



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 1 March 2022

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 1 March 2022

The Speaker, **Mr Shelton**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

MESSAGES FROM GOVERNOR

Division of Bass - Resignation of Sarah Courtney

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I advise the House that I have received the following correspondence from Her Excellency the Governor, Government House, Hobart, Tasmania.

10 February 2022

The Honourable Mark Shelton MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Parliament House
Hobart 7000

Dear Mr Speaker

I have received a letter dated 10 February 2022 from Ms Sarah Courtney MP tendering her resignation as a Member for Bass in the House of Assembly.

I have instructed the Electoral Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the provisions of Part 9 of the Electoral Act 2004.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Baker
Governor

Division of Bass - Election of Lara Alexander

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I advise the House of the following communication I have received from Her Excellency, the Governor, Government House, Hobart, Tasmania.

28 February 2022

The Honourable Mark Shelton MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Parliament House
Hobart 7000

Dear Mr Speaker

I send herewith the Certificate of the Electoral Commissioner stating that a recount has been held under the provisions of Part 9 of the Electoral Act 2004 to fill the vacancy in the Division of Bass caused by the resignation of Ms Sarah Courtney.

Following the recount of the resigned member's ballot papers, Lara Alexander has been elected to fill the vacancy. The election takes effect from Friday 25 February 2022.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Baker
Governor

MEMBER SWORN

Lara Alexander - Member for Bass

[10.02 a.m.]

Lara Maria Alexander, Member for the Division of Bass was sworn and declared that she had subscribed to the Code of Conduct.

STATEMENTS BY THE PREMIER

Hillcrest Primary School - Condolences

[10.04 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I spoke with both Leaders last night and I am sure I speak for all members in offering our sincere condolences to the families of the six children from the Hillcrest Primary School who were taken from us far too soon in December. We also offer our well wishes for the ongoing recovery of the three injured children.

There will be a formal motion later this week so that the House can pay its respects regarding these tragic events. As this is the first time the Parliament has met since this event, it is important that the community understands that our thoughts continue to be with these families and those who are now affected, and that our entire state stands behind them.

Ukraine Situation

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I place on the record my Government's significant concern at the situation unfolding in Ukraine. The Tasmanian Government will be laying down a motion after question time today affirming our respect for Ukrainian territorial

sovereignty, its right to peace, freedom and democratic rule. We will ensure that all members have the opportunity to express their views at the appropriate time.

I have also written to the Prime Minister in these terms and reiterated that as a state we stand ready to play our part to assist with any resettlement that may be required.

Ministerial Appointments

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I wish to advise the House of changes in ministerial responsibilities following the resignations of Sarah Courtney from the Cabinet and the Parliament, and Jane Howlett from the Cabinet.

I have again taken on the responsibility for the Climate Change and Tourism portfolios.

The member for Franklin, Nic Street, was sworn into Cabinet last month as the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Community Services and Development, Science and Technology, and Heritage.

The member for Clark, Madeleine Ogilvie, was sworn in as Minister for Small Business, Disability Services, Women, Racing, and Hospitality and Events.

Minister Roger Jaensch has taken on responsibility for the new combined portfolio of Education, Children and Youth, as well as the Skills, Training and Workforce Growth portfolio. He retains State Growth and Aboriginal Affairs.

Minister Michael Ferguson will now be responsible for the Local Government and Planning portfolio, while his Science and Technology portfolio has transferred to minister Street. He retains his other ministerial responsibilities.

I have also appointed a new Parliamentary Secretary to me as Premier, the member for Braddon, Mr Felix Ellis, who will also be the Government Whip going forward.

The member for Lyons, Mr John Tucker, will be the Government's nominee for Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. I thank him for his work as Parliamentary Secretary and as previous Whip.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Jane Howlett MLC - Resignation as Minister

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.07 a.m.]

Did your decision to remove Jane Howlett as Minister for Sport and Recreation on 16 February, in the first of two chaotic Cabinet reshuffles last month, have anything to do with the fact that five days earlier your media unit received questions about whether she had a serious conflict of interest?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. To be frank, after three months off, if that is the best you can do, dear me, I wonder what you have been doing with yourself.

In terms of that decision to appoint Mr Street to the Sport portfolio, that decision was made on the basis that Mr Street has a background as an adviser in that portfolio and was best placed to take it on. I am certain he will do a fantastic job.

Jane Howlett MLC - Resignation as Minister

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.09 a.m.]

Do you maintain that Jane Howlett's resignation, prompting the second chaotic Cabinet reshuffle in a month, had nothing to do with the persistent allegations of a close personal relationship rumour between her and the CEO of the JackJumpers?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I am not going to speak about rumours. I guess it is the province of the Opposition to trawl around in terms of rumours.

When Ms Howlett spoke to me, she very clearly and very sadly indicated that she needed to take some time away from her role as a result of personal and family circumstances brought on largely by the death of her brother, of which you are all well aware. As I said publicly on the day that Jane left the Parliament, I learnt something the day of that swearing-in. Ms Howlett, within a handful of hours after the death of her brother, had very bravely turned up to Government House to go through the process of the swearing-in of the new minister.

Mr Speaker, as a Premier, I will never put that task on any of my ministers or members of my government again. Even though Ms Howlett had said clearly that morning that she wanted to go through with it, like many people in this place, I have had people close to me die, and there is no way in the world that I could have stood up five hours later and gone through the swearing-in of a minister as Ms Howlett did, and I am sorry for putting her through that.

In answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question, Ms Howlett resigned for personal and family reasons and I wish her well.

COVID-19 - Return to School Arrangements

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.10 a.m.]

When you made the decision to send unvaccinated, unmasked primary school children back into classrooms during raging community transmission of COVID-19, you assured Tasmanian parents, students and teachers that your Government had a plan to return to school safely and that schools would provide a COVID-safe learning environment.

Within two-and-a-half weeks, eight in 10 Tasmanian schools had reported COVID-19 infections. The Burnie Support School, with some of our most vulnerable students, was forced to close and, as of last Friday, daily case numbers were up by almost 50 per cent since the start of school.

Your plan clearly did not provide COVID-safe learning environments for unvaccinated, unmasked primary school students, where most of the infections and outbreaks have occurred. They have been exposed to a deadly virus with known long-term consequences. Will you now apologise to Tasmanian parents, students and teachers for not ensuring schools are safe?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question. I must admit I have been waiting two months to respond to some of the rubbish that she started with over the Christmas period.

Ms O'Connor - I didn't unleash a deadly virus on half a million people.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Some of the crazy stuff that she started with over the Christmas period.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. This question is asked on behalf of Tasmanian students, teachers and parents -

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, that is not a point of order and you know that, disrupting the Premier in his answer. You had a considerable preamble that went to a lot of places and I will allow the Premier the opportunity to address those issues.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Some of the crazy stuff that she was talking about - eugenics is where you went. She was out there, day by day trying to frighten people, doing her very best. I have with me some of the stuff she actually went on with, which was just extraordinary.

The member said that this would lead to a mass disabling event and deaths, and would also crush the local health system and hammer the economy. She went on to claim it 'attacks

the brain,' and that 'politics and the profit imperative have undermined an ongoing effective public health response'. 'We are caught in a massive health and social experiment that is driven by politics.' You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Speaker, the one thing I have done from day one is to follow the Public Health advice, and that advice has been followed to the letter. Today, what we are seeing is our community demonstrate confidence. What we are seeing now is our community transitioning to where they can live with COVID-19. What we are seeing within our schools is simply the fact that our schools are a reflection of our society. We always said that we would see an increase in cases in schools. That is what has occurred in other jurisdictions. The important point that I make here and very firmly is that our system is working.

We are providing for Rapid Antigen Tests that enable children to be tested at home before they go to school. When claims of outbreaks in schools occur the children are at home. They have been tested, they are at home, they are not running around the classroom as some would attempt to portray.

I am disappointed in the way that you behaved over that Christmas period. You pivoted from following the health advice to wanting to frighten people. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Securing Tasmania's Future - Living with COVID-19

Mr ELLIS question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Government's plan to secure Tasmania's future is working? Are you aware of any other approaches?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and for his work in his community to ensure we transition safely to living with COVID-19, unlike others in this place.

We have a strong plan to secure Tasmania's future. That plan by any measure is successfully working. As we transition to living with COVID-19 we find ourselves, once again, with an economy that is one of the best in the country, one of the strongest in the nation. We are in one of the safest places in the world.

Our vaccination rate is incredibly high. About 97 per cent of Tasmanians over the age of 12 are doubled vaccinated. We lead the states on vaccination rates for five- to 11-year-olds. Our hospitalisation rate on a per capita basis is the lowest in the country.

From day one we have followed the Public Health advice. That has stood this state in good stead, albeit there are some in this place who have done their best to frighten people, to unnecessarily cause concern. We supported our businesses when we needed to. We provided nation-leading support and stimulus programs to support businesses, in many cases small businesses, and the people they employed. Our state is reaping those rewards.

In January, the State of the States report by CommSec once again ranked our economy the best performing in the country - for eight consecutive quarters. Employment is at nearly record levels - 260 000 Tasmanians in work. Our unemployment rate is at a previously unheard of 3.8 per cent. Private new capital investment, which demonstrates that our business community and our investors have the confidence to invest, was 30.7 per cent higher over the December 2021 quarter. That is the highest growth of all the state's due to the confidence of our businesses to invest.

It is little wonder that the NAB report found that we are in the top two jurisdictions in the country for confidence in respect of our business settings. Retail in January was up 0.7 per cent on December. December last year, albeit slightly down on November, was up on the previous December, demonstrating that people have confidence.

The Revised Estimates Report demonstrated that our net operating balances improved by nearly half a billion dollars over the Budget and forward Estimates period. For the financial year it was closing in on \$100 million, an \$85 million improvement in the bottom line. Revenues are increasing because our economy is strong and people have the confidence to invest and employ.

We want more Tasmanians to have opportunities in renewable energy, in agriculture, in aquaculture, building and construction, tourism and hospitality, and arts and culture. We want more Tasmanians to be able to access jobs in those areas. We are continuing to invest, to ensure they have those opportunities.

There is nothing clearer than the first question from the Opposition Leader this morning. While we have been getting on with the job, while we have been reopening our borders and transitioning to live with COVID-19, on that side of the House they once again started the parliamentary year with nothing in the tank, wanting to talk about rumours, not about plans. Whingeing is not a platform; complaining is not a policy. It looks like they have learnt nothing over the summer.

Jane Howlett MLC - JackJumpers Funding

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.21 a.m.]

Your Government has spent nearly \$100 million of public money in ways that directly benefit the JackJumpers. Was Jane Howlett involved in any of the processes related to these decisions?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, on decisions regarding the JackJumpers, Ms Howlett made it perfectly clear there was no truth to rumours and there was no conflict of interest. The major contractual arrangements with the JackJumpers were started with the previous premier and they were finished by me as Premier and Treasurer.

Jane Howlett MLC - JackJumpers - Alleged Conflict of Interest

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.22 a.m.]

When did you first become aware of persistent allegations Jane Howlett was having an affair with the CEO of the JackJumpers? What steps did you take to investigate any potential conflict of interest?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not even feel inclined to thank the member for that question. That has taken this place to a new low. When my office was contacted by the *Mercury* that was the first I was aware of any issue. I spoke to Ms Howlett very shortly after that and she categorically said that there was no truth to the rumours.

Ms White - Then you dumped her from the Sport portfolio.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - If that side of the House wants to start dealing in rumours, do not worry. I will load up and I will talk about a few of you in this place. Do not worry about that at all. It is the height of hypocrisy on that side of the House. If they want to load up and start talking about rumours then I am more than happy to return fire. Have a look at the lot of you. We have the seven red masks and Mr O'Byrne sitting there with his white mask. The contrast could not be clearer. If you want to talk about integrity, you explain, Leader of the Opposition, how you voted for Mr O'Byrne when that complaint was sitting on your desk? You have some things to explain.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. The member has misrepresented me. I ask him to withdraw. He is misleading the House. It is not true. What is the ruling on the point of order? May I seek your guidance please, Mr Speaker? Is it now the case that members can mislead this House with no evidence and not withdraw when they are called to order?

Mr SPEAKER - As the Leader is aware, you have raised the issue that it is untrue. If you wish to make a statement, you can do but you need to indicate that you are going to make a statement around that point at a later date.

Ms WHITE - I ask the member to withdraw his untrue allegation.

Mr SPEAKER - If you feel personally aggrieved at the statement you can ask for it to be withdrawn; otherwise you can make a personal statement after the end of question time if you wish to go further.

Ms WHITE - I ask for it to be withdrawn, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - The Leader of the Opposition has taken offence. Two points: if you claim to be misrepresented then at the end of question time you can make that clarification; if you are deeply offended by words that were used then you can ask for the withdrawal. You

claim that you were misrepresented, therefore that opportunity to correct the record comes at the end of question time.

Ms WHITE - I asked for it to be withdrawn. It was not true.

Mr SPEAKER - Sorry?

Ms WHITE - I asked for it to be withdrawn. You said that was one of the options I had available. It is not true.

Mr SPEAKER - If you take personal offence to what was said - if you are offended by what was said, if it is inaccurate then you have the chance to correct it.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, I might clear the matter up. It is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition is frightened of standing up after question time and providing an explanation for these matters. That is perfectly reasonable because I think she has a fair bit to explain. However, if she has taken offence at the words that I have used, I withdraw.

Housing - Limiting Short-Stay Accommodation

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for HOUSING, Mr FERGUSON

[10.27 a.m.]

I acknowledge today's announcement that you intend to invest \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years to deliver an additional 6500 homes by 2032. However, this is 10 years away and your Government's track record of hitting targets is not good. People need homes now. Will your Government move immediately to ease the housing pressures by limiting short-stay accommodation to rooms in the owner's principal place of residence? Such a move will free up entire properties to be returned to the long-term rental market. Tasmanians need roofs over their heads now, not in 10 years time.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Government is very proud today to be unveiling a very strong and emboldened plan to build more houses for Tasmanians. We took to the last election, not one year ago, the boldest plan to continue our track record of delivering 1500 additional homes by June of next year. I am pleased to advise the House that we are on track to deliver that, and the construction sector in Tasmania is working extremely hard, delivering more houses than ever before. We have seen a record in housing starts and now we are also seeing a record in housing completions being delivered. The record speaks for itself.

It also has to be recognised that we have significant pressure on our housing sector in Tasmania, and Ms Johnston would be more than aware of that. We are seeing rising prices and we are seeing increasing rentals. That all comes back to the fact that the economy is so strong. Tasmanians are no longer leaving the state as they were under Labor and the Greens when they had to flee the state looking for work. In fact, the opposite is now occurring. People are now returning to the state. Tasmanians are coming back home, taking up these opportunities and

more interstate people want to call Tasmania their home because it is the hottest economy in the country, and the jobs market here is extremely strong.

As a boy growing up in this state I would have struggled to believe that the unemployment rate here could be 3.8 per cent. That is what it stands at; but we need to do more. Tasmanians have been telling us they do not just want to see short term delivery. They also want to see long term plans. That is why at the last election we took a bolder plan to go beyond the 2023 target and to reach a further 2000 homes by 2027 - and we will deliver that.

Tasmanians want ambition. They want aspiration. That is why the Premier will be providing further detail to Ms Johnston this afternoon. I encourage you to listen closely to the Premier's Address, because we will go further and will continue to build and deliver more housing for Tasmanians. We will make it so much easier for Tasmanians to get into the great Australian dream of home ownership and giving them an entry into the housing market.

There is a lot to do. Ms Johnston, you could play a role. Indeed, any member of this House can play a role and support the Government in a range of policies to help release more residential land to help the construction and residential construction sector to really hit its straps, to support us through the housing strategy and to consider innovative new models such as Build to Rent so that we can get the pipeline of housing moving even more seamlessly than is currently the case.

Right now, the housing industry is booming - not just government sponsored housing, not just our partnerships with community housing providers, but also in the private sector. Ask any council and they will tell you in their planning section that they are approving more housing applications now than ever before. We have been clear about the element of your question which went to planning and short stay accommodation.

The only way you can address the growing demand for housing is to increase supply. You do that by building more homes. Interestingly, the Greens' policy - and I wonder where the Labor Party's is - about taxing homes as some sort of way of delivering more housing, demonstrates the fallacy of those who believe that you can tax your way into more housing. The simple way that we will address this is by working with our community housing providers and our shelters, and ensuring that anybody right now who is in hard times or who needs housing support, we will support them and we encourage them to reach out to Housing Connect.

In closing, I commend members of this House to the Premier's Address this afternoon. It will be a watershed speech about the way this House and this parliament can promote and sponsor more housing, not just in the short term but over the next 10 years.

COVID-19 - Vaccination Program and Omicron Variant

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.33 a.m.]

Can you please provide an update on the Tasmanian majority Liberal Government's nation-leading COVID-19 vaccination program, and how the preparedness of our health system has meant we have been able to successfully manage the current Omicron flood?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the question has been asked of the minister. No one else should be speaking.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member, Mr Tucker, for his question and appreciate his interest in this particular matter. Indeed, it is of interest to all Tasmanians. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an enormous challenge, nationally and internationally, but our extensive planning and investment in hospital capacity has ensured our health system has been able to cope with the surge in COVID-19 cases in Tasmania.

As the member alluded to in his question, our vaccination programs are nation-leading. Tasmania has been a leader in the delivery of vaccine per capita. Tasmania targeted and delivered 90 per cent of eligible people fully vaccinated before opening our borders. We have had an ambitious vaccination plan and we opened when safe and ready to do so. We have not stopped there. We have continued the vaccination program and delivered: 12 and above first doses are now over 99 per cent, with over 96.8 per cent having a second dose; 16 and above boosters are at 57 per cent. Our five- to 11-year-old first dose is over 61 per cent - that is 11 per cent above the national average and it has been consistent all the way through. Our second dose roll out for five- to 11-year-olds commences this weekend with clinics in Bridgewater, Deloraine, Latrobe, Huonville, Scottsdale, Snug, Rocherlea, Sorell and George Town. Deloraine, Huonville, Scottsdale and George Town are also accepting walk-ins, or bookings for first doses. Please ensure you are booking your children in for their COVID-19 vaccinations, if you have not already.

Our health service was prepared and is successfully managing the Omicron wave. Tasmania has the lowest rate per capita of COVID-19 hospitalisation and ICU of any state with an open border. Specifically, Tasmania has the lowest rate between December 2021 and February 2022 of admitted patients for active COVID-19 cases. The COVID@home program is a significant contributor to Tasmania having the lowest rate of hospital admissions as a proportion of active cases, when compared to other open states. The program has supported close to 4000 COVID-19-positive cases to safely recover at home. We have also established community case management facilities to support COVID-19-positive cases unable to isolate at home.

As the Premier and I and others have said many times, any death is a tragedy. Tasmania currently has one of the lowest COVID-19 death rates per capita. Tasmania was the last to apply elective surgery restrictions and the first to lift restrictions. Elective surgeries continued at all of our major hospitals with only minor impacts on our waiting list targets, in January at the Royal Hobart Hospital, the Launceston General Hospital and the North West Regional Hospital. The Mersey actually managed to reduce its elective wait list during January. I commend them.

Tasmania is on track to deliver more surgeries this year than in 2020-21. We have improved our elective wait lists by over 2000 patients, compared to this time last year. Last year our extensive planning and strength in emergency management enhanced our ability to flex and move. The majority of cases of Omicron are less severe than previous waves. When our PCR testing came under incredible pressure in one of the hardest staffing periods, during

the Christmas and New Year break, our health emergency coordination centres responded. We established the rapid antigen test distribution model within 24 hours. We pre-positioned RATs into vulnerable sectors and the health logistic teams unpacked and repacked over 600 000 single rapid antigen tests for distribution to the Tasmania community.

Another example of our emergency management strength and flexibility has been our aged care emergency operation centre, which facilitated the establishment of rapid response outbreaks management coordination teams to enable cross-sector, multi-agency responses to high-risk exposure and outbreaks. The Public Health emergency operation centre has also demonstrated its agility in rapidly scaling up automated surveys and case triage as the volume of cases escalated. Our EPI teams have worked through mountains of data, closely managing Public Health restrictions and outbreaks in high-risk settings.

The extensive planning and investment in our emergency management structures, as well as our hospital capacity, together with the extraordinary dedication and resilience of our staff, all our health staff, has ensured that our health system was able to cope with a surge in COVID-19 cases in Tasmania. The state is continuing to transition to living with COVID-19 and we are focused on supporting our community with a well-prepared and well-resourced health system.

Land Tax - Effect on Rental Properties

Ms O'CONNOR question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.39 a.m.]

Over the past two days you have announced a stadium with a retractable roof, and a massive cut to land tax. You have claimed this 'gift' to investors will bring down rents. In the last year, following your last round of land tax cuts, rents have increased by 9 per cent in the south, 10 per cent in the north-west and 15 per cent in the north. According to Core Logic, rents in Hobart are now more expensive than Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide.

According to SGS Economics & Planning's most recent rental affordability index, Greater Hobart continues to be the least affordable capital city and the only capital where the average rental household will be considered in rental stress, paying over 30 per cent of their total income. It said:

Since 2016, the median rental rate in Hobart has grown by 50 per cent 'consistent across dwelling sizes'. It is now higher than the Melbourne median at any point in the past, despite the average rental household income in Tasmania being 33 per cent lower.

How will your land tax gift to people wealthy enough to buy a second, third or fourth property bring down rents?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. I ask, rhetorically, if she is suggesting that we should increase taxes in some vain attempt to increase housing? It appears the position the Leader of the Greens is taking is that we should not be reducing taxes,

especially land tax which is one of the building blocks of rent, and what we should be doing is either holding it at its current level or potentially increasing it.

I know that you lot are a high-taxing outfit. You have never been frightened to tax anything that moves. To be serious, I did not think that the Leader of the Greens would oppose that. It seems nonsensical. You are clutching at straws and playing politics because you know that land tax is one of the base building blocks. We want to reduce it to put some downward pressure on rents over time.

If I was increasing land tax they would be saying it would be putting upward pressure on rents. I am not certain where the Leader of the Greens is coming from. This afternoon, we will be announcing a \$1.5 billion program that is going to build more houses. It is going to make it easier for people to make their first step on the property ladder. We are going to lay out a long-term plan to ensure that the challenge we face, which is that our economy is strong and people want to live here, is turned into an opportunity.

Jane Howlett MLC - Allegations of Unacceptable Conduct

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.43 a.m.]

When Adam Brooks was facing allegations of defrauding women, you said you had asked him about the allegations. He had denied them and you had taken his answers on face value. If we are to believe your version of events, this is exactly what you have done in relation to the allegations faced by Jane Howlett. Is it your deliberate strategy to play dumb when you want to cover up allegations of unacceptable conduct by members of your Government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for her question. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants to stand behind these grubby allegations, which she is very clearly lining up Jane Howlett for, then make them outside. Have the courage of your own convictions if you believe in what you are putting forward.

Ms White - Uphold your ministerial code of conduct.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Let me once again remind that side of the House how your colourful face coverings this morning clearly demonstrate the rift between you and that member. The Leader of the Opposition, who took offence when I said that the complaint was sitting on her desk when she voted for Mr O'Byrne as leader, has some questions to answer. If it was not sitting on her desk, where was it and what did she know? What did she know when she supported Mr O'Byrne and, importantly, what did the others know? What did you quietly go along with until it was exposed by the courage of a young lady -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I draw the member's attention to standing order 45 - relevance. The question was specifically about the culture of cover-ups of this Government and how we can believe what he says given his previous -

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Points of order are not there to make statements.

Mr GUTWEIN - The culture of cover-up is rife over on that side, Mr Speaker, but we are looking at it. In your attempt to be politically smart and come in wearing a red mask this morning, what you have done is very clearly demonstrated to this parliament the chasm between you and the member that sits over there, and importantly again raises the questions that the Leader of the Opposition should have the courage to speak about: what she knew and when she knew it.

Securing Tasmania's Future - Minister Street's Portfolio Responsibilities

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for COMMUNITY SERVICES and DEVELOPMENT, Mr STREET

[10.46 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian majority Liberal Government is delivering our strong plan to secure Tasmania's future in the areas of Community Services and Development? Can you also outline the Government's plans for the Sports and Recreation, Heritage and Science and Technology portfolios? Is the minister aware of any other alternative program?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in these matters. This Liberal Government is focused on delivering a strong plan to secure Tasmania's future in 2022. As we step into living with COVID-19, Tasmania remains one of the safest places in the world to live and our economy leads the nation on many indicators. We are in a unique position to grasp the opportunities ahead so that more Tasmanians can access skills and training, get a job, build a career, get a home and have access to quality community facilities and services.

It was a great honour to accept the Premier's invitation to join his Cabinet and it is not something I take lightly. As minister across all my new portfolios I am committed to do everything I can to make it easier for Tasmanians when it comes to how they deal with government and the services we provide. In every region and community across Tasmania I want to help them to be better connected and supported and to encourage and enable greater participation.

Building stronger communities builds a stronger Tasmania, and any of us at any time can find ourselves in need of community services. I will continue to bring a human face to Community Services and Development portfolio to do my best to ensure that our Government is supporting the people who need that assistance, to support generational change to give more Tasmanians the chance to learn, grow and thrive, and this Government has been delivering a number of important measures to help bring about this change.

We have delivered Tasmania's first future security strategy, we have enabled Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to roll out their care adviser pilot program, we are progressing the development of Tasmania's first carers recognition legislation, and we are working with COTA Tasmania to develop our new active ageing strategy. I have also met with the CEO of TasCOSS, Adrienne Picone, to discuss the needs of the community sector and how

we can continue to work together. I am looking forward to working with all community organisations to ensure Tasmanians remain connected and supported.

In the Sport and Recreation portfolio I am focused on ensuring we provide increased opportunities to as many Tasmanians as possible to be active and participate and I recognise that this growth will come by encouraging and supporting grassroots participation. We are backing it up with more than \$38 million investment in over 140 sports and community organisations to deliver programs and infrastructure improvements, from grassroots community groups to high-level sports. We have clearly demonstrated our ability to deliver elite sporting content in our state but as Minister for Sport and Recreation, I will be focused on how we use this elite content to inspire and drive grassroots participation, particularly in our kids.

When it comes to the Science and Technology portfolio, this Government is strongly supporting Tasmania's booming technology industries. We are investing more than \$145 million across our agencies to contemporaries our State Service and better connect Tasmanians to the government services that they need and expect. Last year's budget featured the investment of \$8.5 million in specific initiatives highly targeted to boost Tasmania's digital economy, improve digital literacy and help our businesses to market their products and services around the world. I am particularly proud that we continue to invest in our long-running Digital Ready for Business program and that this is now complemented by the Digital Ready for Daily Life program for individuals as well.

In relation to the Heritage portfolio I recognise the importance of our built heritage as a connection to place and to our shared history and I also understand how it needs to be carefully and responsibly managed. Many local families and businesses have strong connections to place through our shared heritage and I also recognise it is a vital element of our state's brand and will continue to play an important part in our visitor economy.

The Government has a strong plan to secure Tasmania's future in 2022. I am grateful for the faith the Premier has placed in me to help deliver that plan across the range of important portfolios and I will be working hard for all Tasmanians.

I was asked about alternative approaches but I will not say much because there is not much to say about the alternative before Tasmanians presently. Labor has no vision for Tasmania and they have no ideas of their own. They still have not delivered an alternative budget because they either do not have the courage of their convictions or they are lazy - maybe it is both - and they try to have it both ways on key policy issues like our borders. Unlike Labor, who remain hopelessly divided and relentlessly negative, we are working hard as a team and we are busy getting on with the job of delivering for Tasmanians.

Jane Howlett MLC - Resignation from Ministerial Portfolios

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.51 a.m.]

Can you confirm that the day before Jane Howlett resigned, you met with her and a representative of, or someone engaged by, the JackJumpers in your office?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in terms of ministerial arrangements, they are matters between me and ministers. Let me be clear about that. In terms of Ms Howlett, she came to see me and told me she was resigning for personal and family reasons.

Jane Howlett MLC - Resignation from Ministerial Portfolios

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.52 a.m.]

You have just confirmed that Jane Howlett came to see you the day before you announced her resignation. Who was with her in that meeting? Was it somebody representing or engaged by the JackJumpers?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, Ms Howlett had a support person with her. Whether they were engaged by the JackJumpers or not, that was certainly not my understanding. She had a support person with her, which is her right to do so. I met with her, she explained her circumstances and she resigned, which I later accepted when she placed it in writing.

Children, Young People and Their Families - Government Support

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[10.52 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian majority Liberal Government is working to better support children, young people and their families?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, for his strong support for children and young people in Tasmania. Nothing is more important than the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people and ensuring that they have the tools they need to reach their full potential.

The children and young people who attend our schools, those in out-of-home care and those in our youth justice system are not different groups of children. They are the same kids. They all need to be safe, they all need to learn, and they all need and deserve the best chance we can give them to succeed in their lives, whatever that might mean for them.

That is why I am very honoured to be Tasmania's first Minister for Education, Children and Youth and to be responsible for Tasmania's first government department with the same holistic child-centred focus which will operate from 1 July this year.

I acknowledge the leadership of my predecessors, ministers Courtney and Rockcliff, for working hard to provide the strong foundations for a contemporary and continuously improving public education system in Tasmania.

Under this Government we have seen an increased network of child and family learning centres, every Tasmanian high school extended to year 12, a nation-leading model of disability funding, as well as funding to counteract the negative impact of trauma on learning. We have delivered a record investment of \$486.6 million in new education infrastructure, including \$116.2 million of capital investment funding in last year's budget.

This funding will ensure the delivery of 38 separate capital projects and programs, including new schools at Brighton and Legana; major redevelopments of existing schools and schools and school farms; six new Child and Family Learning Centres to support families with young children; new school outdoor learning facilities through our COVID-19 Safety in Schools Plan; and infrastructure upgrades to support years 11 and 12 learning at all government high schools and district schools.

I will continue to focus on students' wellbeing and ensuring they have the skills to engage in education which will set them up to be successful in their lives. I will prioritise the recommendations from the Department of Education Inquiry and the Royal Commission through the Office of Safeguarding and Young People, and I am committed to our target of all students eligible to sit NAPLAN being able to read at above the national minimum standard before they enter year 7, by 2029.

I also take this opportunity to thank all our school leaders, teachers, teacher assistants, professional support staff, school staff, Child and Family Learning Centre and library staff for their commitment and their passion for education in Tasmania. In particular, I acknowledge their continuing efforts to keep our community safe, and our learners learning, as we manage the transition to living with COVID-19.

This Government also has a proud record of strong action to improve the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. One of our most important achievements has been the implementation of the \$51 million Redesigning the Child Safety Service - Strong Families, Safe Kids. We are now seeing more support for families at risk than ever before, with fewer cases referred for statutory child safety intervention and a decrease in the rate of children and young people entering out of home care. Kids are remaining with their families and those families are receiving the supports they need to be safe places for kids. This is a significant achievement.

Together with our redesign, we have invested in the staffing resources our child safety system needs with a 40 per cent increase in staffing since 2014. Our Government is also providing greater support for informal kinship carers, priority access for kids in care to government services and concessions and better support for young people at risk of homelessness.

Looking to the future, we are delivering the Strong Family, Safe Kids - Next Steps Action Plan 2021-2023 that will consolidate the changes we have already made and continue the reform process, through building stronger oversight of our out of home care system, promoting permanency and stability for children and young people in out of home care, and ensuring better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.

A comprehensive review of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 will underpin many of these initiatives, with consultation commencing in coming months.

The Government has also embarked on a major reform of Tasmania's youth justice system. The last few years have seen significant improvements in the operations of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, both in facility upgrades and in the model of care. Last year, the Government decided to take the next steps forward through a comprehensive reform of the whole youth justice system, including the replacement of Ashley with two new therapeutic youth custodial facilities. I look forward to delivering these reforms and improved outcomes for young people in contact with our youth justice system.

I also thank Ginna Webster and Professor Michael Pervan and their management teams and the many committed and hardworking frontline staff who have delivered so much positive long-term change for Tasmanian children and families in their roles in the Department of Communities Tasmania over the last four years. I look forward to building on that work and working with them as we enter this next phase of reform.

Mr Speaker, the transition to the new Department of Education Children and Youth will be led by a head of agency steering committee and will be phased in from 1 July 2022.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has described the creation of the new department as 'a unique opportunity to create a more child-centered service system which, if properly implemented and funded, will lead to improved and enduring wellbeing outcomes for Tasmania's children and young people'. I agree with the Commissioner, and I look forward to delivering these outcomes as part of a Gutwein Liberal Government.

COVID-19 - Allowance for Frontline Health Workers

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11 a.m.]

Frontline health workers right across the state are doing an amazing job under the most difficult of circumstances. They work extremely hard and long shifts in full PPE with limited access to breaks, to provide care for those in our community who are sick, including those who have COVID-19. You are relying on the goodwill of health care workers to keep our ailing health system functioning. The Victorian Government is paying health workers a COVID-19 allowance in recognition of their hardworking commitment and tough working conditions. You have deliberately denied this state's health professionals a similar allowance by setting the threshold and trigger for the allowance artificially high. Why are you cruelly denying worthy frontline health workers this allowance?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his first question since he left the Labor Party.

Mr O'Byrne - It is the first time I have been allowed to, under the Standing Orders.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - They are the Standing Orders and it is up to you. You could negotiate for one of the seven if you wanted. That is an opportunity for you.

I thank the member for his question. I will make a couple of points. As the member is aware we are working on the COVID-19 allowance with the unions and our health workforce. If and when we escalate to Level 4 of the COVID-19 Escalation Plan then, I understand, an allowance is being considered and can be paid. I understand that arrangement has been put in place.

I thank our health professionals for the work they have done. There is no doubt they have been on our frontline. In many cases, they have borne the brunt of the incursion of COVID-19 both in recent times and in the past. If you look at where we have come from over the last two years, and what is occurring in other states, in Victoria my recollection is that they were one of the first jurisdictions to have COVID-19 in their hospitals, right on their frontline, and they closed hospitals.

We had the challenge on the north-west coast early on; but they lost a number of hospitals or parts of hospitals over time as COVID-19 impacted. That community was also locked down for more than 240 days over the two-year period when, after the challenges we faced in the north-west, we had very little COVID-19 in Tasmania and our longest lockdown was in the south of the state for three days. The circumstances here are vastly different.

Also, I note that health professionals in Victoria for the last two years have had to deal with an incredibly high number of COVID-19 mortalities and presentations. Who can forget the very unfortunate circumstance when the outbreaks hit the nursing homes and a lot of elderly people were being transferred to hospitals?

Regarding our re-opening plan, it is fair to point out the contrast between where we stand today and where Victoria stands today. They have a much higher prevalence and a much higher per capita rate of people in hospital compared to us. As I was advised yesterday, I believe we have the lowest rate of hospitalisations out of all of the states and territories. The modelling that was prepared last year indicated we could have up to 400 Tasmanians hospitalised on a daily basis. It indicated that we needed to have a significant increase in ICU settings, and we established a process that enabled us to have 112 or 113 different ICU settings available across the state, to support people.

At the moment, we have been averaging 10 to 12 hospital admissions and one to two people in ICU. I understand that it can be very challenging to work in these wards and in the PPE that is required. We have put in place that if there is an escalation to the highest level then a COVID-19 allowance will be paid. We have also taken steps, as I understand, to ensure that breaks are being more flexibly managed to work with our workforce.

We are working these matters through. Our response, as I have always indicated, will reflect the position we are in. I want to thank our health professionals. They have done outstanding work across our health sector. Our public servants more broadly, who have worked with us on our borders, in our quarantine hotels, have likewise provided exceptional service.

We are now stepping down our quarantine hotels. Allowances have ended. Those allowances were largely put in place because of the restrictions placed on workers on where they could go and what they were allowed to do. We are attempting, quite successfully, to

provide an appropriate response, one that can be flexed up. Allowances can be paid at escalation level 4. I believe the transition to living with COVID-19 is occurring relatively successfully.

I understand the Leader of the Greens -

Ms O'Connor - It means people dying with COVID-19, that means disabled people not leaving their home.

Mr GUTWEIN - I understand the Leader of the Greens, who has used some of the most inflammatory, dangerous language over the period that we reopened, will not agree with me.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, you are the only one that I have called to order today. It has been on a number of occasions. It is going to be a very long year through question time if you are going to interject while ministers are trying to answer questions. I plead with you, please do not do that anymore. You are now officially warned. The next time it happens I will ask you to leave.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Right through this, and I think Ms O'Connor understands this clearly, we have followed Public Health advice. That advice informed the plan, supported the plan, and provided the framework for that plan. We will continue to follow that plan. I urge all members in this place to bring matters to our attention when required and we will do our best to work with our community should challenges emerge. We are in a good place. We will get to a better place. I hope that this parliament can continue to work together to ensure that we do.

Time expired.

TABLED PAPERS

Public Works Committee

Mr Tucker presented the following reports of the Public Works Committee:

- Tasman Highway - Hobart Airport to Midway Point Causeway
- Illawarra Main Road Upgrade
- New Brighton High School
- New Legana Primary School
- Royal Hobart Hospital Stage 2 - J Block Redevelopment
- Burnie Ambulance Station
- Burnie Court Complex.

Reports received.

Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee 2021

Mr Ellis presented the following report:

- Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee 2021.

Report received.

Joint Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation

Mr Ellis presented the following reports:

- Scrutiny of Notices issued under Sections 13, 15 and 19 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993) - Report 18
- Scrutiny of Notice issued under Section 17 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Magistrates Court - Electronic Service and Witnessing) and Scrutiny of Notice issued under Section 20 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Magistrates Court - Proceedings) - Report 19

Reports received.

JUSTICE MISCELLANEOUS (INDEPENDENT REVIEW AMENDMENTS) BILL 2022 (No. 3)

First Reading

Bill presented by Ms Archer and read the first time.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Chair of Committees - Resignation of Mr Street

[11.17 a.m.]

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I wish to advise the House that I am in receipt of the following correspondence from the honourable member for Franklin, Mr Street:

17 February 2022

The Honourable Mark Shelton MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Parliament House

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby resign the office of Chair of Committees. When the House assembles, I shall be glad if you will inform Honourable Members of my resignation and at the same time convey to them my appreciation of, and thanks for, the courtesy and consideration which has been extended to me during my occupancy of the Chair.

Yours faithfully

Nic Street MP
Member for Franklin.

CHAIR OF COMMITTEES

Appointment of Mr Tucker

[11.18 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That John Ewart Tucker be Chair of Committees of this House.

Mr SPEAKER - Is the motion seconded?

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to support the Premier's nomination for Mr Tucker who I believe will be an outstanding support to you and an excellent Chair of Committees.

Mr SPEAKER - Does the member accept the nomination?

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - I do.

Mr SPEAKER - As there are no further nominations therefore no vote is required. I declare the member Chair of Committees. Congratulations.

MESSAGES FROM GOVERNOR

Committee Membership - Resignations

[11.19 a.m.]

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I wish to advise the House that I am receipt of the following correspondence from Her Excellency the Governor:

23 February 2022

The Honourable Mark Shelton MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Parliament House, Hobart

Dear Mr Speaker

I have the honour to inform you that on 22 February 2022, the Honourable Nic Street MP tendered his resignation as a Member of the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, effective from 18 February 2022.

I have enclosed a copy of Mr Street's letter of resignation.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Baker
Governor

On 25 February 2022 I received the following correspondence:

25 February 2022

The Honourable Mark Shelton MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Parliament House, Hobart

Dear Mr Speaker

I have the honour to inform you that on 25 February 2022, Mr Felix Ellis MP tendered his resignation as a Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation.

I have enclosed a copy of Mr Ellis's letter of resignation.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Baker
Governor

On 1 March 2022 I received the following correspondence:

1 March 2022

The Honourable Mark Shelton MP
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Parliament House, Hobart

Dear Mr Speaker

I have the honour to inform you that on 28 February 2022, Ms Madeleine Ogilvie MP tendered her resignation as a Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation and the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

I have enclosed a copy of Ms Ogilvie's letter of resignation.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Baker
Governor

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Appointment of Members

[11.21 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move that -

- (a) The member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, and the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, be appointed to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to section 3(3) of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970.
- (b) The member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, and the member for Bass, Ms Alexander, be appointed to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation pursuant to section 3 of the Subordinate Legislation Committee Act 1969; and
- (c) The member for Bass, Ms Alexander, be appointed to serve on the Library Committee.

[11.22 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I have no objection to the appointments but I want to point out the performance that the Leader of the House put on last year when we moved a similar motion to appoint Ms White to committees and the lack of consultation beforehand.

I had not seen the motion and I was not sure who the Government was going to appoint, though it would be pretty obvious to anyone who has been watching that there has been a lot of changes in the Government.

[11.22 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we had not seen that motion that was just tabled by the Leader of the House. In the past there has been, albeit sporadically, a measure of collaboration around these sorts of motions. I do not know if it is because Mr Ferguson, along with the entire Government, is distracted by its internal dysfunction, but that is the sort of motion that should come to the leader of Opposition business, the leader of Greens business, to Ms Johnston and Mr O'Byrne, before we are asked to debate it and vote on it.

I congratulate Mr Tucker on his elevation to Chair of Committees; Ms Ogilvie, who is now a minister of the Crown; and Ms Alexander, who has been elected into this job of great responsibility and honour. Of course Ms Alexander has only just been elected and is now on

two parliamentary committees which the Greens are shut out of. Across the Government benches every child has received a prize, whether it is a portfolio or committee membership or to be Deputy Speaker.

This brings us to one of the most important and outstanding issues that this parliament has yet had the courage to properly confront. That is the need to restore the numbers in the House of Assembly to 35. We have a Government that lost two ministers within the space of two weeks, two Cabinet reshuffles in two weeks, and a Premier who was clearly scratching around for replacements. I encourage members of this place to stop playing politics with good governance and representation and to acknowledge that increasingly in the community Tasmanians want to see this House restored to its proper size. This is not an unpopular move, and that should not be a reason we do not do it anyway.

Outside this Chamber, every member you speak to about restoration agrees it needs to be done. Our inquiry across the parliament into the Greens' restoration bill was unanimous in its support for restoring the numbers. As members know, we have tabled a bill. It is a straightforward bill that increases the numbers from 25 to 35 and allows for an extra cabinet position. We will bring that bill on for debate, and we will time it very thoughtfully. I am mindful of the Premier having said, 'Wait until we're two years in to the term'. Of course, that tells me that the Premier, and indeed the Leader of the Opposition, want to have a look at the numbers and want to have a bit of a psephological breakdown of what it might mean for them at the next election. However, why not do the right thing by this parliament and by the people of Tasmania and support the restoration of this House so that it is functional; so that when a minister falls, we do not have a Premier scratching around and at times scraping the bottom of the barrel in order to form a Cabinet.

We have tabled a motion today that the House gives its in-principle support to Recommendation 1 of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the House of Assembly Restoration Bill 2018 and we will also be bringing that motion on for debate before we debate the bill proper. I implore members, just this once, for us collectively to do the right thing by this parliament that we are all so honoured to be represented to serve the people of Tasmania.

Ms ARCHER - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to draw your attention, and I may have been wrong but I did see the member for Bass, Ms Finlay, take a photo in the Chamber which, of course, is not allowed without the consent of yourself and others. It was in your direction and the direction of the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. I draw that to your attention, Mr Speaker, because I would not like to see that type of precedent set in the Chamber for anybody's benefit. I do not think that it is appropriate.

Mr SPEAKER - Thank you for that.

Ms FINLAY - Do I have a right of reply, Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER - Please.

Ms Archer - I could be wrong.

Ms FINLAY - For the benefit of the member, I took a photo of a piece of paper which I have sent to my office. I scanned a document and forwarded it to my office - the copy of the Notice of Motion I tabled earlier before 11 o'clock.

Ms Archer - Thank you for clarifying that.

Mr SPEAKER - It is a timely reminder of the protocols and everybody should be aware of what we can and cannot do in this Chamber. Of course, we need to be respectful of each other and make sure that we adhere to all the rules.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Integrity in Government

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, the MPI this morning is on integrity in government, which is something that is lacking in this Government.

There is a stench of a cover-up culture emanating from this Government. There is a clear pattern of behaviour and that is most clearly demonstrated through what happened with Adam Brooks less than a year ago now. It is important to remember this, because it speaks to the behaviour the Premier is displaying now regarding Jane Howlett.

Members might recall that when the Premier was asked about Adam Brooks and the allegations that were raised about him, he said on three occasions that he believed Adam Brooks' version of events about catfishing two women through online dating sites and subsequent ongoing relationships. The Premier suggested that Adam Brooks was a victim of identity theft, saying, and I quote: 'He is a good-looking bloke'. When the Premier was shown a copy of the dating profile earlier in the week at a press conference, he suggested to the ABC reporter who showed it to him that she might have 'tricked it up' - a direct quote of the Premier. In fact, Mr Gutwein claimed that he did not know of Mr Brooks' criminal charges until the evening of 13 May - well after the election, and well after everybody else was taking it very seriously. Even when he was asked about this afterwards, the Premier said he did not regret backing Adam Brooks saying, and I quote, 'You can only take people at face value and on their word'. We all know that Adam Brooks resigned one day after his election was declared, after being charged by the Queensland police with possession of a hand gun, unauthorised explosives and false driver licences.

This is the Premier who, despite repeatedly being asked about the character of this person - a candidate he had endorsed after the Integrity Commission found they had lied - refused to believe those things.

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable member, we are aware of the issues around the use of the word 'lie'. If it is in a substantive motion about someone it can be used. In respect of everybody I ask the Chamber if they could always find another choice of words because it is seen as unparliamentary to use that word.

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, I will say the Integrity Commission found that Mr Brooks did not tell the truth.

That also tells us more about the Premier than anything else - that he was not inclined to investigate those serious allegations made against a member of his team. We are seeing the same pattern repeat now with Jane Howlett. This is a Government that, instead of dealing with the serious issues confronting it, creates distraction like claiming it is making a bid for the Commonwealth Games to distract from the fact that a minister has resigned from the portfolio, in fact resigned from parliament. That minister was Ms Courtney.

But, we have a time line for Jane Howlett. On 11 February, questions were asked through the media office to the Premier about a conflict of interest. On 16 February, the minister was dumped from the Sports portfolio, despite the Premier saying she was the best Sports minister Tasmania has had. On 25 February, we saw an announcement about her resignation from the ministry.

Mr Speaker, let me be clear, I do have sympathy for Jane on the death of her brother, Craig. I have expressed that to her personally - last week, when she was at the Launceston Cup. However, I do not believe that that is the sole reason she resigned from her portfolios. In fact, the Premier's explanation last Friday called into question why a minister in his Government is unable to have time off after the loss of family member without needing to resign. We heard from the former minister, Sarah Courtney, when she resigned, it was in part due to the death of her grandmother and the need to travel to be with her family.

Why are ministers in the Premier's Government unable to take leave for personal reasons? Why, in the past month, have we seen two examples where ministers have instead resigned? That says one of two things. It says either the culture of the Gutwein Liberal Government is so bad that ministers would rather resign than ask for leave; or the reasons given for the resignation were not honest. Ordinarily I would not be interested in why ministers in Mr Gutwein's chaotic Cabinet were deserting ship at a rapid rate, except to point out the instability that it is causing for Tasmania and governance of this state, and the hypocrisy of a Premier who is pretending that everything is alright when this is not the stable Government that he promised.

There is something else about the recent resignation of Jane Howlett that demands further scrutiny. Questions remain unanswered about an alleged conflict of interest between herself, as the former Sports minister, and the CEO of the JackJumpers basketball team, Simon Brookhouse. Mr Brookhouse is the CEO of a basketball team that has received significant largesse from the Government and the Tasmanian taxpayer. This becomes an issue of integrity when it involves the use of public money. The Premier and those opposite claim there is nothing to see here; however, by doing so they fail to acknowledge the community has a right to ask questions about matters of integrity.

There have been persistent rumours about Jane Howlett's relationship with Simon Brookhouse for some time. Does the Premier really expect us to believe that he had not heard them from anyone until the media contacted his office? They have both been seen at numerous events together, including this parliament at the end of last year, where they would eat and drink together in the evening on a regular occurrence and Mr Brookhouse would wait around until the Legislative Council finished late at night, sometimes at 11 p.m. You must be walking around with your eyes shut because it seems strange that any stakeholder would be forced to wait until parliament finishes at 11 p.m. to have a meeting with a minister and for this to happen on a regular occurrence.

Even if that unlikely event is true, it still does not exempt the minister from upholding her duties under the ministerial code of conduct, which says very clearly:

Ministers are expected to behave according to highest ethical standards in the performance of their duties, as they hold a position of trust, and have a great deal of discretionary power which can have a significant impact on the citizens of Tasmania.

There are specific references to conflicts of interest in there too.

Time expired.

[11.35 a.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I start by reminding members of the importance of treating parliamentary privilege in this place as a privilege, not just using it to fling around rumours and innuendo with absolutely no evidence or substantiation.

I rise today to speak on the general issue of the matter of integrity. Integrity is an essential trait for all of us to have. As a representative of a community, the importance of all of us in this place to have integrity is critical. It is about being accountable, dependable, open, true to your word and exercising good judgment.

Our Government is a principles-based government and not only do we exercise our role to the highest level of our ability, we take the steps necessary to strengthen areas of public accountability. We note and welcome feedback from members of the public as this provides an opportunity to address deficiencies and improve public service delivery.

As Attorney-General, and on behalf of our Government, I value the work of the Integrity Commission. I respect its independence and I have absolute confidence in its ability to undertake its duties. There has been history and poor form in this House of members weaponising the Integrity Commission in a bid for political point-scoring. Despite being cautioned last year, a member continued to insinuate there are current or past members that she suspected of not abiding by the obligations under the Integrity Commission Act 2009 and the various codes of conduct that are in place to cover the expected behaviours of ministers and members of parliament. However, that member could not point to one single specific instance of alleged misconduct or corruption in Tasmania to substantiate any of these claims. Even more concerning, she was forced to humbly retract and apologise for erroneous and baseless allegations she made in November last year about a former minister, matters that were on the public record in *Hansard* should she have researched it correctly.

This is a reminder in this House that we have a duty of care not to weaponise our independent commissioners or irresponsibly damage reputations in this place under parliamentary privilege. The Labor leader should know this better than anyone. Despite her best efforts to detract from the truth, we all know that the turmoil within Labor continues. Coming in here with same coloured mask does nothing to make you look unified. In fact, I question the use of looking like the Red Army at this point in time.

Opposition members interjecting.

Ms ARCHER - I really question who came up with that idea. By that reaction they are bitterly divided. They have had three leaders -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker. On behalf of all of us, I take offence at the Red Army reference. I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw that.

Mr SPEAKER - It has to be a personal attack.

Mr Winter - We all take it personally.

Mr SPEAKER - They have taken personal offence, Attorney-General.

Ms White - I take personal offence.

Ms ARCHER - You cannot do it collectively. It is about a personal attack.

Mr Winter - I take it personally. Just withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER - Could you withdraw it, please, Attorney-General?

Ms ARCHER - Mr Winter took personal offence, so I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. I was making an observation.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - They are bitterly divided. It is evident over there. They have had three leaders in a matter of months. Ms White promised to unite her team. She said the backgrounding and the infighting would end, but let us face facts, it has not stopped, it has got worse. Since Ms White was elected, Dr Seidel resigned, citing a 'toxic environment' over there, Mr O'Byrne was exiled to the crossbenches, no more evident than today. The Labor Party president has threatened Ms White with legal defamation action. The Labor Party secretary forced the Labor Party president to go. There is factional infighting on that side of the House playing out for all to see. Even the unions are disaffiliating from Labor.

There are some seriously outstanding questions Ms White still faces in this House in relation to Mr O'Byrne. She did know about the complaint against Mr O'Byrne but said, or did, nothing? She even endorsed him as leader knowing that. Only when the complaint was publicly revealed did Ms White say she did not want him in the party.

Ms White - Where is your evidence?

Ms ARCHER - Mr Speaker, if a member holds legitimate concerns they should and indeed must report such behaviour to the Integrity Commission as the appropriate and responsible authority and back it with evidence. The fact that there have been no cases of corruption found in Tasmania does not indicate there is a fundamental flaw with our Integrity Commission or with our processes. Rather, it demonstrates that the commission is working and fulfilling its role.

Our Government values the work of the Integrity Commission. We respect its independence. We have every confidence, as I said, in its ability to undertake its duties. Not only is it the role of the commission to investigate and prosecute misconduct but its supplementary and equally important role is to deliver education and guidance to members of this parliament and the public sector workforce. This educational role is critical -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Just a minute, Attorney-General. The Opposition has raised this issue within the Chamber; you have had a say. The Attorney-General is putting her points of view forward. I expect the Opposition to listen to her points and not keep constantly interjecting.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The education - oh, come on!

Ms FINLAY - Point of clarification, Mr Speaker. I was a little confused earlier at the personal offence that was taken to the previous remark. Was it actually withdrawn?

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Ms ARCHER - It was withdrawn and you are wasting time. I withdrew the comment. Mr Speaker, they are just trying to use up the time that is left.

I was saying it is an important role of the Integrity Commission to educate members of this parliament. I have encouraged the Integrity Commission to embark on an education process because I feel that members in this place have forgotten about their roles of integrity and to ensure that they do not use parliamentary privilege without realising that it is a great privilege to have.

Time expired.

[11.43 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, before I make my substantive contribution on this matter of integrity, I want to note that what has not been noted by the Government, the Premier, or the Health minister today, and that is today we have seen an uptick in confirmed, reported COVID-19 cases, from 734 yesterday to 957 today.

If we are talking about the Premier's integrity and the integrity of his Government we are not going to let the opportunity pass to remind Tasmanians that this is the same Premier who, after being warned effectively by the World Health Organisation not to describe Omicron as 'mild', kept using the word 'mild.' He has never acknowledged long COVID and the devastating, disabling effect that can and will have on Tasmanians. He has not acknowledged that at this point today, as far as we know, 46 000 Tasmanians have been infected by a deadly disabling virus. We had the Premier in here this morning trying to claim credit for the fact that hospitalisations have been kept low. How about giving credit to the people of Tasmania, who effectively shielded themselves from 15 December by wearing masks, socially distancing and staying at home?

The Government cannot claim credit for the numbers that we are seeing so far, but if they want to claim credit for anything it is the fact that 46 000 Tasmanians have been infected by a

deadly, disabling virus that produces long-term consequences. We have had the Premier not telling the truth to Tasmanians about this virus and the effect that it may have on them.

We are talking today about two things. We are talking about the conduct of a minister for the Crown in relation to a relationship that she had with a high-profile CEO of the JackJumpers. People fall in love and lust all the time. That is not the issue here. The issue is whether there is a conflict of interest that affected a minister of the Crown's capacity to do her job properly and within the confines of the ministerial code of conduct. We do not know the answer to that question.

The Labor Party today peppered the Government with a series of questions that were uncomplicated, that simply sought to establish some facts around this matter. What we got from the Premier was his most aggressive and defensive performance I have seen in this place in some time. What it did, regrettably for the Government, is fanned the flames. It is the old adage: where there is smoke there is fire. If you do not have a Premier who can stand up and honestly answer questions about the conduct of a former minister, it does simply fan the flames of suspicion.

In relation to Ms Howlett's given reasons for resigning, on behalf of the Greens I want to express my sympathy to Ms Howlett. It is the most devastating thing to lose a sibling. I know. I was a minister of the Crown when my sister took her life in July 2013. It is fair to say that at the time on the Opposition benches, the Liberal benches, the milk of human kindness had curdled because we got question after question, including to a minister whose sister had killed herself, about a tragic spate of suicides at Taroona High School. There was no sympathy then for a minister who was grieving.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Point of order. The record will show we apologised to Ms O'Connor at the time because we were unaware of that situation. We did give our condolences and express our regret to Ms O'Connor because we were not aware of that situation. Again I express my condolences to Ms O'Connor. At the time we were not aware of that situation otherwise we would not have asked that question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Ms Petrusma. I might point out at the time at least one of your members was aware because they texted me their sympathies before that question time.

Mrs Petrusma - After the case was -

Ms O'CONNOR - No. I've still got the text. No. One of your members at the time who chose to ask me questions about suicide after my sister had killed herself knew full well. I would like that placed on the record.

I do express sympathy to Ms Howlett. I can imagine right now that she is having a very difficult time. It would be really good if we could have this discussion without harming or causing more grief to Ms Howlett but a parliament's task is to seek the truth, a parliament's task is to aim for transparency -

Ms Archer - If it is relevant.

Ms O'CONNOR - and get governments to be accountable. I think that is relevant, Ms Archer. It is very relevant to understand whether a relationship between the minister of the

Crown and the head of the JackJumpers led to extra funds being given to the JackJumpers. That is a question of very legitimate and serious public interest. Today we have had no acknowledgement from the Premier of what is locally well known. We had the Premier feign ignorance about the reasons for Ms Howlett's resignation. It does not instil faith. We know the Premier is under enormous pressure. Despite his protestations it has cocked up a response to COVID-19. We know this Premier allowed his Education minister to go ooh la la, au revoir, to France for a holiday while there were huge question marks hanging over the safety of schools. We now know this Premier - certainly at face value - is not being completely honest about why his Sports minister resigned.

Time expired.

[11.50 a.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, the integrity of government is a cornerstone of our democracy. People have to have trust in government. If we do not have trust in government and the genuineness of what they do day-to-day, then democracy crumbles around us.

We have things like the ministerial code of conduct. Today we asked serious questions of the Premier about potential conflicts of interest, which the Premier did not answer. He should, because in the Premier's foreword of the ministerial code of conduct from May 2021 he says:

The Code reflects the expectation that Ministers, while in the service of the people of Tasmania, must uphold the highest standards and integrity and be honest, professional, and accountable in the performance of all their duties.

Parliamentarians are held to a higher standard than the rest of the public when it comes to the operations of our job and our own personal integrity. Ministers are held to an even higher standard, because it is ministers, especially cabinet ministers, who make decisions relating to billions of dollars of Tasmanian taxpayer funds. They also put in place laws that govern our state. People have to trust their governments. What we are seeing from this Government is anything but that integrity. According to the preamble:

Ministers are expected to behave according to the highest ethical standards in the performance of their duties as they hold a position of trust, and have a great deal of discretionary power which can have a significant impact on citizens of Tasmania. Therefore, Ministers must commit themselves to the highest ethical standards to maintain and strengthen the democratic traditions of our state and its institutions.

It is not just about acting lawfully. It is about a manner which withstands the closest public scrutiny. Today when I asked a question in question time about whether the then Sports minister had any involvement in decisions in awarding \$100 million dollars to the JackJumpers and associated entities, the Premier would not answer that question. Why would the Premier not answer that question? The answer could have been yes or no. We did not talk about integrity or potential conflict of interest. It was simply trying to get some facts. Was the then Sports minister involved in any of the decision making around awarding \$100 million, or thereabouts, of taxpayer money?

Tasmanian people have to have trust in government that that was above board. That is all we are asking. Was there a conflict of interest, or a perceived conflict of interest? People can make judgments of their own. The Premier not answering direct questions like that smacks of a cover-up. There were many coincidences.

On 11 February, questions were asked about Ms Howlett's close personal relationship with Simon Brookhouse. On 11 February questions go to the media office. A few days later, on 16 February, in the reshuffle - another reshuffle - Ms Howlett lost the Sports portfolio. That was a coincidence, Mr Speaker, an absolute coincidence. On 25 February, Ms Howlett resigned from the ministry. Why does that come to pass, when the Premier described Jane Howlett as being the best Sports minister Tasmania had ever had? Only a few days later when these allegations were raised, it is just a coincidence that she loses the Sports portfolio.

We think there is more to it. The Premier has questions to answer. How does he defend himself? He goes for the Chewbacca defence, where he starts rambling on about us wearing red masks. We heard the Attorney-General run the same line. Because we are wearing red masks he does not have to defend his former minister's integrity. What a disgrace. People have to have trust in government. Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. The leader of the Labor Party went into some details about another time when integrity has been brought into question and we see the Integrity Commission report here into Mr Brooks' conduct. That investigation found that Mr Brooks continued to be involved in the operation and management of his business MSS while a minister and concluded that Mr Brooks gave inaccurate, written assurances to the Premier and so on and failed to advise the Premier the true nature of his involvement. When Mr Brooks answered questions on his use of his email account, the investigation identified that later that night Mr Brooks accessed, collated, forwarded and then deleted a number of MSS emails.

Mr Brooks did not inform anyone other than his business manager and the investigation found that he deleted those emails to prevent detection and evidence that he had not removed himself from the operations of his business. Then he suggested to the Crown Solicitor that he do an email audit knowing he had already deleted all the emails. Then it was found that one of the reasons the Crown Solicitor could not do the audit was because Mr Brooks himself was blocking access to those emails.

All this blew up and Mr Brooks resigned in disgrace. Yet, what did this Premier do? He endorsed him, knowing this horrendous Integrity Commission report was on the table and on the public record. The Premier endorsed him, and then we heard during the campaign when legitimate questions were being asked about Mr Brooks' conduct in cat phishing and producing false licences and false credit cards, Mr Brooks replied that he was a good-looking bloke or a victim of identity theft. He dismissed the reporter who doggedly took up this issue and said that the evidence had been tricked up.

That is what this Premier would do: turn a blind eye, take Mr Brooks' word for it, knowing that there is this Integrity Commission report on the table detailing at some length how he had misled the Premier and misled the people of Tasmania.

People have to have belief in the integrity of government and especially in the integrity of the Premier. He needs to answer these questions truthfully or nobody will trust him.

Time expired.

[11.57 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, it is absolutely galling that the party opposite have decided to bring a discussion into this place about integrity. We all know their record. It has been brought into this House despite the fact that they have lived through any number of scandals over the previous years and are currently in the middle of what has to be one of the most spectacular factional infights that has been seen not just in Tasmania but anywhere around Australia. They are truly the worst branch of the Labor Party in the country.

Even today they tried to arrange a stunt where they are all wearing the same mask and they forgot about the poor old Labor member for Franklin over there who controls half the numbers in the Labor Party. It is a disgrace what they brought into this place because it smacks of galling hypocrisy. I refer to a report in the *Australian* on 15 May that stated that under a deal cut by Ms White and the party's controlling administrative committee, she quit in exchange for the ALP National Executive taking stewardship of a review into party governance. Those were her conditions of leaving the leadership.

Now that she is back we cannot wait to see what that review finds in terms of the ALP culture. It says everything about Ms White's Labor Party. It is in such a state of chaos and dysfunction that her only way out of the door was to cut a deal with the federal party, begging them to step in and take the reins that she could not hold when she was leader last time because she was so worried about the Labor member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, coming into the leadership. We understand why she was worried - because he is the shortest-lived opposition leader in history in Tasmania.

We all know there were allegations about what Ms White knew, but further to that, where is this review up to that she has got the feds to step in and take control of the Tasmanian Labor Party? When will Ms White release it, or will she release it at all? Nobody knows. Perhaps Ms White does. Perhaps it is something she will not explain, much like her explanation that she promised to give after question time which we heard nothing about. I challenge her to come in here on the adjournment if she does not want to use the time after question time to give us an explanation that she apparently was so keen to address.

If this review has actually occurred, and I very much doubt it, it will sit on the same shelf as the election reviews that Labor has never released in the past. It is not like the Opposition Leader's return to the leadership has stabilised things. We have already had, as I said, the display of the eight plus one that is going on here today.

You just have to look at what happened with Dr Bastian Seidel, who announced his intention to resign in August last year, citing a toxic environment. He is not a bad guy, Dr Seidel -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ELLIS - I know the community quite like him. I know they think of him as a man of integrity. Those are his words. The question is, does the Labor Party believe them? I certainly do, and I think that the Labor Party would be much better off looking in the mirror to get an understanding of questions of problems with integrity. Dr Seidel said at the time, and I quote:

I have tried to work constructively to solve some of the issues in our party, but have come to the realisation that I have failed. I can't work in the toxic environment -

I can understand that, Mr Speaker.

- and I can't work with people who constantly leak information to the media out of pure selfishness.

Ms Butler - So desperate. This is you on the ropes, isn't it?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms Butler.

Mr ELLIS - That is what the Labor Party think of the Labor Party. That is what a member who is widely regarded in the Huon community as having integrity says about the Labor Party. It has nothing to do with integrity any more. It is all about blatant power games from Ms White and the people who think they control that once proud party.

In October last year, Ms White was even reported in *The Examiner* as saying that the difficulties Labor was experiencing since the May election were a result of ongoing culture change within the party. I cannot wait for that culture change. I am sure when it happens, Dr Seidel will be the first to say that it has.

We have seen how well this absolute shambles has been addressed within the Labor Party. Just this week we have seen that the former president of the Labor Party -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The member will be heard in silence. The Opposition raised the issue. You have put your points of view. You will allow the member for Braddon to put his point of view. Thank you. The next person who interjects will be asked to leave.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Speaker. We know why they are whingeing - because they had their chance and they absolutely blew it.

Just this week, the former president of the Labor Party, who is no longer on speaking terms with senior members of the party and certainly not the Leader, was tweeting that when democracy in a party is forsaken, the real voices are squashed. Those are real voices, like Dr Seidel. Presumably the former president thinks of himself as 'real voices' and we know of countless members who have quit the Labor Party because they cannot stand being around the 'toxic environment' that operates on the other side. Integrity, indeed.

In contrast, the Tasmanian majority Liberal Government remains committed to improving openness, accountability and transparency in the operations of government. We have acted to implement a range of measures since coming into government in 2014, including enhancing and extending the routine disclosures of information across all government departments, public information which under a Labor-Greens toxic minority government was secret.

We were the first government to introduce online disclosures of parliamentarians' register of interest - which is how we know that Ms O'Connor happens to be part of the propertied class that she so desperately likes to smear in this place - and enhance the publication of right to information disclosures following their issue.

Further, to make access to the information easier, we have established a new government information gateway on the Department of Premier and Cabinet's website. That is how seriously we take this. To improve the functioning and resourcing of RTIs we have regularly provided the office of Ombudsman Tasmania with additional funding and a range of other measures. Labor, on the other hand, continues to work hand in hand with the Greens to undermine investment confidence in Tasmania.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[12.05 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, in accordance with practice and the Standing Orders in relation the Premier's Address, I move -

That the House be suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The House suspended from 12.05 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

[3.00 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, it has been a privilege and an honour to serve as Tasmania's forty-sixth Premier for just over two years. I would like to thank Tasmanians for working with me and my Government through what has been a challenging period as we have dealt with a worldwide pandemic. It is not over yet but we are in a good place and our reopening plan is progressing well.

I want to expressly thank and acknowledge the support and hard work of my colleagues who have stood steadfast with me as we work together to deliver our plan to secure Tasmania's future. I also want to thank in the most generous of terms the hardworking, dedicated and talented public servants who have over the past two years gone above and beyond in their efforts to keep our state safe and to assist those Tasmanians who needed support during these most challenging times.

Right now there is a quiet confidence in Tasmania. Our state is one of the safest places on the planet and our economy is strong. We went into the pandemic from a position of strength and we have worked hard to maintain this. As a result of our vaccination rates which, by any measure, are amongst the highest in the world, and the milder variant of Omicron, our hospitalisation rate is far lower than other states and significantly lower than anticipated.

We have welcomed Tasmanians home and visitors back and as we transition to living with COVID, Tasmania is in an advantageous position, viewed globally as unique and safe with world-leading environmental credentials and a strong, prosperous economy.

In its January State of the States report, CommSec ranked our economy as the best performing in Australia for the eighth quarter in a row. Employment is at near record levels, with 259 100 Tasmanians in work, and our unemployment rate at 3.8 per cent is the lowest it has ever been in our history. We have jobs looking for people, with growth in job vacancies 72.6 per cent higher than before the pandemic. Our building and construction sector is running hot with an extensive pipeline of work in front it and we have an abundance of opportunities in front of us.

For a long time, Tasmanian premiers have had to work very hard to convince investors to consider investing here, but not anymore. Today, as governments and corporations around the world seek renewable energy solutions and announce net-zero plans by 2050, we can already generate 100 per cent of our energy from renewables and have a target to double that, and in terms of net-zero we have achieved that aim in six out of the last seven years.

Unlike this place, others struggle to define who they are and what they might offer in a post-pandemic world. We do not, and consequently now nationally and internationally people and businesses are focused on Tasmania and Tasmanian ideas.

My Government is an aspirational government and our gauge is not just to the horizon but well beyond. Over the next 10 years we will invest to harness the significant opportunities we have available to attract investment, create jobs and opportunity, improve the lives of all Tasmanians and secure Tasmania's future.

Mr Speaker, the 2021-22 Revised Estimates Report released last month confirmed that Tasmania's economic and financial position remains strong and is strengthening as we emerge from the impact of COVID-19. Reflecting the strength in the economy, state final demand has been revised upwards from 3.75 per cent to 5.25 per cent this year and forecast continued economic and employment growth over the next four years. As a result of better economic and financial outcomes, the net operating balance has improved by nearly half a billion dollars over the budget and forward Estimates period and the budget remains on track for a return to surplus next year. The improved budget outcome is due to strong growth in revenue because of higher than expected activity across the broader economy.

My Government continues to invest in next-generation infrastructure for Tasmania which builds better communities, provides better services, opens up more opportunities and creates more jobs. Infrastructure investment for the six months to 31 December 2021 is \$321 million, more than \$81 million greater than the same period last year and, importantly, infrastructure investment has been revised upwards by \$72.5 million to over \$900 million this year. These outcomes are the result of hard work of Tasmanians doing the right thing - getting vaccinated, supporting our local businesses and, in turn, local businesses backing Tasmania.

As a government we provided unprecedented levels of community and business support and we delivered two social and economic support packages of more than \$1.3 billion, including Home Builder, First Home Builders Grants and our social housing record build. Since the beginning of the pandemic we have provided \$160 million in support to businesses to keep them going and, importantly, to save jobs.

I want to especially thank small businesses for their efforts over the last two years. These businesses, many family-owned, are the backbone of our economy, and while we have provided significant support we know that in many cases they bore the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we go forward we will not forget you. Whilst many of the major plans I announce today will underpin and support our economy and provide significant opportunities for the small business sector, should there be a need in the future for additional support we will always have their backs.

A strong economy enables more investment into areas that make a difference to the lives of Tasmanians such as health, housing, education and sports and community infrastructure. Governments need to plan beyond election cycles. They need to lift their eyes to the mid- and long-term horizons. Today, I want to speak about both, about where we are today but also where we are headed and what the future holds.

The 2021-22 Budget included a record \$10.7 billion investment over four years which was \$900 million more than the previous year and around \$4 billion more than the Labor-Greens government in 2013. While much of this funding has been targeted at immediate needs, such as reducing the elective surgery wait list, which is already making a difference, opening more beds and employing more staff, we are also firmly focused on planning for the future.

That is why our planned forecast investment of more than \$1 billion over 10 years into critical health infrastructure will ensure that generations of Tasmanians to come will be able to access care where and when they need it regardless of where they live, whilst also helping to attract and retain staff in our major hospitals.

The Budget currently includes over the next four years more than \$525 million of investment into health infrastructure, supporting the Royal Hobart Hospital Master Plan, the recently completed LGH Master Plan and the North West Master Plan currently under way, which informs our investment in modern health facilities, improving patient amenity and increasing capacity.

In the north, the Launceston General Hospital Redevelopment Master Plan forecasts capital investment of \$580 million over 10 years to deliver a new mental health facility and a new tower on the current Northside site, providing additional health services capacity to meet future demand. As well, my Government will also underpin the delivery of a new \$120 million private hospital within the LGH health precinct to ensure that integrated patient care and specialist services are delivered in a seamless way.

In the south we are delivering an expansion of stage 2 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment which represents over \$200 million in new facilities, including an additional 90 inpatient beds, a fit-for-purpose older persons unit and an expanded ICU, expanded emergency department, and new neurology/stroke and medical subspeciality wards. We have engaged with the Commonwealth Government to provide joint funding for the next step in the plan, with works to commence on stage 3 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment before the end of this term of government. It is proposed that stage 3 will deliver mental health services and specialised multidisciplinary subacute services at an estimated jointly funded total investment of \$665 million.

In the north-west we are progressing a \$100 million redevelopment of the North West Regional Hospital, which includes \$40 million for the first stage of a new mental health

precinct and \$20 million for the refurbishment of the Spencer Wing to provide additional wards. Once this is completed in 2025 we will progress the second stage of the mental health precinct at a cost of \$40 million, which we aim to be jointly funded between the state and the Commonwealth.

We have also expanded our investment in the Mersey Community Hospital with a further \$20 million to provide a new kitchen and additional ward, providing more bed capacity. This takes the total upgrade at the Mersey to \$55 million, the most significant in the hospital's history. We are also investing \$20 million to replace hospital equipment, \$9 million in additional and replacement ambulances and \$5 million in equipment for rural hospitals, implementing strategic asset management across these important pieces of equipment.

Another innovative service we have recently introduced is the new Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response, or PACER, team, including mental health clinicians, police officers and paramedics with dedicated support to support those experiencing mental health distress in the community. Since being launched in January as a two-year trial in the south, PACER has already seen positive results, with the majority of people receiving the support they need to remain in the community instead of being taken to hospital. We know that when people can be treated in the community with the right supports they can recover sooner. However, the most important asset in our health system is our people. Since coming into Government in 2014 we have employed 1500 additional FTE health professionals.

I want to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our hard-working health staff, especially over the last two years. They have been on the frontline of our COVID-19 response and have worked tirelessly to help test, to vaccinate and support our community through this difficult and challenging period. Our plan centres on our patients and our staff. We will continue to invest record funding to meet immediate needs. My Government will continue to set longer term goals to build a better health system in every region of our state.

As part of our plan to secure Tasmania's future we are taking action to assist more Tasmanians into homes and to put downward pressure on rental prices. That is why I announced we will establish a new statutory authority, Housing Tasmania, reporting directly to the Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing to increase housing supply, deliver more affordable homes and units, to deliver the stock of houses and the services required to cater for growing demand.

COVID-19 has changed the housing landscape in ways never previously imagined. Who would have expected that after two years of a worldwide pandemic leading to lockdowns, lockouts and significant economic and social disruption that the median house price in Tasmania and Australia would increase as significantly as it has. I consistently maintain that the only way to combat rising house prices and put downward pressure on home prices is to increase supply. This is why I am, today, announcing a massive 10-year, \$1.5 billion housing package to build on our existing initiatives and take even further action to address affordable housing.

Our existing \$615 million program will deliver 3500 new homes by 2026-27. We are committed and determined to accelerate and build on this effort. The new statutory authority, Housing Tasmania, that I announced last week, will have the capacity to borrow and invest. When established it will have a more than \$2 billion balance sheet to underpin the increased delivery of new social and affordable homes.

Over the next decade Housing Tasmania's board will be tasked with building and acquiring as well as partnering with the not-for-profit sector to deliver an additional 6500 homes and units on top of our current target of 3500 homes by 2027 for a total of 10 000 new homes by 2032. The expected new direct investment in excess of our current plan will be more than \$1.1 billion.

Mr Speaker, as you would be aware we are already delivering a wide range of measures which are building more houses and making it easier for all Tasmanians to get into the market. We will do more. We know that the strong property market has made it difficult for some to access rentals. Rising property values have further impacted the cost of renting a home. That is why last year we reset the land tax threshold, which provided over \$56 million in land tax relief for landlords and property owners over four years.

Growing rental prices show that there is more that we need to do. That is why we will reset land tax thresholds, doubling the tax-free threshold to \$100 000. This means no land tax will now be paid on land valued under \$100 000. We will also lift the upper tax threshold to \$500 000 and lower the tax rate for land value between \$100 000 and \$500 000 from 0.55 per cent to 0.45 per cent. The changes mean that around 70 000 Tasmanians will save on average approximately \$800 every year up to a maximum saving of \$1625. Close to 12 000 taxpayers will no longer be needing to pay any land tax at all.

When combined with the changes we made last year it will provide about \$220 million of tax relief for property owners over the next four years to put downward pressure on rents. One thing that will be a critical factor in increasing housing supply and improving affordability is the availability of land. While recent estimates indicate there is already around 5000 hectares of vacant land zoned for residential use which could yield up to 60 000 residential lots, much of it remains undeveloped. That is why we are continuing to incentivise land owners to activate this land.

We recognise that there is more that we can do. This includes providing amendments that will allow the Tasmanian Planning Commission to consider more contemporary growth forecasts when rezoning land. Rezoning proposals for residential developments will be able to be considered on their merits without needing to wait for the full review of our regional land use strategies to be completed and without compromising sound planning processes.

To further accelerate land supply we will also extend our Headworks Holiday program, doubling the residential land rebate from \$15 million to \$30 million. Already, more than 820 lots statewide have been approved and another 127 are being assessed. To keep the supply of land flowing we are extending our funding commitment while all other criteria for the program will remain the same.

Currently, there is a lack of centrally located medium-density infill housing occurring in our cities. It is often easier to develop a greenfield site on the edge of our towns than develop an infill site within the centres. This needs to be turned around if we are to encourage people to live and play near where they work. I believe active government intervention is required to not only identify areas for infill development but to make it happen. As a first step through the Hobart City Deal we will prioritise this focus area and work with our City Deal partners to provide innovative solutions, including legislating if required, so that we can open up the corridor sooner and build more homes.

Today, to help Tasmanians take their first step onto the property ladder, I am also pleased to advise that we will be extending the threshold and expanding the eligibility of our successful HomeShare program, which will now be called the Housing Market Entry program, allowing more Tasmanians who meet our very reasonable income and assets test access to it. For example, if you have limited financial assets, or are a couple with one child and a yearly income of less than \$114 180, or are single earning less than \$82 712, you meet the assets and income test for the program. If you currently rent a Housing Tasmania property you are automatically exempt from these tests.

However, with the recent movements in Tasmanian house prices the HomeShare parameters have become restrictive. Many people are stretched paying higher rents and do not have the capacity to save for a 5 per cent deposit. We are going to reduce the requirement for a deposit to 2 per cent of the purchase price. We will also double the state's equity contribution to a maximum of \$200 000 or 40 per cent of the purchase price for purchasers of new homes or units, and up to a maximum of \$150 000 or 30 per cent of the purchase price for eligible established homes or units.

We are also opening up access to eligible first-home buyers who would otherwise be unable to obtain finance to enable them, with our help, to purchase existing homes, rather than have to build a home. These generous limits will allow more Tasmanians to achieve their dream of buying their own home. We will back this scheme with up to \$50 million of new equity from our balance sheet, meaning that we can support more than 250 purchases of existing or new homes up to \$500 000 in value, or more than 500 new or existing units, depending on their value.

Since coming to Government our First Home Owner Grants have helped more than 3750 Tasmanians build their first homes. I am pleased to confirm that in the coming Budget we will extend the First Home Owner Grant of \$30 000 for another 12 months, from 1 July 2022. The First Home Owner Grant will also be available to those who use our Housing Market Entry program to build a new home. The Government will also double the Private Rental Incentives Program, which encourages property owners to make their homes available for affordable rent to low-income households with low, or no support needs. We will extend this scheme from its current limit of 200 homes to 400 homes, creating another 200 affordable rental properties over the next two years.

The Tasmanian Government's Ancillary Dwelling Grants Program is progressing well, with 161 houses allocated under the program. To further stimulate this initiative an additional \$2.5 million will be invested, making 250 more places available on top of the initial allocation of 250. The program will be extended until the end of next year.

We need more housing options right in our cities, near our services and shops. In 2017 the Government amended the building regulations to make it easier to develop shop-top apartments. Following on from the success being seen in Launceston, we will be encouraging the take up of this form of housing in other municipalities and jurisdictions, especially Hobart. We will engage directly with local councils to discuss what incentives we can jointly fund to accelerate this form of inner-city living opportunity. Furthermore, we also believe there is an opportunity to better utilise government-owned buildings. I have directed Treasury to review in the next six months our own stock of buildings to see what we can do to repurpose them for a higher and better use.

Mr Speaker, today we are also announcing that all stamp duty and first home owner grants and concessions will be increased to a \$600 000 threshold, which including the previous changes last year, results in a 50 per cent increase keeping in line with rising property values. Our bold plan will assist more Tasmanians into their own homes and ensure they can take their first step onto the property ladder. It will help to relieve rental stress through increasing the supply of properties while at the same time underpinning our strong, growing economy providing jobs and opportunity right here in the state.

My Government has a strong commitment to education and a proud record of providing the resources, infrastructure and opportunities for Tasmanian learners to succeed. From the early years to senior secondary education, skills training and library services, access, participation and engagement in learning is fundamental for all Tasmanians to develop the skills and confidence they need to reach their potential and participate fully in Tasmania's economy and our society. I am very pleased to confirm that all high schools have extended to provide senior secondary options as of 2022, and that direct retention from year 10 to year 12 has jumped almost 5 percentage points since 2019 to 76.1 per cent, the highest on record.

We know that further improvements in education outcomes are needed and we are committed to all year 7 students exceeding the national minimum reading standard by 2030. The recruitment of an additional 40 quality teaching coaches for 2022 is already supporting system-wide improvements to reach this goal.

Our record capital expenditure in education will provide the infrastructure and facilities our learners need and deserve, including six new child and family learning centres, new schools and more upgrades where they are needed.

In 2022 we have further increased support for students impacted by trauma, in addition to the funding of the educational adjustments model for students with a disability which, I am pleased to say, has enabled an additional 2000 students to be funded since 2020.

As a result of COVID-19 we need to be flexible. Early in the pandemic we had more than 80 000 public, independent and Catholic students learning remotely from home. This was an outstanding effort. One of the key learnings was the challenge of the digital divide that it still presents and the need for the provision of laptops and iPads to many students and families for their use at home. In the 21st century, every child in a public school should have access to a device. My Government will invest an additional \$5 million to bolster the additional pool of devices to ensure that those families that are currently unable to provide this basic technology are supported so that no child is left behind.

The Skills, Training and Workforce Growth portfolios were consolidated last year in recognition of their key shared focus on supporting Tasmanians into training and skills development to equip them to fill local jobs and more fully participate in their local communities. Importantly, my Government's focus on ensuring that all Tasmanians - no matter what their age, circumstances or where they live - will have opportunities to create a better life, remains front and centre.

The passage of the TasTAFE bill 2021 through the parliament in November last year will put TasTAFE as our public provider of Vocational Education and Training in a stronger position to meet the demands of the future and make sure that every Tasmanian has the best opportunity to get the skills they need to get a job. We said that we wanted TasTAFE to be

more nimble and be able to operate like the businesses it was there to serve, and that is what we will deliver.

Our ambitious multimillion dollar workforce growth agenda is being delivered by the new Jobs Tasmania unit in the Department of State Growth. It is centered on the establishment of a regional jobs hub network comprising seven jobs hubs covering all areas of Tasmania. Jobs Tasmania is also delivering a range of programs to remove barriers and support Tasmanians to transition into training and work, including the Job Ready Fund, the Tasmanian Employer Bonus, Youth Navigators and it is expanding the Area Connect Service so that more Tasmanians can get to work, training or education where no easy transport options exist.

Mr Speaker, the Tasmanian economy is booming and we want to make sure that the opportunities it presents are accessible to everyone regardless of their gender.

In the 2021-22 Budget we committed nearly \$3 million to programs that will recruit, retain and advance women into non-traditional occupations. Further, over the past three years our work to achieve gender equality has been guided by the Tasmanian Women's Strategy. Under this strategy, the Tasmanian Government has made important progress towards improving women's financial security, leadership and participation opportunities, health, well-being and safety.

Very soon we will launch the next iteration of the Tasmanian Women's Strategy which will build on our current work, with a renewed focus on achieving gender equality with women's leadership at the forefront to ensure that more women are supported to be the leaders of tomorrow. There is no doubt that an important part of creating future change is increasing the visibility of diverse female leaders and role models, and we will increase our efforts to support women to aspire to and participate in decision-making and leadership positions through the new strategy.

Mr Speaker, if there has ever been a time to demonstrate the benefits when the State Service collaborates, we need look no further than what we achieved through COVID-19 and use that as the benchmark for an effective high performing and capable State Service. This is exactly why last week I announced that we will move the major functions pertaining to children and young people to the Department of Education which, as the largest provider of services to children and young people in Tasmania, is best placed to become responsible for children, youth and family safety. When the transition occurs, it will be renamed the Department of Education, Children and Young People.

Our children and youth interact with the Department of Education more than any other agency and the department is ideally placed to broaden its scope further to support the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.

This change will continue to ensure that we move from siloed Government approaches and lift capabilities across our systems, policies, processes and procedures to make them stronger, and continue to build a culture where children are at the centre of our processes and child safety is everybody's responsibility.

In September last year, the Government announced its intention to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and establish two new facilities as part of a reform of the entire youth

justice system. The transition plan for this major reform is well underway with the project team already delivering key activities in line with the project timelines.

Noetic Solutions is developing a detailed functional brief for the new facilities, which will determine the most appropriate settings for both a secure and therapeutic environment. At the same time, a range of Crown-owned sites that may be broadly suitable for the new facilities is under way. In coming months, upon receipt of the Noetic Solutions functional brief, preferred sites will be identified and planning and consultation processes will commence.

Education will be a key focus of these facilities and that is why the education department will have the overall responsibility for children, youth and family safety. While location and design will be finalised in coming months, I can foreshadow that the Budget this year will include an allocation of up to \$40 million to ensure that work can commence immediately on building these centres to coincide with the closure of Ashley in 2024.

One matter that has been much discussed in recent times is the future of the Burnie Court. We recognise there is a wide range of views within the community in relation to the redevelopment of the Burnie Court complex. However, what has become very evident is that there is an important need to revitalise the Burnie CBD regardless of where the court is situated. Given these concerns, we will engage further with Burnie City Council and the north-west business community to understand the economic and social implications of the current CBD concerns and, importantly, how best to ensure its revitalisation and how Burnie can best come back to life.

I will be meeting with the mayor, council and the business community in coming weeks to actively consider what more can be done and what investment is needed to revitalise the Burnie CBD, including the future use of the current court site.

Last year, I asked the Commissioner of Police for advice as to structural reform across Government to ensure that we are providing a best-practice sexual violence response for Tasmania that puts victim survivors at the centre. Having received the commissioner's advice, I am pleased to announce that the Government intends to establish next level, multi-disciplinary centres that will ensure victim survivors of both family and sexual violence receive immediate and integrated support in a safe place from a range of services, including family and sexual support and counselling, psychologists, witness intermediaries, police and other related services.

Funding will be included in this year's Budget for the establishment of the first of these centres. Once an appropriate location is identified, and subject to a successful pilot, I believe that these centres will be progressively developed in all regions of the state. It is important to recognise the intersection of sexual violence with family violence. The multi-disciplinary centres will embed that understanding in the Government responses by extending the remit and resourcing of the Safe Families Coordination Unit to include sexual offending more broadly, including child sexual violence. Planning work on both initiatives is commencing now and will be coordinated alongside the development and release of the Government's third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan.

Mr Speaker, as I said, the Government I lead is aspirational and focused on delivering better outcomes for Tasmanians, today and into the future, harnessing our competitive advantages that set us apart from the rest of the world, whether that is delivering more irrigation

water to Tasmanian farmers than ever before through our nation-leading irrigation schemes, maximising the potential opportunity for Tasmania from globally innovative offshore aquaculture, investing to diversify our forestry industry for a climate-positive future, supporting our mining and mineral sector or advanced manufacturing and defence.

Our irrigation projects across the state are allowing farmers to expand the area planted to high-value crops, increase rotations, boost yields, and diversify the new enterprises such as wine grapes, leafy green vegetables and berries. When delivered, the \$370 million south-east scheme will be the biggest irrigation project in Tasmania's history, expected to deliver more than 40 000 megalitres annually, supporting a further \$150 million in on-farm investment with the potential to create more than 2000 local jobs.

My Government is working with the Australian Government's progressive development of the business case for an estimated \$300 million Southern Midlands Irrigation Scheme, which will deliver a similar economic benefit right to the heart of Tasmania. In Tasmania we have the greatest opportunity for paddock-to-plate experiences, which are sought after by locals and visitors alike. This includes wild deer, which will be considered as part of the Deer Management Plan review that will occur 12 months after the commencement of the plan. Following this review and informed by its outcomes, it is the Government's intention to conduct a limited fixed-term trial to evaluate the potential of deer farmers and land holders to supply value-added wild deer products to the regulated food and restaurant trade in consultation with the Tasmanian Game Council and other key stakeholders.

Thanks to a century of hard work, invention and sacrifice, we have more renewable energy than we can use. We have been net-zero for six of the last seven years, and we have a goal to double our capacity to reach 200 per cent renewable by 2040. Our world-class water and wind resources, natural deepwater ports and our skilled and knowledgeable renewable energy workforce have positioned Tasmania among the best globally in the race to develop renewable energy. Our plan is backed in by a 200 per cent Tasmanian renewable energy target, and our Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan. We are witnessing unprecedented levels of interest in new renewable energy projects in the state from multiple proponents. Tasmania is on track to be a global leader in green hydrogen production by 2030, and we are expecting a decision shortly on our Commonwealth funding application to establish a green hydrogen hub at Bell Bay.

Bell Bay presents a perfect location for a nation-leading green hydrogen hub with its advanced manufacturing zone, renewable energy availability, appropriate infrastructure, water availability, and its port access. We have always said our plans for Bell Bay as a green hydrogen hub is bolstered by the proposed Marinus Link interconnector and Hydro Tasmania's Battery of the Nation project. The Australian Energy Market Operator's 2022 draft integrated system plan has Marinus Link and the Tasmanian clean energy it unlocks front and centre of this unprecedented transformation of the energy market.

Critical underwater engineering surveys from Marinus Link are currently underway across Bass Strait as technical processes to sensitively design and build this national priority infrastructure continue at pace. With growing demand for renewable energy both on island and off, we need more capacity to store and transport energy to ensure Tasmania earns a premium for its renewable energy products and accelerate our economic prosperity.

Further interconnectors such as the Marinus Link will unlock these opportunities, and we continue to work closely with the Commonwealth Government to deliver this national priority project. We will shortly be releasing our renewable energy coordination framework to support the strategic growth of renewables in our state through best-practice consultation and engagement.

Hand-in-hand with the opportunities for new renewable energy generation, Tasmania can lead the way in the deployment of new technologies to meet our target of net-zero emissions by 2030. We have made up to \$12.3 million available for the trial of hydrogen buses and the investigation of opportunities to use green hydrogen for trucking and marine vessels. Work with Metro Tasmania has already begun on the integration of hydrogen buses into their fleet and the development of refuelling infrastructure and hydrogen supply chains.

I can also announce today that in the upcoming Tasmanian budget the Government will invest \$10 million over four years to replace our aging fleet of fossil fuel boilers in schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities with renewable energy powered alternatives, including bioenergy technology. By taking ambitious action on climate change, we can also improve environmental, social, and health outcomes for future generations.

Our tourism industry, while having experienced challenges throughout the pandemic, is well positioned to take advantage of Tasmania's reputation as a climate leader. As Premier and Treasurer, and Minister for Tourism and Minister for Climate Change, it gives me a unique vantage point and opportunities for a unified strategy. Tying our spirit of hard work and boutique enterprise through our current and future climate position is not only meaningful, it is an engine for growth, and importantly we can invite our visitors to be a part of it.

Last year our tourism community announced that Tasmania will become a carbon-neutral destination by 2025 and undertook a body of work to underpin this position in the market. With this work nearing completion, it demonstrates a clear pathway to take advantage of Tasmania's unique position while generating positive impact across our community.

Climate-positive travel can not only reduce our emissions but can contribute to projects to increase biodiversity through on-island carbon offsets, reduce emissions in our transport fleet and support a circular economy. Through our nation-leading emissions performance delivering one of the best outcomes in the world, we will look to maximise the benefits available for our industry sectors and the businesses and jobs they support by ensuring that we capitalise fully on our competitive advantages.

Furthermore, we remain on track for the game-changing arrival of our two new *Spirit* vessels. Construction on the new *Spirit IV* has commenced and the project remains on track with the delivery of the first ship by late 2023, with the second vessel, *Spirit V*, to arrive during 2024. These two new ships will be a significant boost for our tourism businesses, large and small, as well as our broader economy, bringing increased passengers in increased comfort to underpin our visitor economy, along with increased freight capacity assisting our high-value time-sensitive exports to get access directly to the mainland markets which are so desirous of the fantastic fresh product that we are world-renowned for.

Mr Speaker, elite level sport not only provides content for Tasmanians to enjoy, it provides pathways for men, women and children to aspire to and supports the wider efforts of our clubs in bringing people together and strengthening our community. It promotes healthy,

active and united communities and serves as a key investment into reducing long-term health costs and pressures on our health system.

There is no denying elite level sport also brings enormous economic benefits, business development and job opportunities and will diversify and strengthen our visitor and broader economy. Never before has there been an opportunity greater than now to challenge ourselves with 'what if' instead of 'what is'. It is reflected in our pursuit to position Tasmanians to be represented in national sporting codes, whether that is the NBL, the BBL, AFL, hockey, A-League football or netball. Time and again Tasmania has proven its ability to host elite sporting content and put on a show worth coming to.

In 2021 Tasmania successfully hosted a record 14 AFL matches, including two elimination finals and the first 20 matches of the 2021 Women's Big Bash League. Hobart's Blundstone Arena recently played host to the very successful fifth Ashes Test. The JackJumpers are in the NBL and the Perth Glory A-League team has just played four games at UTAS Stadium and the Western United A-League Team will play three games later in the season as well. Later this year Hobart will play host to nine ICC Men's T20 World Cup matches, further highlighting our state's ability to hold major sporting events. All these games are broadcast nationally and some worldwide, once again showcasing Tasmania on the national and international stages.

We remain focused on securing our AFL and AFLW licence later this year and it is very pleasing that we have four-time premiership winning master coach Alastair Clarkson assisting the taskforce with our bid. Alastair is working through the matters raised in the Carter report ahead of a final position being put to the AFL Commission and club presidents for a decision on an AFL team. We will continue working closely with the AFL ahead of the decision on our own AFL team, including important strategies to grow the base of community football as well. This has been an incredible 30-year pursuit for our own AFL licence and I have never been more confident that Tasmania will ultimately be successful.

Now more than ever, it is time to plan for the future, to be ambitious and set the longer-term goals that underpin our aims but also demonstrate to the rest of the country that we are on a pathway to where young Tasmanian men and women can aspire to be the best right here in their own state.

At the last election we outlined a commitment to establish Stadiums Tasmania to position Tasmania and its sporting infrastructure to be able to be represented in national sporting codes and to ensure the sound future management of Tasmania's major public stadium assets and infrastructure. Today I can announce that we will task Stadiums Tasmania to work with the Central Coast Council and continue to invest in further development of the Dial Regional Sports Complex to support the community and the aspirations of young people in the north-west. The complex is being designed to AFL specifications and when we have secured our own men's and women's AFL and A-League teams, and our own VFL team as well, I want games to be played on the north-west coast as well as in the north and the south. We will work with the council to facilitate the inclusion of the Dial Regional Complex and the future structure of Stadiums Tasmania and today we are committing \$25 million to enhance spectator and participant infrastructure.

Our plans for UTAS Stadium, once the transfer of the ownership from the Launceston City Council to Stadiums Tasmania occurs and subject to the Australian Government matching

the \$65 million that is allocated within our Budget, are to progress the \$135 million first stage of the \$200 million master plan. Stage 1, subject to funding, will be developed over the next three to five years and will increase the capacity of the ground while also providing retractable seating to enable A-League, AFL and other events to be held, future proofing the stadium for decades to come. Stage 2 will provide an indoor arena capable of holding basketball, netball and other sports and entertainment events.

Currently Blundstone Arena and UTAS Stadium meet the needs for major sporting events, but in the medium to long-term we need to have a bolder vision and, subject to the AFL and to Tasmania achieving an AFL licence and the highly likely prospect of an A-League licence as well, along with a growing population, we will need a stadium that can meet Tasmania's needs for decades to come.

The Government has recently undertaken preliminary feasibility work to understand what opportunities there are to develop a major entertainment, sporting and events stadium with a capacity of up to 27 000 seats as well as up to 30 000 people for a major concert or event, including standing space, within easy commuting distance of the Hobart CBD and connected to a variety of transport modes.

A new southern stadium was first proposed by the AFL Taskforce in 2019 as not an immediate but necessary part of our AFL licence bid and forms a key part of our long-term vision for sporting and entertainment infrastructure across Tasmania. It builds on the Government's significant investments into and plans for existing major facilities such as MyState Bank Arena and UTAS Stadium in Launceston, as well as Dial Park at Penguin. A southern stadium supports the aspirations for Tasmania securing its own AFL team which would be based in Hobart. We will also be able to host rectangular sporting codes that will support ongoing discussions about an A-League football licence. The stadium will put Tasmania on the national and international stage for both sporting and entertainment events on a scale that has not been possible in the past.

Today I am pleased to announce that, subject to stakeholder consultation and planning approval and achieving later this year an AFL licence, we plan to develop this new stadium at Regatta Point. This part of the city holds great significance for Tasmanian soldiers who have served their country, and the Government will work closely with the RSL on how such a stadium could enhance the Cenotaph area and invite people to remember and celebrate our servicemen and women year-round. The area is also important for the Royal Hobart Regatta which is one of Australia's oldest continuous aquatic events, and the Government will work with Regatta Association to incorporate their needs into the development and explore opportunities to shore up the longevity of that event into the future.

Our goal is to develop a multipurpose stadium that takes the best of today's stadium design standards and trends and has a flexible design that allows for future evolution of the facilities and infrastructure. The stadium will include a retractable roof for all-weather playing and performances, making it only one of two such AFL venues in the country. Blundstone Arena will remain the home of cricket with all forms, including tests, being played there with the option for the larger stadium to be used when capacity becomes an issue. The new stadium, which will form a key part of the 10-year strategic stadium plan that Stadiums Tasmania will be tasked to develop, will cost in the order of \$750 million. We will seek to fund this through funding from all levels of government as well as private sector involvement and equity raising,

drawing on numerous examples and lessons of how this works very successfully in other parts of the world.

Subject to achieving an AFL licence later this year and the timing of that being made available, it is envisaged there would be approximately a two-year time frame for planning approvals and contracting and a further three years for construction, meaning that the new stadium could be ready for the 2027 season. The Regatta Point site is ideally located, given its proximity to the city and to future transport corridor links, such as the Northern Suburbs Transport Corridor, ferries on the river and will create a spectacular and iconic entry to the city.

My Government is an aspirational government and this stadium will be a game changer for Tasmania. The economic opportunities that this will bring to the state with the hosting of international events are enormous. It will set us up to have teams in national competitions at the highest level and enable us to host national and international sport, arts and cultural events and concerts. It will be an important part of the state's sporting and entertainment evolution, growing and supporting Tasmania's visitor economy and inspiring infrastructure and transport systems to support industry, business and community growth, filling the city and the state with accommodation, hospitality and retail activity.

In Tasmania we value and protect our environment. We are getting on with our clear plan to reduce waste and build our circular economy. We are making significant progress on a number of key initiatives, including the introduction of a container refund scheme with a consistent statewide waste levy and phasing out single-use and problem plastics in Tasmania by 2025.

We are also building confidence in our waste and resource recovery sectors, investing in plastics, re-processing and re-use of waste tyres and commercial composting and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution in our environment. We have also taken important steps to progress the structural and organisational separation of the Environmental Protection Authority from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, creating a new independent state authority. The new model will ensure public confidence in environmental regulation in Tasmania and promote certainty for proponents.

Last year I committed to providing an update following the release of the Pathway to Truth-telling and Treaty Report. After receiving the report, I wrote to Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations seeking their feedback on the report's recommendations and what the next steps on our journey towards true reconciliation should look like. I can advise the House that while there were a variety of views, the feedback today indicates broad support to take further steps on both the truth-telling process and treaty process. However, the feedback was very clear to me that these processes must be led by Tasmanian Aboriginal people and they must co-design this work. Therefore, as a result of this feedback the next step needs to be to establish an Aboriginal advisory body that is representative of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and can, through co-design, work with the Government to establish these two processes. This advisory body representing Tasmanian Aboriginals will also provide advice on the other recommendations in the report and on matters that affect Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This will not be an easy task. It will require goodwill from all sides to take these matters forward.

My Government is up for it. We want to take the next steps on this path but that path has to be one that is co-designed with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. However, one matter that the Government is firm in its view on is that the Truth-telling Commission, when established,

will not be tasked with determining Aboriginality or eligibility. While I understand that this is a vexed issue for some, the Government remains committed to its current inclusive eligibility policy. The next steps will involve inviting representatives of all registered Aboriginal community organisations to come together to provide advice on the establishment of the Aboriginal advisory body, its membership and terms of reference and how it will be accountable to Aboriginal people in Tasmania. I intend to issue the invitation shortly and hold this meeting as soon as possible, as the Government wants to move forward. I know that Tasmanian Aboriginals do as well. However, there must be Aboriginal leadership and ownership of the decisions that affect Aboriginal people.

As we take these next steps we know that already there have been increased costs as Aboriginal people have engaged in the process to date. The Government will, in the coming budget, provide an allocation of up to \$500 000 to offset costs as the process progresses. To support this new Aboriginal advisory body the government will establish an Aboriginal affairs whole-of-government division within DPAC, comprising of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, as well as staff from other departments, such as Health and Education. This new division will be tasked to oversee and coordinate the Government's significant Aboriginal affairs agenda, informed by the views of Aboriginal people. This includes the truth-telling and treaty processes as well as closing the gap, a new Aboriginal heritage act and finalising the model for returning land. This is a journey we need to go on together and that we must go on together to ensure a more equitable and just future for generations to come.

My Government wants today and into the future to create opportunities for Tasmanians regardless of their background or circumstance; for Tasmanians to have pride and confidence in our state, understanding that it is a unique and special place to grow up and live, with opportunities you can only find in a handful of places in the world. We have a strong pipeline of work ahead of us which is delivering better outcomes to every region in Tasmania - in housing; education and health; renewable energy; tourism and hospitality and across our primary industries, resources and advanced manufacturing sectors. It does not stop there, it cannot, because right now we are in the best position to grasp the opportunities ahead.

We must not just focus on the horizon, we must lift our eyes beyond that. That is what this Government intends to do to secure Tasmania's future.

Mr Speaker, I lay a copy of the Address on the table.

Mr SPEAKER - In accordance with standing order 351(2), I propose that the Address be noted.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

[3.51 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Support for Small Business

[3.52 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I want to speak today about work undertaken over the summer period, the time when some people took a break. In my area of responsibility, small business, I worked with Rebecca White, the Labor economic team and members of the Labor team to connect with small business to understand the challenges they have faced and continue to face since the border reopened.

One thing I found challenging in that time is the duality of public conversation, public reflection of how people felt businesses were tracking over that period of time. We made an effort to connect with businesses and hear first-hand of the devastation and distress many businesses across all sectors of the Tasmanian economy have been feeling. The Premier in his Address said we have done a lot to support small business and if we need to do more we will.

The Premier just said, and many people say repeatedly, that small businesses in Tasmania drive the economy, support communities, and provide engagement and connection in our communities. It did not take much effort to pick up a phone, walk down the street, take the time to check in with those people and hear what was happening.

What did we hear? We heard that Tasmania's small businesses were being challenged. The national Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, when he was meeting here, said there is no substitute for customers. We heard from small businesses across Tasmania that once borders opened that customers almost disappeared. There were times, particularly in the Launceston CBD, in the mall areas that would normally be thriving over summer, it was like tumble weeds. There were crickets. We heard similar stories in Hobart. In regional centres, not only tourism centres but in towns that have great industry, streets were empty; there were no customers. I spoke to someone recently who said they opened their doors and usually they would have five to 10 people in their premises all day every day. Now there is not one person through the door; still now those challenges are being faced.

So the Labor team got out there and did the work. We connected to understand what the challenges were in small business and it is not what we are hearing from the Government. It is not that there is confidence. It is not that they are doing well or that the current rounds of business support have met the mark.

There have been announcements about how many people applied for grants, suggesting that there was not really much need for the grants because not many people applied. I can tell you that when speaking to people in tears about how they are going to not only pay the responsibilities financially for their business but how they are therefore going to pay their personal bills or support the families they employ and their family members that they support, and how are they going to make ends meet at the end of the day. They did not have the energy. They were overwhelmed and found it too complicated to apply, and why would they apply for an amount of money that may be secured, and we have had lots of people that were rejected even though they have had devastation in their businesses, but it was just too hard and the amount of money offered was not going to make the difference.

We are hearing of businesses that have lost in periods of trade over these last couple of months \$5000, \$10 000, \$20 000, \$150 000 in a week. That is not going to be fixed with \$1000, \$2000 or \$5000 support. Labor did the work and we recommended that businesses needed

cash flow support, payroll support and support to understand what actually was happening. They wanted to feel they were being listened to. We felt that workers needed more support and our community needed encouragement and leadership. There has been a lack of leadership from the Government to be encouraged to safely go back out into the community and support this business. We also recommended stimulus and confidence measures.

Across Tasmania we have been hearing from the engine room of our economy, from the respected people we know work so hard to keep together our regional communities, but they have felt let down, disappointed and angry, because they know there is no leadership or understanding and a completely disconnected and out-of-touch government that is not understanding what they need.

In recent weeks there has been a suggestion of an uptick in the economy and that is fantastic. We have always known this was a chapter, but anybody who understands small business knows when you are experiencing losses, when you are having a challenging time, it takes months to trade through it. We know that we are about to hit the season of winter. What our small businesses need right now is for this Government to understand, to take the time to connect, to respect them and to find out exactly what they need to trade through these months to make it to the next season. Many of these operators, some that have had businesses for 20 or 30 years and are at the top of their game and recognised as icons of Tasmania, need the support to get through these chapters that are facing them, to get through to the next summer, to continue to support Brand Tasmania and to continue to support the great reputation that is so openly talked about in order that they can continue to trade and support themselves and their communities.

Time expired.

Hobart City Deal

[3.58 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I thought it was important to stand up and recognise that it was three years since the Hobart City Deal that we commemorated or commiserated last Friday. The Hobart City Deal was promoted as a game-changer for Hobart, a plan that would finally see the level of investment and action in this city that had been so lacking for the five years before. Unfortunately, a plan written and signed off by a Prime Minister who turned up for about 45 minutes, jumped off the plane, drove in his limousine from the plane to the Hobart Airport, signed a piece of paper and then got back on the plane and went back to wherever he was going next, does not deliver action. It is just a plan.

After three years we finally heard from the minister last month that the northern suburbs light rail will not go ahead. This is something we have all known for a long time but have been waiting for him to finally say it is not happening. He finally admitted to that community in the northern suburbs that there is no northern suburbs light rail after three years of thinking about it, countless reports, hundreds of thousands of dollars wasted on consultant reports, to tell us something that I think a lot of people knew right from the start. The northern suburbs light rail is not happening because the Government decided not to go ahead with just one of the pledges within the Hobart City Deal.

Macquarie Point - it is interesting that the Government is talking at the moment about calling it Regatta Point, which is just next to Macquarie Point. If you wanted a single patch of land to explain this Government to someone and their lack of delivery, you would point to Macquarie Point. That is where you would say this is the Government, the cul-de-sac, that is all they have delivered. Part of this City Deal was to create an Antarctic precinct. We still do not know who the tenants are going to be three years into the City Deal. Who are going to be the tenants at Macquarie Point? The Antarctic precinct was another part of this vision of the Hobart City Deal and three years later we still do not know who the tenants will be as part of that precinct.

Congestion in Greater Hobart has been a growing issue over the last eight years of this Government and it was finally recognised in that plan that there was an issue with this and the Government would go ahead and take action to fix it. If you wanted another example of this Government there was the front page of the *Mercury* four years ago with the underground bus mall. We still do not know where the underground bus mall is going to go, four years after the announcement and the pretty picture on the front page of the paper.

Dr Woodruff - Because there won't be one.

Mr WINTER - Of course there will not be one. There will never be an underground bus mall.

The fifth lane on the Southern Outlet was announced a bit over four years ago. They are still consulting, still buying up properties along the fifth lane of the Southern Outlet for a project that no-one in Kingborough or the Huon Valley thinks will actually work. Minister Street - and congratulations to him - says that he has had a change of heart recently but I think he must be the only person in the Kingborough municipality who thinks that it actually will work. It will not work, it is a bad plan, but you will never deliver it anyway, so let us just watch how you go over the next little bit.

The Bridgewater bridge - I was happy to have a look at that the other day; it was Malcom Turnbull who announced that one. That was a fair while ago now when he came to the bridge with Will Hodgman, another former leader, stood there and announced that they would fix the Bridgewater Bridge. But at Senate Estimates a couple of weeks ago, they determined that there is still no final design despite the announcement from the Government of providing who the successful tender would be before Christmas. Still a lack of delivery.

In my community of Kingborough we are still waiting for the bus stop audit that was announced quite a long time ago, to find out what is going to happen with simple upgrades of bus stops. We are not talking about engineering feats, Mr Speaker; we are just talking about fixing some bus stops.

People are sick and tired of this Government announcing things but not delivering, and despite all we hear from this Government, whether it is the Commonwealth Games or a new stadium, people are starting to say 'as if'.

Greens of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - Joint Statement on Military-Political Expansion of the Russian Federation

[4.04 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I was not going to speak on the adjournment tonight but seeing that others have taken the opportunity, I will too.

I wanted to note that a Russian armed convoy around 64 kilometres long is right now descending on the Ukraine capital of Kyiv and to read into the *Hansard* a joint statement by the Greens of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in connection with the military political expansion of the Russian Federation.

Mr Speaker, as you well know, the Greens are a party that always supports peace and non-violence but so too are we a party who fiercely defends democracy. This is a statement from Kyiv on February 26 this year:

We, representatives of the Green Parties of the countries of the Associated Trio of Eastern Partnership, reject any encroachment on the sovereignty of our states by the Russian Federation, guided by the neo-imperial logic of an aggressor resurrecting in the 21st century the stereotypes of the Cold War and the medieval law of force, ignoring the norms of international law, today poses one of the greatest threats to peace and security both on a European and global scale.

Thirty years of presence of Russian troops on the territory of Moldova, the invasion of Georgia in 2008, eight years of a hybrid war with Ukraine and a new large-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, characterize the foreign policy of the Russian Federation much more convincingly than the "peace-loving" demagoguery of its leaders.

Russia's desire to form some kind of special sphere of influence, argued, in particular, by the chauvinistic idea of the "Russian world", forces even the most staunch supporters of a neutral status among neighbouring states to reconsider their position in search of military and political protection from increasing geopolitical pressure.

With persistence worthy of a better cause, the Russian Government is imposing a senseless confrontation on Europe and the United States, trampling on all the achievements of the world community in the field of international security. At the same time, even in the conditions of extreme aggravation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, some states of the European Union take an ambivalent position, trying to treat Russia's claims "with understanding". It is sad that among them there are also countries participating in the Normandy format negotiations, the meaning of which is not to appease the aggressor but to restore the status quo.

We, the Greens of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are convinced that the solution of the problems created by Russia in relations with our countries and generating threats to common European interests is possible only in the conditions of unity and a tough position of the European Union with strict

adherence to the norms and principles of international law, without immoral and destructive compromises in the name of business as usual. With regard to Russia, all possible measures of influence must be applied. The amorphous position and palliative measures in the matter of protecting European values have no justification, as well as the manifestations of the "Stockholm Syndrome" in relation to a terrorist state that today has taken the entire civilised world hostage.

Remaining committed to the principles of non-violence, we are forced to admit that the only way to stop the current bloody marching of the aggressor across Ukraine is by using military force. Russia itself tightly closed the "window of opportunity" in the sphere of diplomacy. We call on all European countries to recognize this cruel reality and ensure the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine, where the battle between Good and Evil is taking place today, the outcome of which will determine the future of the continent and the whole world.

We call on the European Greens to show courage and solidarity in supporting our stance for a better common future.

Signed

Chairman of the Green's Party of Ukraine, Vitaly Kononov

Chairman of the Green's Party of Georgia, Gia Gachechiladze

Chairman of the Greens Party of Moldova, Anatolie Prohnitchi

Chairman of the Ecological Green Party of Moldova, Anatolie Prohnitchi

Burnie Law Court - Location

[4.08 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak about the Burnie court. Whilst it was pleasing to see the Premier outline some further plans around the Burnie court and further consultation with the local community and stakeholders, it does not go far enough.

There is no disputing that the current facilities of the Burnie court are not up to scratch. It is not fit for purpose. There is no disputing that, and we committed to upgrading the court complex at its current site at the 2018 election. I know very well, being the former Mayor of Burnie, that the state of the court is not fit for purpose, but there has been no consultation by this Government on its proposal to relocate the Burnie court to Mooreville Road.

The local community in the residential area do not want the court in their neighbourhood. The legal fraternity do not want the court to move out of the CBD, and the Burnie business community feel that the Liberals, the Party of small business, have turned their back on the business community of Burnie. Fifty thousand people utilise that building each year in and around the CBD in Burnie. That is 50 000 people that will not be in that CBD.

The Premier in his contribution earlier in his Address highlighted the fact that the Burnie CBD does need revitalisation. That has been a fact for some time and that was the intent of relocating the university campus closer to the CBD to increase patronage within the CBD but

also to improve the vitalisation of the Burnie CBD. This Government stood behind that and provided \$15 million of funding towards the university campus relocation. It is ironic that they now want to move such an important piece of social and economic infrastructure out into the suburbs, with no real reason for that other than they have an empty building that they need to use.

That brings me to the Public Works Committee hearing which was held recently in Burnie before Christmas which local member, Mr Ellis, did not even attend. He phoned in on that because he was not in Tasmania at the time. He did not bother to attend the tour of the facilities, or the hearing, in person. A number of representations were made on the day - impassioned representations - about this being a bad move for the people of Burnie and for the Burnie CBD, for our local economy and for our local community.

I say to the Premier and his members that I would like you to also meet with the Burnie community - hold a community meeting in Burnie - with the affected members of that community that live around the residential site in Mooreville Road, but more broadly in the community. This issue has instilled great passion in our community and people have stood up from all walks of life to put their opposition to what really is a stupid proposal which makes no sense whatever.

I call on the Premier to hold a community meeting when he comes up to meet with the Burnie business community, to meet with legal practitioners and to meet with the Burnie City Council. I know the council has a number of ideas about how the Burnie Court facility could be accommodated in the Burnie CBD. I know firsthand that local property owners and business owners have alternative site proposals that they want to speak to the Premier and his Government about. To date, they haven't had the opportunity to do that. There was not even a formal expression of interest process from the outset to look at what other alternative solutions were available in the CBD.

Mr Speaker, the way that this Government has treated the Burnie community is disgraceful. I will not stand for it, and the community will not stand for it. The Government needs to reverse its decision to relocate the Burnie Court out of the Burnie CBD.

Pathway to Treaty

[4.12 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I was interested today to hear an update from the Premier on the Pathway to Treaty because I believe, and the Labor Party believes, that we owe our First Nation's people the dignity of respectful engagement about this very important work. The Labor Party supports treaty and Pathway to Treaty, truth-telling and reconciliation.

I was worried today to see members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community walk out during the Premier's speech, because that tells me that they have not been included by the Premier before his announcement today. I can only assume that members in the gallery were here at the Premier's invitation; but I can also only assume that they walked out because they had not been extended the respect of consultation before the Premier made his announcement.

I was interested to see in the Premier's speech, where he said, and I quote:

My Government is up for it -

This is in relation to treaty:

We want to take the next steps on this path but the path has to be one that is co-designed with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

That is very important, Mr Speaker, and my concern is that the Premier has fallen at the first hurdle that he set himself. I sincerely hope that the process can be restored so that we can commence Pathway to Treaty. My observation is that the Premier should not announce things as significant as the next step in treaty without first talking to the people who it directly impacts, the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

This work is far too important to get wrong. I hope that the Premier noticed what happened today in the gallery. I hope that right now he is reaching out to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to make things right so that we can restore the good faith and the good will that exists in this parliament and, I hope, across community to ensure that we can progress treaty for the Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The House adjourned at 4.14 p.m.