PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 26 March 2026

REVISED EDITION

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Thursday 26 March 2026

The Speaker, **Mrs Petrusma**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fuel Prices

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I rise today to update the parliament on the current fuel pressures affecting Tasmania and their impact on our communities, industries, economy, and people. While global instability is the catalyst, the consequences are being acutely felt here at home. Distance from conflict matters little when it comes to the impact on Tasmanians. Across Tasmania, motorists continue to face sharp fuel price increases and some petrol stations have reported petrol and diesel shortages. It is unclear how long these challenges will continue, but we must continue to be prepared for ongoing high prices and challenges with supply.

The consequences extend deeply into sectors central to Tasmania's identity and economy. Tourism operators report cancellations from both international and interstate visitors due to concerns over rising fuel costs and supply reliability. This particularly affects regional tourism operators, whose businesses rely on visitors travelling longer distances. Rising fuel costs are affecting everything from farm machinery to freight.

Industry feedback presented at our roundtables confirm that fuel volatility is placing significant additional strain on primary producers. It is affecting our communities literally from paddock to plate. Some freight operators have been forced to increase surcharges by up to 50 per cent in response to rapid rises in wholesale prices. These costs ultimately reach consumers, affecting the price of goods across the state.

I reassure the House that despite these challenges, Tasmania's fuel supply remains secure. At the government's roundtable with industry, suppliers confirmed that we have sufficient fuel on island and more on the way. There is no need for stockpiling, which only increases pressure on the system.

We have written to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission requesting close monitoring of the fuel market to prevent price gouging or anticompetitive behaviour.

Tasmanians are also encouraged to use FuelCheck Tasmania to locate the most competitive prices.

I inform the House that from today we are also moving to ensure any fuel outages are promptly reported on the FuelCheck app to keep Tasmanians up to date with the latest information.

In response to these pressures, the government intends to introduce new legislation today designed to further improve transparency, strengthen compliance and enhance Tasmania's ability to act during fuel disruptions. It enforces clearer rules for fuel companies to report on supply levels and introduces penalties should they fail to do so. It allows the government to get

important information quickly and it strengthens our emergency powers. The bill updates Tasmania's emergency fuel laws so that emergency restriction periods can last longer when needed, and the government can temporarily set maximum fuel prices to protect consumers from unreasonable spikes. This bill gives Tasmania stronger tools to keep fuel companies accountable, protect consumers and act decisively during supply risks or emergencies.

Addressing fuel instability requires national cooperation. The federal government holds important responsibilities in this space, particularly in fuel regulation, reserves management and national supply coordination. We respect the federal government's efforts to manage a complex national situation, but urge them to move with greater pace and clarity. We also continue to call on the federal government to reduce the fuel excise while the current situation remains volatile. This will give Tasmanians real price relief.

Tasmania, as an island state with unique logistical challenges, depends heavily on timely national decisions to stabilise both prices and supply chains. We will continue to advocate strongly for Tasmania's position at next week's National Cabinet meeting. Tasmania is facing real fuel pressures, but we remain secure, prepared and focused. Our government and, I'm sure, all members of this House, will continue advocating strongly and constructively with the Commonwealth, supporting local industries and keeping Tasmanians informed.

Honourable Speaker, I thank members of the House. Together we will navigate this challenge calmly, cooperatively and with confidence in the strength of our state.

Members - Hear, hear.

[10.07 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the Ministerial Statement be noted.

I rise to respond to the Ministerial Statement by the Premier and thank the government for recognising this issue. Nobody can fathom what is happening around the globe right now. What is happening in the Middle East is a terrible tragedy. Nobody can blame governments in Australia for global challenges, and we certainly don't seek to do that in this House. This week we have been asking questions of the government on behalf of Tasmanians because Tasmanians want to see all levels of government doing what they can to make this situation better.

We've been asking questions in this House about compliance, in which the state government has a role to play, so I'm pleased about some of the things the Premier just talked about, such as reporting, price caps - which is something that Victoria has done to stop some of the volatility at the petrol bowser - and working from home is a national discussion. There's been discussion in this place this week about making public transport more available and easier for Tasmanians. I seriously worry. I wake up in the middle of the night seriously worried about the cost of living for Tasmanian households, their capacity to weather this, and how long this will go on. Tasmanians are really feeling the pain of the cost of living, whether it's rising housing costs, rents, mortgages or inflation. Every time you walk into a grocery store, everything is going up, and to have this added price pressure in terms of fuel on households seriously concerns me. It concerns me for Tasmanian industries like agriculture and tourism

that are now feeling the impacts of this with cancellations, and people are probably worrying about their future in terms of jobs.

It's very similar to the COVID pandemic in terms of the disruption to global supply chains and people fearing for the future. The scary thing for all of us is that it's out of our control. It is a global conflict. There are nations that are neutral that are being impacted by violence. There are children dying. It shouldn't be happening, but we have to deal with these challenges in a calm and measured way.

We will do what we can in this place to work with the government. I also worry about the state government's capacity in terms of our budget position to weather a storm like this. We obviously weathered the storm through COVID and came together as a state, but our state's finances have never been worse and we've got Treasury saying that the state's capacity to deal with these sorts of global challenges and shocks is limited.

I deeply hope that this conflict can be resolved, that global supply chains can be restored, that Tasmanian industries can return to having confidence in the future, and that Tasmanian households dealing with a cost-of-living crisis can have some of their pain eased because this is a challenge we will all face together. We will do what we can in this place to help Tasmanians because that's our job. I'm pleased that the government is now doing some proactive things, like other states. I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of another National Cabinet to prepare for these challenges. I will support the government where we can because that's what Tasmanians expect.

[10.11 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the Premier for bringing this matter to the House. It's important to hear that the government is starting to act in a systematic way about fuel reduction and all of the impacts that will flow across Tasmania. All the things you mentioned in your statement are important, but I noticed the language where you talk about businesses and operators, tourism, logistics companies, and consumers; all important, but consumers are people. I represent people in my community and every single person in this Chamber has people in their community who we speak to at the shops. They look at the extra $30-$50 they're already paying and they go to the servo to fill up the standard amount they put in and they already can't afford it, and then it's an extra $30-$50. They add them all up, then they get a bill, then they have to pay their mortgage and the interest rates have just gone up. Or they have to pay the rent and it's already unaffordable. For these people, there is nothing left in the tank. Nothing.

A lot of people in Tasmania live one to two hours' drive away from their work. Surrounding Hobart, there are people who come in from the south, east and north, and they drive 30 minutes to an hour in and out every day. I can't tell those people what to do. They say, 'I won't be able to afford to drive in. There isn't a bus service that's available. I can't get the kids to school in my regional community and get in to work because I'm a single parent. My mum can't afford to drive and help me because she lives 30 minutes away. That's what she's been doing, but she can't do it now'.

Premier, when you and your budget paper say that you are finding millions of dollars in this financial year to pay for a stadium, you've made that decision. Don't tell community sector organisations that you can't afford to pay the extra money they need to support vulnerable Tasmanians who are really suffering. Don't tell us and mental health organisations that you

can't afford the money to support them, and you will just give them what you gave them last year. It's not enough. Don't tell Tasmanians you will make those choices. You've made the choice to fund the stadium and a whole lot of other things. We don't agree with them, but it's your job to balance the books. This is where Tasmanians really want to see that, in a crisis, you put everything else down, you look at it from the start and you think, 'Okay, who do I have to look after first?' I am telling you that should be community sector organisations, Neighbourhood Houses and all of the groups in the community who are helping people.

Also, the bus service. We want to see a plan from your minister for how you're going to get the drivers needed to increase the services and put the routes back on because they haven't been there for years since you cut them and didn't prioritise them. Unless we've got a bus service, how are people going to be able to get to work when they can't afford to put petrol in their car, which is only a matter of a week away or less?

Thank you for this. It's not enough. We look forward to hearing how you're going to respond to those other issues as well.

[10.16 a.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, the Premier brought a very important subject to the parliament today. A fundamental rule of economics and consumer behaviour is that policymakers must keep two key factors front of mind: supply and demand. Whilst I fully acknowledge that there is little the Premier can do to influence the supply side of the oil crisis we are facing - other than playing politics by blaming the federal government for not reducing fuel excise- and while greater transparency about fuel supplies is welcome, it does nothing to reduce our demand or prepare our community for the possibility that things may worsen. I was really hoping that the Premier would have responded to the calls by myself, the Greens, the opposition and various members of the crossbench about addressing demand issues.

For the past two weeks, I've been asking the Premier and his Transport minister direct questions on this issue. Their responses have been consistently dismissive. Now, we see this today, as though the seriousness of the situation on the cost-of-living pressures for everyday Tasmanians has not dawned on them. After I questioned him again last week, the Premier rushed out a media release to create the appearance of action, but it was just that, an appearance. No new initiatives to help households manage costs and no measures to address the demand side of this crisis. This is a crisis. It requires strong, brave leadership. The Premier needs to step up to provide this, and not by this statement alone. Instead of focusing all its political energy and the full machinery of government solely on supply, Premier, you must start having honest and constructive conversations with the public about demand.

I have pointed out the International Energy Agency's 10 practical suggestions to reduce demand. These are options available to households, businesses and governments to help shield themselves from the global oil shock and ease the pressure on affordability and cost of living. You would think that the government would be promoting these options. It's so simple to get people to favour public transport, working from home, considering all these things. I hope that you are, Premier, because this is a really important step to help Tasmanians now, when they need it. There is a great deal people can do to reduce their fuel use. I'm not suggesting the government should mandate behaviour. Fortunately, we are not at that point but giving people the information, support and tools to reduce their own demand is well within the government's capacity and responsibility, yet the silence from the Premier has been deafening.

History is a great judge, and the Premier will be judged not just on his stadium obsession, but on how he handles this unfolding crisis. It is time for him to demonstrate leadership, honesty and a plan.

[10.19 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I congratulate and thank the Premier for bringing forward his Ministerial Statement to update the House on this important issue. I acknowledge the hard work that goes into this effort of updating the House on what steps we are continuing to take, and will take to protect Tasmanians during a period of global uncertainty.

Global instability is placing pressure on fuel markets worldwide. Those pressures are being felt right here in Tasmania, particularly given our status as an island state with unique supply chain characteristics. Across the state, Tasmanians have experienced sharp fuel price increases. These developments are concerning households, businesses, industries and the like across this great state. There have been some localised stocks out at some service stations, resulting in temporary shortages of petrol or diesel with increased demand pressure. I want to be clear from the outset: Tasmania's fuel supply has remained secure. Fuel stocks are available on island with further shipments scheduled and arriving in line with normal supply arrangements. There is no need for stockpiling, which only increases pressure on the system.

Given the outlook is not certain, and this does create concern, tourism operators have reported cancellations due to concerns on fuel costs and supply reliability. Primary producers are facing higher costs for machinery, transport and freight. Some freight operators have been forced to impose significant surcharges which ultimately flow through to consumers. Consumers are concerned, and understandably so. This is why we've been acting decisively. The government has maintained close and regular engagement with fuel suppliers, industry bodies and stakeholders. We've convened regular industry briefings to ensure real time visibility of supply conditions and emerging risks.

We work closely with the Australian Government through national fuel security frameworks, recognising that liquid fuel security is a national responsibility requiring coordinated action. The Premier has written directly to the Director of Energy Planning to ensure ongoing visibility of fuel stock levels, trends and constraints across the state. An incident management team has been established within the Department of State Growth, led by the Director of Energy Planning and supported by other agencies, to coordinate the state's response. Tasmania has participated in multiple national coordination meetings with other jurisdictions and industry to maintain situational awareness of emerging fuel supply issues.

I've written to the ACCC requesting close monitoring of fuel markets to prevent price gouging or anti-competitive behaviour. Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) has communicated directly with fuel retailers to remind them of their obligation under the Australian Consumer Law and associated codes of practice. Compliance activity is underway, including audits of FuelCheck Tasmania data and onsite inspections of fuel retail outlets. Tasmanians are encouraged to use the FuelCheck Tasmania app to compare prices and find the most competitive fuel options. We're continuing to monitor fuel supply conditions on a daily basis. We are maintaining close liaison with industry to ensure timely resupply and identify any emerging risks. We're continuing to advocate strongly on Tasmania's behalf at the national level.

While the government has been acting responsibly within existing powers, today we will be taking further steps to strengthen Tasmania's ability to respond to fuel supply risks with three important initiatives designed to improve transparency, strengthen compliance and enhance our ability to act decisively when fuel supply is under threat.

First, in terms of strengthening Tasmania's information gathering and reporting powers: where there is a serious risk to fuel or energy supply, the Director of Energy Planning can compel timely and accurate information from relevant parties. This will allow the government to obtain critical information on fuel production, storage, distribution and supply chains when it matters. I will be writing to fuel companies to require regular reporting on fuel supply and fuel stocks. It ensures decisions are based on evidence, not speculation.

Second, we're introducing stronger compliance and enforcement mechanisms to ensure mandatory reporting and code obligations are meaningful. We're getting on with the job. We will be updating and moving to update the FuelCheck app to enable it to display where there may be local outages of particular fuel stocks at fuel retailers. This is an important addition to the FuelCheck app. To support this, I will be making a new regulation and moving towards having that implemented as soon as possible. Together, all these initiatives give the government clearer visibility, stronger tools and greater confidence to act in the public interest during periods of fuel disruption.

Statement noted.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

The SPEAKER - Honourable members, I'd like us all to please welcome the year 6 students from The Friends' School here today. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Industrial Action at Schools

Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[10.25 a.m.]

I'd also like to welcome some hard-working teachers from our public sector here with us in the Gallery today. The Labor Party certainly values the work that you're doing in our communities, helping our young people reach their potential.

Minister, today marks the third straight day of rolling full-day school closures with thousands of educators who've walked off the job. Yesterday, workers rallied in Launceston and there are more expected here at lunchtime today. It's one of the largest displays of industrial action from the education workforce in recent memory. You've completely misjudged the depth of frustration amongst educators and you think it's all just a political plot. If your offer is as fair as you claim, why are so many educators rejecting it so decisively?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. The only one who should be speaking right now is myself. The honourable Minister for Education has the call.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I add my welcome to the young people we have here with us today, and also members from the Australian Education Union (AEU). It's really great to have you here. Thank you.

The comprehensive second offer for the teachers agreement really did reflect the dedicated and the collaborative discussions that our government has been having with the Australian Education Union. It reflects the shared priorities of teacher workload, staff safety, professional staff support and a range of operational matters that are just essential to supporting our teachers and, indeed, to supporting the outcomes of our students. It is a fair and reasonable offer. It was worked through -

Mr Willie - Why are they not at work today?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

Ms PALMER - with the Australian Education Union, and it is disappointing that the AEU rejected the offer without taking it to our teachers, because I know that this offer was inclusive of the things that teachers have been telling me as I've been going around our schools. I deeply, deeply value the enormous contributions our teachers make every single day in shaping the lives of Tasmanian children, and I see it firsthand when I'm visiting our schools and our Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLC).

Mr Willie - They don't believe you.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Leader of the Opposition, this is your second warning.

Ms PALMER - Our government recognises the dedication and their professionalism and that is why we want to see the best outcome for them.

When we look at what was actually in the offer, we were looking at the things that are absolutely reflected in the AEU's log of claims: reducing teacher workload; keeping our staff and students safe; increasing senior staffing levels; increasing professional support staff; as well as a range of operational matters essential to supporting teachers and improving teacher learning outcomes. The proposal includes a pay rise of 3 per cent in year one, 3 per cent in year two and 2.75 per cent in year three -

Ms Dow - Why are schools closed, then, if it's such a good deal?

The SPEAKER - Member for Braddon, this is your first warning.

Ms PALMER - It also included a base salary boost for most teachers in year one. On top of that, we see the new and increased allowances: an annual professional learning allowance for most teachers and a new overnight student activity allowance. Don't forget, on top of that,

we have allowances for teachers who are working in remote parts of Tasmania: Flinders Island, King Island, the west coast of Tasmania.

Also, teachers who are working in our hard-to-staff schools, we recognise the extra pressure on you and so there is an allowance for that. Of course, more workload reduction measures, reduction in school meeting hour caps and one meeting-free week per term. We have more professional staff and so we know that this was a fair and affordable offer, and it's disappointing the union didn't take it to the teachers.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. I ask the House to settle, please.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - If the offer is as fair as you claim, why are educators rejecting it so decisively? Have a look at them. They're shaking their heads at you.

Ms PALMER - I'm really grateful that we have our teachers in the Gallery today. I appreciate you being here and, as I say -

Ms Brown - I think they'd prefer to be in the classroom. They don't want to be on strike.

The SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, Ms Brown. This is your first warning.

Ms PALMER - I would have loved for the education union to have taken this offer to our teachers -

Ms Dow - Really pleased that schools across the south are closed.

The SPEAKER - Member for Braddon, Ms Dow, this is your second warning.

Ms PALMER - When I look at the advancements in this offer around more professional support, the provision of early-years support for those who are working on a limited authority to teach (LAT), through to their first two years of teaching and for the first year of school psychologists, strengthening of the in-class support that's needed. We look at the work we've done to address violence in schools - again, a plan that was worked through with the unions hand in hand.

I have heard the concerns of our teachers. It is a fair and affordable offer.

Education - Tasmanian Teacher Salaries

Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[10.31 a.m.]

Tasmania competes in a national labour market for educators. At a time when every state is trying to attract and retain staff, your offer would leave Tasmanian educators amongst the lowest paid in the country. Why do you believe Tasmanian educators should be paid the lowest

in the country and why should educators choose to stay in Tasmania when they can be paid more on the mainland?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. My understanding is that Tasmanian government schoolteachers are not the lowest paid in Australia. Based on the current teaching agreement salary rates, degree-qualified teachers entering our government school system commonly start with a salary of $82,828 and then during the course of their career they progress through to a salary of $118,328, and that's without further promotion. I also know that these rates are before you factor in any additional loadings and incentives that are available, such as our $3.5 million Hard-to-Staff Schools Teacher Incentive Program and the incentives around remote teaching initiatives as well.

Mr Willie - Do you think they should be the lowest paid?

The SPEAKER - Third warning, Mr Willie.

Ms PALMER - Under the hard-to-staff model, an incentive payment of $1000 is paid to teachers at nine schools across Tasmania six weeks into term 1, and a second incentive payment of $2275 six weeks into term 3. Our current offer includes a pay rise of 3 per cent in year 1, 3 per cent in year 2 and 2.75 per cent in year 3, plus a boost for most teachers into the base.

Ms Dow - Lowest paid in the country.

The SPEAKER - Third warning, Ms Dow.

Ms PALMER - As I say, that is before you factor in the allowances and the incentives.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Minister, are you comfortable with Tasmanian teachers being paid the lowest in the country?

Mr ABETZ - Point of order, Speaker, that question has already been answered by the minister and she denied it. It's not a supplementary.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. It is not in order for the Speaker to judge whether the question has been answered or not. The only power I have is to judge whether the question itself is in order. The question is in order because it is still related to the original question. It is a matter for the House to determine if it is not in order, but the question itself is in order.

Ms PALMER - I want to see a fair and affordable outcome. I want to see our teachers recognised for the work that they do. We know there are some really complex little people and big people who come into our schools every day and regardless of what might have happened at home or happened in their lives, it is our teachers who are so often that first adult who has to nurture and support them and also sometimes cop the consequences of whether it might be trauma or just a really difficult day, so we absolutely value our teachers. We understand the

role that they play and we are certainly doing everything we can to ensure we are supporting them. That is why we have done the Violence in Schools Action Plan, because we know that was one of the major issues our teachers were facing. That is why we've done so much to reduce the workload and administrative burden that we know has been on teachers. We want our teachers to be able to have that face-to-face -

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

Tasmania's Net Zero Status

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.35 a.m.]

The independent review of Tasmania's *Climate Change (State Action) Act* was released yesterday. It supported what the Greens and community groups have been saying for years: since your government has come to office, you haven't brought down Tasmania's emissions. In fact, they've actually increased. Your government has been relying on Tasmania's carbon-storing native forests to claim net zero status. Your logging and burning of native forests means Tasmania could lose our net zero status before 2030. It's a climate crisis and Tasmania has to cut its emissions and protect carbon-storing native forests. Do you acknowledge the review's finding that your government has failed to bring down emissions? Will you increase them by continuing to log and burn native forests? Will you accept that that is part of the problem?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question and appreciate the sentiment expressed in it. The fact is that Tasmania is well renowned for our natural environment, for net zero and for our renewable energy capacity which we're going to increase and grow.

We value-add the products we produce through our reputation in many respects when it comes to our premium products, our clever people, whether it's in advanced manufacturing, food production, viticulture, whatever it might be, innovation. Our natural environment and the fact that we are net zero and all our environmental credentials adds value to what we do in that premium space. We're well known for it.

The independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* was informed by a range of community and stakeholder perspectives and I want to thank everyone who provided that feedback. Our immediate priority is to continue delivering strong climate outcomes for Tasmania and responses to the independent review's findings and recommendations will be embedded in government operations.

Our act includes the most ambitious emissions reduction target of any jurisdiction in Australia and we're very proud to have maintained our net zero status since 2014. I'm proud of that fact, as I am proud of our forebears, both those who built our hydro schemes and those within this Chamber who made it happen as well.

That is the fact of it. We have enormous capacity for renewable energy, being the battery of the nation with our hydro storage and we seek to add value to that in partnership with the Australian Government when it comes to Marinus, which has been supported across political divides nationally in terms of unity of purpose and the opportunity that presents for Tasmania. Our renewable energy capacity will not just add value to the products we make and grow, but also our bottom line when Marinus comes on board and the average of $470 million a year bottom line is well evidenced there in the business case.

Mr Bayley - What about native forest logging, Premier? That's the question.

The SPEAKER - Order, Greens deputy leader.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When it comes to native forest logging, we are a very strong supporter of sustainable native forestry and our commitment is built on generations of evidence-based -

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

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - There was a lot in there from the Premier about the importance of our net zero status in adding value to everything we sell and tourism on this island. Premier, back to the question: do you acknowledge that native forest logging is now threatening not only climate emissions and the environment from logging and burning but also threatening our net zero status by 2030?

The SPEAKER - The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I understand your advocacy. Thank you for the supplementary question. I refer to where I was going in my previous answer. Many of the forests being protested by your supporters today are mistaken for pristine old-growth forest when, in fact, they are regrowth forests that have been harvested sometimes multiple times in the past, which I believe is damaging to the credibility of those who are engaging in that protest.

To the point of your question, strengthening climate governance by reviewing and refreshing the Climate Change Reference Group, updating its terms of reference, maintaining the existing four-year independent review of the cycles of the act, enhancing focus on climate.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, 45, relevance. None of this is about native forest logging. It's causing us to lose our net zero status, it's emitting carbon into the atmosphere. Do you accept it's part of the problem?

The SPEAKER - The Premier now has one second to answer.

Macquarie Point Stadium - EOI Bidders

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for MACQUARIE POINT URBAN RENEWAL, Mr ABETZ

[10.41 a.m.]

The Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC), in its market sounding document last year, said its intention was to shortlist up to three bidders from the stadium's design-and-build expression of interest process to make it through to the request for tender process. Can you confirm that only one expression of interest qualified as a conforming bidder? Clearly, if that is the case, the EOI process has landed at the lowest end of MPDC's intentions. How can your process create competitive tensions to keep a lid on costs with only one bidder? Doesn't that mean taxpayers will pay even more for your stadium?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, we all know the member for Clark is against the stadium, so no matter what the position, she will peddle a narrative seeking to undermine the stadium. This place and the other place, in negotiations, ensured that there was very strict probity around those who had expressions of interest and that then might move on to request for tender. Therefore, I have ensured that I have kept myself at a distance in relation to a lot of the detail as to who may or may not have applied for expressions of interest who might want to move on.

On the stadium, there was exceptionally good news that the federal government has signed on to our housing ambitions for the precinct, something that certain members in this place ridiculed, saying it would never happen, that we had no guarantee, that we were flying by the seat of our pants. Yesterday we received the formal letter saying the $240 million from federal Labor is coming Tasmania's way, and I thank them for it.

These are some of the real benefits of the stadium and we will continue, as a government, to progress through the expressions of interest and, further, to get a contractor to build the stadium in a manner that is according to all the probity requirements that the parliament sought. I will keep myself at a distance from that because if I were able to tell everybody who had expressed interest and who might be moving forward, I would be accused, no doubt, of interfering in the process. I'm at arm's length from it and I intend to continue to do so, so that no allegations can be made in relation to the issue of probity.

The one thing I won't keep an arm's length from is ensuring that this project delivers for Tasmania, as it surely will. Another milestone was achieved yesterday with the full cooperation of the federal Labor government, for which we thank them.

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - The Treasurer's answer indicated that he is keeping a distance from the entire process. The EOI process ended on 11 February. That's almost a month-and-a-half ago now. A key risk that has been highlighted for the project is the cost and the potential cost blowout. As Treasurer, have you not inquired if there is a risk that only one bidder has a conforming bid and what that would mean for cost escalations?

Mr ABETZ - I will keep myself informed as and when the information is passed on to me. As to whether or not certain companies can or cannot be named in relation to the process -

Dr Broad - They may or may not, could or should -

The SPEAKER - Dr Broad.

Mr ABETZ - In relation to the hypothetical the member is putting before us, there will be very careful monitoring of any quote, I would suspect, by outside quantity surveyors to ensure that the Tasmanian taxpayer, the federal taxpayer and the AFL, all of whom are putting money into this project, will get value for money in all the prevailing circumstances at the time.

Park and Ride Facilities for Northern Tasmania

Mrs GREENE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[10.46 a.m.]

As Tasmanians face soaring fuel prices and rising cost-of-living pressures, more people are looking for practical ways to cut transport costs, including using park and ride facilities. In 2024 and again in 2025 in the lead-up to the election, your government promised northern Tasmanians three park and ride facilities, including one at Legana. It's been two years and there's been no clear update on a location, no timeline or seemingly any progress in Legana for a park and ride, which was explicitly promised to West Tamar commuters. When will that project be delivered? Or has it been quietly shelved?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I appreciate the level of support in relation to the Premier's statement earlier on because it is something foremost in our mind. Public transport is foremost as well. I am very conscious of the park and rides up north and nothing has been shelved to my knowledge. It is still part of the budget process that we're working through to deliver those, I think it is three in the north.

Interesting you mentioned the park and rides. We've seen in the last week about a 20 per cent increase on some general bus routes. We're seeing a greater increase in students on student buses as well, which is good. It is showing people are reacting. It's sad that it's had to take this point to get more people on the buses, but it is quite noticeable driving in of a morning that there are more people at the bus stops, there are more cars I see at Sorell and Midway Point. A fortnight ago, there were probably only three or four cars, maybe half a dozen during the early part of the day at Midway Point but this morning there were about 10 or a dozen there and more people for the buses.

It's something we're certainly working through. Talking with Metro and Kinetic just this morning, they are running through the drivers they have, where the pressure points are and where the bus routes are under the most pressure at the moment with the increased number and they're expecting that to continue to increase.

One of the questions before touched on drivers, it might have been the Leader of the Greens who touched on that. Metro presently has a full contingency of drivers, with another 40 about to go through driver training. Metro's concentration at the moment is monitoring where the increases are happening and where the peaks are happening so it can adjust the size of the buses, the frequency of the buses and some of the other points where things might need to change. All that will help feed into a change we might need to do to look at the park and rides in the Launceston area. We have one at Berriedale that is very close, in the next month or two, to come online and the others will flow from that.

Supplementary Question

Mrs GREENE - At a time when fuel prices are surging, this project would really help commuters in the West Tamar area. We've seen updates on the other two locations that were announced in 2024 and then reannounced in 2025. Can you please provide an update of when we will have a timeline or any progress update at all for a park and ride in Legana?

Mr VINCENT - I do not have that information available at the moment and I won't so much take it on notice, but I will find out and talk to the department over the next few days and find out and come back at an appropriate time to let you and the member know where that is positioned in terms of timing, and what they are doing in the flow of work for the jobs. I was out at Legana the week before last to have a look at the road improvements there and how it would fit. As soon as I've got that information, I'm happy to come back to you.

Education - Wage Offer Negotiations

Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER, referred to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.51 a.m.]

I acknowledge the teachers and union representatives in the Gallery today. They too will be feeling the pinch of fuel prices.

Teachers are burning out young and they're burning out quickly. Senior teachers are leaving the profession because they're exhausted. Early exits from the profession have doubled in little more than five years. The truth is that while teachers enter the profession in Tasmania with a salary almost on par with their mainland colleagues, they soon fall well behind and stay behind. What will you do to halt the exodus if you cannot match the reasonable demands of Tasmanian teachers to be properly valued for their contribution to the state's future welfare?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question and appreciate the sentiment behind the question, as we all fully appreciate and understand the very complex world within our schools that teachers do so well to navigate. I acknowledge members of the Australian Education Union and teachers in the Gallery today, and having spent seven years as Education minister, I can well appreciate the increasingly complex environment which teachers, principals, support staff, facility attendants have to navigate through school.

There is a higher expectation on our schools and our teachers for a whole range of areas within a child's growth and development, and, of course, I paid particular attention at the time to the national report and surveys done, particularly when it comes to principals - I can't quite recall what the name of the report was, but it reflected the challenges that principals face within schools and working with families and the like. We value the role of our educators in our schools, which is why we want to ensure that we can have very fair and -

Ms Finlay - Hold eye contact with them. You don't hold eye contact with them.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Bass, Ms Finlay, this is your first warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - With due respect, I am engaging with the honourable people in the Gallery, so I actually reject what you've just said, and it's unnecessary -

The SPEAKER - I am the Speaker here, Ms Finlay. You've been given a warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and frankly unreasonable, when I was referring to the reasonable question from the honourable member. You mentioned reasonable: what we would like to continue to do is have good faith, reasonable and measured discussions with our educators, with the Australian Education Union, who play such a key role, as all unions do when it comes to the advocacy of their members. We want to ensure we have a fair and affordable pay rise for our educators, and we believe we have that on the table here, which is why the very simple request from us is to survey and hear from the teachers themselves when it comes to the offer on the table. This is a very simple request and we believe all teachers need to have a say on it.

[A disturbance in the Gallery]

The SPEAKER - I remind members in the Gallery that there is an acceptable form of behaviour, and it is for you to sit and observe proceedings. I understand the sensitivities of everything that is involved, but it is important for our younger people who are with us here today, too, that we are respectful. You mightn't agree with the answers, but we do ask for respect to be shown in the Gallery.

Supplementary Question

Mr GEORGE - Premier, thank you for your answer, but you did not address the core of the question, which is: what specific action are you taking and will you take to halt the exodus of teachers from the profession in Tasmania?

Mr ROCKLIFF - With respect to maintaining, supporting and retaining our workforce across a whole range of sectors within our community, it's about ensuring that we have fair, affordable and of value wage negotiations and, indeed, pay rises. We want to ensure that our teachers and, indeed, like our facility attendants we've struck an agreement with, we have a three-year agreement, our police officers, firies, doctors. We want to ensure that through those negotiations, that ended in a result of positivity. We want to continue those positive discussions as well. My view is that we have a fair and reasonable offer on the table, of which I would like to hear from the teachers themselves in terms of what they view with respect to that.

Climate Change Response

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.57 a.m.]

The independent review of the *Climate Change Act* calls for an urgent course correction on how your government responds to climate change. It's what the Greens and community groups have been saying should happen for a long time. The review recommends returning the independent climate body that you axed more than a decade ago to increase accountability of government. It also calls for setting sector emission targets so the state's carbon emissions actually come down.

Tasmanians are already facing extreme climate impacts. Local governments and communities need more support and guidance. The report supports the widespread call for your government to lead on adaptation planning and to put climate change into all government decision-making. Premier, Tasmanians desperately want leadership and action on the climate crisis. Will you act urgently on those recommendations from the review report?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. We take the matter of climate change very seriously. When it comes to the accountabilities of industry, we have improved that accountability enormously over the last decade. When it comes to, as often spoken of in this House, the salmon industry, for example, it is unrecognisable, the level of accountability we now have in the industry, and compliance and regulation, than it was under a Labor-Greens government: unrecognisable. We've done that through continuous improvement, of course. I recognise the effects of climate change and how industry needs to adapt to that

I had a very good briefing the other day in southern Tasmania with a professor from IMAS - Scott was his name was. A great briefing about the giant kelp and the fact that Tasmania's waters are warming four times more than the globe. That is serious stuff. We've lost 95 per cent of our -

Dr WOODRUFF - 45, relevance. I asked the Premier whether he will act urgently on the recommendations from the report. We know the situation is dire. We desperately know that. It's about action.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I also remind members that if you ask a question that has an argument, opinion, inferences, preambles, that actually is against Standing Order 44; but if people ask a question containing that, then under Standing Order 45, ministers and the Premier are allowed a bit more latitude. As long as they're being relevant to the relevant policy area, according to the *House of Representative Practice 7th Edition*, page 567, then the answer is relevant. I will bring the Premier back to the question, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. Tasmania has a legislated emissions reduction target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions or lower from 30 June 2030 and there should be no doubt that we are taking action and making progress. In fact, Tasmania's net emissions in 2023 were -4.93 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is a 125.2 per cent decrease -

Dr Woodruff - Thanks to our forests that you continue to log and burn.

The SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, this is your first warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - from the 1990 baseline level of 19.55 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

I am advised that our comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan has a dedicated estimated total of more than $250 million across government. The action plan was informed by a thorough process of consultation with state and local government, business, industry, non-government organisations and the community. We are finalising 98 practical cross-government projects that improve information and knowledge about climate change, reduce emissions and build resilience.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - I wasn't sure from the Premier's response just then when he said they were finalising actions whether they're the recommendations from this review: Returning to the question, Premier, can you please tell us when you will be acting on the recommendations and will you commit to making the changes to the act by the end of this year?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I outlined some of the areas when it comes to the review's findings and recommendations. We're going to continue to strengthen our action on climate change through existing legislated activities and policy frameworks, and I detailed those in a previous answer. The range of areas I was about to speak of in terms of the plan includes delivering projects from six sector-based emissions reduction resilience plans and the statewide climate change risk assessment which was released in 2024, and 98 practical cross-government projects that improve information and knowledge about climate change, reduce emissions and build resilience to the changing climate, which I've acknowledged.

Home Warranty Insurance Scheme

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, TRADE and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Mr BARNETT

[11.03 a.m.]

Last night, this House passed a bill to crackdown on dodgy builders. It is good that government and the parliament is acting to protect Tasmanian subcontractors and consumers from the consequences caused when unscrupulous builders exploit phoenixing loopholes. Four years ago, your government promised to introduce a home warranty insurance scheme. This was to provide an important protection for Tasmanians who risked losing their life savings if their home builder did defective work or went under. A bill to enable this scheme passed parliament in September 2023. Tenders for the scheme closed in October 2024, but a tender was not awarded. Tasmania still does not have a home warranty insurance scheme. With building company insolvencies on the rise, the need for this initiative is greater than ever. Where is this long-awaited protection for Tasmanian home builders and when is a scheme expected to be in place?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and appreciate his feedback in terms of the bill regarding dodgy builders, for which we received very good support across this Chamber. I can't reflect on the vote, of course, but we were very pleased with the support and particularly the contribution of Dr Shane Broad and the experience he's had. Thanks very much for that commendation.

In terms of the home warranty insurance you've made reference to, yes, that legislation was passed some years ago and the government is still working its way through that tender process. What is important in the Budget is the support for Tasmanian families and builders who need that support and that support remains in place.

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, minister. The tender for the scheme closed in October 2024 and it's now March 2026. Could you inform the House of what has happened?

Mr BARNETT - As you can understand, in the very important sector of building and construction industry we meet with the stakeholders and get feedback from them. For example, the Housing Industry Association that we talked about last night and Master Builders Tasmania are both very important key stakeholders. Those discussions are ongoing and together with my department we're looking very seriously at the various options. What's important for Tasmanians to understand in terms of home warranty is that we have support in place. It's in the Budget and that support is there when Tasmanians need it.

FuelCheck Tasmania - Audits in North and North-West Tasmania

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, TRADE and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Mr BARNETT

[11.05 a.m.]

You've now pointed to 34 fuel checks being undertaken this week in southern Tasmania. That's after weeks of escalating prices and only after repeated questioning in the House. We've even seen reports of the fuel price app showing stations that have been closed for years. When did you first ask the Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) to undertake on-site compliance checks and why were those orders not deployed when fuel prices began to surge? Those audits only cover less than half the petrol stations in southern Tasmania. How many stations have been audited in the north and north-west, and why does your government continue to overlook regional Tasmania when it matters so much?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in this matter. We've just had a ministerial statement from the Premier for which I'm very grateful and I know others around this Chamber in Tasmania are as well, highlighting this absolute top priority as a government. We have taken this issue today and we are going forward. One of those initiatives related to the FuelCheck app and ensuring that petrol stations provide advice if there are any outages at a petrol station or diesel station in Tasmania. That's something we've

announced today. The Premier has made reference to it. I did as well, so that will be the case going forward.

You've also asked about CBOS and their work. I had further updates yesterday when I met with the CBOS director and the secretary of my department and can advise that, as at the close of business yesterday, 44 sites have been audited and the majority of sites will have been audited by the end of this week. I made reference to that yesterday, but that's an update on the actual audit.

CBOS is very diligent in terms of not just monitoring but checking, auditing and then following up the various complaints that are made. We are very serious about this matter. We are so serious that this government has called on the federal Labor government to cut the fuel excise and we'd like to know the views of the Labor opposition.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. I remind the minister that the question was about when he first asked CBOS to undertake on-site compliance audits and how many of these audits have been undertaken in the north and north-west?

The SPEAKER - You also had a big preamble. As I said, if it's in the relevant policy area, his answer is still relevant, but I draw the minister to the heart of the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much. I think I've at least answered that to the best of my ability but I'm more than happy to add -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - that CBOS are very active. They meet with me in my office on an ongoing basis and they continue their important work.

Ms Finlay - Big, fat zero in the north-west and the north-east.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your second warning.

Mr BARNETT - They've continued this since the fuel security situation has been in place. We have ongoing and regular meetings and that's a top priority for our government. It is interesting that so many stakeholders have shared with me and the Premier and many others that they need cost-of-living relief, cost-of-doing-business relief and the fuel excise is a federal Labor government responsibility. We've asked them to make that decision and slash it, at least temporarily. What is the position of state Labor?

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - In his answer, the minister said that he was answering to the best of his ability, so I am going to ask the question really simply, the one that I asked originally. When did you first ask CBOS to undertake on-site compliance checks?

Mr BARNETT - I have regular meetings with CBOS. We talk about a range of matters and these important matters are raised on a regular basis.

Minor Cannabis Offences

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

[11.10 a.m.]

According to data provided to me by Tasmanian Police, in the last 10 years the number of prosecutions for minor cannabis offences has increased, while the number of people diverted from the criminal justice system by police for those offences has reduced by almost 60 per cent. This is despite a key principle of your government's 2024-29 drug strategy being diversion from the criminal justice system to treatment services. Can you explain this dramatic reduction in police diversion for cannabis offending? Will you and your police commissioner be attending the public forum on cannabis regulation on Monday that Mr Garland and I are hosting at the Town Hall at 1.00 p.m.?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. It is an important matter. Broadly speaking, the drug diversionary program is available and is applied by police at their discretion. There have been a number of notable diversionary actions taken by police in that regard, and we will continue to follow up on that process. Overall, we don't propose any change to the existing structure.

More broadly, we're continuing to work with colleagues in this place to deliver a reduction to some of the red tape we've seen around the prescribing of medicinal cannabis. For example, interstate prescriptions can have certain restrictions when it comes to the way they're enforced on our roads. Making some of those commonsense changes, in partnership with the minister for Health, is important to make sure we're recognising a contemporary framework and that people aren't caught up in the law in a way that is inappropriate for the way we regulate those things.

I won't be attending the forum. I appreciate the offer, though. As for the Commissioner of Police, I'm not sure. They may have written to you but they will no doubt update you whether they attend.

Supplementary Question

Ms BURNET - Minister, my preamble was about the almost 60 per cent reduction in diversions from the criminal justice system by police for those offences. That's a dramatic drop. I'm wondering whether you are concerned about this dramatic reduction in diversions?

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, police have discretion. They utilise that discretion. There is a framework available.

One of the other things happening is that more people are getting legal prescriptions as part of pain management and a range of other processes. Where we see less offences because

people are accessing it in a legal way then, of course, those people don't need to be diverted at all because they're not actually committing an offence.

As for our structure, we think it's robust, fair and workable. It is a matter for the discretion of police officers.

Fuel Prices - Work from Home

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.13 a.m.]

With fuel prices rising and pressure mounting on supply, there is a growing discussion about encouraging Australians to work from home to ease demand. Yet on Tuesday you confirmed that no central directive has been issued by agency heads for public servants to work from home to reduce demand. Instead, they are being told to speak to their manager. Thousands of public servants are in roles that can be performed remotely, and reducing non-essential commuting is within your control. It provides direct cost-of-living relief and frees up fuel for those who need it most. Have you now issued a whole-of-government direction to reduce non-essential commuting, or are you still relying on ad hoc decisions across agencies?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. There doesn't need to be a directive because it can happen now.

Mr Willie - But they're saying it's hard.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Employees can speak with their managers and work from home, and that makes great common sense.

Ms Haddad - But they all say no. You're okay with that?

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's a great opportunity for a manager to be flexible with employees and to ensure that they are providing every opportunity to work from home to save fuel.

Ms Haddad - They're not.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Clark, Ms Haddad, this is your first warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That can happen now. Working from home is well established across the State Service. High fuel pricing, as you correctly alluded to and we've been saying for the last few weeks now at the very least, brings cost-of-living pressures. We are committed to assisting employees through offering a range of flexible work arrangements. Where operationally appropriate, remote working or working from home can take place.

There is a whole range of areas we need to continue to investigate to alleviate the cost-of-living pressures on Tasmanian families because Tasmanian families are at the top of our mind. Tasmanian families are affected by higher fuel prices and higher food prices.

Some families, particularly those on fixed incomes and vulnerable families, value the work of our community sector and the community organisations. I well recall that when the energy prices were increasing across the eastern seaboard three years ago, we supported community organisations to support vulnerable Tasmanians, That included more support for our Neighbourhood Houses, for example.

We introduced the Renewable Energy Dividend. Then leader of the opposition, Mr Winter, or whichever position you had that particular time, was against the Renewable Energy Dividend. You criticised the Renewable Energy Dividend -

Mr Winter - I said exactly this would happen, actually.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I was very pleased that you're the biggest supporter of it. It's fantastic. Well done.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, relevance, 45. It's clearly a question about working from home.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Premier, I do bring you back to the original question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for the question. It pointed to the cost-of-living pressures as a result of rising fuel increases. What I have demonstrated is that when it comes to these spikes in energy or fuel, we work with the community to ensure -

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

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Will the Premier shows some leadership and get his heads of agency to encourage working from home to reduce demand. It's ad hoc. There are workers saying that they're being told no.

Mr ROCKLIFF - My expectation would be that employees are working in a flexible environment that supports their circumstances, as is the policy.

Firearms Legislation - Cost

Mr Di FALCO question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[11.18 a.m.]

I listened intently to the debates yesterday about revenue raising and was concerned with the eagerness to raise taxes on industry sectors that employ thousands of Tasmanians and risk their own capital to invest in this state. The same people calling for cost-saving measures have proposed a firearms policy that would easily cost Tasmanian taxpayers $40 million. How many jobs and community programs could that pay for?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question.

Mr Willie - Did you write it?

Mr ABETZ - Once again it shows that Mr Di Falco has got his head around the issues confronting this state and you wonder why the crossbench don't take you seriously. What an offensive interjection to Mr Di Falco. I was not aware of that question. I was given no warning of it.

What I can tell you is that any sensible person, after having listened to the debate yesterday, would have come to the sensible conclusion that the member for Lyons, Mr Di Falco, has come to. If you want to tax the businesses that are providing the employment out of existence, we will lose payroll tax and, on the other side of the equation, have a higher social services bill. As a result, you suffer a double whammy. The Greens want to tax the salmon industry but also abolish it. I'm not sure how that's going to balance the books, but what I do know is, it will see over 5000 Tasmanians put onto the scrapheap of unemployment.

In relation to the payment of taxes by the various companies, payroll tax and stamp duty come to us; stamp duty comes to us. In relation to company tax that, of course, is a federal government matter. What we also know is: what you can deduct against potential company tax is ongoing capital investment and that is what the salmon industry, the tourism industry and other sectors are doing in this state by the bucketload and, of course, that is futureproofing our state for future jobs, greater investment, greater production, greater sales, meaning more income coming into Tasmania, making this state more self-sufficient.

I am delighted that Mr Di Falco fully understands the balancing that is needed. In relation to taxation, it has been very, very noteworthy that those sitting opposite are not willing to champion the cause of reduced fuel excise at a time of cost-of-living crisis. What I would say to those who say they champion the cause of cost of living and the household budgets of our fellow Tasmanians: how do you assist that if part and parcel of your policy is to increase the tax burden on them? We don't support that. We support our fellow Tasmanians, we support the approach being suggested by Mr Di Falco.

Fuel Strategy - Regional Communities

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE

[11.22 a.m.]

Regional Tasmania relies on fuel for everything. Yesterday, instead of stepping up with solutions, you pushed back the burden onto farmers to come up with ideas to manage this volatility and pressure themselves. It just felt like you were outsourcing the state's responsibility onto the very people who are being hit the hardest. While we appreciate the Premier's update, what are you doing today to keep fuel flowing to our farmers and our fishers, to keep our regional economies moving?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I reject the premise of that question. In fact, I feel that I've been verballed to that degree. I said yesterday very clearly - and if you listened, instead of having your mouth open interjecting, you would have heard that I praised the farmers as a resilient bunch, as a bunch of adults - are you listening, or are you going to keep talking and then misconstrue what I'm saying?

The SPEAKER - Minister, there is a point of order.

Mr WINTER - Speaker, just asking you to clarify whether the minister should direct his comments through yourself or straight at the member.

The SPEAKER - Thank you for the point of order. Minister, through the Chair. Address the comments through to myself.

Mr PEARCE - Sure, Speaker. As I said yesterday, I'm going to reiterate exactly what I said again: I said that when faced with problems, when faced with issues, when faced with obstacles, farmers are a resilient bunch and they farm around. That's exactly what I said, and the *Hansard* will reflect that. I gave no assertion that I was placing blame or responsibility onto the agricultural sector or our farmers and I refute that completely, full stop.

In answer to the question, the situation in terms of the Middle East conflict is an ever-evolving issue. What we find today, next week, you will probably find that that situation is changing. There are three carrier fleets in the gulf at the moment. There are now paratroopers ready to go in. I come from that place, I come from the Defence background, the signals intelligence side of Defence. That situation, in a week, will change completely.

Ms Finlay - The Premier himself said there's fuel pressure in the regions.

Mr PEARCE - Are you going to listen, or?

The SPEAKER - Ms Finlay, this is your third warning.

Mr PEARCE - The point I make is: this is an ever-evolving situation. The point I make is: our farmers are an adaptive organisation, an adaptive body of great professionals. The point I make is: we, on this side, instead of barking at the moon and politicising all of this, what we will do is listen to our farmers. We will apply practical measures. We will be mature. We will keep Tasmania governed in the way it deserves; that is, with a mature head. It's times like this where you see the leaders. It's times like these when leaders come out, when leaders come to the floor. It's times like this when we don't need barking at the moon; we don't need chicken littles; we need adults and we need good government. We are exactly doing that.

Supplementary Question

Ms FINLAY - I have a very clear supplementary question that came from the answer. In the Premier's update this morning he said he heard from farmers that there are real fuel pressures. You've said that this takes adults to deliver practical measures. My specific question is: minister, what practical measures have you or are you implementing to support regional Tasmania?

Mr PEARCE - I thank the member for her supplementary question. In fact, what I'm doing, in conjunction with the Deputy Premier, is listening to the agricultural sector, finding out what their requirements are as we move forward. We're also communicating with the federal government, who could lift that fuel excise, as the Deputy Premier quite rightly pointed out, and make things a lot easier. If the federal government -

Ms FINLAY - Point of order, relevance. Specific question: what practical measures?

The SPEAKER - I bring the minister to the question.

Mr PEARCE - Speaker, as I said, that fuel excise could go a long way in relieving real pressure for farmers and ordinary Tasmanians who are finding it difficult at this time. In fact, I have a question that's probably been burning at me for quite some time. You were up in Canberra; what did you do about it?

The SPEAKER - The minister's time has expired.

TasWater - Service Charges

Prof RAZAY question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[11.27 a.m.]

Yesterday this Chamber passed a motion to send a clear message to TasWater that it's not okay to propose an increase in water charges by more than 40 per cent. I understand that fixing our water and sewage infrastructure requires more funding in the future, but I can't accept that adding more pain into households already struggling with the rising of living costs is the answer.

What is the government's position on requiring developers to contribute to TasWater infrastructure costs when their proposed developments place additional pressures on existing systems? Is there a framework in place to ensure that infrastructure costs are equitably shared between public utility and private developers, so households are not left to bear the brunt yet again?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a very real question that many households and businesses are dealing with at the moment, and that is cost of living generally, but of course, with TasWater specifically. In relation to the request made by TasWater to the economic regulator for a very substantial uplift in fees, we as a government responded to the draft economic regulator's determination, the draft determination of the economic regulator. Yesterday I tabled, if I recall correctly, a four-page letter signed by myself, but on behalf of the government, supporting the economic regulator's rejection of TasWater's request.

In relation to developments, yes, as I understand it - I will get back to the honourable member with the exact detail - TasWater does have a framework in relation to developments in requesting or making or requiring developers to contribute, if not pay the cost of, be it water or sewage or wastewater treatment. I know that our major food processors such as McCain,

Cadbury and others, are continually in discussion with TasWater and make representations to me about those matters. In relation to the exact detail of that, unfortunately I don't have that at the front of my mind, but what I will do is provide that detail to the honourable member.

Medicinal Cannabis

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER

[11.30 a.m.]

The most recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey reports that in 2022-23, seven out of 10 people who used cannabis exclusively for medical purposes in the previous 12 months did so without a prescription. While the number of medical practitioners who can prescribe medicinal cannabis has recently increased dramatically in Tasmania, few practitioners are willing to prescribe it. Those people who use cannabis without a script still face criminal prosecution, conviction, fines and jail, regardless of whether they use it for health reasons. How is that consistent with your department's drug strategy, which is quite rightly focused on harm minimisation?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in this area. I note the forum that you and the member for Clark are hosting next week and whilst I can't be there in person I will have a representative at that event as well.

Our government is delivering improved access to essential medications for Tasmania, as we heard earlier, with new interstate prescribing laws in effect, including for medicinal cannabis previously prescribed interstate via telehealth which was unable to be dispensed in Tasmania, and these amendments will allow for that to occur. Tasmanian GPs can prescribe unregistered medicinal cannabis products using the same process for all other similar scheduled medicines in Australia, and Tasmanian community pharmacies can dispense unregistered medicinal cannabis products. Like other Australian states and territories, Tasmanian GPs are required to seek approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration, commonly known as the TGA, under either the Special Access Scheme or Authorised Prescribers Scheme.

I'm advised that the TGA has an online portal which allows applications for prescribers for unregistered products to be considered by both the Commonwealth and the state, and the TGA has published guidance material on the use of these unregistered products for prescribers and pharmacists to utilise.

The government is aware that the TGA is currently undertaking a review of the safety and regulatory oversight of unregistered medicinal cannabis products, driven by stakeholder concerns. It is also important to note that medicinal cannabis can cause impairment and affect fitness to drive. The Department of Health recommends that people do not drive while being treated with medicinal cannabis, and warnings are on all medicinal cannabis packaging. There is no doubt that this has been an evolving space over time. We remain committed to working through those issues as they roll out and I look forward to hearing from your forum on Monday.

Salmon Industry - Florfenicol Use

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.33 a.m.]

The Greens have been using every possible avenue to try to understand just how much florfenicol was used in south-eastern waterways under the now suspended emergency permit. We got nowhere with your agencies, so last week in parliament we went to the top and we asked you. Unfortunately, that didn't help either. The answer we got on notice was that the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) does not have figures for florfenicol usage. It's unbelievable that a full three weeks after the permit for this antibiotic was suspended, the EPA doesn't know how much florfenicol has been used. Premier, does anyone in your Tasmanian government know how much florfenicol was dumped in public waterways - the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE), Biosecurity Tasmania, or the Chief Veterinary Officer? If so, will you finally give us the figure and, if not, WTF?

The SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, I think we all know what that acronym stands for, so I will ask you to withdraw that, please.

Dr WOODRUFF - I withdraw it. What the actual?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, I ask the House to settle, please.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question and the interest in this matter. The EPA has indicated that a report will be published for each antibiotic treatment event once the associated environmental monitoring program has been completed.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - We don't want to wait for 21 drip-fed reports on the monitoring program, we just want to know how much florfenicol has been put into south-eastern waterways over the period of this now suspended permit - as of today, 26 March.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As soon as that information comes to hand I will be more than happy to table that information and make that -

Dr Woodruff - You're actively hiding it.

The SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject that.

Dr Woodruff - Do you actually not have it?

The SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, this is your second warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - With all due respect, that is not true. We can again go through a long history lesson of how much more environmental regulation and monitoring there is now with the salmon industry as there was when you were last in government. We've completely transformed the independence of the monitoring through the EPA and many other areas to satisfy community interest in continuous improvement because, as was highlighted before, it's one of our largest primary industries, worth about $1.2 billion -

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

Hawthorn - Future Fixtures in Launceston

Ms FINLAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.36 a.m.]

At a time when Tasmanians are under massive pressure and workers in the north rely heavily on major events for jobs during winter, there's much discussion about Hawthorn being exited from the state. You went to the election with an unclear commitment about how many games will be played in Launceston and by whom. I am just wondering today if you can clarify your position on this.

Hawthorn playing in Launceston is great for jobs, local businesses and the northern economy. These games deliver more than $20 million of benefit through those winter months every year. What is your position in relation to Hawthorn and the Devils beyond 2027? Can you please clarify this for the northern community today?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. I believe you spoke about the challenges for consumers and fuel prices at the beginning of your question - did I get that right?

Ms Finlay - Just then?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, doing it tough?

Mrs Greene - Shouldn't this be through the Speaker?

Ms Finlay - No, Speaker, I did not mention fuel prices. This is a very clear question that the northern community are asking about clarification on his position.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Right, okay. I understand that the number-one issue on people's minds at this present time is of course the rising price of fuel and the uncertainty that creates. Notwithstanding that, the honourable member has asked me about Hawthorn games, which we will continue to 2027. We've made that clear and we made some clear statements at the recent election as well. I thank the honourable member for acknowledging the value of events in northern Tasmania and it was great to see you - I believe you were there.

Ms Finlay - I wasn't there, I was elsewhere, otherwise I would have loved to have been there.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I think you've made that statement as well. I saw other people of your party enjoying the Foo Fighters, as we were, of course, and others as well, which is fantastic, and it highlighted the fact that for a relatively small investment, we can return, in this case $7.8 million, into the local community.

Ms FINLAY - Point of order under Standing Order 45, relevance. I appreciate the Premier's ability to talk this out; however, I specifically asked for his position about Hawthorn and the Devils beyond 2027.

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - Our policy commitment was made at the last election and we've secured Hawthorn to 2027. We have done that because we value events and clearly Launceston values AFL content, particularly of that nature, throughout the winter months. We've had great examples with the Foo Fighters, Party in the Paddock and Festivale with respect to events and there was another great event whose name escapes me - Paul Kelly was at it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Fantastic. Through the winter months, I agree with you that it's really valuable to have AFL content. You can walk down the streets of Launnie and know the footy is on at the weekend, very clearly. That's why we're going to continue through 2026-27; of course, 2028 will be even better.

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

Supplementary Question

Ms FINLAY - The core of my question was beyond 2027. The Premier is on the record saying that Hawthorn can coexist for many years to come and be in the mix. Premier, can you please clarify for northern Tasmania your position beyond 2027? Hawthorn offer a different product to the northern economy in those winter months with the visitor economy. I'm wondering if you can confirm your position beyond 2027.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can confirm the Devils' content in 2028-29 leading up to the stadium being completed. That will be a huge boost for northern Tasmania with more AFL content through those winter months. I made our policy commitment clear on AFL content more broadly in June or July last year, if my memory serves me correctly. What is fantastic is the VFL, and I will be there on Saturday. I unfortunately missed the game on the weekend as my mother's 80th birthday prevented me from attending that. I know that was very well attended, and how exciting it was to see a win, and how enthusiastic all Tasmanians were, as I'm sure they will be, in Launceston this weekend.

Time expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Fuel Prices - Bus Services

Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[11.42 a.m.]

My question is from Mark of Brighton: will the government be increasing capacity and frequency of bus services to get cars off the road, conserve fuel and provide cost-of-living relief to Tasmanians? Some 26 days since the start of the oil crisis, have you met with regional bus providers and Metro to develop a strategy? Metro report an increase in patronage from 130,266 customer journeys last week to 152,924 customer journeys this week: that is an increase of 17 per cent in a week. What plans do you have to acquire more buses to meet the pending public demand, and will you extend half-price bus fares beyond June of this year?

Women's Health Services

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER

I have a constituent question from Lynn in Glenorchy. Lynn saw the announcement about expansion of The Bubble clinic in Launceston to which the Tasmanian government is contributing $3.8 million to extend its consulting practice. Lynn said even The Bubble's Dr Vavreck admitted the expansion won't mean free or low-cost services to people on low incomes, but it will increase their capacity to provide service to people with the means to pay.

Lynn is aware of long wait times with free and low-cost services through Family Planning Tasmania, including in the south of the state. Lynn would like to know how the government can justify giving $3.8 million to a private for-profit provider when not-for-profit organisations like Family Planning Tasmania and Women's Health Tasmania can't get funding to do outreach so more Tasmanians can access their free and low-cost services.

Art Sale Government Assistance

Mr JAENSCH question to MINISTER for ARTS and HERITAGE, Ms OGILVIE

We have a vibrant arts and creative sector in Tasmania, including our north-west. A constituent of mine who is an artist has asked me about assistance with the sale of their artworks. Can you please provide advice on what support is available from government to assist artists with promoting their artwork for sale?

Land Clearing on King Island

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE

My office has been contacted regarding ongoing illegal land clearing on King Island. This person is concerned that little to no restorative action has been required to address illegal lands clearing that has occurred.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Sorry, Dr Woodruff. It has to be specific to your own electorate.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, there is a constituent who's in my electorate who's concerned about what's happening on King Island.

Members interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, there is, honourable Speaker, if I can continue.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - We will allow it for now. Order. Stop the clock, please.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is a statewide issue, and King Island is one example.

Mr O'Byrne - The redistribution was intense, but not that intense.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The rules are that it is specific to a member's electorate, and/or be raised by a constituent, so if it was raised by a constituent in the electorate, it is allowed. They are the two conditions.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Speaker, if I can continue. I lost a bit of time.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. The only one who should be speaking right now is the honourable Leader of the Greens. I ask the House to settle, please.

Dr WOODRUFF - I will start again: my office has been contacted regarding ongoing illegal land clearing on King Island, and this person is concerned that little to no restorative action has been required to address some illegal land clearing that they've heard has occurred. The person who undertook illegal land clearing has apparently been allowed to keep the land cleared to undertake grazing on it. Under Section 41 of the *Forest Practices Act*, the Forest Practices Authority can require those who have breached the act to repair or make good any damage to land as a result of a contravention of the act.

In a location that's home to many threatened native vegetation communities, unlawful land clearing ought to be treated as the serious matter it is, and restorative action should be taken to rectify the clearing. There should definitely not be tacit endorsement of an illegal practice by allowing grazing to occur on this land. Can the minister confirm if a section 41 order has been made in relation to a legal land clearing that appears to have occurred on King Island, and if not, why not?

Toilets at Stewarts Bay

Mr Di FALCO question to ACTING MINISTER for PARKS, Ms OGILVIE

I've been made aware that the public toilets at Stewarts Bay on the Tasman Peninsula have been out of operation for more than six months. This is a popular family-friendly beach regularly used by day visitors, families and young children, and overnight campers. It is also the departure point for the Pennicott boat tours.

With no functioning facilities and the nearest toilets at Port Arthur closing at 5.00 p.m., visitors are left with no option but to use the surrounding bush. This is unhygienic, inappropriate for families and undermines Tasmania's clean and green reputation. Will the minister advise when these facilities will be repaired and what steps the government is taking to ensure that Parks and Wildlife are adequately resourced to prevent such prolonged closures in the future?

Patient Transport Assistance Scheme

Ms DOW question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER

My question is from Darrell in Burnie: with the increasing cost of fuel, will the government increase the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (PTAS) rate from Burnie to Hobart for locals travelling to access health services in Hobart?

TasTAFE Review

Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for SKILLS and JOBS, Mr ELLIS

My question comes from a constituent who would prefer that I withhold their name: will the minister confirm what guidance the state government has given to the TasTAFE Training Portfolio Strategic review in regard to the focus of future government-funded training? Is the government pushing for further cuts to creative and design courses in favour of a narrowed skills agenda? What assurances can the government give regarding impacts to regional training centres, and how many courses are scheduled for removal, and what specific industry needs are being prioritised?

Regional Telecommunications Network Resilience

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for INNOVATION, SCIENCE and the DIGITAL ECONOMY, Ms OGILVIE

What steps is the Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy taking to ensure Tasmania's regional telecommunications network is resilient and capable of meeting peak demands during our tourist seasons?

Time expired.

TABLED PAPER

Public Accounts Committee Follow-Up Report of the Auditor-General - ICT Strategy, Critical Systems and Investment

[11.52 a.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Public Accounts in its inquiry on the follow-up of the report of the Auditor-General, Information and Communications Technology Strategy, Critical Systems and Investment, No. 4 of 2020-21.

Report received and printed.

PETROLEUM REPORTING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 11)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (TARGETED REFORM) BILL 2026 (No. 10)

First Reading

Bills presented by Mr Barnett and read the first time.

SITTING DATES

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House)(by leave) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 14 April at 10.00 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING ORDERS

Clarification - Constituency Questions

[11.54 a.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) -Honourable Speaker, on indulgence, I request that you give due consideration to the constituent question asked by the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff. I would argue that it opens up a precedent that we can basically ask a question anywhere in the state from anybody. It seems like there's a loophole that's being progressed. I'd ask that you give due consideration to this matter and report back at a later date.

Members interjecting.

Mr Bayley - People care about land clearing all around the state.

Dr BROAD - No, that's not the point. I'll just elaborate on it. The point of the constituent questions was to ask a question that a constituent gave you that was relevant to your electorate. If we allow this precedent to stand, I could have somebody in Devonport request an answer to car parking in Battery Point, for example. My understanding is that the idea of the constituent question was to be relevant to your -

The SPEAKER - Just to assist the House, I understand the point you are raising, Dr Broad. At the moment it is a constituent in your electorate or electorate-wide but I take on board what you were saying. The next course will be to have a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee to discuss the issue you have raised. I encourage respective members of the committee to let your thoughts be heard and we will organise a committee meeting to discuss this issue further because we appreciate the issues you have raised.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Recreational Fishing

[11.55 a.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: recreational fishing.

Tasmania is once again standing at a crossroads over the future of its marine environment. Something that is quite topical at the moment is the proposed Tasmanian sardine fishery. It's presented as precautionary, carefully designed and economically beneficial. Recreational fishers and Tasmanians who value healthy oceans are not convinced.

This is not a debate about whether fishing should exist; it is about scale, purpose and long-term consequences. The recently released policy paper proposes an initial catch limit of 7500 tonnes per year. We have seen in Tasmania how industries expand once capital is invested and supply chains are established. The starting point can quickly become a stepping stone and 7500 tonnes is not small. It would immediately place Tasmania among the largest sardine fisheries in the country. Once licences are granted and vessels are operating, pressure to increase quotas is almost inevitable.

Sardines are not just another fish. Our cold-water sardines are the richest source of omega-3 on the planet. They are forage species that sit in the middle of the marine food web. Southern bluefin tuna feed on small pelagic fish, including sardines. Recreational tuna fishing in Tasmania is growing and deeply valued. Seabirds, dolphins and seals also depend on abundant baitfish. Removing sardines at industrial scale may be modelled as sustainable under certain assumptions, but ecosystems are not static equations. Bass Strait is subject to marine heatwaves, changing currents and climate variability. Forage fish populations around the world have shown how quickly abundance can decline when environmental stress and fishing pressure combine.

The proposed fishery is not being built around feeding Tasmanians. There is no established Australian market that would absorb 7500 tonnes of sardines for human consumption. The most likely destination is aquaculture feed. The South Australian sardine fishery already supplies tuna ranching. Tasmania hosts the largest aquaculture section in the nation. It is difficult to ignore the commercial logic: public marine biomass is being turned into private feed input. The ecological risk remains public.

Tasmania has lived through marine controversies before. Communities have felt shut out, unheard and dismissed. If the government truly believes this fishery is in the long-term interests of the state, it should welcome rigorous questioning. It should publish the Offshore Constitutional Settlement (OCS) instrument in full. It should commit to stronger safeguards than the minimum required. It should acknowledge that recreational fishers and conservation-minded Tasmanians are not obstacles, but stakeholders.

I'm not opposed to all sardine fishing. A small-scale, artisanal, tightly controlled fishery supplying local human consumption is a different conversation. But an industrial-scale operation designed primarily to service aquaculture feed with a built-in pathway to expansion demands far more caution.

Tasmania's marine ecosystems are a shared inheritance. Once forage fish abundance declines, rebuilding it is not simple. Once public trust is lost, restoring it is harder still. This is the moment to slow down, examine every hypothesis, keep every option on the table and insist on full transparency. Before nets are set and licences issued, we must know exactly what we are agreeing to - not in broad promises, not in general assurances, but in detail.

We have a minister who has made a hard decision on the flathead fishery, and I commend him for that. It is broadly supported by the recreational fishers I've spoken to. They are in full support of the closure within that flathead fishery. While we have a minister ready to make those hard decisions, we should be helping in any way possible.

Another thing I believe will solve a lot of problems in this state is the marine environment act I hope to introduce. The Tasmanian's government's commitment to create a new marine environment act is genuinely good news. For the first time in a long time, we have the opportunity to step back and ask a bigger question; not just how we regulate activities in the water, but how we understand the marine estate as a whole. If we get this right, Tasmania could move towards something rare: a genuinely holistic, ecosystem-based model of marine governance. If we get it wrong, we risk creating another technically competent but culturally incomplete framework that manages fish zones and licences well enough, but never quite captures what the sea actually means to people.

The New South Wales' process in the marine act recognises that humans are sentient, that we form attachments to place and that the coast is not just habitat: it is memory, belonging and identity and intergenerational continuity. It acknowledges Aboriginal sea country not as an afterthought, but as foundational. It recognises that conflict over access is often less about extraction and more about perceived respect. It even identifies inadequate social and economic information as a threat in itself.

Time expired.

[12.01 p.m.]

Mr PEARCE (Braddon - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Deputy Speaker, I commend the member for Braddon, Mr Garland, for raising this issue, and for his continued advocacy on behalf of our marine resources, particularly on the north and north-west coast. I acknowledge Mr Garland's longstanding connection with water, fishing, fishing communities and the practical knowledge he brings to this place. It's important. His lived experience as a fisherman gives him credibility in this place when he speaks about the condition of our marine environment and the pressures on our wild fisheries.

Recreational fishing is deeply important to Tasmania. It's part of our DNA and part of the Tasmanian way of life. It supports regional economies and families, and that Tasmanian way of life is absolutely pivotal when it comes to what we're about here as a government. This government recognises that healthy recreational fisheries depend on healthy ecosystems, just as Mr Garland says, and that precautionary science-based management is essential for those fisheries and that science-based management is what I strongly believe in. More than one in four Tasmanians go fishing each year and this government has been clear that recreational fishing matters will be promoted. We see it as strengthening our way of life.

A review of the *Living Marine Resources Management Act* and the release of the Tasmanian fisheries white paper last year provided policy foundations for future fisheries management. In relation to backing the policy with science through the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement, the government is investing $3.7 million each year and leveraging over $3 million annually, in addition to research funding through IMAS. This is important.

I'll now speak to the main concern of Mr Garland's MPI, and that was sardines. Those concerns are understandable, I get that; however, sardines are a foraged species, as was pointed out, and Tasmanians rightly expect reassurance that recreational fishing and the marine environment will not be compromised. That is exactly how this government has proceeded; carefully and deliberately, and is the basis of independent science on which we place our focus.

Research released by IMAS in 2024 represent the most comprehensive assessment ever undertaken in the south-eastern Australian sardine stock. It confirmed: large and resilient populations with an estimated spawning biomass of in excess of 210,000 tonnes in Tasmanian and Bass Strait waters.

That research has been examined across the whole food chain. The findings are clear and modelling shows that Tasmanian marine ecosystems are not highly dependent on sardines as a single food source. Higher order predators, including species valued by recreational fishers across a diverse range of prey, do not rely predominantly on sardines alone. That science underpins the government's precautionary policy framework.

An initial catch of 7500 tonnes, less than 4 per cent of the total biomass, has been confirmed by IMAS more than three nautical miles from the coast using purse seine gear only, so no supertrawlers, and there is a clear prohibition on trawl-fishing. Recreational fishers' interests are central to this approach. Mr Garland's assertion that the sardines are sourced predominantly for salmon feed is not at the centre of our push forward with this piece of marine management. In fact, it's human consumption we're aiming this at. Sardines are a great source of omega 3, as Mr Garland already pointed out. We believe we're on an incredible resource here. In a high-end supermarket, what could be better than fresh Tasmanian sardines?

[12.06 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon, Mr Garland, for bringing on this matter of importance today about recreational fishing. I want to start by talking about sand flathead, because at the start of this month the sand flathead fishery in the south-east region had to be closed. Let's be clear, the Greens strongly support the management action that was taken to protect and restore that particular population, which is at serious risk, as we do with any other species.

Closing the sand flathead fishery was the right thing to do, but it was an emergency action that was taken because the government had completely and utterly failed in the management of that fishery over the last decade. It was classified in 2022 as being depleted and the population of sand flathead in the south-east region has continued to severely decline since then, to a point at which scientists now determine it's at 5 per cent of what it should be. That is as a result of actions taken by this government or failures of actions from this government.

When Minister Pearce announced the closure of the sand flathead fishery he admitted it had been overfished and it's the government that allowed it to be overfished. We recognise that there were minor actions taken in the past, but they were too little and too late and now we're in the position where we have to take emergency action that doesn't make anybody happy. Recreational fishers aren't happy. I've talked to many in my electorate of Franklin. Environmentalists are unhappy. We're appalled that the government has let the sand flathead species come to this point. No-one is happy about the sand flathead fishery being closed. It's a demonstration of this government's complete failure to be able to manage a fishery, to be able to manage the marine ecosystem and the ecological web of life.

This government has sent the sand flathead into critical decline in the south-east and now they think we should trust them to open up a brand-new sardine fishery in the north. As soon as the population of sardines was discovered, this government was rubbing its hands together at how they could plan to work with industry to make a profit from it. Media releases about the proposed sardine fishery crowed about 'sustainable management' and 'environmentally sound practices', but let's be clear, that is nothing but spin and PR from various ministers.

To make matters worse, the sardine fishery is definitely not going to be, as the member for Braddon, Mr Garland, said, for feeding humans in Tasmania. It is not. It is fundamentally about setting up a food source for a rapacious and increasingly industrial-scale salmon farming industry. It's that very industry, involving the massive JBS, the largest protein producer on the planet, and Huon Aquaculture, an enormous multinational company from Canada. Those companies have been lobbying the government for years to make sure they can cut down the costs of feed. Let's be clear: when you're buying salmon, you're buying small fish from the ocean. You're buying fish to eat fish. There is nothing good for the environment about farmed salmon.

I want to focus on the sardine fishery because our serious concern is that it will be overfished and over-exploited and sent into population decline, just like what happened with the sand flathead, because the government doesn't listen to the science. I heard the minister talk about the science. I heard him say that the large mammals are not dependent on sardines as a single food source; they don't rely predominantly on sardines. That's the point. Sardines, a pelagic fish, are at the bottom of the food chain. They are an essential component for all the larger fish that come up. They rely, if not directly on sardines, on the fish that eat sardines and the fish that eat the fish that eat sardines. That's how the magic of the food web works. When we remove them, as this government is intent on doing for industrial scale salmon farming, we are putting dolphins at risk from bycatch which is appallingly what we've seen in South Australia. We're seeing the potential loss of all other large fish as well.

[12.11 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, it's my absolute delight to rise to my feet this morning to speak about recreational fishing in Tasmania. For the many Tasmanians - one in four Tasmanians - who go out and drop a line to catch a fish it is so many things: a way to spend time with family, a way to spend time with yourself and hang out, not worry if you catch a fish, be quiet, look after your wellbeing, and take some time out. It's a way to feed a family. It's a way to connect with others. There is so much good that recreational fishing offers in Tasmania.

One important thing across our state is that it's not just a recreational activity, it's also an economic activity. Recreational fishing in Tasmania supports individuals, families and communities, but it also supports businesses, retailers, tourism, and that classic Tasmanian way of life. Tasmanian Labor recognises the importance and value of the fisheries that support recreational fishers, but we also recognise the beautiful place that recreational fishers hold in our particularly regional communities.

What worries me when matters like this come before the house is the context in which we talk about fisheries, biomass and the wellbeing of fish stocks in Tasmania. I acknowledge the member who brought it forward, the member for Braddon, who is a fisher himself. There aren't many people in this place who know the water and the fish better than Mr Garland.

We have a minister who is supported by advisers and a department so he may contribute to conversations. There have been a number of people in this government - there have been a succession of Primary Industries ministers, many just for a short period of time who have had a hand on the current status and health of recreational fishes in Tasmania. It started back in the day, around the sand flathead fishery with the Premier himself, when he was a Primary Industries minister. He was given advice on what to do and if he had followed that advice based on the science then, we'd still be able to go out and fish for a flatty on the weekend now. Successive ministers haven't made good decisions based on science.

This minister says that science is at the foundation of all his decisions. The one thing I love about this minister is that he's a bit of a character, he gives everything a crack, he's out there and engaged and committed but sometimes I think the minister comes undone when he runs at the mouth. Just this morning we heard him talk about farmers and the impact of fuel excise. Well, there is the fuel tax credit that enables farmers to get that back but let's not get into particulars. He said earlier this week 'there's plenty of fertiliser in Tasmania'. In fact, there are pressures with fertiliser in Tasmania. He said, when he announced the closure of the sand flathead fishery, that it was based on all sorts of science and decisions and proper process. As

people have spoken today, there are people who absolutely back in that decision. There are people concerned about the decision because the core to all good governance is trust: trust in processes, decision and in being honest in how you describe what you're doing.

If the minister stood up and said, 'I want to close the sand flathead fishery, and I'm going do it because of this reason', it might have been acceptable. But when you imply certain processes, decisions, science, and data to back up your decision, and it might not be quite right, that's not okay. What it does to someone like myself - and that's why we've called for a review of the process to close the sand flathead fishery, it's about reviewing the process: when there are concerns raised about a sardine fishery, it starts to deplete the trust that I have, unfortunately, through the minister, in the departments that are so thin now because of the budget pressures of this government because of the way that they have poorly managed the finances of Tasmania. It's hard to trust the process and the information being presented. I want to support a sardine fishery in Tasmania. I believe that the presentations and the information that have been provided is that it is cautious, 7500 tonnes, about 4 per cent of the biomass.

A new fishery in Tasmania would be great for our economy. It would be great if the government had capacity to ensure that it's landed and managed and processed on island. That'd be a great opportunity, but trusting the system and the information is hard now. Tasmanian Labor, at the heart of what we do, want to support regional Tasmanians, we want to support our recreational fishers, we want to support our commercial fishers, we want to support the marine environment, but to do that at its best, we need to be able to support great consultation, great communication, great evidence, great data, and great science because there is no doubt that our recreational fisheries are great. A sardine fishery could be good, the sand flathead fishery may need to be closed, but we need to rely on science, information, consultation and evidence.

[12.16 p.m.]

Mr Di FALCO (Lyons) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the member for Braddon and to acknowledge the importance of recreational fishing not only to regional communities but to the cultural fabric and economy of Tasmania. I can speak all day about the importance of this matter; however, I wish to hear from other contributors as well. Recreational fishing is more than just the pastime, it is part of the Tasmanian way of life.

My electorate of Lyons is the heartland of fishing and I want to acknowledge the member for Braddon for advocating for recreational fishers. I intend to join, review and strongly advocate for them. The economic benefit of recreational fishing must not be underestimated. Small coastal towns rely heavily on recreational anglers; tackle shops, accommodation providers, fuel stations, charter operators and hospitality businesses all benefit from a strong and sustainable recreational fishing sector.

I have spoken strongly in my short time here for services such as inland fisheries that provide crucial services. I've strongly advocated for increased funding in the upcoming budget. We must all recognise the importance of maintaining access. Recreational fishers value the ability to safely and responsibly access waterways and coastal areas. Sensible policies that protect the environment, while preserving access, are essential to keeping recreational fishing strong.

There is also a broader benefit to community wellbeing. Recreational fishing encourages outdoor activity, supports mental health and provides an accessible way for people of all ages

to engage with nature. In a time when many families face increasing pressures, these simple opportunities matter more than ever. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, we must advocate for people to utilise the food sources we have available, whether that is through fishing or hunting.

I commend the member for Braddon for bringing this matter forward and for advocating on behalf of recreational fishers and regional communities. Continued support for fisheries management, infrastructure, stocking programs and access improvements will ensure recreational fishing remains a proud and sustainable part of Tasmania's future.

[12.19 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate on recreational fishing. I'm a wannabe recreational fisher and a part-owner with my two brothers-in-law of a boat that doesn't get out enough. The closest I get to fishing at the moment is taking a couple of fish oil tablets in the morning. Nevertheless, I want to acknowledge the importance of recreational fishing to Tasmania and to this government, and I thank the member for Braddon for raising the matter of public interest.

Recreational fishing is far more than a hobby to Tasmanians. It keeps people active, connects them to nature and forms part of our identity as an island. Recreational fishing contributes $270 million annually to Tasmania's economy and supports regional communities right across the state. As Lyons has significant coastal areas, it supports a lot of regional communities.

This debate today has been more focused on sardines and so I will take my contribution now to sardines. Much of the debate around sardines has focused on fear rather than fact, so it is important to clearly outline what the science actually tells us. Independent research led by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies confirms a substantial sardine stock in Tasmanian waters, around 210,000 tonnes. Crucially, it examines how sardines' function within the food web. The evidence shows that the southern Australian marine ecosystems, including Tasmania's, are resilient and diverse. Predators such as seals, penguins and southern bluefin tuna do not depend heavily on sardines alone; they adapt their diets across multiple prey species. This matters because the science also showed us that sardine populations naturally fluctuate, but by tens of thousands of tonnes as part of the normal ecosystem cycle, without measurable impacts on predator populations or recreational fishing success. The proposed catch levels sit well within the natural variations.

Claims that the fishery would undermine recreation fishing are not supported by evidence. Sardines are not a recreational target species, and fishing would be restricted to offshore waters, avoiding key inshore recreational grounds. Just as importantly, this is not a set and forget situation. The framework includes ongoing stock management, monitoring and the ability to adjust or reduce catches immediately if ecologically or food chain impacts are detected.

In short, a carefully managed precautionary sardine fishery can coexist with healthy ecosystems and a strong recreational fishing sector, and that is exactly the outcome to which that the government is committed.

The Greens have said they don't trust the minister. They always have said they want to base it on science. Well, you can't get any better science than coming out of IMAS. That's what

the government is doing, basing this information on that IMAS investigation. To that end, it's also been mentioned in relation to the *Marine Environment Act*. I understand that the government has commenced work to deliver on its commitment to establish a new marine environment Tasmania act.

To all the recreational fishers out there, it's a tough gig. When it comes to the sand flathead, this has been mentioned today in several contributions, but I know that talking to people in the recreational fishing zones in that area they appreciate the hard decision the minister had to take on sand flathead in the south east. Of course, it is part of our DNA to go out and have a fish. May I get out there with them more often than not.

[12.24 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to make contribution and thank Mr Garland, the member for Braddon, for bringing this on. I have to reflect on the commencement of the minister for fisheries' contribution where he said that recreational fishing is part of Tasmania's way of life. I agree with him totally, but it was only two years ago that the then minister for racing, Felix Ellis, used to stand here in this place and say that racing was part of Tasmania's way of life. In fact, he said it dozens of times before they shut it down. Recreational fishers now would wonder what's next which is what every Tasmanian interested in racing is wondering at the moment.

Water quality is critical in my electorate of Franklin, particularly those of us around the D'Entrecasteaux, where I live at Kingston Beach and all the way down to the far south on Bruny Island. So much of the debate, in fact 99.9 per cent of the debate, has been about aquaculture and salmon farming when it comes to recreational water quality, which I think is a real shame.

Yes, it's an issue that people care about, but what people really care about is their ability to get out in the water and fish recreationally. You want to be able to catch a fish, and we know that's under threat or, in fact, when it comes to sand flathead, is now unable to be done. It's also about recreational water quality for people wanting to get in and have a swim and I thought this is a good opportunity to talk about the Derwent Estuary Program and the great work that that's been doing for water quality in the Derwent, not just for recreational fishers, but also for people wanting to swim.

The program has been undertaking monitoring of water quality across the estuary for many years now, from the eastern shore to the western shore. It has done some great work to identify areas that need to be fixed, and then assisting to actually fix problems but right now we have a situation where no one is really taking responsibility for something that I think is really important: that Blackmans Bay south and Kingston Beach north remain closed for recreational swimming. The advice is do not swim in our waterways. That's primarily caused by stormwater and sewerage that's leaking into our waterways; Not only does that impact recreational people having a swim. but also recreational fishing.

The mayors of Clarence, Glenorchy, Hobart and Kingborough have written to myself, and I know other members of parliament, outlining their real concerns about the defunding of the Derwent Estuary Program. It is a partnership between local government and the state government that's been doing really excellent work, though undervalued and underfunded for a long period of time. The defunding of this program means there will be literally no one doing any monitoring of our waterways when it comes to recreational fishing in that area. What that

means is that all over the Derwent, there won't be peace of mind for people who are wanting to swim, and there won't be monitoring and information that goes back to TasWater and to councils around things that need to be fixed. This needs to be fixed. This is really important. It needs to be funded.

I also want to talk about the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies and the work that they've done in the recent past, but also all the way back through in the monitoring they've done, particularly as it comes from the Tasmanian Scalefish Fishery Assessment from 2020 and 2021. I've heard people say the recreational fishers support this. Yes, that's partly true, when it comes to the closure of the sand flathead fishery, that is. What recreational fishers tell me is they want some consultation, and that's been put forward well by TARFish who said: we want to be consulted about this. You can't just come out and tell us that you're shutting down our fishery. We want a conversation about this, about the fishery and how it's managed.

The other point they make to me is how in 2026 we've been unable to manage a fishery, where we get to the point where we actually have to shut the whole thing down. When I look at this particular report from the IMAS Tasmanian Scalefish Fishery Assessment from 2020-2021, and I go to the table which shows sand flathead was listed as depleting as far back as 2016-17 all the way to 2019-20, and then in 2020-21 it's listed as depleted. This has been going on for a long time. The scientists actually told government that this has been going on for a long time. It gets right to the end point where we actually shut the entire fishery down completely, instead of putting greater controls on years ago when it should have been done. I'm concerned about this on behalf of fishers, but I think we should reflect on what's actually not happened earlier.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Horizontal Fiscal Equalisation

[12.29 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House -

(1) Recognises that Australia's goods and services tax (GST) distribution system was founded on the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation, ensuring that all Australians, regardless of where they live, can access a similar standard of public services and infrastructure, and incur a similar level of tax.

(2) Acknowledges that -

(a) GST represents over 40 per cent of Tasmania's General Government revenue and is critical to funding essential services including hospitals, schools and infrastructure; and

(b) the 2018 changes to the GST distribution system departed from full horizontal fiscal equalisation by guaranteeing resource rich Western Australia a permanently inflated share of GST, regardless of its fiscal capacity to fund from its own revenue base.

(3) Further recognises that -

(a) this has created a two-tier federation, where some states receive GST well above their assessed need while others receive less, undermining the fairness and integrity of the system; and

(b) the Commonwealth's temporary 'no-worse-off guarantee' has masked the true impact of these changes at significant cost to the federal budget, diverting billions of dollars from other national priorities, further entrenching fiscal imbalance across the federation.

(4) Further acknowledges that partial equalisation weakens national cohesion, entrenches structural fiscal imbalance between the states, and undermines the founding egalitarian principles of Australia's federation.

(5) Calls on the Commonwealth to revert to a GST system that is fit-for-purpose, fair, and consistent with the intent of full horizontal fiscal equalisation.

This debate, this motion, is about fairness: fairness for Tasmanians, fairness between states and fairness for Australians no matter where they live. This is one of the fundamental founding principles defining not only the Australian federation, but the very core of our being as an Australian society: a fair go for all.

This motion recognises the GST was designed as a states' tax, distributed on the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation, so that every Australian can access a comparable standard of services regardless of geography. This was the promise the compact entered into, which worked fairly for all Australians. The Howard-Costello GST worked and worked well, ridding us of many oppressive taxes like the wholesale sales tax.

Tasmania has always advocated for full horizontal fiscal equalisation (HFE) as a fair and sustainable distribution system. This principle matters deeply to our fellow Tasmanians. GST revenue accounts for more than 40 per cent of Tasmania's general government sector revenue. It underpins the very delivery of essential services to Tasmanians: from hospitals and schools to police and infrastructure. However, the 2018 GST changes have fundamentally undermined that principle. Before 2018, the system operated at no cost to the Commonwealth and ensured a fair, zero-sum distribution based on need. Since then, that system has been replaced with one that advantages the strongest states.

In 2018 the Australian Government legislated changes to the GST distribution system. This has eroded the level of HFE and introduced a dual level of federation. Western Australia

has been the overwhelming beneficiary. Since the changes were introduced, Western Australia has recorded average budget surpluses of around $3.4 billion, while most other states have been in deficit: and huge, substantial deficits. Western Australia's net debt has actually declined during periods like COVID-19, while other states saw debt increase by over 1000 per cent on average. In a single year alone, the changes delivered an estimated $5.7 billion in additional GST revenue to Western Australia compared to what it would have received under a fair, full-equalisation model. That is not a marginal difference; this is a structural distortion.

At the same time, every other state has been forced to operate in a more constrained fiscal environment, managing rising debt, tighter budgets and growing service pressures. Tasmania's submission to the Productivity Commission is clear: this has created a two-tier federation. The 2018 changes have changed the flow of capital and labour relative to full HFE and have enabled Western Australia to deliver a higher standard of services, or lower taxes to its community, compared to all other states and territories. The temporary no worse off guarantee partially offsets the impacts of the current GST distribution arrangements for states other than Western Australia. To date, we in Tasmania have received $321 million in no worse off guarantee payments. In terms of service delivery, this level of funding equates to around 10,000 hospital admissions annually, indicating the scale of service delivery reduction that would be required under the 2018 reforms, should the no worse off guarantee be allowed to expire.

The 2025-26 Revised Estimates Report estimates that Tasmania will receive no worse off guarantee payments of $149.9 million in 2025-26. Without that guarantee, those are the kinds of services that would be at risk, and it would indicate the sort of money that we would lose but that guarantee came at an enormous cost. It has already cost the Commonwealth $14.6 billion and is projected to reach around $43 billion by 2029-30, contributing to a total cost of approximately $57 billion when combined with other measures. That is $57 billion that was never meant to be spent under the original GST framework.

If the no worse off guarantee ends, as it is currently planned to cease in 2029-30, it will see every state except Western Australia face a sharp deterioration in their fiscal position. That means fewer services, delayed infrastructure and harder choices for governments.

Tasmania's submission to the Productivity Commission makes another key point: there was never any evidence that the original system of full horizontal fiscal equalisation was actually broken. Our original Australian GST compact had worked as intended. It ensured that when a state's revenue capacity increased, such as through mining royalties, its GST share adjusted accordingly. Instead, the 2018 changes introduced an arbitrary mechanism like the GST floor that guarantee revenue regardless of need. The result is a system that not only undermines fairness but also distorts economic behaviour, shifting capital and population toward already strong states. That is not the basis of a stronger federation. It, in fact, is the basis for a divided federation, a two-tier federation, a two-speed federation, and that is not acceptable.

That is why Tasmania's position is crystal-clear. We support a return to full horizontal fiscal equalisation, a system that is fair, sustainable and ensures that all Australians, regardless of where they live, have access to the services they need: a system that protects Tasmanians. This motion reflects those principles.

It also reflects the submissions of the state government, the state opposition, for which I thank them, the Leader of the Greens, for which I thank her, and a whole host of organisations, including the Circular Head Council, the Huon Valley Council, the Greater Hobart Strategic Partnership of the Clarence City Council, Hobart City Council, Kingborough Council and Glenorchy City Council. Rob Fairs MP has put in a submission, and I thank him for that. Anglicare and other community organisations have as well.

This is one of those occasions where, irrespective of political colour, we need to speak as one voice as Tasmanians. We've done it before, on occasion, very successfully. I encourage all honourable members to support this so that we can make an even stronger case to the Productivity Commission and the federal government, noting that it was a federal Liberal government that introduced the changes and, as I understand it, a federal Labor government, or through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) at the time, that allowed the system to continue, I think, for another three years. What I'm trying to say is, I don't care who introduced the change or has kept it going for a short while. This is a matter of fundamental principle. That is why I have sought to the very best of my ability to draft the motion in an absolutely non-political way.

I have had the opportunity of socialising the motion with everybody in this Chamber. I am delighted to say that there was no objection to the motion. I commend the motion to the House. The only fair outcome is to return to full horizontal fiscal equalisation as the only arrangement to support equitable outcomes, a sustainable federation and a fair go for our state of Tasmania.

[12.40 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the government for bringing this important motion on. We will be supporting the motion, of course. We often talk about things being the most important thing, but there couldn't be anything much more important for Tasmania's future than the Productivity Commission and, therefore, the Australian government and Australian parliament getting this right. The risks to them getting this wrong are unfathomable, they are so significant.

I appreciated the Treasurer and, I assume, the work of Treasury in the numbers he read out around the costs to Tasmania. So far, $321 million that's - well, not the cost to Tasmania yet. That's money that's been dipped back into through the top-up payments coming through the Australian Government as a result of the deal. The cost to the Australian Government of $14.6 billion - and that's not just the Australian government, that's us as well, in overseeing this putrid deal, a deal that is immoral in my view, that sees the very foundations of Australian federation undermined by the Australian Productivity Commission's - well, not the Australian Productivity Commission's determination. It's a determination of representatives nationally.

It was led by the Australian federal Coalition government, with Malcolm Turnbull as prime minister and Scott Morrison as treasurer. I vividly remember that debate because I was here as a staffer working for Rebecca White at the time and assisting with our response to that. The issues that took hold were national political issues that we were dragged into, which have been to our detriment for the past almost 10 years.

There was a deal struck whereby Western Australia, which claimed it was being poorly treated, was given an enormous amount of additional cash. That has led to one particular surplus, I noted when I was reading their budget papers, of over $6 billion in a single year. In

that year, the WA government had so much money that they actually said to their government businesses, 'Don't give us any dividends this year because our surplus is so big.' If you want to see the evidence of how completely twisted this deal is, just have a look at the way they've been handled. What's happening is actually immoral because if you live in Western Australia, you are, through the functions of our federalism and horizontal fiscal equalisation mark 2, which is a much lesser version of full horizontal equalisation, you are likely, in the future, to have better access to health services and education, despite us all being Australians.

If we are all Australians, we should be equalising to the top measure, not to the second top measure, as is currently the case. The process of that time, led by then treasurer Scott Morrison and prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, which was all about getting votes in WA, led the Productivity Commission to undertaking a whole bunch of work. After they came back with its various models, which were all submitted to by governments, including the Tasmanian government, as being poor, they came back with a new hybrid model and adopted that one without going through proper consultation. So, the process was poor.

The outcome was even worse. It is a fact that it was a federal Coalition government that led this but it is also a fact that Labor federally supported this.

Mr Abetz - I think it was a Chris Bowen idea originally.

Mr WINTER - Well, I think that's regrettable because the way our system of government and our Australian parliament was set up, particularly in the Senate, is that senators are supposed to be representing their states. In this case, they didn't. It should also be mentioned, and correct me if I'm wrong, Treasurer, that you were a senator at the time -

Mr Abetz - I was.

Mr WINTER - who was there when the vote went through.

Mr Abetz - On the promise that no money would need to be made up.

Mr WINTER - On that interjection, 'on the promise that no money would need to be made up', I will go to this as well. I understand what the Treasurer is trying to do here today and I support it; we will support the motion but this does require a history lesson because this is so important.

During that period of time, there were very strong submissions put by the Tasmanian government and by the opposition at the time to the Productivity Commission to say how poor this was, but there was a certain point in time where the politics took hold and there were reports publicly at the time that there was a conversation - basically a screaming match - between Scott Morrison and Peter Gutwein, where Peter Gutwein was called a mendicant, which he later denied. Then the deal came through anyway, and on 5 July 2018, the then treasurer of Tasmania, Peter Gutwein, issued this statement:

> Labor turned its back on an extra $112 million. Labor needs to explain why they are opposed to even looking at a proposal that on face value will deliver an extra $112 million for Tasmania and then increased revenue in perpetuity. We owe it to every Tasmanian to closely examine this proposal as an extra

> $112 million would deliver more nurses, more teachers and more frontline services.
>
> We have worked with our Federal colleagues, and today's result shows you get a better outcome when you pick up the telephone, rather than the megaphone.
>
> Even Federal Labor have not ruled out supporting the proposal, saying that a reasonable alternative Government should look at it. However by opposing it without even considering it, Rebecca White is prepared to sacrifice an extra $112 million that could be spent on essential services. Ms White has clearly given up on developing a plan for Tasmania and is now nothing more than a leader of a doomsday cult.

Rebecca White is not here to defend herself but I'll do it now: she was right at every step of the way on this. This parliament and this government should have opposed this deal at every single step of the way, but they didn't. We even had the attempt, I believe it was last year, by former treasurer Mr Ferguson, the member for Bass, saying that they had opposed it the whole way. They did not. It's in the media releases at the time that this government supported the deal. They were tricked. They were told that this wouldn't have a negative impact on Tasmania. It did, and everyone could see it. Rebecca White raised these issues.

Saul Eslake produced some outstanding work, and I want to paraphrase him because I don't think I can correctly quote him - he's got a wonderful way with words - but he said this is the worst deal since Federation, or perhaps the worst since the -

Mr Bayley - I've got it here: 'the 2018 GST distribution reforms are the worst public policy decision of the 21st century'.

Mr WINTER - Thank you, Mr Bayley - the worst public policy decision. That's what it was and it was available for anyone with eyes and ears to see, and yet our Tasmanian Liberal government backed it in. It was a shameful exercise in political expediency for their masters in Canberra to get this through. We are where we are because the Tasmanian Liberal government backed it in. A shameful exercise. It hasn't cost Tasmania yet, but if you read the long-term fiscal outlook from Treasury it models what happens if the no worse off guarantee isn't extended.

I want to thank the Treasurer for writing to me to ask me to put in a submission. I have to say I'd already been contacted by the Productivity Commission to produce a submission and meet with them. I heard from them yesterday inviting me to sit down as part of a formal hearing process and I'll certainly be taking that up on behalf of the Labor opposition to outline our really serious concerns about the future of this model of federation, if we can't actually get the funding that is fair and reasonably deserved by Tasmanians.

Our submission outlines Tasmania's fiscal deterioration since this deal was struck. Tasmania's fiscal budget position underscores the importance of this review. Our state is highly dependent on GST revenue, which accounts for 40 per cent of general government sector revenue in the 2025-26 Budget. Tasmania's structural characteristics, a small population, ageing demographics and significant regional dispersion, makes strong fiscal equalisation essential to funding the core services Tasmanians rely on. Since the 2018 changes, Tasmania's

fiscal position has deteriorated sharply. Record cash fiscal underlying and operating deficits have pushed the state to a record net debt level, forecast to double over next four years. Whilst the no worse off guarantee has shielded Tasmania from the impacts of the 2018 methodology changes, the state's worsening financial trajectory makes a reduction in Commonwealth support even more untenable.

Economist Saul Eslake has warned that Tasmania is on track to have the weakest finances of any Australian state. Both Moody's and Standard & Poor's have downgraded Tasmania's credit rating and the government is now in breach of 10 of its 11 fiscal strategy benchmarks. Tasmania is bracing for significant tax increases, service cuts, or both. In the 2026-27 Budget any reduction in GST support would have serious consequences for essential service delivery.

The 2018 reforms were deeply concerning to Tasmanians and the Tasmanian Liberal government's initial response and its early submissions opposed the changes. However, after the release of the final model, which was not properly scrutinised through the Productivity Commission process, the government reversed its position and claimed the reforms would leave Tasmania $112 million better off over four years and in perpetuity. This has not occurred. Tasmania has been materially disadvantaged by the arrangements that funnel billions of dollars to Western Australia while constraining the Australian government's capacity to invest in other states. I asked the commission to disregard any suggestion that the 2018 reforms were ever in Tasmania's interests. They have not been, by any measure.

I want to talk about this a little more. The cost of this to Australia that's been very helpful and I thank him for it, put by the Treasurer, of $14.6 billion is actually money that could be invested in any state or territory. It's money that has been effectively ripped out of the rest of the country and given to Western Australia, a state that is now rolling in massive cash surpluses to the extent where they don't even need the dividends from their government businesses.

The concern I've got here is the capacity for the Australian Government to support Tasmania into the future if we are continuing down this road. Our submission makes the argument that there was no problem in the first place, and I was pleased to hear the Treasurer say it. There was no problem that needed to be fixed. I said in our response that your discussion paper asks if there are any better alternative arrangements. My response is yes, the model abandoned in 2018 should be reinstated as the gold standard approach to horizontal fiscal equalisation. Each jurisdiction's fiscal capacity should be equalised to that of the strongest state, ensuring that every Australian can access comparable services regardless of where they live.

Isn't the whole point of this country that we're all treated equally and we've all got access to the services we need? You don't need to live in Western Australia to get a first-class health system, but that's what this reform delivers. There is no doubt that as this continues further over time, you are going to be able to be guaranteed a better healthcare system in Western Australia because of the actions of Canberra, because of the actions of that coalition government and because of the actions and complicity of this Tasmanian Liberal government.

Tasmanian Labor supports the GST distribution system that maintains strong HFE principles, ensures fiscal sustainability and protects against volatility. The current model does not. Any reform must enhance the capacity of all states and territories to deliver essential services. The 2018 changes have created systemic risk and the previous model should be restored. In the absence of meaningful reform to reinstate full HFE, the No Worse Off Guarantee must be extended indefinitely. The best outcome here is that we go back to full

horizontal equalisation. That is a must. We must deliver that back for the states to re-engage with the fairness that Australia has been built on.

Failing that, the Australian federal government is going to need to extend the no worse off guarantee in perpetuity. It's already cost nearly $15 billion and will cost hundreds of billions of dollars, potentially more, the longer this goes on. It is completely unsustainable the way things are, which I assume is why this Productivity Commission review has been set up.

It is totally inadequate. What we are currently seeing is not delivering the services we need, and we've seen other states and territories, by the way, outlining their concern. South Australia has lodged its submission to the Productivity Commission review into the GST, calling for the abandonment of the extra $6 billion a year of payments made to Western Australia under the controversial existing methodology.

This is from a report in *The Australian* of 25 February by Paul Garvey. I'll read some of it. It says:

> South Australia and Tasmania are heaping pressure on the Productivity Commission to recommend scrapping the current carve-up of the GST, ahead of a lobbying blitz from Western Australia.

It goes on to say:

> The Productivity Commission is investigating whether to maintain the current system … which guarantees WA at least 70 per cent of its per-capita share of GST revenues.

It says:

> SA's submission said it was clear that the 2018 reforms had not delivered on their aims of improving stability, reducing volatility and delivering a 'fair go' for the states and territories, saying WA was better off under the current system.
>
> The state noted that WA had reaped an extra $17bn in GST revenue over the first four years of the current methodology, and that the remaining states would have been $16bn worse off were it not for the commonwealth's 'no worse off guarantee' that is scheduled to expire at the end of the decade.

It forecasts revenue losses for South Australia and said it was equivalent to 3500 nurses for the community. On behalf of Tasmania, we had the Tasmanian independent federal MP Andrew Wilkie and Jacqui Lambie both calling on the current model to be scrapped, with Mr Wilkie describing the 2018 changes as grossly unfair and financially unsustainable.

It quotes from our submission, but nothing from the government, because I don't know where they were on this, but I tell you, they have to be front and centre on this. There was nothing here in terms of the advocacy that was seen from states like South Australia; nothing here but following the lead of Tasmanian Labor, even the Jacqui Lambie Network and Andrew Wilkie who are on the front foot with this and have been banging down the door.

This is really important that we get it right and we've got to make sure that we are on the same page, which is why I support the Treasurer bringing this today. Yes, we do need to be on a unity ticket on this, but we do need to understand the past history of it. The past history is that this deal was dodgy, it was murky and it was to the detriment of Tasmania and will be for decades to come, and yet this government backed it in: a shameful sellout to Scott Morrison, of all people, and to Malcolm Turnbull.

This particular process is critical. We will be making not only the formal submissions and going through that process, but also making it very clear to our federal colleagues that this needs to change. It needs to change for Tasmania's future, for the interests of the state because if this does not get changed, Tasmanians will live in a state that is demonstrably worse off. This will have a bigger impact than any of the worst things that we can think of in this state in terms of scare tactics around tax increases or even cuts in services. The level of funding that would be lost would be the equivalent of hundreds, if not thousands of public sector workers, and it was outlined in the South Australian submission there with 3500 nurses. It won't be that high here, but it will be very significant, probably in the hundreds of public sector workers equivalent if we don't get this right, and if the federal government doesn't do the right thing and sort this out.

We support the motion, because we haven't changed position on this for the entire period of this being an issue. Since 2018, we have maintained the same position, the same opposition to this dirty deal. We will continue to fight the fight, whether that's with our submissions through the Productivity Commission process, but also in Canberra. The Australian Government needs to ensure that the very fundamentals, the fabric of Australian democracy is maintained so that Tasmanians can get the services that they need. This is now a matter where the parliament does need to unite. The parliament needs to ensure that we are looking after the best interests of the country.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

MOTION

Horizontal Fiscal Equalisation

Resumed from above.

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to talk on this motion moved by the Treasurer. The Greens welcome it and will support it. I acknowledge the Treasurer's socialisation of this motion in the lead-up to its tabling so that it wouldn't need amending and everyone was happy. I thank him for that. It's good to get behind this motion because it is of such critical impact to Tasmania.

I also acknowledge the Treasurer's long and consistent advocacy around this issue, going all the way back to when he was a member of the government that ultimately changed it. I don't say that to shame you, Treasurer. I say that to genuinely acknowledge that you've been on this bandwagon for a long time. That's welcome because horizontal fiscal equalisation is a central pillar of our federation and of our system. It's an important mechanism to deliver fairness across the states and the federation. It delivers an even financial playing field and makes sure that all Australians get equal access to essential services. It's designed to make sure that no state has to

deliver an inequitable tax system in order to deliver the services its residents deserve. No-one wants to see that situation, and I believe we are all aware of how significant this is.

It is fair to say that the only reason this did get legs and was passed all those years ago was because of the no worse off guarantee. They kicked the problems down the road such that people were happy to ignore them in the short term, in order to deliver a political fix from a West Australian perspective, ignoring the fact that one day those chickens would come home to roost. That's where we're at now, where we have a significant budget crisis and the proposition of the no worse off guarantee ending at the end of our forward Estimates. It's starting to come into our direct field of view.

I helped the shadow treasurer out with the title of Saul Eslake's paper because I had it on hand to draw from. This is his January 2026 submission to the Productivity Commission review of the distribution of the tax. The title of the paper is *The 2018 GST Distribution 'Reforms': the worst public policy decision of the 21st century thus far*. That is a real indictment of this situation, of the decisions made almost a decade ago. Mr Eslake wrote:

> One of the things that has made Australia a fairer, and thus 'better', country than others with federal systems of government is that the quality of schooling which children get, the quality of health care which families get, or the quality of policing and environmental protection which communities get doesn't depend on the state or territory which people happen to live in nearly as much as it does in other federations (in particular, the United States).

We recognise that this has been a central pillar of the way we operate. Mr Eslake also makes it clear in his submission about some of the costs of the 2018 GST changes:

> By 2030-2031, the cost to the federal budget of the 2018 changes will almost certainly have exceeded $50 billion and will likely be approaching $60 billion. When compared with the original estimate of the cost to the federal budget when these changes were legislated, of $9 billion over eight years, this represents the biggest 'blow-out' in the cost of any single federal policy decision ever, with the possible exception of the NDIS.

This is Saul Eslake's take on this. It was delivered because of the relentless campaign from Western Australia and presumably the West Australians sitting in the federal parliament, as well as West Australians in their own parliament. They have been consistently arguing that they are being denied the kind of returns they deserve, largely because of the mineral riches in their state.

In his submission, Mr Eslake says:

> There is absolutely no evidence to support Western Australia's repeated assertions … that the pre-2018 system of horizontal fiscal equalisation provided 'disincentives' for states and territories to pursue productivity and growth-enhancing reform …

I'll come back to that later on because I've had a look at a couple of the other submissions to the Productivity Commission and I want to discuss the Institute of Public Affairs submission because it's incredibly destructive.

This is a real issue and we do need to confront it. It is welcome that this motion in this Chamber and this parliament provides an opportunity to unanimously call on the federal government to restore horizontal fiscal equalisation in the interests of making sure that our system is restored to fairness.

I've acknowledged the campaign by Western Australia. I will also point to the destructive nature of some of the politics here; the politics of regional West Australian seats in a federal election context. It was a real shame that ultimately got traction. I also point out the tricky and deceptive nature with which this was prosecuted by the federal government. Scott Morrison was the treasurer at the time. On 5 July 2018, he puts out a media release, saying:

> The Turnbull government will fix problems in the system used to share the revenue from GST, leaving all states and territories better off. This will be the first time real changes have been made to fix problems in how the GST is shared since the GST was introduced almost 20 years ago. The Turnbull government's changes will reinforce and protect the fair go system used to distribute GST called the horizontal fiscal equalisation. The proposal will involve transitioning to a new horizontal fiscal equalisation system over eight years, from 2019-20, in a way that is fair, reasonable and sustainable. That will ensure all states or territories are left financially better off.

I never did really believe much of what Scott Morrison said, but that is one of the most shameful exercises in spin, spinning a really bad national financial decision in the positive. As we've heard, there is no evidence -

Mr Winter - How did it actually get through, Vica? How did this happen?

Mr BAYLEY - How did?

Mr Winter - How did this happen? He's the dumbest -

The SPEAKER - Through the Chair, please.

Mr Winter - I'm helping you.

Mr BAYLEY - I've already talked to the fact that this comes down, ultimately, to marginal seats in Western Australia in a federal election context. It was a key battleground going back six or seven years ago. It is clear that the relentless campaigning by Western Australia and the prospect of those seats was something that ultimately pushed prime minister Turnbull and treasurer Morrison into being deceptive about this and spinning it as something positive when, as has been proved since, it's nothing but a negative. It has cost the federal budget billions and billions of dollars, and there's now the prospect, in four years' time, of having the GST rug pulled out from under it.

I thank the opposition treasury spokesperson for the history lesson when it comes to the Tasmanian position around this because I have to admit, not being in this place at the time and

perhaps not watching as closely as I should have, I didn't realise that the Liberal government's position on this changed. It changed from a consistent resistance to utter acquiescence, based on the belief that the no worse off guarantee, the promise of money to come, would ultimately be enough to get our support and leave us in a good situation. They were tricked. It was this kind of tricky language from people like the treasurer who talked about horizontal fiscal equalisation as a problem -

Mr Abetz - Federal treasurer.

Mr BAYLEY - Sorry?

Mr Abetz - Federal treasurer.

Mr BAYLEY - Federal treasurer. Yes, indeed, Treasurer. The federal treasurer, your colleague, spinning this as a problem -

Mr Abetz - The federal Treasurer.

Mr Willie - And all the other ministries he appointed himself to.

Mr BAYLEY - The federal Treasurer, your colleague - spinning this as a problem to fix as opposed to a fundamental principle of our federation and our nation, a fundamental principle that makes sure we all have equality.

Horizontal fiscal equalisations ensures that the smaller states and those with a smaller tax base can afford similar public services, so similar health, education and infrastructure outcomes. Without it, the quality of services and the standard of living would vary significantly across Australia. I think we can all agree that's not an outcome we want to see.

Balancing structural disadvantages, horizontal fiscal equalisation compensates for factors beyond any one state's control, such as a smaller population, higher costs of service delivery in remote areas, or a lower ability to generate mineral and land tax revenue. It supports the federal structure because it reduces fiscal disparities. Horizontal fiscal equalisation allows states to retain autonomy in their decision-making rather than being completely beholden to population-based funding, which would favour the larger states. That is why it is absolutely in Tasmania's interests, as the smallest state of all the jurisdictions only behind the Northern Territory in terms of population, to make sure that this is restored because it's critically important.

When it comes to the motion, just to touch base on it quickly, we've addressed paragraph (1). I want to speak quickly to paragraph (2) and acknowledge that we obviously agree that GST represents 40 per cent of Tasmania's general government revenue and is critical for funding essential services including hospitals, schools and infrastructure. That is absolutely true. That's why we're willing to support this. However, I want to make the point that that is not an excuse to make the difficult and tough decisions when it comes to the Tasmanian budget. We've had debates in this place before and we'll continue to push for increased revenue raising to assist the budget situation. We want to put on the record really clearly now that restoring horizontal fiscal equalisation, making sure we get our fair share of the GST bucket, is not an excuse for not making the tough and right decisions in Tasmania.

The 2018 changes to the GST distribution system departed from full horizontal fiscal equalisation. That is a statement of absolute fact and has resulted in resource-rich Western Australia being given a permanently inflated share of GST, regardless of its fiscal capacity to fund it from its own revenue base.

I want now to turn to the submission from the Institute of Public Affairs, or IPA, which I noticed when I was looking for submissions to the Productivity Commission's 2026 inquiry, and highlight that this is an incredibly destructive position for them to be taking. I'll read it into the *Hansard* because it is so extreme and hostile to states such as Tasmania. This is what they write:

Mr Winter - These are your people, Eric.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BAYLEY - That's right. In some ways I guess this is partly why I wanted to put this on the record, because this is often the organisation that the Liberals and the right of Australian politics point towards in terms of work that is done, yet it's so destructive from a Tasmanian perspective. They write:

> The only fair and sustainable solution to the GST distribution system is to abolish equalisation.
>
> The ongoing debate about whether the 2018 changes to GST distribution were 'fair' or not to Western Australia is irrelevant and unhelpful. The foundations of the current system, based on horizontal fiscal equalisation principles, are fiscally unsustainable, throttle economic growth, and increase fiscal uncertainty.
>
> The Institute of Public Affairs recommends that government should not look towards minor reform, but should abandoned horizontal fiscal equalisation entirely.

Mr Winter - Shame. What a bunch of tools.

Mr BAYLEY - That is utterly shameful, I agree with you, honourable shadow treasurer, because that would be completely destructive to Tasmania's position.

Mr Winter - They live in this little world of textbook economics.

The SPEAKER - Order. You've already made your contribution, honourable member for Franklin.

Mr Winter - Well, honourable Speaker, they are very silly.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, I'm happy to take the interjection because I agree with it. It's absolutely unhelpful and unnecessary for that position to be put on the table.

I want to make a point in relation to paragraph (3) in the motion that this has created a two-tier federation where some states receive GST well above their assessed need while

others receive less, undermining the fairness and integrity of the system. I completely agree with that. It does create a two-tier system, but I also want to put on the record that we have to acknowledge that we have a two-tier economy that sits underneath that system as well. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is getting ever wider, to put it colloquially, and we very much live in a two-tier system.

While we may live in a two-tier federation under this model, and we agree with this position in the motion, we have a two-tier economy as well that leaves many people behind. That's why we're consistently advocating for community service organisations and housing funding to build the public houses that people need. That's why we need to see this government prioritising those kinds of initiatives over and above others that just generate wealth or inequitably distribute wealth to those who don't really need it at the end of the day.

> ... the Commonwealth's temporary 'no worse off guarantee' has masked the true impact of these changes at a significant cost to the federal budget, diverting billions of dollars from other national priorities, further entrenching fiscal imbalance across the federation.

That's absolutely true.

I wanted to also look to an article published last week by Shane Wright in the *Financial Review*, which made it really clear that not only was there a huge blowout in the estimates of cost to the Australian budget, but that it's hurting the national economy. I will read this into *Hansard*:

> The biggest winners and losers in the $103 billion GST carve-up
>
> In the 2019-20 Budget, his last as finance minister, Finance minister Cormann and then Treasurer Josh Frydenberg forecast the cost of the deal by mid 2023 would be $2.3 billion. Instead, it was almost $12 billion, as the government underestimated how the deal would work.

As we heard from Saul Eslake, Shane Wright goes on to say.

> Since then, the cost has blown out even further. It's now on track to cost the federal taxpayers at least $60 billion. In percentage terms, the deal has grown faster than the NDIS.

It is a really significant problem and it does need to be addressed. It weakens national cohesion, it entrenches structural fiscal imbalance between the states and it undermines the principles of our Federation.

We have made our own submission to the Productivity Commission's review of the GST distribution. Dr Woodruff submitted that a few days ago. We have acknowledged the principles of fairness and equity that are embedded in this system and made it really clear that while the no worse off payments provide mitigation for the degradation of horizontal fiscal equalisation, their continuation is not guaranteed beyond 2030. The uncertainty of these payments going forward presents substantial budgetary planning challenges.

We've already got significant budgetary planning challenges. We've seen the fiscal sustainability report, we saw the pre-election financial outlook back in the middle of last year and we know that the Treasurer has an incredibly large job on his hands, but to have such a critical issue hanging over our heads at the end of the forward Estimates is something that simply cannot be sustained.

We go on to conclude in our submission to the Productivity Commission that we don't deny that the current state of Tasmania's finances are due to a myriad of factors. Regardless, Commonwealth grants are such a critical component of Tasmania's budget that the future of horizontal fiscal equalisation in Australia will play a critical role in influencing the overall sustainability of our budget going forward. We argue for a return to the pre-2018 GST horizontal fiscal equalisation arrangement. We're clearly on the record in terms of wanting to make this happen. It's the same kind of recommendations that Saul Eslake is making where he concludes that the 2018 changes to the arrangements governing the distribution of revenue from the GST among the states and territories are not working efficiently, effectively, and as intended. He recommends that the nexus between revenue from the GST and general revenue assistance to the states and territories should be broken, and he says that we should consider whether it is possible to achieve the broad, long-standing objective of horizontal fiscal equalisation through a more readily-comprehensible, transparent and predictable system than the one that has evolved over the past 90 years, using a limited number of widely-understood and readily-accessible economic, demographic, social and fiscal indicators. If so, he wants the Productivity Commission to look into that.

As it stands at the moment, horizontal fiscal equalisation is the measure that served us well for 20-odd years until it was tinkered with. It's clearly in Tasmania's interest. It's clearly a huge cliff over which we may collapse in four or five years' time unless things are rectified, and so it's really welcome that this Chamber is going to be on a unity ticket with the Treasurer in going to Canberra and asking for the federal Labor government, the Albanese government, to take another look at this and to make sure that this is restored so that fairness, so that equity, so that the kind of services that are expected of Australians and Tasmanians can be delivered into the long term. We support this motion. We welcome it being brought on today, and we absolutely implore the Albanese government to look at this and restore horizontal fiscal equalisation.

[2.52 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer and the Deputy Leader of the Greens for their contributions. Can I also thank all the crossbenchers who got back in touch with me, indicating their support for the wording of the motion, albeit they have not made a contribution in the debate, noting that there are other matters for this parliament to deal with.

The issues of fairness, equity and justice underpin this motion, and it's great to see the unanimity around the chamber in relation to those principles on horizontal fiscal equalisation. Can I note that certain people cannot help, when they hand over a bouquet, that there have to be a few prickles on the rose. The prickly bouquets, from especially Mr Winter and slightly from Mr Bayley, are acknowledged but I will resist the temptation of responding -

The SPEAKER - Please do.

Mr ABETZ - lest I undo the unanimity that has broken out around the chamber. In relation to the IPA, I suppose what it shows is that no organisation is correct all the time, and I do recall the changes that were being made in 2018 and the promises and, in inverted commas, 'expert advice' from certain quarters, saying that this won't be a drain on the Commonwealth budget - I see Mrs Archer in the House as well - and we were told certain things which clearly have not come to pass. That is why we as a government - and I would say this to all MPs, a bit of gratuitous advice - always listen to expert advice and outside sources, but always make sure you put your own lens and commonsense across it, ask the questions, interrogate it, and then make your own personal decision in relation to the advice that is being offered.

All that said, can I thank everybody in the Chamber who informally and formally through the debate process has supported this, which is just so fundamental to the concept of team Tasmania. This is about fairness, justice and equity, and I thank the House and look forward to its unanimous passing.

Members - Hear, hear.

Motion agreed to.

CHARITIES AND ASSOCIATIONS LAW (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 65)

Second Reading

[2.55 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read the second time.

This bill will amend the *Collection for Charities Act 2001* and the *Associations Incorporation Act 1964*. The bill will align Tasmania with national registration and harmonisation reforms, reducing the regulatory burden on charities, particularly those operating and reporting across jurisdictions, and will also strengthen enforcement powers to enhance public confidence in the charitable fundraising sector. The bill is the same as the bill that was before this place last year, and I would like to thank the former ministers holding the consumer affairs portfolio for all their work on progressing this important reform.

When Tasmanians donate generously to causes important to them, they need confidence that their donations are being used for its intended purpose and their generosity is not misplaced. The nature of charities and fundraising in Australia has undergone significant transformation in recent times. Charities have expanded in size, complexity and operation and are conducting activities across multiple jurisdictions. In addition, fundraising has been progressively integrated into online platforms, including third-party websites. This bill ensures that our legislation remains contemporary and in line with the changing nature of how charities operate.

Reducing red tape for charities will ultimately lead to a reduced cost for charities to operate administratively across jurisdictions, meaning a greater percentage of donations will

be used for the intended cause. All jurisdictions have agreed to take steps to streamline and harmonise the broad conduct requirements of charitable fundraising, and these steps will give charities and donors a clear understanding of appropriate conduct. Our government has been working with all jurisdictions and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to ensure our legislative framework is contemporary and fit for purpose.

I'd like to thank the various groups and individuals who contributed to the development of the bill through the consultation process that occurred during 2023. Various improvements were made to the bill in consideration of their feedback. I note that the bill was last introduced into parliament on 11 September 2024 and passed the House of Assembly on 26 November 2024. The bill was read for the first time in the Legislative Council on 27 November 2024 and later lapsed due to the calling of the 2025 Tasmanian state election. The bill I now table is in the same form that passed the House in November 2024.

I will now discuss the national fundraising principles that the bill will support. The 16 national fundraising principles will require charitable organisations to ensure that their employees, volunteers, contractors, and anyone else who they engage or arrange to raise funds on their behalf, adhere to the principles. The national fundraising principles will be implemented through a new mandatory code of practice to be made as regulations under the *Collection for Charities Act 2001*. These principles, in general terms, cover a range of areas. They require employees, volunteers and contractors of a charity to always explain the purpose of the charity they are fundraising for, in addition to how the funds will be used.

These individuals must be clearly and individually identifiable by members of the public. This means that individuals fundraising on behalf of an organisation must display identification that details their name, whether they are a volunteer, employee, contractor or acting in some other capacity on behalf of an organisation, and the organisation's name and contact details. Written records must be kept by organisations who fundraise. Clear principles guiding the behaviour of individuals soliciting donations are clearly defined. An organisation and its representative must acknowledge and comply with an individual's refusal to donate or advise that they wish to limit solicitation or do not wish to receive future solicitations.

As is the case under the act, there are limits on times at which soliciting can be undertaken. Door-to-door and telephone fundraising is prohibited before 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. on a weekend. It is also prohibited before 9.00 a.m. on a weekday. The latest time allowed for soliciting on a weekday is 6.00 p.m. for door to door or 8.00 p.m. by telephone.

Fundraising activities must not be carried out on a public holiday unless that public holiday is closely connected with the organisation charitable purpose. An example of this is the Anzac Day public holiday and fundraising activities being undertaken by an organisation such as Legacy.

Individuals who undertake fundraising activities must not mislead, deceive or use false or misleading information in soliciting for donations. An organisation or their representative may not place undue or unreasonable pressure on an individual or act unconscionably in any way in an effort to obtain a donation.

I recognise that Tasmanians willingly donate to various organisations who fundraise and it is essential that advantage is not taken of the trust, apparent need for care and support, an individual's capacity or decision-making ability, or an individual's vulnerability. Those who

undertake fundraising activities must be clear whether a donation is a one-off payment or if the donation is ongoing. In the event it is ongoing, a clear explanation must be provided on how to end the ongoing donation.

Importantly, commercial fundraisers who have been engaged to fundraise on behalf of an organisation must never accept a donation without clearly explaining to the potential donor that they are part of an organisation that receives profit from fundraising, as well as how they are paid.

The principles also placed requirements on the administration of charitable organisations who undertake fundraising in Tasmania. For instance, charitable organisations must undertake appropriate due diligence when engaging third parties to assist, support or deliver services on their behalf.

At all times, charitable organisations must take reasonable measures to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of fundraisers employed or directly engaged by them as well as members of the public when fundraising. They must also establish and maintain a complaints process that allows for proper investigation and redress of fundraising complaints that may be made by members of the public and encourage anyone with concerns about fundraising activity to contact the charity.

Charitable organisations are required to ensure that information collected under the *Privacy Act 1998* is collected, used and managed in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles where required. The National Fundraising Principles also require that charitable organisations must at all times ensure that remuneration to commercial fundraisers engaged to fundraise on their behalf is not excessive when compared to money or goods received for the charitable purpose of the fundraising.

Some of the National Fundraising Principles overlap with existing provisions of the *Collection for Charities Act 2001*. The bill reflects amendments to remove any inconsistencies or duplication between the requirements of the act, such as offences in relation to conduct that will now be prohibited under the code of practice. There are some areas of the *Collections for Charities Act 2001* that are not replicated in the National Fundraising Principles, so these are retained in the bill.

The act will continue to provide that an organisation must not permit any donation given for any charitable purpose to be used for any purpose other than the purpose it was obtained for, with the exception of reasonable expenses incurred in the administration of the organisation, or reasonable payments to agents, contractors, officers or employees of that organisation for expenses incurred in its administration.

As I've indicated, any charity or organisation or person soliciting donations in Tasmania for charitable purposes, including online, will be required to comply with the code of practice and penalties may apply for non-compliance. The bill provides for consultation on the code of practice before it is made. While the clear object of the bill is to ensure charities are to be subject to the national fundraising principles without unnecessary additional requirements, it is important the final regulations are available for consultation in the usual way with the sector.

Other harmonisation reform initiatives the bill makes include the cross-border recognition model for charitable fundraisers. The Council on Federal Financial Relations

endorsed a cross-border recognition model for charities developed by Consumer Affairs Australia and New Zealand officials. Under this model, registration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission automatically authorises a charity to fundraise in each participating jurisdiction.

State regulators retain the ability to apply additional conditions on ACNC-registered entities and can require them to comply with the local financial auditing requirements or obtain copies of financial information from the ACNC. To support and clarify the act in this regard, an amendment to 'donation' clarifies that the act's reference to donations includes fundraised money. A minor amendment to the definition of 'charitable purpose' clarifies that it applies to all benevolent philanthropic and patriotic purposes.

As the protection of animals and the environment have always been recognised under the act, those terms are included as examples of such purposes. The definition is considered consistent with the scope of the definition of 'charitable purposes' that applies to ACNC-registered charities.

ACNC-registered entities will be required to notify the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs or the ACNC of their intention to solicit in Tasmania. In practice, the administrative requirement on charities is reduced, as the ACNC can provide data to the commissioner on charities that solicit in Tasmania.

In terms of harmonising the report thresholds for all charities, in 2020 the Council on Federal Financial Relations agreed to harmonise reporting thresholds for ACNC-registered entities and to increase annual revenue reporting thresholds to reduce the regulatory burden on the sector.

To reduce the regulatory burden on incorporated associations generally, the auditing exemption threshold in section 24 of the *Associations Incorporation Act 1964* is increased from the current $250,000 to $500,000. For charities, this has the benefit of alignment with the ACNC reporting thresholds and amendments to that act also provide for the commissioner to set the form in which annual returns are provided.

Honourable Speaker, the bill clarifies there are important functions for the commissioner under the act, including informing the public about the operation of the act, facilitating training and education and any determined or prescribed function. The commissioner also has an improved compliance and enforcement role under the bill.

The *Collections for Charities Act 2001* does not currently allow for an authorised officer to issue infringement notices for breaches of that act. This has limited the commissioner in the past from taking meaningful compliance action for contraventions of the act. The proposed amendments will give effect to an infringement notice regime that will complement the investigative provisions that are available to the Director of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading under the *Consumer Affairs Act 1988* and the proposed code of practice.

The bill provides a clarified framework for the Director of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading to exercise powers to investigate potential offences and contraventions of the *Collection for Charities Act 2001* under the *Consumer Affairs Act 1988*. This includes a framework for Magistrates Court orders and, if necessary, Supreme Court injunctions similar to that under the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010*.

These amendments will enhance public confidence in the charitable fundraising sector and the commissioner and director will have appropriate powers to not only accept complaints but to investigate and issue infringement notices and take appropriate action in respect to contraventions and defences.

Our government is committed to providing a robust and contemporary framework in which charitable fundraising and solicitation can occur. In conclusion, the *Charities and Associations Law (Miscellaneous Amendment) Bill 2025* will provide confidence for Tasmanians who donate to charities operating in Tasmania, whilst also giving charities the ability to fundraise across jurisdictions without additional red tape and the regulatory burden currently associated with these practices. This bill further strengthens and enhances Tasmania's charities framework for the benefit of all Tasmanians.

I commend the bill to the House.

[3.10 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise, once again, to do a second reading speech for the Charities Associations Law (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2025. This will be the third second reading I've done for this one - I believe it lapsed a couple of times, not just the once - was it 2023 that it lapsed before the other election? I believe this bill has also started and stopped a number of times, which must be a bit of a nightmare for our staff here in the Tasmanian public service trying to sail this one through the parliament.

It's interesting that the minister talks about the government's commitment to this, given that this is the third time I've been here, and it's been brought on, we've run out of time, and then it's been brought on again some months later; this is my memory of this charities bill. So, to say that it's a priority I believe might be a bit of a stretch. I don't really think there's a hell of a lot to add, given that this is the third time I will be talking about this, but I will have a little bit of a go.

This journey, it sounds like, started way back in 2020, when the harmonisation was first brought up. We know in the modern world a lot of charities are collecting donations across the country, across different jurisdictions, so obviously there's a case for harmonisation of the laws that govern how those donations are solicited, and also the repercussions for people who are doing the wrong thing. The four priority areas to implement: the agreed cross-border recognition model for charitable fundraisers is obviously a good thing because, as I've said, organisations are collecting donations across the country in different forms.

The original legislation that is being amended, the *Collections for Charities Act 2001*, would not recognise the way that charities collect and solicit donations in the modern world, so of course there needs to be an update as well. There wasn't the ability to go on a website and click the button to donate way back in 2001 and if there was, it would've taken half an hour to load the page. I think, of course, this whole area of charitable fundraising needs to be updated, and across jurisdictions, so that charities in their best endeavours are not caught out because they've accidentally solicited a donation in a jurisdiction that has slightly different laws.

There needs to be cross-border recognition and harmonisation of laws. It's also good that the second priority, which is to recognise national fundraising principles, will be done through a mandatory code of practice prescribed through regulations. This is also very good because I believe, at times, there have been questions about the way that people have solicited

donations; that could be that people have misrepresented charities or that charities themselves have misrepresented what people are actually donating for.

There needs to be principles and we know that some charities since 2001 have grown significantly, and I would argue that in Tasmania there are some - how do we say it - industrial-grade charities that are collecting donations, like the Bob Brown Foundation, for example, has grown to be a charity that collects $5 million a year and employs 21 people, and they deserve scrutiny for their industrial donation solicitation model. I just want to put that one out there.

Also priority three, which is to harmonise the reporting thresholds for all charities, increasing the auditing threshold for small organisations that are incorporated to align with thresholds in the ACNC legislation, raising that from $250,000 to half a million to reduce the regulatory burden on those organisations. So, as time gets on, $250,000 of donations was quite a bit, and now half a million as the new threshold: I don't see that as a problem.

Priority four as well I believe is one that we need to keep in mind, which is strengthening the enforcement provisions of the *Charities Act 2013*. The amendments provided in this bill will complement the investigative provisions provided under the *Consumer Affairs Act 1988* and the proposed code of practice to give effect to the not-for-profit sectors (NFPs).

I think this is a good mix. It's updating the legislation, it's modernising the legislation, it's also giving the regulator more teeth and it's giving the government the ability to regulate a code of practice. These are good changes. I think that there are probably members in the upper House who were maybe considering some amendments to this bill; I will leave that for them. I know that there is some thought to amending it in the upper House, but we'd really like to see this one passed. I mean, this has dragged out. To be honest, I've been quite confused as to where this one has been at. I thought that we were actually in the middle of the debate, but that was maybe last time when it lapsed because it got chopped off and then brought back.

I thought that I wouldn't have to do a second reading, that there were second readings to go and then we'd be voting on the bill. Not this time. I am quite surprised when yet another minister gets up and does a second reading speech. For those people drafting their second reading speeches, well done. For the government finally bringing this one to the parliament, well done. Let's hope that this one passes. I think there are some good updates here. The strengthening of the regulation of charities is timely; the update of the legislation is timely.

Labor will be supporting this bill.

[3.17 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to talk to the Charities and Associations Law (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2025. I highlight that the Attorney-General misspoke when he moved that it be read the second time, because this is actually the sixth time that this bill's been read, as the member who just took his seat made the point.

It brings me great pleasure to make a contribution on a bill that, in many ways, for me is considered a kindred spirit, having undertaken a similar political journey. I was elected on a recount on 1 August 2023. Just over a month later, on 12 September, this bill, the 2023 version, was tabled. On 12 February the following year, an election was called. My seat was vacated as a result of the dissolution of the Assembly and the bill lapsed due to prorogation. On 14 May

that year I was sworn back in. A few months later, this bill, the 2024 version, was tabled again; but alas, history was doomed to repeat itself, and on 11 June 2025, again my seat was vacated as a result of the dissolution of the Assembly and the bill lapsed due to prorogation. Fortunately, I was again sworn in following the 2025 election and the 2025 amendment bill was then tabled again.

It's really welcome to see this, following this bill. Aside from a personal affinity with the journey of the bill, it adds to the case for fixed-term elections. The bill deals with matters agreed nationally in 2020. Repeated prorogations of parliament have left us behind the eight-ball with this reform over a decade, so it's very welcome that we're getting to deal with it today. It's probably the biggest victim when it comes to repeat elections, but I digress.

To speak to the bill again, I want to put on the record my and the Greens' support for charities and the incredibly important work that they do. So often charities are doing the work that the government would otherwise have to do or sometimes should be doing in their own right, so it's really, really welcome. They do important work, not only in terms of service delivery, but they do really important work in terms of volunteer engagement and giving volunteers some meaning, purpose and activities. The couple that I've been involved with over recent years, Meals on Wheels, which has been in the news recently in terms of the increased fuel costs and the push to make sure that community service organisations are properly funded to deal with the cost of living, the cost of business, the cost of serving. That's something we want the government to consider hard as they go into developing the budget.

Last night I spoke about Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia and the important work they do. I, myself, come from the charity sector. Before coming into this place, I worked for many years at the Wilderness Society, starting not in the campaign space, but on the streets and at doors, raising money and signing up members for the Wilderness Society as a wilderness defender. Charities often do the work the government should be doing.

I will pick up the member for Braddon who resumed his seat in terms of maybe a slight. I don't know whether it was a slight on the Bob Brown Foundation or a commendation of the Bob Brown Foundation. If charities have been successful and grown into large organisations with plenty of employees and fundraising, I would argue that's a measure of both the need that the public perceives is out there and the success of those organisations in doing the work the public wants them to do. I'd say, good on the Bob Brown Foundation in that context.

As well as recruiting and retaining volunteers, fundraising for a charity is a significant challenge. One of the most important things that needs to happen when it comes to charity fundraising is to make sure that there is public confidence. We need to have public confidence in the solicitation. We need to make sure it's fair and appropriate, that it's not offending people or cutting across other charities. In that context, this bill is welcome because it does add rigour.

One organisation's fundraising efforts can have a negative impact on another organisation, depending on how it is undertaken. I speak to that with first-hand experience not only as a wilderness defender for the Wilderness Society, but I also had the privilege of starting from scratch with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania in their application to the ACNC for charity status so that they could attract tax-deductible donations. It's a long, rigorous, diligent exercise. There was a lot of tick-tacking and doing and froing with the Australian Taxation Office but ultimately, that organisation was successful. The ACNC was really good to deal with and lent welcome support.

The initiatives embedded in this bill like the code of practice are welcome. We support this code. Compliance is important because compliance with the code of practice is in the interests of all. It is in the interests of everybody in the charity sector that there is a strong code, that the code is well understood and that it is well enforced. That can give people the confidence that when they donate their money, it's actually going to the organisation and for the purpose for which it has been solicited.

We also support the increase in the audit threshold from $250,000 to $500,000. The administrative burden on charities when it comes to compliance is quite great. A $500,000 charity is not a huge charity and it's still could be quite resource-intensive, but it's welcome that that threshold has been lifted.

We also support strengthening enforcement when it comes to fundraising because that public confidence is critically important. I put on the record again, though, that we have seen attacks on charities for many years, particularly environmental charities who are doing some of the pointy-end work of protecting our environment and standing up against big corporations and entrenched government policy. They are regularly under attack by lobby groups and politicians. Their charity status and tax deductibility has been wielded as a weapon at times. While we support strengthening enforcement, we need to make sure it is not misused in a punitive way to bring charities down, to deregister them or punish them in some other way for the good work they do.

I note that the ACNC's submission to this process raised the concern, as did other submissions, that the Tasmanian definition for a charitable purpose is not consistent with the national definition. Could the minister explain why that is the case?

This reform is welcome. This finally brings us in line with the commitments made in 2020 to have a nationally consistent approach. We hope it goes through this parliament safely because it will add rigour, confidence and integrity to the charity sector and the way they undertake their public fundraising activities.

[3.27 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Braddon, Dr Broad, for the support provided on behalf of the state opposition for this amendment bill. Likewise to the Deputy Leader of the Greens, Vica Bayley, for the positive and endorsing remarks on the Charities and Associations Law (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2025. It's appreciated by the government. I know there's crossbench interest in this bill as well. There has been over a number of years, even before Mr Di Falco was here. You've heard during the debate that it has been in this parliament, it's been supported previously and we're very pleased to be here today. We hope that this is the last step in this effort, subject to the upper House supporting the legislation, which we are very hopeful of. I won't pre-empt what they might be thinking in the other place.

The bill amends the *Collections for Charities Act 2001* and the *Associations Incorporation Act 1964*. The Tasmanian Law Reform Institute recently accepted my request, as Attorney-General, for them to review the *Associations Incorporation Act*. I thank the Law Reform Institute for undertaking that work. The act is somewhat dated and needs updating. I'm happy to share that with colleagues in this Chamber and members of the public. That will get a good review and recommendation from the Law Reform Institute.

This amendment bill will align Tasmania with national registration and harmonisation reforms to reduce regulatory burdens on charities. That's a good thing. We want to release the burdens of any extra effort, red tape, and streamline the process. It will release those burdens in terms of operating and reporting across jurisdictions. That will make it easier across the country, in various jurisdictions where those charities operate.

The bill will also strengthen the enforcement powers to enhance public confidence and we need public confidence in our charities. Occasionally, there is what you'd call a bad egg in the bucket, and it's very important that confidence is there in our charitable fundraising sector. The vast majority of charities do a fantastic job and we are pleased about that. We believe more confidence will be injected as a result of improvement to the law.

Tasmania will align with other jurisdictions in the implementation of the 16 high-level national fundraising principles that I referred to in my second reading speech, in addition to the other harmonisation measures and strengthening the functions of the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs when taking enforcement action against charities and incorporated associations.

The bill reflects the Charities and Associations Law (Miscellaneous Amendment) Bill 2024 that was tabled in the parliament on 11 September 2024 and lapsed due to the calling of the 2025 state election, and I acknowledge the Deputy Leader of the Greens' history lesson in terms of his own involvement with this bill over various parliaments and am very pleased that we're at the last leg to get this through to the keeper, as it were.

I would like to pay tribute to the various charities in Tasmania. Of course we can't name them all, but I've had the privilege and pleasure of working with many in various roles as a portfolio minister. In the housing space, for example, Shelter Tasmania do a wonderful job, as does Hobart City Mission and City Mission in Launceston. I was on the board for a number of years of Launceston City Mission and they do an incredible job, not just in the housing space but also caring for vulnerable Tasmanians more generally. There is also the Salvation Army, Red Cross and the like.

In my role as Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, it's been a real privilege working with so many wonderful charities. Ronald McDonald House comes to mind, as does St Vincent de Paul, Anglicare, CatholicCare, and the list goes on. Variety Tasmania does an incredible job supporting kids and families all around this great state.

Many in this place know of my special interest in our veteran community and interest in military history, and it's been a pleasure working with Legacy in the north and south of the state and what a wonderful charity as well. Being a northerner, I have a special interest in the Launceston Benevolent Society and through Diabetes Australia, the JDRF, or Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, providing research to help find a cure and provide support for Tasmanians and Australians with type 1 diabetes. The list does go on.

The beautiful thing about Tasmania, when it comes to charities, are the volunteers. We are so pleased and proud of Tasmania's volunteers and I want to pay them a tribute today. Where would we be without our volunteers as a community? Frankly, we'd be up the creek. We wouldn't be the sort of community that we are now. I want to pay them an absolute tribute, a 100 per cent thank you and acknowledgement.

I know I speak on behalf of all members of parliament here for the volunteers who work in all these charities around Tasmania. They're doing it tough at the moment because of the fuel prices being so high. It is hard for the volunteers and that's why we've acted so quickly and decisively to address the fuel security and the price of fuel.

I see Mr Morcombe in the in the Chamber today. It's wonderful to have the Morcombes here and thank you for your efforts for and on behalf of the Morcombe family. Of course, we remember Daniel and it's really nice to be able to acknowledge that here today. To the volunteers in Tasmania, we have the highest rate of volunteers in Australia and the rural and regional areas of Tasmania have the highest rates across this great state of Tasmania, so it is a great tribute to all of them.

In conclusion, I want to thank the crossbench again, Dr Shane Broad, Vica Bayley, and in the department Bruce Paterson, Isabella Comfort and Bruce Newey, who are in in the Chamber today providing helpful advice.

To wrap it up, the deputy leader of the Greens asked a question about Tasmania in terms of the national regime, and the advice I have in response to the honourable member's question is this that Australian jurisdictions take a range of approaches to the definition of 'charitable purposes'. There is no uniform approach. The definition does not form part of the 16 agreed National Fundraising Principles. The Tasmanian definition is derived from common law principles. The bill provides a reworked definition which clarifies that the overarching purposes are benevolent, philanthropic or patriotic.

Currently, 'charitable purposes' include a benevolent, philanthropic or patriotic purpose and any purpose for the protection of the environment or the welfare of animals. The existing definition could indicate that animal and environmental charities do not have to have a benevolent or philanthropic nature, whereas that is the underpinning requirement of all charities. The intention of the amendment is not to change the definitional scope but rather clarify the objective of the definition.

The Commonwealth definition is very detailed, setting out 12 charitable purposes. The approach in this bill is compatible with the definition and examples of charitable purpose in the *Commonwealth Charities Act*. The amended definition provides clarity for charities operating in Tasmania and covers the same objectives underlying the Commonwealth definition. The amended definition is fit for purpose and sufficiently broad to cover the charitable purposes defined in the Commonwealth act without the risk of limiting the application of the act.

I acknowledge the different drafting approaches in this regard and reiterate there is no conflict between the definitions. That's the advice we have. That's part of the debate now and in summing up,

I commend this bill to the House and encourage all colleagues to provide support for the passage of this bill.

Bill read the second time.

CHARITIES AND ASSOCIATIONS LAW (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 65)

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING) AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 61)

Second Reading

[3.37 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Amendment Bill 2025, known as Daniel's Law, will strengthen community safety by tightening reporting and monitoring requirements for known sex offenders and significantly improve the collection and sharing of information under the *Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2005* to better prevent sexual harm.

Sexual offending is a devastating crime that shatters the lives of victim/survivors with far-reaching impacts that ripple through families, communities and society. For children, the trauma is especially profound as they are uniquely vulnerable due to their dependence, limited understanding of consent and emotional immaturity. The damage extends beyond the survivor, eroding trust, safety and justice in our communities. These harms can span generations, impact loved ones, caregivers and professionals. Nobody understands this more than Bruce and Denise Morcombe, who lost their cherished son, Daniel, on 7 December 2003. We acknowledge Bruce here today and his and Denise's enormous courage.

Daniel was waiting for a bus on his way to buy Christmas presents when he was abducted and murdered by a repeat child sex offender. Bruce and Denise have become nationally recognised for their advocacy for child protection and started the Daniel Morcombe Foundation. Today, we recognise their loss and their resilience, and we join with them in their tireless fight to protect all children in our community.

Last year, Queensland passed its own legislation to establish a sex offender register disclosure scheme, also known as Daniel's Law in honour of Daniel Morcombe. In Tasmania we stand with Bruce, Denise and Queensland and other states in the future who act in Daniel's name to keep children safe.

By way of background, the *Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2005* was introduced to implement reportable offender registration in Tasmania as part of a framework of statutory registration schemes for sex offenders across Australia. The act requires the Commissioner of Police to establish and maintain a community protection offender reporting register and to appoint a registrar for this purpose. The register is a confidential record of

personal information reported by people who have been convicted of a reportable offence under the act who, at the time of sentencing, have been ordered by the court to be registered. The act requires a reportable offender to keep the registrar informed of their whereabouts and other personal details for the duration of the registration order made by the court.

Police also have powers to monitor reportable offenders in the community to ensure that the information they have provided is accurate and verified. Additionally, the act provides for the making of community protection orders which can restrict the activity and movements of certain high-risk offenders. In Tasmania, there are just over 400 reportable offenders recorded on the register. As part of the national approach, no matter where a person in Australia is recorded on a register, persons with court-imposed reporting obligations cannot avoid or circumvent their obligations by moving interstate. Instead, they become a corresponding reportable offender and are monitored in their new state of residence under corresponding legislation.

The act of conception in the early 2000s was offender-centric and designed to be highly restrictive around access to information recorded in the register. These restrictions prompted Judge Turnbull of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to make the submission in January 2023 to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings about the restrictive operation of the confidentiality and release-of-information provisions in the act.

Judge Turnbull submitted that the legislation should be reviewed to ensure that it is properly protecting children by allowing for information on reportable offenders to be readily accessible to child safety services to determine whether children coming to notice were at risk of sexual abuse. Although the act has been amended on two previous occasions, once to include the provision to make community protection orders under section 10A, and on another occasion to recognise corresponding orders, no significant review of the act has been undertaken since it commenced.

Issues and limitations with the practical operation of the act to effectively monitor offenders and prevent further offending, given technological and other advances, have become evident and additionally, our understanding of how sexual offences are committed has changed significantly. We now have a better understanding of the complexities of these matters and we need to have legislation that can be used effectively to prevent known sex offenders from committing these heinous crimes.

We need legislation that can be used to actively protect children and the community from the devastating consequences of sexual harm. As such, the bill seeks to achieve a shift away from offender-centric legislation to an act that upholds and strengthens protection for our children and our community. The long title of the act is being amended to reflect this reframing, and will add an express objective of protecting children, adults and the community and allowing information from the register to be disclosed for the safety and protection of children and the community. This will ensure that the court will consider the protection and safety of our community as a priority and will ensure that the act is consistent with contemporary national and international principles of child protection.

The bill will introduce a new disclosure scheme that will allow concerned parents, guardians and caregivers to apply for information on the register about people who have regular unsupervised contact with their children. This will give parents, guardians and other persons

who care for children access to information that may allow them to make informed decisions to protect their children. As a result of our most recent round of consultation on the legislation, we've extended the scope of the disclosure scheme to include an ability for a person under the age of 18 years of age to also apply for disclosure in certain circumstances to keep themselves safe. This recognises that we have young people who live independently or, sadly, in situations where parents, guardians or carers are not taking protective actions for the child.

The disclosure scheme will also allow the commissioner to release the personal details of a reportable offender to the community where the whereabouts or location of the offender is not known. This is to ensure that the safety of our children and our community is paramount. The disclosure scheme also prevents the release of information about a reportable offender if they are a child. The bill will balance the release of information under the disclosure scheme with offences that prevent the deliberate misuse or the publication, distribution or displaying of information from the register, except in limited circumstances.

We've listened to the concerns of stakeholders regarding the provisions and worked hard to ensure that the bill clearly reflects its intended purpose, which is to restrict the unnecessary release of information specifically disclosed under the act, and not to stop victim/survivors from telling their stories of their own lived experience. We've also included clarifying provisions, across multiple schedules and sections, that information must not be disclosed under the act if it identifies a victim or complainant. The feedback we received in relation to the victim-centred provisions demonstrates the value of public consultation in the legislative drafting process. We recognise that a disclosure scheme is just one element of a broader approach to keeping children safe. We understand that being told someone with access to your child is not on the register does not necessarily mean that your child is safe from harm.

The approach that Tasmania Police will take to information disclosures will be informed by this fact. Trauma-informed explanatory materials are being developed to assist our communities to understand the scheme, its purpose and its limitations. This includes information sheets for victim/survivors, parents, guardians and carers, youths, employers, support services and the reportable offenders themselves.

We know the implementation of the disclosure scheme requires a careful and considered approach in balancing community safety and achieving the policy intent. We have worked hard to ensure that our disclosure scheme is suitable and workable in the Tasmanian context. Our highly-trained reportable offender and child exploitation unit within Tasmania Police stands ready to implement the disclosure scheme and to utilise the new provisions within the bill to protect Tasmanian children from harm.

As it's currently drafted, the act restricts the exchange of information on the register for law enforcement and child protection purposes, including between other government agencies. The bill therefore includes changes that will make it easier for Tasmania Police to share information on the register for law enforcement and child safety purposes. Section 44 of the act will be amended to define relevant agencies for the purpose of information disclosure and will include the commissioners of the Australian Federal Police and the other police forces of another state and territory.

Relevant agencies will include other government authorities of the Commonwealth or of a state or territory, including government agencies within Tasmania, which are responsible for the protection of children or reportable offender management. These changes are necessary and

important for the strengthening of our capability to support national and local objectives to enhance child safety.

An order for the registration of an adult reportable offender is currently not mandatory at the time of sentencing; the bill will make changes to section 6 of the act by removing the court's discretionary power to make the order for registration and replacing it with a new requirement: to cause a person who has been sentenced for the reportable offence to be registered and to comply with the obligations under the act. This requirement will be balanced with certain exceptions that give the court discretionary powers when deciding to make a person a reportable offender.

Included in these exceptions is a requirement that the court give paramount consideration to the safety and protection of children and the community. Currently, the courts can consider a number of factors in making an order for the registration of an offender under section 10. These considerations will be expanded to allow the court to consider an offender's prior convictions and recent reporting orders, and any pattern in the commission of offences indicated in that history.

This is an important amendment that addresses contemporary understandings of how offenders perpetrate sexual and other serious offences, particularly in recognising patterns in behaviour that provide vital clues to the potential for future offending. Additionally, when considering if an order should be made for a person who is under 18 years of age at the time of committing a reportable offence, the court must take into account the principles of section 5 of the *Youth Justice Act 1997*.

Currently, the act does not recognise the difference between adult offenders and offenders who are under the age of 18 years at the time the offences were committed. In recognising the need to take a therapeutic approach for young offenders, the bill will provide a clear delineation between young and adult offenders in determining if an order requiring the registration of an offender should be made.

Young offenders are still learning about socially-acceptable behaviour; they have a greater potential for rehabilitation. Registration as a reportable offender can have a significant impact on the wellbeing and development of a young person. Nonetheless, we know that some young offenders do pose a significant risk to other children and to adults and will require monitoring to keep our community safe. In the case of young offenders, the new provisions of section 6A take a different approach, recognising that young offenders are fundamentally different from adults in this context. For young offenders, the court must consider whether such an order is appropriate and only impose one if it is satisfied that the child poses an unreasonable risk, removing the mandatory approach taken for adults. This provides for an individualised judicial assessment, allowing the court to consider the specific facts, risks and individual needs of the young person. As a result, section 6A offers far more discretion for the court to refuse to make a reporting order for a child, thereby enhancing proportionality.

Section 23B of the act, which deals with the variation of reporting obligations of young reportable offenders, will also be amended to include considerations of whether the young offender poses an unreasonable risk to the community. Further, the class 1, 2 and 3 offences will be amended to recognise the difference in children being involved in the production of child exploitation material in circumstances where, for example, they are taking selfies or

consensual pictures, as opposed to adults who make, possess or produce child exploitation material.

In acknowledgement of the fact that a reportable offender's circumstances can change through their reporting period, the bill will insert new section 27A to provide that the commissioner can suspend or revoke reporting obligations of a young or adult offender under certain circumstances. These circumstances include where the offender was a child for the last offence that made them a reportable offender, or where they have a cognitive or physical impairment, or where they may have a mental illness. These conditions will require the commissioner to be satisfied that the offender does not pose an unreasonable risk of offending again.

Currently, a reportable offender under the act is not prevented from applying for or engaging in child-related work. In light of the commission of inquiry and recent matters within childcare settings around Australia, this lack of restriction on reportable offenders poses an unacceptable risk to Tasmanian children and is out of step with community expectations. Other jurisdictions, including South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Victoria have provisions that prevent reportable offenders engaging in child-related work. To bring the act in line with those jurisdictions and with our own community expectations, the bill will include a new Part 2A, which deals with child related services and the disclosure of information in relation to people charged with reportable offences.

The new section 15B will automatically exclude reportable offenders from working in child-related services. This provision will only apply to a reportable offender who is not a child or who is not a child at the time of the relevant offending. This is an offence-creating provision. It will be a defence if the defendant can prove that they did not know that it was a child-related service.

The new Part 2A will also provide for the commissioner to require a charged person to provide information to police about whether they are engaged or apply to engage in any child-related services and whether they have any reportable contact with a child. In turn, the commissioner can require the charged person to inform their employer or prospective employer in a child-related service of the fact that they have been charged with a reportable offence and the details of those charges within three days.

The commissioner will also have the ability to provide advice to an employer or a prospective employer of a charged person or to any parent, guardian or carer of a child who the charged person has reportable contact with, or indeed to the child themselves if certain conditions are met. Again, these provisions will only apply to a charged person who is not a child, or who is not a child at the time of the relevant offending. These sections provide protections to the community during the critical period between charging and court resolutions, where previously little action could be taken to protect the community.

Section 10A of the act enables the commissioner to make an application to a magistrate for a community protection order in circumstances where the commissioner is satisfied that a reportable offender poses a specific risk to the safety or wellbeing of any child. The community protection order prohibits or restricts the movement or conduct of reportable offenders. The bill includes new provisions that expand the conditions the court may impose on a reportable offender under a community protection order that has been applied for by the Commissioner of Police.

Currently, the conditions that can be imposed include limiting the reportable offender from specified conduct or movement, such as consuming alcohol or making contact with specified people or classes of people. New conditions include restricting the reportable offender from accessing the internet. We know that heinous crimes are committed online, such as the grooming of children or young people. That is why restricting a reportable offender's access to the internet is paramount to protecting the safety of our children and young people online.

The new provisions will also allow the court to impose conditions requiring an offender on a community protection order to submit to electronic monitoring and to surrender their passport to Tasmania Police. The ability of the court to impose these conditions is important to limiting and monitoring the movements of high-risk offenders within and outside of Tasmania.

The bill provides for new reporting obligations for reportable offenders. Section 17 of the act, which deals with the personal details that a reportable offender must provide to the registrar, will be expanded to provide that a reportable offender must share their relationship status and details of their partner and any children of their partner, as well as details of any electronic monitoring they are subject to.

Additionally, there will be expanded reporting requirements concerning residential arrangements, as well as new inclusions regarding gender, citizenship, passport information and banking details. The amendments will also require that a reportable offender is to present to the registrar any Working with Vulnerable People cards issued to them, and in such circumstances the cards will be seized for verification and enquiry.

I want to make clear at this point that we are taking as many precautions as possible to ensure the protection of children. Whilst we have processes in place to restrict reportable offenders from gaining a Working with Vulnerable People card, we are adding these extra protections to ensure that in the event that a card has been issued, it must be disclosed by the offender.

Additionally, reportable offenders will be required to report on any intended absences from Tasmania, which would include details of their travel, reasons for travel, and details of location and travel companions, amongst other things. We're taking a tougher approach to tracking reportable offenders' whereabouts to ensure that they're fully scrutinised in their movements and to limit the opportunities to reoffend.

The bill will also amend the length of reporting periods as prescribed under section 24 of the act to provide greater consistency in the lengths of orders made. Minimum reporting periods will now apply, whereas the act currently only mandates maximum reporting periods. The amendments will also require that the courts may consider previous convictions in determining the length of the reporting period.

The bill will amend the number of offensive provisions within the act to provide for tougher penalties. If a reportable offender fails to comply with their obligations under the act, they will be liable for a fine not exceeding 200 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or both. The same increase in penalty will apply to the offences of failing to comply with a community protection order or interim community protection order and the offence of providing false or misleading information.

The offence for breaches of confidentiality under the act for those who deliberately misuse information on the register will attract a penalty not exceeding 100 penalty units and/or up to two years of imprisonment.

The bill will also introduce new powers for Tasmania Police to monitor and ensure compliance with reporting requirements under the act. The amendments will provide a police officer the power to search a reportable offender in certain circumstances. New section 45B will be inserted to provide for a general power of arrest without warrant where a police officer suspects on reasonable grounds that a person has committed an offence under the act.

Additionally, a new section 45C will be inserted to clarify and consolidate the current powers to enter and search places, premises, conveyances and containers and to verify personal details. This section will also add a new power for police to search the devices of reportable offenders. The clarification and strengthening of police powers under the act is an important step in increasing the ability for Tasmania Police to monitor reportable offenders, including their use of technology.

A reportable offence is generally one of the three classes of offences under the act and is prescribed in the schedules of the act. The class of the offence determines the maximum amount of time that a reporting period can be imposed on a person by the court. The schedules of the offences, as they are currently constructed, do not align with community expectations.

The bill, therefore, repeals these schedules and replaces them with three new schedules. The new schedules move offences across classes for consistency with the seriousness of those offences. The schedules will also include new relevant offences, including Commonwealth Criminal Code offences such as the crime of persistent sexual abuse.

The Community Protection Offender Reporting Regulations is subordinate legislation to the act. The regulations are, therefore, subject to the expiry provisions under Section 12 of the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1992*. The regulations were due to expire on 1 March 2026 and were, therefore, required to be remade before this date. Due to an overlap in the progress of Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Bill 2025 and the date in which the regulations were required to be made, new regulations took effect on 3 February 2026. The remake of the regulations included several amendments which are currently included as consequential amendments within the bill. As a result, we will seek the following amendments on the floor of the House. On page 7 of the bill which states:

> A BILL FOR
>
> An Act to amend the *Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2005*, the *Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Regulations 2016* and the *Sentencing Act 1997*

be amended to refer to the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Regulations 2026. Clause 59 relating to regulation 8 and clause 61 relating to regulation 10 are withdrawn from the bill, as those amendments have been made in the remake of the regulations. An amendment to the title of part 3 replaces the words 'Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Regulations 2016 Amended' with the 2026 variant, and the amendment to clause 58 replaces the same.

The bill mandates a review of the disclosure scheme relevant to section 44CA at one year and five years post commencement. Such review will consider the number of applications made under the new disclosure scheme, the number of disclosures made and the number of charges laid under the misuse sections, offences at sections 34A and 34B. In carrying out the review, the commissioner is to consult with all persons and bodies considered relevant to assess the operation and effectiveness of section 44CA. This will ensure the disclosure scheme remains subject to scrutiny and provides an opportunity to evaluate its effectiveness.

Our government is committed to providing opportunities for community involvement in the development and review of government policy and legislation. As part of the development of this bill, we invited feedback from the community through an initial public consultation process over 11 weeks from December 2023 to March 2024. We not only received comprehensive written submissions, but we reached out to key stakeholders, including through in-person, targeted consultation sessions.

Since that time, we've continued to listen and to hear what the community has had to say about the proposed amendments. I'm pleased that the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management was able to conduct further consultations in September 2025. Through the consultation rounds, face-to-face meetings were held with all those who previously contributed to the public consultation process in 2023 and in 2024, and we're incredibly grateful to those who provided feedback on the bill.

These additional meetings were extremely productive and collaborative and resulted in some valuable refinements to the bill since it was last introduced to the House. We also reviewed comments made in the initial debate in the bill in May 2025 and, where appropriate, we incorporated members' feedback in the finalised draft of the bill. I'd like to thank everyone who provided input in relation to the bill. We've taken your feedback on board and we've redrafted a bill to ensure that it is strengthened to protect our children and our community from the harms of sexual and other serious offending.

With this bill we've worked hard to get the balance right. It is acknowledged that the bill is not a silver bullet for addressing recidivist offending; as we know, reasons for offending can be complex and heinous and, unfortunately, no single approach can eliminate such a scourge from our community. However, our government is committed to protecting Tasmanian children, adults and the community from harm by imposing tougher obligations on reportable offenders and increasing the capability of Tasmania Police to responsibly share information on the register. We are sending a strong message to offenders that their activities are always subject to scrutiny. We are also making a promise to our children and to our community that we will do everything we can to protect you, with the additional safety net of Daniel's Law. I commend the bill to the House.

[4.05 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to begin my contribution on the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Amendment Bill today, and at the outset indicate that I intend to move an amendment to the motion that we have before us, and that amendment to have circulated to all members, including the Clerk and yourself. I move -

Leave out all words after 'That' and *insert*:

(1) The Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Amendment Bill 2025 (No. 61) be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Administration Committee B for inquiry and report thereon.

(2) The Committee report by 27 October 2026.

In speaking to that motion I want to begin by acknowledging in the gallery today we have Mr Morcombe and Alison Geale. Thank you very much for attending again today. I know, Mr Morcombe, that you've been here a number of times now to see this bill progressed through this Chamber, and I commend both of you for the amazing work that you do in ensuring child safety right across our nation. I believe that's something that we are all absolutely united on in this Chamber: working together to try and ensure that our children are safe in our community. We are on an absolute unity ticket when it comes to that.

As I indicated, this bill has had a bit of a history through this place, beginning back in May 2025 when the honourable minister introduced the original bill. It was a concern at that particular time that there was a lack of consultation on further information needed to be sought to make sure we got the right bill. An election occurred, the parliament was prorogued and so the bill lapsed. I want to acknowledge that, during that time, there was further consultation conducted, and I want to thank Tasmania Police, and also the service providers, for engaging further on improvements and refinements to the bill and acknowledge that in our briefings we've received recently, there has been work done to hear the voices of community in particular, and to try and address none of those concerns.

The bill remains very complex, and as I said, we want to make sure we get the bill right. Community child protection relies on having the right bill with the right mechanisms to ensure their safety. It is absolutely critical that we get this right, and I recognise that there are still a number of concerns and competing interests and perspectives around how we can best achieve that safety for children in our community, and so I think it's appropriate that we refer this bill for more careful scrutiny to Government Administration Committee B, so that we can inquire further into the provisions of this bill to make sure that they are robust, that they stand up legally, that they are evidence based and that they do indeed protect our children, as per the intention of this place.

A number of us wrote to the minister on 19 March: myself, the honourable Jen Butler, the honourable Tabatha Badger, the honourable Craig Garland, the honourable Peter George, and the honourable David O'Byrne. I want to read that out to the House today:

> Dear Minister,
>
> We write regarding the reintroduction of the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Bill. We recognise the importance of a robust and effective framework to protect the community from sexual harm. This is an area where public confidence matters deeply and where the parliament has responsibility to ensure that any reforms are both evidence based and operationally sound. We're concerned that, in the current form, the bill risks conflating two distinct and complex policy objectives: strengthening the operation of the sex offender register, and introducing a disclosure scheme. While both warrant careful consideration, they raise different legal, practical and evidentiary issues.

> We recognise that further consultation has been undertaken since the Bill was last introduced; however, key stakeholders still maintain concerns about a lack of clarity and evidence, and potential unintended consequences. Child safety is something that every member of parliament is committed to. We want to ensure that we get it right. We feel the bill would benefit from a referral to committee for greater analysis and consideration. As we are aware of your intention to bring the bill on for debate, potentially at the end of next week, we write to give you the courtesy of advance notice that we support the referral of the Bill to Government Administration Committee B.

We thank the minister for his response on Tuesday this week, when he wrote back to us and said:

> Dear members,
>
> Thank you for your correspondence of 19 March 2026 outlining your concerns with the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Amendment Bill 2025. Please be advised the government accepts the will of the House regarding referral of this important legislation to the Government Administration Committee B and will, therefore, support such a motion.
>
> The Honourable Felix Ellis

We thank the government for indicating their support in referring this. We absolutely want to make sure that we get this right. It's critical to the safety of our children, in particular, and we want to make sure we do that in a very considered manner.

I apologise to Mr Morcombe and Ms Geale for having to come along today to hear the minister's second reading speech again. But while she won't hear, potentially, the whole debate of this bill today, without wanting to pre-empt the important work at the committee, I'm sure we will hear from you very clearly about how this bill can be strengthened. I'm sure you have plenty of ideas in that regard. We would welcome hearing more evidence from advocates in our community like Mr Morcombe and Ms Geale on how we can make this bill better for Tasmanians.

I commend the motion to the House to have this bill referred to the committee. I look forward, if it's possible, to getting the bill that's right for Tasmanians and right for young people in particular.

[4.11 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - - Deputy Speaker, I confirm that the government will be supporting the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

Quorum formed.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[4.15 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) - Deputy Speaker, I move:

> That the House suspends until the ringing of the bells.

The House suspended from 4.16 p.m. to 5.45 p.m.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 (No. 11) - Progress Through All Remaining Stages Forthwith

[5.45 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

> That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 (No. 11) from proceeding through all remaining stages at this day's sitting.

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, just some clarification about the extension of the sitting, firstly. You're suspending Standing Orders to also, in effect, extend the sitting?

The SPEAKER - That will be a separate motion.

Dr BROAD - That'll be a separate motion that comes after this?

The SPEAKER - Yes.

Dr BROAD - We're being asked to debate a bill that was tabled this morning. We've just had the briefing. The way today's business has been handled is less than ideal. We've had a shuffling of the blue on a number of occasions. The order has been changed, we've spent time debating notice of motion 58 and so on. This bill was tabled this morning and it seems like the decision to debate it happened later in the afternoon. We've been almost shuffling around the blue. I'm not exactly sure what's been going on. I would have thought that if this important bill was coming up for debate, the blue would have been managed a lot differently and the communication would have been a lot better. It seems very hand-to-mouth today.

We have to have a practice where things are done in an orderly manner because the last time it descended into this sort of chaos, we were called back to parliament, if you recall, to debate legislation to suspend a judge that never actually happened. We just want some clarity about why everything has been shuffled around today like it has.

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I could echo the member's comments about the shuffling of things on the blue, but it stands for itself. I think we all know that makes it difficult for us to manage this House.

In relation to this bill, we support the suspension of Standing Orders so that we can debate it. Once we reviewed this, we did call for that. We need to get on with this and make sure it happens. We look forward to debating the bill.

Mr Barnett - Thanks very much for those remarks and thank you for the feedback -

The SPEAKER - Sorry, there's no reply on this one.

Motion agreed to.

SITTING TIMES

[5.48 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 18A, I move -

> That this day sitting of the House shall not stand adjourned at 6.00 p.m. and that the House continue to sit past 6.00 p.m.

We've just had a briefing with all members of parliament with respect to the legislation introduced earlier today. We've approached this with good will, trying to be collaborative and consulting carefully. I had all the relevant officials there to answer questions and I believe it was a very positive, collaborative and good discussion, with many answers given. I appreciate the feedback from honourable members. I also appreciate the feedback during the day, as did others.

The ministerial statement highlights the importance of this matter. The Premier doesn't bring in and speak to a ministerial statement lightly. A ministerial statement highlights the significance or importance or urgency of a matter. That was outlined very clearly in the Premier's address and the remarks I shared as well as others', for which I'm grateful on behalf of the government.

We are approaching this with good will. We want to progress. That's the intention. We hope to offer briefings to members of the Legislative Council and to progress positively. However, that's a matter for each Chamber. I can speak for this Chamber, the House of Assembly. Of course, for the Legislative Council, it's a matter for them. We have had briefings. I look forward to the second reading debate and feedback, and the committee stage. Hopefully, we will progress accordingly and positively.

Motion agreed to.

PETROLEUM REPORTING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 11)

Second Reading

[5.50 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read a second time.

As I said in my statement with the Premier this morning, the Tasmanian government is taking action to address ongoing fuel pressures. I appreciate the opportunity to debate the Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 today. The bill seeks to strengthen Tasmania's energy security framework, improve compliance with mandatory codes of practice and enhance the state's powers to monitor, plan for and respond to risks to petroleum and energy supply.

As the Premier said this morning, the impacts of the ongoing war in the Middle East are being felt right across our communities, our industries and our economy. This bill will further improve transparency, it will strengthen compliance and enhance Tasmania's ability to act during fuel disruptions. Under these new laws, we will enforce clearer rules for fuel companies to report on supply levels and introduce strong penalties should they fail to do so. Importantly, this bill enables us to get access to information from fuel companies faster, ensuring we can keep the community informed. These are uncertain times, but together we will navigate this challenge calmly, cooperatively and with full confidence in the strength of our state.

I also join the Premier in expressing appreciation for the ongoing national efforts to manage a complex situation. However, the Tasmanian government continues to call on the federal government to reduce the fuel excise to provide the immediate relief that Tasmanians need.

This bill will play a crucial part in ensuring a response to fuel prices. It proposes amendments to support petroleum reporting, including clarifying consumer law regulation, making powers and penalties to support codes of practice. It also includes an expanded power to require information under the *Energy Coordination and Planning Act 1985* and clarifies a direction power, and extends the periods that the Governor may declare under the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1994* in case that becomes necessary.

Turning to the amendments to the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010*, there are currently codes of practice made in regulations under this act in relation to fuel prices. The bill provides that if a code of practice imposes a mandatory obligation on a person, the person must comply with that obligation. This penalty provision addresses a gap between the Tasmanian act and other jurisdictions, as there is no fine currently available in Tasmania for breaches of codes of practice. There is currently very high compliance with the codes of practice but this is an important supporting measure. I note my department's officers have been undertaking an ongoing audit, and will have audited the majority of fuel retailers by the end of the week.

The bill also amends the regulation-making power to support matters being prescribed in regulation in relation to codes of practice. This responds to the issue that other requirements on the same matter as an existing code of practice may have to be prescribed, potentially in urgent circumstances.

Indeed, I flag an amendment I will propose in committee to bring forward plans to require reports of fuel outages at retailers so our FuelCheck app can accurately inform Tasmanians of these matters. In the interim, the app is being updated to allow for voluntary reporting from Monday, 30 March.

The bill also amends regulations under the act to add an infringement notice penalty for breaches of codes of practice.

The *Energy Coordination and Planning Act 1995* provides for the Director of Energy Planning to coordinate and advise on energy policy and to assist in planning the energy needs of the state and other matters.

I note the application of the act to a broad range of energy resources. Energy, as defined under the act, covers not only electricity and gas but also any other recognised energy resource. Petroleum and petroleum products fall within this definition. These are crucial energy resources for the purposes of the act generally, and for the purposes of the power to be inserted by this bill in particular.

The bill inserts a section to provide that the director may compel information in certain circumstances. The new section applies where the minister notifies the director that there is a serious risk in respect of the supply of energy to the state or within the state. The director can then require a person to provide information that is required for the specific purposes, such as the director's functions or the minister coordinating provision of energy, and the director has reasonable grounds for believing the person can provide the information. This information may relate to the production, supplies, storage, distribution, transportation, sale, purchase, use, or consumption of the energy to which the requirement relates. The bill includes related clarification of the power and penalty for non-compliance.

The bill also amends the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1994*. This act provides for the conservation of petroleum products in the event or likely event of shortages of supplies of petroleum products occurring in Tasmania. The bill amends the time periods that apply in relation to declared periods of emergency. The periods will now be: the Governor can declare a period of up to 28 days as a period of emergency restrictions throughout the state in relation to petroleum products, instead of the current 14 days. This emergency period can be extended for successive periods of up to 28 days and the total period cannot exceed 60 days.

Currently, the act provides for extensions of up to seven days for a maximum of 28 days. This means that shorter periods can still be declared by the Governor, but the Governor may also utilise the longer periods if appropriate. Section 6 of the act provides that during an emergency period declared by the Governor, the minister, if considering it is in the public interest, may give directions in relation to the production, supply, storage, distribution, transportation, sale, purchase, use or consumption of the petroleum products in respect of which the period of emergency restriction is in force.

There is a penalty for non-compliance. Such directions have no effect after the emergency period and can be revoked by the minister at any time. The bill clarifies that a direction under section 6 may include a direction that specifies the maximum price that petroleum products or a type of petroleum product may be sold, as specified in the direction, and for the period specified in the direction. This means, in the unlikely event it becomes necessary, maximum fuel prices can be set.

I want to be clear: this is a power that can only be used during a period of emergency declared by the Governor. I would like to note our appreciation for the cooperative approach between government and fuel retailers and our industry and stakeholder briefings as we navigate this challenge. This is a crucial set of amendments that aid our ongoing efforts to address this important issue for every Tasmanian, and I commend the bill to the House.

[5.58 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to give some comments about the Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026. There are a lot of firsts in this. This is the first time I believe I've come straight from a briefing to debate a bill, so forgive me if my thoughts aren't all in order. I can say from the outset: that we've had a discussion in the PLP and we will be supporting the passage of this bill, but there are certainly some things that need to be clarified.

I thank the members of the public service who were there to give us the briefing at what appears to be short notice. I think that the briefing was held and the questions were answered in good faith, which is good. This bill does a few things, and there are a few things that it actually doesn't do as well. First of all, there are currently codes of practice made in regulations under the act in relation to fuel prices, but this bill provides that if a code of practice imposes a mandatory obligation, that the person must comply with that obligation. This is a mandatory code: it becomes a very mandatory code of practice.

There are also penalties for not complying and those penalties are quite large: a maximum fine of 1000 penalty units for not complying for a body corporate and a maximum fine of 200 penalty units for an individual. The current rate of a penalty unit is about $205. That could be quite a lot of money. This is the same penalty as under section 29 of the act, so that consistency is also good.

The bill also amends regulations under the act to add an infringement notice penalty for breaches of this code of practice. It actually makes it a very mandatory code of practice with penalties. It also gives a lot of power in the making of regulations, so the regulations may authorise any matter to be determined, applied, approved or regulated by a person specified in the regulations, so there's no real boundary on that, but I'm assured that that's a fairly standard clause. That was the first part, which is the amendment to the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010*. That's about the code of practice and the penalties that apply if that code of practice isn't adhered to.

It's interesting in this code of practice - I believe it's that section where they may be able to insert a provision of a 24-hour maximum price which is in place in other jurisdictions. I believe it's in that section where that could potentially happen, so the code of practice could create something that apparently the government is considering like Victoria, I believe, announcing what the maximum day's price will be the day before, and they cannot charge a higher price. They can drop the price if they feel the need, but they can't do a higher price.

That would mean that somebody could go to the FuelCheck app and they could see the maximum price that a service station will charge and then behave accordingly, hopefully, and drive prices down. That is something that could potentially come under this code of practice; that's my understanding. The minister could correct me if I'm wrong. That would also mean that there would be substantial penalties for not abiding to that code of practice but, of course, that would require some follow-up and some scrutiny of performance, so we need people going out and checking that compliance is occurring.

The second part of this bill amends a different act which is the *Energy Co-ordination and Planning Act 1995* which governs liquid fuels, gas and electricity. This enables the director to compel information in certain circumstances. The minister, in this case, for those powers to be acted on, notifies the director in writing that there's a serious risk in respect to supply of energy to the state or within the state, and the director then may require a person to provide the director with information. The information that they can require is also very broad. They may require a person to provide information in respect to things like production, storage, supply, distribution, transportation, sale, purchase, use or consumption of energy on to which the requirement relates. From what I also gather, that would also include the ability to seek the wholesale price that people are charging, which would be important information.

I am surprised to know that, at the moment, there is no compulsion to supply this information, so this act also inserts another clause, clause 12. If the minister notifies the director in writing there's a serious risk to supply of energy in the state and if that happens, then somebody involved in the industry, whether it be a wholesaler, distributor or whatever, will no longer be able to not provide information based on it being a trade secret, if the minister requests it in the context of there being an issue in fuel supply.

If we're going to go down this road, that's actually something good to have, because I'm sure the definition of a trade secret would be something that we wouldn't want argued out in the courts for days and days, or weeks, or months. We'd want the information provided in a timely manner. That section also increases the penalties for not providing that information, so a person must not fail to comply with the requirement of the director under this section, and the penalties, again, are large. There are 1000 penalty units for a body corporate or 100 penalty units for an individual. Also, the person must not give false or misleading information in response to a requirement of the director given under this section, and the penalty for false and misleading is also the same rate: 1000 penalty units, and 100 penalty units. That is quite high and reasonable in the circumstances, although I think there was an issue raised in the briefing around if somebody is supplying a large amount of fuel, then for a body corporate $200,000 might not be enough, but I'm sure we can have a debate around that.

The third section actually doesn't do a hell of a lot - this is to do with an emergency declaration under the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act*. There can be a declaration of an emergency, and the changes in this are extending that declaration time period from 14 to 28 days across the board. There were different days, and there's also an extension to 60 days that basically increases the declaration period, and we know through our experience during the COVID pandemic that coming back to parliament to extend periods of declarations can be onerous and overly administrative, so increasing that period to 28 days I view as being reasonable.

The other thing this particular part of the bill does is that it gives an avoidance of doubt clause: Section 16, it inserts:

(1A) For the avoidance of doubt, a direction under subsection (1) may include a direction that specifies the maximum price that petroleum products, or a type of petroleum product, may be sold -

(a) as specified in the direction; and

(b) for the period specified in the direction.

That is actually a very powerful existing provision under the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act*, so this is a removal of doubt. I think the department probably argued that they already had the power, but the drafters were arguing that maybe you should avoid doubt, and that is actually a very powerful mechanism for the government to have, although I'm not sure, and maybe if the minister can answer the question, what happens if setting that maximum price creates a loss for the person who that's applied to? Are there compensation provisions?

The other side of that is, if a maximum price is installed, is there a provision to keep a business open? For example, if things really go pear shaped, and in the best interests of the state is to enforce a maximum price under this particular section, we've removed the avoidance of doubt, so the government, in passing, this will have the power, it's quite specific that it will have the power to set a maximum price, but does it have a provision to keep a business open? There might be absolutely no point to having this if it's going to create a loss and the business just decides to shut as a coping mechanism. I'm seeking clarification if there's actually a provision to keep a business open, just bearing in mind that this would be an extreme set of circumstances to be inserting a maximum price using this particular part of the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1994*.

One thing that this doesn't do is put in place mechanisms to prevent price gouging. I would argue that we're seeing that supply is being impacted by panic buying. Thankfully, the briefing also highlighted that Tasmania is business as usual. The ships are still arriving. The supply had a little bit of a bump when the situation in the Middle East first took off and people were buying fuel out of the normal cycle, and we saw what happened with toilet paper during the COVID epidemic, that we've got supply lines and sometimes if there's a change in purchasing behaviour, it can have big impacts. In the case of toilet paper, there was no toilet paper left. We haven't seen that so much in fuel. We have seen some panic buying and that panic buying has resulted in price increases, which ironically, has probably driven people to buy more. I know that there have been some unofficial steps taken by service stations. Service stations of their own volition have decided to enforce things like refusing to fill jerry cans or refusing to fill the thousand litres containers on the back of utes and things like that to try and prevent running low.

As we've seen in other states, when you've got a rural jurisdiction with a small service station and somebody comes and fills up a great big tank to make sure that they're not going to run out, what they're doing is they're running everyone else out and at the same time driving price up, which could reinforce this panic buying behaviour. Panic buying is something we absolutely want to avoid. Being able to provide the information to the public, and I think the government probably could do better at this, by actually highlighting exactly and publishing exactly that supply is not a problem in Tasmania. There's no need to panic buy. We've got so many days of supply, the ships are coming, that there's no need. You will not run out. We don't want stories like - well, I've seen some reporting where people are saying that the supply is the big issue rather than price, because if it's not available then price doesn't matter. We don't want

our state to grind to a halt. I think the government should take a more proactive role in highlighting just how much supply there is, even if it's a matter of putting out a press release everyday while we're going through this period where people might be thinking that supply is an issue until I suppose we can settle the horses and hopefully the Middle East doesn't get even worse. If people have some certainty around supply, then that panic buying behaviour which is having these other problems such as driving up prices, won't occur. I'd urge the government to be more proactive in providing information around how much fuel there is on a regular basis so that people don't make assumptions.

One thing this bill doesn't do is deal with price gouging at all. Now, this is dealt with under Australian consumer law, not under Tasmanian law. We don't have the ability to regulate price gouging. That's up to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). It appears that it's completely legal to price gouge, just as long as customers are informed of the price and you can't prove collusion. We can see an example where the flexible pricing in things like airlines, the surge pricing in hotels, where the Foo Fighters come to Launceston, the flights have become massively expensive all of a sudden and accommodation becomes really expensive: doubles or triples in price. That's perfectly legal as long as there's no collusion and as long as customers are informed of the price. I'm not sure exactly how customers wouldn't be informed of the price, unless on the big sign at the service station it said it was $3 and you got to the bowser and it was $3.10 then maybe that is an offence. Short of that, it seems like the retailers, if they want to gouge, they can gouge away. This bill doesn't do anything about that because we don't actually have the power although, as I highlighted earlier, there is the potential to put in place something like that 24-hour pricing model.

I think this is an area that we need to deal with as a country. One way we could do that is by better informing customers on the FuelCheck app. Not only producing what the fuel is, what the price is at each various service station, but something like having an average wholesale price so that customers can see just how much the margin is, if that's indeed possible. I think if the ACCC could see and produce a model where, if there is a massive increase in the difference between the wholesale price and the retail price, they might be able to make a judgment whether that was reasonable or not.

What we see in the fuel industry is a business model where the prices go up by the elevator and down by the stairs. As soon as there's even a hint of something happening, the prices are driven up immediately, and then it takes weeks or sometimes even months to come back down despite the supply not changing, despite the wholesale price not changing. I think as a country we need to get to grips with that. This is a circumstance where fuel prices have doubled. It's putting massive pressure on people's budgets. It is taking 50, 60 more dollars out of people's pockets for the same tank of fuel, and that's only getting worse. Hopefully, it will settle down and go back the other way, but this is taking money out of people's pockets. We need to have some visibility on these profit margins so that we can hold the retailers to account. They are going to be making some huge profits this year, no doubt, but those profits are getting hoovered out of everyday people's pockets. That is morally unacceptable. Maybe it's not technically illegal, but price gouging is an issue we need to get a grip on.

That's a bit of a rough tour of this bill as I see it, having just had the briefing, having just had the discussion amongst the PLP. This was tabled this morning. We're debating it now. I would like to know if the minister is going to pass this on to the Legislative Council tonight. If not, then what are we doing, really? The minister is also flagging an amendment, the amendment being that if there's a fuel outage, that will get flagged on the FuelCheck app. You

know the government is rushing things when they're amending their own bill. It has been on the table for a day and they're already going to push an amendment. That's typically not a good sign.

We do have a fuel supply but people have fuel supply concerns. We don't have a problem debating this bill tonight, but it would be nice to have answers to those questions, especially whether this is going to progress to the upper House tonight.

[6.17 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to talk to the Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026. The Greens will be supporting this bill and also supporting the amendments. I thank the officials for the briefing and thank the minister for bringing on the bill for debate today. It's quite an extraordinary day to have a ministerial statement in the morning articulating the challenges and issues in relation to the fuel crisis and prices, and the cost of living, and then to have legislation tabled. We did call for it to be brought on.

We see this legislation as being critically important in terms of providing the government with better information to be able to plan going forward. To date, information from fuel companies has largely been based on their good will and willingness to provide it. This bill obviously strengthens the compulsion for fuel companies to disclose information.

I will walk through the bill and talk about some of the human impacts. I will also talk about some of the other steps the government needs to take. Dealing with the information vacuum when it comes to fuel is one problem. Dealing with the cost-of-living pressures that fuel prices place on people, community service organisations and others is another thing altogether.

We are in this situation because of an illegal war in the Persian Gulf, because of megalomaniacs with the toys and weapons of destruction, and the collapse of rules-based order and things as we know them. This situation is brought on largely because of men, because of religion, and because of aspiration in terms of their dominance of the world and their regions. That is why we always need to anchor ourselves back to peace, back to rules-based order, back to diplomacy and back to a global stability where we treat each other with respect and diplomacy. War, not least illegal war, can only lead to pain and suffering the world over.

This is our small price to pay. While we're dealing with some significant price impacts affecting Tasmanians, there are people involved in this conflict who are doing it much tougher because they are being killed, maimed or forced to flee their homelands for other places. That needs to be said in the context of this debate.

The bill amends the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010*, the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Infringement Regulation*s *2021*, the *Energy Coordination and Planning Act 1995* and the *Petroleum Products and Emergency Act 1994*.

The amendments to the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act* prescribes that if a person contravenes a mandatory requirement of a code of practice under the act, they are subject to a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units, $41,000, for an individual or 1000 penalty units, $205,000, for a body corporate. I note Dr Broad's questions about this mechanism being used in terms of price control. These penalties are the maximum currently

provided for under the act for failing to comply with a court order, prohibiting payment or transfer of monies or other property.

As it currently stands, the mandatory rules are for registration of a fuel retailer reporting fuel prices within 30 minutes after a change of the standard retail price, and displaying fuel prices on boards at the same time or before the displayed price changes at the pump.

The *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Infringement Regulations 2021* are also amended to declare that this new provision is an infringement offence, and to allow for an authorised officer to impose a penalty of 10 penalty units for an individual or 50 penalty units for a body corporate.

The amendments to the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010* allow for the regulations that prescribe a code of practice to contain provisions that do not form part of the code of practice, but are related to the subject matter of that code of practice.

Regulation-making powers are also amended to allow for regulations to authorise:

> Any matter to be determined, applied, approved or regulated by a person specified in the regulations.

The amendments increase the maximum penalties that may be prescribed for offences in regulations from 100 penalty units to 200 penalty units for an individual, or 1000 penalty units for a body corporate.

The *Energy Coordination and Planning Act 1995* is amended to allow for the Director of Energy Planning to require a person to provide information in respect of the production, supply, storage, distribution, transportation, sale, purchase, use or consumption of energy, if the minister determines that there is a serious risk in respect of energy supply to the state. That information is required for the director to perform their functions under the act, or for the minister to plan and coordinate the provision of energy in the state.

The bill stipulates that a person cannot object on trade secret grounds, and is subject to a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units for an individual or 1000 penalty units for a body corporate if they do not comply, or if they give false or misleading information. Unlike the existing powers to request information under section 8M of the act, there is no obligation to preserve the confidentiality of the information.

The Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1995 is amended to extend the initial maximum period for an emergency restriction and rationing period from 14 days to 28 days, the maximum extension increment from seven days to 28 days and the maximum total period from 28 days to 60 days. I note that the ability for parliament to allow for a further extension beyond the maximum period is already provided for in the act and remains unchanged.

The bill also reaffirms that section 6 of the act allows for maximum prices to be set during an emergency period.

The Greens welcome these reforms. They will assist the government when it comes to planning for fuel and in an emergency situation, should that need to be declared.

I reinforce the point that has been made. because it is important in this context, that there has been no change in fuel deliveries. While there was a small spike in demand early in this situation, it is largely settled. We're informed that localised outages are largely based on distribution issues.

This is an important piece of legislation. This war in the Persian Gulf has been going on for numerous weeks. We believe that this legislation and, indeed, other measures are overdue. The more we take matters into our own hands in terms of planning, getting the information and creating the mechanisms to hold some of these companies to account, the better off we and all Tasmanians will be.

I want to make it abundantly clear that from a Greens' perspective, this legislation should be only one component of the government's response. Preparing for emergency measures is needed - let's hope we never get into that situation - but so is emergency funding for people, because this is a cost of living crisis. Whether it's individuals or whether it's community service organisations, they clearly need support at this time.

A full fortnight ago, my colleague, the member for Bass, Cecily Rosol, held a media event talking about the urgent need for the government to support community services in response to this crisis. That was a full fortnight ago. I want to take the time and please indulge me to read that full statement into the *Hansard* today, because it really does show that even when it was very clear, there needed to be a response from government, it has been really slow. I quote from Ms Rosol:

> The war in Iran is hitting home for Tasmanians with price rises already putting pressure on people, and community service organisations are on the frontline. The Liberals need to get their priorities straight and fund these organisations so they can meet the increasing need. The conflict in the Middle East is already jacking up the price of fuel. As the war continues, price increases are unlikely to end there. The higher fuel costs in the production and transport of food could see grocery prices rise too.
>
> Tasmanians are already struggling with the cost of living as the price of necessities like rent, bills and groceries remain high. Any further price rises are only going to make things worse. Community service organisations provide vital support to Tasmanians doing it tough. Demand for their support was already high and it will continue to grow as Tasmanians face fresh price rises. I'm hearing from people who are very worried about the increased cost of fuel and the flow on effects of that to food prices. They don't know how they will cope. At my office we've also seen a sharp increase in the number of people visiting our community pantry.
>
> The Liberal government is already failing to meet the funding needs of community service organisations and the struggling Tasmanians they support. At a time when increasing support to Tasmanians is needed, community service organisations have had to reduce or cut services entirely.
>
> While Tasmania's budget is in a bad state, it shouldn't mean we can't support Tasmanians most in need. It all comes down to priorities and the Liberal's spending priorities are out of touch with the needs of everyday Tasmanians.

> As prices continue to rise, the Liberal government needs to get on with getting their priorities straight and fund community service organisations who are helping Tasmanians doing it tough.

That was two weeks ago and we haven't had a response from government in terms of the very human needs of people. This legislation is welcome in terms of their capacity to manage this crisis, but what we need is genuine action and genuine injection of funds into community service organisations and other support services that are helping people in this crisis.

Earlier in the week we heard from 20 peak bodies in the community services sector about the need for more support. This is a critical step that the government must take. We can't leave our most vulnerable people and the organisations that support them high and dry at this time of increased prices.

Another area where we've heard near universal recognition in this place the last fortnight has been on the issue of transport. Greens transport spokesperson, Cassy O'Connor, has been asking questions on this matter upstairs, as others have down here. It's welcome to hear the constructive contributions and questions from Labor and crossbench members on this issue, including in relation to bus fares, working from home arrangements and other measures. These are all things that the government should be urgently considering to make things easier for everyday Tasmanians.

Again, it's good to see this bill today, even if the government is acting a little later than we might have hoped, but we also need the government to respond to the very real need in the community directly with emergency funding and with other measures that will make a meaningful difference. This is an international and national crisis, but the state government does have a critical role in defining the experience of Tasmanians as the war rages on.

With that, I'll close by saying that we support the bill. We reiterate the nature of it in terms of allowing the government to better plan. We live in uncertain times. We don't know where this war is going to go. These people are utterly unpredictable and utterly ruthless. We do not know where this ends and what that means for our fuel prices and indeed other cost-of-living issues. With that I'll leave you with the commitment to our support, and I urge again for the government to consider the message of community service organisations and others.

[6.30 p.m.]

Prof RAZAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, some Tasmanian families are now paying more than $200 a week just to keep one car on the road and family life in motion. Kids need to get to school, to footy training, to music classes. Mums and dads need to get to work, and in regional and rural Tasmania, work can be a long car journey away, and many of these areas don't have access to public transport. Tasmanian people are particularly affected by the high fuel prices because we rely so much on cars. We have more than half a million vehicles registered in Tasmania, and we don't have good public transport to support them. The sharp spiral in fuel costs is an unexpected burden for families already struggling with the rising cost of living. For a weekly bill to almost double overnight, not all families are going to be able to absorb this. The weekly budget can only stretch so far. It's not just fuel prices. The fallout from the ongoing global volatility will be felt far and wide, and freight costs will see prices rise in supermarkets, at the hardware store, and the list goes on.

I welcome the *Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendment) Act 2026*. I think it's an excellent response to the crisis we are experiencing now. It will help to provide information and monitor the supply, storage and transport, and it will also increase the penalty if they are not complying with these rules. The other problem I feel is that this does not prevent price gouging and anti-competitive behaviour. That's the job of ACCC, but I really wonder, apart from reporting prices to the ACCC, whether we also inquire about the margin of profit, because that's what matters: to find out whether the price increases have been justified.

I feel in any crisis we should look at opportunity, and I feel that this might give us opportunity to change our habits. We have relied on cars and we have been lucky with that. Average houses have two cars. Perhaps we have to have a long-term plan, and we should start thinking about using just one car, or lead to connectedness with families, like sharing transport to go to work. It might also help to be flexible in our working places, like to allow especially young families with children to be flexible with the time they start work. I think it's a really great opportunity for us to have long-term plan and change our habit of relying on cars. We must also encourage people to use active transport with walking and also cycling, but I think the opportunity now is to invest in our public transport. We have neglected it for many years, but perhaps this is the time we should put our money in public transport, because it's not going to be solved in a short time. I think that will help greatly in changing our habits. Therefore, I support this motion.

[6.35 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, we certainly live in extraordinary times. What's happening in the Middle East, in terms of the conflict, shouldn't be happening. There are innocent people and children dying, neutral states being attacked and it has completely disrupted global supply chains, and we're all at the mercy of this. Our thoughts are with all of those people who are impacted in that area of the world, and hope that that is resolved very soon.

In terms of what's before us today, I've been around long enough to know that we should take our responsibilities in terms of being lawmakers very seriously, and that when laws are rushed, there is the potential for unintended consequences. I have to commend the previous speakers in terms of getting their heads around this very quickly. The scrutiny was, I thought, excellent given that we just had a briefing and now we are in here debating this bill, but we have to be very careful as lawmakers that we don't cause unintended consequences. I've been around and seen that happen where things are rushed through this parliament, potentially through the other House, and there are things that happen that people didn't foresee during the debate, so this process that we're embarking upon is fraught, is what I'm saying.

Like other speakers have said, this was tabled this morning. We've just had a briefing. We're in here being asked to pass it through tonight, so it is fraught but I do take some comfort in that we are strengthening existing acts. If this was completely new acts that we were debating, I would have very serious concerns about this process.

I believe one of the unintended consequences that the government needs to be very mindful of, and I raised this in the briefing, is that if the parliament sits late tonight through both Houses to strengthen emergency provisions, the communication needs to be very clear to Tasmanians because I can see a scenario where Tasmanians wake up in the morning or listen to the radio in the morning and hear that the parliament sat all through the night to pass strengthening provisions for emergency situations, and they will panic. They will go to the

petrol bowser, or have panic because the message hasn't been controlled, so we do need to be very mindful of that.

I believe that that is a potential unintended consequence of this process that the government's asking us to participate in, but what I heard in the briefing - and I will make this very clear - it is business as usual in terms of supply. We're expecting shipments. There are ships on the way. We've just had one arrive. We have an elevated price at the moment but in terms of supply, we're not panicking. There's plenty of supply in Tasmania, so it's important to note that.

As some of the other speakers have said, this does three things. It strengthens the code of practice with penalty provisions to help make people comply. I do take some comfort in that if there are to be additional matters added to the code that that is subject to review of the parliament, that there will be a disallowable instrument for those things to be considered by parliament, so there is a protection there. I note that because of this rush, the government is going to amend its own bill to also put in the reporting of outages with the FuelCheck app in that section of the bill, so it does that.

I believe the important part, what I took from the briefing, the most important part of this bill, which is what the government needs right now, is information gathering and being able to compel that information. We heard the Deputy Premier talk about the information required like production, supply, storage, distribution, transportation, sale, purchase, use and consumption, and currently the Director of Energy and Planning has oversight of liquid fuels, gas and electricity, but needs to strengthen some of these provisions under the *Energy Coordination and Planning Act* to be able to compel that information to really understand the supply. At the moment, there's some educated guessing that's happening, some assumptions being made. There's some enforcement there with higher penalties, but what I gathered from the briefing is the most important part that the government needs right now is to understand the supply to a greater degree.

Then there are the emergency provisions which allow for an emergency to be declared, and then the minister can make orders and they can extend the period up to 28 days from 14. I've already seen some reporting, probably from the ministerial statement this morning, that that allows for price caps in an emergency situation, which is a bit different to what's happening in Victoria at the moment where they have a 24-hour notice for a price, and that's just been conducted in normal provisions. We did hear in the briefing that the government's considering that, through regulations, and I assume that's through the code of practice. That's what we heard in the briefing. You can shake your head.

That might help to stabilise prices and give consumers some more confidence if they're looking at the FuelCheck app, when they arrive at the fuel station they know that's going to be the price. As I always do when we're asked to do these sorts of things, suspend standing orders, consider things quickly, I do it with hesitation and carefully consider it in the time that we're allowed. I do note that sometimes unintended things happen, and I've made clear my concerns with this process.

It's unclear to me how this will progress through the upper House. Having been a former member of the upper House, I know they take their job as the House of review very seriously, which means that there needs to be time between debates. They like to bring people in and scrutinise things very carefully. It's been unclear to me how this will progress through that

House. Obviously that's a matter for them. In terms of this being progressed through this House, I can see that the government may need some of these provisions before we sit again in two weeks, but it's not generally a great way to make laws.

[6.42 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I hope I'm as coherent as I possibly can be in speaking to this bill. In speaking to the bill, I'd like to thank the Attorney-General for the briefing that we were provided and also the various people in the department who were at the briefing to answer and to explain some of the questions that we had. So, Sean Terry, Shane Gregory, Robyn Pearce, Brad Wagg and Bruce Paterson I'd like to thank you for providing us with information.

I think Dr Broad made the point that this has come on for discussion very suddenly. In the context of today, we had the Premier's address as the first thing in relation to the fuel crisis and supply issues. That occurred in this morning's session, and whilst there may be some concern from the opposition in relation to bringing on this bill to discuss, it's as a result of this parliament reflecting the concerns of many people who do have concerns, and they are those cost-of-living concerns.

They are concerns about the atrocious war in the Persian Gulf and I thank Mr Bayley for so eloquently describing the concerns for people who are tied up and caught up in this horrendous situation, and for any war for that matter, but the war in Iran, the invasion of Iran and the subsequent retaliatory responses by Iran is impacting the world's fuel supplies, and that of course impacts Australia and Tasmania as well.

I'm pleased to see that this bill has been brought on. I have been talking over the last couple of weeks about the concern about demand. We're talking about supply tonight, but the demand is something that we need to consider as well and how we address some of those issues, ensuring people can get to work or work from home or change their patterns; as Professor Razay has said, changing those patterns of behaviour so that we don't have such a strain on the fuel supplies that we have. I'm pleased to see that this has been brought to the House because - and there were of course many questions arising from the briefing this afternoon, but what we have in this Petroleum Reporting Miscellaneous Amendments Bill of 2026 is a bill that amends four acts: *the Australian Consumer Law Tasmania Act 2010*, *the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Infringement Regulations 2021*, *the Energy Coordination and Planning Act 1995* and *the Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1994*.

I'm learning that life is complex when you're looking at bills and regulations and so forth. However, there have been some learnings from more recent events like COVID in relation to the responses in the emergency section of the bill.

The consequences of the fuel supply are being felt by Tasmanians and this bill, through amendments around consumer affairs, it provides greater powers to prosecute and also to have increased oversight as the amount of fuel stored. We learnt this afternoon that there's not that oversight of knowing how much fuel is stored, what sort of capacity there might be. That makes it very hard to plan in the event of any emergency, any fuel rationing or anything that might have to come as a result of a war. We don't know how long it will last.

The current legislation, as I understand, doesn't allow for fines for breaches of the code of practice, so that is addressed in this bill. When you look at the emergency powers of fuel

supply and it goes to those lessons learnt most probably from the period of COVID-19 and, and emergency powers and orders that occurred.

I'm just reading from the fact sheet:

> The bill amends the time periods that apply in relation to declared periods of emergency. The periods will now be that the governor can declare a period of up to 28 days as a period of emergency restriction throughout the state in relation to petroleum products.

Instead of the current 14-day period - so it's not a set 28 days - but it can be that and that total period cannot exceed 60 days. Those are really important powers to have in place and it's very important that those powers have a restricted time, but a time well enough so that things can be put in place effectively.

With the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act* in one of the questions - and Attorney-General, you may want to just reiterate this so that I have this understanding correct, but the emergency powers could mean that a particular sector of the community - we've heard from Ms Finlay and Minister Pearce about the agriculture sector, making sure that our farmers have as a sector may have- if we go into an emergency situation that that sector would have access to fuel over others.

I asked about public transport and making sure that we do have that public transport, so mass transit available so that our cities and towns can run effectively, because if things grind to a halt then that's a whole another world of pain for our businesses, for our communities, for our students. Those things do need to be in place. I'd just like to hear from the Attorney-General in relation to that.

We've touched a little bit on the amendments - I don't think they've been introduced - but I'd like some sort of clarification about the amendments if they're just looking at the app or beyond that. Perhaps if you can clarify that, if it's as innocuous as advice of an app where the fuel may or may not be available, then I think that is an acceptable arrangement, but I want to know the limitations, Attorney-General, in relation to this.

In all, I will be supporting this. At the beginning of the week we could have been discussing a bill much earlier than we really would have given it a good airing. That was, I think, the tobacco products bill - I'm so pleased that we didn't bring that bill on before it's time of ripening, if you like. This is an important bill to consider tonight. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this to the House and I commend the bill.

[6.52 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I want to acknowledge each and every contribution on this bill. Thank you very much for the remarks and your supportive comments at this difficult time.

I'll pick up on the honourable member for Clark's comments at the end, that we're responding to the concerns in the community and we're reflecting those in our contributions tonight and our actions in this parliament. I wanted to acknowledge that, and that absolutely is the case. I know each and every member here is representing their own community with goodwill and respect to do the best that they can in these very difficult times.

Of course, many here have referred to the war in the Middle East. There are so many things that are outside our control as we stand and sit in the Parliament of Tasmania and indeed across this beautiful country of Australia. I'm reminded of an observation I shared with the Premier very recently where I said, 'It's not what happens in life that counts, but how you respond to what happens in life that counts'. We are in this position now in the Tasmanian Parliament where we're responding to matters that are very much outside of our control in the Middle East war. This has had an impact right across the world, specifically in Australia and specifically in Tasmania. We're an island off an island. We want to do the best for our great state of Tasmania and the people of this state.

The actions of what this bill will do is reflect the motivation of the members of this place in getting a result which will protect the public interest. It will improve compliance and it will obviously inject penalties to make things happen. There are certain emergency provisions which have been reflected upon to prepare for what may be down the track, but we need to arm ourselves and be very well prepared. That's what we're doing.

I will respond to the honourable members, but the bill, in summary, does respond to the practical issues identified through recent global events that have affected fuel prices and underlined supply risks. It's a sensible precautionary package that strengthens Tasmania's preparedness for potential fuel and energy supply disruptions. While Tasmania's fuel supplies are currently secure, this bill ensures that the government is equipped to act should circumstances change.

First, the bill strengthens the government's ability to obtain timely, accurate information where there is a serious risk to energy supply. It expands information-gathering powers under the *Energy Coordination and Planning Act* so decisions can be based on evidence, not assumptions or scenario planning. That still has to occur, in terms of scenario planning, but we need to have all the tools in the toolbox possible to make good decisions for our state.

Second, the bill closes compliance gaps under the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010* by ensuring mandatory fuel codes of practice are enforceable. It aligns Tasmania with other jurisdictions by providing proportionate penalties and infringement notice options where obligations are breached. Third, the bill improves emergency response arrangements under the *Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1994*. It modernises emergency declaration timeframes and clarifies direction-making powers, including the ability to set maximum prices in connection to such an emergency declaration, if required, in the public interest.

All powers in this bill are targeted, they're conditional and they're proportionate, in my firm view. They apply only in serious circumstances and include appropriate safeguards, oversight and time limits. Together, these reforms improve transparency, accountability and preparedness across the fuel supply chain. They protect consumers, support industry confidence, and strengthen Tasmania's resilience in uncertain times.

I would like to respond to the remarks of the honourable members and again, I thank the honourable members who have shared remarks and the feedback we've had, and I will go through that very shortly, but I just wanted to indicate very clearly again that Tasmania's fuel supply remains secure. All five terminals have been restocked this month and we've been advised delivery schedules for early and mid-April are in line with normal arrangements.

Each terminal is typically restocked at least once a month. Combined, these five terminals have a capacity of 63 megalitres of petrol, 78 megalitres of diesel and six megalitres of jet fuel. At full capacity, this represents 57 days of petrol, 39 days of diesel at normal consumption patterns. At a national level, in recent days, we've had 38 days of petrol, 30 days of diesel and 30 days of jet fuel, and that exceeds the national minimum stockholding obligation. You've heard the federal government and the federal minister speak of that.

Currently, there are no impacts to Tasmanian fuel deliveries; fuel continues to arrive as normal. I wanted to put that on the record, but I also wanted to make it clear, and again thank the Premier for his ministerial statement this morning and acknowledge that the Premier last week wrote to the Tasmanian Director of Energy Planning seeking ongoing visibility of fuel stock levels across the state, including trends, constraints and emerging risks to support forward planning and to ensure the state is well positioned to respond to potential supply disruptions in the future.

The Premier has also announced the Tasmanian government is exploring opportunities to strengthen the state's resilience and will be assessing existing fuel storage capacity opportunities for infrastructure expansion, potential industry partnerships and broader levers to help improve the resilience. There's a lot of work that has been going on in recent times as a result of the Middle East war and the concerns that have been expressed in the community. The issues and concerns particularly around cost of living and cost of doing business are at the top of everybody's minds in Tasmania, that is for sure.

I'd like to now refer to the honourable members who've made some remarks and respond to those. Dr Broad was very thoughtful in his remarks and made reference to the briefings, as other members have and like other members, I want to thank the members of the department who've made such an excellent contribution. I will name them now and thank them sincerely on behalf of the government and, I believe, other members here: Shane Gregory, the Acting Secretary of the Department of State Growth; Sean Terry, Director of Energy Planning; Bruce Paterson from the Department of Justice, who I think many of you know very well and does an excellent job; Brad Wagg; and, of course, Robyn Pearce from CBOS, and Acting Deputy Secretary as well. I'm incredibly grateful for the support and advice of those department representatives; that's been absolutely superb.

Dr Broad did ask some questions in terms of price gouging, regulation, making powers and the like, if I can just run through a few of those. Dr Broad asked the following questions regarding maximum price provisions of the bill: what happens if creating a maximum price produces a loss? Will there be compensation? Does it have a provision to keep a business open if a business decides to shut as a coping mechanism? That's paraphrasing Dr Broad.

I reiterate that fuel price caps would only be introduced in the event of a fuel emergency declared by the Governor. Such caps would serve to protect consumers from potentially excessive price increases beyond what would be reasonable in an emergency. Any other measures such as those situations referred to by the member for Braddon would need to be considered in the design of the price-setting arrangement. In terms of the bill tonight, in terms of the Legislative Council and whether it would be considered, well, they will be briefed this evening. I think they're being briefed as we currently are speaking with the view to progressing the bill through this House positively, if that's the will of this House, then through to the Legislative Council. That's the answer to that question.

In terms of price gouging, this is certainly a concern for all of us. We're very concerned about the risk of price gouging. It's important to be very clear that responding to and taking action over price gouging, cartel behaviour, market manipulation and the like, are matters under Australian consumer law that are directly in the remit of federal powers and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, not state and territory regulators. That's exactly why I wrote to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission more than a week ago about the need for full monitoring and, indeed, increased penalties for the ACCC. I wrote to the federal Treasurer about that. The federal Treasurer acted swiftly with the support of other jurisdictions to increase their penalties in terms of price gouging and anti-competitive behaviour.

I want to put that on the record the very collaborative approach we've had in that regard to do that. I was the first representative, the first state to support an increase in those powers and penalties. We continue to take the position that the ACCC must be active in doing their job in terms of price gouging, anti-competitive behaviour, false and misleading advertising and marketing. Any anti-competitive behaviour, that's the job for the ACCC and we want them to do their job in Tasmania.

In terms of regulation-making power, it's important that we provide the flexibility to more expeditiously make changes to regulations and the associated codes of practice. We're acting quickly to make use of those provisions, to make new regulations requiring retailers to provide information on any outages of fuel through the FuelCheck app. I will, as I foreshadowed in the briefing and elsewhere, including in my second reading speech, introduce that regulation by way of an amendment in the committee stage.

Dr Broad asked about the Victorian model of forcing retailers to publish their maximum prices for the next day, and those remarks from the Leader for the Opposition in that regard as well. We're obviously aware of that policy, but the jury is very much out on it, particularly during a situation like we're facing now. It does not restrict prices. It simply says retailers must advise of their maximum price for the next day. We want to act on evidence and we are concerned, in a period of uncertain supply, about having retailers flag that their prices may be going up by a significant amount the next day, and the impact that could have on possible overstocking or panic buying. That's our current view. I wanted to draw that to colleagues' attention in this place.

In terms of other contributions, let me just check my notes and make reference to the honourable member for Clark, Vica Bailey, and again making reference to the war in the Middle East and again it's outside of our control and I respect your views and the views of the Greens 100 per cent. It is very sad. It's a shocking situation and nobody wants it and it's having a flow-on effect right through to little old Tasmania, and we now must do our best as decision makers in this state to protect the public interest, and that's exactly what we're doing. You've made reference to community service providers and indeed the cost of living and that is absolutely on everybody's minds in Tasmania. You've talked about consumers and families and it is totally understandable and I'm with you in terms of the concerns, as is the government, and that's why we've acted so quickly and decisively.

I've paid a tribute to the community service providers publicly. I say it again. They do an incredible job and I appreciate that and on behalf of the government, the minister for Community Services, I know is such a strong advocate as well but we acknowledge the points that you make. It is really difficult for community services at this time. The Premier's made

reference to Meals on Wheels as an example earlier in the debate today. In terms of charities, I've made mention of a whole range of charities and guess what, they're supported by volunteers and of course, their cost of travel to get to and from those various places of their volunteer work is absolutely acknowledged.

Also, Mr Bayley made reference to buses and transport and this has been raised in the parliament in the last several days, and it's absolutely acknowledged and the important role that our public transport system has and, of course, we currently have half-priced bus fares, and this is front and centre. I know the member for Clark, Helen Burnet, has been very positive and proactive in promoting the benefits of the buses and indeed active transport more generally, and I want to acknowledge that as well.

Professor George Razay talked about the cost of living, talked about the concerns around price gouging and Australian consumer law and this is my point. This is really a matter for the ACCC. We take it very seriously. That's why I wrote to the Chair of the ACCC. That's why I wrote to the federal Treasurer more than a week ago. That's why those penalties now have been increased across Australia in terms of price gouging or anti-competitive behaviour and you also made reference to the public transport system like others in this place. That's acknowledged and thank you for standing up for your constituents in that way.

The Leader for the Opposition, Josh Willie, in his remarks talked about the fact that we are strengthening existing legislation and I appreciate it. I'll say let's take it as a vote of confidence and I wanted to acknowledge that and thank him.

In the briefing, I won't go into the details, but the Leader of the Opposition also talked about the importance of communications, and indeed, the honourable member for Bass has raised that with me and with others. Michael Ferguson and I just wanted to concur with those remarks. It is very important as leaders in our community, local members of parliament, that the comms is right, that we set the scene in terms of indicating to the public that supply is secure, please take what you need when you need it, and to ensure that a commonsense approach as we progress through this difficult and challenging time.

There was a reference to the FuelCheck app by regulation, which I will move in committee shortly, and I've flagged that already. The honourable Leader of the Opposition made reference to the price cap in Victoria and I think I've already responded to that to the honourable member for Braddon, Dr Broad.

Again, the member for Clark, Helen Burnet, as I've said, is a very strong proponent of active transport and our buses, and made reference to the app. I'll speak more about that, but in short, it's designed to ensure that we don't just have the price every 30 minutes on the petrol retail outlet, but also any outages. It's pure and simple and it would have been possible to introduce a regulation to make this happen but I thought, for transparency, to be upfront with members of parliament, we'll put it in the legislation so it's very clear. It provides some flexibility. I'll speak about it again shortly, but indicate that it will be taken up voluntarily on Monday, 30 March, so this coming Monday. It'll be voluntary, but what we're doing is we'll be making it mandatory going forward, once this legislation passes subject to it passing through both Houses.

So, Tasmanians will then have access to that information. I hope that will be of great benefit. I don't want to take up any more of the members' time. There is an opportunity for the

committee stage. I totally support this bill. I thank the Premier for his ministerial statement earlier today and wanted to acknowledge all the contributions and the feedback that I've had during the day and during the debate and in summing up, I commend the bill to the house.

PETROLEUM REPORTING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 11)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 7 agreed to.

New Clause X to Follow Clause 7X

Mr BARNETT - I foreshadowed this amendment, and before I read it into the debate, as foreshadowed, a clear and simple regulatory step is to require prompt reports of fuel outages to ensure that both government and consumers are aware of these matters when the retailer expects supply to be restored. The first amendment is a standard clause when an act amends a regulation. To clarify, the regulations can be further amended.

The second set of amendments inserts the heading and provisions to amend the code of practice for fuel price reporting in relation to fuel outage reporting. A substantial part of the amendment is new regulation A on page three. It requires a fuel retailer to report an outage of a fuel within 30 minutes in the manner specified by the director. In practice, this means the fuel reporting website - an important requirement of the report is to include details of the likely resupply time if possible. The last aspect of the amendments is to update the long title accordingly.

I move the following amendment -

New Clause X

To follow clause 7.

'X. Further amendment of regulations not prevented

For the avoidance of doubt, if an Act amends a provision of any regulations made under this Act, the amendment of the provision of the regulations does not prevent that provision or any other provision of the regulations from being amended or rescinded by a subsequent regulation.'

NEW HEADING FOR PART A

To follow clause 7.

Insert the following Part Heading.

'PART A - AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER LAW (TASMANIA) (CODE OF PRACTICE FOR FUEL PRICE REPORTING) REGULATIONS 2020 AMENDED'

NEW CLAUSE A

To follow new Part A Heading.

'A. Principal Regulations

In this Part, the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2020* are referred to as the Principal Regulations.'

NEW CLAUSE B

To follow new clause A.

'B. Regulation 2A inserted

After regulation 2 of the Principal Regulations, the following regulation is inserted:

2A. Interpretation

Unless otherwise specified, a term used in these regulations has the same meaning in these regulations as it has in the code of practice for fuel price reporting prescribed in Schedule 1.'

NEW CLAUSE C

To follow clause B.

'C. Regulation 4 inserted

After regulation 3 of the Principal Regulations, the following regulation is inserted:

4. Additional reporting requirements

(1) If a fuel retailer runs out of a relevant fuel that is offered for sale by the fuel retailer, the fuel retailer must report that fact in accordance with subregulation (2).

Penalty: In the case of -

(a) a body corporate, a fine not exceeding 1 000 penalty units; and

(b) a natural person, a fine not exceeding 100 penalty units

(2) A report required under subregulation (1) -

(a) must be made within 30 minutes after the fuel retailer has run out of the relevant fuel to which the report relates; and

(b) must be made in such a manner, and include such information, as is determined by the Director and published on the website operated by, or on behalf, of the Department; and

(c) is to, where possible, include details as to when the fuel retailer is likely to be resupplied with the relevant fuel.'

Dr BROAD - Chair, we're moving all these as one. I'll start with the easiest one, which is the additional reporting requirements. The minister gave a reasonable explanation of why he has decided to include this in the bill. It is a good thing to know when fuel retailers run out.

If people could be made aware of that in a timely manner, although I don't think people are checking the fuel app that regularly, but knowing within 30 minutes, that's the same updating schedule as a change of price, so that's very reasonable. The penalties, as well, are consistent with the rest of the bill, so no trouble supporting that at all.

Then it comes to the first lot of amendments, which is a little bit disappointing. It is a symptom of doing things in a hurry. It looks like what's happened is, there's a standard clause, clause X, which is an impenetrable word salad. It would be nicer if this could be simplified. I don't know if the drafters of legislation have come up with an easier way to say what they're trying to say.

However, the bigger concern is, in the rush to get this done - the bill was tabled this morning - it looks like the name of the regulation to be amended is incorrect. We have to update that. I'm pleased that we're doing that now. We don't want a situation like we had for the supply bill before the last election where the mistake got picked up in the Legislative Council, meaning that we had to wait and then agree to the amendment to that supply bill before it could get done. There is a little bit of history here. When you're doing things in a rush, you do need to check. Getting the name of the regulation wrong is not a good look. You know, double-check, triple-check.

Also, the new clause A. Could the minister clarify the need for this? The new clause B, and the new clause C, so:

> Unless otherwise specified, a term used in these regulations has the same meaning in these regulations as it has in the code of practice for fuel reporting prescribed in schedule 1.

Is that just another clarification of doubt clause?

As well, the new clause C:

After regulation 3 of the Principal Act, the following regulation -

Oh no, that's the next bit. It just seems like there's been some details missed. Are you still going over it so that we can amend if there are further mistakes now, because it would be a bit tragic if we were waiting around for the Legislative Council to amend, and then had to amend it as well. Let's just hope that these are the only mistakes but this is what happens when you do things in a rush. There's a bit of form here. I think we need to do a bit better.

Mr BARNETT - Chair, I thank Dr Broad for those remarks. To be very clear in terms of the new clause X and to respond to your concerns, that is included for the avoidance of doubt. I think I shared that earlier in the afternoon through my officials. Clause X is there for the avoidance of doubt.

You made reference to Part A, Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2020 amended. This is a new regulation. It's actually inserted into the bill. That's the reason that is there. It is done for a reason. It has been carefully checked. My advisers confirm that is the position and it's set out in the bill accordingly.

We are very confident that when you check your FuelCheck app, once subject to the legislation passing, it will be updated every 30 minutes, so you can have access to your price and then access to if there's any outage at your petrol station for whatever the fuel is - petrol, diesel, if there's some other fuel. That's a requirement going forward, subject to this legislation passing.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 16 agreed to.

Title

Mr BARNETT - The amendment to long title, I move -

Page 3, after '(Tasmania) Act 2010,'

Insert 'the *Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2020*,'

Amendment agreed to.

Title, as amended, agreed to.

Bill taken through the remaining stages.

PETROLEUM REPORTING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 11)

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[7.25 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That you leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells.

Motion agreed to.

The House suspended at 7.25 p.m. until the ringing of the bells.

And the House having continued to sit after midnight.

FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2026

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 (No. 11)

[1.37 a.m.]

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council having this day agreed, with Amendments, to a Bill, intituled -

'A Bill for an Act to amend the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Act 2010, the Australia Consumer Law (Tasmania) (Code of Practice for Fuel Price Reporting) Regulations 2020, the Australian Consumer Law (Tasmania) Infringement Regulations 2021, the Energy Coordination and Planning Act 1995 and the Petroleum Products Emergency Act 1994', now returns the same to the House of Assembly, and to requests its concurrence therein.

CM Farrell, President
Legislative Council
27 March 2026

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the said message be taken into consideration forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

PETROLEUM REPORTING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 11)

In Committee - Consideration of Legislative Council Amendments

Amendment of the Legislative Council to Clause 19

Clause 19

Page 14, after paragraph (c).

Insert the following paragraph.

(d) by inserting the following subsection after subsection (2);

(2A) If a period of emergency restriction has been declared under this section for 90 days or more within a 120-day period, a resolution of both Houses of Parliament is required that authorises -

(a) any extension of that period of emergency restriction under this section; or

(b) any further period of emergency restriction that is to be declared in the 120 days immediately following that 120-day period.

Mr BARNETT - Chair, I move that the amendment of the Legislative Council be agreed to for a couple of reasons. I don't think the scenario that's outlined in the views of the mover of the amendment are very likely to occur at all but in terms of an abundance of caution and with due respect to the Legislative Council, the government won't be opposing in any way the amendment.

I wanted to also add my sincere thanks to the consideration by the members of the Legislative Council and likewise to members in this place. It's been a long day, but a very important day for the people of Tasmania. Fuel security is a top priority. I wanted to pass on my sincere thanks for the consideration, the collaboration, and earlier I made a remark with respect to the patience of job, and that's been demonstrated today in my view by everyone in this Chamber.

I thank you for your support for this bill and I commend it to you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Chair, on the amendment, I'd like thank everyone. Just 13.5 hours ago we had a Ministerial Statement, so I very much appreciate the work across the parliament: briefings that were attended, of course, both in the lower House and upper House as well. I want to thank our Attorney-General for the work and diligence for bringing this forward, but also the manner with which you've consulted with the parliament as well, and for colleagues who asked questions, a very important matter as it is. I want to thank all our officials who supported the briefings as well and I recognise the challenge in the other place and very much appreciate their scrutiny of the bill, but ultimately their support of the bill as well. Thank you.

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - On the amendment, maybe we concur with the Deputy Premier that this is a circumstance that may never arise, but nonetheless it ensures that the parliament has a role when circumstances are extended to a particular level. From our perspective, that's always a good thing. We absolutely support this amendment and note that it doesn't amend the bill we considered today. It amends one of the original acts.

Amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported.

Resolution agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[1.42 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Answer to Question - TasWater - Service Charges

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Choose an item.) - Honourable Speaker, in response to the question asked by Professor Razay during Question Time this morning about TasWater developer charges, I can confirm that developer charges are standard. Upfront charges are not imposed on existing customers. Developer charges are upfront and regulated charges applied as a condition of connection. They include headwork, shared infrastructure contributions, and site specific augmentation costs. All charges are set within a framework approved by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator, not arbitrarily by TasWater. It is important to note that the model for developer charges is currently subject to review by the Economic Regulator as part of his price determination investigation - the model could change, but the payment principle won't, that being, new developments fund their share of infrastructure, not existing customers. Further detail is publicly available on TasWater's website and I will arrange for the relevant link to be sent to the honourable member.

The House adjourned at 1.44 a.m.