



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Tuesday 30 July 2024**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Tuesday 30 July 2024**

The Speaker, **Ms O'Byrne**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

## **STATEMENT BY SPEAKER**

### **Audio Issues**

**The SPEAKER** - Before I call on questions, I note the very cramped conditions people are currently in as the upper House members join us. We are working on the audio so that we can resolve that. If a member is asking a member from the upper House a question, they cannot hear very well sitting over there. I ask members to be conscious of that in their delivery. To update members, the audio problem we thought we had - that there would be no sound for all of Question Time - is now fixed, so you will be heard and on display. Please remember that in your contributions. I no longer need to hold up this sign, which is handy.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Health System - Waiting List**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.02 a.m.]

Shocking statistics released under the *Right to Information Act* show that you are completely out of ideas to improve Tasmania's health system. The documents reveal there are people who have been stuck on the waiting list to see a specialist for more than 11 years. These are Category 2 patients who should have been seen within three months. Instead, they have been stuck on the waiting list for the entire time you have been in government. They were on the list in 2014 and are still waiting now.

Whatever you have tried, it has not worked, and now you and the Jacqui Lambie Network plan to cut millions of dollars from the Health budget. How much of your \$300 million of cuts will be coming from the Health department?

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. This is a government that has invested in health services, particularly frontline health services, over the last 10 years: record funding into health services. The only party that cut health services is the Labor Party, which is why we are recruiting, not cutting. That is why you see advertisements in mainland newspapers with the Tasmanian Government actively recruiting health staff. It is a result of the Labor government's cutting, as the Labor government cut health staff between 2010 and 2014. The Greens can laugh, but you were partners in the cutting as well.

The member needs to clearly state a position. We are about investing in health services, as we have continually done. The budget will demonstrate that we will continue to invest in frontline services, in health, in police, and in our schools. As clearly evidenced by the

contribution of the member for Braddon, Dr Broad, during the election campaign - as limited as it was - it was Labor's plan, the red book -

**The SPEAKER** - I draw the Premier to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - which clearly said and stated '\$2 billion worth of cuts: \$2 billion worth of savings across government'.

**Ms Dow** - How much is coming from the Health department, Premier, your cuts?

**The SPEAKER** - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I will draw the Premier to the question and then you will not need to interject.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As evidenced by our record number of elective surgeries, we are clearly investing in elective surgery. We have a four-year elective surgery plan which continues that investment beyond the forward Estimates. I point to the data that Mr Winter clearly chooses to ignore, which is that we are having and have demonstrated - thanks to our hardworking health staff, surgeons, health professionals, nurses and doctors - record elective surgeries. I commend each and every person within our frontline health system for their care, compassion, goodwill and good work on behalf of the Tasmanian people.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, honourable Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - To restate the question which was not answered: How much of your \$300 million of cuts will be coming from the Tasmanian Health system?

**The SPEAKER** - There was a preamble on Health but there was a specific question on cuts. I accept the supplementary and draw the Premier to the question.

**Mr Winter** - You have said how much is coming out of police -

**The SPEAKER** - You have asked the question, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Speaker. What the budget will demonstrate, Mr Winter, is that on 12 September 2024 there will be an increase in investment in the health system.

### **Health System - Budget and Jobs Cuts**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.06 a.m.]

Category 1 patients have conditions that are so serious doctors have decided that they need to be treated within 30 days. On your watch, category 1 patients have been waiting more than 2100 days to see a specialist, more than 70 times longer than they should have waited. This is totally unacceptable.



How many jobs will be lost from the Department of Health as part of the budget cuts you announced last year?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The Premier has not made it to the podium yet.

**Mr Ellis** - Labor wanted \$2 billion worth of cuts.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Ellis.

## **ANSWER**

Thank you, Speaker, and Mr Ellis is right, notwithstanding his interjection, that the Labor Party took \$2 billion worth of cuts in and across government to the last election. Do not come to us and speak of us not investing in frontline and health services, because we are. This is clearly demonstrated by our record number of elective surgeries. I have not seen the latest data, but we were leading the nation in elective surgeries per capita.

**Mr Willie** - How many jobs are going?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Mr Willie, for your interjection. I have been taking great note of what you have been saying in recent times, the Willie-Winter combination, or Winter-Willie combination, however you would like to determine it. Indeed, Mr Willie, you were recently quoted in terms of your belief in budget management -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, members on my left.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You have demonstrated the fact that all you care about is the political cycle. You do not care about people waiting or waiting lists. All you care about is the political cycle. That is what you have said.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the point of order. Premier, wait for the point of order.

**Mr WINTER** - Standing Order 45, relevance. I would like the Premier to answer this important question about the cuts in our Health department. I wonder if you could bring him back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** - I will draw the Premier to the question.

I remind members that it is hard for anyone outside this Chamber to hear when we are interjecting. I am sure we all want to hear the answer to this question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Honourable Speaker, on budget day the full allocation will be clearly evident -

**Mr Winter** - These are not initiatives of the next budget; they are of the last budget.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - in the forward Estimates and the whole of government. Regarding what you believe, we expect that after a decade, the Labor opposition will finally table an alternative budget. We know where you stand because Mr Willie, the shadow treasurer, has said - and he interjects so, therefore, is inciting interjections, Honourable Speaker. You said that, 'Our role -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Interjections will cease. Responding to interjections will cease. The Premier will answer the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - 'Our role in this part of the political cycle is to hold government to account.' He then went on to say, 'We will outline our plan for government as we get closer to the election'. We will not know your plan for government in 2024, no idea in 2025, no idea in 2027, and we would not -

**The SPEAKER** - If the Premier has finished answering the question, he can resume his seat. I will call the next question.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary, honourable Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - I again ask the same question that was not answered: How many jobs will be lost from the Health department as part of your budget cuts?

**The SPEAKER** - I will take the supplementary. It is substantive of the original question. I will also remind members that I am not going to put up with filibustering any more.

**Mr Abetz** - But he says there will not be cuts.

**The SPEAKER** - If the Leader of the House has something to say, he may say so.

**Mr Abetz** - I am talking to my colleague.

**The SPEAKER** - Quietly, perhaps.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you very much, Speaker. As I have said many times, I am very proud of our health professionals for what they are doing under difficult and challenging circumstances, as other states are -

**Mr Winter** - Why are you making cuts then?

**The SPEAKER** - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - facing across the country. Record elective surgeries: we are up there with the rest of the states and territories for our elective surgeries per capita. We were leading the nation at one time. I point to an advertisement in *The Age* -

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, you can quote but not wave it around as a prop.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are recruiting enrolled nurses, registered nurses and midwives, nursing and midwifery leadership roles, associate and nurse unit managers, allied health positions, medical, including registrar and specialist vacancies, paramedics and GPs.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired and he will resume his seat.

### **Integrity Commission - Reforms**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.12 a.m.]

The Cox review of the Integrity Commission in 2016, the commission of inquiry and the independent Weiss review into paedophile police officer, Paul Reynolds, all highlight the pressing need for reform to strengthen the Integrity Commission. The Integrity Commission has clearly been unable to investigate paedophile state servants, including serving police officers and others in positions of trust who enabled the sexual abuse of children.

You previously committed to bring in changes to the *Integrity Commission Act* in response to the commission of inquiry's recommendations this year. Can you confirm that the Integrity Commission reforms recommended by the Weiss review, including those calling for stronger, coercive and investigative powers for the Integrity Commission, will be brought in as part of the same set of urgent amendments this year?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I fully appreciate the seriousness of the nature of the question and, once again, reiterate our government's commitment to implementing the 191 recommendations as per the commission of inquiry, and more to ensure that we are nation-leading when it comes to the protection of our children and young people.

In reference to the Integrity Commission's work, we respect and value the independence of the commission and have every confidence in its ability to undertake its duties. The confidence and stability agreement between the Premier and the parliamentary members of the Jacqui Lambie Network requires a review of the Integrity Commission within 12 months of the agreement, as per 10 April. We will see further work demonstrated about this.

The Integrity Commission will be reviewed with an eye to giving it greater capability to conduct its work by mid-April 2025. This will include reforms already, considering recent commission of inquiry recommendations and those remaining from the 2016 statutory review and 2022-23 consultation, as you alluded to in your question, Dr Woodruff. The review will consider the May 2024 Integrity Commission report into a right-to-information request in the

Department of Health that will also address recommendation 5 from the June 2024 Weiss review.

The government expects that the review will build on, rather than reinvent, prior analysis and consultation completed in recent times regarding the five-year statutory review and commission of inquiry. Future funding decisions will consider the Integrity Commission's financial needs as they relate to the powers and width of the commission's jurisdiction in existence over that time, notwithstanding the increase, as both I and the minister, Mr Ellis, have spoken about in recent times.

In respect to the Weiss independent review into Paul Reynolds, on 10 July I announced that Cabinet had accepted all recommendations of the 28 June 2024 review and final report. Recommendation 5, as you would know, relates to the Integrity Commission. It contains two sub-recommendations, if I can term it that way. The first is that Tasmania Police consider recommending *Integrity Commission Act* amendments to ensure the commission can independently investigate all notifications regarding Tasmanian Police members alleged to have groomed and/or sexually abused persons, that being serious misconduct under the act. The second is reiterating recommendation 35, which you refer to, of the Cox review -

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired.

#### **Supplementary Question**

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary question, Honourable Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** - I will take the supplementary question if you want to continue that.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Can the Premier confirm that you have dropped your commitment to bring in those changes this year and that you are wrapping up changes to the *Integrity Commission Act* with a review of the Integrity Commission -

**The SPEAKER** - It is not the time to make a speech, Dr Woodruff. I will draw the Premier to the original question.

**Dr Woodruff** - But it is the question and he seems to be delaying for a review.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I will draw the Premier to the original question, which was about whether or not these amendments would be introduced in the time that was identified.

**Dr Woodruff** - This year.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you. Premier, it is a very serious matter. I would like us all to pay attention.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I understand the question. We are reviewing to strengthen. I can provide -

**Dr Woodruff** - You do not need to review. The recommendation has been made.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, you have asked the supplementary question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can provide an update to the House, if you like, on exactly the timeframe, as per your request.

**Dr Woodruff** - By today?

**The SPEAKER** - Can I confirm that the question has been taken on notice by the Premier?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, absolutely.

### **Housing - Land Supply Orders**

**Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS**

[10.17 a.m.]

Six years ago, when the then Housing minister, Mr Jaensch, introduced the *Housing Land Supply Act*, parliament was told that this policy would fast-track the delivery of up to 800 homes and help to reduce prices. In 2022, the subsequent Housing minister, Mr Ferguson, said the housing land supply orders were, 'Allowing more houses to be built for Tasmanians than ever before'. The following minister, Guy Barnett, said it had proven effective in rapidly rezoning Crown land for social housing development. Your predecessor, Nic Street, told parliament last year that he has been able to see first-hand the benefits that housing land supply orders have created.

Your government's supposed supply-boosting, house price-reducing policy that could have delivered up to 800 homes has been talked up by five Housing ministers in six years. In those six years this policy has only delivered six homes. Will you be the first Housing minister to admit that this fast-tracked housing policy has failed to fast-track anything?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and note his interest in more housing. That is exactly what we need to deliver. Our government set a target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. I can let the House know that we are on track. We have delivered 3620, a third of the target, in a third of the time. We are on track and we are keen to deliver more.

One tool is the housing land supply orders. We brought that legislation into this place and it has passed. It has a pipeline of about 800 homes ahead. That is a lot of work on the way, including in your electorate, member for Franklin, but we think there is more opportunity in this space.

I have spoken about the need to take the politics out of planning. We have legislation coming into this House about development assessment panels and ensuring we can deliver more homes for Tasmanians who need it, both Tasmanians doing it tough on the social housing register and Tasmanians who want more affordable housing in their communities. We think those development assessment panels are a great opportunity.

If there is further opportunity that this House is interested in, in cutting red tape from the *Housing Land Supply Act*, I am very interested in that. I am very keen to have a conversation with the member opposite about how we can take the politics out of planning for housing land supply orders, because the process is not perfect.

There is currently a housing land supply order in the other place that will deliver 100 homes in the suburbs of Launceston. That is a great opportunity, but we think we could be getting on with it faster if we continue to improve this particular tool. We are on track for our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. Housing land supply orders are one of those tools and if this House is interested in taking the politics out of planning, we have some great plans and legislation that you might want to support.

### **Ambulance Response Times**

#### **Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.21 a.m.]

Right to Information documents obtained by Labor have revealed the appalling state of ambulance response times in Tasmania. In the last three months, dozens of patients have waited more than 10 hours for an ambulance. At least eight patients have waited more than 20 hours. Do you agree this is downright dangerous for patients and shows Tasmania's ambulance service simply cannot afford the cuts you are planning? Will you be honest with Tasmanians about the impact of your budget cuts and table copies of the agency saving strategies for each department?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Under the government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we are continuing to build on our record investment in our health system. All Tasmanians deserve the right care at the right time at the right place, especially when it comes to our hardworking paramedics and volunteers at Ambulance Tasmania. We know that at times there can be delays - otherwise known as ramping - and that is why in our Strong Plan for Health in Tasmania we are committed to end ramping.

We are the only political party with the aspiration to end ramping - also known as transfer of care delays - at our major hospitals, as evidenced by the minister for Health's recently released data. I commend the minister for Health for his hard work and diligence in implementing this policy commitment. We have now implemented the transfer of care delay protocol across our major hospitals and it is working. I know those opposite do not like it, but it is working, with the end of year data for 2023-24 confirming -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. I am sorry, but I am not going to have to call you again without having to warn someone. I know we have been away for a couple of weeks, but could we revert to some decent behaviour in the House, please?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - ambulances spent 9276 fewer hours ramped when compared to 2022-23, with decreases at all four major hospitals. Those opposite thought this was not

possible. This is an outstanding result. I commend our health professionals and our paramedics. That is 9276 more hours for our Tasmanians who need them in the community. They are out in the community for that length of time and at a percentage reduction of 25.3 per cent compared to the previous year.

Concerning ambulance response times and the RTI Ms Haddad has brought forward, you are seeking to mislead and paint a picture that is inaccurate, which is a direct attack on our hard-working paramedics who do a fantastic job. A long wait time on paper does not mean someone is waiting for urgent care. I am advised the data in the RTI includes circumstances where a medical assessment determines that it is more appropriate for a patient to be transported during daylight hours or after the patient has had a sleep for instance. There are triage processes to ensure the most urgent and life-threatening cases are prioritised. We trust our Ambulance Tasmania staff to make these calls in the best interests of the patients.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I acknowledge in the gallery the cadets and graduates from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. Thank you for joining us.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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### **Housing - Effect of UTAS Move into City**

**Mr JENNER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.25 a.m.]

The political war between the government and the University of Tasmania is bad for the state. Educational outcomes and new housing opportunities are being put at risk. Will you show leadership and sit down with the university before this saga drags out even further?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, members on my left. The Premier has not even made it to the lectern.

**Mr Willie** - It is all right. They have the Greens.

**The SPEAKER** - I am sorry, Mr Willie. Would you like to spend some time outside? It is entirely up to you. Thank you. I do not want to have to implement a timeout step.

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We have sat down and will continue to sit down with the University of Tasmania. The relationship between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian government has strengthened over the last decade. When it comes to retention and workforce development, I have chaired roundtable discussions with key

stakeholders. Those discussions still take place between the University of Tasmania and, for example, the Australian Education Union, the Department of Children and Young People, the Tasmanian Principals Association and others. We are always willing to sit down and engage with the University of Tasmania about its plans and our plan as per the intent of our legislation, which is not unusual -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, the member for Bass will contain herself.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am advised that legislation in other states of Australia is to simply put those checks and balances -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, the question was asked by the member for Lyons, not members on my left. You can be quiet so you can hear the answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Concerning where the campus and other infrastructure is located, there has been a considered effort by the community to ensure the site's future is secure. We have listened and introduced legislation as per our 100 days, effectively keeping the UTAS campus at Sandy Bay. We are also working with university on a STEM-led plan for the Sandy Bay campus.

As per your question, we will also sit down and engage with the University of Tasmania, of which we are very proud.

### **Supplementary Question**

**The SPEAKER** - Mr Jenner, is this a new question or a supplementary?

**Mr JENNER** - A supplementary question.

**The SPEAKER** - I'll hear the supplementary question.

**Mr JENNER** - Basically, I need to know when the Premier or one of his ministers sat down with the university? That was one of the questions I asked. Housing and education outcomes - we have to put those ahead of policy.

**The SPEAKER** - You can only ask the question. You cannot add to it. Premier, the original question was about meeting with UTAS. You indicated that you had. Could you respond to that question in more detail, please?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I speak to the Vice-Chancellor on a regular occurrence and will continue to do so. I cannot speak for my other ministers in relation to their exact diary allocations. We will always continue to engage with the University of Tasmania on their future plans.



## Health System - Redundancy Program

### Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.29 a.m.]

A leaked memo from the Department of Health shows that at least 700 workers' jobs are not being funded and are at risk of being cut by your coalition government. Documents released under the *Right to Information Act* reveal that you have been advised by at least one of your agencies that vacancy control and natural attrition will not be enough to achieve the efficiency dividend cuts you have demanded of them. Will you rule out a redundancy program in the Department of Health?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I again say that we are investing in health services and recruiting more health professionals. I have already been through that this morning.

The Budget is out on 12 September for everyone to see where there will be agency allocations. It is only 44 days until the Budget is released. I look forward to that day, which will demonstrate our very clear plan for continued investment in the vital services that Tasmanians deserve, unlike other states that are cutting services and health professional positions. Where they are cutting, we are recruiting, and we welcome that opportunity to do so.

I understand the views of the member who asked the question. The views of the Leader of the Opposition are a little unclear about what they were producing and demonstrating for the Tasmanian people in their alternative budget. I look forward to the first alternative budget in 11 years for a very good reason: the member does tend to different audiences and different views. We hear different things on southern radio than we hear on northern radio, for example. We hear one minute that they have dumped all their policies and then this morning on northern radio we hear that they are proud of the policies that they took to the last election.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, on relevance. I am not sure that discussion on northern or southern radio goes anywhere near addressing the question. I ask you to draw the Premier to the question.

**The SPEAKER** - The Leader of Government Business will also be mindful of the no conversations across the Chamber rule. Premier, I draw you to the original question because if we must have 44 days of hearing 'wait for the Budget', I think this place might actually explode.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Speaker. I was clearly demonstrating that the Opposition Leader, in policy and intent and speaking to people, has one view for one audience and another view for another audience. It is like some -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, members on my left. Premier, I draw you to the question or you may resume your seat if you wish.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Speaker. What we see in the Opposition Leader is that he is the conductor of a bittersweet symphony, Mr Speaker. That is what it is all about. He is one person to one audience, another person to another audience -

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired. You can refer to me as Speaker and not Mr Speaker, if you would not mind.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms HADDAD** - Speaker, a supplementary.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, members. If the member could resume her seat. I know we have not been here for a little while and I know that we have all missed each other very much, but people who are in our gallery today and people who are listening cannot hear the genuine questions being asked and, one would hope, the genuine answers being given. I will call the next member, but I do not want to have to throw anyone out. You have all prided yourselves on how well this parliament has been behaving. Make it so.

**Ms HADDAD** - The question was a very simple one. It asked the Premier to rule out redundancies in the Health department. He failed to do that. I asked you to draw the Premier's attention to that question. Will he rule out redundancies and, if not -

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, member for Clark, I heard you. Supplementary questions are asked to elicit further information from the answer given or to allow the original question to be answered. Premier, the question was about the redundancy program.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that and I will come to that in just a moment, but there is a conflict between what Labor took to the last election -

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, I will ask you to resume your seat if you do not answer the question. It is a supplementary question. It is quite precise. You have 45 seconds left.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you. As we have clearly demonstrated, we have employed an extra 2500 health professionals, including 1390 nurses, and we are recruiting more, as demonstrated today -

**Mr Willie** - Yes, or no? Rule it out.

**The SPEAKER** - Mr Willie, you have the pleasure of being the first member of parliament warned in the new session. That may not have meant something before, but it certainly does now.

### **Integrity Commission - Funding**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT**

[10.35 a.m.]

We now know from the Premier that bolstering the Integrity Commission is being kicked down the road. Compared to every other Australian jurisdiction, Tasmania's integrity body is

shamefully underfunded to perform its statutory function. It has less than five full-time staff to oversee 40,000 public sector workers, including 1400 Tasmanian police officers.

After the Weiss review's release, the commission's chair, Greg Melick AO, said the commission simply cannot take on more work. He said, 'On our current budget, we cannot provide the level of investigational oversight that the report recommends.' Your government seems reluctant to empower the Integrity Commission to slough off its reputation of being toothless and ineffective. Without additional funding, it remains unable to do its job.

Will there be a substantial increase to the Integrity Commission's funding to cover the extra work required by the commission of inquiry and the Weiss review, or will that also be ignored?

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and interest in the Integrity Commission. I say upfront, as the Premier did, that I have confidence in the Integrity Commission and their work, integrity and independence. As a government, and, I hope, as a parliament, we respect their independence. They have important work to do and we support them in undertaking those responsibilities for and on behalf of all of us, not just as a parliament, but as a community and state service.

You quoted from the Chair. I thank the Chair for his work and thank the members of the commission. They do important work on an ongoing basis and it is respected and valued by our government.

I also indicate that you have misquoted the Premier in the opening remarks to your question. You have characterised the comments by the Premier inappropriately, unfairly and incorrectly. I say that very clearly.

I will not go over the Premier's previous answer, which was very comprehensive regarding the important work of reforming the Integrity Commission. We have had the Cox review and more recently the Weiss report. The Premier has made it very clear that we support the Weiss report and its recommendations. I know the Police minister is backing that 100 per cent. Let us be very clear that we take these matters very seriously.

You asked about funding and resources, and I will address that part of the question. In 2021, the commission received an additional \$622,000 per annum over three years that provided an additional five full-time equivalent staff in a mix of permanent and fixed term positions, reducing to three full-time equivalent staff in 2024. Further funding was provided in the 2022-23 Budget: \$225,000 over the forward Estimates for education and oversight functions to improve investigative timeframes, meet investigative demands, and to manage the state government lobbyists register. The Treasurer approved rolling forward \$170,000 to the 2022-23 budget year. I could go on, but in light of the short amount of time, I indicate that we do value the Integrity Commission and its important work, and we take it very seriously.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary, Dr Woodruff.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The minister said that I had misquoted the Premier. Will he be putting extra money into the Integrity Commission's budget this year? If not, then there is clearly no intention to strengthen the Integrity Commission to do extra work.

**The SPEAKER** - Leader of the Greens, this is not a time to debate the point. I am happy to take the supplementary and ask the Attorney-General to address the additional funding issue but it is not an opportunity to debate the matter.

**Mr BARNETT** - I thank the member for her supplementary question. The member - and I hope all members in this parliament do - knows full well that we cannot pre-empt the Budget. The Budget will be presented on Budget day, 12 September.

**Dr Woodruff** - Are you going to fund the Weiss report? Are you going to fund the recommendations? This is what Tasmanians want to know.

**The SPEAKER** - Attorney-General, continue with your answer, please. I am sorry, Leader of the Greens. We will hear the answer.

**Mr BARNETT** - I have made it very clear that we take it seriously. The Premier has accepted on behalf of the government all the recommendations of the Weiss report and you will see more on Budget day regarding those funding decisions.

### **Rescued Labradoodles - Emergency Funding**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms HOWLETT**

[10.40 a.m.]

Tasmanians have been horrified by the treatment of 250 labradoodles. They are angry that due to the inadequacies of this government's animal welfare laws prosecutions were not possible and these breeders were able to operate for so long, inflicting so much pain and suffering on so many dogs.

Thankfully, through the amazing negotiation skills of the RSPCA, these dogs have been rescued and ordinary Tasmanians have generously donated \$300,000 to the RSPCA to help care for these neglected and abused dogs. The RSPCA will share this money with partner organisations such as the Dogs' Home and Brightside. However, hefty vet bills will consume much of the funds raised, leaving these organisations still short.

Will you provide immediate government funding to these organisations to ensure that they are not out of pocket in dealing with the animal welfare crisis, one that could have been avoided if we had contemporary and strong animal welfare laws?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Tasmanian government commends the RSPCA on taking actions to shut down Tasmanian Labradoodles at Epping Forest. I understand that the RSPCA is continuing to raise much-needed funds and has been flooded with offers to provide loving new homes for the labradoodles. I also acknowledge Biosecurity Tasmania officers who have been working very closely with the RSPCA in recent weeks to ensure that the welfare of dogs on the site is paramount.

We never want to see this situation happen again in Tasmania. This is why this government is undertaking a review of the *Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations 2016* to prevent overbreeding, stamp out puppy farms and improve welfare for all dogs, including greyhounds.

It is also proposed that the *Dog Control Act 2000* will be amended to require dogs over 12 weeks of age to be microchipped and to introduce new provisions to enable information sharing between councils and animal welfare regulators to better identify any potential dog breeding operations.

The government has also committed to enforcing a Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice, with provisions around minimum standards for the care, housing and health of dogs in the racing industry. I am currently working with the Minister for Local Government as the minister responsible for the *Dog Control Act 2000*, as well as the Office of Racing Integrity and RSPCA Tasmania to progress this review.

There will be public consultation on the amendments this year and I encourage everyone to have their say in this review.

### Supplementary Question

**Ms JOHNSTON** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms JOHNSTON** - Can the minister please confirm that the government will not be providing additional funds to deal with animal welfare crisis but instead be expecting Tasmanians in a cost-of-living crisis to put their own hands in their pocket to deal with the crisis?

**The SPEAKER** - It is not the time to debate the point. I will call the Minister for Primary Industries and Water to address the issue of additional funding.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Honourable Speaker, the RSPCA is still getting more funds coming through their door, which is great. I thank the Tasmanian people for how they have reacted to this campaign. I look forward to an update from the CEO of the RSPCA.

## **Population Growth - Low Immigration**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.44 a.m.]

Tasmania's population growth has alarmingly slumped to an eight-year low. We are coming last behind every Australian state and territory. It is largely down to severe lack of interstate migration. Are Australians hesitant to move to Tasmania because they fear they cannot rely on our state's essential services, including a public hospital system unable to meet demand?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank Mrs Pentland for the question. Speaking of population, you would be aware that we released our population policy just a few weeks ago. I spoke of that at the Committee for Economic Development Australia conference. There is very good reason for that regarding the demographic in age profile over the last 54 years. In 1971, our median age in Tasmania was 26. It is now 44 and the national average is 37.

There is a very good reason why our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future focuses on attracting people from interstate and elsewhere to Tasmania. That is where a number of our housing initiatives are from and why we are actively recruiting.

As per your question, we are seeing massive cuts in the health systems of other states, including Victoria most predominantly. We are actively recruiting in Victoria for health professionals to come to Tasmania as a result of the cuts to strengthen and bolster our health system which we have committed to strengthening.

I point you to our population policy that we have released, with a number of key areas we are focused on, particularly doing what we can to ensure we are shifting that demographic profile to a younger median age. There is no doubt that the policies we have on offer and our commitments in our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future do exactly that, and for good reason, given the data I outlined for you about our profile over the last 50 years.

Other states would be welcoming greater investment in Tasmania when it comes to health service provision, which is exactly why we are having an active recruitment blitz as we speak. That will continue to add value to the number of health professionals, the 2500 we have already built on over the last decade.

## **Tasmania Police - Budget Cuts**

**Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS**

[10.47 a.m.]

The Weiss review was damning of Tasmania and its systems which led to the abuse of children over three decades. The Premier has committed to implementing all five recommendations, including establishing a restorative engagement framework for those harmed by a Tasmania Police officer and a redress scheme for victim-survivors, both of which

will require substantial extra funding. You plan to cut \$35 million from Police, Fire and Emergency Management over the next four years. How do you expect Tasmania Police to implement the Weiss recommendations if you are slashing their budget and capacity? How will that keep Tasmanians safe?

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I say again to the victim-survivors of Paul Reynolds' atrocious crimes that our hearts go out to you. To those who came forward, thank you for your courage. We want to support everyone who was a victim of his heinous crimes over many decades and our government is committed to acting on that. We have accepted all five recommendations, just as we accepted the 191 recommendations from the commission of inquiry, which also mentioned Mr Reynolds' terrible crimes against children.

There is no higher priority in this state than keeping Tasmanian children safe. Our government, led by the Premier, and every minister who has carriage of important recommendations from the commission of inquiry and this review, is committed to doing everything we can to make sure we deliver that. We will be working through the budget process in the usual way and policy work has begun to deliver on these important recommendations. Our government is committed to that.

Regarding our investment in police, we currently have a record number of police on the beat in Tasmania. The recruit course we had graduated last week. It was an exciting time and I know that all those people have a commitment to keeping children safe. There was a record number of police graduates on the parade ground as well. Tasmanians can be encouraged that not only do we have record police on the beat today, but next year we will have even more as we deliver on our commitment for 60 new officers for Tasmania Police and a dedicated relief pool.

Our government is investing in the frontline of Tasmania Police. We are investing in delivering on our recommendations from the commission of inquiry and the recommendations from the Weiss review. All parts of government need to ensure they continue to do their work more productively. Finding those efficiencies will be important. Our commitment to the Tasmanian communities is that we will continue to invest in the services that will keep you safe.

## **Energy Developments in Tasmania**

**Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN**

[10.51 a.m.]

Yesterday, the ABC revealed that you sent well wishes via text to the ACEN Australia chief executive, Mr David Pollington, who is responsible for the Robbins Island wind farm proposal. This was the day before the TASCAT ruling last year on 27 November 2023. You stated in the text that you were, 'really looking forward to a positive outcome tomorrow. Robins is such an important project for the state'. On what date did you first begin communicating with Mr Pollington from ACEN via text message? What did you mean by, 'really looking forward

to a positive outcome tomorrow' in relation to the TASCAT ruling? Did you send any wellwishing messages to any of the other appellants in that TASCAT case such as the Circular Head Coastal Awareness Network, the Bob Brown Foundation or BirdLife Tasmania? If not, do you think that your portfolios of Energy and Renewables and Parks and Environment are in conflict if you are favouring energy developers above environmental concerns?

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I would make one slight alteration to the premise of your question. I was Minister for Energy and Renewables and Minister for Parks and Heritage at the time of the text message and did not hold the responsibility for Environment at that stage.

I am not ashamed, unlike some in this Chamber, to say that I support the ongoing growth and prosperity of Tasmania. Renewable energy is an essential ingredient for our economy to grow and to build on our comparative advantages. Powering our future industries with clean, green, renewable energy, new jobs and helping keep our power prices as low as they can be is hugely important. It is the role of the Energy minister to progress that agenda.

It should be noted that it is no surprise that I support the efforts to see more renewable energy projects in Tasmania and to see ACEN's Robbins Island wind farm come to life. It is a project that has been in the offing for 20 years. It has been going through its approval processes for more than seven years. To characterise it as being fast-tracked, rushed through or having some sort of behind-the-curtain approvals process is to gild the lily somewhat.

To the substance of your question about that particular text message, at the very beginning of it, I introduced myself as, 'Hello, this is Nick Duigan', because there had been no dialogue - text or voice - prior to that.

It is entirely appropriate for the minister, in light of a decision that would either make that project entirely commercially unviable or potentially keep continuing on its way to have an interest in that. I am happy to do that. I spend a lot of my time in contact with energy proponents looking to invest in Tasmania, as is absolutely appropriate. I do not resile from that in any way, shape or form. I will continue to do so.

## **Supplementary Question**

**Mr GARLAND** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary from Mr Garland.

**Mr GARLAND** - How can clean and green be applied to Robbins Island wind farm when we have a disease-free devil population on there? The devil population is down to 10 per cent right now -

**The SPEAKER** - Mr Garland, I have to draw you to why it is a supplementary question.

**Mr GARLAND** - Why?

**The SPEAKER** - Yes, you have to ask the supplementary question.



**Mr Abetz** - Not just another one.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader.

**Mr GARLAND** - I just cannot think -

**The SPEAKER** - I think your point is well made, Mr Garland.

### **Health System -Vacancy Control and Budget Cuts**

**Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[10.56 a.m.]

Evidence of government neglect of the health system continues stacking up. New information from your department shows Tasmanians on the outpatient waiting list for over a decade and recent ambulance wait times topping 23 hours. It was not long ago the state set a devastating record for the number of patients with imminently life-threatening conditions not being seen on time in emergency departments. Staff are now being trained to pat down and search patients for weapons because security is under-resourced. While the Royal Hobart Hospital is in constant crisis with staff at breaking point, you have asked them to take shifts at the Launceston General Hospital too. When they raised concerns about this, you said they should, 'Get a grip'.

Things will only get worse under your health cuts. Will you listen to health staff and all Tasmanians? Will you scrap vacancy control and rule out any further cuts in the upcoming Budget?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her interest in health. These are important matters. As the Premier has indicated, we are on a recruitment blitz for health workers, particularly in Victoria where Labor is cutting, while the Liberals are recruiting in Tasmania.

The ABC put it that we are on a 'recruitment raid' in Victoria. I do not mind how people characterise that: we are on a recruitment blitz. We are going have more frontline health workers in Tasmania this time next year than we have today. We have 500 more in the last three months - 150 new nurses, specifically. This is a positive. To hear the negativity from Labor and the Greens on a consistent basis, uphill and down dale, you should be ashamed. The level of negativity, particularly from Labor and the unions, is disappointing.

You referred to elective surgery and getting access to the health care that is so important: we have delivered nearly \$200 million. What we have discovered in the last 12 months is record elective surgeries, more than 22,000 elective surgeries. That is a record for Tasmania. This is delivering the health care that Tasmanians deserve faster. That is what is happening under this Rockliff Liberal government. We are getting on with the job, make no mistake about that.

You referred to outpatients. We have delivered more than 10,000 extra outpatient consultations and meetings in the health system in the last 12 months. That is good news for Tasmanians. That means that Tasmanians are getting the health care that they need faster. They deserve it and we are delivering it.

There is more to be done, but we are not negative in talking the Tasmanian health system down. That is what Labor and the unions have been doing: they are talking down to our healthcare workers. You are demeaning our healthcare workers. I say stop it; stop that negativity. It is not on.

**The SPEAKER** - Minister, I draw you to the question asked by the member of the Greens.

**Mr BARNETT** - I have been answering two key parts of the question and highlighting the important role that we have in putting on more healthcare workers. That is why we are so proud of the work that we are doing. We know there is more work to do. I acknowledge the concerns that have been raised by the member. That is why we are getting on with the job and why we have full-page ads in Victoria to get healthcare workers from Victoria to Tasmania as soon as possible.

**The SPEAKER** - The minister's time has expired.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms ROSOL** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - Unsurprisingly, we will be hearing a supplementary question from Ms Rosol.

**Ms ROSOL** - Minister, will you rule out any further cuts in the upcoming Budget?

**The SPEAKER** - Minister, that was the original question and, therefore, is an appropriate supplementary. I draw you to the question. You have one minute.

**Mr BARNETT** - Just hello, hello? We are employing more healthcare workers. What does 'more' actually mean? This is additional, the last three months more than 500. As the Premier has just said, 2500 more in the last 10 years. Hello, hello, hello? Are you hearing 'recruitment blitz'? What is going on? Recruitment blitz. It is happening. Come to Tasmania. We love you.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Mr Barnett, I am going to sit you down just for all of us. Thank you. If we could all come together. Whilst props are inappropriate, I am not sure quite what that was. Can I have some order so that we may hear the question from Ms Haddad, member for Clark. From the looks of it, it is going to be on the same topic.

## **Health System - Budget Cuts**

### **Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.01 a.m.]

It was an extraordinary display. Premier, today you have refused to categorically rule out budget cuts in our health system, a system already under extraordinary pressure. Your Health minister just did the same in quite an odd display. The question is simple: will you rule out any cuts to budget, services or staff in the Department of Health or the Tasmania Health Service?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank Ms Haddad for her question. We have clearly said that we are investing in health services. The Leader of the Opposition might like to listen a little bit more rather than be on X or Twitter, or whatever it is called. You are tweeting mistruths during Question Time once again. I will say once again: we continue to invest -

**Dr Broad** - How did you know?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Reliably informed. Settle down, thank you very much.

**The SPEAKER** - Let us go back to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You are saying one thing and doing another. You come up here and talk about investing in frontline services when your budget plan at the last election had \$2 billion of cuts. The Leader of the Opposition is one person in southern Tasmania when he is on radio, and another person in northern Tasmania. Wherever he goes, he is a different person. He is a million different people from one day to the next and, as I say, conducting a bittersweet symphony. This Leader of the Opposition cannot be trusted because he says one thing to one audience and another thing to another audience.

We are about being consistent with the Tasmanian people. We went to the last election with a clear plan to invest in frontline health services and health services more generally - actually investing in health services that were the responsibility of the federal government where we are reaching in, funding GP services, primary health care, we are reducing red tape when it comes to what pharmacies can do for the community, and we have delivered on those commitments from the 2021 election.

If the Leader of the Opposition is serious, he needs to outline exactly what his plan is for the budget and where he is going to invest, because all we have now is that red book with a sea of red ink through government services of \$2 billion, and at the very least, \$170 million worth of health cuts. You say one thing and you do another.

You cannot be trusted, Mr Winter, when it comes to your plans for Tasmania, because you have no plans for Tasmania. You took it to the last election and it was quite clearly rejected. You rejected your policies very quickly after the last election, until today, when you said you are proud of the policies that you took to the last election. You are a million different people from one day to the next. Tasmanians know that the Leader of the Opposition cannot be trusted. What they can trust is that this government will continue to invest in frontline health services.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired. I appreciate the verve with which you approached that question but -

**Mr Winter** - Is that what I think it was?

**The SPEAKER** - It was that, yes. Is that a new question from the member for Clark? I was expecting a supplementary.

### **Launceston General Hospital - Master Plan**

#### **Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.05 a.m.]

I think I have asked enough times. He will not rule out cuts, so I have a new question for the Premier.

In today's *The Examiner*, your Health minister has denied that there are any planned changes to the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) master plan. He said suggestions to the contrary are, 'Simply not true. Full stop. End of story'. The current master plan promised by you at two elections pledges the new mental health precinct will be completed by the start of 2026, just 18 months away. Will it be delivered by that date?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank Ms Haddad for the question. I do not have *The Examiner* in front of me. I have *The Age* in front of me: 'The Tasmanian government has a 2030 Strong Plan -

**The SPEAKER** - Which the Premier is quoting from and not using as a prop, I am quite sure.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - 'to build a better health system. Join the Department of Health today in one of our exciting new opportunities.' We are investing and recruiting, and some of the benefits are on display in our advertisement. Tasmania is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. That message goes out to the hardworking health staff in Victoria and elsewhere, and we welcome them to Tasmania. Many of them we will recruit to the Launceston General Hospital.

We have recruited 2500 health professionals and 1390 nurses over the last 10 years. Part of our strong plan for building a better health system is investing in the LGH. I am very proud of the master plan for the redevelopment and upgrades over the next years.

As part of this, it was fantastic to release the concept plans for the new multi-storey car park a few months ago, which I know will be a relief to patients, staff and visitors. I am very excited about the \$120 million Northern Heart Centre, which is fantastic - an initiative we spoke of and committed to at the last election.

Regarding the \$580-million stage 2 redevelopment, we are boosting it. My understanding is that it is \$53 million - if that is correct, minister - to nearly double the size of the ED.

We have from the opposition more negativity and more undermining of northern health services. We will have none of that. We are committed to the Launceston General Hospital redevelopment. I speak of the \$53.5 million expansion to ensure a new ED has additional capacity to meet current and future demands. It includes a new and improved emergency medical unit for patients to be discharged in less than 24 hours, a new and improved approved acute medical unit for patients who need a couple of days of admission, and an expanded fast-track waiting area. Added to this are the commitments that we have made, which those opposite said were not possible, when it comes to ending ramping. Our protocol is quite clearly working when it comes to those 9276 hours - a reduction over the course of the last 12 months. Those hours mean more time for paramedics and ambulances to be on the road supporting and caring for Tasmanians in need. That is what a government that gets things done does.

**The SPEAKER** - Your time expired 10 seconds ago, Premier.

### **Supplementary Question**

**The SPEAKER** - I am assuming you have a supplementary question, member for Clark?

**Ms HADDAD** - Yes, Speaker. The Premier did not go near the question, which is: will the mental health precinct be completed by the start of 2026?

**The SPEAKER** - That was the question and I draw the Premier to it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you for the question, Ms Haddad. I would like to have some time to provide an accurate answer for you. I am more than happy to update the House on exactly the time frame.

**The SPEAKER** - I am taking on notice the timeframe for the mental health unit.

### **Launceston General Hospital - Master Plan**

**Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF, referred to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[11.10 a.m.]

Can you confirm that you have abandoned the promised plans in the Launceston General Hospital master plan to construct the new mental health precinct on the old Anne O'Byrne site? Is it true that you will instead be building a car park on that site?

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier will understand I have a great interest in what is happening to the Anne O'Byrne site. Premier, you may refer the question to the minister for Health rather than take his information, if you wish.

### **ANSWER**

I am happy to refer to the minister in terms of a more detailed answer. There was some discussion around the mental health precinct and the Calvary Hospital and that location as well, and there were some changes around that.

**Mr BARNETT** - I thank the member for her question. First of all, in terms of the Launceston General Hospital master plan, it is progressing. The false allegations from Labor are very disappointing. We are progressing with an \$80-million mental health precinct. The suggestion from Labor over the last 24 hours is entirely wrong and unfair.

**Dr BROAD** - Point of order, Standing Order 45. We do not have much time to get an answer. This is a very specific question about the mental health precinct, which did not have much of a preamble. I ask you to draw the member to the question.

**The SPEAKER** - I will draw the minister to the question, which was specifically around what is being built on the site.

**Mr BARNETT** - I was in fact being directly relevant to the mental health precinct. We are progressing. It is more than \$80 million. It is in the Budget.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr BARNETT** - I am trying to answer the question. The mental health precinct is progressing. There are false allegations being made by Labor and the unions, which are talking our health service down. I ask you to cease talking down the health service and our very awesome health workers.

With respect to the car park, we are progressing with the 500 car park spaces at the LGH. With respect to the former Anne O'Byrne site, it has been cleared and there will be plans for a car park in that space as well. With respect to our relationship with the private sector, I have made it very clear that we are disappointed that Calvary withdrew from that agreement with the government. That was made very clear earlier this year, many months ago.

We continue to work with not just Calvary but other private sector operators, and we believe there is an important role for the public and private sectors to work together to get the job done and to deliver better healthcare services to all Tasmanians.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms HADDAD** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary and remind other members that they should allow those questions to be asked in silence.

**Ms HADDAD** - The supplementary question goes to the original question, which is, if the mental health precinct will not be built on the old Anne O'Byrne site, can the minister or the Premier advise where it will be built?

**The SPEAKER** - I will allow the supplementary because it goes to the intent of the question.

**Mr BARNETT** - Just to be clear, honourable Speaker, this is a supplementary question. I only have a minute to answer but I would love to give a 20-minute response to this question. This has already been in the public arena for ages; last year this was made public. I say to the

newish shadow minister I am happy to provide further updates, but let us be very clear, this is in the public arena. We are doing it adjacent to the LGH in the Franklin Street site.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr BARNETT** - You should know, you are the member for Bass. It has already been made clear that we have moved it from -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my left and the minister will stop having a direct conversation. The minister can either resume his seat or finish his question as he wishes.

**Mr BARNETT** - This is bizarre. You have a member for Bass and a shadow minister for health who do not even know where the mental health precinct will be built in Launceston - adjacent to the LGH on Franklin Street, an \$80 million development.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my left -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Speaker. I ask you to draw the minister to the relevance of his answer to the question; he has not gone anywhere near it. Where exactly will it be located?

**The SPEAKER** - I am not going to rule on the content of the answer. The minister's time has expired. Unfortunately, we have no capacity to allow him to go to the question about where the site will be finally built. Sadly, the time for questions has ended.

## **CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS**

### **Franklin - GP Wait Times**

**Mrs PETRUSMA question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[11.16 a.m.]

Constituents in my electorate of Franklin, particularly in the more rural and regional areas such as the Huon Valley, have expressed concerns at the wait times to see a GP. Can the minister please provide an update on whether he is aware of what measures the federal government has taken to support access to GPs in Tasmania and also provide information on what actions he is taking to make it easier to recruit doctors in rural and regional Tasmania?

## **Bruny Island - Mental Health Services Plan**

### **Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

Tammy from the Bruny Island Community Association has contacted me. Healthcare providers, first responders and educators in the community have identified big gaps in current access to social work and mental health support on Bruny Island. It puts immense pressure and costs on services and residents' mental health. The association has a draft proposal for how mental health services for approximately 1000 residents on the island can be improved. She wants to know whether the government will act on this and their proposal, which has been developed by a working group across all sectors on the island. They want to proactively address the mental health concerns for the long-term and prevent the costly crises that are currently occurring. She asks whether there is a clear commitment by the government to ongoing funding for the BIRCH service for Bruny's elderly, a permanent on-island social worker for Bruny and a permanent part-time visiting psychologist for Bruny Island.

## **Radiation Treatment Delays in the North-West**

### **Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

Delays accessing radiation treatment are causing a number of north-west patients great anxiety on top of the distress of a cancer diagnosis. Cancer patient and former Devonport City councillor, Kerry Whittle, would like answers to the following questions. Why is it that only one linear accelerator at the North West Regional Hospital is operational? Is it true that the cancer centre is not running at full capacity because there are not enough qualified professionals to actually run two linear accelerators? How many north-west patients are on the waiting list for radiation treatment? When will both linear accelerators be operational?

## **Police Personnel Statistics by Region**

### **Mr BEHRAKIS question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS**

Under the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, you committed to recruiting more police. I have been hearing loud and clear from constituents in my electorate that we need these police to help in the community, not only in the city but in regional areas. Can you provide a breakdown of police numbers, including regional breakdown?

## **Road Safety Improvements - Hadspen**

### **Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr FERGUSON**

The Meander Valley Council has been working with State Growth on a design to improve the safety of the intersection of Bartley Street and Meander Valley Road at Hadspen. It has



been agreed that a roundabout would need to be built. However, to date, no funding has been allocated by the state government.

This section of road is quite busy, with a school bus route, bus stop and a new subdivision. A 250-house subdivision has been approved by the council, and the developer has commenced work on the first stage. However, approximately 200 new homes will be held up until the intersection is improved. In the middle of a housing crisis, why is the state government not prioritising the improvement of this intersection and working with the council to allocate the necessary funding to ensure that more 200 homes can be built?

### **Coastal Development Approvals**

#### **Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS**

My question comes from Kim in Montagu. Can the government release a list of all *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* permits issued or apparently issued since January 2009 for developments in Tasmania between the high tide mark and one kilometre inland from the coast?

### **Patient Travel Assistance Scheme - Effectiveness**

#### **Mrs BESWICK question to MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

Last week, I met with a resident from King Island who raised concerns about the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme. The scheme states on its website that it covers some costs for travel and accommodation. Despite this, patients have been denied support unless they travel both ways in one day. As I personally experienced a three-hour delay on my flights, I find it very unreasonable to expect patients to align a service within these tight timeframes when they are impacted by the weather.

Do you honestly think that this scheme is working? Can you identify improvements to be implemented to better meet the needs of these residents?

### **Animal Welfare - Livestock Processing Taskforce**

#### **Mr FAIRS question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms HOWLETT**

As recent commentary in this place has demonstrated, there are many constituents across the state who want to see the government taking action to boost animal welfare. I understand that you have been highlighting the work of the Livestock Processing Taskforce, which has been meeting regularly, conducting workshops, and taking on feedback. Can you please detail some tangible and real-world actions taken by this taskforce and how these actions will make a real difference to the farmers and the wider community?

**Time expired.**

## CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS - ANSWERS

[11.21 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I lay upon the table of the House responses to constituency questions.

### **Historic Heritage Summit**

Mr Fairs to Minister for the Arts, Ms Ogilvie

See Appendix 1 on page 142.

### **Lions Club Clarence and Meals on Wheels - Accommodation**

Ms Brown to Minister for Housing and Planning, Mr Ellis

See Appendix 2 on page 145.

### **Renewable Energy Dividend Payment**

Mr Wood to Minister for Parks and Environment, Mr Duigan

See Appendix 3 on page 146.

### **Bass Highway - Duplication between Hadspen Bridge and Deloraine**

Mr Shelton to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson

See Appendix 4 on page 148.

### **Kings Meadows Bunnings Roundabout and Slip Lane - Safety**

Ms Finlay to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 5 on page 150.

### **RBF Tasmania - Claim Timeframe**

Mrs Beswick to Treasurer, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 6 on page 151.

### **Small Business Grants Program - Awareness of Eligibility**

Mrs Petrusma to Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs, Ms Ogilvie

See Appendix 7 on page 153.

### **Caravan Parks - Proposed Legislation**

Ms Finlay to Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs, Ms Ogilvie

See Appendix 8 on page 155.

### **Heritage Assessment for TVT**

Ms Haddad to Minister for the Arts, Ms Ogilvie

See Appendix 9 on page 156.

### **Paradise Gorge - Road Closure**

Mr Jenner to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson

See Appendix 10 on page 157.

### **Glamorgan-Spring Bay Online Access Centre**

Ms Butler to Minister for Education, Ms Palmer

See Appendix 11 on page 159.

### **Education Department Policy on Charter Bus Seatbelts**

Mrs Bewick to Minister for Education, Ms Palmer

See Appendix 12 on page 160.

### **Support Services for Young People when Parents Incarcerated**

Mrs Beswick to Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Mr Ellis

See Appendix 13 on page 161.

### **Tasman District School - Netball Courts Upgrades Delay**

Ms White to Minister for Education, Ms Palmer

See Appendix 14 on page 162.

### **Violent Crime Targeting Businesses in Hobart CBD**

Mr Behrakis to Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Mr Ellis

See Appendix 15 on page 163.

### **Health - Mother-Baby Telehealth Support**

Ms Rosol to Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mr Barnett

See Appendix 16 on page 164.

### **Health - Independent Review Recommendation**

Mrs Beswick to Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mr Barnett

See Appendix 17 on page 166.

### **Compulsory Acquisition of Westbury Farmland**

Ms Butler to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 18 on page 167.

### **Longford Traffic Survey**

Ms Badger to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 19 on page 169.

### **Waste Management**

Mrs Petrusma to Minister for Parks and Environment, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 20 on page 170.

### **Council Rates - Pensioner Concessions**

Mr Behrakis to Minister for Local Government, Mr Street.

See Appendix 21 on page 171.

### **St Patricks River Reserve Clean-up**

Ms Rosol to Minister for Parks and Environment, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 22 on page 172.

### **Triabunna - Discharge of Onboard Sewage**

Ms White to Minister for Parks and Environment, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 23 on page 173.

### **Solar Energy Battery Storage Trials - Franklin**

Mrs Petrusma to Minister for Energy and Renewables, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 24 on page 175.

### **Electric Vehicles Charging Stations - Launceston to Hobart**

Mr Wood to Minister for Energy and Renewables, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 25 on page 176.

### **Regional Tourism Loan Scheme**

Mr Wood to Premier, Mr Rockliff.

See Appendix 26 on page 177.

### **Aircraft Noise - Effect on Communities**

Ms Badger to Premier, Mr Rockliff.

See Appendix 27 on page 179.

### **Women's Basketball - Funding**

Mr Willie to Minister for Sport and Events, Mr Street.

See Appendix 28 on page 181.

### ***Integrity Commission Act - Legislative Reform***

Ms White to Attorney-General, Mr Barnett.

See Appendix 29 on page 182.

### **Vacant Government-Owned Premises in Risdon Vale - Future Usage**

Ms Brown to Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mr Barnett.

See Appendix 30 on page 184.

### **Support for Primary Producers**

Mr Fairs to Acting Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 31 on page 185.

### **Tenants' Union - Funding Increase**

Mr Bayley to Acting Attorney-General, Mr Abetz.

See Appendix 32 on page 187.

### **Metro Tasmania - Reliability and Reporting Validity - Sandy Bay Road**

Ms Burnet to Minister for Transport, Mr Abetz.

See Appendix 33 on page 189.

### **Metro Bus Services**

Ms Burnet to Minister for Parks and Environment, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 34 on page 190.

### **Bridport Pier**

Mr Fairs to Minister for Transport, Mr Abetz.

See Appendix 35 on page 191.

### **Bus Stops in Main Street of Kingston**

Dr Woodruff to Minister for Transport, Mr Abetz.

See Appendix 36 on page 192.

### **kunanyi/Mount Wellington - Cable Car Consultation**

Mr Bailey to Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Mr Abetz.

See Appendix 37 on page 193.

### **Sidmouth General Store - Impact of Roadworks**

Ms Finlay to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 38 on page 194.

### **Budget Bids - Jacqui Lambie Network**

Mr Willie to Treasurer, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 39 on page 195.

### **Road Upgrades - Smithton to Marrawah**

Ms Dow to Minister for Infrastructure, Mr Ferguson.

See Appendix 40 on page 196.

### **Vacant Housing Units**

Ms Finlay to Acting Minister for Housing and Planning, Mr Jaensch.

See Appendix 41 on page 198.

### **Support for Tasmanian Native Forest Sector**

Mr Shelton to Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Mr Abetz.

See Appendix 42 on page 199.

### **AFL High Performance Centre - Rosny**

Dr Woodruff to Acting Minister for Sports and Events, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 43 on page 201.

### **Winter Events in Tasmania - Government Support**

Mr Behrakis to Acting Minister for Sports and Events, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 44 on page 202.

### **Vaccination Rates - Respiratory Illnesses**

Mrs Petrusma to Acting Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mr Ellis.

See Appendix 45 on page 203.

### **Public and Social Housing - Unoccupied Premises**

Dr Broad to Minister for Housing and Planning, Mr Ellis.

See Appendix 46 on page 206.

### **Launceston General Hospital - Wait Times for Specialist Services**

Mr Faris to Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mr Barnett.

See Appendix 47 on page 209.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR**

### **Assent to Bills**

**The SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

A Bill for an Act to amend the Duties Act 2001, the Land Tax 2000, the Land Tax Rating Act 2000, the Payroll Tax Rebate (Apprentices, Trainees and Youth Employees) Act 2017 has been presented to the Governor for Royal Assent.

Her Excellency, in the name of His Majesty the King, has assented to the said bill.

Further:

A Bill to for an Act to amend the Surveyors Act 2002 has been presented to the Governor for Royal Assent.

A Bill for Act to establish an independent monitor to monitor and report to the Parliament on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, any recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that have been accepted by the State but not yet implemented, and certain other relevant recommendations and for related purposes has been presented to the Governor for Royal Assent.

Her Excellency, in the name of His Majesty the King, has assented to the said bills.

## **TASMANIAN DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 34)**

### **First Reading**

**Bill presented by Mr Rockliff and read the first time**

## **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

### **Move a Motion without Notice**

[11.24 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Honourable Speaker, I indicate that with the support of the Labor Party, the condolence motion for the Honourable Fran Bladel will now be after the matter of public importance.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Speaker. I would have thought that since it was such an important matter it would have been nice to have been informed about that.



**Mr ABETZ** - The important matter is, I move -

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent -

- (1) the question before the House at 1 p.m. this day from standing adjourned until a later hour; and
- (2) the member for Bass, Mrs Pentland, from making a statement to the House at 2.30 p.m. this day for a period not exceeding 30 minutes.

I agree with the Leader of the Greens that it is a very important matter. I commend it to the House.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER** - Regarding the change to the blue, the blue is a guide for people to use, but a change to the blue is simply to facilitate, I believe, the family of Ms Bladel to be here for the appropriate speech.

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Budget Cuts**

[11.26 a.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: budget cuts.

I am happy to address the House today, although 'happy' is not the right word to use when we are talking about sweeping cuts to the Health budget in the middle of the worst health crisis.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Could I ask members to not have conversations? We are attempting to hear Ms Haddad on a matter of public importance. Conversations can be had outside. Thank you.

**Ms HADDAD** - Question Time today was one of the most disappointing we have seen from this government in the more than 10 years that they have held the government benches. Question after question, they refused to rule out cuts to the health system, cuts to budgets, cuts to service delivery, or cuts to staff. It is disgraceful that they have refused to do this at a time when we know the health system is under the most extraordinary pressure.

Every day we are hearing from health workers at every level, every kind of profession and every hospital, about how terrifying the conditions they are now working in. They are dedicated health professionals who should be listened to by this minister and this government, not ignored. These are dedicated people. They dedicate their lives and their careers to positive patient outcomes. They are being prevented from doing that in a way that is safe because of the way this government has mismanaged the health system for 10 years. We are seeing the results

of those cuts. They started back in 2014 and we have seen hundreds of millions of dollars cut since that time. The results of those cuts are very clear for Tasmania to see right now.

We know how hard workers are working. We know how hard nurses, paramedics, doctors, specialists, cleaning staff, catering staff and every person working in the Tasmanian health system is working. Every day we hear from patients about the extraordinary quality of care they are receiving but they see the pressure when they are receiving those health services. They see, with their own eyes when they are in hospital, how hard those health workers are working in a broken system that has been plagued by cuts.

Today in Question Time, we asked straightforwardly worded questions: 'Will you rule out cuts? Will you rule out redundancies? Will you rule out cuts to services, staff, budgets?' Deafening silence every time. They refuse to rule them out. They refuse to rule out cuts to staff, redundancies, cuts to budgets. They refuse to rule out vacancy control. We know the vacancy control board is already in place, stopping people from recruiting into positions that are already there. They refuse to scrap those plans.

How can the minister, with good conscience, say he is on a recruitment blitz when we know people are leaving in droves? Be honest with the numbers. Be honest about how many people are leaving the health system while they desperately try to recruit more people from interstate to work in a broken system, where morale is at the lowest it has ever been.

You can see that from the campaign the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is running right now. It is called Safe Hospitals Save Lives, Make Hospitals Safe. They are making it clear that hospitals are not safe under the leadership of this minister and Premier. Patient outcomes, health care, and lives are at risk because of this government's mismanagement of the health system. We are hearing it directly from workers through that campaign. They are saying workloads are not sustainable; and a growing prevalence of overwhelmed staff, stress, fatigue, missed breaks, and inability to decompress when off duty.

The system is facing a critical shortage of trained senior staff to mentor and support new junior members. They are calling on the government to invest in health care to ensure that enough experienced hands are on site to guide the next generation. They are also saying very clearly that short-staffing and bed block are jeopardising patient care and putting immense pressure on our dedicated nurses, midwives and care workers. They are the words of ANMF members: people working directly in the system. They are the words of people who are taking extraordinary industrial action. We stand beside them in that industrial action. They are having to take that step because the government will not listen to them about the effect these budget cuts are having.

We heard the minister and the Premier talk about the care and compassion shown by health workers. We heard them today talking about recruiting from interstate. However, they refuse to rule out cuts to the budget that will reduce services and staff. It is not good enough and it needs to be ruled out today.

[11.31 a.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, 'Get a grip.' Those are the words the minister for Health used last week when nurses raised concerns about staff at the Royal Hobart Hospital being asked to cover shifts in the emergency department at Launceston General Hospital. 'Get a grip.'

Perhaps this is not a surprising comment coming from a minister who, earlier this year, when asked about the 136 Tasmanians who died after being ramped for an extended period, suggested that because they were old, their deaths were somehow more acceptable and expected, rather than a tragic loss of life of people who deserved our best possible response to their health emergency:

'Get a grip.' What a demeaning, belittling and dismissive comment from the minister for Health. This statement is gaslighting. It is a way of saying, 'nothing to see here, there is no problem, you are overreacting', similar to suggesting that asking questions is negativity and talking the health system down. It is a way of denying the reality that is staring us in the face.

There are so many examples of things going wrong in Health at the moment. LGH cannot staff its emergency department and nurses are being requested to shift around the state in response. A new right-to-information (RTI) published by the Department of Health shows some appalling information. Wait times for patients: outpatient appointments in excess of 10 years; wait time for urgent outpatient appointments, which are supposed to be within 30 days, in excess of five-and-a-half years; and unbelievable ambulance wait times topping 23 hours. It is appalling but not really a surprise, given that the wait time for the 90th percentile of emergency calls for an ambulance in Hobart has gone from 21 minutes to 31 minutes in the past five years; and the average statewide emergency response time has nearly doubled under the Liberals. It has gone from 8.8 minutes in 2013-14 to 15.1 minutes in 2022-23.

Associate nurse unit managers in emergency departments at Royal Hobart Hospital and other Tasmanian hospitals have recently been trained in patient pat-downs and searches for weapons. The ANMF has expressed deep concern about these requirements being placed on nurses. Nursing is all about health care, not security. Searching patients for weapons falls outside the nursing and midwifery board's scope of nursing practice and capabilities, and is not part of an associate nurse unit manager's listed duties or responsibilities. Weapons searches also place associate nurse unit managers at significant risk and could escalate already dangerous situations in emergency departments. If nurses are not feeling safe at work, how is training them to search and pat down patients a response that helps them feel safer? This takes them away from patient care and potentially makes them less safe.

Instead of asking nurses to search for weapons, the minister for Health should be funding better security in our emergency departments. Perhaps the Health minister should take his own advice and 'get a grip' on the reality of what is happening on the ground in the Health department instead of pretending everything is okay. The health service is not okay and it needs serious investment. The Health minister must get a grip, cancel the budget cuts and provide the funding the Tasmanian Health Service needs. All Tasmanians deserve health care that meets their needs and helps them live their best lives.

[11.35 a.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to correct the misleading and deceptive conduct demonstrated by both Labor and the Greens with respect to our plans to improve health services in Tasmania.

I will first address the remarks of my shadow, Ms Haddad, who said that health cuts started in 2014. Health cuts occurred under a Labor-Greens government. We all know that. It is on the public record. They sacked a nurse a day for nine months. They closed a ward. Health services were cut under the Labor-Greens government. That is the only government that has

been doing it, apart from what is happening in Victoria at the moment. It is disgraceful of Labor and the unions to continue to attack our hardworking, awesome healthcare workers as a result of their completely false claims about job cuts and health services. We have a shadow minister who has come into this place today, and a member for Bass, who has disclosed on the public record that they know nothing about the proposed mental health precinct in Launceston, adjacent to the LGH. The Premier announced it on 12 February. It is on the public record. I will read it to you. On 12 February, the Premier said:

The original site identified for the hospital, 52 Franklin Street, will now become the home for the new mental health precinct we will build as part of the LGH master plan.

Further down, it says:

The new LGH mental health precinct remains on track, with the project set to deliver a contemporary fit-for-purpose facility with a comprehensive range of mental health services for inpatients and outpatients.

The shadow minister asked two questions today: where will the mental health precinct be in Launceston? Hello, is anyone listening, is anyone out there? Are you interested in health care in the north of Tasmania?

You then have the member for Bass, Ms Finlay, asking, 'Oh, where's it going to be?'. It is going to be adjacent to the LGH at Franklin Street, as was announced on 12 February. We are working towards that. We have \$80 million in the Budget.

I am trying to respond to the false and misleading claims that have been made by the Labor shadow, the Labor-Greens, and the Labor-union shenanigans that have been going on. This is an attack on our healthcare workers and I will not put up with it.

**Mr Winter** - They represent healthcare workers better than you do.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, the members of the opposition.

**Mr BARNETT** - It is a direct attack on our mental healthcare services and our healthcare workers. I will not put up with these misleading, deceptive, outrageous claims. They are wrong. We have an \$80 million commitment. It is in the Budget and I am really excited about it. I am excited about it in terms of the mental health services, and moving the mental health services in the north side of the Launceston General Hospital across the road in Franklin Street into the mental health precinct. Watch this space. There will be more to be said.

Let us just outline. In addition, we are on a recruitment blitz. I will table the full-page advertisement in today's *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers. The Premier has made it clear. It is very exciting. In the last three months we have recruited more than 500. We have 150 nurses to add to that more than 500 in three months. I was at the Royal Hobart Hospital, in the electorate of Clark where Ms Haddad resides and is the member for. We have successfully recruited 44 new doctors and 25 new nurses. I announced that last week. Hello, are you listening? This is happening as we speak. Talk to Dr Paul Scott. What did he say? He was very positive about the recruitment process and our plans for the Royal Hobart Hospital and the ED. That is in the ED alone. That is just in the emergency department.

You have heard about our plans. We are getting on with the job. We will continue to deliver. I reject the accusations of the Greens health spokesperson. We are one health system and we work together - Team Tasmania. It is entirely reasonable that, when required from time to time, nurses may work in another location. Please be fair and reasonable.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The member's time has expired.

[11.40 a.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak on this government's budget management, or lack thereof.

It is certainly an uncertain period. The last financial year we had a record deficit. I have been checking the Treasury webpage religiously for that update. They used to have the date there for when they published those sorts of reports, and it has been removed. I am not sure if that is to avoid scrutiny. It does not matter, because what I will do is make it my homepage and make sure I am checking it every single morning so that they cannot get away with it. We will be on the ball.

Given some of the commentary around the winter break, I would have thought the Jacqui Lambie Network MPs would have been chomping at the bit to speak about budget cuts. We do not see them very often, but when we do see them in the media, there are often more questions than answers. This is certainly an uncertain period for the government to navigate. They are cutting the budget and the crossbench is not happy about it.

Matthew Denham, a journalist who has a great knack of extracting information out of MPs at times, had an article in *The Australian*. The title was 'Tasmanian crossbench budget threat: Leave frontline services alone or else'. It went on to say:

Tasmania's minority government may struggle to pass its austere budget, with the balance-of-power MPs warning they won't accept frontline service cuts and flagging parliamentary manoeuvres to force additional funding. With state debt rivalling Victoria's on some measures and ballooning deficits amid an economic decline, Tasmania's September 12 budget is tipped to be tough, with health not immune from the cuts.

Australia's last Liberal government relies on offers of confidence and supply from five crossbenchers - three Jacqui Lambie Network MPs and two independents - needing the votes of four to survive and pass bills. Two Jacqui Lambie Network MPs told *The Australian* their pledges of supply did not necessarily extend to all budget measures, while joining Independent Kristie Johnston in warning the government not to cut frontline services.

Ms Johnston said that the parliament could vote to demand the minority government, formed after a hung parliament was elected on March 23, introduce a supplementary appropriation bill to cover spending shortfalls left by the budget.

Funny confidence agreement, where you are demanding extra money bills. Confidence and supply, I should say.

'We could send a really clear signal to the government that their budget may not be satisfactory or that it may need finding additional funds. That is where the crossbench can hopefully work together. The government ought to take that very seriously. It ignores the will of the parliament. It does so of its own peril. It can get difficult for the government if they ignore those calls because it shows a lack of confidence.'

Ms Johnston went on to make some other remarks.

The Jacqui Lambie Network Bass MP, Rebekah Pentland, said she supported belt-tightening - so she will probably have some friends there in the Liberal Party - and more efficiency in the bureaucracy. However, the guarantee of supply did not extend to every budget item: 'No, absolutely not. We will scrutinise the budget'. She hoped the government would work with the JLN MPs to ensure any disagreements over budget measures could be addressed before a vote in parliament. We are going to have some interesting times. We are having a debate right now about budget cuts. They are obviously very concerned in the media, but they are nowhere to be seen in the Chamber to raise their concerns in this place.

The Jacqui Lambie Network Lyons MP, Andrew Jenner, said that he was unsure the extent to which he could oppose individual budget items while honouring his offer of supply. He seems to understand a supply and confidence agreement, however, he warned the government not to cut frontline services. There is a bit of a contradiction there. Is he going to support the budget? That is the big question.

How far are the cuts going to go in the upcoming budget? We know the Liberal Party went to the last election with \$1.7 billion worth of new spending and no way to pay for it and no plan to pay for it. It is going to be interesting to see what the Jacqui Lambie Network MPs do. They were conscious of their responsibility to provide stability while holding the government to account. Mr Jenner said, 'It is a real balancing act.'

The Jacqui Lambie Network Braddon MP, Miriam Beswick, said she would back greater efficiencies and fully honour her commitment to supply, but also be a little storm cloud for ministers failing to meet expectations. Where is the storm cloud in the Chamber right now? It seems like clear skies.

### **Time expired.**

[11.45 a.m.]

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, let us cut through all the negativity and talking points and talk about the reality. The reality is we are spending more on health than at any time in Tasmania's history. There are more healthcare workers than ever before, and we are committed to delivering more again. We have only just passed our first 100 days in government and in health we have delivered already as part of our 2030 Strong Plan.

We commenced, as the minister said, Tasmania's largest-ever recruitment blitz for hundreds more frontline health workers. We have launched new incentive packages to further bolster our health system, with more than 500 new health workers employed across Tasmania since 27 August. This includes doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals to help deliver new and expanded health services for Tasmanians, including at the new expanded Emergency Department at the Royal Hobart Hospital. The recruitment drive has so far

delivered more than 500 additional staff into our health system, including more than 150 new nurses and 66 doctors.

**Members** interjecting.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Members of the opposition, the member who is now on his feet was silent during your contributions. I ask the same courtesy, please.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - We have recruited for 10 state-employed GPs to make up our GP Now Rapid Response team, which was advertised on Saturday 13 July. This team will be an extension of the successful Care at Home program based in Cambridge, Launceston and Latrobe.

We have launched an initiative to attract up to 40 new GPs to rural and regional Tasmania for five years by picking up their HECS tabs up to \$100,000. The allowances, in addition to the Commonwealth Help Scheme, will result in the 100 per cent elimination of HECS debt for GPs in remote and rural areas. The incentive package will also include the payment of HECS debt up to \$100,000 for GPs who have finished their training and settle in outer urban areas.

Additionally, we have launched a new multi-year grant program delivering up to \$250,000 per year to support and strengthen the viability of GP practices in outer urban, regional and rural Tasmania. The new 60-minute transfer-of-care protocol began on 22 April and our government is transparently releasing daily updates on the Department of Health website. We have seen a significant improvement in the number of hours ramped since the protocol was put into place.

Just this year, Tasmanian ambulances have spent 9276 fewer hours ramped than in 2022-23, with decreases at all four major public hospitals, ensuring greater availability for emergency responses.

We have delivered a package of incentives to encourage more nurses to move to Tasmania or back to Tasmania and encourage new graduate nurses to remain in their home state. Applications are open for this \$10 million package, which will provide for a \$15,000 incentive staged over three years for nurses and midwives to move to Tasmania and remain employed full-time with the Tasmanian Health Service for three years or more. This is on top of additional relocation allowances. It is also on top of the \$10,000 scholarship for new Tasmanian graduate nurses who started at the Tasmanian Health Service and remain employed full time for a period of over three years.

Additionally, we are delivering a funding deed to the Royal Flying Doctor Service to provide \$6 million towards their new base. The expansion of this service and the Royal Flying Doctor Dental Service to the east coast has been brought forward with a provision of new oral health services for concession card holders and children from St Helens and Nubeena. We have extended prescriptions of the oral contraceptive pill, which was made available from 1 July, and an expansion of our partnership with community pharmacies. The change will free up GP appointments to save women much-needed time and money.

We have delivered legislation to protect frontline workers from serious assault or bodily harm, as introduced on 11 June. Planning has begun for the construction of new ambulance stations in Snug, Cygnet, Legana and King Island and project managers have been engaged.

Planning and design work for the new mother and baby beds is under way and service planning discussions have commenced between the Department of Health and the Tresillian Family Care Services. The new mother and baby beds will be open at the completion of construction at the Launceston Health Hub.

The Department of Health has also commenced the necessary changes to bring Tasmania into line with other states by extending the time period which allows GPs or special interest practitioners to provide ADHD medication from two years to three years, something I have a special interest in.

I had the pleasure of joining the Health minister at the Royal Hobart Hospital on a number of occasions for the announcements of both the \$22 million pharmacy redevelopment and the recruitment of an additional 44 doctors and 25 nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department. We had the opportunity to meet the staff and see their passion for what they do. They are a credit to Tasmania and are always seeking to care for others in time of need. Despite the constant negativity we are hearing in this place, I heard first-hand from these new doctors and nurses who had chosen to move to Tasmania to be part of our healthcare service.

[11.50 a.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this matter of public importance about this government's proposed budget cuts, which they are not being upfront with the Tasmanian community about. The other night I was standing in my kitchen watching the news, as I often do, when Mr Barnett came on the news with his statement around our nurses needing to 'get a grip'. I was absolutely shocked. The Premier comes in here this morning -

**Mr BARNETT** - Point of order, honourable Speaker. It is a misquote taken out of context.

**The SPEAKER** - If you claim to be personally misrepresented you may do so but it is not a point of order.

**Ms DOW** - I do not think it is a misquote. The issue was about nurses travelling from the Royal to work at the Launceston General Hospital. You said that nurses need to 'get a grip' and it was business as usual. It is an absolute disgrace.

The truth is this government has underinvested in health. They have not done the workforce planning that has been required across the health system. That is why they are looking to Victoria to recruit nurses. They have not trained enough nurses across the state. They have not considered the ageing profile of our health workforce. You do not need to go very far across my electorate -

**Mr Barnett** - You do not support the recruitment campaign?

**The SPEAKER** - Minister, would you like to be the second person warned? It is entirely up to you.

**Ms DOW** - You do not have to go very far across my electorate to understand the severe shortages of nurses. We have nurses contacting us every day via social media and other mechanisms telling us about their plight, how they are completely broken and about to give up



and that they need more support from this government, not rhetoric from this minister about an ambulance ramping ban which, by the way, has not been successful. It was merely a three-word political slogan at the last state election.

When we talk about slogans and unfunded commitments that this government has made time and time again, whether back in 2018 or 2021, there are master plans across every major health facility across this state and they are all underfunded. They are all off in the never-never. The Premier is looking at the ground because he knows that is the truth. It was the 2021 election that you promised to fund the Launceston General Hospital and it is nowhere near being funded. You promised to ask the federal government for assistance. We still do not have an update on that. Tasmanians are tired of this minister, this government and their plethora of unfunded promises when it comes to the health system. Now, at a time when our health system cannot face another cut or any type of pressure at all, they are proposing to cut more.

The worst thing about this pattern of behaviour of this government is that they will not tell Tasmanians what they are actually doing. 'Wait until 12 September', the Premier says. We should not have to wait that long. Be upfront about what your intentions are. It is not enough to deflect to say that you are recruiting nurses from interstate when you are actually proposing to cut positions across the state. It is merely a deflection - an advertising campaign.

Nurses have been crying out for more staff for years across this state. You have patients who have waited 11 years to see a specialist. That is the hidden surgery waitlist. They are the people who cannot get to see a specialist about their elective surgery to begin to be on the elective surgery waitlist. It is an absolute farce. You have thousands of Tasmanians waiting to see a specialist and all the while they are getting sicker. They are presenting to our emergency department. They are presenting to general practice when they can get an appointment.

All these put increasing pressure on Tasmania's health system because this government has not done its job properly. They continue to mismanage the budget, they continue to mismanage the health system and, quite frankly, they continue to be disrespectful to our health professionals, as evidenced by Mr Barnett on the news the other night.

Really, minister, you had to ask Mr Ferguson about the mental health precinct at the Launceston General Hospital. I saw you before you provided your answer. Even then, you could not provide the answer. You had to come back and update the House on the matter of public importance. It is time you got a grip. It is time your government got a grip. It is time that you better support our healthcare workers and provide better health services for Tasmanians.

[11.55 a.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for bringing on this matter of public importance on budget cuts.

I will start, as have other members, with the notion of getting a grip. 'Get a grip', as the minister said. If nurses are having to get a grip now, I wonder what they are going to have to do after September to cope with things.

I put on the record today that I am incredibly disturbed at what looks like an increasing level of anti-worker, and indeed, anti-union, rhetoric that is coming from the minister. In Question Time today, we heard repeated criticisms of the aspirations and the advocacy of the unions in the health space: nurses having to come to terms and get a grip with the situation.

This is not acceptable language for the minister to be raising in this context. We are in incredibly tight times. The Budget will be tight and there are people across the public sector and across the community who are genuinely fearful for what this coming Budget is going to reveal.

We have seen elements of it already: the vacancy controls, the pat downs, and the incredible waitlists in the health sector. The community reaction to this has been quite significant. The community is outraged and concerned, and well might they be. We are an ageing population, we are an unhealthy population, and we need to have improvements in our health space. Plans to improve, to quote the minister, include a 'recruit recruitment blitz', and quoting from advertisements in *The Age*. These are not evidence of an increase in budget, minister. This is not evidence that the budget will not be cut. You cannot employ more people on one hand and reduce the budget on the other.

It is clear that in the health space people are advocating for more money so they can do more services for the Tasmanian people. While the conversation has been dominated by Health, it is clear that it is across the scope of the services the government delivers. The community expects that we are going to get cuts, complications, and compromises made.

When it comes to housing, Homes Tasmania is predominantly debt-funded these days. When we have applications for over 4700 people on the waitlist and wait times of 90 weeks, it is completely unacceptable, as it is unacceptable for the government to be fudging figures when it comes to homes they are building. To be counting vacant land and crisis housing in those figures is an absolute abrogation of responsibility.

We are going to see similar pressures come in the health system and in out-of-home care in the north-west. We have a number of important childcare positions that are unfilled. The Integrity Commission has taken the unprecedented step of putting on the public record their inability to deliver on the requirements and recommendations outlined in the Weiss review. Additionally, the community services sector, which delivers services for needy people, is crying out for an increase in funding and indexation for project funding.

What has been utterly absent in today's debate on both sides of the Chamber is the elephant in the room, which is the notion of spending over a billion dollars on a stadium that Tasmanians neither need nor want at Macquarie Point. No-one believes this stadium can be delivered for \$715 million, apart from perhaps the people on my left. I do not think the Premier believes this either because at the start of the election campaign his commitment to cap expenditure at \$375 million is effectively an admission that it will blow out significantly. No-one who I have talked to understands who in the private sector will fund a billion-dollar stadium that is going to lose \$320 million over 20 years. It simply does not stack up. To put this into context, recent contracts for the architects have been issued for \$37.9 million - \$37.9 million to do the drawing for this billion-dollar stadium; add to this the paid-out contracts for the development that will not go ahead and the dollars allocated for the previous masterplan.

Meanwhile, other infrastructure, such as Wharf 6 for the *Nuyina* at Macquarie Point, remains completely unfunded. It looks like TasNetworks is expected to debt-fund that asset.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## CONDOLENCE MOTION

### Honourable Frances Mary Bladel, former Member for Franklin

[12.01 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) (by leave) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That this House expresses its deep sadness at the death on 5 December 2023 of the Honourable Fran Mary Bladel, a former Minister of the Crown from 1989 to 1992 and 2000 to 2002, and a Member for the Division of Franklin from 1986 to 2002, and places on record its appreciation of her service to this State and, further, respectfully tenders to her family its sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

Honourable Speaker, first, may I offer my sincere condolences to Richard and Jami, and Ms Bladel's family, and acknowledge their presence in the Chamber with us today.

While my path and Fran's did not ever cross in this place - with Fran serving from 1986 to 2002 and my arrival in parliament the same year - I know that many long-serving members and many more Tasmanians fondly remember Fran as a trailblazer, a fighter for the disadvantaged, a champion for women, a tireless and committed member of the community, and a friend and mentor to many.

I spoke to one of our long-serving, very capable staff members, Sandy Wittison, today about Ms Bladel. Sandy described Fran as a lovely, beautiful, and kind person. She was a traditional member of Parliament who would stop you in the corridor, say 'good day' and 'hello', and ask how you were doing, irrespective of political allegiances.

Indeed, an article in *The Australian Women's Weekly* from 1978 confirms all as I have mentioned. It was headed 'Why Aren't There More Women in Parliament?' and featured Fran, who had yet to be elected but clearly had already made a name for herself on the national stage.

As we speak of Fran's contribution to this parliament and elsewhere many years before the parliament, we cannot forget the contribution that Fran made to our students, our community and our schoolchildren over many years.

I have a range of examples of Fran's contribution to Rose Bay High School, where she began teaching in 1970, through to her contribution as the coordinator of the Tagari Project school, which is a small alternative high school, from 1973 to 1977. She taught at the women's prison in a voluntary capacity in 1978, and she was, as termed then, Senior Mistress for English Studies at Bridgewater High School from 1978 to 1986. I hear 'Hear, hear' behind me from the member for Franklin, Mr Abetz, whose late wife, Michelle, was taught by Fran. She reached many in the community, as we will all speak of today.

At the time I speak of, in terms of the national stage, Fran was in her forties and spoke about being widowed with her son when her son was three, and about cleaning at night so she could be with her son during the day, and work as a barmaid, to use the terminology of back then.

In 1965, Fran won a mature-age entrance to university, undertook a degree and became a teacher. It was that hardship of being a single mother that obviously sparked her passion to fight for women and kickstarted her political career. Fran was later, and rightly so, inducted to the Tasmanian Honour Roll for her services to not only government but gender equality and social justice, for which I know many will remember Fran.

Back to the *Women's Weekly* article. Fran was asked at the time about how women can get a seat in parliament or a seat in power. While I will not reflect on her comments about the unions, she was an early champion of quotas as a means of getting more women into parliament, but only, as she said, for a time-limited period. Fran said:

We are not asking for some gent sitting on a safe seat to vacate it. Neither are we saying any twit should get in because she is a female.

I love that forthrightness, old Fran. She insisted that until times changed and we had more women in public office, those sorts of measures were needed, saying:

Women seem to believe that they will never share in decision-making ...

and

I think women are going to have to be prepared to do something about it themselves ...

She did. Fran was elected to the House of Assembly as the member for Franklin in 1986 and remained elected until 2002. Fran became one of the earliest female ministers in the Tasmanian Parliament and she held a number of Cabinet positions including Minister assisting the Premier on the Status of Women.

Fran fought for and was involved in inquiries into the sex industry, the legal recognition of significant personal relationships and adoption. Fran championed Tasmania's anti-discrimination laws, which are today recognised as gold standard. Even while working as an MP, she simultaneously volunteered at the women's prison.

Fran was involved in a huge number of community organisations including The Taste of the Huon, the Bridgewater PCYC and Parents Without Partners. Fran became a board member of the Female Factory Historic Site, a foundation member of EMILY's List, a chair of the Huon Valley Health Services Advisory Council, a tutor at the University of the Third Age, and a patron for the Dogs' Homes of Tasmania.

In 2009, Fran was asked to comment on life after politics and spoke of her many interests in the local community, including with unemployed people at Bridgewater. She also spoke then of her two proudest achievements: her son and his family - her grandsons - being the first, and the second, changing the laws that prevented widows of government employees from retaining their husband's superannuation if they remarried or entered a de facto relationship. How proud you must be.

I understand Fran continued her work with the Labor Party long after retirement and was crucial in convincing many others to follow her footsteps, including former Premier Lara Giddings.

I had the pleasure of speaking to Lara today on this very matter. I have put on record many times my admiration and respect for former premier Giddings. Lara said to me today that Fran was a great supporter of young women in the parliament and their ambition. People loved her; she was a real fighter for the underdog. I quote former premier Giddings in a *Mercury* article from December last year:

Fran [was] a woman who has impacted on so many people's lives as a mentor, advocate, friend and comrade, no more so than for me as she helped me navigate a political career, including supporting my campaign to win a seat in Franklin on her retirement in 2002. She was one in a million, a legend and loved by many of us.

Speaking in her inaugural address, Fran also reflected on the number of women in parliament, calling it absurd to label her first contribution in the House a 'maiden speech'. We have all tried to change our language since that time, probably in using the terminology 'first speech' now.

Fran also said as a woman in parliament in 1986 she was 'somewhat of a rare species', but such was her style that she went on to pay tribute to other women: 'the invisible female workers', she called them. The wives, secretaries, caterers, administrative workers, and many more.

As I said earlier, Fran was always a champion of those who were disadvantaged by way of background and location. She spoke at length in her inaugural speech about the families of Bridgewater living below the poverty line, and what she described as the greatest social problem in Australia: the lack of housing. Here we are today with those challenges.

Fran never ceased in her time in this place to raise issues on behalf of vulnerable Tasmanians. My research on Fran's contribution before, during and after parliament clearly reflects that - an absolute fighter and champion for the underdog.

I will conclude my remarks there. I again offer my sincere condolences to Fran's family. You must be so very proud of what Fran achieved throughout her life. It is lovely that you can be with us here today. What a wonderful role model, and what a legacy she has left us all - not only her family and friends but this parliament, the Franklin electorate and the State of Tasmania, including and especially women in this state. We thank Fran for her service.

Vale, Honourable Fran Bladel.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[12.12 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I start by thanking the Premier for his generous contribution about somebody who, on our side of Parliament, was deeply respected and deeply loved by everybody in our party. I offer my sincere condolences on behalf of the Labor Party on the passing of the much-loved Fran Bladel on 5 December.

To the family, on behalf of us all, we were deeply saddened by the loss of Fran. We join in offering our appreciation of all her contributions to the Australian Labor Party, to the

Tasmanian Parliament, and to Fran's community and electorate, which she represented so well and so strongly for such a long time.

While it is deeply sad when we lose a member from our Labor team, this loss cuts particularly deeply for many members of the Labor Party. I know many, and particularly Labor women, benefited from Fran's trailblazing career - her inspiration, her mentorship and her lifelong dedication to helping others. Fran was a mother, feminist, teacher, politician, tireless community advocate, fighter for the disadvantaged, mentor, grandmother, supporter of the arts, cricket fan and true believer in the Labor Party. She was strong, highly intelligent, quick, kind and deeply held the values of social justice.

Fran was born on 3 October 1933 in Hobart and raised in Moonah. Her first job was working as a photographic assistant to a Russian portrait photographer at the age of 15. Fran met her husband, Erwin, when he moved to Tasmania from Germany after World War II. They married in 1954 and had their son, Richard, several years later. Again, I acknowledge Richard and his family here today. Sadly, Erwin passed away when Richard was just three, leaving Fran as a young widow and a single mother, working as a cleaner and a barmaid to help support the family.

The hardship she faced as the sole breadwinner, having to rely on family members and neighbours for childcare, gave her an enormous insight into the lives of other women in low-paid jobs. There is no doubt that those early experiences deeply influenced her and, later, her political career, and, therefore, this parliament.

Fran studied as a mature-age student at the University of Tasmania where she graduated in 1969 with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours and a teacher training certificate, which then began her career as a teacher. One of the highlights of that career was her shared leadership of the Tagari Project from 1973 to 1977. This was an innovative alternative secondary school project which took a more intimate, family-orientated approach to education.

After the Tagari Project, Fran was the Senior Mistress for English students at Bridgewater High between 1977 and 1986, an experience that made her a lifelong advocate for that local community, which we all saw and understood in this place.

She volunteered as a teacher at the women's prison in 1978. Because there were so few resources available and the library was located in the men's prison, Fran provided a number of teaching resources herself. This is the type of anecdote that sums up what a kind person Fran was: generous, kind, and always putting others first.

It was those qualities that drew Fran to her political career when she joined the Australian Labor Party in 1972. In 1986 she was elected to this place, the House of Assembly, as the Labor member for Franklin, a position I hold very dearly, following in the footsteps of great Labor people like Fran.

When she gave her inaugural speech in this place, it was called her maiden speech. Like the Premier, I particularly noted this from her inaugural speech. It was, in fact, in her very first sentence where she pointed out the absurdity of calling it a maiden speech, saying:

... [it] is a little absurd to call it a 'maiden' speech, particularly for someone who resigned her maidenhood a long time ago.

Fran joined the only other women in parliament at the time, Judy Jackson and Gill James, just three Labor women in a 35-seat parliament, all of them proud Labor women. Between 1989 and 1992, Fran served as the shadow minister for Prices, Lands, National Parks and Wildlife, Women's Affairs, and Consumer Affairs.

Fran reflected the role of women in politics in her inaugural speech to parliament, pointing out the need for more women to have an equal share in the processes of government. That passion for equality and equal opportunity was not just the highlight of her speech; it was one of the hallmarks of her entire political career. She worked with determination and enthusiasm to improve opportunities for women in the workforce. It was not just about women in paid jobs though. Fran's speech also recognised the enormous and rarely acknowledged contribution women working as homemakers made to the economic life of the nation and our state, and she advocated for decent levels of support for them too.

In her previous work as a teacher, she had a real love of children. She describes them in that speech as the great treasure of any nation. Fran recognised the damaging impact of poverty on children and the limitations it placed on their choices and, ultimately, their lives. A sense of social justice and equal opportunity played a huge role in her political career and life beyond politics. Her own experiences as a single mum and the limited housing choices available to her gave her that unique ability to empathise with women in different and similar situations. Her words back then are just as relevant today and should continue to inform our efforts to help more vulnerable members of society. She said:

I cannot help bitter feelings when I get requests for help with housing from supporting mothers, for instance, who have to separate from their children because of a lack of housing, or from people sleeping in cars and overcrowded houses.

...

This parliament must address this problem which is, to quote a colleague in another place, the greatest social problem in this country.

As the Premier said, problems we still deal with today.

In short, Fran always understood the challenges faced by people struggling economically because she lived it herself and that experience never left her. She always fought for women, she always fought for people who were disadvantaged because that was at the core of who she was.

Fran was ahead of her time in appreciation for the environment, our wildlife and, in particular, Tasmania's unique qualities, whilst also fighting for a better future for workers in traditional industries like forestry. That is another quality of Fran that was so impressive: her recognition of the need for compromise and balance and for planning a sensible and sustainable, prosperous future for Tasmania where everyone is taken care of. In keeping with her fight for equality, Fran chaired the Parliamentary Labor Party's inquiry into women's affairs in 1987.

She became a minister in the newly elected Labor government of Michael Field in 1989, serving as the Minister assisting the Premier for the Status of Women, Administrative Services and later Consumer Affairs.

Michael Field tells us the story about Fran's impact and how it was immediately felt. He recalled the arrival of Fran and Judy Jackson in 1986 as instantly changing what had been a very blokey Labor parliament and Labor Party, whilst making a significant contribution to the broader party and movement. Michael said Fran's quick wit and strong opinions, combined with her generosity, commitment and loyalty, contributed to changes she brought, also prompting some of the trade unionists at the time to be, as he put it, 'a little more careful' about what they said in her company. Michael said it was those characteristics, along with the incredible work ethic, that made Fran such a great addition to his Labor team and highly regarded in her community.

Fran also served in the Bacon government as secretary to Cabinet, acting as Minister for State assisting the Premier and acting Minister for Education. She remained one of the most respected and well-liked members of the Labor team and of this parliament throughout. I believe that was reflected in the Premier's contribution.

As Tasmania's first woman premier, Lara Gidding, said, 'Fran was crucial to encouraging more women to enter state parliament'. Lara said:

Fran was part of a generation where we had Christine Milne, Sue Napier and other women coming through before we had, in 1996, the breakthrough year for younger women coming into parliament.

Fran was inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll for Women in 2006 for service to government, education and the community.

Honourable Speaker, it is rare in politics to have someone who was so genuinely respected and loved by both sides of politics, and it was a clear measure of who she was as a person. Fran Bladel was awarded life membership of our Australian Labor Party in 2003. Fran was a founding member of EMILY's List, an organisation dedicated to supporting progressive women into parliament. That was fitting for who she was. She was a well-known leader for affirmative action, campaigning for increasing women's representation into parliament. She fought at Labor Party conferences for adoption of affirmative action into the Labor Party rules - rules we maintain today.

Fran Bladel was an active member of the Labor Party right up until her passing. She made regular donations to the party and candidates at election time. Nothing made her happier than seeing young people active in the party. She was secretary for her beloved Bellerive-Howrah branch of the Labor Party for 10 years and also a branch official for more than 20 years. She was an incredible support to former premier, Lara Giddings, and that was the time when I first met Fran.

Fran was somebody who was not just an inspiration to Labor women but also to Labor men. She was somebody who was deeply respected in her electorate, the electorate that I grew up in. She was someone who was deeply respected within the Labor Party. She had an aura and a presence about her which made people stop and notice that she was there. Her position for young Labor members meant that we knew we had somebody who would fight for young



people, for young women, and for a Labor Party that continued to hold dear those issues of social justice which were so powerfully held by her.

Outside of politics, Fran continued her community activism. She was the chairperson of the board of management of Bridgewater Workskills, secretary of the Taste of the Huon festival, patron of the Eastern Shore Table Tennis League, and vice patron of the Risdon Vale Neighbourhood Centre. Some members of this place choose to exit community life. Some, like Fran, choose to stay involved, and it is a great credit to her that she did that. Fran was also a member of the Tasmanian Council of Social Service, the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, the Australian Education Union and the Tasmanian Writers Union.

I am grateful to have known her and know that sentiment is shared by everyone who had the pleasure of knowing and working with her.

I speak on behalf of the Labor Party. I send our sincere and deepest condolences to Fran's son, Richard, her grandchildren, and their entire family. Thank you for being here. Thank you for giving us a piece of Fran for such a long time. Rest in peace, Fran.

[12.23 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, on behalf of the Greens I give my warmest condolences to Fran's family, especially those who are in the Chamber today, Richard and Jami, and her grandsons, Max and Hugh, and to everyone else who loved her and was loved by her.

Fran was a genuine pioneer of women in politics in Tasmania. She entered politics in an era in the 1980s when there were precious few other women in politics in Tasmania. She was elected in 1996 with Judy Jackson and was followed shortly after by women such as Christine Milne, Di Hollister and Sue Napier. What a time that was. It was an era in parliament that is different from today. There was no web streaming and no sort of public experience of what was happening in the House in the way that we know it now.

We know from the stories of these early women MPs, and also from the report we have had, that parliament in the Chamber and corridors and committee rooms was often a chauvinistic and sometimes misogynistic and male-dominated culture. Throughout this, Fran was tough but she was also warm. She withstood the political storms inside the House and outside with a real grace and strength. Everyone I have spoken to about Fran who knew her, worked with her or was mentored by her, was lucky enough to feel the encouragement that she generously gave, especially to women, but to many people. They all said that she was a very gracious and strong person. She had a moral clarity and real understanding of what is right and what is wrong. She was not, as I understand it, an inflexible person, but she also would not compromise on the things she knew were right and the things she understood were wrong.

She had the experience of being a single mother in the 1960s and 1970s and that was a hard time for women. She raised Richard from when he was a young child after her husband Erwin died. It was obviously this experience in her life that energised her and gave her direction and commitment in her later work life to help disadvantaged people in the community and especially to help other women.

In her 16 years in parliament, she was not afraid to stand up for socially unpopular or novel issues. I note that she chaired inquiries into the sex industry in Tasmania in 1998 and

into the control of weapons bill in 1999, never an easy issue to raise. She also looked at the use of cannabis for medical purposes 24 years ago, and the legal recognition of significant personal relationships 24 years ago. These were big, difficult issues and she did not resile from grappling with them.

She was also a stalwart for promoting women, especially for supporting women and she had experiences that she used to reach out to other women. Some women in that space do not necessarily do that but she was a generous person. Cassy O'Connor mentioned to me what she was like mentoring her as a young journalist. For any young woman who was having a go at doing something positive, she would lend her support and encouragement.

There was also her work with the Female Factory. There was maybe a bond there for the single women and their infants and the harsh experiences they endured. I am sure she could relate to some of those issues for women then, which were still the same in the 1960s and 1970s, and for some women it is likely they are still the same today.

She was involved and an important critical person in the Labor Party's EMILY's List and she would have been so proud of the outcomes from that. I recognise that the Labor Party, particularly in Tasmania, has a high number of women and that is a fantastic legacy thanks to someone like Fran.

She was an advocate for childcare and gender equality. When she left parliament after 16 years she did not go and drink pina coladas on the beach, she did not put her feet up, but she continued to work on the issues in her so-called retirement. That is not something everyone chooses to do. I commend her for the contributions she made to Tasmania - and I note it was the big and the small. She did not pick the cherry on the cake. She was in there with the table tennis league and all manners of issues, small and large, in her community.

I commend her personhood and the values she brought to this Chamber and the work that she did. Fran, we salute your thoughtfulness and your bravery, your determination and your kindness. Those of us who are in the Chamber today hope to emulate those sorts of values in our life of public service. On behalf of the Greens, and especially to her family and friends, vale Fran Bladel.

[12.30 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for the Arts) - Family, it is lovely to see you, and it is always such an honour to speak on these occasions although it is very sad, obviously. The Bladel family has made a huge contribution to the arts and I can see where you get it from. With Fran, who lived such a remarkable life and a woman who clearly turned personal adversity into such a drive for societal change, you must be incredibly proud of her.

Growing up in Moonah during the Depression era as a Catholic primary school student, I understand she became aware of social problems and inequities which really left a mark on her and gave her a compass through which she lived her life. Facing those challenges as a widow and single mum, Fran channelled those experiences into her work, both in education and politics and her life outside of politics. It is well recognised that her efforts at the Tagari Project school, the women's prison and as a Senior Mistress for English Studies reflected that she had been given a deep understanding and took care of those who were more vulnerable in their struggles.

In her political career as an MP for Franklin and as a minister, Fran was a pragmatic force for change, focusing on tangible improvements in gender equality and social policy. Her approach in parliament highlighted the often unseen yet crucial contributions of women in various roles, and we have heard a little of that today. Her mentorship was grounded in realism and the practicalities of navigating a political career, which we know is not easy.

She said in her inaugural speech -

I also applaud the Tasmanian people who, by electing my two women colleagues and myself, have demonstrated their belief in the ability of women to take an equal share in the processes which decides how this State will be managed and how its future will be directed.

She certainly left some markers on how to do that in her time here.

I had a personal and very good and friendly relationship with Fran. The last time I saw her was at an opening at the Salamanca Arts Centre, a place we all know and love. As always, she was so inclusive, so happy and so warm with everybody who was there, regardless of politics or anything else. It just so happened it was one of the last events I was at that my stepfather, Peter Underwood, who was Governor at the time, was at and they were dear friends. It is anecdotes like that that show the genuine character and kindness and loveliness of the person. You see those exchanges, those friendships that go beyond anything to do with politics.

Her legacy is not just in the policies she shaped but in a clear-sighted approach to overcoming challenges and making a difference, to cutting a pathway and showing people how to do things by doing it. It is fair to say that that Fran's 90 years were lived to their fullest and her commitment to the community has left a lasting legacy on our local communities.

Fran also said in her inaugural speech:

There has been an improvement not only in the status of women and children in the workforce and the possibilities for women to accept the challenges given by higher education but also in the support services available to women who choose to work as homemakers and who contribute so greatly to the economic life of this nation, although sadly this contribution is never acknowledged and rarely mentioned.

Well, we are acknowledging it and mentioning it today.

I will finish with a few facts about her life and career. Born in 1933 in Hobart, Tasmania; growing up during the Depression era; becoming conscious of social dynamics and injustices; starting work early at 15 and experiencing that cultural diversity first-hand through interactions with post-war European immigrants who had also come here; raising her son and facing those challenges, both of single parenthood and financial challenges and hardship. Her ability to take up the opportunities of higher education, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours from the University of Tasmania in 1969 - the year I happened to be born - volunteering at the women's prison in 1978 and serving as a Senior Mistress for English Studies at Bridgewater High School and others; being elected to the parliament in 1986, representing Franklin, and serving in many ministerial roles. What a character that she could apply her talents across so many different areas!

She was noted for her inaugural speech in parliament focusing on the status of women, and retired from politics in 2002. She was a lifelong advocate for women, people, social justice, community welfare - all of the good stuff that we like. She mentored many and was an active member of her political party for a long time. She was honoured with the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women as an inductee for services to government, education and the community. She is remembered for her practical approach to leadership, commitment to social change and her influence on future generations, particularly of women in this House.

Given she was a mistress of English, I thought it would be a good idea to finish with a poem that I like, which I hope resonates somewhat. It is a poem called *Immortality (Do not stand at my grave and weep)* by Clare Harner. I hope that Fran is perhaps sharing a glass of red up there with my stepfather and listening to the poem. It goes:

Do not stand at my grave and weep;  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow;  
I am the diamond glints on the snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain;  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft star that shines at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry.  
I am not there; I did not die.

[12.37 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity for the parliament to share so many beautiful stories and memories honouring the life of a remarkable woman, Fran Mary Bladel. I add my respects and my own reflections and memories of Fran.

I also welcome to the Chamber Fran's family. Thank you very much for being here today. I am really pleased that you could be here to hear how much everyone loved Fran, especially in the Labor Party. You know that. I thank Fran's family for welcoming so many of her Labor family to her funeral service late last year. Fran's funeral service reflected so beautifully all the elements of Fran's personality. It was warm; it was loving; it was serious; it was fierce. It was also cheeky and hilarious, which reflects Fran's rich personality.

Fran was an active member in the Australian Labor Party for more than 50 years. By the time I joined the party when I was in high school, Fran was a senior and active shadow minister, serving as shadow minister for Community Services, Women and Social Justice.

I remember Fran in that time as a young Labor member. She was a fierce advocate for women and social justice, not just in the parliament but, as we have heard, also in the community and within the Labor Party. She served in many portfolios from opposition. When the Labor government was elected, she was appointed cabinet secretary and government spokesperson for women. She was active in these areas and many policy areas, as we have heard today, when they were not seen as popular or sometimes even palatable to campaign on, at a time when women's voices, especially in politics, were routinely shut down, ignored, diminished, ridiculed and trivialised.

This was the reality of being a feminist and being a female MP at that time. But nothing held Fran back. Nothing held Fran down. She was a loud and persuasive voice in our party, in factional meetings, in policy committee meetings, at her local branch, at state conferences and in the parliament.

It was because of Fran and other leaders like her that women started to become more involved, not just with the Labor Party but with politics more generally. While Fran accomplished so much in her career, and contributed in countless ways on a range of policy issues and in her commitment to myriad of community groups, it is specifically her contribution to the increase in women in parliament that I want to focus on in my contribution today.

In 1977, Fran established and led the work of an ALP committee to review how affirmative action strategies could be adopted within the Labor Party to increase women's participation.

In 1978, she co-authored a study which surveyed the electoral consequences of the limited number of female Labor MPs in Australian parliaments. This work was foundational in establishing the affirmative action targets that we adopted later in the Labor Party. The Tasmanian branch, the most progressive branch of the Labor Party, was the first branch to nationally adopt these targets in the 1980s and, over time, all the other states and territories in the Commonwealth have followed. For anyone not familiar with what affirmative action means, it was a change to our party rules that ensured that Labor made sure that women candidates were preselected into winnable seats. Under the new rules, a percentage of preselected candidates had to be women, with the intention of slowly increasing what had up until then been a terribly low representation of women.

By the early 1990s, Fran was involved in a national team of Labor women, including Judy Jackson, Joan Kirner, Carmen Lawrence and Julia Gillard, all founding members of EMILY's List, an organisation that supports progressive women to run for parliament. That is the badge that you can see many Labor women wearing today. The message of EMILY's List is that when women support women, women win. Fran absolutely embodied that message.

She joined that group, which also did the hard work of making the structural changes needed in the ALP to increase representation of women in our party and in Australian parliaments. In 1994, affirmative action targets were adopted nationally in our party. The first target was for 35 per cent women to be preselected into seats. That was later raised to 40 per cent and finally 50 per cent. If you want to know practically how these targets work, we can see the results of them all these years later. In 1994, when the affirmative action rules were adopted nationally by the Labor Party, the federal Labor caucus had just 14 per cent women and the federal Liberal caucus was about the same. Now, three decades later, the federal Liberal caucus has about 28 per cent women, so they have increased a little over time. By comparison, the federal Labor caucus is 53 per cent women. In the Tasmanian parliament, the Liberal caucus has around 25 per cent women and the Labor caucus is 62 per cent women.

This is part of Fran's enormous legacy. Without her work on this as early as the 1970s, these changes may never have occurred in our party or would have at least been a much longer time coming. I know that Fran believed, as I do too, that as women represent more than 50 per cent of the population, our parliaments should reflect that. The age-old argument about merit being the only basis upon which people are preselected, or run for office, or are elected at elections is out of date and out of touch. The implementation of affirmative action targets

makes that abundantly clear. If merit was the only criterion for preselection or election, parliaments would naturally be 50 per cent women, and they are not. The fact they are not is a demonstration of the barriers to women's participation in democracy that Fran recognised way back then.

It was Fran and other women leaders she worked with who were committed to addressing those barriers and breaking them down for good. Every Labor woman who has come since Fran has, in large part, to thank her for their success.

Fran served in this place as member for Franklin for 16 years before resigning to contest the upper House seat of Huon in 2002, which sadly she did not win. Leaving the parliament did not see her sail off into the sunset, in the community or in our party. Fran never stopped participating. She remained a strong voice in our policy committees in the left faction in her local branch right up until the end.

She continued to work tirelessly to support younger women coming up through the party and the movement long after she left parliament. She would visit my office and the offices of many of my colleagues to give us tangible advice as well as warm encouragement - the last few elections were with the aid of a walking stick or frame. I really want to emphasise that because not every MP does that. Regardless of what party they have represented, they do not all stay involved after they finish their parliamentary careers.

Personally, I feel very fortunate and honoured to be able to represent my community in this place. I know I can only do that because of the support of my party, the Labor Party. I do feel strongly about it when people represent their community and party and they are given so much when they do not remain engaged, giving back after their parliamentary career comes to an end. That was one of the things I loved most about Fran. She kept turning up, she kept contributing, she never held back, and she kept making a difference right up until the end.

She embodied the solidarity of our party and our movement. She showed that even when people might not have deserved it. She did that because of her deeply held values, her commitment to social justice, to feminism and democracy, and her desire to see Labor governments be elected and be the best they can be to deliver for people who need it most.

My love and condolences to Fran's family and loved ones. My love and respect and enormous gratitude to Fran Bladel on a life well lived.

Before I finish, I note and thank Fran's family, who will later today be donating a portrait of Fran to the parliament. It was on display at her funeral last year. The portrait is really lovely. You will all see it once it has been formally gifted to the parliament. It was painted by Susan Nichols for a 1992 exhibition called Tasmanian Women of Influence held at the Lady Franklin Gallery. I am told by Fran's son, Richard, that Susan worked at Hansard here in parliament for 22 years. She remarked to the family that Fran was one of the few MPs who spoke to her and Hansard staff and engaged with them, which I think really demonstrates Fran's personality. Thank you for that and hello to Hansard.

[12.46 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I join in all the lovely tributes that have been paid to Fran today and feel that it is an incredible honour to speak in her memory. She truly was one of a kind. We all miss her very much. I cannot imagine how much she is missed by

her family. It is lovely that they are able to be with us today. To Richard, Jami, Hugo and Max, thank you for joining with us for this very important special occasion.

I will forever be grateful to Fran for the support and encouragement that she gave to me from the time that I nominated as a candidate for the Labor Party to run in the seat of Lyons. I was not a notable candidate. I was a young woman from a regional community, but I had been involved with the party for a few years and knew how influential Fran was amongst her peers and amongst the membership and the deep respect that she was given and deserved.

I was a bit overwhelmed that she took an interest in me, but that was what she was like. She demonstrated great respect for others. She really cared about what was happening in your life. She was a true egalitarian. Fran spoke in her inaugural address of her ideals, her values and the philosophy of equality, but the thing that made Fran truly remarkable was the fact that she lived those ideals every day.

Fran was stoic, she was strong, she was intelligent and she could be forthright, but she was also incredibly compassionate and had an ability to empathise with others, perhaps because she had suffered her own heartache and knew what it was like to feel desperate or sad or sometimes angry. That meant people could confide in her with the safe knowledge that she would not be a harsh judge. She wanted to help improve the lives of those around her - her family, her students and her constituents. In my case, she was incredibly supportive of my career and wanted to see me succeed.

Fran appeared in my first ever election advertisement, that somewhat notorious Pollywaffle one. In it, Fran spoke to camera and gave her endorsement of me. It was incredibly powerful. I sometimes think back on that and wonder how I got so lucky to have her do that for me. But that was Fran. She stood ready at all times to progress opportunities for women. She was relentless in her endeavour to promote opportunities for women and to encourage their participation in the political process. I am a beneficiary of that. I am a beneficiary of the glass ceiling-shattering efforts of Fran who used her wit, her experience and her intellect to make a real difference when she was a minister in government.

More than that, Fran used her time in public office to build on all the hard work she had done over many years as a teacher to continue to teach and inspire those around her and build capability, aspiration and endeavour so that the Labor movement was able to benefit from her energy and determination. She was forceful but graceful at the same time. She had an air about her that gave her authority without intimidation. For all the years I knew her I wish I knew her better because there was so much to Fran that I would love to learn more about. There are so many conversations I will never get to share with her that I think would have been a lot of fun to have as well as incredibly thought-provoking.

Fran always struck me as a person of substance. She did things for a reason. She gave herself to causes because she believed in them. She wanted to leave a legacy, not for the sake of it, but because she truly wanted to help improve circumstances for others and to leave the world in a better place. That is what she applied herself to do in her work as a teacher and as a politician.

It struck me at Fran's funeral not only how loved she was for all that she accomplished in her life and all she had done for her family, but also for how deeply she loved back. Fran

loved her family and she had love and abundance for many others who had the fortune to be in her life, especially those in the Labor Party.

We have a special event occurring today that Ms Haddad spoke about that is occurring in concert with the parliament recognising Fran's contribution to public life, and that is the acceptance by this parliament of a portrait of Fran. I think, personally, that this is a very proud moment. It is a proud moment for Fran's family who can share a memory of her with all of us and everyone who visits this building. It is also a proud moment that, as a member of this place, as a member of the Labor Party, as a member of EMILY's List, and as a woman that this parliament will honour Fran by displaying her portrait.

I may not have stepped inside this Chamber had it not been for Fran. I know that she desperately wanted to see us win the recent state election and that she was hopeful to see another woman as premier of this state. It was not to be this time, but that day will come. I hope that when another woman is elected as Premier of Tasmania they might be able to take a quiet moment of reflection to visit Fran's portrait hanging on the walls of Parliament House and pay tribute to her for helping to pave the way.

Fran, you were an inspiration. You will forever live on in the memories of all those who were fortunate enough to know you and who were the beneficiaries of your kindness and encouragement. Vale Fran Bladel.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[12.52 p.m.]

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I take the opportunity as Speaker to speak from the Chair and thank Richard, Jami, Hugo and Max for letting us have this occasion today so that those of us who loved Fran, and those of us who now wish they had met her, can say a few words.

When I was first preselected, Fran was absolutely a mentor for me. One of my first conversations after being preselected, which she backed heavily within my grouping, was the advice that new women candidates - and there were not very many women in politics at that stage - worry a lot, worry all the time if they are getting things right and they wake up at 2.00 a.m. and that is when they worry the absolute most. It was really important that you knew that that was normal. Most importantly, Fran said, 'And that's when you call me and I will take your call because I've been there and I'm there for you'. It is a piece of mentoring that I give to other women now because it meant so much to me.

Fran was a foundation member of EMILY's List which has changed the way the Labor Party is operating in Australia and the way that parliaments have operated since then. There was an ALP history book that was written in the late 1970s, early 1980s. If you go through the chapters and get to the chapter called 'Labor Women' and you turn the page, there were five blank pages because there were no Labor women that the Tasmanian Labor Party could speak of. Then came Fran, Judy and Gill. They absolutely changed the world and are the reasons we are here today.

Post-politics, as you have heard, she kept her passion. As a minister, I was technically invited to meet with her about the Huon Health Service. Formally, it was an invitation, but



there was no question that you would not appear; and there was no question that you would be left in any doubt of how important that service was and how much she would fight for it.

She was brilliant, she was kind, she was funny, she was warm, she was amazingly ferocious and, if you see the portrait when we rise at lunchtime, you will see all those things coming through - both the great sense of warmth and the great sense of strength. She was an absolute trailblazer for the Labor Party, for women and for our community. I am honoured to have known her. I am honoured to have had an opportunity to add my voice to the voices today. If anybody would like to hear her famous pap smear story, I will tell it later on. I have been advised it is not really appropriate for the Chamber, although I am sure she would have said it here.

Vale Fran. We loved you very much and we miss you very much, and we know that your family are very blessed to have had you and bereft without you. Thank you.

I ask members to signify their support for the motion by standing.

**Motion agreed, *nemine contradicente*.**

[12.55 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Thank you, honourable Speaker. Many members have said how lovely it is to see Fran's family in the Chamber today. I further move -

That a copy of the foregoing resolution be forwarded to the family of the late Ms Bladel.

**Motion agreed to.**

**SPEAKER** - With that being very close to the official portrait handover, I am going to suggest, with the agreement of the Leader of the House, that the House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

**Sitting suspended from 12.55 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.**

## **INAUGURAL SPEECH**

### **Rebekah Pentland - Member for Bass**

**The SPEAKER** - In line with the resolution passed earlier today, we are moving to the inaugural speech of the member for Bass, Mrs Pentland. Before the member commences her contribution, I remind the House that this is the member's inaugural speech and ask that the House extend the usual courtesies to the member. I call the member for Bass.

[2.31 p.m.]

**Mrs PENTLAND** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I am excited and honoured to be standing here today. I congratulate you on your appointment to the role of Speaker of the House. May I say what a wonderful job you are doing in keeping everything in order. Bravo to you.

**The SPEAKER** - You can say that as much as you like.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - I congratulate my fellow members, both re-elected and newly elected to the House of Assembly and thank the members who previously served their communities for their contributions to parliament.

Congratulations to Premier Rockliff on your reappointment to the position of Premier of Tasmania, and to your Liberal Party for taking on the role of government.

I also thank the community of Bass for this opportunity to serve and be their voice on the matters that mean most to them.

On 20 February 1978, at the Royal Women's Hospital in Paddington, Sydney, a middle child was born, Rebekah Samantha Bowcock, daughter to Susan and Ian Bowcock, and middle child to older brother, Daniel, and yet-to-be-born younger sister, Danica.

Daniel and Danica have been my greatest friends both in childhood and adult life. My sister, Danica, is a constant presence in my everyday life. Her daily chats and unwavering support are invaluable to me. She has always been there, providing a listening ear and offering encouragement, for which I am deeply grateful.

My brother, Daniel, played a pivotal role in fostering my competitive spirit and love for sport. The three of us would spend hours playing out on the streets as we grew up, and we knew we had to be home when the street lights came on. We were fortunate with lots of freedom and always managed to stay out after dark. Daniel, a gifted cricketer, would always talk us into one more bowl of the ball and I could bowl a mean yorker back in those days. Backyard cricket often resulted in broken windows, and I do not remember a time when all our windows were not smashed.

I enjoyed playing sport growing up: netball, basketball, representative touch football, and swimming, in which I excelled. I won the Jack Campbell Award while being part of the Coogee Bay Surf Life Saving Club. During the school holidays, I often spent more time in the water than out. Without both my sister and brother, I do not know if I would be as strong and confident as I am here today.

This sport-loving nature also fitted into my ambition to achieve a rescue scuba diving licence. This later fuelled many trips to Thailand, where I tried to spend more time under the water than on land.

I come from a loving but dysfunctional family. My parents, though separated, remained under the same roof, creating an atmosphere that was far from peaceful. My sister, Danica, and I lost our bedroom and spent our childhood living on a landing. No bedroom door, no internal walls, no privacy. Each night I prayed to God for a bedroom door, a symbol of my desire of my own space.

Years later, in an unexpected turn of events, God answered my prayers, and in a grand way. Today, as the owner of accommodation businesses, I now have more than my fair share of bedroom doors. What was once a simple childhood wish has manifested into a reality far beyond my childhood imagination. This has taught me that even during dysfunction, determination and hard work can lead to incredible outcomes.

Growing up during this time, I understood the impact of having an identity crisis. I witnessed my own mother struggle with her identity due to being adopted. This was traumatic and very difficult growing up as I watched her struggle to understand where she came from and who she was, and how this disconnect to her biological family impacted her mental health. Still, to this day, we do not know my mother's biological family.

Our home was quite difficult at times and I often found solace out of the family home. Growing up I spent a lot of time away. I feel like the choices I made during this time made me who I am today. Others may view these choices as poor decisions that potentially could have led down a different path. I, however, learned much about myself and the world.

I wish to pay homage to my mum for instilling her lateral thinking and Christian values in me. I thank her for her wisdom and guidance in helping me become the woman I am today.

At the age of 19, I decided to live with my grandmother. This was an incredibly special time as it allowed me to further develop my communication skills. As a young person, I listened to my grandmother telling me her life stories growing up in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Gran was a true lady who always acted with decorum and grace. I will always cherish this time and how it impacted me.

I stand before you to share a glimpse into my early journey into the world of work, a journey that began when I was 12 years old. My father, a TAB agent, instilled in me the values of hard work and responsibility from a young age. His first agency was nestled on William Street, just a stone's throw away from the iconic Coca-Cola sign in Kings Cross. Every Saturday afternoon I eagerly lent a hand to my father, aiding him in meticulous tasks of recording dividends, managing late scratchings, rider changes and relaying the late mail. One such day was Melbourne Cup day, and I can remember having to teach the punters how to correctly fill out the betting tickets - probably the only 12-year-old who knew how to put on a boxed trifecta.

In the heart of Kings Cross, I encountered a diverse range of individuals, from the homeless seeking respite to the hustling working girls and the astute businessmen. Yet along with the display of humanity, there were lessons learned that went beyond mere transactions and the individuals behind the transactions. My father's steadfast refusal to lend money to the homeless, despite their pleas, left a significant mark on me. It was a lesson in compassion tempered by pragmatism - a lesson that taught me the harsh realities of the world. There were, however, moments when empathy overruled obedience of listening to my dad, and I extended a helping hand only to witness the painful cycle of addiction and gambling.

These experiences were invaluable lessons that shaped my understanding of the human condition and the importance of discernment in extending aid. They taught me that true compassion lies not only in helping, but also in empowering individuals to make choices that lead to lasting change.

Transitioning into retail, I served as a cashier at a local supermarket and later a food packer, mastering the art of organisation and attention to detail, and learning the importance of customer satisfaction and efficiency in service.

Whilst I was studying, I casually worked as a beverage attendant at the Sydney Football Stadium and Sydney Cricket Ground. I was promoted to bar manager within two months and

was later awarded the bar in the Members' Stand. It was at the Member's Stand that I had the privilege of serving esteemed guests including Prime Minister John Howard and Tom Cruise. My involvement in the Sydney Olympics further solidified my experience as I hosted families and players alike whilst managing bars at the stadiums.

I then took an unexpected turn into the world of finance, where I delved into accounting and bookkeeping across different industries, mastering the language of numbers and ensuring financial integrity. However, it was in the arena of sales that I found my true calling.

I studied exercise science and aerobic instruction and became a qualified aerobics instructor and personal trainer. I met with the general manager of Randwick Fitness First, interviewing for an aerobics instructor position. Right now, dancing around on a podium wearing tight Lycra would be a lot less terrifying than standing here doing this in front of all of them.

The club manager had other plans and talked me around to accepting a role as a membership consultant. As a sales consultant for Fitness First, I shattered records and surpassed expectations earning accolades such as Australian Sales Consultant of the Year not once, but twice, and Australian Sales Manager of the Year. During this role, I had the opportunity of sitting and meeting with potential clients and listening to their stories, and often found myself offering counsel. Often the reasons to join a gym would vary from a death in the family or marriages falling apart, to losing weight, bulking up or improving overall general fitness. This was the reason for the change in their lives and I was privileged to help. The reward was seeing their hard work pay off, their confidence grow and happiness improve.

At the age of 23, I was the youngest person promoted into club management. Here I had the daunting task of overseeing a new club, Auburn Fitness First, in the western suburbs of Sydney. With plenty of racial wars out west, including a violent incident on my first day, I continued to demonstrate leadership and perseverance.

Eventually, I found myself back in the eastern suburbs managing Bondi Fitness First, where I continued to thrive and lead by example. This club consisted of 14,000 members and 75 staff. The facility included a childcare centre, a cafe, a Pilates studio, massage therapist, personal trainers, exercise instructors, receptionist, cleaning staff, a customer care team and, my personal favourite, the sales team. It often reminded me of hospitality but on steroids - literally.

From here I had the amazing opportunity of travel and I was offered a position of working with a tennis player, Arantxa Sánchez. Arantxa and her brother, Emilio, ran a tennis academy in Barcelona, Spain. I was employed to help train and mentor teenagers at their academy. I lived in Barcelona for four months and made sure I did not miss any of the Spanish festivals. I then travelled for a further five months, cramming in as much as I could.

When I returned to Sydney, I wanted to fulfil my goal of buying my first apartment by the age of 25. At Fitness First, I worked long hours and saved enough money that two months shy of my 25th birthday, I was able to achieve this goal.

I then ventured from Fitness First to Novartis and began my career as a pharmaceutical business consultant. I have over 15 years' experience looking at ways to improve pharmacy business and patient outcomes by providing affordable medication through generic brands.

I have been nominated many times as Australian Pharmaceutical Business Consultant of the Year.

Sport, health and fitness have provided me with incredible career opportunities, so it is fitting that a debate about a sports stadium should pave the way for my entry into this arena.

On 15 April 2010, Cupid was working hard and who would have thought that on a cold, rainy Thursday night at the Coogee Bay Hotel I would meet the love of my life, Alex. Alex was in the army as a commando based at Holsworthy Barracks. After a short time together, it became apparent to me that we would be apart for a significant amount of time due to Alex being deployed overseas. It was during these two months of courtship that Alex took me on our first adventure to his hometown of Launceston, which included visiting the family shack in Bridport. We visited wineries and tasted amazing Tamar Valley produce. We travelled to Bridport via Lilydale and both Alex and Tasmania stole my heart along the way. Alex sealed the deal and Cupid had done his job.

In June 2010, Alex was deployed for his third tour to Afghanistan and we spent six months apart. On that deployment, not even a week in, a Black Hawk helicopter crashed during an operation resulting in the death of three commandos. The not knowing was gut wrenching. Alex made a call to me to let me know that he was in fact alive and that I was not on the end of a very different type of phone call. It was a very difficult realisation that this was going to be an ongoing factor in each deployment moving forward. Thankfully, Alex decided to leave the army to pursue a career in the building and construction industry. We lost 47 Australians fighting the Afghanistan war, 13 of whom were commandos.

Shortly after, we started trying for a family and, very sadly, we had an ectopic pregnancy. This was extremely difficult. We started working towards our lives together, both with building a family and our professional work lives. Instead of having a baby, we bought our first investment property together, a disgusting renovator's delight in Sydney in a prime location. We tried for a baby again and, luckily, we became pregnant with Jasper. Becoming pregnant with Jasper was also not an easy journey. Alex and I were living in our renovator's delight and I still remember laying the floors and finishing the furnishings at 39 weeks pregnant, just before Jasper's arrival.

It was at the 20-week scan that both Alex and I were made aware that Jasper had a heart condition, a coarctation of the aorta and aortic valve stenosis. As parents, Alex and I were thrust into a world of uncertainty and fear when we grappled with the weight of Jasper's diagnosis, unsure what the future held for our precious child. Amidst the chaos we found comfort in the hands of skilled medical professionals who offered us a glimmer of light in our darkest hours.

Today, I stand before you to share the courageous story of a young warrior, Jasper. At just three days old, he had his aorta repaired, and at six days old he underwent a ballooning of the valve to address his aortic valve stenosis, a procedure intended to buy crucial time for a more serious intervention. A month after the initial procedure, during a routine check-up, it became evident that the first ballooning had not achieved the desired results. The surgeon attempted to repeat the ballooning but after three weeks it was clear that the procedure was still not working. Jasper's condition demanded urgent intervention and a decision was made to perform the Ross procedure, a complex and high-stakes open heart surgery. The road to recovery was fraught with obstacles. One of the most terrifying moments was when the medical team expressed concerns about whether Jasper's heart artery had been correctly reattached.

There was a fear that he might develop a condition known as black heart, where inadequate blood flow would cause death. We anxiously awaited the surgeon's examination after we washed out the wound and, thankfully, we received good news: the artery was reattached correctly.

However, Jasper's heart was significantly enlarged and injured from the trauma. To support his recovery, the medical team decided to place him on an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) machine, which provided his heart and lungs with the rest they desperately needed to heal. The procedure carries a significant chance of complications, including bleeding, infection and organ damage. Additionally, the very act of connecting a patient to an ECMO means invasive surgery, further increasing the risk of complications. It is not an easy sight watching your baby lie with his heart stopped, an open chest with blood drains and rubber tubing everywhere.

For me, the road to Jasper's recovery was long and arduous. For 13 agonising days, he remained tethered to the ECMO machine, his fragile existence hanging in the balance. Through sheer determination and the unwavering dedication of his medical team, Jasper defied the odds and emerged victorious against the spectre of death.

As a new mother, I was on a stressful road with my newborn son. Due to many medical interventions required, I was unable to hold Jasper which, of itself, was heartbreaking. However, I managed to remain steadfast to Jasper and was committed and disciplined to visiting the express room every three hours to provide Jasper with liquid gold: milk.

During this time, Alex was a first-year apprentice and studying his Certificate IV in building. Whilst Alex was away during the weeks, I was at Westmead Hospital living by myself on-site with Jasper. Overall, this was an incredibly depressing and precarious three months. It was difficult, isolating and stressful. On top of this, Alex had been involved in a car crash. Luckily, there were no serious injuries, just a painful price tag for the repair.

Today, I stand before you and I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to the Lord, my God, whom I pray to, praise be to God. He provided Jasper with the miracles of modern medicine that saved his life, and for the unwavering support of friends and family who stood by our side, and for the fighting spirit of a little boy who refused to give up. I love you, Jasper.

I do not want today's speech to focus on the negative experience Jasper has had with the Tasmanian health system but, rather, bring attention to why I take this responsibility so seriously. The Tasmanian health system needs to improve. If I could not get Jasper to Sydney for urgent medical care, there is a good chance that Jasper would not be sitting in the gallery today. We are becoming a state where only the wealthy can keep healthy. It is my personal passion in making sure that every Tasmanian has access to the required treatments and/or health services when needed.

Having children for me has not been an easy ride. In trying to build our family, once again tragedy struck and we suffered our first miscarriage. This was extremely difficult and, unfortunately, was not the only time this occurred. Both Alex and I were further devastated each time and often left wondering if I would be able to become pregnant again. I wish society was more understanding of the impact this has on a woman and her family. I wish it was not taboo to talk about miscarriages and pregnancy mishaps.

Close to four years later, Reuben arrived and what a joy he is. A little legend who spends more time upside down than right way up. I am not going to lie; I feel a bit of pressure in here today because my biggest performance critic is sitting right behind me. I love you, Reuben.

Alex and I have always been focused on our work endeavours. We both work incredibly hard. This included Alex working in a high management role in a respectable building company and I was working as a pharmaceutical business consultant. I sold my Sydney apartment and we started our own business in Tasmania. This included our CBD apartments in Launceston. We then built apartments in our back yard and created another short-term accommodation business. We established a construction cleaning business. We built and sold a huge family home. We are also part-owners of the Mercure Hotel in Launceston, where Alex is a company director. This accommodation encompasses 80 rooms, a bar and restaurant. Alex has completed project-managing the entire hotel renovation, including the renovation of the facade, which have beautifully lit up Brisbane Street opposite City Park. It was no easy feat managing this hotel during the COVID closures.

I have always thought we would have three kids, so again we tried for another baby and again we were unlucky and experienced miscarriages. After five years of trying, I had a difficult discussion with my doctor, who addressed the risks of getting pregnant, especially at my age. It was at this point I was ready to give up. However, God had other plans and I was shocked to learn I was pregnant with our youngest, Miriam, our little rainbow baby. At 46, I know I am blessed with another baby. I love you, Miriam, and we are forever grateful for the three children we have.

When I reflect on what made me start this career, it comes down to me questioning my own land tax. I remember how angry I was when I received the bill and how, compared to the year prior, it had almost doubled. As I mentioned, I questioned the increase. The response I received was that it had been advertised in the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* and I no longer had enough time to challenge it. Honourable Speaker, who reads the *Gazette*? It made me think about the cost-of-living crisis, what this could mean for others in a similar situation and how these individuals would struggle to afford the increase.

I know the rules clearly state that I am not supposed to bring props when I speak here, but if you look over there, sitting in the gallery, you will see a few props of mine. And no, they are not the usual kind. They are my family and, believe me, they are a tougher crowd than anyone else in this room ever could be.

During the campaign, the Jacqui Lambie Network received a fair bit of flak for supposedly lacking policy. As you know, the three of us act as independents under the JLN umbrella, so I thought it was time to come clean and share with you all exactly what my personal policy is. My personal policy is derived from my family.

My father: when I look into my father's eyes, I see the elderly and what they represent. Their experiences and their sacrifices are the backbone of our society. They are the pioneers, the generation that fought hard to raise families and put food on the table. They toiled for our country, instilling values of hard work, dedication and resilience. Their legacy is a testament to the strength and perseverance that built our nation. It is imperative that my policies honour and support this invaluable segment of our population. We must not marginalise the elderly in their golden years.

My husband: when I have conversations with my husband, I hear the present and the drive for progress. He embodies the spirit of seeking opportunities, striving for prosperity and finding ways to succeed. This perspective is crucial for our time as it focuses on harnessing current possibilities to improve our lives and build a robust economy. My policies aim to foster innovation, support entrepreneurial endeavours and create a thriving environment where hard work and ingenuity are rewarded.

My children: when I think about my children, it becomes clear that our actions today must be guided by an environmental moral compass. It is essential to tread lightly on the Earth and leave it in a better state than when we found it. My policies emphasise sustainability and the need to ensure the test of time, ensuring that future generations can manage the delicate balance between industry, prosperity and the environment with greater ease.

By prioritising ecological responsibility, we pave the way for a healthier, more sustainable world for our children and their descendants. When we are making decisions for children, we should be making those decisions with compassion, with our own children in the forefront of our mind. The only difference between someone's journey is a decision, and that decision can be the catalyst of which road they follow.

The heart and soul of Tasmania is its people. We are known for our sense of community, our resilience and our incredible natural beauty but, most importantly, we are known for looking out for one another. My policy is rooted in making sure every Tasmanian feels heard, supported and empowered.

I wish to acknowledge my other JLN elected members, Miriam Beswick and Andrew Jenner, who are also taking on this role. I am confident they will also rise to the challenge of what their electorates require.

I would like to say thanks to a few people. To the awesome parliamentary team who works behind the scenes, what an incredible team you are. To the Clerks, the Clerk Assistants, the Parliamentary Assistants, the HR and IT teams, security staff, the dining room staff, the team downstairs in the cafe and all the cleaning staff, you are an impressive team. I am very grateful for your chit-chat and all the warm smiles you have thrown my way. Thank you.

I thank Lee-Ann Patterson, who I met in February, who volunteered on my campaign. I cannot thank you enough for everything you did from emotional support to words of encouragement; it truly meant the world.

To Jacqui Lambie, thank you for your support and faith in me. Your confidence in my abilities and your encouragement have truly been inspiring. Your hard work and dedication to serving this community are unparalleled, and you are a true inspiration to us all. Your relentless commitment and tireless efforts have set a high standard for public service. I am deeply grateful for the trust you have placed in me and together we will continue to work towards making a positive impact and achieving our shared goals.

I thank Tania Clark, Chloe Skip, Georgie Lim, and Kristen Kral, my closest friends. Your constant support and encouragement will not be forgotten. Thank you for always being by my side.



I also thank Sharon and Dale Pentland, my mother- and father-in-law for their support. This included providing and driving the trailers around the Bass electorate and finding extra potential poster locations. I have even had other Bass candidates during the state election refer to me as the trailer poster queen. Thank you.

I want to thank my siblings. Without our incredibly close bond, I do not know if I would have stayed sane during the campaign. To my sister, Danica, your support around our daily talks and reminders that I could do this will always be appreciated. To my brother, Daniel, thank you for coming down from Sydney and being part of my support system the night of the vote count - and how about the fact that you both travelled from Sydney to be here today? Thank you.

I thank my dad for the values you have instilled in me. Thank you for all the care you have shown during the campaign, cooking us meals, babysitting and doing all our washing. I also thank you for cheering me on the sidelines and always reporting back when you heard or saw me on TV. You always listened to me rant and rave when I got politically fired up and I am grateful for your support. I love you, Dad, and I hope I have made you proud in here today.

To my children, Jasper, Reuben and Miriam, it is not normal to watch your mother campaign. At your age, I always wished to see my name up in lights, but not like this. It is not easy when your friends at school let you know that they saw your mum on a corner flapping a sign and waving her hand. I am sorry that we had to pass my face many times to and from school each day. Thank you for believing in me and stepping up during this time. As I always say, never say never and never say forever. Just remember you can do anything you put your mind to. If your mum can be a politician then you are able to fly to the moon.

Alex, there will never be enough words to say how thankful I am I have you in my life. You are a perfect husband and an incredible father to our children. I will always admire your determination and workhorse attitude. You achieve in a day what most men would struggle to achieve in a week. I will always wonder how we managed to maintain our family commitments alongside the demands of the campaign. Our tag-team effort was truly a huge effort between me handling the day shift, carting around a 10-month-old baby, doorknocking and meeting with the people of Bass, and you handling the afternoon/night shift, putting up signs, driving the trailers around and making sure my campaign sign was both visible and in a new location every couple of days to maximise visibility with the community.

I will forever be grateful for your support and for everything you do and have done for our family and for me while I have chased and ultimately undertaken this massive challenge. We both push each other to our limit and we are taking up too much space if we are not living on the edge. You inspire me every day. Thank you, Alex, and from a proud wife to a humble husband, I would like to formally thank you for your service. You are the true hero in this House today.

Honourable Speaker, it is truly an honour to be standing in front of you today as an elected member for the electorate of Bass. I acknowledge that I have much to learn and I am excited to take on this challenge and opportunity. I thank the people of Bass for putting their faith in me to represent them on the matters that concern them most.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

## FORESTRY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2024 (No. 20)

### In Committee

Continued from Thursday 20 June 2024 (page 81).

#### Clause 7 -

Section 7 amended (Objections to declaration of land as private timber reserve)

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I am not sure if you have the amendment there, but I move -

Page 5

*Leave out* everything after "section"

*Insert* instead -

"7 of the Principal Act is amended by

- (a) By omitting "prescribed", first occurring from subsection (1); and
- (b) inserting ", other than for a minor boundary extension," after "reserve" in subsection (1); and
- (c) by omitting everything after "granting of the application" in subsection (1), and substituting "on a ground specified in paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) or (f) of section 8(2)"; and
- (d) by omitting paragraphs (ab) and (b) from subsection (2) and substituting the following paragraph:
  - (b) the ground for the objection is a ground specified in paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) or (f) of section 8(2); and"

The functional purpose of this amendment is to allow any person other than only a prescribed person to make a representation to an application for a private timber reserve. I have discussed this at different points but will refresh members' understanding that section 7 of the *Forest Practices Act* requires that any objection to declaring a land as a private timber reserve can only be made by a prescribed person, and 'a prescribed person' includes a local authority who exercises jurisdiction over the land, a state authority, or a person who has a legal or equitable interest in the land, or in the timber on the land, or to whom the application relates, and a person who is the owner of the land that adjoins a neighbour, in other words, or is within 100 metres of the boundary of the proposed private timber reserve.

There are many reasons why that is an inadequate list of people who can make comment on a private timber reserve. There are many values that may be associated with a reserve with timber, and these may not always be identified or addressed by those other prescribed bodies. Some of them may have an interest in not identifying the whole range of environmental values of land, because they have some sort of interest in the land and they might be a beneficiary of making it a private timber reserve.

We have to provide an opportunity at all points for people who can speak or want to speak for the values of the forest. That is not just a neighbour who may not have the environmental or scientific understanding, or might not have the Aboriginal heritage understanding, of that particular area and those particular forest values. That is why we are moving to make sure that it can be broadened to include a whole range of people.

I will speak as somebody who is the member for Franklin and who lives in the Huon Valley. I know that there are a number of places that are private timber reserves that have been assessed for having extraordinary natural values. People want to declare areas as private timber reserves, and it has been very difficult when it is only the neighbour who is able to make comment on an area. However, when it is in a forested region - I am thinking particularly of the hills around Cygnet that are well known and understood as refuge for a whole range of threatened and some endangered species - then it is just not reasonable to leave it up to the neighbour to understand that those hills, for example, have Tasmanian devils and spotted quolls, and they have forests that swift parrots land in. They have bandicoots, potoroos, yellow-tail black cockatoos, wedge-tailed eagles and sea eagles.

These are the sorts of issues that have been raised just in my local area by people who have not been neighbours but have been aware that people want to declare a private timber reserve and they have no ability to be able to put into the conversation the values that they know that forest holds. That is the purpose of moving this amendment: to give all Tasmanians with a public interest a capacity to do that.

**Dr BROAD** - Labor will not be supporting this amendment. We know in this place that nothing gets the Greens going like trees, but it is pretty clear that despite half the state being in reserve, this is not good enough. We are far in excess of any other jurisdiction that I am aware of - comparable at least - regarding the number of reserves in Tasmania. Half our land mass is in reserves, but it is not good enough.

What the Greens want with this amendment is the ability to come after private landowners to stop them managing their own properties. Basically, they want the ability for anybody to come in and in effect provide a potential veto on something like a timber reserve being granted. This is massive overreach, I think, from the Greens. That is why we will not be supporting it.

It is pretty obvious that the Greens and indeed the environmental movement, especially the Bob Brown Foundation, have found various ways to game various processes of government. This would be opening yet another process that the likes of the Bob Brown Foundation can game. Basically, this would open up to legal challenge any timber reserve on any private land in any part of the state. There is no doubt that injunctions would be sought. There would be claims of various threatened species that may or may not be present. This would turn what is a relatively positive thing - the granting of a private timber reserve - into something that would become a legal football for the Greens and especially the Bob Brown Foundation to kick around.

We think this is a massive overreach. The Greens ignore that the timber reserve is not an open-slasher permission to clear-fell anything. There are processes in place that have to occur before a single tree is touched on a timber reserve, including a Forest Practices plan and so on. Anyone logging these private timber reserves has to be mindful of their responsibilities under the *Forest Practices Act*. That is completely ignored by this. There are checks and balances in

effect. This is a massive overreach. It is reaching into the principal act and trying to amend the principal act, which is overreach, rather than making minor technical amendments to legislation. Instead, the Greens are trying to amend the principal act -

**Dr Woodruff** - It is what we do as legislators.

**Dr BROAD** - You are not amending the bill before us. You are seeking to reach into the principal act and amend the principal act.

**Dr Woodruff** - Does Labor never do that?

**Dr BROAD** - I am saying in this instance it is massive overreach. You are changing the intention of what has been attempted here today and instead open up a legal avenue for anyone to attack any timber reserve, which is a massive overreach given there are existing checks and balances. I do not believe this is worthy of support.

**Mr ABETZ** - I appreciate the fact that the Labor Party agrees with the government in opposing this amendment by the Tasmanian Greens. Let us be very clear, we are only talking about private timber reserves and private property in this bill and with these amendments. According to the Greens, they would want to allow anyone and everyone to object to what can be done on private property.

When establishing a timber reserve, neighbours, local councils, and other specified persons can have an input. The legislation that the government has put forward seeks to amend that in the event of a marginal increase or change in the boundary of the timber reserve of no more than 10 per cent - that it would be streamlined.

Surely we would all agree that private timber reserves should be encouraged. Australia, despite its vast landmass, is still a net importer of forest products. At last count, it is anticipated that 10 per cent of the timber products imported into Australia comes from illegal sources. How is that good for the world environment? How does that make any good sense? It does not. Often, with respect to the Tasmanian Greens, they overreach or view issues in a maniacally focused manner. This has been the history of the Greens, going back to when they tried to block a hydro scheme and suggested that an alternative could be a coal-fired power station in the Fingal Valley. How would that have worked out for us? Not too flash. I encourage the Tasmanian Greens to have a holistic view of these things.

Should we encourage private timber reserves? We have not heard this yet from the Tasmanian Greens, but I hoped they would say that private timber reserves, in principle, are a good thing. It would be great to have that on the record.

Then the question has to be asked: if it is a private timber reserve and it is private property, do you want somebody - for example, I will pick on the member for Braddon, Mr Garland - being able to object to something that might be done in the foothills of Cygnet, to which the member for Franklin referred, on somebody's private land? I stress this: private land. We are not talking public forests here. We are talking private forests. I believe most Tasmanians would be of the view that private land - underline on private - is something that is to be protected.

Sure, others might have an interest in that, and that is why the original private timber reserve requires a degree of consultation. That said, as the other member for Braddon in the Chamber, Dr Broad, indicated, before that private timber reserve can be harvested, you need a Forest Practices Plan. That Forest Practices Plan needs to consider cultural, environmental and other values that the community in general might have a concern about.

This is yet again an example, with respect, where the Tasmanian Greens are trying to frustrate the private timber reserve - the private forest estate in this state. As we lock up more and more of the public reserve of timber - over half of our state is now locked up in World Heritage Area, national parks, et cetera - if we want to be self-sufficient in relation to timber, we will have to have recourse to private reserves. That is what this amendment bill sought to do: to try to make it easier for that to occur.

Keep in mind that given the sort of brainless decisions of Victoria and Western Australia to close down their native forest sectors, we are now importing bulk hardwood from Brazil and North America. Is there anybody in this Chamber who honestly believes that Brazil does timber harvesting better than we do it in Tasmania and Australia? That is the consequence with these decisions. You cannot have a blinkered view about this particular block of land; you have to look at the totality of the consequences of your decisions. Humans need wood. Timber is used in housing. We have a housing affordability problem. Part of it is lack of resources to build houses. Instead of providing our own, as we should be able to in this country, we are now an importer of hardwood from Brazil.

If the consequence the Greens want is to frustrate the private timber reserves and reduce the amount of timber produced in Tasmania - and this is what they ought to be saying, if they were to be completely transparent on this - they then have to answer the question: from where will the timber be sourced? We know the answer. It will be from Brazil, from South America, and other parts of the world that do not do forestry as well as we do it in Tasmania.

If I recall correctly, when we were last debating this bill, I asked rhetorically, as I used to do in the Senate, name me a place where they do forestry better than we do it in Tasmania. It is one of those rare occasions where you get deafening silence from the Australian Greens, and in this place from the Tasmanian Greens. They know in their heart of hearts that Tasmanian forest practices are world-leading; there are none better. If you can point me to something better then be assured I would send officials there to learn how to do things even better.

I do not invite interjections, and usually interjections come my way in these debates without them being solicited, but there is deafening silence when that challenge is thrown out and that tells the story in itself. The government opposes the amendment.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I was not going to bother interjecting because it is unfortunate that both you and the Labor member impute some sort of Machiavellian scheming to our amendment. It is great that you think we have as much power as you would like to give us over managing how the planning scheme operates.

Basically, the Greens are trying to uphold the law and recognise the world as it is. We have a biodiversity challenge across the planet, and it is in Tasmania like everywhere else. If it was not a biodiversity challenge we would not have species on the brink of extinction. If there were no biodiversity issues and no threats to species, they would not be a step away from extinction, and there would not be so many threatened and critically endangered species in

Tasmania. It is because of human habitats, human development and human behaviour, and it is because of the heating climate. There are many factors. Some of them are in our control, and some of them are less in our control. That is why we have planning schemes. Part of the job of planning schemes is to look at the appropriate place for a development for the community, for the economics of a region, for the protection of the local and wider environment. That is why we have planning laws.

We have environment laws to protect the species that are endemic to Tasmania and that migrate to Tasmania, and to protect the clean air and water that our functioning ecosystems in our large areas of our natural habitat still provide us in Tasmania. We are very lucky to have the air we have. It is some of the best air in the world. We take it for granted, but it is not the case that it will be that way unless we look after it. We still have great water, but we know that our river systems are desperately challenged. We know that there is a lack of water in our river systems relative to the clean environmental flows that are needed to protect the water and to provide for a whole range of users across rivers.

To suggest that this is an attempt to game the system is ludicrous. It would be amusing, if it was not so sad, that the minister for forestry thinks that would be the purpose of people who are trying to look after and retain into the future our endemic species that are threatened, rare, endangered and critically endangered, some of them very close to extinction.

The minister has made some inconsistent statements. When you are saying that it is acceptable for others to have an interest but it is not acceptable for anybody to have an interest, that does not make any sense. You have said on the one hand it is private property and no-one should tell a landowner what to do on their property. However, you also accept that some people should, as are mentioned in the act. There is no functional difference in extending that definition to include other people who have knowledge and can make an adequate case for why a private timber reserve should not be made. This is about declaring a private timber reserve and lodging an objection. It is not about a process for going to court. It is about a process for making an objection and there must be grounds for an objection. This is not leaving the door open for people to put their hand up and say that cannot happen without an assessment of whether they have a case and they make reasonable points about what the values of that forest are.

I will say again that there is no necessary case that the local authority or the state government or the landowner themselves, or somebody else with a legal entitlement, is going to point out the natural or Aboriginal values in a private timber reserve. It is not always the case that the Forest Practices Authority has the local knowledge about that land. It is not always the case that in the preparation of a Forest Practices Plan they have that specific knowledge. That is the value of having an open system. We are not afraid of standing up for the laws that we have in Tasmania. We make laws and it is every person's right to challenge a law if they think it is being flouted. That is why we have a court system.

This idea that there are some challenges in court that are okay and other challenges in court that are lawfare, what does that mean? It is nothing except trying to build a narrative, and it says to me that the Liberal and Labor parties are joined at the hip in doing everything they can to build a narrative about the Greens and the conservation movement simply standing up to protect our forests, our wild places and the things that make Tasmania beautiful.

As a member who comes into this place as a representative for the people in Franklin, I know that I am representing what people in Franklin love and what is special about being a Tasmanian and living in Franklin. As the Leader of the Greens, I am speaking about what is special about Tasmania, and what is special is that we have clean air. We have some of the best air in the world. We have a clean, green state that we invite tourists to visit. That is deeply beautiful but it will not remain so unless we continue to protect it because of the challenges for species that are already being pushed into difficult places because of the heating planet and the pressures of development.

We need to look at things as a whole picture and make reasonable assessments. There is nothing wrong with getting other voices to the table to point out why something has value and should be protected. That does not mean they will get what they want. Just because you make an objection does not mean an application falls over, and it is disingenuous to suggest that it would. Unfortunately, I believe the minister was being disingenuous by saying that.

The Greens will never resile from standing up for more community consultation and for more opportunities for local people to have a voice. We are only asking for an assessment of the values in order for people who are making judgments about a private timber reserve to be mindful of their obligations to protect threatened species and other values.

As for the housing problem in Tasmania, minister, I believe you are utterly incorrect in suggesting that we have a housing problem in Tasmania because there is not enough wood to build houses. Hello? We have a housing problem because we have had a Liberal government which has done everything it can to benefit the private real estate market and has not put the interests of renters first and has not spent any money building houses. The Labor Party would agree with that. They have spent no money building houses -

**Dr Broad** - You are well and truly off track now. We are talking about private timber reserves.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The minister started it; I am just following his line. The minister started talking about housing. He was the one who mentioned the desperate need for private timber reserves. If you want to have houses, then do something about the short-stay market. Regulate that. Overnight, there are 4600 houses in Hobart that are being used for Airbnbs - about the same number of people on the public housing waiting list. Many have been there for years and years. Women escaping family violence cannot get houses. There is a whole range of people. What a mockery to say that has anything to do with not having enough private timber reserves to chop down trees to make wood to build houses. It is your government, minister, that has failed to do anything about the housing crisis. It has nothing to do with not having enough private timber reserves and everything to do with putting private landowners first, over people who desperately need housing, and not putting the money in the budget to build public housing for the last 10 years. We are in a desperate situation because of that.

Back to private timber reserves, I wanted to make the point for the minister -

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Dr Woodruff, your time has now ended.

**Dr BROAD** - Deputy Chair, I am loath to extend the debate, but what we heard was a whole bunch of statements from the Leader of the Greens going down the old tropes of bagging out native forestry. We have heard this time and time again.

**Dr Woodruff** - I did not say anything about native forestry.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, you did. The whole idea that there are a bunch of threatened species at imminent risk because of native forestry in Tasmania ignores -

**Dr Woodruff** - I did not mention native forestry.

**Dr BROAD** - You are talking about the threats of extinctions. We are debating a bill about private timber reserves - timber reserves on private land. It is in that context that we have to take note of your discussions about the imminent dangers of climate change and the heating of the planet. However, there are a few things you continually miss.

First of all, the minister, Mr Abetz, attempted to talk about choices of what is better for the environment as a planet. Logging in Indonesia and creation of oil palm plantations and that timber coming into Australia is not a good environmental outcome. I argue that timber reserves in a properly regulated process, like we have in Tasmania, would be a better environmental outcome even than from an FSC-certified forest from West Papua where they do not know the threatened species they have there, not to mention human rights and all sorts of jurisdictional issues. But that is okay, that has an FSC stamp and that can come into Australia. That is not a good outcome for the environment. Private timber reserves could be seen as a much better environmental outcome if we were thinking globally and acting locally.

However, we will ignore that for a second. The whole idea that native forestry is driving extinctions is just not true. You have to get rid of this idea that the way native forestry is regulated and goes, whether it be on public or private land in Tasmania, is driving extinctions. There is no evidence for that. If you want to talk about driving extinctions, land clearing and conversion to something else, whether that be plantation or farmland, absolutely drives extinctions. There is no doubt about that at all, especially when it is done at scale. However, native forestry does not drive extinctions.

That is the implication of the message that comes out of the Greens. I can safely argue that was the implication coming out of the Leader of the Greens' comments just then: that you have to have the ability for anybody in the public to reach in and have their say on how something like a private timber reserve is adjusted or regulated because they are the only ones who can protect the environment; they are the only ones who know the true value of that piece of land; they are the only ones who could ever possibly know about Aboriginal heritage; they are the only ones who could know what threatened species are in that particular patch of native forest. Therefore, they have the right to come in and sit in their ivory towers and lecture landowners about what they can and cannot do. That would be an abuse of process.

The fundamental point - and this is the point that the Greens will not acknowledge - is that native forestry does not drive extinctions when it is regulated like it is regulated in Tasmania. If you have any evidence to the contrary, I am happy to have a look at it, but there is none. What is driving extinctions is, yes, the changes we are seeing in the environment, the changes from climate change.

I have said it in this place a number of times: what would be a better outcome for flooring in Tasmania on a new build? Would it be tile, concrete, carpet, lino, or would it be a timber floor? Out of all the options, what would be the best one for the environment? I argue that Tasmanian hardwood on that floor would be the best environmental outcome for a number of



reasons. We would not have to ship it from Indonesia, from who knows what jurisdiction, or North America or South America. It is done in our local sawmills right next to our local forests. That would be a much better outcome. It would lock up the carbon and, importantly, part of that whole process is that that patch of bush is re-sown and remains native forest. That is by far the best outcome when compared to any of the other options. That is something else the Greens ignore because, when it comes back to things, the Greens do not want anybody touching a single tree ever.

[3.34 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** - Like the shadow minister, I am reluctant to continue the debate but some of the myths that have been put forward need to be dispelled.

We have heard this afternoon, yet again, the relentless negativity by the Greens asserting that, basically, there is nothing good about the forest sector in our state and the forest sector on private land. With it came a denigration of our experts who assess these private timber reserves and determine a forest practices plan. If there was a genuine threat to biodiversity or to a threatened species, the Forest Practices Authority would take that into account in determining how this patch of private forest would be dealt with.

For the record, in 2022 we had a report indicating that over the period 30 June 2016 to 30 June 2021, four threatened species moved to a lower category and five species were delisted altogether. We should be celebrating that as a wonderful achievement whilst we have still had these forest practices occurring. Things are improving. Why not celebrate that? Why does it have to be this relentless negativity, this assertion that Armageddon is about to fall upon us? I am concerned about the assertion that there will be extinctions in a biodiversity Armageddon. No, that is why we have the Forest Practices Authority, that is why we have the plans, and that is why we leave that to the experts.

To draw a further conclusion from the Greens, if you want to say to a private landowner, 'I want every man and his dog to be able to help determine what you do with your land', do I have a right to say what Dr Woodruff grows in her garden, that she might be using too many chemicals, or not enough chemicals, on a particular rose or cabbage plant? Private land is private land, and we need to respect that.

The Leader of the Greens also tells us that she believes in standing up for the laws of Tasmania. No, not quite. You are trying to amend the law of Tasmania as it stands because you are not satisfied with it. Let us be honest and transparent in that -

**Dr Woodruff** - You are bringing legislation in today, minister. That is what you are doing: you are amending law by bringing in legislation.

**Mr ABETZ** - and that has even made you smile, Dr Woodruff. You recognise that, in asserting that all you are doing is standing up for the law of Tasmania. Yet, quietly, we are trying to amend it to make it easier, as you said, to have applications made. Just because applications are made does not mean they are going to succeed. Absolutely correct. However, in fighting the applications, the landowner and others are put to great expense and delay in harvesting, et cetera. That has a huge cost and a stifling effect on investment, on private timber reserve creation and, most importantly, at the end of it, the jobs that are created in local communities in providing timber for our needs rather than importing them.

Let us be very clear that, from time to time and in very recent times, there has been a shortage of timber for housing and a substantial escalation in the cost of timber for housing. Why do costs increase? Simple supply and demand. The less supply there is, the greater the cost. That is all that I was seeking to say.

Finally, I am sure it was only because the Leader of the Greens ran out of time that she did not answer my rhetorical question: where do they do forestry better than in Tasmania? I again urge the House to oppose this amendment.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Dr Broad has mentioned the poor environmental management of the Papua New Guinea government. I do not know why you are sledging it.

**Dr Broad** - West Papua, Indonesia.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - West Papua then. I do not know why you are sledging the Indonesian government. In Tasmania, we have more than 600 threatened species that are listed that do not have recovery plans. There is no mechanism. To put something on a list is not protecting it. Just because you have identified it does not make it protected. There is no difference to identifying something or not identifying something if you take no action. I make the point that, in Tasmania, we have more than 600 threatened species of animals and plants and they have no recovery plans. To suggest that we know and look after our threatened species is not true.

I did not talk about native forests, Dr Broad. I was talking about private timber reserves. I made the point that, in private timber reserves, as in native forests in Tasmania, there are species which are critically endangered and threatened. I did not make the direct point that it is native forests that are driving species to extinctions.

**Dr Broad** - Of course, it is native -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Of course, it is native forest, did you say?

**Dr Broad** - No, it is native forest that we are debating here.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We are not. We are debating private timber reserves. We are not talking about the forestry industry; we are talking about private timber reserves.

**Dr Broad** - What are they reserving? Grassland or something?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You have made the point that these are patches of the Tasmanian forest landscape that have values. They have important values because they have trees that can become timber, and they are valuable for a reason: they are old trees or they are trees of a particular type that are valuable.

I also make the point that when you, Dr Broad, are talking about the fact that these trees are milled in our local sawmills and they are sawmills in our local forests, that is not always true. A huge amount of our private timber reserve forests that have been logged are going to Victoria. You know it and so does the minister. This is not staying in Tasmania. This is not about wood that is staying in Tasmania. This is not about taking wood from private timber reserves that are going into houses in Tasmania. It is not even going to sawmills in Tasmania.

It is getting shipped to the mainland. Massive B-doubles constantly on the *Spirit* are going to the sawmills on the mainland.

Let us be real, there is no interest here by the Liberal or Labor Party to attend to the reality of what is happening in local communities in Tasmania, in the utterly dysfunctional native forest and private timber reserve logging system here. The whole thing is up for conversation in the next couple of years with the contracts ending. It is a critical space for us to look at our future. If it is not the Greens who are speaking for threatened species, then Tasmanians can be sure that there will be no one else here - Mr Garland aside - who will be making comment about them. We do not call having conversations and being able to make an objection 'relentless negativity'. We do not call standing up for threatened species 'raving on about biodiversity Armageddon'.

It is a fact that there are huge numbers of species that are being challenged in our native forests, and part of any sensible process should be to give people with experience the capacity to have an assessment, but they need to know what is there of value in the first place.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** (Mrs Beswick) - The question is -

That the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 7**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Burnet  
Mr Garland (Teller)  
Ms Johnston  
Ms Rosol  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 25**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr Jenner  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Pentland  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Ms White (Teller)  
Mr Willie  
Mr Wood

**Amendment negatived.**

**Clause 7 agreed to.**

**Clauses 8 to 14 agreed to.**

**Clause 15**

Section 6 amended (Functions of Authority)

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I have a number of questions about this clause, minister. Clause 15 amends section 6(1) of the *Private Forests Act 1994*, which is the functions of authority. It makes a change in section (1)(b). It says:

to provide assistance and advice on forest management for commercial purposes and on the use of trees for sustainable land management;

It has added in the words 'establishment and' after 'forest'. Could detail why these words were added?

Likewise, clause 15 part (b) amends paragraph (e) of the principal act and changes the word 'commercial' to 'relevant', so it becomes 'to advise, assist and facilitate the private forest sector in the development of relevant infrastructure'. Could you explain the reasoning for both of those changes, please?

**Mr ABETZ** - I thank the member for the question. In relation to section 6(1)(b), the idea there is to provide assistance and advice on forest establishment management, so not only on forest management but also establishing forest. I thought establishing forest might be something the Greens would embrace, and I trust that they do.

In relation to section 6(1)(e), to advise, assist and facilitate the private forest sector in the development of relevant infrastructure, I thought the Greens would also welcome this change. At the moment it is only about commercial infrastructure. There are other considerations beside purely commercial considerations. Relevant infrastructure will still include matters commercial that could embrace other infrastructure which may not necessarily be of a commercial value. I suppose the sky is the limit as to what that might refer to, but it can be infrastructure other than commercial. I thought that would make it more acceptable to everybody within the Tasmanian community that we do not just limit it to commercial but also relevant infrastructure.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Please do not assume that I am asking these questions from any sort of negative position. I am asking these questions to get information because I do not understand what the background for the changes has been and what the purpose for this legislative change is. I can hear what you are saying. It is making a change from commercial infrastructure to relevant infrastructure. Could you please give us some information about what the infrastructure we are talking about might be? I do not understand. What is the distinction between changing it from 'commercial' to 'relevant'?

**Mr ABETZ** - I trust I am not missing anything, but you can have commercial infrastructure and also have other infrastructure which is not of a commercial nature. Therefore,

there can be such things as relevant infrastructure which will be taken into consideration as well. It broadens the consideration of infrastructure that the authority can deal with.

The functions of the authority are as follows: to advise, assist and facilitate the private forest sector in the development of relevant infrastructure rather than simply commercial infrastructure, so the authority can advise in relation to all matters about infrastructure. They will no longer be constrained to simply consider or worry about whether the infrastructure they are considering is to be labelled commercial or not. By defining it as 'relevant', it broadens the scope of the infrastructure considerations to be undertaken by the authority.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay, I will draw from that what I can. I do not think you have helped the situation, but I do not think you are trying to be unhelpful.

This is about functions of the authority. I assume this is meaning that the private forest owners who are establishing and managing forests for commercial purposes will use a range of infrastructure. I thought that the commercial aspect of that would be considered under the authority for the *Private Forests Act*, but you are saying it is any infrastructure, but it has to be relevant to owning and managing a private forest. Is that what 'relevant' means in this context?

**Mr ABETZ** - I have not done an account, but the functions of the authority under the act are from paragraphs (a) to (m) in the legislation. I do not know how many different areas that is, but it would be about 13 or a dozen or so. One of the functions of the authority is to advise, assist and facilitate the private forest sector in the development of relevant infrastructure so they can provide advice or ideas to the owner of the relevant private timber reserve as to how they might go about things and not only in relation to commercial infrastructure. It empowers the authority to advise, assist and facilitate the private forest sector in the development of relevant infrastructure.

**Dr Woodruff** - Relevant to what, though?

**Mr ABETZ** - To the private tourist sector.

**Dr Woodruff** - Relevant to owning and operating a private timber reserve?

**Mr ABETZ** - To facilitate the private forest sector in the development of infrastructure. It was limited to commercial infrastructure. It is now relevant infrastructure, which is, I think we could all agree, a broader definition than the narrow constraints of the term 'commercial' that might be determined in a particular manner. I thought we would welcome and celebrate the fact that the Forest Practices Authority can reach beyond the narrowness of only commercial considerations or commercial infrastructure and deal with matters relevant.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay. Section 6(1)(k) in the *Private Forests Act*, at the moment, says:

- (k) to encourage non-commercial forestry on private land including strategic planning and appropriate technical and policy development;

The amendment bill before us seeks to change it to encourage whole-farm planning on private land, including strategic planning and appropriate technical and policy development. It has changed it from 'to encourage non-commercial forestry' to -

**Mr Abetz** - We are in?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We are in paragraph (d) of clause 15. It is on page 11 of the bill under the function of authority under the *Private Forests Act*, the principal act. You will see that section 6(1)(k) of the *Private Forests Act* says that a function of the authority is to 'encourage non-commercial forestry' and this changes it to encourage 'whole-farm planning'. The authority's function can potentially expand quite a lot. Can you please give me the genesis for this change?

**Mr ABETZ** - If I may quickly backtrack, an example of relevant infrastructure might be fencing to protect a stream reserve or something of that nature. That would not be necessarily a commercial decision but a relevant decision to protect certain values.

**Dr Woodruff** - Thank you. That is what I was looking for as an example.

**Mr ABETZ** - I was just cogitating and that might be an example for you. In relation to -

**Dr Woodruff** - The change from non-commercial to whole-farm planning?

**Mr ABETZ** - Yes, to section 6(1)(k). The term 'non-commercial forestry' does not necessarily encompass what I would consider whole-farm planning. For example, shelter belts might not be of a forestry nature, but as they are out and about they might say to a landholder, 'Have you thought about a shelter belt?', et cetera, which would be a whole of farming suggestion. Even if you just grow a few trees they would not necessarily be a commercial crop of trees for harvesting in the future. If you want a completely integrated farm property, part of which was a timber reserve for harvesting in the future, other advice can be provided on the side to assist in the whole-farm planning, and also where they can provide advice as to which areas might be the best for the timber reserve out of all the land that is potentially available for the purposes of a timber reserve. Some advice and guidance in relation to which areas might be the best is also something that the experts and officers who go out and do these things might be able to assist with.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The question I have now is on clause 15(e), part (lc). This is an insertion of three paragraphs under section 6 of the principal act, Functions of Authority. I understand from reading this that the first two, (la) and (lb), have taken up what was omitted under paragraph (f) in the principal act.

Paragraph (f) was:

to maintain and update an inventory of private forests, prepare five-yearly reviews of private forests and report on compliance with export and other licence conditions as required by any agreement entered into between the State and the Commonwealth;

This amendment bill will take out the parts that are about reporting on compliance with export and other licence conditions as required by an agreement with the state and

Commonwealth. Those parts appear now to have been separated and added in as new paragraphs (1a) and (1b).

Paragraph (1a) is:

to contribute to state and national reporting on private forest matters;

So it has omitted the parts about agreements that have been entered into between the state and the Commonwealth. Previously, what has been required is reports on export and other licence conditions as required by any agreement entered into between the state and Commonwealth. Now it will be that the authority is required to contribute to state and national reporting on private forest matters and to advocate on behalf of private forest owners in the formulation of and review of state and national forest-related policies, programs and legislation.

What has been lost is any mention of agreements reporting on compliance with export and other licence conditions as required by any agreement entered into between the state and the Commonwealth. If there are agreements that are existing between the state and the Commonwealth, and if those agreements are required to have a reporting mechanism or some discussion and reporting about compliance with licence conditions, who will do that work? This is sort of saying that it is not work that is now required to be done by the private forest authority.

**Mr ABETZ** - I have an easy answer to that one: because those requirements no longer exist.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay, and they were Commonwealth requirements and it is like the contract or whatever the agreement was has ceased?

**Mr ABETZ** - I understand that is the situation, yes, but we will still have the five-yearly reviews.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - In relation to the amendment bill, clause 15, paragraph (e), inserts paragraph (1c):

to implement and manage priority projects on behalf of private forest owners;

This is new. Can you please tell me how a priority project would be defined? What are the discussions around what a priority project is? Is it an environmental values management project? Is it a commercial activities project? Is it priority related to scale or size? What resourcing would be allocated to this new task, which is implementing and managing? Managing is a big step. It is managing priority projects on behalf of private owners. That sounds like that could involve quite a lot of resourcing and human time. Could you discuss where that came from?

**Mr ABETZ** - I am advised that the authority in this will prepare the priorities. How that occurs is that the authority meets with all the private foresters that want to be part and parcel of a particular forum and advises them of priorities. It is not so much for the individual private forest holders, but dare I use that terrible term, the collective of them - all of them.

For example, fire management: what would be a good priority in relation to fire management? That would be applicable to all owners of private timber reserves. That is what that looks at, and to a large extent that is what I think they might do unofficially in any event, but it puts it into legislation and gives them authority to do so. One assumes that happens on an informal basis in any event.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Are you saying private forest owners is a collective in the way it has been used here?

**Mr ABETZ** - Yes. They have an annual meeting, as I understand it. It consults with individual private forest owners whenever and as requested. They also have an annual strategic planning meeting. It is setting the priorities there that is being envisaged in relation to this amendment.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay. Thanks.

**Clause 15 agreed to.**

**Clauses 16 to 26 agreed to.**

**Title agreed to.**

**Bill to be reported without amendment.**

### **Third Reading**

**The SPEAKER** (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is -

That the bill be read the third time.

**The House divided -**

#### **AYES 25**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis  
Mrs Beswick  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr Jenner

#### **NOES 7**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Burnet (Teller)  
Mr Garland  
Ms Johnston  
Ms Rosol  
Dr Woodruff



Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Pentland  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Ms White  
Mr Willie (Teller)  
Mr Winter  
Mr Wood

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read the third time.**

**ASBESTOS-RELATED DISEASES (OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE)  
COMPENSATION BILL 2024 (No. 21)**

**Second Reading**

[4.24 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, the Asbestos Compensation Scheme was created in 2011 to provide compensation to workers who are suffering from an asbestos-related disease as a result of exposure to asbestos during the course of their work in Tasmania.

We are all aware of the devastating consequences of exposure to asbestos and the suffering of those workers who were exposed during their working lives. The asbestos compensation scheme has been successful in providing support and compensation to those workers at a time that is very challenging for them and their families.

This bill makes various amendments to the act which implement the recommendations made in the second five-yearly review of the act, as well as additional recommendations from the 2017 review. The report arising from the second five-yearly review was tabled in parliament in October 2022.

I will now address each of the proposed changes and outline the background behind them.

First, the bill amends section 61(1) of the principal act to provide that a determination of an impairment assessor is no longer to be a determination of the medical panel. This rectifies an anomaly in the act whereby there is currently no mechanism to deal with a situation where the medical panel does not agree with the impairment assessor - other than referring to another impairment assessor.

The bill also amends the act to provide that the costs of support services for both claimants and family members may now be met by the asbestos compensation scheme. This aims to provide further support to workers and their families who are going through a difficult period in their lives. Members of the family who have attained the age of 22 years will also be able to claim these costs.

Sections 118 and 119 are amended to provide for the reimbursement of medical costs incurred prior to making a claim that are directly related to a successful claim, in recognition of the significant cost impost on claimants or their families.

A new section 127A will enable the tribunal to decide if a member of the family is aggrieved by the distribution of compensation under the default position, as provided by Schedule 1 of the act, and enable the tribunal to determine how the compensation should be apportioned among family members.

The bill amends section 146 to allow the asbestos compensation commissioner to meet the review costs of a successful claimant where an error of law has been made by the medical panel.

Section 162 is amended to specifically facilitate expenditure from the asbestos compensation fund for the provision of professional training and education and public information and community education.

Finally, the bill introduces changes to section 173, providing that a claimant is not required to repay the commissioner an amount of compensation which has been incorrectly calculated.

The proposed changes contained in the bill are prospective; therefore, they cannot be applied to claims that have already been determined or claims determined before the commencement of the amendments, but will apply to claims that are determined after the bill is passed into law.

These changes will be beneficial to workers suffering from asbestos-related diseases as a result of exposure to asbestos during their work in Tasmania, and their families. They are valuable changes and implement the recommendations from the second five-yearly review act in full, which demonstrates our government's commitment to ongoing support of the asbestos compensation scheme. The amendments also include recommendations from the 2017 review.

On behalf of the Tasmanian government, I thank all the stakeholders who provided input into the review of the asbestos compensation scheme and, in particular, the claimants and their families who have been impacted by this terrible disease.

I very much look forward to hearing the contributions from the Chamber. This is an area in which we have an alignment of interest to make sure we do the best we can for Tasmanian families. I will be taking some notes to see if I can answer any questions you may have.

I commend the bill to the House.

[4.29 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to make some comments on the Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure Compensation) Amendment Bill 2024. This was tabled 2023, but with parliament dissolving rather suddenly it has been retabled and we are debating it. I Alice Morris and Robyn Pearce for their briefing. This was some time ago, so you might have to forgive me or indeed correct me if I have anything wrong. I can say from the outset this is very important and Labor will be supporting this bill.

First, the basis of this bill was from an independent review and recommendations made in the past in the 2017 review. There was a 2022 review and a 2017 review and, if I recall from the briefing then, most of the recommendations from those reviews are being implemented with this bill. I commend the government for bringing it forward.

I will go through a few of the issues that the minister has raised in her second reading, but also in the fact sheet and as a way of reminding myself about the briefing.

This bill does some very good things. It does not impact, thankfully, thousands of people, but it is still very significant for the people and their families whose lives are impacted by asbestos-related diseases. From all accounts, around 68 people in five years have accessed the scheme and 50 received compensation. It comes in at about 10 people per year. An average payment, if I recall correctly, is about \$460,000.

The amendment makes some significant changes. Initially, a determination of an impairment assessor is no longer taken to be the determination of the medical panel and this means that the medical panel makes the determination. This can be appealed by the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT) and that is also good. The tribunal now has the ability to distribute compensation other than in accordance with Schedule 1 if a family member is aggrieved by the default position. This basically recognises that a spouse or a child could have been estranged from the person accessing the scheme and it recognises the complex nature of families. It gives a bit of flexibility, which is very good.

The Asbestos Compensation Commissioner will now be required to meet the review costs of a successful claimant where an error in law has been made by the medical panel. From what I understand, this is a potential issue, not an issue that has arisen. That is my recollection from the briefing. If I am incorrect, please correct me. This is cutting off a potential issue rather than something that has been experienced. Also, the expenditure from the Asbestos Compensation Fund will now specifically include funds for the provision of professional training and education, and public information and community education. This is up to the commission. It is largely to for education, public information, and so on, to educate people about the ability to apply for the scheme, how to apply and those sorts of things. That is good.

The claimants will not be required to repay the commissioner the amount of compensation which has been incorrectly calculated. I am not sure if this has occurred, but it is definitely a good thing because of the beneficial nature of the scheme that if the government makes a mistake there is not a claw-back. My notes tell me that has not happened, but it is good that when people get a compensation payment they can get on with their lives and not have to think about the potential for funding being clawed back if the government has made an error in their favour.

The amendments are prospective. In other words, they are not retrospective. That means that it only applies to people from now on.

The independent review said that the scheme was being administered well, which is a very good outcome of an independent review to say, but obviously there were some issues that were raised. That is why this bill has come before us.

The burden of proof is relatively low in people accessing the scheme. There are tight statutory timeframes, which is good considering the short life expectancy of most people who

are diagnosed with asbestos-related diseases, which is an absolute tragedy. That might not necessarily be people who have worked directly with asbestos or asbestos-related products; it could be partners. We have seen examples where somebody washing asbestos-contaminated clothing has suffered asbestos-related diseases down the track, or children who have helped their parents do a renovation. There are all sorts of horrific stories. The burden of proof being low is good, and from the number of people who have made claims and received compensation, I do not think this scheme is being abused in any way.

Part of this process was a survey of 100 claimants, and 37 responses from claimants and their families were received. There was an issue of additional support for counselling for families, which is in this bill, which is good. Dealing with these sorts of difficult diagnoses and the path forward makes for difficult times. Giving families counselling is good. Greater awareness was also required and that is why the education campaign funding is permitted.

I am just going through my notes so it is a bit higgledy-piggledy. The fund is based on a levy from the workers compensation insurance of around 2 per cent. At the time of my briefing there was \$29 million in the fund. Fortunately, there have not been as many claims as the actuaries predicted, hence the levy is on the way down.

Regarding asbestos-related diseases, it is good that the number of people accessing the fund is fewer than predicted. I hope that is not because people are not aware of the fund, but we never know. Asbestos-related diseases are horrific because they can pop up years or decades later after the initial exposure and there is no safe level of exposure. I hope this scheme does not need to be accessed. That would be the ideal situation now that, to a large extent, asbestos-related products are banned and not in use. However, we still have exposure due to asbestos in building products in buildings that still stand, and also in products such as lagging around exhausts in old cars. There is still asbestos out there. I urge people to be careful and very informed. Asbestos remains a very dangerous product. I hope down the track that people are not exposed to asbestos or, if they are, they have the appropriate safety precautions in place so that this scheme does not need to be accessed. That would be the ideal situation.

When I asked, the members of the family who have attained the age of 22 will be able to claim costs. I asked why 22 years? Apparently, that is consistent with other laws.

The compensation being apportioned among family members - I am sorry, I have already addressed that issue.

I thought the consultation during the review period appeared to be very good. The bill was not consulted on directly, but it was tabled in 2023 so people have had time to look at it. I have had discussions with Unions Tasmania. They had no problems with the content of this bill and recognise that it makes some beneficial changes.

With those few comments, I urge people to be safe around asbestos. It should be avoided or managed in a safe manner. I hope this compensation fund is not needed. However, if it is, this bill makes some significant changes to make the lives of those impacted, including their families, much better.

[4.40 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk on the Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure) Compensation Amendment Bill 2024 with pleasure, as

I was the minister who introduced and passed the original bill that introduced this compensation fund.

People get cynical about review provisions, not only legislation but in any sort of commitment - 'Oh well, we promise to review it'. I am sure some of the recommendations were a part of the first review conducted in 2017, but I understand that we are now looking at some of these changes to improve the bill as an outcome of those important reviews. I commend the government for now acting on those recommendations.

Sometimes when issues such as this move down the track, it is taken as a given that this is a good thing to do. However, I can recall at the time of putting this bill out into the public domain and in creating the fund, there were two major challenges. The member who resumed his seat referred to the fact that there were fewer claims than the actuaries had predicted and the cost to the fund as predicted. That is inherently a good thing for the individuals. However, at the time it was a bit of an arm wrestle with the actuaries and their advice about the scope of the fund, the quantum of the payouts, the compensation to victims and also the percentage of the levy on the insurance to actually garner the funds to provide the compensation.

At the time there was a fair bit of debate regarding cost to business and, 'it is very expensive'. I commend the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At the time, it had members who had no experience or exposure to these kind of matters because of the nature of their business, like software industries, et cetera. The chamber managed to work with me, as minister in the government, and the parliament of the time to get all businesses to agree that this was a decent thing to do, that the levy was not so crippling as to cause ramifications for businesses, and that the levy would deliver a community good. It was important for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry to do that because the history of asbestos, particularly in Australia, is one effectively marked by corporate deceit. Companies knew that this was a dangerous product and hid that from the community and the workers in post-war Australia, particularly two companies: James Hardy and CSR.

There were three waves of asbestos exposure: the mining and production of it; the implementing of it, so the workers who created manufactured products for sale; and now the third wave we have been seeing the last 20 years is of people who have experienced it. It is in piping, roofing, insulation, tiles, old kitchens, under lino and all of that sort of stuff. The third wave is the home renovator and also the building industry and workers who come across this product by virtue of their current activity. Those three waves have been significant.

As I said at the beginning, this is essentially a product that is a killer. We had a company, particularly in James Hardy, who used many legal strategies and corporate structure strategies to avoid their obligation to their workers who contracted mesothelioma and asbestosis due to their work. There were inspirational workers such as Bernie Banton. The Bernie Banton Foundation continues to do great work in awareness-raising. It took courageous workers and their unions fighting what was a multinational company with very big pockets, with sophisticated legal and corporate strategies to avoid their obligation to people they knew were harmed and killed by virtue of the product they traded in.

For those interested, there is a great book called *Killer Company* by former ABC journalist, Matt Peacock, that talks about the strategies deployed by that corporation in essentially making significant money out of this product, knowingly putting workers in harm's way, and continuing to use the product in a way that was unsafe, which killed people.

I am not a doctor but it is an awful death. Mesothelioma is a terrible disease. It does not kill quickly; it kills slowly and painfully. It is one of the worst kinds of disease and it is the luck of the draw. There are stories of workers at their mines and manufacturing plants, at Botany in Sydney, where workers would be throwing each other into piles of asbestos, playing cricket with it and using various ways of skylarking around at work, not knowing that it was dangerous. Some of those workers survived by pure luck. However, too many workers contracted those cruel diseases. The book by Matt Peacock talks about the lengths the company went to, point by point, step by step, to avoid their obligation to families who usually relied on one breadwinner in the 1960s and 1970s, to people who died a terrible death with no compensation.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, there were many campaigns, predominantly led by the union movement. I acknowledge former Australian Council of Trade Unions secretary, Greg Combet, who partnered with Bernie Banton in taking on James Hardy to make sure a fund was established to provide compensation to workers. When James Hardy reorganised globally to move many of its responsible entities into the European Union and deliberately underfunded the compensation scheme, Combet and others worked extraordinarily hard - using the courts was expensive because James Hardy had very deep pockets - those campaigners brought that company to bear. It was great to see when we had talked about not so much employee contraction or exposure to asbestos-related products, but worker exposure in a workplace environment, which was the origin of this bill. We knew there were many workers who were not employees of CSR or James Hardy or those companies that used asbestos products, but by virtue of their placement in workplaces or the conduct of the business that they undertook and were paid to do were exposed to asbestos-related products and, therefore, were contracting mesothelioma and asbestosis.

The idea and the genesis of this bill in 2011 was about saying we know that there are workers who do not have a direct relationship to the company that produced the thing, but through their work engagement, they were exposed to asbestos-related products and, therefore, were at risk of contracting. The concept around this bill in its origin was for working people who, through no fault of their own, in a normal workers compensation environment, would have had access to workers compensation, but did not in this case because they were not directly employed by the company that made the asbestos-related products, and who contracted mesothelioma and asbestosis.

The origin of this bill was to provide those working people with a level of compensation. Up until that point, so many workers - Mr Appleby is probably listening, he is up in Queensland, is he not? He is one of the great campaigners in Tasmania who fought for changes in Tasmanian law, essentially for workers who contracted these diseases through their work but were not able to get compensation because companies use all these legal strategies to deny them fair compensation.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry acknowledged their global corporate responsibility. They supported the implementation of this bill, which is to provide quick and easy access for suffering workers to an appropriate level of compensation. From some perspectives, there never is enough. There is never enough for a life, but at least they could provide some level of compensation so their last days are seen out with dignity, and so those who are left behind - their families - can have some level of dignity and compensation for losing a loved one to a workplace contraction of those diseases.

After about 30 years of community campaigning and legal battles, not only did we have the James Hardy Fund get resolved nationally across the country, but the State of Tasmania took the most reasonable step to ensure that we had a bill that would allow a fund to be established to provide compensation for families that is most reasonable.

I have a couple of questions. I thank the minister's office for the briefing. I really appreciate that. It was very informative. There are a couple of issues, because we are expanding in one area the form of compensation for families and counselling, et cetera, which is a thoroughly reasonable and decent thing to do.

The only question I have is around the fund because the integrity of the fund is very important. Whilst we have been fortunate in many cases not to have a run on the fund, we do need to make sure the integrity of the fund is maintained. For example, if there is a run on the fund and a number of cases come up, we are talking about using the asbestos compensation fund for - and at the face of it, it looks like a reasonable thing to do - the provision of professional training and education, public information and community education. In one case you could say the government should be doing that anyway. WorkSafe and the building and construction industry should be doing that anyway.

Minister, can you quickly touch on what impact you think this will have on the integrity of the fund to ensure the original purpose and ensure we do not come to the circumstance where money starts to run low and families do not receive the appropriate level of compensation? The integrity of their fund is very important. As the minister at the time, I had long meetings with the actuaries who - they are a different breed, and I say that respectfully, but they know their stuff. We had some long meetings about how we were going to establish this fund. It was ingrained in me that it is super important that once we get over the hill of establishing such an important fund, it cannot be a cash cow for other activities. It needs to be there for the prime purpose of what it is designed to do.

In relation to community awareness, that is something that WorkSafe and other organisers should be doing anyway. I believe there is a broader responsibility. I want to see what checks and balances around the expenditure of the fund in that area will be, particularly given that when we established the original commissioner, it was a recently retired senior public servant who had no other obligations to government so they could exercise their duties in quite an independent way. I must admit it has been a few years. Maybe it is the COVID haze, but having the head of WorkSafe as the same person as the commissioner, particularly when you open the fund up for professional training and education, et cetera, which is beyond the original purpose of the bill - I am not saying it is not important, it absolutely is, but there could potentially be a conflict there. I flag that as a concern, given that it is one and the same person. Yes, two different statutory roles, but they are essentially one and the same. If you could talk about how that fund will work, that would be helpful.

With regard to the provisions around the error of law to review the cost of a successful claimant where an error of law has been made by the medical panel, I support that. The conflict between the impairment assessor and medical panel - that was not foreseen in the original drafting and the working through, but that is a very sensible recommendation. I welcome those amendments.

Claimant and family members able to claim for cost of support services - completely sensible and completely consistent with the original objects of the bill, which is basically to

support families who are having a really tough time. The commissioner required to meet the review costs of a successful claimant - we have talked about that.

On the whole I support these amendments. They will strengthen the original bill. If the minister could clarify that issue around the fund and the training and education, on that basis, I support the bill.

[4.56 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Speaker, this is an important amendment bill before the House today. I say that because it affects people's lives. Most things we do in this place do, but this one in particular. As I was considering these changes, and my interactions with people over the years who have been affected by asbestosis and mesothelioma, primarily when I was a nurse, you can understand why these amendments are important today. I thank the minister for bringing them forward.

Mesothelioma is an insidious disease. It can come on at any time and without any real knowledge of your exposure, or the fact that you put yourself at risk at a previous point in time. I have seen people who have suffered intolerable pain and suffering from mesothelioma and asbestosis. I am a firm believer that if there is anything that we can do to additionally support them through a disease that they have acquired through their workplace or another exposure, then we should be doing that. It causes financial hardship for families, and I have met those families through this role and previous roles.

It is critical that when we introduce new legislation like this, it is reviewed at different points in time because there is always room for improvement, in my view.

There are a couple of points that I want to put on the record about those amendments. It is essential that when there has been a payment that has been incorrectly calculated and not being the fault of the claimant, why should they have to endure that cost? That is fair and reasonable. I am pleased to see that included in this review of the legislation.

Something that Mr O'Byrne raised, which I had a question about, was why was the funding coming out of this compensation bill for ongoing community education programs? I think that would be a primary role and function of government and would be found from other resources rather than from this compensation fund, which was purely, to my understanding, set up to provide financial compensation to those who had been affected by mesothelioma and asbestosis, and their families. I thought that public education would be the government's role and that responsibility should be funded, but not through these funds. I would appreciate an explanation of that.

I believe additional funds for counselling and support for families is critical, as others have said. I will not go on about that on the record today. If you are in a single income family or there are other financial consequences of your loved one becoming sick, the financial costs associated with putting in a claim in the first place are substantial so we should be supporting people in ways to do that.

I want to ask the minister about dust-related diseases in the mining industry, and in particular, silicosis. I have had it raised with me in the past by constituents of mine around compensation. Similar to some of the things that have been changed in this legislation, there were issues they raised with me around that, such as additional support for families, and



extension of financial support to family members as well. When I undertook some research into the compensation we provided around dust-specific diseases with silicosis in the mining industry, I could not find much information to support how we did that in the Tasmanian community and through legislation in the Tasmanian parliament. I would appreciate the minister outlining that, because whilst asbestos and mesothelioma are obviously caused by dust, silicosis is also a very debilitating disease that people can live with for quite a significant period of time. It is incredibly debilitating and painful, and impacts their quality of life, and their ability to participate in the community and the economy substantially. It would also be good to understand what the government intends to do around that.

[5.02 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise as Greens spokesperson on workplace relations to support the bill. I have some questions and I hope the minister will be able to answer those in her summing up.

The Greens support the Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure) Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. I note that the bill introduces changes recommended in the 2020 review as well as some outstanding recommendations that were held over from the 2017 review. There has been quite a long turn around, particularly in relation to the 2017 review.

Given the cruelty of the condition under the broad umbrella of asbestos-related diseases, can the minister please explain the delay? Any delay is certainly an unwelcome delay for sufferers and their families.

I note the points made by Dr Broad and Mr O'Byrne. Many of those are points I would like to talk to as well.

Specifically to the amendments, they address the issue that if the medical panel disagrees with the opinion of an impairment assessor, they are only able to refer the matter to another impairment assessor. They extend the claim eligibility for claimants and family members to costs in relation to support services. They provide for reimbursement of medical costs directly related to a successful claim. They enable the tribunal to make alternative apportionment of claims to family members other than according to the standard provisions under the act if a family member is aggrieved by that appointment.

They require the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner to pay the claimant's review costs when a claimant is successful and an error of law is made by the medical panel. They allow for the funds from the Asbestos Compensation Fund to be used for professional training and public education. As Mr O'Byrne and Ms Dow have raised, there is concern in relation to how that might be spent and how that might dip into the compensation that is meant for workers, as this is a workers compensation scheme.

Finally, the last amendment absolves a claimant from the responsibility to repay funds when their compensation is incorrectly calculated. All those amendments are good and the recommendations are well reflected in those amendments in the bill before us.

All these matters are supported by the Greens, just as the Greens gave tripartite support for compensation for asbestos-related diseases under the act when the Independent for member for Franklin was minister. The Asbestos Compensation Scheme is something the Greens

supported from the outset, and the work of the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner and their team to resolve issues should be noted.

The scheme has provided support and compensation to those workers, however, compensation for diseases that can be a chronic burden, like a ticking time bomb, is a significant challenge for those workers and their families. Let us look at the financial burden of disease. Of the 68 claims in the five-year period, from the last report in the review done by Gillam and Chandler, 51 were successful; \$22.48 million was spent over five years on lump sum payments to successful claimants - both medical and, sadly, funeral costs - and, of the total spent over the last five-year review period, no weekly benefits were administered. One would have to be a good money manager to eke out the lump sum compensation paid, and one wonders how effective this lump sum compensation might be over the long term for an average lump sum payment of \$440,940.

There are categories of payment and a level of payment for an imminently fatal case. According to the 2021-22 annual report:

A person with an asbestos-related disease and less than two years life expectancy is entitled to lump sum compensation at \$351,043. If the person is less than 80 years of age, they are entitled to an additional age-related benefit of up to a maximum of \$351,043.

All reasonable expenses related to the disease are paid for, up to a maximum amount.

I understand from discussions in the briefing and this afternoon that medical costs are met up to a ceiling as well over an extended period.

In 2021-22 this was \$121,890. Beyond this amount, the Commissioner must review the case.

Incidentally, I note that of the medical practitioners registered to review asbestos-related claims, only one female practitioner is part of that. It may be a gender imbalance the minister wishes to improve upon.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I will do my best.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you. The Greens and I welcome that the review found strong support for the scheme and that it is operating efficiently and in a timely manner. The review makes a range of positive comments about the operation of the scheme. However, I ask the minister to update the House on the government's actions in response to one of the findings of the review that does not necessarily relate to legislative reform.

The review noted that there is some evidence that knowledge of the scheme may not be reaching all potential claimants. It is the point that Dr Broad raised. Is this something that is being worked on by the government?

There is also the issue of secondary exposure, which was raised in several submissions to the review but, unfortunately, has not been picked up by the act. Although not covered in this bill, in the changes, I will briefly discuss the issue of compensation for secondary exposure,

which was raised in the review and in a number of submissions to the review. Finding 10 of the Chandler-Gillam review states:

Whilst fully sympathising with the concerns raised, the Reviewers have strong concerns about extending the Scheme beyond 'workers' as currently defined. It would represent a significant change from other workers' compensation schemes, including in other jurisdictions. However, the Reviewers encourage the State Government to consider the issue of secondary exposure in the context of asbestos exposure in the wider community.

This was brought up in the submission by the Asbestos Free Tasmania Foundation. I will quote from their submission at points 8 and 9 because it is important that we have this on the record. The government could consider this because for those workers who may carry or may not carry the disease, if there is any secondary exposure to perhaps their spouse - traditionally, there have been women who have sometimes contracted the disease with or without their spouses contracting it as well - why is it that they cannot get any compensation? I understand that this is a compensation scheme for workers but - what a surprise - it is women who are probably most likely exposed, or have been exposed over many years. I have been speaking to Laurie Appleby, whom members of the House know very well from Beulah, and working over many years on this issue. However, I digress.

I will just read from the submission from Asbestos Free Tasmania Foundation:

On the issue of secondary exposure, Asbestos Free Tasmania (ATF) urges the review to give this serious and favourable consideration. The most common issue is where workers exposed to asbestos carry those fibres home on their clothing which is subsequently handled and cleaned by their partner, most commonly their wife. This could range from waterside workers who carried hessian sacks of asbestos on their shoulders, to workers in the Goliath cement factory, where high levels of airborne fibre were normal for many years, to workers that install, maintain or repair asbestos-containing machinery and materials.

This exposure has led to cases of asbestosis and mesothelioma in those women who face even greater difficulty in establishing a common-law claim than those directly exposed. In a case known to AFTF, the victim declined to make public statements but was exposed to asbestos fibres through washing the clothes of her husband, a Goliath Cement employee, and now must be hooked up to an oxygen tank to be able to breathe. Another is suffering from asbestosis and recently had a stroke and needs help.

This issue has possibly the greatest pertinence to Goliath Cement workers and their families as that company was aware for many years of the risks its workers took. Goliath is known to have taken advice from the notorious James Hardie Company in how to handle public comment about asbestos hazards but left its workers unprotected for decades. It is reasonable to see a home-based or otherwise employed partner poisoned by asbestos in the same terms of the worker carrying the fibres home. They are both victims of employer negligence.

To my way of thinking, it is a travesty that women are often subject to this. They are not represented by employee bodies and yet they have been exposed and suffer. They would have to make claims through the courts, which is exactly what the compensation scheme does so well to avoid. It takes the burden of somebody with disease, in particular, and their family, to not have to pursue it through courts.

With a latency of disease of 30 to 60 years from initial exposure, asbestos-related diseases - the result of a deceitful, recalcitrant industry privy to the knowledge of the fatal nature of exposure and its legacy, as Mr O'Byrne has said - has devastating impacts on lives of the victims, their families and workmates. I understand the reviewers' reservations about extending the scheme to cover secondary exposure, given that the scheme is funded by levies applied to workers compensation premiums. However, I would like the minister to consider how this might be addressed in the future, and sooner rather than later. We know how devastating this disease is on families and victims.

This still leaves those suffering from asbestos-related diseases caused by secondary exposure with no option for redress but to navigate through the civil court system, where they must demonstrate that there was no other potential cause for their disease than their exposure to the primary asbestos victim. That is, if the workplace that caused their illness is still around, which is not always the case given the long latency period for asbestos-related diseases. Why is it that people should endure the same things this scheme does so relatively efficiently for workers just because they are not classified as workers?

We have just heard through the Matter of Public Importance, the speeches recognising the trailblazing MP for Franklin, Fran Bladel, who died late last year. She was a true fighter for equality, especially women. Fran would have been interested in hearing how we could try to seek justice in this case as well. I suspect many of these women may not be deemed a worker and many cannot organise in a workplace because they have received this exposure at home. It is not acceptable. Whilst they may not be in paid work, they are working, running a household and washing their husband's asbestos-contaminated clothes. Why should they not be compensated? Why is it so, and why should they suffer the long, drawn-out civil law court system this compensation scheme bypasses? This needs redress.

Even the review noted that the financial impact of the scheme would not be great if secondary exposure was included. We need to determine how we are going to address this as a parliament, given the small number of claims that would be likely to be made. The Greens would like to establish certainty and see the number of Tasmanians who have asbestos-related diseases caused by secondary exposure.

It was very difficult to get some of this information in relation to asbestos-related deaths. It is something that I will be pursuing. I would like a guarantee that the minister will look to address this legislative gap so that individuals suffering from asbestos-related illnesses are considered for compensation.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I have your question. I will do it in summing up.

**Ms BURNET** - In relation to other dust-related diseases, the review also raised the issue of including other dust-related diseases in the scheme, which occurs in other jurisdictions. I note that the final report from the National Dust Diseases task force was tabled in 2021. What

progress has the government made since then to provide compensation for those with other dust-related diseases?

**Ms Ogilvie** - Sorry, just repeat that one. What was that?

**Ms BURNET** - What progress has the government made since 2021 when the National Dust Diseases task force report was tabled to provide compensation for those with other dust-related diseases?

Finally, I acknowledge the work of many people who have worked tirelessly over many years for justice for victims of asbestos-related disease. They are victims of a mendacious industry that went ahead knowing full well of the implications of their disease. I acknowledge the work of Laurie Appleby. I acknowledge the work undertaken by people like Simon Cocker, who has been involved in Asbestos Free Tasmania for many years. I also thank those people who spoke to me in preparation for this second reading debate, whose husbands are suffering a cruel, insidious illness. I recognise the impacts that this has on families.

I am very pleased that this bill looks to address some of the support required in a psychological capacity for family members, and there is so much more that can be done. This review is very important. It would be good if it was done in a timely manner and it will be up to the next review very soon.

I commend the amendments that have been raised in this bill, but also would like to see justice for those other people who are not captured by this compensation scheme.

[5.22 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I have done my best to capture the questions and comments as we have gone through, and I will try to address some as we go.

I do not know if people are minded to move into Committee, but let us see if I can answer the questions that were raised. I will do my best, but please feel free to interact if I have not quite captured it the way you had asked.

In order of response, Dr Broad asked a question as to why the age parameter of 22 was set. That is to acknowledge that some adult children are still dependent on their parents after the age of 18 and reflects the generous nature of the scheme. This has been a situation since the act was introduced in 2011.

There has been a bit of a theme around that secondary exposure. Dr Broad specifically mentioned washing clothes, and that goes to that question of secondary exposure. Currently, under the scheme, there are no provisions for third parties who are exposed to asbestos through another person's work, for example, a family member who inhaled asbestos fibres when washing the clothes of a worker, or exposure to particles that entered shared environments, such as the family home or car. The intention of the act is to ensure compensation for workers who contracted an asbestos-related disease through their employment and were not able to claim workers compensation as they were most likely no longer working at the time of the claim. With asbestos-related diseases, there is usually a period of approximately 30 years between exposure and the diagnosis of disease, hence most claimants have retired before being diagnosed with a disease and cannot access workers compensation.

Family members would not normally be entitled to workers compensation and do not fall within the scope of the act. This approach is consistent with other jurisdictions in Australia. It remains open to a family member who contracts an asbestos-related disease to pursue a claim through the courts. My thoughts and heart go out to anybody who has contracted an asbestos-related disease and their families, but we do need to remember that the object of the legislation is to compensate people who have contracted a disease in their employment.

We heard Mr O'Byrne speak about the actuarial necessities of making sure that the compensation scheme covers the class that it is intended to cover, but because everybody has asked this question, I also will say, Ms Burnet, as Minister for Women, I feel what you are saying and I strongly support actions that will ensure gender equality in Tasmania.

The government is not currently considering expanding the scheme for the reasons I have commented on. However, this can be a matter considered by the next independent review. It would require substantial amendments to the principal act, and it also would change the intent of the act. That is not to say that it is impossible, but certainly, it would need to be subject to some pretty deep policy work. That probably answers that question, but as I said, please chip in if I have not captured it correctly.

Mr O'Byrne, it was interesting to hear the history of it and this issue is very much a journey. I know that not just with asbestos but dust-related diseases more generally, it has been a journey. We have recently done some work on the engineered stone issue, which we can feel positive about.

You asked specifically about the stability or the integrity of the fund. The answer I would like to give, just for the record, and then perhaps in a little more detail for you, is about the number of workers who are eligible to make a claim and the claims that we anticipate.

In the five years to 30 June 2021, there were 68 claims lodged - Dr Broad mentioned those as well - of which 51 were accepted, and there are a further two claims pending. This equates to an average of 14 applications with 10 accepted claims per year. There have been small fluctuations year to year, but the figures remain relatively consistent and in the short term, are expected to remain at similar levels.

Due to the broad range of industries covered, including over 3000 applications that utilised asbestos prior to its ban, it is difficult to accurately estimate exactly how many workers were exposed. In the long term, we expect the figures will ultimately decrease and we are focused on work health and safety more generally to make sure that we have measures in place that are aimed at minimising workplace exposure to asbestos, including a nationally recognised licensing system and strict protocols for workers involved in the removal of asbestos.

Connected to that point is the integrity of the fund. Whilst it is anticipated that there will be some additional costs incurred as a result of the amendments in this bill, the amount is expected to be minimal due to the nature of the changes. Some changes, such as the amendment to section 61, are unlikely to incur additional costs as it is simply a change in mechanism.

Sections 118 and 119 are capped at a level sufficient to cover costs of reasonable medical expenses prior to the claim. However, it is still relatively small in comparison to the overall cost of the claim and the overall cost of the scheme.

Section 116 aims to provide options for claimants and their family members to access psychological support through the scheme. Under section 162, requests from medical and allied health professionals to claim relevant training under the scheme are subject to approval from the asbestos commissioner, who can then determine if the cost is reasonable and necessary. This small investment also has the potential to reduce costs over time due to more effective and efficient service delivery. As the costs associated are minimal, it is not anticipated there will be a significant impact on insurance premiums based on advice received to date.

Mr O'Byrne and Ms Dow both touched on this point. The question was, in effect, how much is the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner going to be able to spend from the fund for education, for example, and is that capped? The first five-yearly review recommended that there is a need for annual meeting including continuous training in the education component for impairment assessors, medical panel registrants and other relevant persons involved in the administration and assessment of claimants. The second five-yearly review has identified a need for community education and information to increase knowledge of the scheme, and we touched on this in this Chamber as well, particularly amongst general practitioners, relevant specialists and the general community.

The act does not currently provide a mechanism for the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner to use funds for the scheme for these purposes. Accordingly, clause 12 of the bill does that and amends section 162 to allow for this expenditure which will support the ongoing effective operation of the scheme consistent with its purpose. The amendment does not fetter the amount the commissioner may spend under this section from the fund. However, it is important to note that the commissioner is a statutory office holder required to provide an annual report to parliament each year. This report will specify the amount of expenditure for this purpose, which can be scrutinised by parliament through the budget Estimates process, so that probably does help.

The minister may also give directions for expenditure of excess money from the fund for the purposes of promoting workplace safety in relation to asbestos or purposes that are, in the opinion of the minister, related to the Objects of the act.

Dr Broad commented on the changes to section 146: why was the recommendation to amend the cost provisions within the act to require the commissioner to meet review costs of a successful claimant where an error of law has been made by a medical panel, and was there a problem that caused the change? The recommendation was informed by a submission from a legal firm with experience in asbestos compensation matters, which raised the concern that a medical panel may make an error of law, such as applying the wrong test for eligibility. As the commissioner is bound by the decision of the panel, the commissioner must reject the application, even though the commissioner is aware that there is an error of law. The only remaining alternative is for the claimant to seek a review of the decision through TASCAT, and it is not reasonable in these circumstances for the claimant to bear the cost of the review.

The concern raised in the review was a hypothetical situation. Such a case has not arisen. The recommendation is relevant, however, to a potential gap in the act and it is appropriate to amend the act.

Ms Dow queried whether there are any plans to add silica-related diseases to the *Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure) Compensation Act*, or to introduce a similar compensation scheme. There are no current plans to add silica-related diseases to the

*Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure) Compensation Act 2011*. The nature of asbestos-related diseases and silica-related diseases differ significantly in terms of age of onset, progression and treatment. Consequently, the need of workers experiencing these conditions often differs significantly.

Workers who are impacted by silica-related diseases are and will continue to be able to claim through the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. The workers compensation act supports workers who are experiencing a broad range of physical and psychological injuries and remains fit for purpose. It is anticipated that the number of new claims of silica-related disease will decline in the future as a result, we hope, of our decision to ban the use of engineered stone.

Dr Broad commented on the consultation involved in developing the bill. It is helpful to lay on the record the consultation that has occurred. The changes to the act were guided by the recommendations of the second five-yearly independent review by Rod Chandler and Liz Gillam in 2022, which we call 'the review'.

The methodology for the report was comprehensive and included research into the background, history and performance of the act; consultation with key stakeholders including advertising for public submissions and publication on the department's Have Your Say website; distribution of a claimant survey and completion of face-to-face interviews of claimants and their families who requested a meeting with the review team; meeting and/or phone discussions with the commissioner, Asbestos Compensation Unit management and operational staff, a consultant occupational physician, the Deputy President of the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal responsible for all referrals made under the act, a member of the WorkCover Tasmania Board and representatives of the insurance industry; so, it was pretty broad.

The findings of the review were overwhelmingly positive, however, identified a few areas where the act and its administration could be refined to better support this vulnerable cohort and this will be achieved through this bill.

Mr O'Byrne raised a question: why was the role of the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner merged with the Work Health and Safety Regulator? When they were set up, they were separate officers. The statutory roles of the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner Scheme and the Work Health and Safety Regulator have been performed by the same officer from around 2012-13 when WorkSafe Tasmania was established. The Work Health and Safety Regulator formerly sat within Workplace Standards and the Asbestos Compensation Commissioner sat within the WorkCover Tasmania Board. When Workplace Standards and the WorkCover Tasmania Board were combined, the new executive director was then referred to as the CEO of WorkSafe Tasmania and was responsible for both statutory roles. It is important to note that these are two separate statutory roles, but the same person is doing them. The roles have not been merged, if that makes sense.

**Mr O'Byrne** - But the fund has now changed. You are seeking to expand the fund to do more than the original premise, which potentially -

**Ms OGILVIE** - I am finding it hard to hear.



**Mr O'Byrne** - You are now proposing to change the scope of the fund, which potentially causes a conflict between those two roles in terms of priorities. That is more the point.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I understand, okay.

Ms Burnet asked about the long duration of time and whether there was a delay. The answer is the operational recommendations were prioritised. The bill was then brought on and supported by government.

Is knowledge of the scheme reaching all claimants, was another question -

**Ms Burnet** - Potential claimants.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Yes. I believe our communications strategy is incredibly important. They are aware of that and I believe the communications strategy encompasses that. I am very happy, if you feel that we could be doing more, to have a dialogue with you around that.

Ms Burnet also raised the issue of secondary exposure, particularly around women, which is a critical piece of the puzzle. As I have mentioned, I personally and our government supports actions that will ensure the safety and protection of women and, in particular, gender equality in Tasmania. However, for the reasons we have discussed, we are not currently considering expanding the scheme. During the review process there is an appropriate point where those considerations could be put. I am very happy to have a dialogue with you at that time, recognising that it would be part of the next independent review and would require substantial amendments to the principal act and change the Objects of the act. It is a bit of a structural change and not simply done; it is not a simple measure to change.

I found the notes in relation to the awareness raising piece. I have some more detail for you. The government is committed to managing the legacy risk of asbestos in Tasmanian workplaces and homes and looking after Tasmanians who have been injured through exposure to asbestos at work. We are a signatory to the previous national asbestos strategic plans spanning 2014 to 2018, and 2019 to 2023. The management of risk of asbestos in Tasmania, as we have heard today, is complex and multifaceted. Different aspects of asbestos management fall within the responsibility of several government agencies, as well as local government authorities and the Commonwealth.

Some of you have raised today the pervasive nature of asbestos across Tasmanian private residences, workplaces, public buildings and the environment, together with consideration of health compensation. Broader and commercial factors means that the responsibility cannot be assigned to a single agency. That is why our government has agreed to adopt and implement the Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024 to 2030 in Tasmania. By formally adopting the plan, we commit towards implementing relevant actions within the plan in line with our government's priorities. That is a long-term phased approach to eliminating asbestos-related diseases in Australia through nationally consistent and coordinated actions. This work is led by the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency with policy and legislative review supported by Safe Work Australia. It is a broad and multifaceted approach.

I am interested in your point about potential claimants who may not be aware of it. I read here also people can register with the national register on a voluntary basis and that national and state coordination is incredibly important.

I believe there was one last question from Ms Dow. It was in relation to the silicosis issue and I have a bit more information on that. I acknowledge that people might lean into wanting to expand the scheme to cover workers who suffer silicosis and other dust-related disease. We know the nature and the numbers of people who have made claims against our workers compensation system relating to silicosis since 2018, and that is 11, 10 have worked with engineered stone in the manufacturing industry, and one has worked in mineral quarrying, so that went to your point.

As I have said, due to its specific nature, the funds in the scheme cannot be used to compensate workers for any other dust-related diseases. The act was introduced for the specific purpose of compensating workers who contracted asbestos-related diseases because it was recognised that asbestos-related diseases can impact most workplaces, industries and the broader community. Expanding the scope of the scheme to cover silicosis and other dust diseases would be a major change to the change to the act and would impact many stakeholders.

Work is ongoing in relation to the work we are doing with silicosis to raise awareness. We have recently made legislative change. We have a media campaign on silica safety, and specific guidelines for the construction industry and mining and quarrying industries. We want to prevent the occurrence of disease through the ban on engineered stone, which I believe this Chamber supported. This ban came into effect from July 2024. I was very pleased that happened. It means that any work involving the manufacture, supply, processing or installation of engineered stone is banned in Tasmania, which is good. The final layer is that, where necessary, we enforce our work health and safety laws with WorkSafe Tasmania undertaking a comprehensive compliance inspection program resulting in a number of prohibition notices and improvement notices being issued.

For these reasons our government does not currently plan to establish a compensation scheme for silicosis and other dust diseases. That probably, as best I can, answers what I believe were the questions. If there is anything else, I would be happy to -

**Ms Dow** - You said that those people would be covered through workers compensation legislation. However, if they are not working, and quite often that is what happens with silicosis - you have retired - because it does have a latency around when it is diagnosed, they are currently not covered for anything.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Let me just check if I can get an answer for you.

I am advised that the latency period for silicosis is much shorter than it is for asbestosis and mesothelioma. Silicosis has around a five-year latency period so most people remain connected with the workplace. It is an easier task, in that sense, to continue that connection and use the workers compensation scheme.

I think we are done. Thank you, everyone.

**Bill read the second time.**

### **Third Reading**

**Bill read the third time.**

## INDUSTRIAL HEMP AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 17)

### Second Reading

[5.47 p.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Industrial Hemp Amendment Bill 2024 delivers updates to the act to make it clearer and easier for our hemp growers to get on with the job. Industrial hemp has the potential to be an important crop for the state and is making a valuable contribution to the growth of the farm gate value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. The stems and seeds can be used for a variety of purposes, including textiles, paper, fuel and food. The *Industrial Hemp Act 2015* creates a simple licencing framework to support the growth of Tasmania's industrial industry.

Consistent with the intent of the act, the purpose of this bill is to retain sufficient flexibility to respond to industry priorities while providing improved clarity, transparency and efficiency. The bill also delivers on our commitment in the government's 2020 Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050 white paper to work with the hemp industry to support future growth and a streamlined regulation.

Tasmania's low tetrahydrocannabinol - or low THC - industrial hemp industry is nation leading thanks to our regulatory environment, the hard work and determination of our passionate hemp growers and the leadership of the Tasmanian Hemp Association. In 2017, shortly after Tasmania's *Industrial Hemp Act* commenced, hemp seed was approved as a food product in Australia. This occurred largely because of Tasmania's efforts to advocate for changes to national regulation. It is clear that Tasmania's legislative and regulatory environment enabled our hemp industry to expand rapidly. It peaked in 2019-20 with 1500 hectares under cultivation, and Tasmania produced 30 per cent of Australia's total industrial hemp crop, with a farm gate value of around \$5 million.

In 2021, a review of the act commenced with the purpose of considering opportunities to update and modernise the regulatory framework and to consider activities with industrial hemp that were not contemplated when the act was first drafted. The review acknowledged that the act had then been in operation for six years and it was timely to make sure that our regulatory settings for industrial hemp are proportionate and contemporary.

The review focused on three broad areas: updating existing definitions to clarify scope of regulation considering ongoing changes in the industry; clarifying the interaction of the act with other legislation; and assessing the act to ensure the level of regulation remains proportionate to risk.

Importantly, the review did not consider medicinal cannabis and associated scientific uses, which can only be licensed by the Australian Government under the Commonwealth *Narcotics Drug Act 1967* through the Office of Drug Control. It also did not consider the regulation of crop for commercial recreation cannabis or personal cultivation, which remains an illegal activity in Tasmania.

We want to ensure that growers get maximum value for their crops by using more of the plant, not just the seed, for value-added products. Like any agricultural commodity, industrial hemp seed is subject to market forces. A recent oversupply of hemp seed in global markets has temporarily decreased demand and reduced the size of Tasmania's commercially grown industrial hemp crop. Accordingly, the review focused on providing opportunities for greater whole-of-plant use to enable growers to maximise the return on their crop while maintaining efficient enforcement of illicit activities.

It is important to note that the act is broadly framed and already provides scope for greater whole-of-plant use. The licensing and compliance scheme for industrial hemp is administered by AgriGrowth Tasmania in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. Most of the detail for the licensing scheme is contained in licence conditions. Importantly, the review found that most issues raised by stakeholders can be addressed by updating licence conditions, developing and publishing policy, and streamlining administrative processes.

Accordingly, the government's response to the review is twofold. First, legislative amendments are proposed through this bill including updates to the Industrial Hemp Regulations 2016 to improve the effectiveness, transparency and clarity of both the act and regulations for industry.

Second, this will be contemplated by updating licence conditions and developing policy guidance to address practical matters identified in the review, such as dual medicinal and industrial hemp licensing, animal feed, cover cropping and cultivation testing. This will better support licences to get the most from their industrial hemp crops and improve the application process and other compliance documentation to make it easier for industry to interact with the licensing scheme.

Overall, this will provide increased flexibility, clarity and transparency, and remove the perceived and actual barriers to greater value adding for the Tasmanian hemp industry.

With the context of how the various matters identified in the review are being responded to, I will now address the resulting changes as proposed in this bill.

In summary, the bill will support greater industry growth and value-adding potential by including horticultural use as an explicit licence purpose. It will address regulatory gaps and improve transparency with respect to actions where a crop test is above 1 per cent THC, and in relation to special research licences. It will improve efficiency, clarity and consistency with existing legislation with respect to police powers, the assessments of suitability of applicants, and the definitions for fit and proper person and reasonable responsibility of officers.

In section 9 of the act, industrial hemp licences must not be granted unless the secretary of the department is satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person. However, the act does not define criteria for a fit and proper person. Therefore, the bill amends section 4 of the act and inserts section 4A to establish a definition for a fit and proper person, including specifying matters to be considered by the secretary in determining if a natural person or a body corporate is a fit and proper person for the purposes of the act.

The bill also inserts sections 21A, 21B and 21C to establish responsible officers where the holder of a licence is not a natural person. Both the new fit and proper person and

responsible officer provisions are aligned to similar provisions which exist in the *Poisons Act 1971* in relation to poppy licences.

The bill amends section 4 to include police officers under the definition of inspectors to enable police officers to conduct investigations without needing to be appointed by the secretary, and to improve the timeliness and responsiveness of investigations. The bill also amends sections 4, 7, 11, 12, 14 and 18 to rename the special licence to a special research licence to better reflect the specific research purpose of these licences, which are granted for research into hemp varieties which have more than 1 per cent THC.

Complementary amendments to the *Industrial Hemp Regulations 2016* through the new regulation 7A will add criteria that must be met before the secretary determines an application for a special research licence. Such criteria includes scientifically valid research method and approach. Given the potential benefits of the research to the industrial hemp industry, appropriate safety and security measures will be put in place to minimise the risk of their theft or unauthorised access.

The intent is to better support research innovation by providing flexibility, improve transparency and clarity for industry and researchers on the criteria used to assess applications for a special research licence. The level of detail required would be commensurate with the scale and scope of the research proposed and will provide more efficient assessments of applications for special research licences. This approach provides the capacity to support research which may deliver significant benefit to Tasmania's industrial hemp sector.

An example could be research into hemp varieties which have more than 1 per cent THC to ultimately develop a cultivate with below 1 per cent THC and with specific features for industry benefit, such as improved disease resistance or greater yield. It also manages any safety and security risks that may arise from hemp with THC levels above 1 per cent without being prescriptive on the THC levels, which could constrict innovation.

The bill amends section 8 so that the secretary is to provide a licence application to the commissioner of police to assist with determining the suitability of the applicant. This proposed amendment would bring the act into line with other existing legislation for assessing licence applications by ensuring applications are shared with the commissioner to obtain factual information that may be relevant to the secretary's assessment of the applicant's suitability. The commissioner is to inquire into and provide the secretary with a report on such matters concerning the application that the secretary requests. The commissioner is not required to disclose information to the extent that to do so would prejudice the prevention, investigation or prosecution of an offence.

Section 11 of the act currently specifies that the secretary must consult the minister responsible for administering the *Poisons Act 1971* when considering special licences, which, as already outlined, are proposed to become special research licences. The proposed amendment will make the consultation process more effective by enabling the secretary to consult with a person appointed by the minister.

The bill amends section 13 to provide the granting of industrial hemp licences for the explicit purpose of horticultural use. This clarifies that industrial hemp can be licensed as horticultural mulch or compost, for example, to support industry value adding and enable hemp byproduct to be better used in the circular economy.

Section 22(4) is amended to clarify that the conditions specified by the secretary in the instrument of appointment relate to inspectors appointed under this section.

Sections 23 and 24 are amended to clarify that an inspector may, in practice, arrange for hemp to be tested by a third party as compared to testing it themselves. Industrial hemp crops are currently tested at Analytical Services Tasmania, a laboratory accredited through the National Association of Testing Authorities. All commercial industrial hemp crops are tested and, on very rare occasions, may test over 1 per cent THC. This might be due to environmental factors such as heat stress or certain important seed varieties performing differently in Tasmanian conditions.

New section 24A will overcome a deficiency in the act to provide for the secretary to direct actions where a crop has tested above 1 per cent THC. Actions could include crop destruction or alternative actions where, for example, a crop that tests above 1 per cent THC has been grown in good faith and the licensee has otherwise complied with the licence conditions. To clarify and support information sharing, the secretary is to notify the commissioner of police when a direction is given to destroy a crop, and the secretary may seek the commissioner's advice before proposing alternative action. The act's existing review provision at sections 20 and 21 will apply to decisions of the secretary under this section.

Section 25 is amended to omit section 4 as a consequence of appointing police officers as inspectors.

Section 35 of the act outlines how certain officials are protected from personal liability when performing a function under the act. It is important that police officers are included under this section. A new section 35A provides authorisation for police officers to possess and supply industrial hemp or hemp for whatever purpose. This could apply, for example, when carrying out investigations for training purposes, or for the transport and delivery of controlled substances.

Section 13 of the act provides that an industrial hemp licence may authorise a person to possess, cultivate or supply industrial hemp for one or more of the purposes listed in that provision as specified in the licence.

Section 14 provides that a special licence may authorise a person to possess, cultivate or supply hemp that is not industrial hemp for the purpose of scientific research, instruction, analysis or study.

It is proposed that section 37 be amended to retain future flexibility and to provide that regulations may prescribe the types of activities that may or may not be carried out under an industrial hemp licence or special research licence. At the same time, it is proposed that regulation 6, which lists the types of industrial hemp licence that may be issued under the act, be rescinded. These two amendments achieve the intent of streamlining and clarifying licence purposes and activities while providing future flexibility for the regulation to prescribe activities under licence, if required.

Finally, section 37A inserts transitional provisions to facilitate an effective transition process for an existing special licence to a special research licence under the amended act.

In closing, the initial process to review the act and then the development of this bill involved close consultation with leading Tasmanian hemp growers, representatives from the Tasmanian Hemp Association, the Australian Hemp Council, TasFarmers and the Office of Drug Control. The review of the act and draft of the bill were also subject to an open public consultation process. Key government agencies including Tasmania Police, the Department of Justice and the Department of Health, together with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, were all involved in the inter-departmental working group and steering committee process.

I sincerely thank all those involved, including the staff from AgriGrowth Tasmania in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for bringing together what amounts to a considered package of improvements to the regulatory environment for the industrial hemp industry in Tasmania.

Like we did on hemp in food, the government has also committed to support industry to advocate nationally for greater use of non-medicinal products from industrial hemp, such as extracts and resins, in a way that is compliant with the Commonwealth Drug Regulatory Scheme.

Overall, the government's objective is to create avenues for local growers and experts to innovate, value add and develop a prosperous, sustainable and valuable industrial hemp industry in Tasmania.

I commend the bill to the House.

[6.06 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to contribute on behalf of Tasmanian Labor and indicate at the beginning that we will be supporting the Industrial Hemp Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the minister for her contribution regarding the content of the contribution, the submissions and any consultation that has happened around this. It is a fairly common-sense administrative, make-things-a-bit-better amendment, and that is good. I appreciate the briefing I had on this amendment bill.

Regarding the submissions, I want to get some clarification. At the end is the submission from the industry association. There still appears to be a difference of opinion, interpretation, understanding or, I suppose, intended effort or willingness to make some significant changes. All the language around supporting growth and innovation, being able to use the whole of plant, and seeing where we can make the most of the industry in Tasmania - those things have been supported by these amendments. However, in reading the submission from the industry association and speaking to members - although I thank the department for the briefing, and I understand the position that was given and why these changes were not possible or did not happen in this - there seems to be a difference of opinion in this area.

Tracking through this amendment bill, I agree it does make some things clearer and easier. It is important to figure out how we can make the most of the whole of the plant so that we can have a successful, growing and thriving industry in Tasmania. All those things are important.

When it comes to priorities, there is a single area of effort that industry would like to see, which goes to that single convention piece and how it interrelates with other acts. I will touch on that at the end.

In considering this amendment bill, it is important for anyone in the community who is looking to get into the industry or are a member of the industry and wants to better understand the environment, to understand what this actually does and what industrial hemp is in Tasmania.

The additional flexibility is appreciated. Yes, it aims to support growth; it also provides for the granting of the industrial hemp licences for the purpose of horticulture; it renames the special licence and the special research licence; and it makes the assessment of the applications under that special research licence element more efficient. It includes police officers under the definition of inspectors under the act. It includes the provision for the secretary to direct actions where the crop has been tested. There are very few occasions - and you reinforced that in your second reading speech - where there is a crop tested above that 1 per cent threshold but, if that does happen for whatever conditions and reasons, there is a provision for the secretary to direct actions. The provisions for the commissioner of police, the inclusion of definitions of a fit and proper person and responsible officer, and the piece about the transitional provisions of the Industrial Hemp Amendment Bill assists with the transition from special licences to special research licences.

It does all those things and that is useful. It makes things clearer. However, when underpinning and providing that next-step change, there was just that one piece that was missing.

I was interested to learn - and the minister mentioned a few reasons why there was a peak some time ago - that activity peaked with 1500 hectares and a value of around \$5 million globally. The potential value of this industry is significant. The industry association believes we could benefit in a far greater way in adding to the farmgate value in Tasmania and realising the potential of the industry. Consequently, it is important for us to do whatever we can to make sure that we create that environment.

You have clarified the interaction with other acts and considered risks. I am interested in that piece while considering how risk-averse we are as a state, or how willing we are to continue to lead the way. You mentioned quite rightly that Tasmania has led the way in this area and that we have been at the forefront of the development of the industry here. As with a number of other areas in Tasmania, we do not want to lose that leading edge by being too risk averse.

It is true that growers and industry representatives want to see that we can get the maximum value out of our crops. There is no doubt that there is big value to be realised in Tasmania. It is important to clarify and put on the record when speaking about this that it is not clear to everyone what industrial hemp is. You talked about the things that it does not address in terms of medicinal cannabis or recreational crops and those sorts of things. Industrial hemp is the same plant but with very low percentages of certain compounds. That is very important. Sometimes it is easier to define what it is not. I was interested in a fact sheet that explained in plain English that industrial hemp is not the same as legal cannabis plants used for medicinal purposes, nor is it illegally grown cannabis plants for recreational use. We have a good industry in Tasmania based around horticultural use, food and fibre. We also have a great industry around construction, where we are leading the way; food products, whether it be from the seeds, seed oil, or fibre products; and people wanting to work more closely together to use the whole of the plant in their enterprises.



I thank the people who made submissions. A number of submissions, including individuals, were made. One individual focused on the fibres, outlining the different ways they use that, whether it be for textiles, paper, fuel, plastics, body care, when you talked about those resins and things at the end as well. Horse bedding is of interest, and building materials. It was great to have an individual's perspective.

We had the organisational perspective from TasFarmers, which was TFG at the time. TasFarmers said it was crucial that the act supports the advancement of the industry and does not hinder potential future growth. I think in that they were underlining and supporting the position of the industry association.

We had a submission from Hale Farm that welcomed the clarifications and was grateful about recognising horticulture as a permitted use. There was also a submission from Plant Well.

There are two submissions I want to focus on: the one from the Tasmanian Hemp Association and the submission from the Australian Government. This was the most interesting part of the briefing, and also an area where there was a clear difference in positioning.

The Hemp Association submitted to the original review in 2021, when this process started, and there was additional time to put in the submissions in 2022. At that time the association was talking about the United Nations meeting that happened in December 2020. In its submission, it writes:

The United Nations removed cannabis from schedule 4 of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and the non-THC compounds found in the plant are no longer scheduled under international drug conventions. Many states and other nations have already taken bold and decisive action to bring outdated legislation in line with current community and scientific views around this stigmatised crop so innovative businesses can thrive.

The Hemp Association believed that convention had been amended. As I understand it, the Australian Government submission was sought to specifically respond to that. There was a letter included in the consultation which says:

It should be noted that while it is recognised that the low THC extracts for cannabis contains little or no psychoactive THC, the single convention does not control cannabis or extracts based on the THC content, but rather on what the intended use of the cannabis is for, and generally limits this use to medical and scientific purposes.

Further in the letter, it is interesting to me that it says:

I note that the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs held a vote in 2020 to consider a threshold for the THC in preparations to clarify what substances are controlled under the single convention. Ultimately, however, the commission voted against any amendments. Therefore, any extracts and tinctures of cannabis, including hemp oil, remain controlled under the single convention and not to be used for non-medicinal purposes.

Having had two submissions with two specifically different pieces of information in it and the benefit of the briefing, I went back to the Hemp Association and said, 'This is what has been shared'. Did it have an update in terms of its submission? Its submission at the time was fairly strongly worded, saying:

Upon reading the final report, we're disappointed to see that no real action is being taken by the government at this time -

to implement the proposed improvements they had included in their original submission. Having spoken to a representative of the association, I understand that it remains disappointed that there had been no action on that.

As I understand it, the association's position is that there is a difference of interpretation, or a potential difference, in how that action at the 2020 meeting occurred; that there are jurisdictions around the world that have progressed and made changes subsequently; and that some states in Australia have determined to push on in any case, given their own interpretation.

Tasmanian Labor supports this amendment bill. We recognise that the amendments are practical, commonsense and administrative, so we support the changes as outlined. However, we would be keen to see more work done on the requests and expectations of the industry to see what more can be done to progress more significant step changes to create better outcomes for industry in Tasmania.

[6.19 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister and everyone who has been working on this bill. The Greens will be supporting it. I am going to keep it brief or I will end up echoing everything that Ms Finlay has just said. However, I am no less enthusiastic to be talking about the prospects of enabling the expansion of this important industry for Tasmania. As has been pointed out, this state has proudly led the country in the hemp industry. That is thanks to the empowering state government legislation put in place some years ago. As the industry expands, ongoing amendments to the *Industrial Hemp Act* to facilitate Tasmania's continuing innovation in this space are welcome.

Hemp is an extraordinary, versatile product and plant. Its value to the globe, particularly in a time of climate and biodiversity crisis, cannot be overstated. Its long-lasting fibres used, for example, in clothing, can help minimise waste. The strength of hemp fibres for the use of ropes and other heavy-duty products can create goods with a far longer life span. The fast-growing nature of hemp crops means it has a high-yielding turnover and does not require vast amounts of land clearing or other forms of possible environmental destruction. There are also numerous health benefits, which we have heard about today, from consuming hemp products such as seeds and oil. Those include things like reducing inflammation, boosting heart health and improving a variety of skin conditions.

Hemp being a regulated product, as we have heard today, is impacted by two other pieces of legislation in this state, those being the *Poisons Act 1971* and the *Misuse of Drugs Act 2001*. Future industry growth will require all three pieces of legislation to be assessed against global movements in the hemp business to ensure that Tasmania does not fall behind. As the minister pointed out, the Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050 white paper states the ambition to work with the hemp industry to explore options to support future growth and streamline regulation. These amendments are a step in the right direction for streamlining

regulation through introducing a range of refined measures determining who is a fit and proper person to be granted a licence. The amendments have generally tidied up the legislation very well.

However, as Ms Finlay has pointed out, amendments to this act can, and should, go further to build the industry and assist with more value-adding opportunities. This is a sentiment shared by various associations, community advocates and groups, some of whom made submissions on these draft amendments. None of the handful of submissions received opposed the amendments, but all had concerns that it did not go far enough and that Tasmania is at risk of losing its nation-leading status if we do not go further.

It is tremendous that these amendments are enabling principal, whole-of-plant uses. This does mean that Tasmania's hemp industry is going to go further and be truly sustainable as a player with the ability for hemp byproducts to be used for horticultural products such as mulch. We need to encourage all industries to be looking at holistic product uses to minimise waste byproducts and to move towards a sustainable, circular economy.

However, some states, such as New South Wales, have been more advanced in enhancing their high-value export opportunities, and much of that is through the hemp leaf extract products - restrictions that should be considered for removal within the Tasmanian legislation in the future. That would enable our state to create even more sustainable products, including bio-insecticides, health product additives - that is more towards the health and wellbeing benefits that we have already noted - and beer and tea products as well.

I will read in some of the Australian Hemp Industry Association submission because it goes further to clarify exactly what hemp is. That seems to be the greatest hindrance we currently have. The Australian Hemp Industry Association noted that the industrial hemp industry has been stifled for over 100 years by the confusion around the meaning of the word 'cannabis'. Hemp and cannabis are both terms used to describe a plant of the genus *Cannabis*. However, industrial hemp is a plant with very low levels of the psychoactive substance THC.

My sole question is echoing that from Labor and Ms Finlay - why did the bill not go further? There was expectation from the various community groups. Is it the century-long stigma around hemp and cannabis that is holding us back and making us slightly risk averse? What more do we need to do to help break down that stigma to progress this industry so that we ensure that Tasmania is absolutely nation leading?

I was also going to read into the *Hansard* that older Tasmanian Hemp Association submission, which has kindly already been done on my behalf, but I echo that final comment from the Tasmanian Hemp Association:

Unfortunately, a failure to take the necessary bold steps now means an opportunity to truly make a difference is being lost.

Before closing, it was wonderful to hear today of the late Fran Bladel, who led the inquiry into the medicinal uses of cannabis many years ago. That is testament to how Tasmania has really led the way for a variety of uses on the hemp front.

There is no doubt that the Tasmanian government will continue to support and grow the hemp industry in our state, as outlined in their 2050 white paper. Hemp can be a huge economic

contributor to our agricultural sector. However, as the various associations and stakeholders have articulated, we must be far bolder if Tasmania is to keep its nation-leading reputation. The Greens support the bill.

[6.27 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, before I get into it, hemp is a 90-day crop. As logging becomes more contentious in our native forests, here is the answer for the building materials we need.

I was fortunate to have a briefing with the advisers from the minister's office and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. Based on those conversations, I believe there is a positive collaboration between government and industry. The consultation report on the bill is a demonstration that the government is listening to the community and the key industry stakeholders. But, is there enough listening and responsiveness, and are there areas for improvement?

In terms of economics, I have been advised that there has been an overproduction of hemp globally, leading to a decrease in hemp products being produced in Tasmania with a drop in growers and revenue received. Other places like China, India, the United States, Canada, Russia and European nations are major suppliers of industrial hemp. The industrial hemp market size is expected to almost triple in the next few years as there is rising demand for products such as textiles, building materials and food products. Factors influencing the market include legalisation and deregulation of hemp cultivation; demand for hemp-based products, particularly hemp seeds and oil; advances in harvesting and processing technology; and rising interest in hemp as an alternative to crops that require more water and pesticides to grow.

The main production in Tasmania is for hemp seed, as we have great growing conditions. Some fibre can be used in hempcrete for building and has been done in Tasmania. Value-for-money hemp seed is the most attractive option for farmers who must consider economic return when deciding how best to use available land. Can Tasmania compete in the global market with industrial hemp? There is an ongoing opportunity in the domestic market and international market for Tasmanian farmers to supply locally grown industrial hemp, a product that is genuinely clean and green and not just marketed that way.

I was surprised that this is still a relatively small industry given that the industry has been in place since 2015. I understand that there are many factors that influence growers to cultivate hemp and that economics is probably the most crucial one. Over the past five years there has been a downward trend of growers in Tasmania, despite the number of licence holders remaining relatively stable. Last season, there were only eight active growers of hemp out of 69 licences, down from a peak of 49 growers out of 75 licences in the 2018-19 financial year, and 47 growers out of 89 licences in the 2019-20 financial year. There needs to be some discussion about how this trend can be reversed to keep a sustainable industrial hemp industry in Tasmania.

I understand that, under the act, there is a requirement for hemp products to test below 1 per cent THC content for it to pass the inspections as per the act. This bill seeks to give more flexibility to the secretary to reduce the likelihood of the destruction of hemp or industrial hemp. My question is - and maybe the minister can answer - how many times has industrial hemp been tested and found to have above 1 per cent THC, and are there any statistics on this held by NRE?

I heard from the briefing yesterday that some in the industry would like to see it further deregulated. I also found it interesting that recent comments from the minister for Resources highlighted that private land is private land, and we need to respect that. He argued that we should not have the right to tell people what they can or cannot grow on their land.

The *Industrial Hemp Act* and this bill still maintain regulation on this to ensure that there is a healthy balance. That is what we, as legislators, must strike: the balance between freedom to and freedom from when there are actual or perceived risks. I am asking for consistency - balanced regulations, not overreach. The industry needs to be allowed to get on with it to support jobs and economic growth. At a future time, with more open dialogue and consultation with the community and the industry, further deregulation of this industry would be welcome.

I have some concerns that the over-regulation may be a factor that directs farmers into growing other products, not just the economic reasons - getting licences, the testing regime, the surveillance by authorities, the uncertainty about what happens to a crop if it is not below the 1 per cent threshold, and the risk taken to grow industrial hemp in a global market for something for which demand is probably still relatively low in Tasmania.

In the act there is a responsibility for growers to destroy hemp if it tests over 1 per cent, and if they are convicted, pay the costs of the destruction of their own crop, even if it is forfeited to the Crown. This act is rather juvenile in the sense of overprotectiveness and excessive caution. Tasmania could be a regional leader in supplying industrial hemp as we have excellent growing conditions, but the act prevents us from taking industrial hemp to its full potential.

I understand that licences and inspections and powers of inspectors were likely part of the initial negotiations to get this act in place in the first instance, but I imagine that farmers undertaking an operation of any scale are likely to be compliant with all aspects of legislation. The act effectively gives the government the powers to identify industrial hemp growers in contrast with hemp that is not industrial.

An inspection is an important part of the process, but I found out during the briefing that until now no-one has been charged or convicted under this act, and that education and awareness tools have been the main function of the government to support growers. As members of parliament and government departments, we can be doing more to advocate and promote the cultivation of hemp, not only for export but for value adding here in Tasmania. My suggestion to the government is to continue to work with stakeholders and, perhaps more importantly, reflect on its own attitudes towards hemp and the potential limits the state places on the free market, in this instance due to the stigma associated with cannabis.

To destroy or not to destroy - that is an important question in this bill. Under the current act, if industrial hemp is grown under licences is tested and found to contain over 1 per cent THC then the secretary has no other option than to order it to be destroyed. The bill as proposed will give the secretary more discretion for the industrial hemp to be used for other purposes and not to be destroyed just because the THC concentration might be 0.01 per cent, or 1 per cent or 2 per cent above the required 1 per cent limit. It is a waste for the market and for the farmer to destroy crop for no other reason than it does not quite fit within the rules. I welcome this change in the bill and hope that it leads to better usage of production.

Not being connected to the industry, it could be a case of legislation catching up with what already occurs. The threat of hemp destruction may have been enough for compliance.

A licence holder for industrial hemp has conditions on the licence that include notifying the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) of testing sites, keeping records, not supplying industrial hemp to anyone without an industrial hemp licence, and being subject to testing at least once per year. At the briefing I was informed that compliance action has been mainly regulatory. NRE staff work with growers and have conversations rather than take the legal route. Continued non-compliance would lead to further actions under the act. However, I was informed that there were no instances of this occurring in Tasmania.

I would like this on the public record: has anyone been charged or convicted under the *Industrial Hemp Act*? I hope the minister can provide a response to this question for clarity. Most growers will be very compliant with the rules, wanting to do it right and build the industry.

The Tasmanian Hemp Association (THA) is the peak body representing the Hemp Industry Association. They do a great job to bring as many stakeholders together as possible. From their website, the Tasmanian Hemp Association state they are proud to have virtually all key industry stakeholders in our home state and mainland Australia as corporate members of the association, stating:

The expertise and experience of the folk from the list of businesses below runs deep, and by making critical introductions between these partners, our broader membership and the public, and ensuring all parties are remaining connected, the THA is playing a vital role in progressing the hemp industry both in Tasmania and beyond.

The association is a vital part of the industry and has done well to advocate on behalf of its members and educate the community. It is pleasing that the government and industry are working well together and that there has been an improvement in the efficiency of licensing processes and other key asks by the industry.

To conclude, it might be out of the scope of the bill and indeed the act, but if there is any work the various wings of government can do to promote and advertise the benefits of hemp, provide incentives or schemes to encourage growing industrial hemp, develop community education awareness through public campaigns of research funding, and fund independent studies into the benefits to the Tasmanian economy if more hemp was grown in Tasmania, these would all be positive directions.

Further improving diversity in food and fibre production in Tasmania is healthy and gives options for farmers depending on the market conditions for hemp, but also as an alternative for long-rotation plantations and other seed crops.

I intend to support the bill because it demonstrates progress in the industry. I would like to see continued progress in this space and by the government with the industry.

[6.37 p.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Resources) - Honourable Speaker, I will read in a letter from the Australian Hemp Council from 18 June 2024:

Tasmania Moves Forward on Hemp

The Australian Hemp Council (AHC) acknowledges and appreciates the efforts of the Tasmanian government in supporting the Tasmanian hemp industry. It is well known that the state governments are constrained in their efforts to bring about changes to hemp legislation because of restrictive legislation and regulations at the federal level. This is also the case in Tasmania.

The AHC is pleased to see the Tasmanian government has committed to support the hemp industry to advocate nationally for contemporary pathways, compliant with the Commonwealth Drug Regulation Scheme, to potentially allow for greater use on non-medicinal products from industrial hemp such as extracts and resins.

It is AHC policy to enlist support from all state governments in urging the federal government to bring about regulatory and legislative changes which will allow the state governments to provide further opportunities for Australian hemp farmers.

Two key changes that help the Tasmanian hemp industry includes

1. Allowing hemp farmers to supply hemp mulch for horticultural businesses, providing extra revenue streams to crop returns.
2. In the case of a crop exceeding the 1% THC level, the bill calls for the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE Tasmania) to direct crop destruction or alternative actions. The proposed change prevents the wasteful destruction of fibre and other crops, which have only marginally exceeded the THC levels and still has no drug value.

We still have a long way to go in giving the hemp industry a fair go. Tasmania is setting a good example for other states such as Victoria and Queensland, which still have no dedicated hemp legislation in place.

I will also read a submission to the draft bill from the Australian Government's Department of Health and Aged Care:

Dear Ashley

Thank you for your recent correspondence to the Office of Drug Control (ODC), a part of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, regarding the Tasmanian Government's recently released *Final Report on the Review of the Industrial Hemp Act 2015* (Final Report) and the draft Industrial Hemp Amendment Bill 2023 (Tas) (the Bill).

Broadly speaking, our understanding is that the Bill is intended to ensure the sufficient flexibility for Tasmania to respond to emerging priorities within the industrial hemp industry in Tasmania. Among other things, if enacted, the Bill will amend the *Industrial Hemp Act 2015* (Tas) (Industrial Hemp Act) to provide for the granting of industrial hemp licences for the purpose of

horticultural use. This is intended to support industry to better use hemp by-product in a circular economy, for example as horticultural mulch or compost.

Australia has obligations under international drug treaties where all products derived from the cannabis plant (excluding fibre and seed) are considered drugs and may only be used for medical or scientific purposes. The United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 (the Single Convention), as amended, requires all signatories to implement controls on the cultivation of the cannabis plant. As a signatory to the Single Convention, Australia has implemented some of these controls through the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967* (Cth) (Narcotic Drugs Act).

The Single Convention defines how the *cannabis plant* may be used. Under Article 28, Australia is not required to control the cultivation of the cannabis plant for fibre and seed, or for horticultural, purposes. As a result, hemp cultivation for fibre and seed is controlled by State and Territory legislation. The proposal to clarify that licences under the Industrial Hemp Act may be granted for horticultural purposes would similarly appear to be a matter open to regulation at the State and Territory level.

It should also be noted that, while it is recognised that low-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) extracts for cannabis contains has little or no psychoactive THC, the Single Convention does not control cannabis (or extracts) based on THC content but rather on what the intended use of the cannabis is for, and generally limits this use to medical and scientific purposes.

However, where the *cannabis plant* is not used for fibre and seed, or horticultural purposes, the use of *cannabis (including extracts/resin)*, must be under the control framework, which for Australia is implemented through the Narcotic Drugs Act, and cannabis (and extracts/resin) may only be used for medical or scientific purposes. As such, should a cultivator of industrial hemp also wish to use the hemp flower, or make extract/resin for medicinal purposes, they can do so by applying for a licence under the Narcotic Drugs Act for the cultivation and production of medicinal cannabis, or to manufacture a narcotic drug. Any such application must be made to the ODC.

We understand there is interest within the Tasmanian hemp industry to be able to produce non-medical extracts and resins derived from industrial hemp. On this issue, the Final Report notes this is an issue that requires a coordinated, national, industry-led approach and the Tasmanian Government supports industry-led advocacy to resolve this issue at a national level. The Final Report further suggests a possible way forward is to remove low-cannabinoid extracts from the drug control framework by advocating for amendment to the National Poison Standard. For example, one option might be for an amendment to allow hemp biomass oil with the same low-cannabinoid concentrations as currently approved for hemp seed oil.



However, as the Final Report goes on to correctly note, the Single Convention defines extracts and resins of cannabis as a drug. Accordingly, as previously indicated, extracts/resin from the cannabis plant are subject to the control framework under the Single Convention and therefore can *only* be used for medical or scientific purposes.

In this regard, I note that the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs held a vote in 2020 to consider a threshold for THC in preparations to clarify what substances are controlled under the Single Convention. Ultimately, however, the Commission voted against any amendments, therefore any extracts and tinctures of cannabis, including hemp oil, remain controlled under the Single Convention and are not to be used for non-medicinal purposes.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for Tasmania's recent collaboration with the ODC on matters of common interest, including certain supply matters. The ODC is currently considering the extent to which medicinal cannabis licence holders under the Narcotic Drugs Act can source their starting genetic material ... from State or Territory industrial hemp licence holders. As this issue varies amongst the jurisdictions, depending on their applicable legislation, we look forward to continuing to work with you and provide guidance for interested stakeholders.

Finally, I note that Tasmania will be reviewing its industrial hemp licence conditions further to the consultation process on the draft Bill, with a view to developing policy and implementing improvements prior to the 2024 growing season. Please do not hesitate to contact the ODC for any assistance during that process. In particular, we would be interested in working with you on issues relating to the Single Convention or matters that may intersect with the Narcotic Drugs Act, including clarity in relation to obligations for businesses holding both industrial hemp and medicinal cannabis licences and security, supply and waste management matters,

Yours sincerely

Avi Rebera  
Assistant Director  
Office of Drug Control

In response to Ms Finlay's question about the single convention, the Commonwealth Office of Drug Control (ODC) cannot authorise non-medical extracts and resins from industrial hemp because of *Narcotics Drug Act 1967* (Commonwealth), only permits cannabis extract and resin production for medicinal and scientific purposes. This links directly to implementing the Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs, 1961, where all products derived from the cannabis plant, excluding fibre and seed, are considered drugs and may only be used for medical or scientific purposes.

There is no issue with the Tasmanian *Industrial Hemp Act 1995*. Tasmania's *Industrial Hemp Act 2015* is already broad enough to allow for the production of industrial hemp extracts and resins. However, to ensure compliance with the National Drug Control Framework and, in

turn, Australia's obligations to the single convention, licence conditions are currently imposed. Specifically, Tasmania's industrial hemp licence conditions prohibit contraction of the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*, the extraction of cannabinoids or cannabis oil from the cannabis plant, or any other activities relating to therapeutic or medicinal use of cannabis.

Specifically, extracts and resins of cannabis, including from industrial hemp, are regulated under the Therapeutic Goods (Poisons Standard - February 2024) Instrument 2024. This is a legislative instrument under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* (Commonwealth), which classifies medicines and chemicals into schedules.

The National Poisons Standard is made law in Tasmania by order under section 14 of the *Poisons Act 1971*. Section 14(1) of the *Poisons Act 1971* provides that the minister may adopt the schedules of medicines and poisons in the Poisons Standard. Section 14(2) provides that the minister may amend the Poisons Standard in its application in Tasmania, including by admitting a specific substance or class of substance from any of the schedules in the Poisons Standard. Section 14(3) provides that if the minister amends a Poisons Standard under section 14(2), the minister must have regard to any relevant classification of substance made from time to time by the United Nations organisation or any of its agencies.

Extracts and resins of cannabis are classified as drugs under section 1 of the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961. To reiterate, the aim of the convention is to combat drug consumption through coordinated international intervention. Its intent is to limit the possession, consumption, trade, distribution, import, export, manufacture and production of drugs to medical and scientific purpose only.

It is not an issue with the Tasmanian legislation. Tasmania's *Industrial Hemp Act 2015* is already broad enough to allow for the production of industrial hemp extracts and resins. Section 4 defines the industrial hemp as any plant of the genus *Cannabis* that has been grown from a certified hemp seed that has a concentration of THC in the leaves and flowering heads of not more than 1 per cent, and includes a seed of any plant and the product derived from any such plant. Section 13 provides for a licence that can authorise a broad range of activities including any other purpose approved from the secretary.

The Tasmanian government fully supports industry to advocate for a nationally consistent pathway for non-medical extracts of industrial hemp. However, it is limited by the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, and in turn the National Drug Control Framework.

In summary, we have explored the options, determined a position and will continue to advocate on behalf of industry to the federal government. The issue that has been raised with the Australian Government during the process of the review of the *Industrial Hemp Act 2015*, most recently in February 2024, the then minister for Primary Industries wrote to the federal Health minister, the Honourable Mark Butler MP. The reply advised that the Department of Health and Aged Care is always interested in low THC cannabis as a source of extracts for various purposes and is considering what, if any, options might be available, noting the Australian Government must ensure activities avoid damaging Australia's international reputation under the Single Convention as a well-regarded opiate producer.

**Ms Finlay** - If I may ask a question, you mentioned that the government would support industry to advocate nationally for this change. Is the government advocating for this change also at a national level?

**Ms HOWLETT** - Yes, absolutely. In response to Mr Garland's questions, all commercial crops are currently sampled and tested. Samples are collected by a regulated crop inspector and provided to Analytical Services Tasmania for THC testing. Sampling is performed in accordance with an agreed protocol. Generally, sampling occurs at 50 per cent seed set for seed crops and approximately 70 days from the date of sowing for fibre crops. Research trials with multiple treatments are inspected. However, sampling may or may not occur depending on a range of factors such as the end use of the trial material.

Licensees are responsible for paying the cost of THC testing. A standard THC test is \$143.25 per sample as of 14 May 2024.

Mr Garland asked how many crops had been destroyed. To date, three small plots totalling 2.35 hectares have exceeded the 1 per cent THC threshold out of a total cultivated area of more than 5500 hectares since the act commenced. In these instances, licensees were advised that their plots were no longer authorised under the act. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) worked cooperatively with the licensees to resolve the issue. Subsequent measures were taken by the licensee to terminate the plots.

You also asked if anyone has been charged or convicted under the *Industrial Hemp Act*. The answer to your question is no.

In closing, the member for Lyons, Ms Badger, also commented on it being in beer. About four weeks ago. I tried hemp gin. It was from our electorate in New Norfolk. It was fabulous. One of the skin care products that I use daily has hemp seed oil in it. The hemp seeds are fantastic on porridge as well. Since I have been visiting hemp owners, I have been utilising the product. I can advocate for the oil as well; it is great on a salad.

In closing, I thank all those who have made submissions together with staff from AgriGrowth Tasmania and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, including Jo Hall and Ashley Bastock; and Parliamentary Counsel for bringing together what amounts to a considered package of improvements to the regulatory environment for the industrial hemp industry in Tasmania. Like we did with hemp in food, the government has also committed to supporting the industry to advocate nationally for greater use of non-medicinal products from industrial hemp for one or more of the purposes listed in that provision as specified in the licence.

Thank you everyone in the Chamber also for their contributions and to all those who have provided submissions. We look forward to making this industry stronger and helping them increase their target.

**Bill read the second time.**

### **Third Reading**

**Bill read the third time.**

## JUSTICE MISCELLANEOUS (COMMISSION OF INQUIRY) BILL 2024 (No. 26)

### Second Reading

[6.58 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Justice) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read the second time.

The Justice Miscellaneous (Commission of Inquiry) Bill 2024 implements a number of the recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

The commission's report contains 191 recommendations, all of which will be implemented by the Tasmanian government with the aim of better protecting children and young people in this state. The bill is another step towards fulfilling that commitment.

I thank the victim/survivors who participated in the commission's process. I thank you for your patience and I recognise that while this bill is an important one, there is much work still to be done. I also extend my sincere thanks to everyone who assisted the commission's work and, by extension, contributed to this important law reform.

I will now turn to the amendments contained in the bill.

The first amendments in the bill relate to apologies given in proceedings governed by the *Civil Liability Act 2002*. These amendments implement recommendation 17.5 and reflect aspects of related recommendations 17.4. The provisions in the tabled bill are somewhat different from those in the consultation bill. In the latter, the reforms would have been in Part 10C of the act, which deals with liability of organisations for child abuse. In this bill, the provisions are in Part 4, which deals with apologies. This change reflects stakeholder feedback and other advice taken during the drafting process.

I wish to clearly state support for commission's recommendation 17.4, which begins with the sentence:

The Tasmanian Government should ensure individual victim-survivors of child sexual abuse who request an apology receive one. Proactive steps should also be taken to offer an apology to victim-survivors who make contact in relation to their abuse.

Legislation is not the sole tool for promoting trauma-informed apologies. The Department of Justice is progressing other work to supplement the legislation and guide government institutions through the process. This resource will be publicly available.

The commission recommended amending the *Civil Liability Act* to ensure that an apology in relation to child sexual abuse can be made without amounting to an admission of liability. It wrote that the Tasmanian government and government institutions should be able to apologise in relation to child sexual abuse without compromising any defence the Tasmanian government may have, for example, based on all reasonable steps having been taken to protect a child from

abuse. The commission stated there should be no legal disincentive to apologising for child abuse.

Proceedings covered by the *Civil Liability Act 2002*, section 49N(3) of that act, makes the state the proper defendant for an unincorporated organisation that is a government department established under the *State Service Act 2000*. Furthermore, section 5 of the *Crown Proceedings Act 1993* states that, generally, proceedings may be brought by or against the Crown under the name the State of Tasmania.

The *Civil Liability Act* defines child abuse to mean sexual and physical abuse as well as any consequential psychological abuse.

The bill adds provisions regarding organisations that may be legally responsible for child abuse allegedly perpetrated by an associated individual. Such a person can include an employee, officer or volunteer of the organisation. The new provisions apply regardless of whether alleged child abuse occurred before or after the commencement of this bill. However, they will not apply to civil proceedings which were finished before the bill receives Royal Assent for reasons of finality. They will also not apply to those which have started but not finished when the bill receives the Royal Assent. This is because parties to litigation must be able to count on the consistency of the law about their evidence from start to finish.

The bill states that an apology, as defined, does not constitute an express or implied admission of fault or liability by the organisation in respect of the child abuse. It makes the apology irrelevant to determining fault or liability for the child abuse apologised for. It makes the apology inadmissible as evidence in civil proceedings of the organisation's fault or liability regarding that abuse.

An apology means an expression of sympathy or regret, or of a general sense of benevolence or compassion in connection with child abuse. To be protected, it cannot contain an admission of fault or liability in connection with the intentional act that is the abuse, being the perpetrator's physical actions. This is consistent with the wording of the definition of apology and the wider apology provision in section 7 of the act prior to the amendments in this bill taking effect.

Significantly, the bill expressly states that an apology could include an acknowledgement of the abuse and its impact. It could also include information about the person's time under the organisation responsibility and information about past or future steps to protect against further child abuse or children. This will not force an organisation to make an apology, but it will remove what may have been a legal concern which stopped organisations from doing so.

The bill amends several sexual offences in the Criminal Code in accordance with the recommendation 16.9, position of authority offences. Section 124A of the code, creates the offence of penetrative sexual abuse of a child or young person by a person in a position of authority. As the title of the section suggests, that offence does not extend to non-penetrative sexual acts. The bill inserts two additional position of authority offences, capturing indecent acts with or directed at a child or young person, and indecent assault. These are contained in new sections 124B and 124C. All three of these positions of authority offences can only be committed by those aged 18 and over, as recommended by the commission.

These amendments acknowledge that there is no real reason to distinguish between penetrative and non-penetrative acts. Neither should be engaged in by a person who is in a position of authority in relation to a child or young person, subject to the defence that I will speak about in a moment.

We know that offenders will often try to groom a child or young person prior to engaging in penetrative sexual acts and as such it is important that the position of authority offences capture this conduct. The creation of these new offences necessitates consequential amendments to a number of other acts, such as the *Corrections Act 1997* and *Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001*.

Amendments have also been made to include a similar age defence in respect of each of these three crimes. While this issue was not directly addressed by the commission of inquiry, it is an issue that was alluded to by the national Royal Commission and was the subject of extensive feedback during consultation on this bill.

The vast majority of, if not all, stakeholders supported the introduction of a similar age defence in these crimes. Generally, consent would not be a defence to these crimes. This amendment will provide that consent is a defence, but only where the accused person is not more than two years older than the child or young person. These offences can only be committed by those who are aged 18 and over, and this defence would only arise where complainants are aged 16 or 17 and the accused aged 18 or 19.

This defence is stricter than existing similar age defences in the Criminal Code, such as in section 124(3). That difference recognises that a smaller age gap is appropriate when there is an alleged position of authority dynamic between the two people involved. It is important to remember that, from a defence perspective, closeness in the ages of the complainant and accused only matters if there was consent.

A person does not consent as defined in section 2A of the Criminal Code if they agree or submit because they are overborne by the nature or position of the other person. Therefore, this defence will involve an assessment of the particular facts of the case and scrutiny of the relationship between the two people involved. This is a difficult area to legislate in and it is important to strike a balance between respecting the autonomy of young people to have sexual relations with people who are close in age to them while protecting them from exploitation by adults who are in a position of authority in respect of them.

Persistent sexual abuse of a child or young person: the bill contains various amendments to section 125A, which creates the offence of persistent sexual abuse of a child or young person. This is a very important crime in our Criminal Code. It is used in cases where there has been repeated, often systemic, sexual abuse of a child. The charge is made out where, during a specified period, the accused commits at least three unlawful sexual acts in relation to a child or young person under the age of 17 years and they were not married to that child or young person.

This charge is a most effective tool because it does not require the prosecution to prove the dates on which any of the unlawful sexual acts occurred, nor the exact circumstances of the acts. This is critical for ensuring perpetrators of this abuse are held to account. As the commission of inquiry noted, young people in particular may not have a good sense of dates and times, making it difficult for them to provide the standard of evidence usually required.

This difficulty is compounded in cases where the sexual abuse has continued in a similar way over a lengthy period of time, making it difficult for the child or young person to distinguish between all of the different occasions.

Honourable Speaker, the first amendment to this crime is to subsection (1) to specifically include all three position of authority offences as unlawful sexual acts for the purpose of establishing the offence of persistent sexual abuse of a child or young person. That is, the prosecution may rely on any of the offences in section 124A, section 124B or section 124C to make up the three occasions necessary to prove the crime of persistent sexual abuse of a child or young person.

Section 125A is further amended to remove language referring to maintaining a sexual relationship with a young person and replacing it with 'commits the persistent sexual abuse' of a person under the age of 17. This amendment acknowledges that the current terminology is outdated and could imply some element of consent on behalf of the child or young person.

This change has been a long time coming. To that end, it would be remiss of me not to mention, as the commission did, the advocacy of the Grace Tame Foundation in this space. I emphasise that this amendment is not intended to change the substantive law in any way. Section 125A should continue to capture the same conduct it currently does, simply by a different, more appropriate name. This also brings the provision itself into line with a previous amendment to change the title of the offence.

Failure by a person in a position of authority to protect a child: the final offence being amended by this bill is section 125E being the offence of failure by a person in a position of authority to protect a child from a sexual offence. This is a simple amendment to restrict that offence to accused who are at least 18 years of age. As detailed by the commission, it would be inappropriate to hold a child responsible for failing to protect another child from sexual abuse by an adult, and that is not the intention of that offence. This is also consistent with the recommendation of the national Royal Commission.

Pre-trial rulings and directions: recommendation 16.14 of the commission's report relates to improving the process around pre-trial arguments, those being arguments before a jury is sworn. Pre-trial rulings enable legal issues to be resolved prior to the trial proper, which gives the parties certainty about the issues and avoids wasting jurors' time while legal disputes are resolved. Sometimes the legal issues to be resolved are so significant that, particularly for more complex matters, there may need to be several months between the ruling being given and the trial being held. Other times there is a delay between the conduct of the legal argument and the conduct of the trial simply because of the availability of judicial officers. For example, the delay may be because the judge who heard and ruled on the pre-trial legal argument is sitting in another location or in the civil jurisdiction and, therefore, unavailable to hear the trial for some time.

Currently, section 361A(1) of the Criminal Code requires the accused to enter a plea before pre-trial argument can take place. That requirement means that the trial has formally commenced by virtue of section 351(5). This creates difficulty when the judge who conducted the legal argument is unable to hear the trial proper for some time. One option to work around this is for the judge who heard the legal argument to formally abort the trial after making a ruling so that it can proceed before a different judge. However, some judges are hesitant to abort trials in this way. This amendment is intended to remedy this issue by removing the

requirement for a plea to be entered before pre-trial argument can take place, which means the trial will not have formally commenced, in turn making it easier for the matter to proceed before a different judge if necessary. Fundamentally, this amendment was recommended by the commission with the intention of minimising delay in the trial process for all parties.

The remaining amendments to section 361A relate to the status of the pre-trial ruling. Subsection (2) already provides that if there is a new trial, the pre-trial ruling or order will stay in effect. The new subsection (3) clarifies that, despite subsection (2), the ruling or order may be departed from if it would not be in the interests of justice for the ruling to stay in force, or if the ruling is inconsistent with an order made on appeal.

Trial direction in a family violence prosecution: the bill includes an amendment to section 371A of the Criminal Code, which contains a requirement for a trial judge in certain trials, such as those involving sexual offences, to give a direction to the jury regarding recent complaint. When there is evidence that tends to suggest an absence of complaint or a delay in the making of a complaint about the alleged commission of the crime, the trial judge is required to warn the jury that absence of complaint or delay in complaining does not necessarily indicate that the allegation that the crime was committed is false; and also to inform the jury that there may be good reasons why such a person may hesitate in making, or may refrain from making a complaint.

The amendment extends the application of this section to crimes of family violence. This amendment is not a commission of inquiry-related one. It was contained in a bill that progressed through this place late last year but lapsed when the parliament was prorogued. While that bill will be retabled, this amendment was removed and inserted into this bill because, initially, this bill was going to include some other amendments to jury directions, as recommended by the commission. I will return to why those amendments are no longer included in this bill. However, that is why this single amendment to trial directions is contained in this bill.

Tendency and coincidence evidence: the bill amends both the Criminal Code and the *Police Offences Act 1935* to remedy a legal issue which prevents certain evidence being led in some prosecutions, consistent with recommendation 16.13 of the commission. If proceedings for a summary offence are instituted in the Magistrates Court but discontinued, the prosecution will tender no evidence and an acquittal is entered. Once this occurs, there is no power for the case to be reopened. This is because, in effect, the prosecution, upon being put to proof, is declining to present any evidence to support the charge. The result is that the prosecution has not proved its case and the outcome of the hearing is an acquittal.

Where a proceeding has been finally determined by the entering of an acquittal, complainants cannot seek to later have that case revisited or reopened. The commission did not recommend altering this position. However, the situation is more complex if there are subsequent proceedings and the prosecution seeks to use the evidence relevant to that initial charge's tendency, coincidence or relationship evidence in that subsequent prosecution. If evidence relevant to the initial charge cannot be led, the fact finder is arguably deprived of important evidence that would likely strengthen the prosecution case, provide context to the alleged offending and may demonstrate that the offending is not isolated. Section 13B of the *Family Violence Act 2004* was introduced in 2017 to remedy this issue in relation to family violence matters, and the commission recommended an equivalent provision for sexual offences.



Accordingly, proposed new section 430 of the Criminal Code and new section 39A of the *Police Offences Act* ensure that where the prosecution tenders no evidence for an alleged family violence or sexual offence, and the defendant is acquitted for that reason, the evidence that would have been led had that matter proceeded is capable of being used as tendency, coincidence or relationship evidence in subsequent court proceedings for family violence or sexual offences involving the same defendant.

I emphasise that this amendment does not impact the existing rules regarding the admission of tendency and coincidence evidence, as contained in the *Evidence Act 2001*. This provision simply means that evidence is available to be used for that purpose. However, it remains subject to all existing admissibility requirements and exclusionary restrictions.

The bill implements recommendation 18.2, which relates to the risk assessment process within the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People scheme. Arguably, this is the most fundamental aspect of the scheme. Each applicant is assessed so that the registrar can determine whether the person poses an unacceptable risk of harm to vulnerable people, including children. If the registrar receives that information that a registered person has engaged in any behaviour which poses a risk of harm to vulnerable people, they are to conduct another risk assessment. A person who poses an unacceptable risk of harm cannot get or retain registration.

There are certain things which the registrar can and cannot consider when they conduct a risk assessment. These things are set out in the *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act* and in ministerial orders for risk assessment, which I approve as Attorney-General. The commission found that, at times, the registrar had adopted too high an evidentiary threshold when assessing whether certain people posed an unacceptable risk to children. Amendments to the *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act* within this bill clarify the risk assessment process to further enhance the safety of children and other vulnerable people.

The commission emphasised that risk assessment is a predictive exercise to assess future risk and it is not limited to facts which have been objectively proved in the past. These amendments ensure that when assessing risk, the registrar must consider whether a particular allegation has been proved on the balance of probabilities, but then must go beyond that to further consider whether the person poses an unacceptable risk of harm regardless of whether the allegation is proved. For example, a person who has been the subject of separate consistent allegations from different people at different times may pose an unacceptable risk of harm even if none of the allegations have been proven in a court.

The commission also noted that there were powers in the act to suspend a person's Registration to Work with Vulnerable People, but that further guidance on when this power could be used was required. This bill amends section 49 and 49A of the *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act* to clarify that the power to suspend registration can be used in situations where there would not be a power to cancel. In other words, the registrar can suspend registration on less evidence than they would need to cancel. This ensures that vulnerable people are kept safe in the short term while preserving the rights of registered persons to only have their registration cancelled upon sufficient evidence, to receive reasons for any decision to cancel and to challenge any decision to cancel in a court of law.

The commission emphasised the importance of the registrar being able to consider any factor which indicates a person may pose a risk of harm to vulnerable people. The rules of

evidence, such as those that restrict the use of evidence of a person's tendency to abuse, do not apply.

The commission also recommended that it made clear that once it is determined that a person poses a risk of harm to vulnerable people, their registration must be refused, suspended or cancelled, regardless of other factors, including things such as mental health or employment.

Under the amendments in this bill, once a person is deemed to be an unacceptable risk, the registrar cannot consider the impact that not being registered may have on the person. If it is required for the safety, welfare or protection of vulnerable people that a person not be registered, then they simply cannot be registered.

The commission emphasised that the language used by those involved in the criminal justice process can have a powerful and sometimes devastating effect on victim/survivors, as well as a broad symbolic effect on the understanding of child sexual abuse. The commission expressed particular concern about references to consent in the context of child sexual abuse offences, noting that discussing the notion of consent in child sexual abuse matters perpetuates outdated ideas about where responsibility sits and has potential to reinforce victim/survivors' fears that they are to blame for the abuse, which they are not.

The commission's recommendations in part 1 of recommendation 16.18 is to amend section 11A of the *Sentencing Act 1997* to specify that in determining the appropriate sentence for an offender convicted of a child sexual offence, the acquiescence or apparent consent of the victim is not a mitigating circumstance. That is what this amendment does. Importantly, this reflects existing case law. Even if there is consent in cases, it is no defence, it is not mitigatory.

There is no unfairness to the accused because they will be sentenced on a neutral basis. The presence of any apparent consent neither increases nor reduces the severity of the sentence for this type of offence. That is not to say that the factual circumstances are irrelevant, but the mere fact of apparent consent will not be mitigatory.

In terms of an update on the commission of inquiry work, before concluding I will provide an update to the House and other interested stakeholders about progress on some other recommendations or other aspects of recommendations.

First, recommendation 16.15, which relates to trial or jury directions. While the commission suggested this recommendation be implemented by July 2026, efforts were made to progress those amendments sooner, acknowledging how important these directions are to the trial process. For that reason, amendments implementing the commission's recommendation were included in the consultation draft of this bill.

However, it became evident during consultation on this bill that more comprehensive consultation, particularly with legal stakeholders, needs to be undertaken on these amendments to make sure we get them right. I am hopeful we may still be in a position to progress those amendments this year. However, I will await the outcome of that further consultation and provide an update in due course.

In relation to part 2 of recommendation 16.18, I can advise that the Director of Public Prosecutions has updated his prosecution policy and guidelines to reflect that where consent is

not an element of the offence or an available defence, the language of consent should not be used by prosecutors in any sexual assault prosecution.

In respect to prosecutions for persistent sexual abuse of a child or young person, the guidelines stipulate that prosecutors must identify the unlawful acts by reference to the crime.

I thank all the stakeholders who met with the department officers to discuss the contents of the bill or provide a written submission. I am pleased to progress these amendments, which I am confident will have positive outcomes for our state.

I commend the bill to the House.

[7.27 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, in the brief time I have before we conclude for the adjournment, I will outline the Labor Party's support for this bill.

Today is an important step in progressing the implementation of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry. I thank your staff for the briefings provided to me, particularly given some of the complex nature of the matters we are dealing with in this legislation. I also appreciate the update you provided just now on why there are quite significant changes from the draft bill put out for consultation compared with the final bill we are debating now and accept the reasons given. The submissions expressed quite clearly some of the concerns relating to those matters that you have delayed implementing and I believe that is appropriate in this context.

I note that there were a number of submissions made on the draft bill released for consultation and also the short timeframe that was allowed for in that consultation; it was extended by a further week. Nonetheless, it was only two weeks that the process was open for consultation to receive submissions. On such a significant piece of work it was publicly noted that was probably not long enough. I respect that there is an urgency to progress the recommendations from the commission of inquiry and there is no doubt that the timing of the election has disrupted the progress that was able to be made and the timing of this parliament's ability to legislate some of those changes. However, I do not believe that circumvents the government's responsibility to provide for proper opportunities for consultation, particularly when we are talking about important matters, and that did cause distress to victim/survivors and their advocates across our community.

Noting the time, I am not going to get into the substantive elements of this bill. There are some remarks that I will share with this House, but given the amount of time that I have left, I might speak very slowly and take the opportunity to recognise the work of the honourable Meg Webb as well, who was one of the strongest voices that I heard at the time regarding the short timeframe for consultation when the government had initially allocated only one week.

I also note that a number of submissions have not been published because they were done in person and that makes it difficult.

**Debate adjourned.**

## ADJOURNMENT

[7.30 p.m.]

**The SPEAKER** - I call on Adjournment Matters. It is the practice to give the Leader of the House the opportunity to answer questions that were taken on notice first. If everyone is comfortable with that, we will do that. It may save further concerns.

### **Answers to Questions - Integrity Commission - Reforms**

#### **Answer to Question - Launceston General Hospital - Master Plan**

##### **Comments made by the Leader of the Greens**

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, two questions were taken on notice today. The first one I seek to answer on behalf of the Premier is in response to Dr Woodruff, who asked, among other things:

Can you confirm that the Integrity Commission reforms recommended by the Weiss review, including those calling for stronger coercive and investigative powers for the Integrity Commission, will be brought in as part of the same set of urgent amendments this year?

The answer is as follows: the member has conflated a number of different recommendations. We are doing exactly what we said we would in relation to the commission of inquiry recommendation 18.11 with a bill to be introduced by the end of the year.

As for the Weiss reviewers, the Premier advised the House this morning the Integrity Commission will be reviewed by mid-April 2025, consistent with our government's agreement with the Jacqui Lambie Network. Consideration will be given in this review to include any outstanding commission of inquiry recommendations, any outstanding recommendations from the 2016 Cox statutory review, the May 2024 Integrity Commission report into a Right to Information request in the Department of Health, and the recommendations of the June 2024 Weiss review.

A question was also taken on notice from Ms Haddad in relation to the mental health precinct in Launceston. She asked the Premier:

Will the mental health precinct be completed by the start of 2026?

The answer is as follows: I note the member was not even aware the mental health precinct was being delivered at the Franklin Street site so it is not surprising that she also was not aware of the timeframe the Premier publicly stated last year. For the member's benefit, I can advise that subject to achieving necessary approvals, construction tenders are expected to be called in early 2025 with works due to get underway in mid-2025 and construction due for completion in 2027 - again as was publicly stated last year.

Honourable Speaker, I also raise a matter for your attention and that is to invite you to have a look at page 73 of the *Hansard* of Thursday 20 June 2024, in which the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, asserted about me:

You have said lots of things in the past. You thought women should not go to work and women should not get the vote.

I interjected by saying:

What? I've never said anything like that.

Labor came to my defence with Dr Broad:  
Are you saying that is what he said?

Dr Woodruff:

No, not at all.

Ms Ogilvie then interjected:

It sounded like you said that.

Ms Ogilvie was correct. It sounded like it. *Hansard* confirms it. The false assertion is offensive and needs to be withdrawn. I respectfully request you, Honourable Speaker, to examine the *Hansard* and call on the member for Franklin, if you deem it appropriate, to withdraw what I consider an offensive and completely untrue comment.

Could I also invite counselling for the member to not mislead the parliament when she denied saying that which the *Hansard* so clearly records.

### **Drought Support for Farmers**

[7.34 p.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Resources) - Honourable Speaker, our agricultural sector is a lifeblood of our state and I will always back our farmers.

This government also knows our farmers and rural communities are facing real challenges due to the unprecedented drought and dry conditions. That is why this government has been working since last spring with our farmers, rural communities and supporting organisations like TasFarmers, Rural Alive, and Rural Business Tasmania in response to the conditions being felt statewide.

The government has continued to work closely with and listen to our farmers, including through a strong and positive working relationship with TasFarmers and, in particular, TasFarmers' President, Ian Sauer, and CEO, Nathan Calman. I also welcomed the opportunity to attend the recent TasFarmers board meeting and member night in Orford in my electorate of Lyons. It was a great evening and I thank TasFarmers for their invitation.

In recent weeks, we have listened and acted further on our drought response. First, we announced that we were extending the closing date of our Seasonal Conditions grant program until the end of winter, 31 August 2024. We have already assisted nearly 500 farmers to date under these schemes, with around \$3.7 million provided to our farmers.

We then announced a new \$4.8 million package of drought-support measures, especially to assist farmers and their families who are having to make difficult decisions regarding their farms and livestock during the winter. Of this, \$150,000 of funding is going to TasFarmers to expand their community drought coordination and preparedness activities on King Island, Flinders Island and mainland Tasmania to facilitate drought response and recovery as required.

I thank Jacqueline Shipton, the TasFarmers Community Drought Support Coordinator on King Island, for her ongoing hard work.

Whilst on the topic of King Island, I again thank the Lions Club and Need for Feed on the delivery of their second load of much-needed fodder that arrived there over the weekend.

We continue to stand with TasFarmers in opposing the unfair federal biosecurity tax. We have not heard from those opposite on where they stand on this tax on our farmers. Perhaps farming-related jobs are not part of Labor's jobs, jobs, jobs mantra.

Nevertheless, I had a productive call today with the new federal Labor minister, Julie Collins, on a range of priority policies we need her to deliver for Tasmania. This includes her government immediately backing the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme with a funding commitment. I look forward to working with minister Collins and will continue to lobby the federal government on these matters.

We will keep backing and working with our farmers, including the team at TasFarmers, in the best interest of the agricultural sector in the state.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **Honourable Frances Mary Bladel, former Member for Franklin - Tribute**

[7.38 p.m.]

**Ms BROWN** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I am proud that many of our Labor colleagues spoke about Fran and I take this opportunity to say a few words.

Today we honoured the memory of an extraordinary woman, Fran Bladel, who recently passed away at the age of 90. Fran was not only a former Tasmanian Labor MP and a minister in the Field and Bacon governments, but a trailblazer whose influence extended far beyond her immediate sphere.

Fran's journey in politics began in 1986 when she was first elected as the member for Franklin, a position she held with distinction until 2002. During her tenure, she served in various ministerial roles, including Consumer Affairs, and Construction, and assisting the premier in the status of women. She was a woman of immense dedication and unwavering commitment to the public service.

Fran's story is one of resilience and compassion. Growing up in Moonah during the last years of the Depression, she faced significant hardships. After being widowed just seven years into her marriage, she raised her son alone, an experience that deeply influenced her understanding of the struggles faced by women in low-paid jobs. This empathy and

understanding became the cornerstone of her political career, driving her to champion causes that improve the lives of countless Tasmanians.

Her work extended far beyond politics. As a teacher, she influenced many lives at the Tagari Project school in Bridgewater and as Senior Mistress for English studies at Bridgewater High School. She volunteered at the women's prison, demonstrating her commitment to supporting those who faced the toughest of times.

In her inaugural speech to parliament, Fran reflected on her status as a woman in parliament, saying:

As a woman in parliament I realise that, in terms of gender numbers, I am one of a minority group - perhaps even one of a rare species.

Yet, ironically, she observed that it is women in the less publicly recognised roles in parliament that do so much to build the infrastructure which keeps this House working.

Fran was a life member of the Australian Labor Party and was inducted in 2006 into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women for her service to government, education, and the community. She was critical in encouraging more women to enter state parliament and was a mentor, advocate, friend, and comrade to many. It is women like Fran who are the heroes, leading the way through their powerful contributions.

Fran built a path for women in politics, creating a legacy that today's younger generations tread. Her trailblazing spirit and dedication made it natural for women to see leadership roles as attainable. Her impact ensures that women view political leadership as their rightful place.

Fran was a beloved member of our party and will never be forgotten. Let us remember Fran not only for her remarkable achievements but also for the legacy she leaves behind - a legacy of dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to helping others. May we continue to be inspired by her life and strive to carry forward her vision for a more equitable and just society.

### **Bangladesh - Student Protests**

[7.42 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of the House to the protests of hundreds of thousands of people across Bangladesh against the reinstatement of politically skewed quotas for government jobs by the Hasina regime. Student protests in opposition to the Bangladeshi government, organised by a group called Students Against Discrimination, have been peaceful but turned violent with a police crackdown.

Violence that occurred has led to nationwide unrest. Students were campaigning against civil service job quotas, which have been historic in Bangladesh, and the reintroduction of a scheme that is now reserving 30 per cent of government jobs for family members of those who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence from Pakistan in 1971. The quota, according to critics, is intended to stack public jobs with people loyal to the ruling Awami League party.

In reaction to the protest, the Bangladeshi Supreme Court last week scaled back the reservation to make 93 per cent of the jobs merit-based, and the government has formally accepted the move.

Despite students welcoming this move, the protest became about a greater discontent with the Hasina government at large, and the government-sponsored violence has led to reports of more than 200 Bangladeshi people being killed and at least 9000 arrests of citizens nationwide. That is according to *Prothom Alo*, Bangladesh's largest daily newspaper. There have also been reports on Al Jazeera and the ABC.

The Greens support the Bangladeshi people's right to peaceful protest and condemn the misuse of government power in response to these protesters and the extreme violence being levied against them by police and security services.

I want to speak about why I am talking about this tonight. I was contacted by a member of the Bangladeshi community who lives as a resident in Franklin. That person has witnessed the violence and being desperately concerned and affected about being unable to contact the people who they love because of a media blackout. There have been appalling images released online of police vehicles being used to run down protesters and allegations of security forces using live ammunition and extreme violence against protesters.

Three of the Students Against Discrimination leaders were hospitalised, allegedly from the police violence. Recently, they were forcibly taken from hospital into police custody. Just as the curfews have been loosening, there is a list of demands that are being made by the community, including a public apology from the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and the sacking of police officers, multiple ministers and university chiefs who have been involved or implicated in the violence.

The Bangladeshi community across Australia, and some people in Tasmania from that community, are also joining the students' campaign with an open letter organised by Sanam Amin, a prominent climate campaigner from Bangladesh who is studying her PhD at the Melbourne Law School in Australia. The letter is calling for the Bangladeshi government to immediately cease its violent crackdown on demonstrators and to end a communications blackout that has blocked internet access for 170 million Bangladeshis for more than a week. They are also supporting the students' call for the resignation of key figures in the government and police.

The United Nations High Commissioner, Volker Türk, has spoken actively about this. He called for an independent investigation into alleged human rights violations. He said many people have been subjected to violent attacks by government affiliated groups. His letter also includes the quote:

To paraphrase the words of Aboriginal activists in Queensland from the 1970s, we have come because their liberation is bound up with ours and we will work together.

It is an extremely traumatising conflict for those involved and affected in Bangladesh and in the very large diaspora community here in Australia and people in Tasmania. Our thoughts are with all those who are being impacted or currently unable to contact their community due to the internet media blackout.



My officers are monitoring for further information and reports. We are looking at what has been provided by international organisations or the Australian Government. Our fellow New South Wales Greens office, Senator David Shoebridge, has been working very closely with the Bangladeshi community for some time. They released a statement last week in response to the evolving stories and disturbing updates coming out of Bangladesh, as well as a video on social media to bring awareness about this political violence.

There is no place for political violence and the brutal misuse of power. We are seeing that in Bangladesh and it is appalling to see peaceful many young student protesters being attacked and mowed down by trucks used by the police. The Greens will continue pressuring the Australian Government to encourage the Prime Minister and the government to join with the international community, uphold human rights and call on the Bangladeshi government to have accountability and justice for the people who have been brutally attacked in Bangladesh.

I end by thanking and giving my personal thoughts for the members of the Bangladeshi community who live amongst us in Tasmania. We value your contributions to our society. We recognise your pain. What is happening in the country where you have loved people and from where you were born and your culture is very hurtful for you. We are here with you and we will do what we can to raise our collective voices against those atrocities.

### **Health Workers - Recruitment Campaign**

[7.48 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Speaker, I will share a few remarks tonight and provide an update on the very successful recruitment blitz of our healthcare workers with over 500 now of our healthcare workers in the last three months since we were elected. This is great progress. We have doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals, and those who are helping and supporting those on the frontline.

We will have more healthcare workers in Tasmania this time next year than we have now. This recruitment blitz is just getting underway. It is very encouraging - 150 nurses and midwives, for example. It was good to meet some of the new recruits last week at the Royal Hobart Hospital where we have successfully taken on 44 new GPs, and 25 new nurses and midwives into the emergency department.

This was an election commitment. We made \$88 million backing it. It was great to catch up with Arun, one of the new registered nurses from Ireland. It was great to catch up with Gabrielle. Gabrielle is from far North Queensland. She had received three job offers from other healthcare institutions around Australia but chose the Royal Hobart Hospital. One of those reasons was the wellbeing and support package that we have here in Tasmania. She indicated and shared those remarks directly with me and Simon Behrakis, the member for Clark, when we visited there last week. Of course, she loves Tasmania. All the things that are so great about Tasmania: the clean, fresh, pure and natural brand. All of that goes to say that this is an attractive place for those interstate and overseas, and for the wonderful healthcare workers we already have in Tasmania. This is very encouraging and I thank Gabrielle for sharing that.

It was great to catch up with Dr Paul Scott, Director of the Emergency Department at the Royal Hobart Hospital. It was very positive and encouraging with respect to the plans that we have and the progress so far.

It was also special to meet some new nurses at the acute medical unit at the LGH at the end of last week. Anna, Sheba and Hazim are lovely, kind, gentle and caring nurses who are already making a big difference over recent months at the Launceston General Hospital.

We are going gung-ho on our recruitment blitz making a big difference and there is much more to come. We spoke about it earlier today. Today, there are full page advertisements in the mainland newspapers - the *Herald Sun*, *The Age* - and I tabled the full-page advertisement earlier in parliament today. It makes it very clear that we have very big incentives with the \$15,000 for our nurses and midwives, \$100,000 for our GPS, and of course, \$25,000 scholarship for our allied health professionals and more.

Tasmania is the greatest place in all the world to work, live and raise a family. Those points were made clearly in the advertisement. It is now getting into the newspapers in Victoria because this is a Victorian Labor government that is cutting its healthcare workforce and in Tasmania we are growing it because we are a Liberal government. We know how important it is.

What did they say in the *Herald Sun* today? 'Tassie's brash job lure'. That is what it is. 'Victorian health workers facing uncertainty because of looming budget cuts across the sector are being lured interstate'. These are the budget cuts under Labor in Victoria. Let us make it very clear. It goes on and it repeats some of the wonderful points that are made in our ad and that talks about 'Victorian hospitals and health services are bracing for the release of final budgets in coming weeks after being ordered to meet tough new targets earlier this month, that says in the final -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr BARNETT** - I am reading from the story. It says: 'The government has been warned ambitious attempts to save an estimated \$1 billion across the health sector would compromise services and lead to massive job losses in Victoria'. Then it says: 'Earlier this month the Mildura Base Hospital warned the only way it could meet tough new targets was by shutting its emergency department and ending paediatric care'. That is what they are doing in Victoria.

It is not happening in Tasmania. We are recruiting. Yes, more, more, more. We are on the march. It is working: 500-plus in three months and clearly making a big difference. We want you from Victoria. We welcome you from Victoria. We have had success overseas in the United Kingdom, and other parts of Australia like Far North Queensland where I mentioned Gabrielle is from. It is very encouraging. That is why we are putting out the welcome mat for all those Victorian healthcare workers.

Of course, this is all on top of the healthcare reforms of getting more GPs in the rural and regional parts of Tasmania with our \$100,000 incentives for 40 more GPs; support for our GP practices; \$250,000 grants to provide that infrastructure support or put on an extra registered nurse; and provide longer working hours for our GPs to ensure that Tasmanians get the healthcare they deserve. That is what we are doing.

The federal Labor government has let us down and we are stepping in to provide the healthcare that is so important for Tasmanians. Families that are doing it tough need that support. We have stepped in, in so many areas, whether it be St Marys, Bridgewater, Glenorchy, at Lauderdale, Upper East Devonport and a range of other places. We have the GP Now guarantee with 10 doctors at the ready to step in where there is a thin and failing market. Where there is failure in the market we will be there to try to support and provide that assistance for those communities because the federal government has let us down.

We will not give up. We have made a range of reforms, the pharmacy reforms, cutting the red tape, making sure that healthcare can be provided. UTI, for example, in our pharmacies, and contraception pills. Thank you to our pharmacist and thank you to the community -

**Time expired.**

### **Illawarra Road, Longford - Impact Statement**

[7.56 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, this evening I will begin reading the first section of an impact statement for and on behalf of the following landowners of Illawarra Road, Longford. Their names are John MacKinnon of 'Wickford', Illawarra Road; Piers Dumaresq, 'Mount Ireh', ('Entally Forest', 'Illawarra', 'The Glebe', Illawarra Road); Ferdie Foster, 'Rosedale', ('Montreal', 'Forest Lodge', 'Hatherley', Illawarra Road); Richard Johnston, 'Esk Farm', Illawarra Road; and Frances Stewart of 'Valleyfield', Illawarra Road.

The Illawarra Road landowners fully comprehend the role of members of the government as being servants of the people, acting on behalf of the people and in the best interests of the people. Sadly, this has not been evident in the case of the \$80 million proposed upgrading of the Illawarra Road to comply with National Highway status.

The change from State Road status to National Highway status was instigated by the Department of State Growth several years ago to facilitate access to federal funding for road upgrades. No landholders along the Illawarra road were ever consulted on the possible impacts that this change was likely to have on their farming activities and/or road access. It has now become evident that the impacts are many and varied and all negative.

It is sufficient to say that the sole purpose of Illawarra Road was to service the farms along road and was not ever designed as a link/shortcut between two major highways.

The Tasmanian farming community is well worth acknowledging and preserving in all its stories.

Stan Laycock and his wife happened to be two of those noteworthy icons of recent Midlands farming history. Everybody knew Stan; from Oaklands to Carrick he was well known and respected. He worked for the MacKinnon family on their properties for almost his entire working life. On his retirement, he was gifted lifetime tenure of the Wickford Mill Cottage on Illawarra Road, Longford.

Stan Laycock lived in the cottage for over 60 years. He and his wife raised three children in the cottage. The cottage was Stan and his wife's pride and joy, and they both expected to live out the remainder of their lives there.

The un-consulted and un-evaluated decision of State Growth to repurpose this rural corridor for freight traffic and to make it part of the highway had a significant impact upon Stan and his wife. The MacKinnon family at Wickford were informed that the Laycocks' cottage home was going to be demolished to make way for the road upgrades. There was no consideration for relocating Mr and Mrs Laycock or the impact this might have upon them in their senior years. Mr MacKinnon was told that there was no provision for relocating the elderly couple and that it was entirely his responsibility because they had been gifted lifetime tenure and there was no rental agreement.

Mr MacKinnon was informed in April 2022 that the cottage would be demolished in November 2022 and he must have the Laycocks out before then. An assigned government valuer valued the cottage in May 2022, stating that it could only be valued for the bricks and materials and not the actual value of the cottage to the farming enterprise. The estimated value of the materials was \$165,000. This compensation would not be forthcoming until the entire road project had been completed, possibly in two to four years' time.

Mr MacKinnon subsequently purchased a house in Longford and Mr and Mrs Laycock were moved to the new house in July 2022. From here on, Mr Laycock's distress was palpable. He was so upset at having to leave his beloved home that he stopped eating several months after being moved to Longford and died a short time later. It is significantly distressing for Mrs Laycock because the cottage is still sitting idle, having not been demolished some 24 months later due to a change of plans by State Growth.

State Growth is required by law to undertake both heritage and cultural assessments on any proposed acquisitions. When State Growth received the heritage and cultural report, it stated that the whole of the Wickford farm is, in fact, heritage listed, including all buildings, significant trees, kilometres of hawthorn hedges and not just the 1830s homestead. This heritage and cultural assessment report states that if State Growth was to go ahead and demolish the cottage, they would be required to undertake a detailed archaeological survey of the site, and also carefully deconstruct the cottage and rebuild it on Wickford. In addition, the historic brick entrance walls to Wickford, which were also on the demolition list, would also have to be deconstructed and rebuilt.

At what point State Growth became aware of the contents of the report is unknown, but it was most certainly after Mr MacKinnon had been informed that the Laycocks had to be moved out. At every meeting Mr MacKinnon had with State Growth's appointed consultants, he was told that the upgrades to the Illawarra Road were necessary for safety purposes. Mr MacKinnon pushed time and time again to have the speed limit reduced to 80 kilometres per hour, which would negate the majority of the \$80 million works ever being required and, certainly, the Wickford cottage and historic farm entrance from being demolished. Regrettably, the sensible suggestion fell on deaf ears.

The relevance of Wickford Mill Cottage also ties into being one of the last remaining cottages from the settlement of the Illawarra district. Edward Dumaesq constructed the Illawarra Road to establish access for farm tenants to attend Christ Church, Illawarra, which is still commissioned and attended on a bi-monthly basis by local parishioners. Descendants of

Edward Dumaresq retain ownership on title of a section of the road adjacent to the Illawarra property that the road derives its name from.

Due to time constraints, I will continue to read the impact statement over the next few adjournments this week in parliament.

This is an account read by me for and on behalf of John MacKinnon, 'Wickford', Illawarra Road; Piers Dumaresq, 'Mount Ireh', ('Entally Forest', 'Illawarra', 'The Glebe', Illawarra Road), Ferdie Foster, 'Rosedale', ('Montreal', 'Forest Lodge', 'Hatherley' Illawarra Road); Richard Johnston, 'Esk Farm', Illawarra Road; and Frances Stewart, 'Valleyfield', Illawarra Road.

### **Community Transport Services Tasmania**

#### **Honourable Frances Mary Bladel, former Member for Franklin - Tribute**

[8.03 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I recently met with Lyndon Stevenson, the CEO of Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST). They run a great program - the Area Connect Jobs Transport Program, which is at a bit of risk due to funding uncertainty. Community Transport Services Tasmania is Tasmania's largest provider of community transport, serving older people and people with disabilities by offering door-to-door transport for medical appointments, shopping, social activities and maintaining community connections.

It operates as a not-for-profit organisation supported by funding from the Commonwealth Home Support Program and the Tasmanian Home and Community Care Program. Clients contribute to trip costs, aiding in vehicle operation expenses. CTST manages a fleet of 95 vehicles and relies on approximately 250 volunteers, who play a crucial role in providing transportation. Annually, CTST covers over 4 million kilometres, facilitating more than 170,000 trips for around 8000 individuals. That is massive. That is an amazing figure.

In May 2024 alone, CTST delivered an impressive 16,000 community transport trips statewide. While not a primary health service, CTST supports Tasmanians in accessing essential health and community services. It engages closely with users, volunteers and local health and community organisations through regional offices. In addition to its core services, in recent years CTST launched Area Connect, Tasmania's first transport social enterprise, which caters to smaller and remote communities without regular public transport. Unlike CTST, Area Connect operates with paid drivers and without specific client eligibility criteria, funded primarily by the Department of State Growth.

One of the key programs delivered by Area Connect is the Area Connect Jobs Transport Program. Since its inception, the Area Connect Jobs Transport Program has emerged as a pivotal link with existing transport providers and residents in regional Tasmania who lack access to public transport.

To date, CTST has delivered over 30,640 trips to work or training, averaging more than 1700 trips per month, with CTST reporting 98 per cent passenger satisfaction rating. An independent review of this pilot program has also confirmed its worth. The program not only addresses critical transport gaps, but also supports the Tasmanian government's Local Jobs for Local People initiative by enabling access to employment and training opportunities across the state. They take people to and from work and training if they cannot otherwise get there. This

includes hiring buses to take seasonal workers and overseas workers to fruit picking jobs. The model works on contributions from employers and employment companies in addition to government funding.

Area Connect Jobs Transport program drivers are more than just drivers. They are also trained to mentor clients who are just starting out on their work and training journey. This includes all the practical things like punctuality and presentation, as well as offering that little bit of encouragement. These may seem like small things, but to some of the most vulnerable people in our community, this type of support can make a huge difference in their lives.

To further these efforts in eliminating obstacles to employment and promoting economic inclusion, especially for Tasmania's most marginalised and vulnerable cohort and those in regional and remote areas, funding certainty is needed.

It is a pilot project, as I said, and there is much more that Community Transport Services Tasmania would like to do with this program. If this program is discontinued and not continued beyond the pilot program, it is predicted that 100 Tasmanians will be unable to get to work and training, which will obviously have significant negative consequences to them personally, their families and their communities.

I raise their issues tonight to inform the House of not only the good work they do - and I know many members would be aware of the good work that they do - but the importance of continuing this pilot program. We know in a state with a dispersed population, the need for these kinds of bespoke services that target those most vulnerable people are crucially important.

While I am on my feet, I also echo the sentiments of a number of members today on the passing of Fran Bladel. I knew Fran for decades. All the beautiful words, sentiments and reflections on her life - her work life, her personal life and her family - were 100 per cent correct. She was a giant and a massively strong advocate in a whole range of areas of her life.

There was a touch in some of the speeches on Fran's sense of humour and her wit. Being in a number of factional meetings - I know the Liberal Party does not have factions, apparently, but in the Labor Party they do have factions, and I know that intimately. Fran was the master of the eye roll. She was the master of the 'tut tut' and she was the master of the exasperated sigh. During various debates when people were arguing for a certain position, it was just a matter of time before either the hypocrisy of their argument or the looseness of their argument was called out by Fran. Fran fought the good fights and the correct fights, but her sense of humour, wit, charm and ability to bring people along with her was something that enriched those who worked around her.

Fran was a legend. We did not always see eye to eye because I was a union bloke and that was one of the big challenges she took on. She took on some of those in the union movement inside the party, and rightfully so. She was always mostly right on some of those arguments.

There was a part of her personality which should be reflected in *Hansard*, and that is her quick wit, her sarcasm, and her very acerbic tongue, which actually was done in such a way as to lift debate, improve debate and move the debate on. Vale Fran Bladel.

## **New Horizons Tasmania - Barbie & Ken Ball**

[8.10 p.m.]

**Mr FAIRS** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I would like to talk about an inspiring and amazing community event that my wife, Jo, and I attended on the weekend in Launceston. It was the New Horizons Tasmania Barbie & Ken Ball. As you know, because you were there, this is an amazing community group that provides for-purpose, inclusive sport and recreational opportunities for Tasmanians with disability, and has done so since 1986.

**The SPEAKER** - Can I interject that we looked amazing?

**Mr FAIRS** - Yes, it was really good, wasn't it? A wonderful lady by the name of Robyn Hanson started this organisation. I also give a special shout-out to Peter and Tessa Rae, who have been ambassadors and patrons for New Horizons Tasmania for years. They are in their nineties and they are still going to these sorts of events. They are wonderful people and it is awesome to see them.

New Horizons Tasmania's mission is to empower individuals with disabilities and build inclusive communities throughout the state. I am very proud to be involved with New Horizons Tasmania. I do whatever I can to support this organisation. I have for several years through its all-inspiring champions program, donating prizes or hosting events like the annual Western Tiers Cycle Challenge, which is another big fundraiser for them.

The Barbie & Ken Ball was a sell-out, which was fabulous. People of all ages got into the spirit of what this event was about, dressing up for the cause. There were Kens and Barbies of all shapes, sizes and it was brilliant to see. Co-hosts Manika Champ and Andrew Palmer were perfectly cast as Barbie and Ken. I also send out a big shout-out to Greg Garwood, not only for his kind cash donation but he also shared his rare 1972 Bathurst XU1 Torana, an amazing piece of motor history. It just happened to be pink. It was believed to be the only pink one ever manufactured - which is awesome. That was on show at the front of the event. It was brilliant and it turned plenty of heads.

Through auctions and other fundraisers, New Horizons Tasmania was aiming to raise \$50,000 on the night to help continue its amazing programs across the state. I am happy to say that, despite these very tough economic times, the target was exceeded. I can report that they have raised over \$60,000 and they still have their grand final tickets raffle to come. I am blown away by people's incredible generosity. Thank you to everyone who donated for the cause.

The performers were incredible. They are so inspiring and a big shout out to Finn Hilder, he is known as the New Horizons Tas champion and a star performer. He was shaking it. If I moved like that, I reckon I would be in traction for six months. I do not know how he does it, but he does. He was fabulous, as were all the other performers on the night.

I also give a massive shout out to Belinda Kitto and her awesome team at New Horizons Tasmania. Under her leadership and guidance, they do an amazing job and their passion and dedication are truly inspiring.

## **Devarshi Deka - Grant of Permanent Residency**

### **Peter Gutwein - The Walk: Step Up Together**

[8.14 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about Devarshi Deka, an Indian international student studying at the University of Tasmania. He came here to make a better life for himself, studying a Master of Accounting degree. I know he has been talked about in this place before. I acknowledge the work of the other member for Clark, Helen Burnet, who has also stood beside Devarshi and his family throughout his journey.

Devarshi came here to make a better life and tragically suffered from an alleged assault in Salamanca that left him in a medically induced coma for more than three months. He is now a paraplegic and is slowly going blind in his left eye. This was a tragic circumstance for a celebratory night where he was celebrating securing a part-time job.

My heartfelt best wishes go to Kula and Deepalee Deka, his parents, who have been in the state for some time caring for Devarshi, and Devarshi's brother, who is a teacher back home. He has been supporting the family financially and it has been a challenging time for all of them.

Devarshi has been fortunate, in some ways, despite the worst circumstances, to have a friend in Rishabh Kaushik - Rick, as he is known - who has been a tremendous advocate and friend to Devarshi. He did not know Devarshi prior to the incident but heard of him and decided that he was going to do his best to help him.

I also rise tonight to talk about the former Immigration minister, Andrew Giles; he is a great human being. You know Andrew, I know Andrew. I thank him on the record, and I thanked him yesterday in the media. I was fortunate to spend an hour with Andrew by chance.

The former premier, Peter Gutwein, whom I have a lot of time for these days regarding the work he is doing in the migrant space and valuing their economic and social contribution to the state, is doing some amazing work in the community. It is great to see his life after politics too. I felt so compelled about the work that Peter was doing that I rang him and said, 'I would like to meet you at Granton when you come into Hobart and walk with you to Glenorchy'. I met him. He passed Granton the night before, so I met him in Austin's Ferry at the service station there early in the morning, and we set off together alone. Along the way, other people joined us. Peter, who was a former teacher, had been walking with Peter down the highway. Also, Andrew Giles joined us in Claremont, and I decided to use this opportunity to talk about Devarshi and the circumstances he found himself in. Andrew is a very professional person. He said, 'I cannot talk about individual cases, Josh,' but he knew all about Devarshi and what had happened to him.

He said, 'I cannot talk about decision-making in an individual sense,' but I could tell that there was a humanity there that I thought might carry some hope. That was the first time I felt hopeful about Devarshi's circumstances. Obviously, much is going on in the immigration space at a federal level. Andrew had been under a lot of pressure at that time. That conversation with Andrew gave me a little bit of hope after feeling a bit helpless for Devarshi in his circumstances. I know the member for Clark was there, that the Premier also spoke to Andrew that day, and that former premier, Peter Gutwein, knew about Devarshi as well. We spoke about him together.



That was a great event. Peter raised significant money for the Migrant Resource Centre and, more importantly, and I know Peter will say this, he wanted Tasmanians to have a conversation about how Tasmania had been the beneficiary of migrants coming here, contributing their skills to our economy, generously sharing their culture and making Tasmania a great place to live. I know he was driven by some other incidents. He spoke at length about some taxi drivers being exposed to racially motivated violence, which is shocking. Tragically, we also had a young man lose his life at the docks, not far away from parliament. A number of things happened in Tasmania that motivated Peter to go on that walk.

It was a fortunate interaction with Andrew. Before that interaction, I had written to him and told him that there would be a letter in his office somewhere from me on behalf of Devarshi and his family. Not long after his trip to Tasmania, Andrew wrote back to me and said:

Dear Mr Willie,

Thank you for your representation on 3 June 2024 on behalf of Mr Devarshi Deka concerning his medical situation and visa status. As you may be aware, Home Affairs portfolio ministers have personal intervention powers under the *Migration Act 1958* that allow them to grant a visa to a person if they think it is in the public interest to do so. The public interest powers are non-compellable; that is, the ministers are not required to exercise their power. What is in the public interest is a matter for the ministers to define.

I can confirm that a request for the ministerial intervention has been initiated on behalf of Mr Deka. Please be assured the information you have provided has been forwarded to the relevant area of the department and your support for Mr Deka will be considered when a decision is made on his request.

I received that letter and was absolutely rapt. It was within about five minutes of receiving that letter and trying to consume it, I had sent it to Rick and said, 'Please let Devarshi's family know about this letter. I think it is very positive. There is ministerial intervention that has been initiated.' Fortunately, that resulted in Devarshi achieving permanent residency.

**Time expired.**

## **National Tree Day Ecosystem Restoration**

[8.21 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the enormous progress that we have had on the ecosystem restoration front right across Australia during the past week. It has been fantastic to see everything that is happening, in particular this weekend. Sunday was National Tree Day, and I am sure all members would have been out and about in their local communities helping to plant a variety of trees. This coincides with World Conservation Day very appropriately as well.

Right across Lyons, there was a tonne of grassroots efforts, a lot of communities and, particularly, younger people using this opportunity to mitigate their climate anxiety by having

a hands-on approach and acting in their local community. This was action that involved a lot of pride in their place, where they can look back in five- and 10-years' time and see a difference in their local environment and ecosystem.

At the southern beaches, the local Landcare group at Jacks Flats was planting. It has been 24 years since the last mass tree planting at Jacks Flat. For context, that was when Sydney had the Olympics. It is astonishing to see that what was a completely denuded and disused paddock is now an incredible and thriving ecosystem. There are bandicoot holes dug all around - it is also trip hazard - and there are birds and bats that have found habitat in the newly grown trees. Over the weekend the community added over 400 plants to that area. That is thanks to the incredible people at Wild Seed who have some fantastic plant stock. I highly recommend them as one of the best in the state. The Sorell Council lent their support as well.

The biggest success is really bringing together that community in Lewisham and Dodges Ferry at the southern beaches for their work leading up to the event, which took almost a week just in hands-on preparation to plant that many trees.

Locally, in my township of Ellendale, we came together - a tonne of landowners who have creek adjacency to have our inaugural meeting for the local Ellendale Land Care Group to work together to fix fragmented sections of the landscape where some places have been restored along the creeks and others have not. Together, we want to work collaboratively to restore the continuity of the biodiversity right along that creek line.

Unfortunately, there has been some potential regression in ecosystem restoration in Tasmania. Skyline Tier, at the back of Scamander, is Tasmania's largest ecosystem restoration project. They are planning to restore a total of 2000 hectares of what was radiata plantation pines into thriving native forest. So far, it has been a huge success. This project has won international awards for what they have been doing: restoring and rehabilitating blue gum habitat for the swift parrot. There is a very specific kind of butterfly that only lives in sedges that are growing in this area that are being restored. This is huge, good news story for Tasmania.

Unfortunately, parts of this project are now threatened to be flattened for more pine plantation. This is rehabilitating native forest, flattened for pines that are set to be burnt for hydrogen. There is a place for radiata pines in our state. It is part of it -

**Ms Finlay** - That is not true. There is no permission to farm trees for hydrogen production. I think you need to take that off the record.

**Ms BADGER** - I will double check on what the company's intention for the trees is and I will rephrase it to: the information I have been given and also shared publicly on Sunday and has been in the media, is that the company at Skyline Tier had the intention to grow radiatas and the community was informed that the intention was for biofuels.

Either way, there is a place for radiatas in Tasmania's forestry, but it has to be in the right place. That is not in the water catchment for Diana's Basin where this is planned. It is not in rehabilitating native forest. It is regressive to be taking down restoration projects in that area, particularly somewhere that has had a long history of continuity for restoration that only has a small fraction of land left before they have swathes of this area completely restored.

I will read what ecologist Dr Helen Morgan, who has produced a number of environmental reports for the Skyline Tier project, said:

It is very disappointing that it is being considered a good idea when it cannot achieve beneficial or ecologically sustainable outcomes and will clearly destroy an environment that has recently been healed from previous damage. Instead of taking this step backwards by proponents, it could be showcased (Skyline Tier) as a leading example of forest restoration and management.

Restoration work at Skyline Tier is important to protect as a shining demonstration of what can be achieved in habitat protection and rehabilitation of nature, and importantly, as one that gives people hope for the future.

Indeed, that hope for the future is what was highlighted in the Wentworth Group of Independent Scientists Review, which came out and was announced at the National Press Gallery last Wednesday. A report six years in the making showing that restoration is possible for what is a relatively small economic input in Australia. The blueprint identifies 24 practical actions. What is often neglected when we talk about ecosystem restoration and what is highlighted through projects is the intangible benefits of ecosystem restoration, which are very hard to quantify, those being the social cohesion, the transition of jobs and the health benefits as well of being outside, but we know that these absolutely are something.

This is the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Restoring ecosystems plays into the 30 x 30 pledge that Australia has signed on to. Tasmania can upscale its efforts. We know we can do it for a minute amount of investment and it will bring back to us enormous environmental and social benefits.

### **Science and Technology Sector Meetings**

[8.28 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening in my position as the shadow minister for science and technology having since being appointed to that position, spent a lot of time meeting with industry, individuals, organisations with science and tech at their core. Collectively, there is a concern that this government has not made an appointment of a science and tech minister, noting that there was no minister in attendance at the recent digital ministers meeting, which lends to a collective concern that Tasmania is going to miss opportunities, not be involved in the national conversation, but more importantly, that Tasmania could be left behind in what is a rapidly changing environment.

I have been meeting with a number of the CIOs around Tasmania and I met with Jeff Griffith from the Devonport City Council, an incredible gentleman who moved to Tasmania following a journey from his life in the United States, in tech companies and leading in his field and has ended up in Tasmania. The Devonport City Council and Tasmanian industry are the beneficiaries of this. In my meeting with Jeff - I had just attended the TMEC conference and had been at the energy conference as well - and we were discussing the rapid changes occurring in our communities, in society, in business and in the way jobs will present themselves in the future.

One of the things that Jeff shared with me, and I will share some of the statistics he shared with his permission, but he made a statement that was gripping to me and we need to collectively -

**The SPEAKER** - I am sorry, member for Bass.

It being 8.30 p.m., the question is that the House do now adjourn.

**The House adjourned at 8.30 p.m.**

## Appendix 1

Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs  
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Minister for the Arts  
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

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Mr Rob Fairs  
Liberal Member for Bass  
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Dear Mr Fairs

### CONSTITUENCY QUESTION – HERITAGE SUMMIT

I write in response to your question to me about the government's support for Tasmania's heritage sector, including around tourism and its economic benefits.

The Heritage Summit, Tasmania's second of such, was held at the beautiful Tram Sheds on the heritage listed Inveresk Railway site. It was a remarkable opportunity for collaboration, idea sharing and setting priorities. I was pleased you were able to attend and noted your many discussions with those in attendance.

Simply put, Tasmania's heritage sector is of great significance for the State. Not only does it support more than 5000 jobs, but it also injects some \$93 million dollars annually in the construction and building economy, \$375 million directly to Tasmania's economy, and has a capital value of approximately \$6 billion.

The Rockliff Liberal Government is deeply committed to preserving Tasmania's rich cultural heritage, recognising its role in shaping our state's identity and economy. Importantly, our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future supports a growing tourism sector vital to showcase our renowned heritage sites.

Investment in built heritage brings numerous benefits, particularly in attracting local, interstate, and global tourists. Annually Tasmania receives more than 440,000 Heritage related visitors. For example, in 2022-23 the Port Arthur Historic Site was visited by over 320,000 - a 71.3% increase from the previous year. This is testament to the resilience demonstrated by the site's Management Authority – especially in the post-COVID environment.

Tasmania's heritage extends beyond the preservation of historic buildings. It offers a unique connection to personal and family histories. The Convict Memorial Hub at the Hobart Penitentiary Chapel is a recent initiative that exemplifies this broader perspective on heritage, providing a profound link between the past and the present for many visitors.

Like all sites of significance, especially those of interest to tourist visitation, resources and targeted investment have also been directed towards improving infrastructure and interpretation at heritage sites. Projects like the \$1.25 million Convict Memorial Hub supports a modernised approach to connecting visitors with Tasmania's convict past through the medium of artificial intelligence. This unique site, operated by the National Trust of Australia, Tasmania Division, opened in late 2023 and remains yet another attraction for locals and tourists alike.

Investments in other heritage sites, take for example the Cascades Female Factory, have similarly driven visitor numbers and increased satisfaction. Site visitation and popularity can be attributed to its relatively new interpretation centre and tour offerings.

We understand the preservation and conservation of heritage properties can be an expensive undertaking. For this reason, I have been pleased to open our Built Heritage Grants, a funding package of \$4.5 million (over three years) to ensure our heritage places are valued, maintained, and leveraged for the benefit of all.

I hope you find this answer informative as I am sure your constituency, many of whom have a deep interest in Tasmania's rich heritage, will as well.

Yours sincerely



Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP  
Minister for the Arts

## Appendix 2

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management  
Minister for Housing and Planning  
Minister for Skills and Training

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Ms Meg Brown MP  
Member for Franklin



Dear Ms Brown

Thank you for your Constituency Question regarding the Homes Tasmania property currently being leased by Meals on Wheels and the Lions Club of Clarence.

Meals on Wheels is an important service in our community, and the Government and Homes Tasmania have worked with them on their accommodation arrangements. Homes Tasmania most recently approved a twelve month extension to their lease, through to December this year, and this followed previous extensions provided in 2021 and 2022.

The property has been earmarked for redevelopment into new housing.

Following your question I sought preliminary advice from Homes Tasmania. I understand Meals on Wheels at Mornington does not undertake any cooking or food preparation onsite. There is no commercial kitchen and the site is used as a distribution point. I understand the Lions Club may utilise the space for meetings.

I have sought further advice from Homes Tasmania regarding what other opportunities may be available, both within the State Government-owned property portfolio or through other organisations and entities such as local Government.

Yours sincerely

Hon Felix Ellis MP  
**Minister for Housing and Planning**

19/6/2024



## Appendix 3

**Minister for Energy and Renewables  
Minister for Parks and Environment**

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Mr Simon Wood  
Member for Bass  
Via Clerk of the House

email: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)



Dear Mr Wood

Thank you for raising a question on behalf of your constituents in Parliament on 12 June 2024.

Hydro was built by Tasmanians, for Tasmanians, and that is why we have introduced a new Renewable Energy Dividend (RED) allowing Tasmanian households and small businesses to share in Hydro's profits.

Just like shareholders receive a dividend when a business is making a profit, the RED means that when the Hydro makes money, Tasmanians save money off their power bills. Our Government is returning the benefits to Tasmanians, with a dividend payable when Hydro returns over \$90 million.

With the rising cost of living and interest rates, as well as global inflationary pressures – the Tasmanian Liberal Government has supercharged our Renewable Energy Dividend to deliver a one-off \$250 payment to every single Tasmanian household. Over 254,000 of them.

We are also delivering the supercharged dividend to the small businesses that keep our economy ticking, with \$300 for around 35,000 small businesses.

This is against a backdrop of an average increase of 0.5 per cent in Standing Offer prices available to residential and small business customers. After factoring in CPI electricity prices are actually decreasing in real terms.

The supercharged dividend has already been provided to retailers. Customers should see the dividend credited to their accounts on their bill in the first quarter of this financial year, with timing dependant on their billing cycle.

This dividend will mean in 2024-25, every Every Tasmanian household with an electricity bill will receive at least \$550 in relief. Those with other concessions will receive up to \$1,429 in relief.

This includes embedded network customers, such as those who pay their power bills indirectly such as at a caravan park. Embedded network customers will need to lodge a claim for the Renewable Energy Dividend. Those customers who applied for and received last year's Energy Bill Relief payment will receive a letter in the mail with pre-populated forms to simplify the claiming process.

For embedded network customers who have not received previous relief or who may be new to embedded networks, can go to ReCFIT website ([recfit.tas.gov.au](http://recfit.tas.gov.au)) to enter a claim the payment.



Our Government is proud of our Hydro history and our Renewable Energy Dividend which allows us to support Tasmanians. I hope this information assists your constituents. Please do reach out to my office if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Duigan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
**Minister Parks and Environment**

## Appendix 4

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart  
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Mr Mark Shelton  
Liberal Member for Lyons  
Email: [mark.shelton@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:mark.shelton@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Shelton

In Parliament on 11 June 2024 you requested information from me as Minister for Infrastructure on behalf of a constituent in Westbury as follows:

*A Lyons resident in Westbury has requested a response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the following question: the Liberal Government announced a lot of road upgrades in the lead-up to the Tasmanian election earlier this year, including works on the Bass Highway. Can the Minister please give a time frame for the duplication of the Bass Highway between Hadspen - or more accurately, Hadspen Bridge - and Deloraine, and how will this be completed with the \$20 million that has been committed to it?*

In response to this question I can advise as follows:

The Tasmanian Government commitment of \$20 million towards the duplication of the Bass Highway into a consistent four-lane link between Launceston and Deloraine requires a commitment of \$80 million from the Australian Government under the well-established precedent of the Commonwealth contributing 80 per cent for regional highways.

Timing of these projects is therefore dependent upon a commitment (and budget profiling) of Commonwealth funds.

As you are aware, the Bass Highway is a key corridor linking major population centres, transport hubs and ports and agricultural districts. The Bass Highway Corridor Strategy – Launceston to Devonport identifies 66 potential improvements for the 91 kilometre section of the Highway between Hadspen and Port Sorell Road.

The Tasmanian Liberals promised in the 2024 election campaign to prioritise this section and now that we have formed Government we remain committed to deliver this important upgrade, subject to an Australian Government co-contribution.

The Highway between Hadspen and Deloraine has been progressively realigned to bypass towns, enabling full duplication.

Given the rate of traffic growth on this section of the Highway at 2 per cent a year (and 4 per cent for heavy vehicles), the demand for a safer and more efficient Bass Highway is well established.

Yours sincerely



Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure

19/6/2024

## Appendix 5

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

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Ms Janie Finlay MHA  
PO Box 1813  
Launceston TAS 7250

Dear Ms Finlay

In Parliament on 13 June 2024 you requested information from me as Minister for Infrastructure on behalf of a Launceston constituent as follows:

*"I was speaking yesterday to a constituent in Launceston regarding a letter to the editor in The Examiner written by Karen Eames of Hadspen, entitled 'Split Lane Needs Attention'. She wrote: I'm writing to express my deep concern regarding the slip lane leading to the roundabout near Bunnings Kings Meadows on the Bass Highway. It has become increasingly apparent that this slip lane is grossly inadequate to accommodate the traffic demands, particularly during peak hours. Recently I experienced a harrowing incident while waiting in line on the shoulder of the road to enter the slip lane. The congestion and danger posed by this insufficient slip lane has become all too common. This slip lane has become a critical bottleneck.*

*I implore you to take immediate action to address this pressing safety issue. The current conditions, compounded by the proximity of a blind hill and bend, pose an unacceptable risk to motorists' lives. I urge Roads Tasmania to prioritise this hazard situation before a tragic accident occurs. [TBC] The question from the constituent is what immediate action is being taken to correct this risk and to make this section of road safe?"*

In response to your constituents question, I can advise the following.

The Department of State Growth is aware of occasional traffic queuing beyond the length of the Midland Highway and Kings Meadows Link southbound exit ramp during peak periods.

The department plans to engage consultants in the coming 2024-25 financial year to design an extension to the existing exit ramp. The design work will be used to determine the cost of the extension, which will help identify the future funding required for its construction.

As an additional, interim measure, the department is installing signs on the Midland Highway before the Kings Meadows Link exit, alerting road users of potential queuing ahead. These signs are expected to be installed by July 2024.

Yours sincerely

Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure

19/6/24

## Appendix 6

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure



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Miriam Beswick MP  
Member for Braddon  
Jacqui Lambie Network  
[Miriam.beswick@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:Miriam.beswick@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Beswick

Thank you for the Constituency Question you asked in Parliament on 13 June 2024 requesting information regarding the expected time frames for the Superannuation Commission to assess claims, as follows:

*"I have personally observed and heard of several other incidents about delays from RBF super funds in assessing claims and reasonable requirements they place on claimants to put proof of claims, particularly where spouses have passed away and the claim is going to the left behind spouse. This organisation has been well known as the slowest and worst of assessments by lawyers, Centrelink workers and the like who come into contact with these claims. This is a significant issue, particularly for vulnerable people who are in these circumstances and are grieving. Can you confirm the expected time frames for these claims and assessments and how often RBF Tasmania and its representatives actually meet those expectations?"*

As you are aware, the Superannuation Commission administers and manages the Retirement Benefits Fund and provides benefits on retirement to members of the contributory scheme, and their beneficiaries or representatives and strives to provide a consistent, timely and responsive service for RBF members.

I can advise that for the period 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, the Superannuation Commission assessed a total of 470 claims for ill health and death, of which 116 were surviving partner pension claims.

The majority of pensioner deaths are identified and actioned by the Superannuation Commission within 14 days of the death and, when the death of an RBF pensioner is identified, it is usually actioned on the same day. The Commission endeavours to be proactive in identifying deaths and, if a potential surviving partner of a pensioner is identified, RBF initiates contact by telephone and then by letter to commence the surviving partner application process. The time taken to assess surviving partner pension claims are also dependent on the completeness of information submitted by the potential surviving partner.

I can advise that for the same 12-month period, it took an average of 13.2 weeks from the date of death of a pensioner to the commencement of the surviving partner pension. Once a surviving partner pension application was approved by the Commission, on average their pension commenced within 11 days.



A provisional surviving partner pension can be paid following the death of an RBF life pensioner, where a surviving partner declaration has been completed by the pensioner prior to their death. A provisional surviving partner pension can commence immediately following the death of the pensioner and be paid for up to six months.

I can further advise that the Commission has an ongoing campaign to increase the number of pensioners with a surviving partner declaration to ensure that a members' death benefit is paid promptly. The form, and further information, can be found on the RBF website.

Telephone and in-person support is also available to surviving partners who are going through the determination process and require assistance with paperwork or certification of documents.

Yours sincerely

  
Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure

19/6/2024

## Appendix 7

**Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs**  
**Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation**  
**Minister for the Arts**  
**Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence**

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Hon. Jacqui Petrusma MP  
Member for Franklin  
Email: [jacqui.petrusma@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:jacqui.petrusma@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Petrusma

### CONSTITUENCY QUESTION – ENABLING BUSINESS GRANTS

I write in response to your question on 18 June 2024 about support for small businesses through the Enabling Business Grants program, in particular the eligibility criteria for interested businesses.

As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, the pro small business Tasmanian Government announced that we would establish a \$1 million grants program to support small businesses across Tasmania to thrive, adapt and innovate.

These grants, between \$2,500 and \$10,000, will help our businesses to grow and to take advantage of opportunities by assisting with small capital purchases, including machinery, electronic payment terminals and computers to name just a few.

While the grant is not open until later this year, we have launched the guidelines to ensure businesses have plenty of time to review, consider and prepare.

The key eligibility criteria to access this \$1 million grant program is as follows:

1. Active ABN: The small business must hold an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and be registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST).
2. Location: The small business must be located in Tasmania.
3. Business Activity: The small business should be actively trading and demonstrate the ability to manage the proposed operation.
4. Tax Registration: The small business must be registered for tax purposes in Australia.

All successful applicants must provide a cash contribution of at least 30% towards the total purchase cost. The total value of the proposed purchases must not exceed \$50,000, including GST.

This hand up will ensure small businesses are best positioned to capitalise on opportunities, employ, and grow.

Small businesses can check their eligibility through the following means:

- Checking the Program Guidelines available via the Business Tasmania website
- Contacting Business Tasmania at either [ask@business.tas.gov.au](mailto:ask@business.tas.gov.au) or call 1800 440 026; and
- Using the online resources including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Applicant Checklist at the Business Tasmania website.

As a local small business advocate in Franklin, I trust this information is useful in your discussions.

Yours sincerely



Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP  
Minister for Small Business



## Appendix 8

Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs  
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Minister for the Arts  
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

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Ms Janie Finlay MP  
Labor Member for Bass  
PO Box 1813  
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250  
Email: [Janie.Finlay@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:Janie.Finlay@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Finlay

### CONSTITUENCY QUESTION – Proposed Caravan Parks Legislation

I write in response to your question on 18 June 2024 about legislative arrangements for caravan park operators and residents. I also note your similar question this matter in the May sittings. The answer remains the same as my response of 11 June, the Tasmanian Government will move to consult on reforms needed around long-term residencies in caravan parks.

The Department of Justice is preparing a Discussion Paper which examines the issues relating to long-term residency in caravan parks across Tasmania. The Discussion Paper is due to be released in August for public consultation and with dates yet to be confirmed. The Paper will be available through [www.justice.tas.gov.au/community-consultation](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/community-consultation).

Under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we are working to strike a balance between supporting our visitor economy sector, private ownership rights, and housing affordability.

The Tasmanian Government has not committed at this time to new legislation. Once the responses to the discussion paper have been considered, the Government will form a view about what and if legislative change is required. A broad range of stakeholders are intended to be consulted. More information about the discussion paper will be available closer to the release date in August.

Yours sincerely

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP  
Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs

## Appendix 9

Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs  
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Minister for the Arts  
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

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Ms Ella Haddad MP  
Labor Member for Clark  
Email: [Ella.Haddad@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:Ella.Haddad@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Haddad

### CONSTITUENCY QUESTION – TVT9 Heritage Assessment

I write in response to your question on 18 June 2024 about the heritage assessment for Tasmania's last surviving original television station, Launceston's TVT (TNT 9).

The Tasmanian Heritage Council, at its recent June meeting, agreed that the nomination to enter the TNT9 studios at Watchorn Street, South Launceston, be progressed to owner consultation stage, as outlined in the Heritage Council's *Owner and Stakeholder Consultation Policy for Registration Matters*.

To date, contact has continued between Heritage Tasmania officers and both the owners and owner agent in relation to progressing the statutory nomination process.

At this stage, no decision has been made regarding the nomination, as the pre-statutory consultation process is still underway.

I understand a Development Application for the site is publicly available via the Launceston City Council's website, and comments in relation to the proposal are required to be lodged prior to 3 July 2024.

Anyone interested in this site should be encouraged to submit their comments in relation to the development application through this mechanism. The *Land Use Planning & Approvals Act 1993* provides an avenue through which stakeholders can voice their concerns regarding the development of any sites across the state regardless of the heritage status.

Yours sincerely

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP  
Minister for Arts

## Appendix 10

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

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Mr Andrew Jenner MP  
Parliament House  
HOBART 7000



Dear Mr Jenner

In Parliament on 11 June 2024 you requested information from me as Minister for Infrastructure on behalf of a constituent in Orford as follows:

*"This question came in to me this morning from a constituent in Orford. There was yet another incident at Paradise Gorge this morning, blocking the road between Orford and Sorell. Many of us who have to commute to work were left briefly stranded. Thankfully this time the road was cleared quite quickly. However, should this happen again and the clear-up take far longer, Wielangta Road is not suitable for smaller cars and they have to travel two and a half hours for what should be a 40-minute trip. What is being done to stop this from happening again?"*

In response to your constituent's question, I can advise the following.

A small tree and some debris was reported to have fallen on the Tasman Highway at Paradise Gorge near Orford on the morning of Tuesday, 11 June 2024.

The Department of State Growth's maintenance contractor was alerted to the matter and arrived on site before 8am and quickly cleared the road with a minimal impact to road users.

While the topography of Paradise Gorge represents an ongoing challenge, the impact of the event was minor in comparison to the 2021 controlled rockfall event required to remove dangerous boulders that were identified above the road, requiring the closure of the highway and diversion of traffic through Wielangta Road.

While the Tasmanian Government has no current management responsibilities for Wielangta Road, we deployed workers there to maintain it for the residents of the Lower East Coast through the temporary closure of the Tasman Highway, spending more than \$380,000 on this task.

I have been clear that Wielangta Road has proven its importance as an ongoing access route for the East Coast.

At the 2021 election we committed \$1 million for targeted resurfacing of the 32-kilometre road.

The Department of State Growth commissioned a feasibility study for a second sealed access to the Tasman Highway through upgrading Wielangta Road to a consistent sealed travelling surface for the full length between Orford and the Arthur Highway at Copping. This study identified a range of options to seal Wielangta Road ranging up to more than \$90 million for the full length.

The sealing of the entire length would need to be staged over a number of years and is likely to involve additional works to ensure a consistent travelling surface.

I am pleased to advise that the Rockliff Liberal Government allocated \$6 million in our 2024 election campaign towards a \$32.1 million upgrade of a seven kilometre section of Wielangta Road. The Tasmanian Government's investment would seal the section most prone to damage and includes the replacement of the Griffiths Rivulet Bridge and Seventeen Acre Creek Bridges, providing a significant improvement in the event of any potential future closure or disruption of the Tasman Highway.

This \$6 million commitment is the State's contribution to this \$32 million project and is subject to the Australian Government's contribution of 80 per cent towards this section in accordance with established precedent. I note that the Federal Member for Lyons has been public in his support for the sealing of Wielangta Road.

We will maintain our efforts to attract the necessary federal funding so we can improve the resilience of the road network.

Yours sincerely



Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure

19/6/2024



## Appendix 11

Minister for Education  
Minister for Disability Services  
Deputy Leader in the Legislative Council

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17 July 2024

Ms Jen Butler MP  
Labor Member for Lyons  
Email c/o Clerk of the Assembly: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Butler *Jen*

Thank you for your Constituent Question on Wednesday, 19 June 2024, asked as follows:

*Is the Minister aware that the Online Access Centre in Glamorgan-Spring Bay has recently closed?*

*Can the Minister please outline the reason for the closure; advise whether the closure will be permanent and outline what steps the Government took to prevent the closure?*

*Given the funding arrangements for all Online Access Centres expires in June 2025, can the Minister provide a guarantee to regional communities that no more of these Online Access Centres will close?*

I am pleased to provide the following response:

- Glamorgan-Spring Bay Online Access Centre advised Libraries Tasmania of its voluntary closure due to its inability to find appropriate staff to operate the service.
- This closure was not funding related.
- All Online Access Centres are funded appropriately for their work through to 30 June 2025, via Digital Connections Grants.
- For your information, the Tasmanian Liberal Government is planning to undertake an independent review of investment in digital inclusion programs including the Digital Connections Grants, to be completed before the end of 2024.
- Future funding for Online Access Centres will be explored pending the outcome of the review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Palmer'.

Hon Jo Palmer MLC  
Minister for Education

## Appendix 12

Minister for Disability Services  
Minister for Education  
Deputy Leader in the Legislative Council

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17 July 2024

Mrs Miriam Beswick  
Jacqui Lambie Network Member for Braddon  
Email c/o Clerk of the Assembly: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mrs Beswick,

Thank you for your Constituent Question on Thursday, 20 June 2024, asked as follows:

*Does the education department have a policy around chartering buses and the requirement for whether or not they have seatbelts. We would like an update on where that is at, and whether it has been reviewed in the last two years.*

I am pleased to provide the following response:

I have been advised that the Department for Education, Children and Young People does not currently have a policy around chartering buses or any related seatbelt requirements.

The matter of contracted school buses sits with the Department of State Growth.

Advice from the Department of State Growth is that currently school buses in Tasmania are not required to be fitted with seatbelts under law. However, all new small (25 seats and under) dedicated school buses that operate on government contracts are required under the terms of the contract to be fitted with seat belts.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Palmer'.

Hon Jo Palmer MLC  
Minister for Education

## Appendix 13

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management  
Minister for Housing and Planning  
Minister for Skills and Training



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Ms Miriam Beswick MP  
Via email: [miriam.beswick@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:miriam.beswick@parliament.tas.gov.au)



Dear Ms Beswick

Thank you for your Constituency Question on behalf of a young man who became homeless when his father was taken into custody.

The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management has advised of the process when a person is taken into custody if there are dependent children requiring care and no other adults present.

Attending police officers would work with the person or persons being taken into custody to determine temporary care arrangements for any children (for example, a responsible family member or friend).

If necessary, police would alternatively liaise with relevant service providers to put in place an appropriate arrangement to ensure the children's safety.

As discussed, my office and I will work with you to assist in the particular instance you have outlined to provide specific information and facilitate the required support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Felix Ellis".

Hon Felix Ellis MP  
**Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management**

11/7/2024



## Appendix 14

Minister for Education  
Minister for Disability Services  
Deputy Leader in the Legislative Council

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20 JUN 2024

Ms Rebecca White MP  
Labor Member for Lyons  
Email c/o Clerk of the Assembly: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms White,

Thank you for your Constituent Question on Wednesday, 12 June 2024, asked as follows:

*I recently had the pleasure to visit Tasman School where I was provided with an excellent tour by students who made it their priority to show me their netball and basketball courts. They told me that no progress has been made on upgrades that you committed to years ago, and the netball court is now no longer able to be used due to the poor condition of the asphalt. This means their teams cannot practice at school and they are competing against other school teams without the ability to train. Can you explain why there has been such a long delay and when the upgrades to the courts will occur?*

I would like to provide the following response:

Tasman District School has an approved Outdoor Learning Program project to resurface the outdoor netball courts. Delays in progressing the project have occurred due to existing storm water drainage issues on the site that are impacting on the courts.

The site has a history of natural springs that have impacted the outdoor areas and these issues need to be rectified before resurfacing works can commence. Expert advice is being sought to guide whether any additional drainage or structural works need to be undertaken.

We expect this advice in the near future and current programming indicates works are to be completed prior to the end of the year, noting that dry and warmer weather is required for the resurfacing works.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Palmer".

Hon Jo Palmer MLC  
Minister for Education



## Appendix 15

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management  
Minister for Housing and Planning  
Minister for Skills and Training



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Mr Simon Behrakis MP  
Via email: [simon.behrakis@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:simon.behrakis@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Behrakis

Thank you for your Constituency Question on behalf of Hobart CBD business owners and their concerns about crime.

You sought information regarding what is being done locally in the Hobart CBD to address this issue, in addition to the actions being taken to target repeat offenders, and whether there are additional measures that can be taken to improve safety.

Further to the work of Taskforce Saturate, which has charged 980 people with over 12,500 offences since starting in 2018, Tasmania Police works closely with the City of Hobart Council to address antisocial behaviour and crime.

Everyone deserves to feel safe at home, out in public and in their workplaces. Tasmania Police, in conjunction with the City of Hobart Council, use their combined resources to identify and respond to any offences occurring. While this occurs on a regular basis using the Hobart's CCTV network, there are also targeted operations.

These operations focus on areas such as Wellington Court, and areas in the CBD such as the Elizabeth Street Mall, and the Cat & Fiddle Arcade.

In response to an increase in complaints from the public, recently a dedicated Hobart CBD patrol has been implemented. This means Tasmania Police officers are undertaking high-visibility foot-patrols in the Hobart CBD and transport hubs, focussing on detecting offenders, resetting behaviours and keeping all members of the public safe.

If members of the public have any concerns at all about their safety, or the safety of others, they are encouraged to phone it into the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or 000 in an emergency.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Felix Ellis".

Hon Felix Ellis MP  
**Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management**  
9/7/2024

## CONSTITUENT QUESTION

### House of Assembly



ASKED BY: Cecily Rosol MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and  
Wellbeing

#### QUESTION:

In June 2023, St Helen's Private Hospital closed with the loss of eight beds in the mother and baby unit. Three mother and baby beds were created at Royal Hobart Hospital and a four-bed, co-located unit is due in the north by Mother's Day next year. The federal government funded Tasmanian navigator nurse positions to guide new and expecting parents to mental health support, with 295 referrals received to date this year.

Modelling indicates that eight beds are needed to meet need around the state, and current services are woefully insufficient. Your 2030 Strong Plan states that in your first 100 days of government you will establish a new Telehealth support and statewide phone service for parents. To date no funding agreement or SLAs have been signed for this service.

A concerned constituent has asked when they can expect the Telehealth support and phone service to begin operation so Tasmanian parents can receive the help they need when they need it.

1. when they can expect the Telehealth support and phone service to begin operation so Tasmanian parents can receive the help they need when they need it.

#### ANSWER:

I am pleased to advise the statewide Tasmanian Parenting Support Line commenced operation from July 1 2024, as part of our important

partnership with Tresillian Family Care Centres – meeting the commitment under our 100 day plan.

This means Tasmanian parents can now freecall 1300 TAS BUB (1300 827 282) between 7.00am and 11.00pm, seven days a week, where they can receive telephone support and guidance from a specialist Tresillian child and family health nurse.

APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Guy Barnett MP  
**Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Date: 15 July 2024

## Appendix 17

### CONSTITUENT QUESTION House of Assembly



ASKED BY: Miriam Beswick MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and  
Wellbeing

#### QUESTION:

In the independent review there is an expectation that 46 beds are due to be opened by the end of this month. Can you confirm this will be actioned by 30 June?

#### ANSWER:

All 46 beds were opened during June 2024.

APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy Barnett".

Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 15 July 2024

## Appendix 18

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

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Ms Jen Butler MP  
Labor Member for Lyons

By email: [Laura.Ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:Laura.Ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

19 July 2024

Dear Ms Butler

Thank you for your constituency question you asked in Parliament on 20 June 2024 regarding the proposal to compulsorily acquire land at Westbury for a Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area as follows:

*"Carol and John Firth of Westbury are concerned about the Department of State Growth's plans to compulsorily acquire their land for a heavy vehicle rest area. They say there was no consultation with them and the first they heard was a letter in the mail with the title, 'Project Update'. Noting the poppy yield of the land has the highest alkaloid levels in the area, these concerns were raised with the government in January this year. Mr and Mrs Firth have advised that the acquisition of their prime agricultural paddocks will proceed. Are you concerned about the way they have been treated and will you step in to find a suitable resolution?"*

Managing driver fatigue is essential for road safety and for ensuring our heavy vehicle drivers comply with National Heavy Vehicle legislation, and the ability for heavy vehicles to safely and productively navigate the road network is a key consideration of the Tasmanian Government's investment in infrastructure to support economic opportunity and enhance productivity.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government partnered with the Tasmanian Transport Association (TTA) in the development of a Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area Strategy, which was released in 2020. The Strategy identified potential sites for new Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Areas (HVDRA) in key locations that will allow heavy vehicle drivers to take mandatory rest breaks across Tasmania, better manage fatigue on key Tasmanian freight routes and check their load security.

I have been advised that the Department of State Growth undertook a thorough scoping exercise of land suitable for the HVDRA, to be located between Westbury/Binallee Road and Deloraine. After undertaking this work and once the project team had a clearer understanding of those who may be affected by the project, the Department commenced a process of consultation with landowners and other potentially affected. Consultation did not commence until the scoping exercise was complete so as not to cause unnecessary concern to landowners whose land was subsequently determined unsuitable for a HVDRA.

I can advise that after suitable locations were identified, landowners were informed on 31 January 2024 of the draft plans and associated land acquisition for the HVDRA. The first in-person meetings and the original project update letters were intended to be the start of a program of targeted consultation with directly impacted landowners. These meetings were intended to assure landowners that acquisition plans would not be finalised until after the preliminary design was complete and to be the beginning of an open and ongoing relationship with landowners throughout the project. This was also an



opportunity to advise landowners about the compensation and acquisition process for property that is needed for projects, which is run by the Office of the Valuer-General.

I understand that the Secretary of the Department of State Growth wrote to Carol and John Firth on 15 March 2024, providing a detailed update on the scoping exercise and the consultation program. Mr and Mrs Firth were also advised that fair compensation would be paid for the acquisition of their land, which would include compensation for the loss of future revenue from the land.

I have been advised that representatives from the Department have endeavoured to continue to engage with Mr and Mrs Firth but have experienced some difficulties.

Westbury was identified in the 2020 Heavy Vehicle Rest Area strategy as a priority HVDRA site. I am advised that, while other westbound locations on the Bass Highway were considered by the Department, there were no other locations deemed appropriate. For this reason, the Department has been attempting to work with the Firths to develop the site on their land, understand how the Department can minimise impacts on their land where possible, and to ensure that the Firths are fairly compensated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Ferguson".

Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

## Appendix 19

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart  
Public Buildings, 53 St John Street, Launceston  
GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001  
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09 JUL 2024

Ms Tabatha Badger MP  
Parliament House, Hobart, TAS 7000

Dear Ms Badger

In Parliament on 19 June, you asked the following question on behalf of residents of Longford and the Northern Midlands Council:

*In March 2023, the residents of Longford and the Northern Midlands Council were pledged an independent traffic survey which would specifically address the ongoing safety issues on the corner of Wellington and Marlborough streets in Longford, locally known as 'Sticky Beaks Corner'.*

*Minister, what is the delay for this promised independent traffic survey? People are still being forced to drive alternative routes in order to avoid car accidents at this dangerous intersection. Can you advise on an updated time frame for the commencement of this urgent assessment?*

In response to your question I can advise that the Department of State Growth reviewed the Northern Midlands Council's design for the footpath improvements at the intersection of Marlborough Street and Wellington Street in Longford as part of the Tasmanian Government's Vulnerable Road User Program.

Following implementation of the design, the department inspected the site and accepted the works, and the project was completed.

The Department maintains the view that the onsite arrangements are satisfactory from a traffic safety perspective. However, the Department also agreed that it would engage a consultant to undertake an independent review of the site. The department has engaged a consultant and is expecting the independent review to occur by the end of July 2024.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Ferguson".

Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure

## Appendix 20

**Minister for Energy and Renewables  
Minister for Parks and Environment**

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10 July 2024

Ms Jacque Petrusma  
Member for Franklin  
Via Clerk of the House of Assembly  
email: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Petrusma

I write in response to a question raised in Parliament on behalf of your constituents on 20 June 2024.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to enhancing our circular economy and established the \$3 million Waste Tyre Reprocessing Grant Program to help find sustainable uses for end-of-life tyres in Tasmania. Waste tyres that are illegally dumped or stored can pose a range of risks to our community and environment and is a waste of a useful resource and we know that more effort is needed into this area of resource recovery.

The Tasmanian Government has taken a number of actions to address these problems, by improving the regulation around stockpiling of tyres, and working at the national level to improve product stewardship for tyres. The Waste Tyre Reprocessing Grant Program is another part of the solution. In particular, I was pleased to recently announce that Tyrecycle has been granted \$1.27 million from the Program to upgrade the Barwick's tyre shredding facility at Bridgewater to add a new waste tyre chipper.

End-of-life tyres collected from around Tasmania will be pre-processed using the existing machine at Barwick's and then manufactured into five-centimetre Tyre Derived Fuel (TDF) chips using the new chipper. For the last decade or so in Tasmania, waste tyres have been collected and shredded in Tasmania by Barwick's, but only to a large size, which then required more processing in Melbourne. The upgraded facility at Bridgewater will create a value-added product that can be used as an alternative fuel for coal in a range of industrial processes, such as cement production.

We know that the use of TDF instead of coal can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 per cent. Tyrecycle has extensive experience in providing TDF to industry across the world, but they are also committed to providing an "on-island" solution to our tyre waste - and providing TDF to Tasmanian customers once those opportunities are available.

This will help reduce Tasmanian emissions and provide a sustainable use for the 650,000 end-of-life tyres collected each year in our State. I am very happy to see this project going ahead. It is another example of how we are implementing the Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy through strategic investment. It will help to set a pathway for Tasmania to embed circular economy principles across all sectors, and to achieve a more sustainable, low-emissions future.

Thank you again for raising this important matter with me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Duigan".

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
Minister Parks and Environment



## Appendix 21

Minister for Finance  
Minister for Local Government  
Minister for Sport and Events

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Mr Simon Behrakis  
Member for Clark

c/- Laura.Ross@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Behrakis

Thank you for your constituency question on 19 June 2024 to the Acting Minister for Local Government, the Hon Roger Jaensch MP, regarding how older Tasmanians can access financial support to assist them with their rates payments.

I acknowledge that there are some Tasmanians who are doing it tough right now, and we are working hard to help them. In the Local Government sphere, eligible pensioners (including health care card holders) are entitled to a rates remission the lesser of 30% of their rates or the 'prescribed maximum amount', the latter being adjusted each financial year under the provisions of the *Local Government (Rates and Charges Remissions) Act 1991*.

The maximum amount for 2023-24 is \$368 if you are a TasWater client or \$542 if you are not a TasWater client. In 2022-23 the amounts were \$345 for TasWater clients or \$507 for non-TasWater clients.

The rate remission scheme is funded by the Tasmanian Government and administered by local councils. I encourage your constituents to contact their local Council if they have any questions about making an application.

You can also direct them to find further information about the pensioner rate remission scheme, including eligibility requirements, on the State Revenue Office website at [www.sro.tas.gov.au/pensioner-rates-remission](http://www.sro.tas.gov.au/pensioner-rates-remission).

Thank you again for raising this matter with me. I hope the information I have provided is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nic Street".

Hon Nic Street MP  
**Minister for Local Government**

9 July 2024

## Appendix 22

### Minister for Energy and Renewables Minister for Parks and Environment

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9 July 2024

Ms Cecily Rosol  
Member for Bass  
Via Clerk of the House  
Email: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Rosol

I write in response to your question on behalf of your constituent in relation to the St Patricks River Reserve.

I have sought advice from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) in order to respond to your question.

What is known by the local community as "St Patricks River Reserve" is actually a series of unnamed parcels of Crown Land and is not reserved under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* nor is it a Public Reserve under the *Crown Lands Act 1976*.

The Crown Land is part of the Department of State Growth road corridor as a remnant of the Tasman Highway following a realignment of the bridge in the 1950s and is subject to flooding and at times, anti-social behaviour, such as littering and hooning.

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) has had discussions and site visits in the area over many years with members of the local community, including Mr Von Steiglitz, President of St River District (Tas) Inc. Most recently, PWS met with Mr Steiglitz onsite, in March 2024 where he advised he wished to clean up an area with a 5-tonne excavator with the aim of creating a picnic and day use area.

In June 2024, a new application was received from Mr Von Steiglitz on behalf of the community for St Patricks River District. Mr Von Steiglitz has received advice from PWS by email and telephone that his application has been received and is now being assessed. I encourage Mr Von Steiglitz to continue to work with PWS in relation to his application.

Thank you for your question and your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Duigan".

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
Minister for Parks and Environment

## Appendix 23

**Minister for Energy and Renewables  
Minister for Parks and Environment**

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Ms Rebecca White  
Member for Lyons  
Via Clerk of the House  
Email: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms White

I write in response to your question on behalf of your constituent in relation to the discharge of onboard sewage from vessels at the Triabunna marina and mercury in the marina and Mercury Passage. I am advised the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has not received any complaints about sewage discharge in Triabunna.

I understand the discharge of sewage into the sea from boats is subject to requirements established under the *Marine-Related Incidents (MARPOL Implementation) Act 2020* and should be considered a last resort. The Director, EPA has issued two Sewage Management Directives that prescribe where owners and operators of certain boats may and may not release disinfected and untreated sewage into local waterways.

The directives aim to protect the environment and public health and have been in place for about a decade. They were developed in consultation with boating organisations and the Director of Public Health. Importantly, the directives do not promote disposing of sewage at sea. If boat owners are unable to treat their wastewater onboard, that wastewater should be contained on the vessel until it can be properly disposed of on land.

The Triabunna Marina is owned by Glamorgan/Spring Bay Council. If vessels are discharging sewage in the marina, it is Council's responsibility to ensure compliance with the Sewage Management Directive. However, the EPA will assist Council as necessary on request. The Directive does allow sewage to be discharged in certain areas of the Mercury Passage. This applies to all vessels, including the Maria Island Ferry.

I am advised MAST has previously part-funded sewage pump out stations at marinas, including at the Margate Marina. If the Council wishes to explore this option, they are encouraged to make an application for funding under MAST's Small Boating Fund to help address the issue of blackwater discharge. A link to the application form is available [here](#):

<https://mast.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Small-Projects-Fund-Application-and-Criteria-Form-2023.pdf>

Thank you for your question and your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'ND', is positioned above the printed name.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
Minister for Parks and Environment



## Appendix 24

**Minister for Energy and Renewables  
Minister for Parks & Environment**

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Ms Jacqui Petrusma MP  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier  
Liberal Member for Franklin



Dear Ms Petrusma

Thank you for your Constituent Question in Parliament on Thursday, 13 June 2024 asked as follows:

*I was intrigued to hear about a neighborhood battery trial currently taking place in Queensland. The trial consists of the installation of batteries to power poles and at ground-level to help encourage residents to store the energy they generate from solar panels. On behalf of the many constituents in my electoral of Franklin, can the Minister for Environment advise if any initiatives exist in Tasmania that support residents to store the electricity they generate from solar, and if so, how can the community access this?*

In Tasmania, we prioritise energy efficiency initiatives and have a range of support available. We want to ensure all Tasmanians are empowered to manage their energy needs and take advantage of new technology.

To store energy generated from solar panels, a current initiative which would assist Tasmanians with the purchase of a battery is the Energy Saver Loan Scheme. The Scheme provides a practical way to help households and small businesses transition to better energy efficiency by offering no-interest loans to eligible applicants to fund the purchase price and installation of energy efficient products, including batteries.

One of the biggest obstacles for Tasmanians undertaking an investment in energy efficiency measures is the up-front cost, and this Scheme is designed to help overcome that issue and make energy more affordable and sustainable.

For more information, please visit [Energy Saver Loan Scheme | Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania \(recfit.tas.gov.au\)](https://recfit.tas.gov.au)

Again, thank you for taking the time to raise this initiative with me.

Yours sincerely

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
**Minister for Energy and Renewables**

## Appendix 25

**Minister for Energy and Renewables  
Minister for Parks & Environment**

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Mr Simon Wood  
Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Government Whip  
Liberal Member for Bass

Email c/o Clerk of the Assembly: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Wood

Thank you for your Constituent Question in Parliament on Thursday, 13 June 2024 asked as follows:

*Travellers using electric vehicles between Launceston and Hobart have raised concerns with the number of charging ports along the way. Can the Minister for Environment please provide information on what is being done to ensure trip security along this route and whether there are plans to increase the number of charging ports across the state?*

The Government is firmly committed to supporting the uptake of electric vehicles and building on its associated infrastructure through the ChargeSmart Grants Program.

The first ChargeSmart program funded grants totalling \$600,000 to deliver 14 fast chargers, and 23 destination and workplace charging stations around the state. The second ChargeSmart program allocated \$773,000 to support the installation of 20 fast charging stations and 23 destination chargers across regional areas and tourism hotspots.

Improving our charging infrastructure is a key priority within the Draft Transport Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan, which is soon to be finalised and published in coming weeks. Through this Plan, the Government has committed to a grant program to support the expansion of key electric vehicle charging locations across main arterial routes across the state, including between Hobart and Launceston, to increase Tasmania's charging capacity.

We want to encourage even more Tasmanians and visitors to get out and explore our beautiful state as we secure Tasmania's future, and building up our network of charging ports will boost our state's reputation as a preferred tourism destination for electric vehicle owners.

To see where all charges are located around the state, visit [www.PlugShare.com](http://www.PlugShare.com). This site also provides information on chargers that are in use or temporarily unavailable to assist you with planning your journey.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Duigan'.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
**Minister for Energy and Renewables**

## Appendix 26



10 July 2024

Mr Simon Wood MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Government Whip  
Liberal Member for Bass  
Email: [simon.wood@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:simon.wood@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Wood

Thank you for your constituent question in Parliament during the last sitting in which you asked me as Minister for Tourism and Hospitality the following question:

*"As you are aware, there are many local business owners in my electorate of Bass and across Tasmania who are struggling with the winter downturn that affects tourist numbers to our state, particularly in our winter months. We know there is a need to promote regional dispersal and stimulate tourism activity in regional Tasmania. The Tasmanian Liberal Government has committed to delivering a \$50 million regional tourism loan scheme. This scheme will provide low-interest loans for businesses to invest in new projects that will stimulate their local visitor economy. I note that you have also committed to opening the scheme in the first 100 days. On behalf of my electorate, I ask, can you provide an update on the status of this initiative and when will Tasmanians be able to access the support?"*

In response to your constituent question, I can advise the following.

Today, I was pleased to announce that the \$50 million Regional Tourism Development Loan Scheme has been established as part of the Tasmanian Government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

Applications are now open for loans of between \$100,000 and \$3 million to support projects that assist with the development of new or improved tourism products and experiences in regional Tasmania.

We know there is so much innovation out there in the tourism industry, but current commercial interest rates can make it challenging for ideas to become a reality. This scheme will provide an opportunity for operators to realise new projects with the incentive of a lower interest rate than what is available in the commercial lending market.

Under the terms of the program, successful projects will also have a focus on year-round regional tourism, authentic Tasmanian experiences, environmental sustainability and inclusiveness and accessibility.

As you know our Government is committed to building on Tasmania's reputation as a world-leading tourism destination and highlight Tasmania's unique experiences.

GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001 | Telephone: 61 3 6165 7650 | Email: [premier@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:premier@dpac.tas.gov.au)

For more information on the program and to apply go to: [www.business.tas.gov.au](http://www.business.tas.gov.au)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Rockliff'.

Jeremy Rockliff MP  
Premier



## Appendix 27



10 July 2024

Ms Tabatha Badger  
Greens Member for Lyons  
Email: [Tabatha.badger@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:Tabatha.badger@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Badger

Thank you for your constituent question in Parliament during the last sitting in which you asked me as Minister for Tourism and Hospitality the following question:

***Your government has made a commitment to invest \$5 million into the State Aviation Strategy to increase exports under your 2030 Strong Plan. What measures will the government implement to alleviate the distress caused by the noise of jet aircraft using the current runway 30 RNP-AR flight path while also protecting the scenic and environmental values of the affected area? Have you had any correspondence with Airservices Australia about this? How will the State Aviation Strategy prioritise the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, balancing the needs of aviation and tourism industries with those environmental and local communities as well?***

In response to your constituent question, I can advise the following.

The aviation environment remains challenging post COVID-19 and for Tasmania to maintain and increase capacity to the island, Tasmania must be able to respond to emerging opportunities as they arise.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government will create a dedicated Aviation Fund of \$5 million to be established to enable Tasmania to be agile and swift in leveraging opportunities by partnering with domestic and international airlines to increase capacity and enter the Tasmanian market.

Airservices Australia is a Federal government-owned organisation responsible for the safe and efficient management of Australia's skies, including responsibility for setting and monitoring of flight paths into Hobart Airport.

I am advised a trial is currently underway by Air Services Australia to monitor aircraft noise and test two different flight path approaches to Hobart Airport's runway 30.

The trial will run for approximately the next 6 months to understand the noise impacts on community and the options to lessen the noise impacts on various locations.

The trial involves all arriving flights to runway 30 using the long approach (RNAV), near Connellys Marsh. It will operate between 2pm and 8am and will distribute air traffic more evenly between the long approach and short approach (RNP-AR) to lessen noise impacts on areas near the short approach.

Noise monitoring devices are positioned at various locations and will continually measure noise impacts throughout the trial.

When completed, the trial will be assessed and a decision made on whether to cease the trial, amend the trial conditions, or implement the NAP as a permanent operation.

The Tasmanian Government, through Tourism Tasmania and Department State Growth, is engaging on this issue with Airservices and the community through the Hobart Airport Community Aviation Consultation Group. It will continue to advocate for the community and for continued improvements that will both allow for the vital services and economic drivers that the airport enables and a harmonious relationship with the community within a safe and regulated environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Rockliff'.

Jeremy Rockliff MP  
Premier

## Appendix 28

Minister for Finance  
Minister for Local Government  
Minister for Sport and Events

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Josh Willie MP  
Member for Clark

c/- Laura.Ross@parliament.tas.gov.au



Dear Mr Willie

Thank you for your Constituency Question regarding the Tasmanian Government's election commitment to the Launceston Tornadoes.

This commitment is intended to fund a media and advertising campaign designed to lift participation by women and girls across the sporting landscape.

The campaign will aim to educate girls and their parents on the role of sport to improve health outcomes, promote the positive connections that team sport can provide, promote the benefits of team sport in the areas of mental health and wellbeing, and promote positive role models in sport for young girls and women.

The funding is the result of a clearly articulated vision for the promotion of the importance of women's and girls' sport by a community sporting organisation, and I'm sure you can see that this work will have benefit for the whole state.

The Tasmanian Government provides equal funding for the state NBL1 teams through the sport's governing body, Basketball Tasmania.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nic Street".

Nic Street MP  
**Minister for Sport and Events**

9 July 2024

## CONSTITUENT QUESTION

### House of Assembly



ASKED BY: Rebecca White MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

#### QUESTION:

Civil society groups point out that in July 2022 the Department of Justice commissioned a discussion paper on legislative reform of the Integrity Commission Act. Does your government remain committed to progressing this reform? If so, when will you provide an update on the legislative changes the government plans to introduce?

#### ANSWER:

In 2016, the Hon William Cox AC, RFD, ED, QC undertook an independent statutory review of the *Integrity Commission Act 2009*. In 2017, the Government actioned the first 6 recommendations by introducing amendments to address technical and other relatively straightforward matters.

In 2022, the Government published a discussion paper seeking feedback on legislative reforms concerning remaining Cox Review recommendations as well as a number of new issues raised by the Integrity Commission. There were 21 submissions received. Since the 2022 discussion paper, additional matters have been raised by the Integrity Commission. There are also potential reforms arising out of recommendations in the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

The Department of Justice is currently considering and undertaking research and analysis into these matters. Many of these further reforms involve complex policy issues affecting fundamental legal rights and the way in which the *Integrity Commission Act 2009* is administered. This requires detailed consideration and analysis; issues are often interrelated and are being dealt with as a package.

It is expected that this work will be further built upon by the review to be undertaken in accordance with the Confidence and Stability Agreement between the Premier and Parliamentary Members of the Jacqui Lambie Network, which requires a review of the Integrity Commission, with an eye to giving it greater capability to conduct its work, within 12 months of the agreement's 10 April 2024 execution date.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Attorney-General  
Minister for Justice

Date: 13 July 2024

## CONSTITUENT QUESTION

### House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Meg Brown MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP



#### QUESTION:

My question is on behalf of residents of Risdon Vale. Until recently, the Healthology Medical Centre at Risdon Vale had been operating out of government-owned premises. Since the recent closure of the medical centre, have any arrangements been made for the future of this premises or are any uses being considered, and if so, what are they?

#### ANSWER:

The Department of Health received formal notification on 1 May 2024 that Healthology Medical will not be renewing their licence that is due to expire on 30 June 2024. Healthology vacated the site by 30 June 2024.

The building will be used by the Department's Hospital@home program, with the intention to complete minor works and enhance security now that Healthology has vacated the premises.

☒ APPROVED ☐ NOT APPROVED

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Felix Ellis".

Hon Felix Ellis MP

Acting Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 10/7/2024



## Appendix 31

### Minister for Energy and Renewables Minister for Parks & Environment

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Mr Rob Fairs MP  
Parliament House, Hobart, TAS 7000

Cc: [minister.howlett@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:minister.howlett@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Rob

In Parliament on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June this year, you asked the following question on behalf of your constituents to the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Jane Howlett MP

*In my electorate of Bass, there are many Tasmanian families who are small agricultural producers. Many of these families are experiencing hardships and I am aware that some have been finding this season the most difficult they have faced for a long time due to a growing number of challenging conditions and increasing costs.*

*I know the government provides a number of different services to provide support to our people in our agricultural regions, and I am well aware of the terrific work that organisations like Rural Alive and Well and Rural Business Tasmania do in these situations.*

*Minister, on behalf of the farmers in my electorate, can you confirm where producers can go or call to access advice and help and find out what the options are for themselves?*

As the acting Minister for Primary Industries I am please to respond on Minister Howlett's behalf.

Farmpoint is recommended as the central point of contact for farmers and their families experiencing hardship. The current demand on these services is particularly high given the dry seasonal conditions.

FarmPoint is designed to help producers navigate the large amount of information available online and connect them with the advice they need. It has links to support services such as Rural Alive and Well and Rural Business Tasmania as well as information on grant programs and approvals.

I recommend to your constituents to contact FarmPoint on its free hotline 1300 292 292 or email [farmpoint@nre.tas.gov.au](mailto:farmpoint@nre.tas.gov.au).

Agricultural producers can also go to the FarmPoint website: [farmpoint.tas.gov.au](http://farmpoint.tas.gov.au)

If producers can't find what they need on the website, officers are on hand to answer enquiries by phone or email. They can also refer you to the best source of information within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania or elsewhere.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information for your constituents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Duigan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC

**Acting Minister for Primary Industries and Water**  
**Minister for Energy and Renewables**  
**Minister for Parks and Environment**



## Appendix 32

Attorney-General  
Minister for Justice  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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Vica Bayley MP  
Member for Clark

10 JUL 2024

Dear Mr Bayley *Vica*

Thank you for your Constituency Question on behalf of Mr Ben Bartl of the Tenants Union of Tasmania (TUT).

The National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) is a five-year national partnership agreement with the Commonwealth Government to support the delivery of legal assistance services.

The NLAP provides important Commonwealth financial support Tasmanian Community Legal Centres, including TUT. The Commonwealth Government has committed to providing \$18.767 million to Tasmanian CLCs under the current NLAP.

In addition to its baseline commonwealth funding, TUT receives additional Commonwealth funding to contribute to the provision of legal services for vulnerable women. Total Commonwealth funding for TUT is currently approximately \$190,000 per annum.

In recognition of the critical role of the legal assistance sector in supporting the most vulnerable members of our community, our Government permanently committed additional funding of \$640,000 per year to the sector in the 2021-2022 State Budget to provide certainty in baseline funding for the life of the NLAP. This funding has been allocated to Tasmania Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres and is indexed each year.

The State Government provides TUT with top-up funding of approximately \$28,000 per annum.

Our Government also invested \$2.2 million per year over four years from 2021-22 until 2024-25, to ensure that Tasmanians who need extra help can access free or low-cost services. The 2023-24 Budget included an additional \$820,000 to extend the 2021-22 commitment for a further year until 30 June 2026. From this additional funding the TUT receives approximately \$75,000 per annum to fund legal practitioner services in Launceston and the North-West.

In May 2023 the former Attorney-General approved additional funding of \$50,000 for TUT to undertake specific research projects.

On 23 June 2023, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, announced the commencement of the Independent Review of the NLAP and indicated that the final review report will be completed by early 2024. On 28 May 2024 the Commonwealth Attorney-General released the review report.

The negotiation of the next legal assistance funding arrangement was discussed at the most recent meeting of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (SCAG) on 5 July 2024. As indicated in the SCAG communiqué following the meeting, the participants agreed key timeframes and process for the negotiations of the next legal assistance funding arrangement. A standalone SCAG meeting will occur in September 2024 to consider future legal assistance arrangements.

Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future seeks to uplift Tasmanians and by fostering an effective, fit-for-purpose legal system we can begin to realise our vision. Our Government will now work closely with the Commonwealth and other state and territory governments to ensure that TUT, and the broader Tasmanian legal assistance sector, can continue to provide free or low-cost legal services for Tasmanians who need it most.

Yours sincerely



Hon Eric Abetz MP  
**Acting Attorney-General and Minister for Justice**

## Appendix 33

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Leader of the House

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Ms Helen Burnet MP

Email [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Burnet

10 JUL 2024

Thank you for your constituent question asked on 13 June 2024 in Parliament on behalf of Lucy regarding Metro services along Sandy Bay Road.

Thank you for raising Lucy's concerns. I appreciate the frustration and disappointment felt with the lateness of the buses and the impact it has had on her timely arrival at TAFE on time.

Metro apologises for the inconvenience and stress these delays have caused.

Along with the scheduled timetables, Metro uses telematics, ticketing data and CCTV to assist in investigating and assessing "on road" and "on bus" incidents.

In relation to services along Sandy Bay on Tuesday 28 May 2024, I am advised that between 08.00AM and 08.20AM, two buses were scheduled to pass Stop 14. Additionally, there was a third bus scheduled to arrive at 8.21AM.

Based on ticketing data, Metro advises that Route 402 picked up passengers at Stop 14 Sandy Bay Road at 8.00AM, Route 429 also stopped at Stop 14 but arrived late at 8.27AM due to traffic conditions and Route 426 passed the Stop at the similar time of 8.27AM which was also slightly delayed due to traffic.

Live tracking of bus and ferry services will be introduced across the State from December 2024, commencing with Hobart Metro services. This technology, once implemented, will allow Lucy to view the location of a bus on an online map, follow its progress along the route and see predicted arrival times.

Once again, Metro apologies for the delays in these services due to traffic conditions and thanks Lucy for her patience and patronage.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

  
Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Transport

## Appendix 34

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Leader of the House

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Ms Helen Burnet MP

Email [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

10 JUL 2024

Dear Ms Burnet *Helen*,

Thank you for your constituent question asked on 20 June 2024 in Parliament on behalf of Zara and Scott regarding Metro services in Sandy Bay.

Metro apologises for the inconvenience caused and appreciates the frustration and disappointment felt with the lateness of the buses.

As you are aware, in August 2023 Metro suspended some of its less frequented services while maintaining its more popular services to reduce unexpected cancellations. This has improved certainty for customers when planning a trip on a Metro service.

It is important to also note that, while timetables are the best estimate for when a bus will arrive at a stop, the actual time will, of course, be affected by factors including traffic conditions and the needs of passengers boarding at certain stops.

The introduction of real time tracking by the Tasmanian Liberal Government as part of its 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future will help passengers better plan ahead when using public transport. This is why I was delighted to recently announce that live tracking of bus and ferry services will be introduced in December 2024. This is an important step in creating a more reliable, convenient and accessible public transport in Tasmania.

In the meantime, may I suggest Scott and Zara contact the customer team at Metro on 13 22 01 who will be able to take any feedback or answer questions.

Once again, Metro apologises to Zara and Scott for their recent experience and thanks them for their patience and patronage.

Thank you for raising these matters in Parliament, I trust this information is helpful

Yours sincerely

*Eric Abetz*  
Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Transport



## Appendix 35

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Leader of the House

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Mr Rob Fairs MP  
Liberal Member for Bass  
Email: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

27 JUN 2024

Dear Mr Fairs

Thank you for your constituent question asked on 11 June 2024 in Parliament regarding the Tasmanian Liberal Government's commitment to provide Bridport with a recreational pier.

As you would be aware, the proposal to build a pier was a 2021 election commitment resulting from recommendations contained in the Bridport Foreshore Master Plan. The work conducted as part of this Plan determined that a pier would be beneficial to Bridport, delivering economic stimulus through tourism as well as providing amenity to recreational fishermen, boaters and residents.

A concept plan for the delivery of the 126 metre public jetty has been developed by Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST) with an estimated cost of \$4 million. Four prospective sites have been identified:

- adjacent to the old Pier at Pier Point
- south of the Pier Point Boat Ramp
- at the Southern end of Croquet Lawn Beach
- on Goftons Beach near the Surf Life Saving Club

MAST has recently completed community consultation on these potential sites. This consultation involved meetings with key stakeholders, a public drop-in session and an online/paper survey with over 400 submissions received. The survey data and comments have been analysed and discussions will now take place with Dorset Council to understand the land-based considerations, statutory planning requirements, property ownership, access and infrastructure requirements. Engineering advice on site specific conditions such as bathymetry, coastal processes and wave height will also be considered.

Once the final location has been determined based on the above factors, the public will be provided with a further opportunity to comment during the planning approval process. At this stage, MAST anticipates lodging an application for planning approval in late 2024.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Transport

## Appendix 36

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Leader of the House

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Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP  
Member for Franklin

Email: [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

10 JUL 2024

Dear Dr Woodruff *Rosalie,*

Thank you for your constituent question asked on 12 June 2024 in Parliament regarding upgrades to the Kingston bus interchange.

Like you, I am eager to see these bus stops commence operation. The Channel Highway stops are much more convenient to passengers and provide greater visibility and safety.

The new Kingston bus interchange has been designed and developed by Kingborough Council with funding administered by the Tasmanian Government through the Hobart City Deal.

The Government, through the Department of State Growth, provided comments throughout the planning and design process, when invited to do so, including through the public consultation periods.

As part of the Council's commissioning of the site, it undertook a range of vehicle testing which identified several issues that need addressing to ensure the facility is safe, accessible and fit-for-purpose prior to commencing operations. The Department has worked with the Council and bus operators to resolve these issues, including obtaining specialist independent advice.

I am advised that the Department has recently received advice on infrastructure remediation needed to make the facility safe and functional for bus operators and customers. The advice will be discussed with bus operators and shared with the Council for its consideration and action.

All bus operators will continue to operate services from the temporary Goshawk Way bus stops until the new Kingston Interchange is ready to open.

Thank you for raising these matters in Parliament. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Abetz".

Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Transport

## Appendix 37

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Leader of the House

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Mr Vica Bayley MP  
Member for Clark  
Email: [vica.bayley@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:vica.bayley@parliament.tas.gov.au)

09 JUL 2024

Dear Mr Bayley

Thank you for your constituent question of 12 June 2024 in Parliament, on behalf of Mr Phil Stigens and other constituents regarding the strategic review of kunanyi/Mount Wellington.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government recognises the importance of the Mount Wellington Precinct to all Tasmanians and the value it provides as Tasmania's most visited natural asset. However, there are challenges with the mountain that need to be addressed over the longer term. Stakeholders involved in the care and management of Wellington Park have raised specific concerns about existing infrastructure and amenities, access, transport and fire management.

We are committed to consulting with the community throughout the review to develop a long-term vision for the Precinct. This will ensure that all Tasmanians have an opportunity to have their say on the mountain's future. Further information about how community engagement will work during the review will be made available as planning proceeds.

The Department of State Growth will finalise the Terms of Reference for the review through targeted engagement with key stakeholders including local government, the Wellington Park Management Trust, peak tourism bodies and Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations.

The final Terms of Reference will ensure the review delivers a long-term vision for the Precinct, with a focus on values management, visitor experience, and administration. It is anticipated that the Terms of Reference will be released in July 2024.

Thank you for raising these matters in Parliament; I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Abetz".

Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources



## Appendix 38

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

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Ms Janie Finlay MP  
Labor Member for Bass  
[janie.finlay@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:janie.finlay@parliament.tas.gov.au)

09 JUL 2024

Dear Ms Finlay

In Parliament on 20 June 2024 you requested information from me as Minister for Infrastructure on behalf of community members and the Sidmouth General Store owners as follows:

*It has been repeatedly brought to our attention both by community members and the Sidmouth General Store owners that ongoing road works are having a considerable impact on their business. Their small, family-owned local business relies on passing traffic to survive.*

*The impact of putting the road works traffic lights right outside the store on more than one occasion makes it difficult for any potential customers to stop. These works have been continuing for an extended period and will continue for some time. The impact to this business is ongoing. What adjustments can be made to allow passing traffic to easily access this business both now and in the future?*

In response to your question, which is similar to correspondence you have separately sent me on this matter, I have received the following advice:

The Department of State Growth Project Manager and the contractor's Project Manager for the Batman Highway roadworks are in regular contact with the owners of the store to keep them updated on the scope of planned works. This includes how the Department is working with the contractor Hazell Bros to minimise the impact of the road works to the property.

The Department has committed to several activities including:

- exploring the option of night works while full width excavation of the road takes place outside the General Store;
- where possible, ensuring no signage or traffic lights are set up where traffic pulls into the property;
- while works are directly in front of the property, access and direction is being facilitated by traffic controllers stationed in the front of the site, to guide customers to parking; and
- ongoing and regular contact with the store owners to continue to provide updates and look at options to limit impacts where possible.

The Department advises me that the work is planned to be completed in July this year, subject to weather. When complete the project will provide a designated heavy vehicle parking area on both sides of the road, improving access to the store for customers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Ferguson'.

Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure



## Appendix 39

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

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Mr Josh Willie MP  
Labor Member for Clark  
By email: [josh.willie@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:josh.willie@parliament.tas.gov.au)

9 JUL 2024

Dear Mr Willie

Thank you for the constituency question you asked in Parliament on 20 June 2024 regarding the 2024-25 State Budget Community Consultation Process as follows:

*"Your coalition partners, the Jacqui Lambie Network, have powers afforded to them that no one else in this place has. One of the most significant is their ability to put forward Budget bids. Several of my constituents are very interested to understand what they have put forward. Can you outline how many bids they have made and what the total value of those bids are, and will you commit to releasing them publicly?"*

As you are aware, each year, the Tasmanian Government consults with the community in the lead up to the development of the State Budget.

Community groups and individuals were invited to make submissions in respect of the 2024-25 State Budget, which commenced on 26 August 2023, with submissions due to be submitted to the Department of Treasury and Finance by 30 November 2023.

In relation to the publication of Community Consultation submissions, the Department of Treasury and Finance, which coordinates the Community Consultation process, does not publish submissions. Stakeholders that make submissions do so with the understanding that the submissions will not be made public. Stakeholders may, however, publish their own submissions.

As part of the Budget development process, agencies are required to consider the Community Consultation submissions in the context of development their Agency Budget submission, which are then considered by Budget Committee.

The 2024-25 State Budget, to be handed down on 12 September 2024, will detail funding provided to community organisations.

Yours sincerely

Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Treasurer

## Appendix 40

Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Minister for Infrastructure

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Ms Anita Dow MP  
Member for Braddon  
PO Box 495  
Burnie TAS 7320

10 July 2024

Dear Ms Dow

On Thursday, 13 June, you asked the following question in Parliament on behalf of Smithton constituents:

*"My constituents from Smithton want to know when the long-awaited road upgrades between Smithton and Marawah will be completed and I note that there is significant community concern about the safety of this road corridor."*

In response to your question I can advise that the *Bass Highway – Wynyard to Marawah Corridor Strategy* was developed following an extensive engineering assessment of the road environment and consultation with the community.

The Corridor Strategy identified the following of key issues and opportunities for improvement of the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marawah:

- Four new overtaking lanes.
- 10 sections of road to be realigned, with potential for realigning an additional five sections.
- 15 junction upgrades with potential for upgrading an additional 51 junctions.
- Up to 60 km of shoulder widening, with 25 km identified as a high priority.

The Corridor Strategy sets out our long-term upgrade plans for the highway, to be delivered over 20 years. The projects are being delivered in order of priority with the highest priority projects delivered first. In response to the Corridor Strategy, the Tasmanian and Australian Governments have jointly committed \$100 million to provide upgrades to the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marawah.

To date, \$48 million has been spent on planning, design and construction of the highest priority projects, with construction ongoing since 2020. Eleven projects have so far been completed including three between Smithton and Marawah as follows:

- Brittons Swamp road rehabilitation and shoulder widening.
- Mella Road, Broadmeadows junction upgrade.
- Salmon River Road to Park/Paceys Road, Togari safety improvements including junction upgrades, and new Montagu River bridge.

I am advised that the following projects are currently in design and will be delivered over the longer term:

- Smithton junction Improvements - Brittons Road junction & Bacon Factory Road junction.
- Alignment Improvements east of Schuurings Road, Christmas Hills.
- Improvements to the junction of Christmas Hills and Dunns Road.

Future improvements also identified in the strategy and subject to future funding include junction improvements at Kubanks Road and Ida Scott Crescent at Smithton; and Blameys Road, Tabbys Road/Dixons Road, and Fagans Road at Christmas Hills.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Ferguson', is positioned above the printed name.

Michael Ferguson MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Infrastructure

## Appendix 41

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management  
Minister for Housing and Planning  
Minister for Skills and Training

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Ms Janie Finlay MP  
Member for Bass



Dear Ms Finlay

Thank you for your Constituency Question in relation to a number of units constructed in Mainwaring Street, Beauty Point.

I am advised that Homes Tasmania purchased this site with the intent to construct a number of 2-bedroom units. The three dwellings are in the final stages of internal and external works to bring the units to practical completion, scheduled for 30 September 2024.

Thank you again for your interest in our Government's significant housing pipeline, increasing the supply of social and affordable housing for our state.

Yours sincerely

  
Hon Roger Jaensch MP  
Acting Minister for Housing and Planning



## Appendix 42

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Leader of the House

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Hon Mark Shelton MP  
Email: [mark.shelton@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:mark.shelton@parliament.tas.gov.au)



12 JUL 2024

Dear Mark

Thank you for your constituent question raised on behalf of your constituents, concerning native forest imports.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is the strongest supporter of Tasmania's high-value native forestry industry.

Tasmania's native forest industry is sustainable, renewable, and world-leading.

The industry supports more than 5,700 direct and indirect jobs, not just in harvesting but across transport, associated support industries and sawmills around the State.

Tasmania's native forest on-island processing sector is currently under increasing supply pressures, due primarily to the actions of Labor and Greens both historically, and more recently.

This has included the halving of the production forest estate in 2011 under the disastrous Labor-Green forestry deal, and the more recent closure of native forest industries in both Western Australia and Victoria under Labor Governments.

This has led to increased interest and competition in our high-quality native forests from interstate processors, and embarrassingly, to the Victorian and Western Australian Labor governments, has led to massive increases – over 1500% - of imported native forest timber from the United States alone to mainland Australia.

So, far from meeting their stated goals of protecting native forests and protecting the climate, the Victorian and Western Australian Governments have simply transferred their issues to another jurisdiction, while increasing the carbon footprint of their timber usage (through significantly increased transport distances), reducing community resilience (by not buying local), and all the while decimating regional jobs and communities.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government will most certainly continue to support our native forestry sector. We have demonstrated this by committing to:

- Making available up to 40,000 hectares of the Future Potential Production Forest "wood bank"
- Making available an additional wood basket of up to 158,000 cubic metres of high quality sawlog to Tasmanian industry – an annual increase of up to 10 per cent
- Making this new supply available exclusively to existing Tasmanian customers
- Supporting our iconic special species timber sector
- Supercharging on-island processing with an additional \$5 million, and

- Extending long-term supply contracts - which currently expire in 2027 - to 2040 to secure local sawmillers' futures.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Abetz', written in a cursive style.

Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

## Appendix 43

### Minister for Energy and Renewables Minister for Parks & Environment

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Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP  
Leader of the Tasmanian Greens  
By email to [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)



### Constituency Question of Tuesday 11 June 2024 – AFL High Performance Centre

Dear Dr Woodruff

Thank you for raising your question regarding the AFL High Performance Centre in Rosny and for your interest in this important project for Tasmania.

Through an Expression of Interest process, the Rosny Parklands were identified as the preferred location for the High Performance Centre which was the unanimous choice of the steering committee charged with evaluating proposals. The steering committee comprised representatives of the Government, the AFL and the Tasmania AFL football club.

During the development of council's proposal to the Department of State Growth, council investigated numerous locations across the city as possible options to house the High Performance Centre. These locations included: the old Rosny golf course and Charles Hand Park, Seven Mile Beach, Geilston Bay Recreation Area, Blundstone Arena, Cambridge, and Clarence Plains/Bayview Secondary College.

As part of their proposal, council could only put forward options on proposed land on which they own, or are in partnership with the other landowners. Of the five potential options, only one, Rosny, is owned and managed by council. Throughout the development of their proposal, I am aware that council worked with other landowners and considered joint proposals with adjoining landowners, but I am advised that none were forth coming. Detailed justification for non-selection of these sites is available on the City of Clarence website.

Prior to submitting its proposal, the City of Clarence consulted widely with the local community, receiving a high level of community interest and participation, and strong support for locating the facility in Rosny. Clarence City Council's original proposal was for the facility to be built at the Rosny Parklands with a secondary oval to be built at the adjacent Charles Hand Park. Council has since decided it would prefer to locate both ovals at Rosny Parklands.

The Government will continue to work with Clarence City Council on this proposal and is currently undertaking geotechnic explorations on both sites to inform further works, including an integrated masterplan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nick Duigan".

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
**Acting Minister for Sport and Events**

19 June 2024



## Appendix 44

### Minister for Energy and Renewables Minister for Parks & Environment

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Simon Behrakis MP  
Member for Clark  
By email to [laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au)

#### Constituency Question of 12 June 2024 – Support for Winter Events

Dear Mr Behrakis

Thank you for raising your question regarding support for events in Tasmania during winter and for your interest in the events sector.

The Tasmanian Government, through Events Tasmania, committed to seeking event content that could be hosted across Tasmania in the winter months of 2024 to boost visitation numbers.

By supporting events across winter, we know we can help bring the colder months alive not just for visitors, but for locals and local businesses, and we may even be sowing the seeds for the next big Tasmanian winter event.

Hockey Tasmania, Water Polo Tasmania and Tennis Australia are receiving funding through Events Tasmania to deliver three mass participation events over the winter period. Collectively, these three events are anticipated to attract over 2,700 visitors to Tasmania.

Netball Australia have also been provided funding to deliver an Australian National Championships in August 2024, which will attract over 370 competitors and support crew who will stay an average of eight nights.

Additional funding has been provided to support Festival of Voices and the Beaker Street Festival to enhance their existing event content, in turn encouraging a longer night stay and increased interstate visitation.

As part of the Tasmanian Government's commitment to continuing to support winter events across the state, we provided \$100,000 for eligible events to secure funding through Events Tasmania's Event Marketing Tasmania – Winter Edition Grant Program. The aim of the program is to assist event organisers with interstate marketing activities that target visitors from outside of Tasmania for events held between April-September 2024.

There is an abundance of event content during the cooler months this year, and I encourage Tasmanians to get out and about this winter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nick Duigan", written over a horizontal line.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC  
**Acting Minister for Sport and Events**

19 June 2024



## CONSTITUENT QUESTION

### House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP



#### QUESTION:

Given we are now in winter, we are all seeing instances of winter and respiratory illnesses on the rise, which is bringing some fear and anxiety back into our communities. On behalf of the older and vulnerable Tasmanians in my electorate of Franklin, I wish to ask for more information on what plans and strategies are in place by the Tasmanian government to help protect our most vulnerable. What is being done to protect Tasmanians by encouraging and maximising vaccination rates, particularly for COVID-19 and influenza?

#### ANSWER:

This is a key priority for the Department of Health and I can advise the 2024 Winter Strategy and Plan is well underway to support the management of acute respiratory illness during the 2024 winter season. There is also a dedicated communication campaign to support the objectives of the 2024 Winter Strategy; the Winter Wellness campaign.

Through this Winter Wellness campaign, Tasmanians are being urged to prepare, plan and protect themselves and their families this winter from severe illness. With respiratory infections increasing through the colder months, there are simple actions Tasmanians can take to protect themselves.

The Department of Health is keeping Tasmanians informed about current acute respiratory illness activity in the community, and associated steps to take, through weekly activity updates and publication of the detailed RespTas report on the Department of Health webpage.

The best thing Tasmanians can do to prepare is stay up to date with their vaccinations, as this remains the best defence against serious illness from COVID-19, influenza and RSV.

Everyone aged six months and older is recommended to receive an annual flu vaccine, which is particularly important for those at higher risk of serious illness from flu.

All adults are eligible for a COVID-19 booster at least every 12 months, and older adults or those with severe immunocompromise should get one every six months. I can also advise that a vaccine is now recommended for older individuals to protect against severe illness from RSV.

Through the Winter Wellness campaign, Tasmanians are being advised that they can 'prepare' by receiving their annual flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines from GPs and most local pharmacies.

The Department of Health continues to monitor vaccination coverage, particularly among priority populations, to inform vaccination programs and policy.

Tasmanians at higher risk of serious illness for acute respiratory illness are being encouraged to 'plan' by ensuring they have an up to date plan with their GP about how they will access testing and access to antiviral medications if they become unwell. Tasmanians continue to be able to access Care@Home, which offers virtual care to high-risk people with COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

The Department of Health continues to work with high risk settings, including Residential Aged Care Homes, to prepare and respond to outbreaks of acute respiratory infections.

I would also urge Tasmanians to keep up the simple behaviours that have kept us safe in recent years, such as staying at home if you're unwell, covering coughs and sneezes, and regularly washing your hands.

Importantly, our hospital and health system is prepared to manage expected peaks in demand, applying the learnings from previous years.

☒ APPROVED ☐ NOT APPROVED



Hon Felix Ellis MP  
Acting Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 10/7/2024

## Appendix 46

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management  
Minister for Housing and Planning  
Minister for Skills and Training

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place, Parliament Square Building HOBART TAS 7000 Australia  
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Dr Shane Broad MP  
Member for Braddon



Dear Dr Broad

Thank you for your Constituency Question seeking data on unoccupied social housing properties.

There are a number of reasons why social housing properties may be vacant from time to time, including due to maintenance of the strategic management of the social housing portfolio across Tasmania. This is to ensure that our social housing properties are redeveloped, disposed of, or retained to meet the requirements for housing for Tasmanians into the future.

As at 30 April 2024, 98 per cent of Tasmania's social housing portfolio of approximately 13,000 properties were tenanted.

Of the 256 social housing properties either owned and/or managed by Homes Tasmania or community housing providers that were unoccupied, 108 were usual vacancy maintenance including 4 properties that were vacant for longer than six months. 148 were offline including 86 properties that were vacant for longer than six months.

The average vacancy period is 28 days which is in line with the national average.

A suburb breakdown is provided along with the number of properties that have been vacant for longer than six months, as you have requested. When properties have been vacant for longer than six months, the reason for this vacancy is provided.

Yours sincerely

Hon Felix Ellis MP  
Minister for Housing and Planning

Attachment - Unoccupied social housing properties

10/7/2024

## Attachment – Unoccupied social housing properties

Suburb	Usual Vacancy	Offline	Total	Vacant for longer than 6 months	Reason for vacancy for longer than 6 months
ACTON		3	3	3	1 To be sold, 2 To be redeveloped
BEACONSFIELD	1		1		
BELLERIVE	2	2	4	1	1 Major upgrade/repairs
BERRIDALE		3	3		
BLACKMANS BAY		2	2	1	1 Insurance
BRIDGEWATER	5	4	9	1	1 Insurance
BURNIE		10	10	10	10 Major upgrade/repairs
CAMPBELL TOWN		1	1		
CHIGWELL	3	2	5	2	2 Strategic assessment
CLARENDON VALE	4	1	5	1	1 Insurance
CLAREMONT		6	6	3	3 Insurance
COLEBROOK		1	1	1	1 Strategic assessment
CYGNET		1	1	1	1 Insurance
DELORAINIE	1	1	2		
DERWENT PARK		1	1	1	1 Insurance
DEVONPORT	10	7	17	4	4 Insurance
					3 Awaiting allocation for Specialist Disability Accommodation, 1 Insurance
EAST DEVONPORT		6	6	4	
GAGEBROOK	4	3	7	3	3 Insurance
GEEVESTON		1	1	1	1 Major upgrade/repairs
					3 Insurance, 1 To be redeveloped, 1 Strategic Assessment
GEORGE TOWN		9	9	5	1 Strategic assessment, 4 Insurance
GLENORCHY	3	10	13	5	
GOODWOOD	2	1	3		
HERDSMANS COVE	2	1	3	1	1 Insurance
HOBART	2	2	4	1	1 Insurance
HUNTINGFIELD	1		1		
HUONVILLE		1	1		
INVERMAY		4	4	2	2 Insurance
KINGS MEADOWS	1	2	3	1	1 Insurance
					4 Insurance, 1 Major upgrade/repairs
KINGSTON	6	6	12	5	
LATROBE	1		1		
LAUNCESTON		1	1		
LENAH VALLEY		1	1		
LONGFORD	1	3	4	2	2 Insurance
LUTANA	1	1	2		
MAYFIELD	1	3	4	1	1 Insurance
MIANDETTA		1	1	1	1 Insurance
MOONAH	6	1	7	1	1 Insurance
NEW NORFOLK	5	1	6	1	1 Insurance
					1 Insurance, 1 Strategic assessment
NEW TOWN		2	2	2	
NEWSTEAD		1	1		
NORTH HOBART	1	2	3	1	1 Insurance
PENGUIN	2		2		
PERTH		1	1	1	1 Insurance
PROSPECT	2		2		
PROSPECT VALE	1	1	2	1	1 Management transfer
PUNCHBOWL		1	1		
QUEENSTOWN	1		1		
RAVENSWOOD	4	10	14	8	8 Insurance
ROCHERLEA	3	1	4	1	1 Insurance
ROKEBY	1	1	2	1	1 Management transfer

Suburb	Usual Vacancy	Offline	Total	Vacant for longer than 6 months	Reason for vacancy for longer than 6 months
ROMAINE	2		2		
ROSETTA	1		1		
SANDY BAY		2	2	1	1 Major upgrade/repairs
SCOTTSDALE	1	1	2	1	1 Insurance
SHEFFIELD		1	1		
SHOREWELL PARK		1	1	1	1 Insurance
SMITHTON	1	1	2		
SOMERSET	2	1	3		
SORELL	1		1		
SOUTH HOBART	2	3	5	1	1 Major upgrade/repairs
SOUTH LAUNCESTON		2	2		
STANLEY	1		1		
ST HELENS		1	1		
ST LEONARDS	1	1	2	2	1 Insurance, 1 Insurance and Management Transfer
ST MARYS	1	1	2	1	1 Insurance
SUMMERHILL	1	3	4	1	1 Insurance and Management Transfer
TRANMERE	1		1		
TRIABUNNA		1	1	1	1 Insurance
UPPER BURNIE	3		3		
WARRANE	2		2		
WAVERLEY	2	2	4	2	1 Insurance, 1 Major upgrade/repair
WEST HOBART	1	1	2		
WEST LAUNCESTON	2	1	3	1	1 Insurance
WEST MOONAH	3	1	4		
WYNYARD	3	1	4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>90</b>	

## CONSTITUENT QUESTION

### House of Assembly



ASKED BY: Rob Fairs MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and  
Wellbeing

#### QUESTION:

Constituents in my division of Bass have made inquiries about reports of The Examiner this week claiming health department figures show some patients are waiting up to six years to see a specialist health professional at the Launceston General Hospital.

The report claims urgent wound management patients are waiting 1121 days, with semi-urgent respiratory patients waiting 940 days for specialist services. Those respiratory patients deemed non-urgent can wait up to 2087 days, which is nearly six years.

1. Can the minister provide verification of these figures and an update on the availability of specialist services at the LGH?

#### ANSWER:

I can assure the Member that ensuring Tasmanians have access to the best possible health care services has been and will remain a strong focus of our Government.

Since our election in 2014 we've delivered an additional 298 hospital beds and employed an extra 2,500 health professionals, including 1,390 nurses.

But there's more work to do and our health system still needs to be better – and this time next year there will be even more frontline health workers in the Tasmanian health system as we continue to build an even better health system.

The State's biggest ever recruitment blitz is now underway searching for Tasmania's newest doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals.

Importantly, it is already delivering positive results, with 494 additional staff being welcomed into our health system, including 138 new nurses – almost two every single day.

Tasmania already has more healthcare workers than any state in Australia per head of population, but we are committed to delivering more to ensure Tasmanians can get the health care they need sooner.

We're also building the infrastructure our State needs for the future, and at the LGH, work is already underway on our \$580 million LGH Master Plan Redevelopment, delivering long term upgrades to the LGH over the next 10 years.

Our 2030 Strong Plan builds on this, with a commitment to double the size of the Emergency Department as part of a new \$53.5 million expansion.

This will ensure the ED has additional capacity to meet current and future demand, and includes:

- a new and improved Emergency Medical Unit for patients to be discharged in less than 24 hours;
- a new and improved Acute Medical Unit for patients who need a couple of days of admission;
- and an expanded fast track and waiting area.

In terms of elective surgeries, our Government is delivering more than ever before, with a record number of elective surgeries completed in a financial year for two consecutive years - meaning more Tasmanians are getting the right health care sooner, despite increasing demand.

We have invested significantly in recent years through our \$196.4 million Statewide Elective Surgery Plan and these results confirm our investment is working, with more Tasmanians able to have a better quality of life as a result.

Additionally, we understand that access to outpatient services including specialist procedural, surgical, medical, diagnostic, allied health and nursing interventions are important for supporting the health of the Tasmanian community.



We are committed to improving access to public outpatient services, to address growing demand and improve outcomes for patients – not just at the Launceston General Hospital, but across the entire state.

I do acknowledge the impact that waiting outside recommended times can have on patients, which is why we are investing into our health system so more people can get the care they need sooner.

Our \$20 million Outpatient Transformation Strategy is working to reduce the time Tasmanians are waiting for their appointments.

This will allow us to see more people within clinically recommended timeframes, deliver improved outcomes for individuals and broaden community access to specialist services for those that need them.

We're also investing in digital technology, with the new eReferral system implemented statewide in all public hospital clinics in 2023 and the planned statewide implementation of a new outpatient management system in the last quarter of 2024.

We will continue to do all we can to ensure Tasmanians have access to the healthcare they deserve, when and where they need it.

APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', written in a cursive style.

Hon Guy Barnett MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 19 July 2024