



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 23 March 2022

REVISED EDITION

Contents

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER.....	1
COVID-19 - SAFETY MEASURES IN PARLIAMENT HOUSE.....	1
MOTION	1
LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE - MOTION NEGATIVED.....	1
QUESTIONS.....	8
VICTIM/SURVIVOR - CALL FOR APOLOGY	8
VICTIM/SURVIVOR - CONFIDENCE IN MINISTER FOR JUSTICE	10
COVID-19 - GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AND NUMBERS OF CASES	13
BURNIE COURT COMPLEX - UPDATE	15
MANY COLOURS ONE DIRECTION PROGRAM	17
PUBLIC TRUSTEE - RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES OF REVIEW.....	18
MANY COLOURS ONE DIRECTION PROGRAM	20
SECURING TASMANIA'S FUTURE - HOBART CITY HIGH SCHOOL MASTER PLAN	20
MANY COLOURS ONE DIRECTION PROGRAM	22
COMMONWEALTH GAMES BID	22
POLICE - INVESTMENT TO IMPROVE SAFETY OF TASMANIANS.....	25
COMMONWEALTH GAMES BID	27
SECURING TASMANIA'S FUTURE - SUPPORT FOR THE SMALL BUSINESS SECTOR.....	29
PERSONAL EXPLANATION	30
MEMBER FOR CLARK - MS O'CONNOR	30
QUESTION UPON NOTICE	31
21. PARKS - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - PROPOSALS	31
MOTION.....	32
LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE - MOTION NEGATIVED.....	32
MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	36
HOSTING THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES	36
LAND TAX RATING AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (NO. 6).....	46
SECOND READNG	46
STATEMENT BY DEPUTY PREMIER.....	46
ABSENCE OF PREMIER	46
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER	50
ABSENCE OF CHAIR OF COMMITTEES	50
MOTION.....	51
VICTIM/SURVIVOR - CALL FOR APOLOGY	51
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS	51
MOTION	63
FUEL PRICES.....	63
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS	64
MOTION	84
HOUSING POLICY.....	84
ADJOURNMENT.....	98
PUBLIC TRUSTEE - GUARDIANSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION IN TASMANIA	98

SPEAK UP! STAY CHATTY - JUNIOR SPORTS PROGRAM	100
GLENORCHY BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION - GOOD SPORTS AWARDS NATIONAL CLUB OF THE YEAR.....	100
TASMANIAN GREENS - FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY	101
BURNIE COURT COMPLEX	103
AMOS FAMILY - BICENTENARY	104
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE - ABSENCE OF MR ELLIS AT MEETING IN BURNIE	105
BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS	106
DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS - GREEK ORTHODOX SERVICE.....	106
HOUSE OF GUIDANCE - MOSQUE IN KINGS MEADOWS	106
RESPECTFULNESS IN THE WORKPLACE.....	106

Wednesday 23 March 2022

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

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

COVID-19 - Safety Measures in Parliament House

[10.02 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion to suspend standing orders to bring on the following motion.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, I am still on my feet. I will get my work done first.

I wish to make a statement to the House this morning to clarify for all members of this place the COVID-19 safety measures that are in place.

The Parliament COVID-19 Safety Plan was updated last Friday to bring it in line with the current Public Health advice. It was sent to all members. The plan has been agreed to by me and the President of the Legislative Council on advice.

The plan strongly encourages the wearing of masks where physical distancing is not possible. This may include meeting rooms, the Chambers of both Houses and shared offices. The wearing of masks is not mandatory.

The plan will continue to be reviewed in accordance with the advice of Public Health.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion without Notice - Motion Negatived

[10.03 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion to suspend standing orders to debate the following motion.

I move -

That this House:

Calls on Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer to apologise to Tiffany Skeggs and other victims/survivors who have been offended by their behaviour.

Mr Speaker, this is an urgent motion that should be debated forthwith, based on the advice from the victim/survivor who continues to feel aggrieved and distressed that no apology has been provided, despite her repeatedly calling for one.

Tiffany has asked for a personal apology for the groans that were audibly heard in this Chamber when I asked a question on her behalf approximately two weeks ago.

Yesterday, she again spoke with the media who asked her, following the failure and refusal of the ministers, Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson, to apologise yesterday, how that made her feel.

Mr Speaker, I would like to read her words into *Hansard*:

Today, this Government destroyed the last ounce of remaining hope I held for their integrity.

The only remotely appropriate step to be taken from now is for Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer to resign immediately.

I deserve the appropriate apologies to be made. I shouldn't need to demand them. The Opposition and Greens shouldn't need to demand them on my behalf.

Ms Skeggs is quite right. The members who groaned should apologise. There should be no further delay or debate on this matter. It should be a simple step for Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson today to apologise to Tiffany Skeggs and to other victims/survivors who have been hurt and who continually feel betrayed by their failure to acknowledge that hurt and to simply say sorry.

This is an urgent motion that should be dealt with because, quite rightly, I do not think the parliament can consider other matters properly until this is resolved. We have an obligation in this House to uphold certain standards. I argue that when a victim/survivor has spoken publicly, given her name to her concerns, after all she has been through and the trauma she has experienced, that we should listen to her. Ministers in Peter Gutwein's Government, the Premier of Tasmania, should apologise when they are asked to by a victim/survivor.

It is not me who has asked for them to apologise. It is Tiffany. It is Tiffany who has asked for an apology. This is not political. This is about common decency, doing the right thing, to say sorry. It should not be so hard.

I note yesterday the remarks by both ministers, Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson, in response to questions that were put to them in this place, asking them to apologise. When Ms Archer first got to her feet to respond she said it was an appalling question. The question that was asked, on behalf of Tiffany, was to ask her to apologise.

This matter must be resolved now. There can be no further delay because every day the Government delays apologising, every day Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson delay apologising, it causes further harm and hurt to Tiffany and to other victims/survivors.

Mr SPEAKER - The debate should be about seeking leave, not about the substantive motion. If you could, please?

Ms WHITE - The seeking of leave is to give the opportunity right now for Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer to apologise to Tiffany Skeggs. I hope they take that opportunity. We have

made the space available this morning in this parliament for them to do it, at the first available opportunity.

There can be no delay on behalf of Tiffany any longer. There are no excuses. There is no reason, no good reason whatsoever, for the ministers not to get to their feet right now, as part of this debate, and provide a sincere and meaningful apology.

As it was said yesterday, the unfortunate reality is that the longer it takes for the ministers to apologise, the harder it gets for their apology to be regarded as sincere and meaningful. I do not understand why it is so hard for them to say sorry to Tiffany Skeggs. Yesterday, Mr Ferguson said it was his hope that an apology would be accepted. However, it is entirely a matter for any person who is offended for them to come to their own view on that.

I can inform the House that the person who was offended, Ms Skeggs, has come to her own view on that, and she does not regard it as appropriate that no apology has been forthcoming from Mr Ferguson.

Mr SPEAKER - Again, Leader of the Opposition, it should be about seeking leave, not about the motion.

Ms WHITE - Thank you, and that is why this urgency motion requires us to suspend standing orders, to debate a very simple motion, which is that Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer apologise to Tiffany Skeggs and other victims/survivors who have been offended by their behaviour. It is very straightforward. It is not political in nature at all. It is simply affording the time of this parliament, right now, to remedy a wrong, to deal with the hurt that has been caused to an individual in our community through the failure of Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer to offer a sincere and meaningful apology.

I urge this House to grant the seeking of leave so that we can debate this motion which should hopefully end the need for any further motions of this nature to be dealt with in this place, because it can simply be resolved now through Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer saying sorry.

[10.09 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, in response to the Leader of the Opposition's notice of motion, the Government has apologised to Ms Skeggs. I have apologised on behalf of the Government.

I am a person who understands full well the issue of child sexual assault abuse. The apology that I provided two weeks ago to Ms Skeggs was without explanation and it was without excuse. That apology stands.

In terms of what occurred on that day, at the earliest opportunity I stood and apologised on behalf of myself and my Government, including my ministers and my backbenchers, and provided the most sincere apology I could to Ms Skeggs for any hurt that she may have felt. I made it very clear that that apology was on behalf of the Government.

Mr Speaker, the reason I offered that apology without explanation or excuse was because I understand full well how difficult these circumstances can be. Unfortunately, those opposite have turned this into a political weapon.

Ms O'Connor - Oh, rubbish. It is the two ministers sitting behind you.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - In turning this into a political weapon, it is you who has targeted the two ministers sitting behind me, not Ms Skeggs.

Ms O'Connor - Have you spoken to her?

Mr GUTWEIN - It is you who I believe has erroneously targeted two ministers because you think it provides you with a political leg-up.

Ms White - I beg your pardon?

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of the discussion that occurred in this place yesterday, where you rolled leadership into it, where on that side of the House they raised the matter of previous leadership challenges, it was you who did that, not Ms Skeggs.

Ms O'Connor - Do not speak for Ms Skeggs.

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of my apology, that stands and it is sincere and without explanation or excuse, but this has now transgressed into the political arena -

Ms White - No, it is about standards and decency.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I think that context needs to be placed on the record, Mr Speaker. In terms of that context, when Ms White asked me that question on behalf of Ms Skeggs, saying that I lacked empathy and warmth -

Ms White - I did not say that. Ms Skeggs said that.

Mr GUTWEIN - I have just explained that. Please allow me to speak. When she said that I lacked empathy or warmth that hurt me, that cut me to the quick.

In terms of the members of my Government, they were not aware of my personal circumstances, but they knew full well my commitment to getting to the bottom of these matters. They knew full well that that was a long-held commitment of nearly 20 years. The context of what occurred on that day was in relation to the people who support me -

Mr SPEAKER - We are on the seeking of leave.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, I am arguing against the seeking of leave for these reasons. The context was that they felt for me because they understood those words would hurt me. They understood those words were completely out of context with everything that this Government has tried to do. Whilst that may have caused Ms Skeggs some concern, I still stood that night and offered a sincere apology without explanation or excuse. But now you have allowed this -

Ms White - I have not allowed anything. They have.

Mr GUTWEIN - You have allowed this to become political. I sincerely say to Ms Skeggs that I do not agree at all with the step yesterday in calling for ministers to resign. I do not agree with that at all, and that has stepped into the political arena.

I can understand, as somebody who has had their own experience of these matters, how angry you feel, how much you want to lash out, how much you want to square the ledger if you can. I know as we work our way through this, my Government will bear the brunt of claims from victims over the next 12 months as we sort out this commission of inquiry. I am prepared to go through that because I believe we need to get to the bottom of this. We need to understand, in terms of Ms Skeggs' position why, in 2009, 2011 and 2013, Mr Griffin had contact with our authorities, because if any one of those three had been picked up under a previous government, we would not be having this conversation today.

On the question of seeking leave, the Government will not support this. The apology has been provided by me, on behalf of my ministers and the entire Government. It has been provided sincerely and without explanation or excuse, because I understand very deeply these matters. On that side of the House they want to turn this into something political. Every minister and every member supports my apology.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Mr GUTWEIN - That apology was on behalf of all of us, and we will not be supporting the seeking of leave.

[10.16 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, the Greens strongly support the seeking of leave. This is clearly an urgent matter because there is a damaged woman who has asked for an apology from two ministers who are refusing to do the right thing.

I personally spoke to Ms Skeggs yesterday. It is fair to say she is devastated by the events in this parliament since the last sitting Thursday, but also yesterday. With the greatest of respect to the Premier, I do not doubt your commitment for a moment, but this not about you, Premier. This is about a woman who was betrayed by the State of Tasmania and continues to be badly let down. This is about two ministers who could do the right thing by this damaged woman and make this problem, temporarily, go away.

It is still impossible to understand why these two arrogant ministers will not do the right thing. Neither of them has denied it was them, we know it was them, the parliament knows it was them, Tasmanians know it was them who groaned and sneered, and they themselves know it was them. If they did not behave so disrespectfully that day, if it was not them -

Mr SPEAKER - On the seeking of leave, please.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, Mr Speaker. If it was not them, then we would have had a firm denial and we have not had that. We need an apology from these two ministers.

Under the standing orders, if a member takes personal offence they can seek an apology from the member they were offended by. Why are we applying a different set of rules to

Tiffany Skeggs than the rules we have set up in here for ourselves? There is no moral justification for not just getting up and apologising. We have a motion on the books today for our private members' time seeking an apology from these two rude, arrogant, disrespectful ministers. We have made a promise to Ms Skeggs not to let this go, and we will not and clearly nor will the Opposition.

This is simply a question of human decency; having the decency to know you have done the wrong thing and apologise to someone who is wounded. How hard can it be? We have parliament's time devoted to trying to make two ministers do the right thing. This is political, Premier, because your ministers have refused to do the right thing. It was not your Government that sat there that sitting Thursday and sneered and groaned. Nor did you Premier, and I understand that you were hurt by those words. But you did not sit there and groan. Minister Ferguson did, minister Archer snickered away, and minister Jaensch, who has done the right thing and apologised. It is political because two of your ministers will not do the right thing. You know how this works and we clearly, the Opposition and the Greens are in here to try to get some justice for Ms Skeggs, who has to date absolutely been denied justice.

I remind minister Archer that she has portfolio responsibility for the commission of inquiry. Does minister Archer accept, from Ms Skeggs' point of view, that it places a particular responsibility on her? Can minister Archer understand how Ms Skeggs' fragile trust in the process is being damaged by minister Archer's refusal to do the right thing? We sat in here yesterday and debated a justice bill, and I heard minister Archer talk with real sincerity about the victims of violence and sexual assault, and about the importance of looking out for victims/survivors. You cannot come into this place and say one thing out of one side of your face, and then do another out of the other side of your face.

But that is what we had in here yesterday. It is naked hypocrisy. This is an urgent matter because Ms Skeggs has asked for a personal apology from those two ministers - not from the Government. She has asked for an apology from these two ministers, and they have the capacity to deal with it today. They are being given the opportunity now, in this urgent motion.

I thank Ms White for bringing it on before we deal with questions today. This could be dealt with immediately, and at least give Ms Skeggs some comfort that there is respect for her suffering and how she felt in response to some of the answers from members of the Government to questions that were asked on her behalf.

Ministers, if you do not apologise, this will be a stain on your political career for the rest of it. If you do not apologise, you should hang your heads in shame for the rest of your time in this parliament. You can sit there and look off into the distance, but this is on you. You can make it go away. You can do the right thing by Tiffany and we are calling on you to do that.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, as yesterday, the three leaders have spoken on this, this morning, and we had the debate twice yesterday. Under standing order 350, I will put the question. The question is that we are seeking leave to move a motion.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - The standing order allows me, when I have heard enough of the debate - and we had it twice yesterday, and we have had it again now this morning - and it is on the books for this afternoon.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, under standing order 152, I dissent from your ruling. You are seeking to shut down debate in this place. You are seeking -

Mr SPEAKER - Order. There is no dissent on this ruling.

Ms O'Connor - Could you explain that, please?

Mr SPEAKER - Standing order 350 gives me the power. The House through the standing orders has provided the Speaker with the power, when the Speaker has heard enough of the debate, to put the question. I am putting the question for the seeking of leave.

Mr WINTER - Mr Speaker, can you explain your reasoning as to why you have heard enough of this debate?

Mr SPEAKER - I already have. On the Chair's ruling, I will say it again. Yesterday we had a similar debate twice. We have had another debate this morning. I have listened to the three leaders put their cases forward. In regard to the parliament operating effectively and efficiently, and there is a motion for this afternoon, I have made the call that the motion be put.

The motion is the seeking of leave to move a motion without notice for the purpose of moving a suspension of standing orders. All those of that opinion say aye. The noes have it.

A division is required; ring the bells. The whips are happy with the attendance, presumably? Lock the doors. Stop the bells. The question is -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. As I understand, with the particular standing order agreeing to shorten the period of the ringing of the bells, the whips have to say that they are happy, or that they report full attendance. I did not report full attendance. In the current circumstance, I was having a conversation and I would like to finish my conversation, and then I will answer your question.

Mr SPEAKER - Your mask muffled some of that. I apologise.

Ms O'BYRNE - My apologies. I will take off my mask so you can hear. As I understand the standing order regarding whips reporting attendance - which allows us to end the period of time for which the bells do ring - you have to actually have the whip say that they report full attendance. I did not do so. The fact that there is full attendance is irrelevant. That is a decision that has to come, as I understand it, when we agree to create a mechanism to shorten the ringing of the bells. That is the rule.

Mr SPEAKER - That is right. I sought the whips' identification that attendance was here in full.

Ms O'BYRNE - In the circumstances, as I understand it, if I do not agree to report full attendance, and I do not have to, the bells will continue ringing until such time as the bells finish ringing.

If the Government wants to rush this through - and we have already had a rather unsavoury process take place this morning - if the Government wants to continue to rush it through, I do not think it looks very good, Mr Speaker. That is a matter for you as Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - We are in full attendance. The doors are locked. We will go through the vote.

The question is - That leave be granted to move a motion to suspend standing orders -

The House divided -

AYES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 11

Mrs Alexander (Teller)
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Street

PAIRS

Ms Finlay

Mr Tucker

Motion negatived.

QUESTIONS

Victim/Survivor - Call for Apology

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.32 a.m.]

You would have seen the statement made yesterday by Ms Skeggs, the woman who is deeply hurt, first by the appalling conduct of two of your ministers who refused to apologise, and then by the callous and stubborn refusals to apologise just now. She said, and I quote:

Today this Government destroyed the last ounce of remaining hope I held for their integrity. The only remotely appropriate step to be taken from now is for Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer to resign immediately. I deserve the appropriate apologies to be made.

That is the most significant point. She continued to say:

I should not need to demand them. Given the lack of respect and accountability that I have witnessed again today, I ask Mr Gutwein to reprimand his ministers accordingly.

Will you, Premier, or will you simply let ministers in your Government, including ones with responsibilities central to the commission of inquiry, disrespect people like Ms Skeggs and get away with it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. Again, and I have said this to Ms Skeggs, I have provided an apology on behalf of this Government. I provided that apology without explanation or excuse for all ministers, all backbenchers and members of this Government, and that apology was sincere. Every member of this Government stands behind that apology. It is unfortunate that you - and by you, I am talking about you, not Ms Skeggs - have targeted two ministers and taken political aim at them through this matter. That is on you.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Given that we are paying so much attention to standing orders, can I ask you to get the Premier to direct his question through the Chair? When he says 'you' on the record, he is talking about you, Mr Speaker.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker, that is on the Leader of the Opposition. It is the Leader of the Opposition who has targeted these two ministers for political gain. Whilst this is an extraordinarily difficult set of circumstances, I very much acknowledge the challenges and the difficulties that Ms Skeggs faces. I do.

When this matter was first raised in the parliament and I apologised without explanation or excuse, I was personally shattered that people would think that I or my Government was not 110 per cent committed to getting to the bottom of this issue of institutional abuse.

Ms White - How do you think this behaviour now makes them feel?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - As I have already explained to the House, that apology has been provided. I hope Ms Skeggs accepts that on behalf of the Government.

However, this matter has now transgressed into the political. The Leader of the Opposition has made it very political. People in this Chamber have pointed the finger at my Attorney-General and Mr Ferguson. It is the people in this Chamber who have done that. That is a statement of fact, and you understand that. You understand the politics that are being played here.

As I have explained, now that the matter has become political, it is reasonable that that context be explained, be in terms of the words that were used, and Ms Skeggs had no understanding of my personal circumstances but that cut me to the quick.

Ms White - It is actually not about you.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - It cut me to the quick when that question was asked and it was suggested that I lacked empathy or warmth towards victims/survivors.

Ms White - You did not groan.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms White, I warn you, order.

Mr GUTWEIN - It absolutely shattered me. My team, knowing my very strong commitment in this space, reacted. They probably should not have but they reacted in support of me. Unfortunately, that has impacted on Ms Skeggs and so, at the earliest opportunity, I rose in this place to provide that sincere apology without explanation or excuse. In bringing this into the political sphere, we cannot walk away from the fact that we would not be having this conversation and there are members on that side of the House who sat in this place in 2009, 2011, 2013 where there are questions that need to be answered before that commission -

Mr SPEAKER - If you can wind up, please, Premier.

Mr GUTWEIN - because if those matters had been picked up then we would not be having this debate. I hope that the circumstances for Ms Skeggs would be vastly different today but you want to walk past that. You want to try to shoot all blame to my Government and I will not accept that. Again, I say to Ms Skeggs -

Ms DOW - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45 to relevance. The Premier has not answered the question which was about reprimanding his ministers. It was not about the Premier. It was about the ministers who have not apologised.

Mr SPEAKER - We have been through standing order 45 a number of times. As you are aware, I cannot put words in the Premier's mouth. The Premier is allowed to answer the question as he sees fit in sticking to the issue that the question goes to. Premier, I have asked you to wind up. Could you, please, in the next 20 seconds, wind up?

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. My ministers support the apology that I provided. I support my ministers and my entire team in their actions on this. The buck stops with me, Mr Speaker. With that buck stopping with me, I say to Ms Skeggs that I am so very sorry that the events of that Thursday impacted on you and caused you pain and concern. Once again, I offer that apology to you on behalf of my entire team, fully supported by my entire team.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Victim/Survivor - Confidence in Minister for Justice

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.40 a.m.]

The Minister for Justice's conduct yesterday was particularly inexcusable. She labelled calls for an apology 'appalling', bizarrely tried to deny her shocking conduct even occurred,

referred to it as - and I quote - 'instances that just do not exist', and then refused to come into the Chamber for any of the ensuing debate. Sebastian Buscemi, Tasmania's most prominent lawyer for cases of historic child sexual abuse, has also called for minister Archer to be sacked. He said:

She should step down immediately. No-one who shows this sort of disdain towards survivors is fit to be in the role.

Premier, do you have confidence in your Minister for Justice, Elise Archer?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I absolutely have confidence in my Minister for Justice and Attorney-General in terms of her position and the role she plays. She has my absolute confidence, as does minister Ferguson. He has my absolute confidence in these matters.

Ms White - They've got your backing to not apologise to Tiffany.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I have made the point: the buck stops with me. The apology has been provided by me on behalf of this Government.

Dr Broad - Why is it so hard? Why is it so difficult?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Braddon.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is members of this Chamber who are targeting, I quite believe quite unfairly, two ministers in this place because they believe they can do so for political gain. Without evidence, they are just making it up.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - The Attorney-General has been resolute in the efforts she has made to protect victims, to change laws, to support the commission of inquiry and bring that in. As I have said on a number of occasions, we have brought on the commission of inquiry but my Government is also subject to that commission of inquiry. We go willingly to it because the questions need answering.

Likewise for that side of the House, there are questions to be answered about what happened in 2009, what happened in 2011 and what happened in 2013. Those questions need to be answered. I hope the commission of inquiry gets to the bottom of that.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Excuse me, Premier, just for a moment. Order, interjections should cease. It is not appropriate, as I have said many times in the past, to ask a question and then continually interject on the minister who is answering. That includes the Premier who is answering the question. Please let the Premier continue without interjection.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I had hoped, albeit it appears to a hope that is too far away, that this parliament, as we work through these very difficult matters of the commission of the inquiry, could have done so united in our hope that we could get to the bottom of some of the circumstances, the issues, the reasons why we have had such a dark past. However, it is quite obvious that that side of the House wants to play politics with this -

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, I take personal offence to the accusations by the Premier that we will not be supporting the commission of inquiry. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER - I cannot see how that is a personal offence.

Ms White - I am offended.

Mr SPEAKER - It was to that side of the House, so I am not going to accept that.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, there is only one side of the House that is playing politics with this commission of inquiry.

Ms White - We are asking for your ministers to apologise on behalf of Tiffany.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Ms White, if you wish to stay in here, that is your final warning.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, members on this side of the House who the Leader of the Opposition just mentioned have been judged and named by the Leader of the Opposition, so to suggest that she is not playing politics with this could not be further from the truth.

Ms White - I am speaking for a victim/survivor who has no voice in this place.

Mr SPEAKER - If you can conclude your answer, please, Premier.

Mr GUTWEIN - I say to Ms Skeggs that I want to get to the bottom of this. I want to find a way forward for this state -

Ms White - Start with an apology.

Mr GUTWEIN - through the commission of inquiry, whereby we can put in place a framework that will ensure our kids in the future are safe.

Ms White - Start with an apology to Tiffany.

Member Suspended

Member for Lyons - Ms White

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White. You can leave the Chamber, please, until the end of question time.

Ms White withdrew.

Mr SPEAKER - Premier, please conclude.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will, Mr Speaker. In finishing, the point I was going to make in regard to the member who has left the Chamber was that it is no wonder, in terms of the matters that have gone on in recent weeks and the questions that she has to answer as the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the way that she has handled matters within her own party, it is no wonder that she is so determined in her attack to shift the spotlight from herself onto my Government. I will not accept that.

We have gone forward as a government with good intent, with real intent to get to the bottom of these matters once and for all, and to ensure that our kids are safe moving forward. I hope that this parliament supports us in that.

COVID-19 - Government Actions and Numbers of Cases

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.47 a.m.]

Premier, congratulations. Your Government's epic public health failure has led to more than 10 000 active COVID-19 cases, including 1979 reported overnight and a big jump in hospitalisations to 32. In total, more than 70 000 Tasmanians have been infected, including thousands of children and young people, with a novel bat virus. Fifteen people have died since you reopened the border; these were avoidable deaths.

Instead of taking steps to prevent infection, you have removed mask-wearing protections, allowing the BA.2 subvariant to run rampant. So high is our current case rate that if Tasmania was a country we would be in the top 15 nations in the world for cases per capita. As you know, no child under 12 is fully vaccinated, vaccines are waning in efficacy, and they do not prevent infection or the risk of reinfection or long COVID.

Tasmanians want to know what is your end game with this virus?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question. It does not surprise me that she is still continuing in the same vein that she started over the Christmas period -

Ms O'Connor - Jesus Christ, have you had a look at the numbers?

Mr GUTWEIN - where you claimed that -

Government members interjecting.

A member - Swearing in parliament.

Mr GUTWEIN - where you claim that Public Health, that the Government -

Ms O'Connor - It is not swearing.

A member - Taking the Lord's name in vain.

Mr GUTWEIN - was engaging in eugenics. It was just a disgrace.

Ms O'Connor - I am not using it in vain.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor, you have asked the question. I expect everybody to listen to the Premier.

Mr GUTWEIN - As to the matter Ms O'Connor has raised, Mr Speaker, the number of people in hospital being treated specifically for COVID-19 has remained relatively stable.

Ms O'Connor - It spiked overnight.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - There are 14 people in hospital who are actually being treated for COVID-19.

Ms O'Connor - What a load of crap. There are 32 people in hospital.

Government members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of the total number of people in hospital, obviously as COVID -

Ms O'Connor - I actually care about their health.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor. If you do not want to be the second leader to leave the Chamber this morning, I would stop interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, as COVID-19 spreads more widely, what we are seeing, importantly, is that it is not manifesting as higher rates of serious disease. The number of people in hospital being treated for COVID-19 has remained relatively stable right throughout this. But what will happen as people enter hospital over time, someone breaks their leg, because of the spread of the disease the chances of them entering hospital and having COVID-19 are much higher. But they will not be -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. People who communicate with the Greens want to know what -

Mr SPEAKER - I am sorry, you will have to take your mask off, your voice is muffled.

Ms O'CONNOR - I do not regard this Chamber as particularly safe, as you know, Mr Speaker but people who are worried about the spread of this virus want to know what the Government's end game is.

Mr SPEAKER - What is the point of order?

Ms O'CONNOR - The point of order is relevance. Could he answer the question instead of resorting to personal attacks?

Mr SPEAKER - Premier, if you could continue.

Mr GUTWEIN - With the greatest of respect, you have made an art form out of personal attacks.

The end game is exactly the outcome that we spoke about when we laid down the plan. That was to open our borders safely and successfully, and ensure that over time we could transition to living with COVID-19 safely and getting on with our lives. That remains our plan.

Public Health has been clear in their advice. We had Public Health speaking on the radio this morning; I think they were out there publicly yesterday. They stood with me on Friday. I have made this point before: unlike other premiers in other states or first ministers, I have stood with Public Health every step of the way. Public Health has made it clear on a number of occasions - last Friday, yesterday, and I understand today as well - that the uptick in case numbers is a result of the more transmissible BA.2 variant.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I believe the Premier is misleading the House. I cannot believe Public Health said that removing masks had nothing to do with spread.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, the higher spread is related to the BA.2 variant's higher transmissibility. That is directly from Public Health. Sensibly, in terms of masks, the position of Public Health was that in high-risk settings, they are to remain. In other settings, if you cannot socially distance, it is recommended that you wear a mask, which is what we are doing today. I have to say that, in a sparsely populated Chamber last night, I thought it was highly unfair of you to target a member of the House's staff in the way that you did, somebody who was following the rules, as outlined by Public Health -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek the leave of the House to make a personal explanation after question time. I am flagging that I will, because Mr Boutchard's presence in here unmasked put us at risk.

Mr SPEAKER - The statement can be made after question time, not now.

Mr GUTWEIN - Perhaps in that personal explanation, Ms O'Connor, you can explain how you got to eugenics and that disgraceful claim over the Christmas period.

Ms O'Connor - I have explained that. It came from Women with Disabilities Australia.

Burnie Court Complex - Update

Mr ELLIS question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.54 a.m.]

Following our meeting with the local Burnie community, can you please update the House on the next steps of the Burnie court complex project?

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for his interest in this matter. I thank him, together with the Attorney-General and minister Jaensch, for last Friday meeting the community members, the business community and also the council with me. It was a very informative day.

Over several months we have been working through a process of planning and consultation. As I said last week, we met with the Burnie City Council, and I spoke to Mayor Kons prior to that meeting. He was unfortunately unable to be there. We met with local business representative Ian Jones, the president of Business North West, and some other business people. We also had a very informative meeting with the council, and with four local members of the community representing the community concerns.

I believe I can say that the Government and local stakeholders are all in firm agreement that the current facilities of the court are no longer fit for purpose and must be replaced. Decanting from the court and dealing with the asbestosis issues in that court building are not possible. We are also in agreement - the community and business community, and also the council - that the central business district in Burnie is in need of revitalisation. It is in need of activation.

The Government had previously identified the former university campus - the Mooreville Road site - for a new court complex, following a significant process to reveal and consider various sites. At the time it was selected, the site was determined to be suitable and appropriate due to some key factors: the Government already owns it, which is important in a court context; it can accommodate existing court functions and planned future expansion; and there were no other suitable sites in the CBD, at that time, that were either owned by the Crown or for sale on the open market.

As I have indicated, we are firmly committed to working with the local community on this matter. We all want to leverage this project as a catalyst to ensure that we can revitalise Burnie more broadly, while delivering key facilities for the city.

Last week we were all advised that the Burnie business community, the council, even the residents, believed there were other alternative sites available that would not have been available, or that we had line of sight on, some time ago.

Considering all these factors and interests, we are announcing today that we are going to conduct a short, targeted expression of interest process to ensure that we have exhausted all possible opportunities to maximise the benefits from this project. This expression of interest process will be conducted by Treasury in close consultation with the Department of Justice and also the Burnie City Council. They have a firm view on this. They believe there are other opportunities available, they are going through a planning process themselves, and it is important that we work with them.

We will look to identify suitable CBD sites that may be available for purchase and redevelopment on acceptable terms and time frames, and are potentially suitable for the new court complex, including future growth options, and are consistent with the strategic objectives of revitalising the CBD. The initial process will commence as soon as possible. It is expected that once it commences, it will be completed within around three months.

Should one or more potentially suitable sites be identified as options for redevelopment, we will look at these in terms of what the redevelopment of each site would require. We will evaluate them to ensure that any alternative sites that are suggested would provide equivalent court functionality compared to the Mooreville Road site, and that they will represent a good value proposition for the taxpayers of Tasmania.

Following this process, should a suitable alternative CBD site be identified, and subject to acceptable terms, the Government will make a final decision and will redevelop the court in the Burnie CBD.

Obviously, the Mooreville Road site still remains. It has been through Public Works but we want to exhaust this EOI process, work with the community and get the best outcome that we can for the community, the business community and the council, and ensure that we revitalise and activate that CBD.

Many Colours One Direction Program

Ms DOW question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[11.00 a.m.]

In July last year, a commitment was made to transition away from the Many Colours One Direction (MC1D) program in the Northern Territory after concerns about child safety. Can you advise how many young people have been transitioned out of the program since that commitment was made? What services have been put in place to assist their transition and provide much-needed support in Tasmania for these young people and their families?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for her question. Our Government's priority, as always, is to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and young people. We are committed to developing the supports and programs that we need to respond to their needs in out-of-home care, particularly those young people with highly complex needs who are the subject of much discussion in here regarding placements in the Many Colours One Direction program in the Northern Territory.

We commissioned an expert panel report to review the use of Many Colours One Direction and to provide recommendations for improving our support for Tasmanian children and young people with highly complex needs, and to transition away from the use of Many Colours One Direction program for those kids. We also set aside \$500 000 of seed funding to progress the development of Tasmanian-based programs.

I can report that work is under way to develop and procure new programs and services and we expect to have them on the ground by the end of this year. A cross-sectoral oversight group has been established to assist with implementation planning, which includes members from the non-government sector, including TasCOSS, Families and Children Australia, the Australian Childhood Foundation, and Aboriginal community organisations. The group also includes representatives from the departments of Communities, Education, and Health. In December 2021, we released an implementation plan which was endorsed by the cross-sectoral

oversight group and the plan is available on the Department of Communities Tasmania website. These are important steps forward in our commitment to establish programs for young people with exceptional needs here in Tasmania.

To the question and to the interests of many in this issue, as part of our transition away from Many Colours One Direction, the service agreement between the Department of Communities Tasmania and Many Colours One Direction has now concluded. In line with their wishes, and with the support of their families, two young people remain in the Northern Territory with the connections they have established while participating in the Many Colours One Direction program. Both of the young people remaining in the Territory will continue to access a range of support services as negotiated with them and their individual care teams.

We will not go into discussing individual cases of young people, but with the permission of one young person in particular, I can share some brief details. One of the young people who was spending time in the Many Colours One Direction program does remain connected to Mr and Mrs Brahminy through a family-based care arrangement while they are transitioning to independence. This has occurred in line with that young person's wishes and with the strong support of their family. They have also continued to be supported by our broader care team.

In reporting on what our Government has done to discontinue and transition away from the use of Many Colours One Direction as a placement option for young people with particularly complex needs, we have at all times had the best interests of those young people at heart, and continue to. We continue to involve them in decision-making that affects them, and to work with their families and the people who have wrapped around them to ensure they are getting the support they need as we make these changes. We will continue to, as we develop and implement alternative care arrangements for them and young people like them here in Tasmania.

Public Trustee - Recommendations and Outcomes of Review

Ms O'CONNOR question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[11.04 a.m.]

On 30 November last year, an independent review into the Public Trustee by Damian Bugg QC was published. The review found the trustee has failed to correctly meet its duties for 26 years, and that as a result those on guardianship orders have had their rights and their assets stripped away from them. The independent review pointed to the trustee selling or disposing of personal property without consultation, in short, at times fleecing Tasmanians when they are at their most vulnerable.

Would you agree that all victims of the trustee should be entitled to compensation, and that mechanisms for this should be developed and made available as soon as possible? Will you commit to ensuring justice for those Tasmanians who have been harmed by the operation of the Public Trustee, without delay?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question. It is a very important matter. My Department of Justice is working closely with the Public Trustee, and the

Department of Treasury, including meeting on a weekly basis. I am anticipating receiving detailed advice on the recommendations of the review and the proposed pathway -

Ms O'Connor - When?

Ms ARCHER - I am getting to that; I cannot answer it in one sentence - forward for consideration by the end of this week. I am aware that the secretary of the department is meeting with the interim Public Trustee board's spokesperson, this week, to finalise the advice and proposed response.

However, from the preliminary advice received, I am able to advise that all of the Bugg review recommendations are accepted, either wholly in principle or in part. That will be explained in our response, and will be implemented as a matter of priority, as I have always said.

I can indicate the following timings are anticipated, for the implementation of recommendations. A number of recommendations have already been acted upon and are under way by the Department of Justice, the Public Trustee and TASCAT, the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. A majority of the recommendations will be implemented by the end of May, prior to the state Budget. Those recommendations that are subject to additional funding requests are likely to take additional time to consider and address through budget considerations. A number of recommendations requiring legislative reform may also be included in the work currently under way regarding the next tranche of the Guardianship and Administration Act reforms, with the draft bill anticipated to be out for consultation.

The recommendations relating to the operation, performance and culture of the Public Trustee have already been considered by that board, the CEO and management, with a number of these recommendations already under way, and others scheduled to be completed between now and the end of the year.

There are several significant recommendations that are supported in principle but do require further analysis, and indeed consultation and possible additional funding. That is why Treasury is involved as well. The detailed advice I am expecting by the end of this week will provide further information regarding this work.

Our Government recognises the concerns raised by the community and clients of the Public Trustee about how their cases are being dealt with, and administered, which is why we announced the review in June last year.

The independent reviewer, Damian Bugg AM QC, provided a very comprehensive report in December, with a number of significant recommendations relating to the future direction and operations of the Public Trustee. As I said, I expect to shortly receive that advice from my department, including options regarding the best way to implement the detailed recommendations and making the necessary improvements to better meet clients' needs and meet community expectations. Importantly, this will include a response to the calls for compensation made by community advocates as a result of identified shortcomings or failures.

Furthermore, I will soon be progressing further work to introduce tranche two of the guardianship and administration reforms to address the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute's work which will look towards entrenching further supports for vulnerable Tasmanians into the

guardianship framework. It is my expectation that these recommendations and important reforms will be progressed and implemented as a matter of priority.

Many Colours One Direction Program

**Ms DOW question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH,
Mr JAENSCH**

[11.10 a.m.]

In October last year, one of the young people participating in the Many Colours One Direction program run by Allan Brahminy had to be collected from the Northern Territory by their mother after Mr Brahminy accidentally called a child safety worker and left a five-minute voicemail which captured a verbal exchange which could be described as verbally abusive and aggressive between Mr Brahminy and this young person. After several months of doing her best to support her teenage child, this young person's mother is in desperate need for support for her family and your office has been made aware of this. Instead, she has now been asked to consider whether she wishes Child Safety Services to continue their involvement with her family. What possible justification is there for withdrawing this essential support service from a vulnerable young person and their family, particularly after such a traumatic experience?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am advised by my office that we received a letter late yesterday via your colleague, Ms Lovell, raising this question on behalf of the family. I am advised my office is following that up to understand the particular circumstances referred to. These are kids with complex needs. That is why in the past we have sought to provide placements with unique providers who have had the ability and a success rate working with kids with particularly complex needs. With those no longer being available, we have a range of other services to offer them.

We will maintain our contact with this family and this young person to fully understand their needs and provide whatever support is required to ensure the best outcome for that young person.

I have not had full advice on this particular case. As I said, we were advised only late yesterday, I understand, via Ms Lovell, so I will be giving it my full attention.

Securing Tasmania's Future - Hobart City High School Master Plan

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

[11.12 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Tasmanian Liberal Government is delivering on its plan to secure Tasmania's future through the release of the draft Hobart City high school master plan as part of the Government's record investment in education infrastructure? Does the minister know of any alternatives?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker, the member for Lyons, for his question and his support for young people and the facilities they learn in around our state. Our Government continues to take the important and necessary steps required to support secondary school education in the City of Hobart. Last year we took a significant step in giving Hobart City High School its new name, forming the school's new identity and helping define the school for generations to come. This was followed by a \$1.6 million injection to undertake essential and urgent capital improvements, including upgrading toilet facilities and refurbishing general learning areas at both Ogilvie and New Town campuses.

Today we take another milestone step with the release of a draft master plan for the Hobart City High School and the commencement of a community consultation process to inform the final design of this important component of Hobart and Tasmania's educational infrastructure. This process will ensure that the priority works for the high school's Ogilvie and New Town campuses are fully informed by the views of students, families and the school community.

The draft master plan identifies opportunities to provide more contemporary learning facilities and cater for increased enrolment capacity on the Ogilvie and New Town campuses. These facilities will serve generations of learners to come, and it is important that we understand the community's long-term needs and aspirations for both campuses.

A total of \$20 million has already been committed so we can respond quickly to priority projects identified through the consultation process rather than waiting for future budget cycles. The Department of Education's Get Involved campaign for Hobart City High School will be open until 20 May 2022 and provides a range of avenues for input and feedback on the draft masterplan, including an online survey, community workshops and email submissions.

Targeted community and stakeholder consultation on the draft master plan will commence from Monday 28 March 2022 and will run for eight weeks. I strongly encourage the Hobart community to visit the Department of Education's Get Involved website and participate in this exciting opportunity to have a say on the future of Hobart City High School. This is just one of a number of important education infrastructure projects we are investing in as a government.

Since 2014 the Tasmanian Government has delivered record investment in new education infrastructure with \$486.6 million, a much-needed investment into the future of our learners and the most important investment we can make. This includes \$116.2 million of capital investment announced in the 2021-22 state Budget to deliver on our 2021 election commitments. With these new commitments, the total capital investment in the 2021-22 Budget and forward Estimates increased to \$271.8 million over four years.

Through this investment, we will be delivering two new schools at Brighton and Legana; major redevelopments of existing 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 Safety in Schools plan; and infrastructure upgrades to support our high schools, which as of this year are all providing years 11 and 12 learning options so that all Tasmanian kids can complete their schooling at their school where they live - something Labor spent years opposing in this place.

Importantly, a number of major projects will be completed this year, providing contemporary new facilities for children, students, staff and school communities, including the \$20 million redevelopment of Penguin District School; the \$10.5 million redevelopment of Devonport High School; an \$8.25 million upgrade of the Southern Support School; a \$4.3 million upgrade of the Jordan River Learning Federation School Farm and the new East Tamar Child and Family Learning Centre at Mayfield.

The Government continues to balance the need to provide the best possible education with responsible financial management.

Mr SPEAKER - Please wind up, minister.

Mr JAENSCH - We know that the physical environment contributes to the engagement of our learners, and this Government will continue to prioritise infrastructure that our learners need. More broadly, these projects are part of a pipeline of investment in strategic infrastructure that will support economic growth in all our regions, creating jobs and educational opportunities for aspirational Tasmanians right across our state.

Many Colours One Direction Program

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.19 a.m.]

Minister Jaensch failed to adequately handle the situation with Brahminy when he held the portfolio last time. Now your Cabinet dysfunction has forced you to reinstate him as minister for Children and Youth. How can this young person's mother and family have any faith that they will get the support they so desperately need?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for that question. I will make this point: Mr Jaensch is a very capable, very dedicated and very hardworking minister. I have absolutely no doubt that he will deliver the support necessary and pathway forward with distinction.

I am not going to go into the details of Many Colours One Direction; Mr Jaensch has touched on some of those matters in the previous question you asked. Minister Jaensch is very capable. He is extraordinarily hardworking. He will ensure that he and this Government does an outstanding job in respect of these matters.

Commonwealth Games Bid

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.20 a.m.]

Your Government is lurching from crisis to crisis. You have lost two ministers already this year and undertaken several Cabinet reshuffles. When the first of these ministers, Sarah Courtney resigned in disgrace, you attempted to launch a massive distraction by announcing

that Tasmania will be bidding to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Documents released under Right to Information reveal your Government was invited to participate in the bidding process in 2018 and you declined the offer. They also show that, in the subsequent four years, no further work whatsoever was undertaken.

Were you being honest with the public when you claimed you were serious about bidding to host the Commonwealth Games or was it just a desperate distraction from the chaos in your Government?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I think he is the shadow treasurer, so I thank Dr Broad for that question.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - The first thing that I am going to do is to ensure that you do not rewrite history regarding the circumstances of Ms Courtney. Ms Courtney was a very hardworking minister. In fact, Ms Courtney stood with me right through that initial period, in the COVID-19 disruption that we had, day in day out, oversaw the health system and did a very good and capable job. Her personal circumstances, in her need to take some space, should not be characterised in a way that that member did. It is a disgrace and I will not allow it to occur.

Regarding my Cabinet and the recent changes was that we had two good ministers who went out and I have had two very good ministers who have come in. That is a demonstration of the depth that we have on this side of the House. When you look at the other side of the House, they cannot even sit together. In fact, the only reason that Dr Broad -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. The question is about the Commonwealth Games. The Premier has not yet said the words 'Commonwealth Games'. Can you draw him back to the question?

Mr SPEAKER - On the point of order, relevance is important but there is substantial leeway in answering the question. I note the Courtney issue was raised in that and the Premier is therefore allowed to go to any point in the question. The Premier has not wound up yet, and I will ask him to continue without interjection.

Ms O'BYRNE - On a point of order, Mr Speaker. If I can refer you to the companion document to the Standing Orders it does say that:

From time to time, it is claimed that Ministers may answer Questions in any way they wish. This claim is of course tempered by the obligation for Ministers to conduct themselves in accordance with the Standing Orders -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'BYRNE -

and making political points only vaguely relevant to the question is clearly in breach of the Standing Orders.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. I know what is in the Standing Orders. It does not need to be read out to the Chamber.

Ms O'BYRNE - I am making my point of order, Mr Speaker, which the Standing Orders also allow me to do before I resume my seat.

Mr SPEAKER - As I indicated, the precedents and practice of this Chamber is that there is a certain amount of leniency given to the question when it is put and that leniency is also given quid pro quo to the answer. Ms Courtney was mentioned in the question. The Premier has gone there. I am sure he will cover all the other issues that were there and probably even more.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, I will do my best to cover these things. Thank you for that licence, Mr Speaker. The point that I was making in that question, he went directly to the Cabinet and I have dealt with that.

Regarding the Commonwealth Games, I was appalled to hear Dr Broad talking down the state as he did. When this matter was raised we were taking sensible and responsible steps in our engagement on this. When Dr Broad dished the opportunity that we were pursuing, when he talked down Tasmania, I have to say I was not only surprised, I was bitterly disappointed that that side of the House would seek to stoop to those levels. What do you have against being aspirational?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - What do you have against a government that wants to see good outcomes for Tasmanians? What do you have against a government that was engaged with the association at a national -

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Speaker, point of order, I have just heard you pull up members of the Opposition for interjecting. I note that on the Government benches there has been constant interjections but no apology, from Mr Ferguson, Mr Jaensch and Ms Ogilvie. I ask, I beg of you -

Mr SPEAKER - I will manage the Chamber, Ms O'Connor, I do not need your assistance. I take your point of order. There are constant interjections coming from the left and banter right across the Chamber. I ask everyone to be wary of not interjecting and allow the Premier to answer the question in silence, or to conclude his answer in silence.

Mr GUTWEIN - Do I still have that wide range in other matters caveat, Mr Speaker? I was so bitterly disappointed in the response of the Opposition, and especially Dr Broad, in this matter. We remain engaged with the national association. If there are opportunities for us

to co-host, if there are opportunities for us to host visiting teams, then I would like to see that occur.

What I cannot understand is why Dr Broad, in his comments, was so quick to cut Tasmania down, so quick to suggest that we should not be aspirational, that we should not hope for more. It bitterly disappointed me and you should be ashamed of yourself.

Police - Investment to Improve Safety of Tasmanians

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mrs PETRUSMA

[11.28 a.m.]

Can you please inform the House, of how the Government's investment in police is improving the safety of Tasmanians, and is the minister aware of any alternatives?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for her question, and for her interest in this very important matter. The Tasmanian Government is very committed to investing in our police to keep our community safe and to secure Tasmania's future. This is why this Government is recruiting 308 additional police officers, along with upgrading police houses, providing equipment such as body-worn cameras and building new police stations.

I was honoured to attend the opening of the new New Norfolk Police Station last month, along with other members of this House. This station was made possible due to this Government's \$5 million investment and is now providing a modern, fit-for-purpose facility, for police to continue to provide high quality services to the Derwent Valley.

Likewise, again with other members of this House, I was also delighted to attend the opening of the new \$5 million Longford Police Station last week, with the Longford station now being the divisional headquarters for the Central North Division, which is also complemented by new, state-of-the-art, \$1 million facility, for our northern specialist police operations and to support this, the Tasmanian Government's \$8.9 million commitment for a fulltime Special Operations Group.

Through our increased investment in additional police resources, Tasmania Police is also able to focus on targeting and prosecuting offenders, which has been evident in recent anti-social behaviour blitzes and targeted road safety operations. These operations are all about protecting lives on our roads, encouraging safe driving practices and issuing infringements for those who choose to commit one of the fatal five: speeding, not wearing a seatbelt, driving with drugs or alcohol, being distracted or using their mobile phone or driving while fatigued.

Early this month Tasmania Police undertook one of these operations on the west coast, resulting in four defect notices, two persons charged with exceeding the alcohol limit, one for illicit drugs, 38 charges for speeding, one charge of not wearing a seatbelt, and two charges for using a mobile phone whilst driving.

Last month police undertook targeted operations in the Huon Valley, with more than 300 roadworthiness and compliance inspections as well as seven vehicles being seized and impounded, and 30 drivers issued defect notices.

Disappointingly, police also caught six drivers exceeding the prescribed alcohol limit and fined three passengers for possessing open containers of alcohol while driving in vehicles. One driver was arrested after being caught hooning at Geeveston and had their vehicle seized, three drivers were driving unregistered vehicles and failing to wear seatbelts, two people were driving whilst disqualified, five drivers were issued fines for causing unnecessary noise and smoke, and 18 motorists were detected speeding, one of whom was arrested and their vehicle seized.

Over the March long weekend Launceston police targeted the Launceston CBD and surrounding suburbs with regard to drink and drug driving offences and hooning vehicles. Again disappointingly, 17 drivers were caught drink-driving and a further 11 detected with an illicit drug in their body, and two vehicles were detected hooning and both drivers arrested, with one of the vehicles clamped for 28 days. Tasmania Police also issued 14 traffic infringement notices, six drug diversions, 29 motor vehicle defects and 14 formal directions to leave the CBD.

In all of these operations, the support and information provided by the wider community to Tasmania Police has been invaluable in ensuring that those who blatantly flout the law are caught and targeted. These outstanding results demonstrate that if people deliberately choose to offend and endanger other road users, they will be caught, especially as we have increased the numbers of police officers in Tasmania. This includes 70 Tasmania Police graduates last year, with 95 recruits to graduate this year, including the graduation of 22 new police officers this month.

Tasmania Police has advised that these high-visibility traffic operation blitzes are a high priority to deter and detect incidents of hooning and dangerous driving on our rural roads and highways. Please take all reports of hooning seriously. Anyone who witnesses hooning should contact police immediately with information including the exact location, registration number and vehicle description, to give police the best chance to be able to stop this type of behaviour.

Information can also be provided anonymously through CrimeStoppers. If there is any CCTV or dashcam footage this should also be supplied to police, because to clamp or seize offending vehicles police must have direct operations. Tasmania Police are already utilising innovative strategies to safely target hooning, including the use of drone technology. Tasmania Police now operate 22 drones across the state through the investment of \$400 000 by this Government, with drone-identified hooning offences already resulting in the seizures of offending vehicles.

I want to congratulate Tasmania Police for working with their local communities and for the great success of these strategic and targeted operations. Our investments in Tasmania Police are securing Tasmania's future, in stark contrast to those opposite who cruelly cut 108 officers. In fact, there were fewer officers under the previous Labor government when they left in 2014 than when they came to government 16 years earlier in 1998.

Commonwealth Games Bid

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.33 a.m.]

On 10 February, you wrote to the CEO of Commonwealth Games Australia to:

... formally request that Tasmania be given consideration as a host state for the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

You say this was a serious bid. If we are to believe that, that means that you were willing to sign Tasmanian taxpayers up to an enormous expense that would have come with hosting the games.

Eight days after you formally requested Tasmania be considered to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games, your department told you the cost to host the event was nearly \$2 billion, which is more than the entire Tasmanian Education budget. How could Tasmania have possibly afforded that, and why were you willing to sign up the state to spend \$2 billion just to distract from a minister's resignation and the dysfunction of your Cabinet?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Broad, the member for Braddon, for his question and his interest in this matter. He obviously has my letter which I am happy to quote from. It continues:

Should you be open to discussions we are confident we can work collaboratively with Commonwealth Games Australia on the opportunities Tasmania presents as either a host or co-host of the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Let us put some context around this. At the time I wrote my letter, there was no bid from any capital city in this country in terms of hosting those games.

Dr Broad - There was no budget, no business plans. Hadn't asked the councils.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - As I understand it, the conversation that the former Minister for Sport and Recreation had with Mr Craig Phillips early on was that he encouraged Tasmania to put its foot forward into that space. We were intending to have a conversation with Commonwealth Games Australia in terms of what the opportunities might be.

Dr Broad - You don't even know the sports.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr GUTWEIN - This goes to the disgraceful way that Labor and Dr Broad specifically treated this option that we had in front of us. We wanted to explore and understand what might be available for Tasmania, for the young people of Tasmania, for the businesses of Tasmania and for the community of Tasmania should there be an opportunity here, and that is perfectly

reasonable. In fact, I think you would be criticising us if we had not done that, but you want to walk both sides of the street on all of these issues.

Dr Broad - Two billion dollars to be spent in four years.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I come back to the one point that I made earlier. I was so disappointed with Dr Broad that he would talk the state down as he did and then -

Dr Broad - I talked you down. You're signing cheques you can't cash.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - even in terms of the co-hosting option -

Dr Broad - How did that go? You didn't even talk to the Victorians.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Braddon.

Mr GUTWEIN - he closed his eyes to that. He shut down that opportunity because Labor stands for nothing on that side of the parliament.

Dr Broad - They shut it down. Did you talk to the Victorians?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Braddon, you are officially warned and I do not have to warn. You asked the question and when a member asks a question of a minister, I expect that person to listen to the answer. It may not be what you want to hear but you are expected to listen to it.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, when the previous premier wrote to the Commonwealth Games Association and indicated that we were interested in opportunities but hosting the games at that stage was not an option, the previous premier had not seen what occurred in this state in the last couple of years, such as how we were able to hold two back-to-back AFL finals for the first time in the state's history, and how we were able to pull together the fifth Ashes Test within four weeks. On that side of the House they talked down the opportunity for co-hosting, they talked down the opportunity to engage. It was perfectly reasonable and responsible to explore that opportunity.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr GUTWEIN - In regional Victoria they are in a non-disclosure period where they are working through the options.

Ms Butler - Did you even call Victoria?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Lyons.

Mr GUTWEIN - I hope - and we have left the door open with Commonwealth Games Australia - that there may be opportunities for Tasmania to still play some part. I welcome the Opposition's support if we get to a point where we could have visiting international teams domicile here as they acclimatise, or in training camps. There is a range of options, but on that side of the House they have no aspiration. They operate like something from the 1990s. Let me make the point that Tasmania is a vastly different place today. We have a leading economy. We have record jobs. We set records week by week in this state. I would hope that side of the House could find it amongst themselves to stop navel-gazing, lift their eyes to the horizon and at times past the horizon, as we do on this side, and at least show some level of aspiration.

Securing Tasmania's Future - Support for the Small Business Sector

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, Ms OGILVIE

[11.39 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Tasmanian majority Liberal Government is supporting our small business sector and why that is so important to secure Tasmania's future? Are you aware of any alternatives?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for that question. What a great question. There is no greater supporter of Tasmania's 39 000 small businesses than this Government. It is a crucial sector - a sector that secures Tasmania's future, growing our economy and creating jobs for our community, as we know.

Since the start of the pandemic, Tasmanian businesses have received more than \$160 million in COVID-specific support programs. During the height of the pandemic in 2020, our Government provided the highest level of support for businesses per capita of any jurisdiction in the country.

Our Government remains committed to supporting our small business sector, and the jobs it delivers, as we now transition to living with COVID-19. Last week, we announced round three of our COVID-19 business support package, with grants of between \$1000 and \$10 000 available to assist businesses who are continuing to experience a downturn due to a loss of customers and/or staff due to COVID-19.

In rounds one and two of the program, more than \$3 million in funding was provided directly to more than 1500 businesses, and I am very pleased to advise that already 44 businesses have received more than \$100 000 in round three which, as I just mentioned, only opened a week ago. I am very pleased to be able to do that support. That is what this program is designed to do. It is aimed to get money out the door as quickly as possible to help those businesses that are still facing some challenges.

Since announcing the third round of the program, I have spoken to many small businesses and small business owners who are thrilled with the support package. One is the wonderful Nikki Salter from the Hybrid Training Centre, who said:

We have been successful in applying for previous grants, which have really helped us survive through the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is really great the government is continuing to support small businesses like ours as we recover and move forward.

Mr Robert Mallet, CEO of the Tasmanian Small Business Council, has also welcomed round three of the program, saying:

Ongoing support such as this is essential not only for businesses, but for physical and mental health of those under pressure. The fact that the government is prepared to continue the grants program over a number of months and is continuing to support small businesses is giving them the confidence that they have a government that has got their back, and we are interested in their longevity.

I take this opportunity to say how proud I am of Tasmania's small businesses. They are robust. They are getting back to what they do best, and that is business. They are getting back to business.

Mr Speaker, to be quite honest, the only thing that seems to be keeping our small businesses back right now is the negativity and scaremongering that we can hear from the other side. It has been extremely disappointing over recent weeks to hear those sitting over there continually provide negative feedback on the support we have been giving. What they fail to mention amongst all this negativity and scaremongering is that the latest CommSec State of the States report for January 2022 has Tasmania leading the nation as the best-performing economy in the country, for the eighth quarter in a row.

NAB's latest business survey has found we have the second-best conditions for business in the nation, and our employment rates are at near-record levels, with our unemployment rate the lowest it has ever been in our history. We have these outstanding results because our Liberal Government's programs have supported our business sector and our economy, and our businesses are reaping the benefits of this investment.

Time expired.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Member for Clark - Ms O'Connor

Mr SPEAKER - On a personal explanation. Ms O'Connor, as you are coming to the lectern, I will point out to the Chamber that when a personal explanation is given, it is confined only to a very brief response to the matter in contention, and may not debate the subject.

[11.44 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I called out your adviser Mr Ed Boutchard last night because coming in here unmasked makes this Chamber less safe for everyone in it. It makes it less safe for members of parliament and for staff. Mr Boutchard was in here unmasked, in defiance of your own correspondence strongly encouraging everyone

in the Chamber to wear masks. We were all wearing masks. Who does Mr Boutchard think he is?

I note it is mostly Liberal staffers and elected representatives walking these halls unmasked.

Mr SPEAKER - As I said, Ms O'Connor, your explanation may not contain an argument.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am not having an argument. I am explaining myself, Mr Speaker. I urge everyone who does not want to get infected to keep wearing their masks and keep their distance from these people.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, thank you very much, I have heard the explanation. As I said, it must be very brief and you are going back over the issue that you raised last night. If that is all you have?

Ms O'CONNOR - I have one more line, thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - You have 10 seconds, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - I will continue to call out people who are selfish, entitled and disrespectful in this place. I will keep calling them out, because nobody has a right to infect anyone else.

Mr SPEAKER - That again is an argument, Ms O'Connor.

QUESTION UPON NOTICE

The following answer was given to a question upon notice:

21. PARKS - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - PROPOSALS

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS, Mrs PETRUSMA

In relation to Expressions of Interest:

- (1) Have any Expression of Interest proposals for development in public protected areas been approved to lease and licence since 1 January 2015, and if so, how many?
- (2) Is the Government currently assessing any Expression of Interest proposals, and if so, how many?

ANSWER

- (1) I am advised that a total of thirteen leases and licences have been issued since 1 January 2015 under the Expressions of Interest (EOI) process for Tourism Investment Opportunities in national parks, reserves and Crown land. Two have since been surrendered by the proponents, and one is not yet operational as it is still progressing through the approvals process.

- (2) The Expressions of Interest proposals process is led by the Office of the Coordinator General. I have therefore sought information from the Minister for State Growth on your behalf, and I am advised that there are two proposals currently being evaluated by the EoI Assessment Panel. There are a further 3 proposals that remain on hold awaiting further information to allow the Panel to undertake its full due diligence and to finalise its recommendations.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion without Notice - Motion Negatived

[11.47 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion without notice for the purposes of moving the suspension of standing orders to debate the following motion.

The motion is:

That this House requires minister Archer and minister Ferguson to apologise to Tiffany Skeggs.

Mr Speaker, this issue is not going to go away, and if the ministers feel they can get away without apologising to Tiffany Skeggs they are mistaken.

I am very reluctant to need to do this again today, but feel it is necessary because I have given a commitment, both in asking her question in this place, and in following this matter through seeking an apology on her behalf, that I will do all I can to ensure she gets the respect she deserves. It is very straightforward. The matter can be resolved very quickly for the Government, and for the ministers at the heart of this mess, minister Ferguson and minister Archer, by them getting to their feet and apologising. It is that simple.

If the Government thinks this matter is going to go away with their failure to apologise they are mistaken. We will continue to hold them to account on behalf of Ms Skeggs and other victims/survivors who feel offended and affronted by the behaviour that was demonstrated in this place nearly two weeks ago.

It is not about whether the Premier has apologised. Ms Skeggs has accepted the apology from the Premier. This is about the ministers who groaned during the question that was asked, and an apology from them. That is what this motion is about. It is what the motion was about earlier today. It is what the motion that we discussed yesterday was about. It is not about the Premier. It is about minister Archer and minister Ferguson.

Mr Speaker, in this House we are elected to represent our community. There are expectations that we uphold certain standards. When we are sworn into this place, we swear an oath to the people of this state, and to conduct ourselves in certain ways to certain standards.

Mr SPEAKER - Again, the question is of seeking leave, not going to the motion. Please, you are frustrating the process by not sticking to the actual standing orders.

Ms WHITE - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The motion before the House is to seek leave so we can debate an urgent motion, to call on two ministers in Peter Gutwein, the Premier's Cabinet, to apologise to a victim/survivor, whose name is Tiffany Skeggs.

It is a very poor reflection on those ministers that they have failed to do that.

My reasoning for referring to the oath that we swear when we are elected to this place is to remind them that there are certain standards and behaviours that they have sworn to uphold and they have failed to do that.

We will not let them get away with failing to apologise to a victim/survivor who has requested an apology from them and she should never have had to have done that.

I will not continue to draw this matter out. I am making the point again, that the ministers need to apologise and in doing that, make the point that we will not let this matter go. I hope that the ministers, Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson take the opportunity to rise to their feet and speak at the lectern and offer an apology now because without an apology from them, Ms Skeggs cannot heal from the hurt that was caused. If for no other reason, then they should offer an apology to assist her with her healing.

[11.51 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak against the motion for seeking leave. I very clearly placed on the record this morning, mine and my Government's position on this. Those ministers who have been targeted, and I think unfairly by those in this House regarding this matter, fully support the apology that I have already provided to Ms Skeggs, as I said at the time without explanation or excuse, and I have nothing further to add.

[11.52 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, let the *Hansard* record note that the Premier was on his feet for about a minute and we are still no closer to having an unreserved and sincere apology from two ministers who we all know behaved disgracefully that Thursday question time morning.

Tiffany Skeggs is no closer to feeling a sense of, or even a measure of, respect and justice from these two ministers. The arguments for apologising are overwhelming. It is about human decency. It is about respect. It is about recognising something you did: you hurt someone who is already grievously wounded.

This is not politics. The Premier can try that line all he likes. This is about human decency. This about at some level, trying to deliver justice to Tiffany Skeggs, who has given me her permission to tell this House that she was repeatedly raped as a child. Tiffany Skeggs, who is damaged, a beautiful person, watched this debate that Thursday morning and was retraumatised.

I ask Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer to put your pride aside. If it is pride, put it aside. If it is arrogance, do better. It is never too late to say sorry, and sorry is all that is needed here, a sincere and unreserved, unqualified apology for compounding trauma and harm to Tiffany Skeggs.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I understand the motion. This is about seeking leave.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you for repeatedly for reminding members who seek leave, that it is about the seeking of leave. Thank you, Mr Speaker, I have been here long enough.

I am seeking justice as is Ms White and the Opposition, a measure of justice for Tiffany Skeggs. I do not see why I have to elaborate on why it is an urgent matter. It should be painfully obvious to everyone in here, not least of all these two ministers who will not do the right thing. It is baffling. I do not understand. Is it because they think that if the Premier just stonewalls it will go away? It will not. We will not let it. It is not hard to say sorry. What is hard right now is Tiffany Skeggs' life. Seriously, I have not seen anything quite like this in this place.

It is painfully obvious that two members of this place have done the wrong thing. It is painfully obvious that they have harmed someone. A victim/survivor. We all know it was them. I am not sure they need reminding, but I will remind them that question time is televised. There is video and audio. On the audio you can clearly hear those who showed such disrespect that morning.

This was an urgent matter on that Thursday. It was an urgent matter yesterday. It remains an urgent matter. There are two people in this place who can allow Ms Skeggs and this parliament to move on. Their names are the member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, and the member for Clark, Ms Archer. They are the two people who know they did the wrong thing. They know it.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, you are not arguing for the seeking of leave, you are arguing the motion. If you have no further information to put, then I will put the motion.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have another one minute and 50 seconds to speak on this motion.

Mr SPEAKER - On seeking leave. Not the motion.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right. I have another one minute and 33 seconds to speak on this motion of seeking leave. That is what I am doing, Mr Speaker.

Ms Skeggs does not have a voice in here apart from the other side of this House. The other side of this House takes very seriously its responsibility to give voice to victims/survivors. Thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker.

I am speaking on the seeking of leave and making the case that this is an urgent matter and that every second that goes by without a frank, full and sincere apology from these two ministers is more time that Tiffany Skeggs and other victims/survivors suffer. It is most certainly an urgent matter. It is something the House should be allowed to freely debate. What we should hear after I sit down is each of these ministers getting up and apologising.

Further, Mr Speaker, I understand on previous form that we are likely to get a standing order 350 ruling from you. That would be very disappointing, I think, to Ms Skeggs and other victims/survivors. Other members should also be given the opportunity to speak on this motion seeking leave. There should not be any attempt to restrict debate.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER - I am again going to invoke standing order 350. I have indeed heard the three leaders speak on this issue. It is my responsibility to control the Chamber and its operation and when we are going over and over the same ground, then I need to move it on. We have had the debate yesterday. It is listed for a motion this afternoon and it is my call when I deal with this. Please, sit down.

Ms O'Connor - You cannot take a point of order?

Mr SPEAKER - Not when I am speaking. I have just said that I am going to put the question. The question is that leave be granted. Division required. Ring the bells.

Can the whips indicate full attendance? Ms O'Connor is here. By my count Labor has full attendance. You can't indicate that?

Ms O'Byrne - I have not indicated it, no. I do not have to Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Then we won't have full attendance. I will ask the whips again if they can indicate full attendance?

WHIPS - Yes, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - I have had a good read of the Standing Orders and I am not so sure of the actual wording but by my count we have full attendance available in the Chamber. Stop the bells and lock the doors.

The question is that leave to suspend standing orders be granted.

The House divided -

AYES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 11

Mrs Alexander (Teller)
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Street

PAIRS

Ms Finlay

Mr Tucker

Motion negatived.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Hosting the Commonwealth Games

[12.07 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: hosting the Commonwealth Games.

We have had a Right to Information request granted that lays bare the fraud that was the proposal to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and we know it is a fraud because we have the evidence. On 22 July 2018, in response to a letter from Mr Craig Phillips, the CEO of Commonwealth Games Australia, the then Premier Will Hodgman expressed the following sentiments:

Thank you for your letter regarding Australia's candidature for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

He had to say that because he actually missed the deadline of 31 May by some three weeks. That is how serious this Government was about the Commonwealth Games. They did not actually meet the deadline in the original letter, but he then went on to say that:

The Government is not in a position to bid for the Commonwealth Games in its own right.

Now we fast forward to the day that minister Courtney resigned after what we know was some scandal - remaining in France despite COVID-19 preparations at foot and so on. The minister came back and resigned. So what does the Premier do on 10 February? He writes a letter, again to the same Mr Craig Phillips AM, CEO of Commonwealth Games Australia, and says:

We write to formally request that Tasmania be given consideration as a host state for the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

A host state. The Premier, in his delusion, continues:

We acknowledge that in 2018 the then Premier of Tasmania, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, wrote to you indicating that Tasmania was not in a position to bid for the Commonwealth Games in its own right.

He also failed to acknowledge that that letter arrived late, but anyway, we will let that one slip.

However, we are open to participating in discussions in relation to any other opportunities for Tasmania as part of the candidate process.

A lot has changed since 2018. The evidence for that was that Hobart's Blundstone Arena recently hosted the fifth Ashes Test.

So here we have things that have changed since 2018, when a letter arrived three weeks late saying we were not in a position to host, to 2022 and that Tasmania hosted an Ashes Test. This is delusional and it is laid bare by the briefing some eight days later that the Premier received from the department.

How is it that a state like Tasmania could afford a bill of \$2 billion? That is what this Premier was willing to sign the state up for, and this is from the briefing paper provided by the department.

Hosting the Commonwealth Games involves up to 72 competing nations and will typically have between 4000 and 6000 athletes participating, with the addition of coaching support staff and officials of up to 9000 people attending - so that is roughly what you can fit into Blundstone Arena.

These are just the athletes and the coaches, not to mention if we go back to the evidence of the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane: 6000 athletes and coaches attended, 15 000 volunteers, 3500 police, 4000 security personnel, 1000 from the Australian Defence Force, and they received at least 100 000 visitors from interstate - but the Premier says we can host the Commonwealth Games, please consider us to be a host.

The department goes on to say:

Tasmania has few sporting facilities for possible Commonwealth Games sports that would meet current international competition standards, and it does not have any existing facility that would cater for the number of people that would be anticipated to attend key events such as the opening and closing ceremonies and major event finals.

The cost to host the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games was reported to be \$1.86 billion.

Queensland spent roughly \$2 billion. The Queensland budget spends approximately \$67 billion, and they stumped up \$2 billion to host the Commonwealth Games.

This premier believes - and he defended it again today. He stood up here and he backed it in that this state could afford \$2 billion to host the Commonwealth Games, when the Tasmanian budget spends approximately \$8 billion. That is just ridiculous. He talks about aspiring. This is not aspiration. This is delusion. If we are to believe the Premier, \$2 billion - the entire Education budget - would go on hosting the Commonwealth Games, when we could not possibly fit the people who would come to the Commonwealth Games into the state. It is not aspiration. It is delusion.

Again, the Premier stands up and tries to crab-walk away from the top line of his letter, which said that Tasmania wants to be the host, and he talks about co-hosting. How deluded is he? I have spoken about this before. What sports did he spruik? Mountain biking. Yes we can host mountain biking, but the other thing he talked about was rowing. That is how deluded this premier is. He did not mention rowing today. Hopefully, he is embarrassed about all the media he got spruiking rowing.

I love rowing. Would it not be amazing if rowing was here? Absolutely, but the Premier is aspiring to host an event that is not part of the Commonwealth Games anymore. It is not even on the optional list. It has not been there since 1986. What a blunder. What a mistake.

First of all he is saying okay, we can sign up to \$2 billion, but if we cannot, let us host a sport that is not even on the list. How deluded is that? He gets up and backs it in today. He talks about being aspiring. How about the Premier go through the basic details of what sports are actually in the Commonwealth Games, and goes through a few details of the actual cost?

Did he even pick up the phone to the Victorians? He talks about co-hosting opportunities. Has he even spoken to the Victorians? No. I very much doubt the minister or the Premier has actually picked up the phone to the Victorians. It was a stunt, absolutely, to cover up the dysfunction of his Cabinet.

Time expired.

[12.14 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Sport and Recreation) - Mr Speaker, I am glad Dr Broad wanted to discuss the Commonwealth Games today because it is a good time to put a few things on the record.

First, you do not need to remind us that you love rowing. We know you are a former rower and a former elite athlete. We know that because you spend at least 50 per cent of your time in this place and your contributions telling us about that. We do not need reminding. The other 50 per cent of the time he spends reminding us that he is a doctor.

What it actually confirms to this place is that Labor has a complete lack of vision for Tasmania. I may not have agreed with most of what the former Labor premier Jim Bacon had to say politically, but at least he had a vision for Tasmania that extended beyond the end of question time each day, and he had the courage of his convictions to actually pursue it.

What we have now sitting over there - this rubble of an Opposition - is a political shell of what the Labor Party used to be and what it stood for, because once upon a time Labor actively pursued Commonwealth Games opportunities for this state. Just to put it on the record, at the time they did so, the leader of the Opposition, Mr Hodgman, actually said, and I quote:

We need to make sure that Tasmania reaps maximum benefits from the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Back in November 2005, the former Labor minister for sport and recreation, Jim Cox, also had a Commonwealth Games vision for Tasmania, unlike Dr Broad. Mr Cox was proud to announce that the New Zealand cycling team was going to train in Launceston in the lead-up, which is exactly the sort of opportunity that we are talking about now -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Mr Winter, order.

Mr STREET - And the derisive laughter from those opposite is because you know you have been caught out with this absolute rubbish.

Dr Broad - We have a go-kart track.

Mr SPEAKER - Dr Broad, do you want me to give you a warning?

Mr STREET - Mr Speaker, the other thing Dr Broad needs to be reminded about is what his actual job in this place is, and that is the shadow treasurer, rather than going off on these mindless frolics that you bring into this place as a matter of public importance.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad. That is your first warning.

Mr STREET - What we are actually learning now is why there is no alternate budget from the Opposition each year. The shadow treasurer is more interested in these sorts of ridiculous games than actually doing his job.

Like I said, as a former athlete yourself Dr Broad, why have you accepted last place in the race before it has even started? Our athletes deserve better than this, Dr Broad, and they deserve better than the weak attempt they saw here today - although I did notice how much you made yourself laugh. There is no bigger fan of your own comedy in this place than you, is there?

Dr Broad - I am laughing at you.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr STREET - Dr Broad, even Brenton Best, your controversial predecessor, had a vision for Tasmania and its involvement in the Commonwealth Games. Earlier this year, *The West Australian* newspaper had a front-page picture with a map of Australia pointing to Tasmania and questioning why their own government did not show any interest in bidding for any part of the Commonwealth Games. Western Australians were critical of their government for not showing the vision that we showed. Unlike those opposite me, who just want to muckrake and be negative, our Government does have ambition. We have a plan that we actually want to deliver good outcomes for Tasmanians, and we will never apologise thinking big for this state. You should spend less time being relentlessly negative and more time embracing the wonderful opportunities that are on offer.

In the time I have remaining, I want to put a few things on the record in terms of the time line. In February 2022, the former minister for sport and recreation had a positive discussion over the phone with Craig Phillips, the Commonwealth Games Australia chief executive officer. Following that conversation, the Premier sent a letter to Mr Phillips on 10 February, formally requesting that Tasmania be given consideration to play a part, as a host state, for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. There were also verbal conversations between the minister for sport and recreation's office and the Department of Communities Tasmania regarding Tasmania's bid to play a part.

Our Government was then later informed that the Victorian Government had signed a heads of agreement with the Commonwealth Games Federation and Commonwealth Games Australia to enter exclusive negotiations to bring the 2026 Commonwealth Games to Victoria.

The Premier then met with representatives from Commonwealth Games Australia to discuss the potential for Tasmania hosting qualifying events or training camps in the lead-up to the 2026 Commonwealth Games - as I said before, just like the previous Labor government did in 2005 with the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games. But from day one Dr Broad and those opposite have mocked this opportunity and ruled it out.

These sorts of events could have significant benefits for the Tasmanian economy, and give our state further exposure on the international stage. Again, why should we not aspire to play a part in the Commonwealth Games, and why was there immediate negativity from Dr Broad?

Dr Broad - Because you said you were going to host it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr STREET - You spied a political opportunity to try to embarrass the Government, and all you have done is embarrass yourself with your lack of vision for Tasmania. Labor's vision, it has to be said, is as narrow and small as the portfolio of alternative policies that the Opposition Leader presented in her state of the state reply two weeks ago - what has to be the most insipid display you would ever see from an Opposition leader in response to the state of state. No new policies, no new programs, no new ideas, just relentless carping of negativity, and platitudes for what they would like to do.

As I said, why should we not aspire to play a part in the Commonwealth Games? We want more Tasmanians to get active and dream big, no matter where they live, what their age, or their circumstances. As the Minister for Sport and Recreation, I am proud of the significant investment we are making in the state's sport and recreation sector, to make active recreation possible. When our Government talks about delivering elite sporting content and infrastructure for our state, we know the positive impacts it will have at a community and grassroots level. It highlights international pathways for men, women and children to aspire to and supports the wider effort of our clubs in bringing together and strengthening our community. For young aspiring Tasmanian cricketers, being recently given the chance to head along and watch some of the world's best players competing in a test match on home soil was the opportunity of lifetime.

We want to create that opportunity not just for cricket and AFL but for every sport in Tasmania. We will never apologise for being an ambitious government, and especially not because of the relentless negativity of the Doctor Doom that sits opposite.

[12.20 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens do have a vision for Tasmania. It is a Tasmania where everyone who wants and needs an affordable home is able to find one. It is a Tasmania where if you turn up to the emergency department of one of our outstanding public hospitals you are not left sitting there feeling sick for hours and hours because our hospitals are under-resourced. It is a Tasmania where you can feel confident when you send your children to a public school that this Government is resourcing those schools so that our NAPLAN results are not going backwards as they have since 2014.

This is about a government that is more focused on bread and circuses than the bread and butter of the lives of Tasmanians. It is a clear distraction technique. Whatever Mr Street says, there is the letter from the Premier, who on 10 February co-signed with the former Minister for Sport and Recreation offering to host the Commonwealth Games. Such is the level of grandiosity and self-delusion and being so out of touch with the lives of ordinary Tasmanians, that we have a Premier who put this state's hand up without any conversation with the people of Tasmania for a potential \$2 billion hosting bill, the same Premier who, to distract from another embarrassing ministerial episode, splashed on the front page of our paper here a plan for a \$750 million stadium with a retractable roof -

Dr Broad - Floating out on the Derwent.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, floating out on the River Derwent. Seriously, it is so out of touch with what is happening in the lives of the Tasmanian people that you can have a premier, with no conversation or consultation, sticking up this state's hand for a \$2 billion Commonwealth Games bid bill. There was no consultation with the people of nipaluna/Hobart before splashing on the front page of the newspaper a plan for a \$750 million floating stadium with a retractable roof.

What about investing some of the sporting money he seems so keen to splash around on the big events out in the towns and regions? What about investing it in improving change rooms for women and girls across the state? How about investing it in giving public schools more capacity to include students in sporting events and to take them travelling to compete? How about some of those sporting priorities being identified? It reminds me of the fall of Rome.

Out there, there is so much suffering in our community. I do not believe a word I hear from the Premier and his ministers about what is happening in the lives of Tasmanians and how great this economy is. As Dr Broad said yesterday, people are leaving this state in droves because they cannot find a home. People are spending almost half of their income on rent. This Government since 2014 has massively underinvested in increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. They let the short-stay sector run rampant and opened the door to private investors, big property investors from the mainland and overseas. They basically gave the middle finger to Tasmanians who cannot find an affordable home. Then this Government sends off a letter to the Commonwealth Games organisation, some four years after the bidding process began, and we are supposed to take it seriously? Really? It is insulting being gaslit constantly by this Government. It is insulting how out of touch they are.

Question time - insult after insult. Ministers who do not answer questions get up and blather on, full of self-importance in response to a Dorothy Dix question for six minutes at a time. Meanwhile, out there in the community, certainly in my electorate of Clark, people are stressed. Housing affordability is so far out of reach. We have a government that is letting a potentially deadly and disabling virus run rampant through our people. A state with the oldest and fastest ageing and highest level of disability and chronic disease in the country has a government that is letting coronavirus rip.

This Premier and his ministers do not apparently understand what is happening in the community. The level of fear, economic fear, inequality, is tangible. The level of fear of infection is tangible. I know people, and I have read from people who are suffering acute anxiety and depression, who are reduced to tears on an almost daily basis because it has dawned

on them that this Government does not care about them. It does not care about their health. It does not care about their access to affordable housing. It continually underinvests in our children in our public schools and it has let thousands of primary, secondary and college students become infected with a novel brain-shrinking bat virus.

Seriously, Mr Deputy Speaker, but apparently everything is fine, because we are after a Commonwealth Games or to host some events or training. It is bread and circuses and we have all had enough of it.

Time expired.

[12.28 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, in this matter of public importance, I want to address the Greens leader going back to the fall of Rome nonsense that she seems deeply committed to, to say that we all know that when you are a leader of party of two, perhaps the worst party leader the Tasmanian Greens have ever had, the clock is probably ticking on your service in this place. We know that Dr Woodruff, in her absence, cannot wait to become the Leader of the Greens and Vica Bayley cannot wait for the lay party to finally say to Ms O'Connor that her time is up, she has passed her relevance and it is time to move on.

I now turn to this matter of public importance about the Commonwealth Games. The Government has a proud record, particularly over COVID-19, of bringing top-level elite sports into our state. We have had an extraordinary run in the last couple of years in Tasmania. Who would have thought we would be hosting AFL finals and the Ashes cricket? In the north-west we had the extraordinary opportunity which was embraced with open arms by members of the community to go to a game between the Richmond Tigers and Hawthorn Football Club to commemorate those young children who sadly died and those who are still with us who are facing debilitating injuries.

I know some of those opposite were there at that game and it was a fantastic spirit of unity which brought people together, 8400 people that we know of and you hear rumours about a few extras who managed to sneak in as well. One of the great things about the power of sport is to bring people together to enjoy a game of friendly competition and particularly at an elite level. That draws people from all walks of life to see an extraordinary spectacle as well as, in that case particularly with Hillcrest, to reflect on some very difficult times that we have had as a community. Sport is a healer. It is a uniter and that is why we believe that it is good for the community, it is good for the economy and for inspiring young Tasmanians.

Many of us in here are parents, inspiring those young Tasmanians to witness the very best in their chosen sports and to aspire to be part of that one day as well. The minister has been clear: there is no conspiracy here regarding the Commonwealth Games. There is no smoking gun, despite what Labor will try to have us believe.

There was positive discussion, a letter of request for formal consideration and then the Government was later informed that the Victorian Government would sign a Heads of Agreement with the Commonwealth Games Federation and Commonwealth Games Australia to enter exclusive negotiations with Victoria. Good on them.

It is important to note that this is the government that brought us the AFL finals to Tassie for the first time, more A-League soccer, the Ashes, NBL games. We have our own team here

and we have seen the enormous economic boost that that has provided for our state with travelling fans from all around the country wanting to come to Tasmania to see it perhaps for the first time and know that it is the world's best place to live, work, raise a family and retire. The list goes on.

Our state is once again gearing up in 2022 to continue hosting a range of major sporting events and we are very excited about that.

There will be a major hockey tournament, clinics and training camps to be held on the north-west coast, my home. The shadow treasurer, if that is really what his job is these days - seems to be the shadow treasurer for rowing, life jackets and random stuff, basically.

Whenever the circular firing squad that is the Labor Party decides that they have had enough of giving the left a go and decide to throw something to Dr Broad and see what he can make of it and go on a bit of Commonwealth Games-level fishing expedition -

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the member is well and truly straying from the content of the speech. What has that got to do with the Commonwealth Games?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, Dr Broad.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not want to talk about this as well but given the events of today, it is clear that there is another job that the left is angling for. We know that -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Mr Deputy Speaker, I remind you that you are the deputy speaker at the moment. There was a point of order that was made before that you did not rule on. The point of order was standing order 45 on relevance. This is the MPI on the Commonwealth Games. The member is speaking about something completely irrelevant. Can you bring you bring it back to the topic?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Winter, it is not a point of order.

Mr ELLIS - We know that the tactical genius that is the leader of Opposition business over there thinks this is question time. We know that standing order 45 is the only thing that he actually knows and I do believe -

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would argue standing order 142 section (e) that the member is digressing from the subject matter under discussion.

Mr ELLIS - Why did you not say that when Cassy was digressing? Are you scared of Cassy?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Dr Broad, that is not a point of order.

Mr ELLIS - I believe that this is simply disorderly.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I will make this point that it has been very broad-ranging, especially with Ms O'Connor's contribution and there was no point of order brought

forward by yourselves then and you sat through the whole conversation. I will ask the member to be relevant and please get on with it.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are excited about the aspiration of the Commonwealth Games, for elite sport in general and also community sport. We know that the opposition whip has now decided that she has had an absolute gutful of the failed leader of Opposition business, that he simply cannot do his job. He does not know what he is doing.

We saw a bizarre display today where she tried essentially to pull rank and tell everyone else that she knew more about the standing orders, which to be fair to the leader of opposition business, she does, because he does not know anything.

I really applaud the Government's work on supporting local and elite sport.

[12.35 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that was an opportunity for the member for Braddon to defend the Premier, to defend the Commonwealth Games bid, and he spent a couple of minutes broadly speaking about it, before digressing into a bizarre rant about all manner of things that came to his head because no-one can defend the Commonwealth Games bid.

The minister for Sport had a bit of a crack at it, though he seemed embarrassed to say that Tasmania had actually made a bid to host the Commonwealth Games. Actually, bid to host the Commonwealth Games, an apparently serious bid for us to host the Games, that would have cost - according to the briefing under the RTI - up to \$2 billion. That is \$2 billion in the context of Tasmania's budget that at this point in time, this current financial year will set a new record for budget deficits - \$600 million. That will beat the record deficit from this Treasurer and Premier from last year, that was a record. That beat the previous year of deficits - that was also a record.

As Dr Broad likes to remind us, \$2 million a day every day in debt being added, and this Premier and Treasurer, to create a distraction, decided to bid for the Commonwealth Games. They call it aspirational. I call it delusional. It was an absolute farce. Just because the Premier was under a bit of political pressure he decides to create the ultimate distraction and he will bid for the Commonwealth Games.

The sports journalists enjoyed it. They could see a huge number of stories for them, but everyone is scratching their heads wondering what on earth this Government's priorities have become? This is not aspiration. It is delusion and it does not align with the priorities of the Tasmanian people. It certainly does not align with the priorities that I hear when I speak to people. The idea that the Tasmanian Government planned to build an athlete's village for athletes at a time when Tasmanians are sleeping in cars and tents is reprehensible. It is disgusting. It was an abhorrent proposal that got so far into an imaginary world of Premier Peter Gutwein, that he left the realm of reality. He does not have a team behind him that is strong enough to pull him up when he comes up with the most ridiculous ideas and suggestions.

The new minister for Sport must be relieved that he does not have to try to deliver this thing. He has just outlined that the former minister, Ms Howlett, made the phone call originally. Well, what a hospital pass that would have been if he had ended up trying to deliver

a Commonwealth Games. The Premier and Treasurer thought that rowing was in it - did not even know the sports.

Do you know who else did not know? The councils - the two major cities of Tasmania, Hobart City Council and Launceston City Council - were not made aware that they were going to be part of delivering the Commonwealth Games. Where on earth else would it be held apart from in cities? Commonwealth Games are actually held in cities and the bids - although I note Victoria has done something different - almost always are by cities, by the Gold Coast.

The Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games are held by cities. What sort of serious bid for the Games would be done without telling the cities that there was going to be one. There was an ABC Right to Information looking for information about it. When the RTI came back there was no information. No-one knew anything about it. I wonder what they knew on the backbench about the bid when it was announced? I wonder if it had been through the parliamentary Liberal Party, 'Look guys, we are in a bit of strife here. So, what we are going to do is we are going to announce the Commonwealth Games in Tasmania'. Do you think that went through the party? What do you think they said? A great Utopia moment when it comes to yet another distraction, and that would be the stadium bid.

There was a discussion by the minister for Sport about the Jim Bacon legacy and having a vision for Tasmania. I want to note that there was a great vision from Jim Bacon, and he did something else that was not just have a vision and have aspiration, but he also did something very important: he delivered things, he actually did something. He did not just announce things and then forget them. When he talked about linking Tasmania with the mainland, you know what, when it comes to electricity, we built Basslink. When this Government talks about linking Tasmania with the mainland, they talk about Marinus, 14 years, and deliver it in 2031. Maybe.

That is the difference between aspiration and actually doing something. People have stopped believing anything this Government says. When you get past the chaos and dysfunction of the frontbench that will not say sorry, of the ministerial merry-go-round of moving the deckchairs on the *Titanic*, all you see is promises that never ever get delivered. After almost 10 years in government we have a housing crisis here, people living in tents, we have former failed housing ministers all around this Government, who failed to deliver.

Mr TUCKER - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, could you remind the member to keep it relevant, standing order 145, relevance, to keep it to the relevant subject please.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - In the interest of fairness, I will -

Members interjecting.

Dr Broad - Ironically that is about disruption of procedures.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad you have been warned. I do not want to remove anyone from this Chamber. The member was resuming his contribution. There will not be a point of order based on consistency.

Mr WINTER - I noticed that the new minister for Sport when he became minister said that he wanted to focus on grassroots sports. We both know that there are still organisations

where young athletes cannot use the public toilets at their facilities - and they wanted to host the Commonwealth Games.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

LAND TAX RATING AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 6)

Second Reading

Continued from 22 March 2022 (page 92).

[12.42 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER - (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will start with a few comments that Ms O'Connor made in her speech yesterday that I think has misled parliament. Ms O'Connor made the comments that right-wing trolls like Mr Ellis, and his colleague on council, Mr Simon Behrakis - I would like to point out his correct title is Alderman Simon Behrakis - like to take aim at the Hobart City Council for its failure to approve every single dwelling that comes before it. What they fail to acknowledge is that council is required to apply the planning scheme.

I would like to make the point that current voting on no votes to the homes in the Hobart City Council, as at 15 March 2022, the number of votes by certain councillors or certain aldermen, despite having expert planning approval, per se that these houses should be approved: deputy mayor, Alderman Burnet, has voted against expert planning 237 times and the mayor, Alderman Reynolds, 162 times. This is against experts who have said that these homes should be approved. Alderman Dutta, 215; and Alderman Harvey, 107 times.

Ms O'Connor should correct the record on that. What she has put forward is not correct.

I would also like to start with correcting a few things that Dr Broad has said as well, with his national state and territory population. It is quite interesting when you do read into this, in the common there.

The ABS is currently investigating a data quality issue with the source data for overseas migration - specifically the state and territory level data. At this stage, preliminary overseas migration is expected to be revised in the next quarter. Revisions will be incorporated in the rear-based population estimates scheduled for release on 28 June, 2022.

Our record on population speaks for itself. Since coming to government, our population has grown 0.7 per cent on average per year.

Statement by Deputy Premier

Absence of Premier

[12.45 a.m.]

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Tucker, the Minister for Health and Deputy Premier has a short statement to make on indulgence.

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Deputy Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, a short time ago the Premier was informed that a family member has tested positive to COVID-19. The Premier has just confirmed with Public Health that, in line with the current Public Health requirements, he has been classified as a close contact.

The Premier has taken a RAT test, which was negative, and is now returning home to isolate for seven days, together with other members of his family.

The Premier will continue to work from home and perform the duties of Premier. However, I will undertake those duties and responsibilities that he would normally perform as Premier during question time, and for matters for the parliament.

Thank you.

Mr TUCKER - Mr Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, our record on population speaks for itself. Since coming to government, our population has grown 0.7 per cent on average per year, more than double the average annual growth of 0.28 per cent seen over the last four years of the Labor-Greens government.

The Tasmanian Government has set an ambitious target of growing Tasmania's population to 650 000 people by 2050. We achieved our first milestone of 530 000 Tasmanians by 2020 early, back in September 2018.

Over Labor's last term of government, net interstate migration averaged 212 people leaving Tasmanian per quarter, including 10 consecutive quarters of negative interstate migration. In complete contrast, since we came to government, net interstate migration has averaged 239 people moving to Tasmania per quarter, Dr Broad.

Compared to the last four years of the last Labor government, where the state suffered a net loss of 3384 people to interstate migration, to the last four of this Government, where the state had a net increase in interstate migration of 4439 people.

The jury is in. People now want to come here and live here, and we want them. Under Labor, they did not. With a strong economy, we have jobs, our exports are at record highs, and we have clear focus on our shared future. We have good reason to be optimistic, Dr Broad. We are not all Dr Dooms.

Unlike the Labor Party, we have a clear plan to create jobs, grow our economy and secure a brighter future for our children. The Premier has delivered his state of the state address, where he promised to: one, double the land value which land tax becomes payable from \$50 000 to \$100 000; increase the maximum land value threshold by \$100 000, from \$400 000 to \$500 000; and three, decrease the rate of land tax on land values under \$500 000 to 0.45 per cent.

This will help to ease the cost of living for Tasmanian families, and continue adding downward pressure on rents.

Dr Broad - \$600.

Mr TUCKER - I know you know that is right, Dr Broad, and I will get to that later on.

Our state remains one of the safest places in the world to live, and our economy is among the strongest in the nation, and this bill will only add to this. There is no doubt that this is why more and more people want to live and work in Tasmania and raise their families. This is why we are taking further action on land tax rates and thresholds to ease the cost of living and place downward pressure on rents.

As we know, our strong property market has made it difficult for some to access rental properties and rising property values have further impacted the cost of renting a home. By increasing the upper threshold to under \$500 000 and increasing the tax-free threshold to the maximum land value threshold to under \$100 000, landowners will benefit as this will provide cost relief to all land taxpayers, with an average benefit of \$581 in the first year alone and with a maximum saving of \$1625. It is estimated that around 7800 landowners will no longer pay land tax from 1 July 2022. Overall it is estimated this will provide around \$39 million of tax relief for property owners, which further reduces the cost for rental properties and puts downward pressure on rent prices.

Our economy and property market is strong and unavoidably the market value of property increases. As we are well aware, land tax is determined by the Valuer-General and is based on land value. Valuations occur every six years and are assessed on unimproved land value, not the capital value of a property. For the years between valuation, an adjustment factor is applied to valuations to account for the natural movement in land values. Rising property values are a sign of the state doing well with more jobs, economic growth and improved infrastructure. It is important to remember that land tax is one of the few sources of revenue available to the state which is used to continue to improve the interactions between members of the community, improving infrastructure and making Tasmania a more desirable place for Tasmanians to live.

Land tax rates in Tasmania have not changed since 2010. Amendments to the thresholds were passed in June 2021, with the same calculation rules that were put in place by Labor when they were in government. The only thing that has changed was that the Labor-Greens government removed the previous concession for shack owners. Shack owners will be hit hard with thousands of dollars under Labor's 'shack tax'. Not the Tasmanian way of life, is it, Dr Broad?

The amendments to this bill will provide a meaningful and direct reduction in the cost of living to home owners and will place downward pressure on rents, with an estimated \$39 million of tax relief for property owners. For general land, and including those who hold multiple properties - like yourself, Ms O'Connor - based on an average land value of \$155 000 the land tax bill was approximately \$630. Changes to this bill to the rate and the threshold means a decrease close to 50 per cent, bringing the land tax bill to approximately \$330. The changes also mean close to 12 000 property owners no longer have to pay land tax.

We have seen house prices rapidly rising, but this is not solely a Tasmanian and Australian issue. We have also had historically low interest rates, which in turn create low price money which is creating a property boom across Australia. Along with this boom we are seeing house prices at exceptionally high levels and new homes costing more due to the high rises in input costs, such as the price of materials having grown by 12 per cent in 2021 alone. By reducing the liability land tax places on housing costs, this bill will assist in controlling the

increasing cost to housing and reducing the inputs. I want to remain focused on the Land Tax Rating Amendment Bill 2022 as we have measures in place to address our housing situation.

This Liberal Government knows you cannot tax yourself into wealth. Lower taxes mean lower costs to those who are renting and looking to enter the housing market. The amendments to this bill are not a housing tax, or a vacant housing tax, like the Greens or the Independent member suggest. We need to address housing affordability by reducing input costs and increase the supply of houses. We are doing just that with this amendment to the bill by significantly reducing the tax burden which is generally passed on to the home owners and renters.

Neither Labor, the Greens nor the Independent member have a real solution to housing affordability. The only real solution is that which this Government has committed to and is enacting in this bill today.

Ms O'Connor - It is not a solution to housing affordability and you know it.

Mr TUCKER - When is the date, Ms O'Connor, when is the date?

Ms O'Connor - What date?

Mr TUCKER - When they are going to replace you. Everyone is talking about it.

Ms O'Connor - Wouldn't you love that? Wouldn't you love to get rid of me? Well, sucked in, I'm sticking around.

Mr TUCKER - Everyone is talking about when Vica Bayley is going to come in, after your performance last night.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in fact in the financial year of 2021, our Government invested \$90.9 million on capital expenditure for housing. This does not include our unprecedented commitment to build 10 000 homes and units for our state's most vulnerable.

Mr Ferguson - You have a toxic culture.

Ms O'Connor - You talk about toxic. It's toxic to let people in here unmasked while we have 10 000 active cases. That is what is toxic.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr TUCKER - In contrast, the last time Labor and the Greens were in government, they managed to invest only \$28.9 million, one third of what this Government is currently spending each year.

Labor's unbudgeted, so-called plan for housing that they took to the election this year suggests that they would deliver the same number of new homes as this Government for \$80 million less. Like so many of Labor's policies this is an unrealistic and uncoded pipe dream. Not only are we spending over 300 per cent more on new housing than the Labor-Greens government, our commitments are already resulting in real-world delivery of housing

to those in need, and support and accommodation for our most vulnerable Tasmanians, unlike Labor's half-baked and uncostered promises.

If members are serious about making homes more affordable for Tasmanians, if they are serious about driving down rents, they will stop the mud-raking on this issue. If the last two weeks of parliament are anything to be go by, however, it seems that Labor is more interested in lowering their already low standards and chasing headlines rather than focusing on the real issues that are affecting Tasmanians.

Let us go back to 2021. Dr Broad did not actually read this Labor policy that they put out. They put out a press release on 15 April 2021 saying 'Labor will cut land tax'. In this document it says reduced land tax would place downward pressure on rent while helping landlords and shack owners. It came from Labor, Dr Broad. You do not have very many policies to read, Dr Broad: I am sure that you could have read this one. I am going to say a couple other points that were in this policy. They said the cuts will ease the cost of living pressures on small landowners and provide incentives for medium-scale property investors to cap or reduce rental increases.

Under a Labor government, foreign landowners will be required to pay more tax, because Labor's priority will always be looking after Tasmanians who need housing first, but agricultural land will be exempt from foreign ownership surcharge. Our plan will help make the land tax system fairer and place downward pressure on rents. You need to read that policy, Dr Broad, and do not get up here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, they continue to argue against this bill. There is only one thing they are consistent with, and that is being confused. I guess this is because this party does not know whether they are coming or going. They cannot even agree amongst themselves, they are so bitterly divided.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Absence of Chair of Committees

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I inform the House that the Chair of Committees, the member for Lyons, John Tucker has, within the last couple of hours, been identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. In line with Public Health advice, he will be returning home to isolate for seven days with other members of his family.

MOTION

Victim/Survivor - Call for Apology

[2.31 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I can indicate that a vote will be required and that this debate will continue for the full hour and it will not be gagged and the ministers will be given ample opportunity to do the right thing.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, if I could interrupt you briefly to say good afternoon to year 9 students from Scotch Oakburn College. Group A is with us, and groups B, D and C will be in the Chamber later on. Welcome.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes that the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Hon. Michael Ferguson MP and the Attorney-General Hon. Elise Archer MP were groaning in question time on 10 March 2022 while the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Rebecca White MP, read the words of a victim/survivor to the House, while the Minister for Education, Children and Youth Hon. Roger Jaensch, MP said, 'oh come on'.
- (2) Acknowledges the deep distress this caused to the victim/survivor, who has suffered enough at the hands of the Tasmanian Government and its agencies.
- (3) Understands that any victim/survivor of child sexual abuse may have been distressed by the response of senior Government ministers.
- (4) Notes that both the Minister for Education, Children and Youth Hon. Roger Jaensch MP and the Premier, Hon. Peter Gutwein MP, had the decency to apologise for this behaviour.
- (5) Calls on the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Hon. Michael Ferguson MP and the Attorney-General, Hon. Elise Archer to sincerely and unreservedly apologise for any hurt and offence caused by their response on 10 March last.

Mr Speaker, the House has debated this matter at length. Obviously, the Opposition and the Greens have worked very hard to get these two ministers to do and say the right thing.

Obviously, twice now the numbers have been used by Government to shut down debate on this matter and remove any opportunity for those ministers in those debates to do and say the right thing.

We now have an hour of Greens' private members time and I will not speak for as long as I might otherwise because, like every member of this place on the Opposition and the Greens' benches, we want to see justice for Tiffany Skeggs. We want to see a response that lets victims/survivors know this Government hears them, it sees them and if this Government or its representatives have done something wrong, they will acknowledge that and they will apologise.

Two votes against an apology today so far. It is not going to happen this time that the ministers can cry shortage of time. We will make sure.

We are going to give these two ministers plenty of time to seek Ms Tiffany Skeggs' forgiveness for their trespasses against her and we will not let this go.

As I said earlier, I have been given permission by Ms Skeggs to share some details of her life; how she was betrayed by the state, and how she continues to be let down by the state; how she has not received justice and from ministers, Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer, and she has not received respect. It is disrespectful to hurt someone like that and not say sorry. It re-traumatises someone who from the age of 11 was singled out by James Griffin, who was groomed. I am very mindful that there are young people watching this debate now in the public gallery and I am sorry that these young people will hear a story that no young person should have to hear.

The Tiffany Skeggs' story should at least, in part, be placed on the *Hansard* record so that it is very clear how much she suffered, how little justice she has received and how she continues to hurt to this day.

Tiffany Skeggs, because of her courage, has become the highest profile of James Griffin's victims. This is a young woman who at the age of 11, as she told the *7.30 Report*, thought she had found her place and a place of safety, playing netball in northern Tasmania. As she told Rhiannon Shine, the ABC reporter who did an outstanding job on this really difficult story, she said, 'netball should have been my safe place. I would never have perceived that would be where I met my greatest threat'. She was 11. She said, 'it was a predator in his playground. And if I was to go back now, I would be like, 'Tiff, run from this. You need to report this in some kind of way but you need to run to keep yourself safe first'. But, as a child she said, you do not have that ability.

James Griffin was 58. Tiffany Skeggs was 11. Griffin was a volunteer medic at the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association and a nurse in the paediatric ward of the Launceston General Hospital. The *7.30 Report* states the abuse started with kissing and inappropriate touching. Between the ages of 12 and 14, Griffin would pick Tiffany up on a Saturday morning to take her to netball. On the way there he would park his car and molest her. Griffin also sexually abused Tiffany in the first aid room at the netball precinct. She said the first rape happened at his house when she was 15 years old. She told Rhiannon Shine:

It's hard to describe just how much I and so many others have been failed by our system and the amount of red flags that were both there for people to see and raise.

In 2013, concerns were raised with Tasmania Police about Griffin inappropriately touching and grooming Tiffany. The matter was referred to the state's Child Protection Service. Both James Griffin and Tiffany denied anything inappropriate was happening and the case was closed but the abuse continued.

Last year, as members in this place know, an internal review by Tasmania Police found deficiencies in the way it had shared information across agencies. The agency says it has since made improvements, including information sharing between police and Child and Family Services.

Then the *7.30 Report* story details the moment when Tiffany realised she was not alone. It says after years spent thinking she was Griffin's only victim, one day in 2019, Tiffany saw Griffin surrounded by children at the netball courts. She told the journalist, 'And something in me just clicked. I didn't have a choice anymore. It wasn't about me wanting to come forward to tell my story, it was I have to come forward'.

Tiffany made a report to Tasmania Police. Griffin continued to work as a paediatric nurse at the Launceston General Hospital for three months, until being stood down at the end of July. Remember, for much of that time he kept his Working with Vulnerable People registration card.

Weeks later, after standing down in July, he was charged with multiple child sex offences. A month later he was arrested and charged with more sexual crimes, and admitted to criminal offences against Tiffany. After being granted bail, James Griffin took his own life.

Tiffany told me, when we were talking quite recently, that one of the hardest things she had to do was obtain the transcript of the bail hearing. She tried to get it through right to information and was denied access to James Griffin's bail hearing, and ended up having to write to the magistrate to obtain a copy of it. She sat through it and she listened to that court let James Griffin go. She listened to that court release James Griffin into the public after what he had done to her - and as we now know, after what he had done to other children.

The Premier can say we are making politics out of this. We are not. We are just not. We want some justice for Tiffany. We want to make sure other victims/survivors do not see the poor behaviour that is being modelled by these two ministers, and have further trust in the institutions of the state eroded, because that is what happens when people see ministers of the Crown who are not prepared to do and say the right thing. It erodes already fragile trust.

Remember, people like Tiffany Skeggs find it very, very hard to trust people, because they were so savagely and thoroughly betrayed, betrayed by adults, and ultimately by the State of Tasmania. That is what makes an imperative of this apology from these two ministers. We are not prepared to put up with this conduct, because we know the damage that it does to people like Tiffany, and other victims/survivors.

It is a cheap shot to say this is about politics. It is a very, very, cheap shot. In fact I do not normally cut the Opposition a break, as members know, but I think that the way this matter has been handled by Labor has been full of integrity. Labor has not got up here, like the Premier, and tried to point the finger around, sling mud - and that is what we got from the Premier: pointing his finger at Ms White, deflecting to other internal Labor Party machinations. Who cares about that stuff, honestly?

What the Greens care about in this place, on this day, and during this debate, is the wellbeing of Tiffany Skeggs and other victims/survivors. We care about the behaviour that has been modelled by this place in the wider community. We know that often people do not make a party-political distinction; we are all smeared, because we are all just politicians at the end of the day in some people's minds.

Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer bring shame on us all by their conduct - their childish, petulant, arrogant, disrespectful conduct. I have thought about it for two weeks, and at great length, and the longer this drags out, the more confused I am. Why would they not just say sorry? Is it because they are not? That is the worst of all possible answers: is it because they are not sorry for their behaviour? They sure should be, because I do not think they have allowed themselves to comprehend how much damage they have done.

In terms of the apology, we have a statement from the Premier on 15 March. He said:

In relation to further commentary in recent days, I wish to provide clarification that last Thursday in parliament I sincerely apologised without explanation or excuse as Premier, on behalf of the government, for events which occurred in parliament that day in response to a question from Ms White.

The following day, Minister Jaensch also apologised without explanation or excuse for his comments, and I have now followed up personally with an apology on behalf of the government to the victim/survivor.

He said:

I, as well as the government, fully understand that this is a very distressing time for all victim/survivors.

The time line is pretty clear. On the day that it happened, the Premier came in on the adjournment because he knew - he had the self-reflection to understand - how damaging those interjections were. He knew it had caused harm to Ms Skeggs. From a political point of view, he clearly knew it had also caused harm to his Government.

Mr Jaensch came in the following day and apologised - not in this place, but in a public statement - without explanation or excuse. That apology from minister Jaensch is clear, it is sincere, and it has been accepted by Ms Skeggs. Minister Jaensch has done the right thing.

The Premier did the right thing in apologising at the time. Where he has gone wrong is not pulling these two disrespectful ministers into line.

I know the Labor Party is not the only party in this place that has factions. I know what we are seeing here - in terms of those who have had the decency to apologise, and those who will not - runs down a factional line in the Liberal Party. I cannot help but form the view that Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer straight-up refused to apologise. I just cannot see it happening any other way - and if it is true, that says an awful lot about them.

If you have a look, for example, at my handy ever-ready copy of the ministerial Code of Conduct, it says in the opening 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.

F, for fail, for both ministers: Ferguson and Archer. They have not upheld the highest standard of ethical conduct in here. They behaved like children that morning: bad children, Mr Speaker, and when they were caught out they ran for cover, because that is effectively what has happened here. They are hiding behind the Premier's apology on behalf of the Government.

It is actually so gutless it is staggering. It is so gutless and petty not to just say sorry - especially when this is not Ms White coming in here and demanding an apology out of nowhere, or me on behalf of the Greens. This is a request for an apology that has come from Tiffany. That puts this in a whole different frame; a victim/survivor, who for many years was abused by James Griffin, a traumatised person of great courage, dignity, warmth and heart, has asked for an apology from these two ministers, and still they are digging in. That is terrible behaviour.

I do not understand the politics of this. What is to be gained in refusing to apologise? It just makes them look like the worst of people, it is damaging the Government, more importantly of course, it is damaging Ms Skeggs and other victims/survivors, but politically this is the stupid path. Politically, for the Government, this is the path of most pain. That is why it is so baffling and very difficult to understand why these two ministers have taken that stance.

I went through the *Hansard* uncorrecteds a short time ago, and when the Minister for Justice was given another opportunity to apologise, all we got was more stonewalling. She said:

Mr Speaker, I really have nothing to add to my previous answer. I covered it in great detail.

Narrators note: no, she did not.

... my hard work over the many years since I have been Attorney-General since early 2018 and Minister for Justice since the end of 2017, and my record stands as my commitment.

I am thoroughly tired of the tendencies of government ministers to make this about them. It happens a bit. Obviously, we see from Ms Archer's reform agenda that she takes her job and these matters very seriously, but the rubber hits the road when it is personal, when someone who has been harmed by the conduct of Ms Archer has asked for an apology. You can be the greatest law reformer in the world, but if you do not have the human decency to apologise to someone who has been damaged by something you have done, it sheds a very unflattering light on Ms Archer's behaviour. She then goes on to say:

I know that victims/survivors and their families know that they have my wholehearted support.

Mmm, no, not the case. Ms Skeggs does not think she has Ms Archer's wholehearted support. Ms Skeggs thinks Ms Archer is a coward. Ms Skeggs would like to see Ms Archer not be a minister anymore because of her behaviour.

We had a very peculiar contribution from Mr Ferguson in the matter of public importance debate, where he got up and said some very obtuse things. He said:

There has been a lot of commentary already. There has been an exhaustive discussion in question time. The Premier has given a very thorough account of the Government's very considered position on this important matter.

From the outset, no-one on this side of the House will be saying the subject is not important. A case is not being made, by Ms White, the Leader of the Opposition, as to why her particular motion ought to be debated today, when the Premier has been very clear.

This was on the seeking of leave for suspension, not the MPI. Actually, Ms White did make the case, I made the case, we made the case, on behalf of Tiffany Skeggs.

Then Mr Ferguson tried this deflection, pretending at one level it was not him groaning. Yes, it was. He says, 'Like others, I have listened to the tape numerous times', and someone interjects, 'Yeah, listened to yourself groaning'. Mr Ferguson, who often retreats to get protection from the Speaker when he is under a bit of pressure, then says, 'Mr Speaker, I would like the opportunity to respond' - bottom lip hanging out, no doubt. Mr Speaker agreed that he deserved that and Mr Ferguson said:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is very clear that there was an audible response from members of our side of the House. I will make this point as delicately as I can. The assertions that have been made by a number of members of the other side of the House today, I believe, are without foundation. The Government is not exploring that. Nobody should just take on trust what Ms White and Ms O'Connor are alleging.

He does not deny it was him, he just pretends by linking his listening to the audio to the matters that are being debated. He knows it was him. It is not just Ms White and me who think it was him. A number of people have listened to that audio a number of times and there are also some of us who were in here and heard and saw it. He cannot even take responsibility for doing it. He pretends it was not him. He then falsely goes on to say, 'It is very clear that the Government has accepted that there has been a response'. What kind of garbage sentence is that? It does not even make sense. He continues:

For that, the Leader of our Government has apologised on behalf of that side of the House - our side. We own it.

No, the Premier owned it and he was not one of the offenders. Mr Ferguson has never owned it. He has tried to pretend he was not there, so no, they do not own it. It is a completely dishonest statement.

Then he goes on to say, 'I agree that when people need to make an apology, one should be forthcoming'. He agrees, but only for other people, not for him apparently. 'I agree that

people have felt hurt and let down.' Great, what are you going to do about it, Mr Ferguson? 'I agree with that and I respect that deeply'. Well, he does not respect it deeply enough to do the right thing.

I want the *Hansard* record to note that neither Mr Ferguson nor Ms Archer are in here today. That tells me that they are probably not going to make an appearance. That tells the House that they are not going to come in here and apologise to Ms Skeggs. That tells Ms Skeggs that despite 13 days having passed since they did that, they have not allowed themselves the opportunity for some deep self-reflection. It has certainly changed the way I think about those two, not that they would care what I think about them in the slightest, but I have to say I expected better, certainly from Ms Archer. Anyway, you live and learn and that is the way life rolls. People often reveal their true selves in times of stress.

I commend this motion to the House. I want Tiffany Skeggs to know there are people in this place who are standing with her and we will do whatever it is okay with her to do to help get this apology and have a measure of justice. Saying sorry can be so powerful to people who have been wronged. Even if, politically, Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer do not think it is in their interests to say sorry - actually, I believe it is in their interest to do so - why would they not recognise the difference that this could make to Tiffany? Do they so lack empathy for this young woman? Are they more interested in saving their own skin? It feels like it. On all their behaviours, Mr Speaker, I think that is what is happening. It is disrespectful. It lacks empathy. It is compounding harm and we are not going away.

My advice to them, for what it is worth, is just apologise. There is an old saying that if you have to eat a poo sandwich, eat it quickly and pretend you are enjoying it. These two ministers should just get this apology done. Do it for Tiffany. Do it for your own self-respect. Do it because at some level you care about what your colleagues in this place think of you. Maybe just do it because it is the right, grown-up thing to do.

I commend the motion to the House.

[3.01 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Ms O'Connor's contribution and - like all of us - her very clear concern and compassion for victims/survivors of child sexual abuse. I truly believe all members of this House are absolutely united against child sexual abuse, and are fully committed to the commission of inquiry process. I speak for all of us in that sense.

I speak also for Mr Ferguson, who I know is very committed in this area, and Ms Archer, who I have worked very closely with when she and I were putting forward the Department of Education inquiry, for which Mr Tim McCormack and Stephen Smallbone did an enormous amount of work, which will also form part of the commission of inquiry, and I thank them both for that work.

I also acknowledge victims/survivors and their bravery for coming forward, including Ms Skeggs, who I have corresponded with, and am familiar with her harrowing circumstances. We absolutely do want justice for victims/survivors of child sexual abuse, and that is why the Premier took the very necessary steps in setting up the commission of inquiry.

To Ms O'Connor's motion, to which I will speak more broadly. The Premier, and the Government, has been resolute in setting up the commission of inquiry, which Ms Archer has been instrumental in, but there are many other areas across government where we have acted to ensure, as best as possible, that we have all the processes in place to protect vulnerable children across all institutions of government, and broadly. We are committed in that sense.

I recall the steps we took with the Department of Education inquiry, where we listened to victims/survivors of child sexual abuse in state care and the Department of Education, going back decades, despite many processes that were put in place over decades and in more recent times. As the minister for education, and indeed the Department of Education secretary, Mr Bullard, we wanted that inquiry by Mr McCormack and Mr Smallbone, to ensure everything possible that could be done to protect our children was being done, and any possible gaps - whether in the past or indeed now - were filled, to ensure the protection of our children in our care, and that these horrific circumstances never happen now and into the future.

The Premier has unreservedly apologised, as he has explained, to the parliament without explanation or excuse. That apology was very genuine and was made on behalf of all Government members. The Premier made it very clear at the time that he was speaking on behalf of the Government - and of course, as the Premier's deputy, and indeed all members of the Government wholeheartedly support the Premier in that apology. Every one of us acknowledges the bravery of victims/survivors to disclose child sexual abuse, and reliving their harrowing circumstances. We understand - as Ms O'Connor has clearly explained - how deeply distressing this is for all victims, and how distressing it is for all victims to come forward into the commission of inquiry process. That process, which of course all members of this House support, is absolutely necessary, and will take its course.

As I alluded to before, the commission of inquiry will put forward a number of recommendations, which this Government will be committed to, but we are not waiting until the commission completes its process and makes its recommendations. We are acting right now to ensure that where there are areas that can be improved - and I have mentioned the Department of Education and the report by Professors McCormack and Smallbone - they are addressed as quickly as possible.

We have undertaken an independent inquiry into child sexual abuse into the Department of Education, and in response to that inquiry, the Office of Safeguarding Children has been established to ensure every possible step is taken right now to safeguard children and young people from harm or abuse. That was important as the minister for education. I wanted to be absolutely sure, despite the improvements we have made, that where there were gaps they are absolutely addressed.

We have established a dedicated commission of inquiry response and reform team in the Department of Health, which now I am responsible for, to lead continuous improvement across our health services, including mandatory reporting obligations and processes. The Ashley Youth Detention Centre will close and the transition into two smaller secure units in Hobart and Launceston will be within the next three years. In the meantime, there has been significant investment in installing new technology, including CCTV, to increase accountability and the safety of our young people and staff.

In Tasmania Police, as a result of the outcomes report into the police investigation of James Griffin, a child sexual abuse joint review team was established. That team was tasked

with implementation of the recommendations from the outcomes report, along with the need to deliver an historical complaints review process and to provide recommendations to government on structural reform for best-practice service provision to victims/survivors of sexual violence.

The joint review team includes experienced child safety professionals, detectives and intelligence analysts, and since its inception has undertaken significant work, including undertaking a review of thousands of records held across government agencies to assess any potential risk to children; develop memorandums of understanding between Tasmania Police, Communities Tasmania, Department of Justice and Department of Education to ensure information is shared promptly across agencies; and develop training and investigation guidelines for police officers and child safety professionals.

We are also planning for the development of three multidisciplinary centres that will offer support and safety for victims/survivors, including family and sexual support and counselling services. Witness intermediaries, police and other related services are at the same location. This year's Budget will include funding for the establishment of the first of these centres and subject to the success of the pilot, we look forward to progressively developing the centres in each region of the state, and I acknowledge my colleague Mrs Petrusma in the House today.

All of this work has been done while we continue to progress the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and we report annually, as we should, on the progress of these reforms. I am now informed that 195 recommendations are completed with a further 90 currently being progressed, such as establishing a child and youth safe organisations framework including independent oversight of child-safe standards and a reportable conduct scheme. All of these reforms are happening because of the courage of victims/survivors to come forward -

Ms O'Connor - That's true and that's why it's such a small thing to say sorry.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and we thank each and every one of them, Ms O'Connor.

As difficult and distressing as it has been for each and every one of them to make their voice heard, without those voices there would be no change. I commend each and every one of them for their courage and bravery under such harrowing and distressing circumstances for coming forward and ensuring, as best as is absolutely possible, that what happened to them will never happen to our children in the future. Without their courage there would be no light that will be shone on such horrific circumstances that these people went through when they were young and vulnerable, and I thank each and every one of them.

That is why we are committed, through a far-reaching commission of inquiry, to ensure the vulnerable in our community are protected. The Premier has said on many occasions it is our Government's intention through the commission of inquiry to do everything we possibly can to understand what has occurred and, importantly, put in place the frameworks to ensure it cannot happen again. We are all committed to that.

We have been asked about guarantees and recommendations with respect to the commission's recommendations. We would not have started this process of a commission of inquiry if we did not intend to implement the recommendations, and the Premier has stated that

before. It is our intention, as the Premier has said, that when this process is finished, we will implement the commission's recommendations.

There is no more important task of this Government or any government than to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in our care and across our community. As the Premier and a number of us have said - and I reflected on this as minister of education when I announced the Department of Education inquiry in August 2020 - we cannot change the past, but we are committed to making a difference for the future to protect our children.

I thank Ms O'Connor for bringing forward this motion today and allowing me as Deputy Premier in the Premier's absence to put on the record my thoughts but also the actions of this Government and how committed we are to protecting our children in our care.

[3.17 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate the Labor Party's support for the motion in Ms O'Connor's name and the necessity for ministers Archer and Ferguson to apologise. I am dismayed that we continue to need to have this debate in this place because of their refusal and failure to apologise. I am dismayed on behalf of Ms Skeggs, who is the one who has been offended by their behaviour the most. However, there are other victims/survivors who are equally offended and concerned, doubly so now, not just at the behaviour of that time but the refusal to acknowledge that poor behaviour and to apologise.

As the member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, noted, I also note that minister Archer and minister Ferguson are not in the Chamber. This motion is specifically about them and their poor behaviour. This motion specifically calls on them to apologise unreservedly for any hurt and offence caused by their response on 10 March last to a question that I had the responsibility to ask on behalf of Tiffany Skeggs. They are not here and that is damning, not just on them but on the Government.

I feel a little bit of empathy for the Deputy Premier needing to defend their poor behaviour in this debate today. I know he was not one of the members who groaned when that question was asked. It would not be in keeping with his character for him to do such a thing.

I acknowledge the good work the Government has started with the commission of inquiry and we provide our full support to it, but that is not what this motion is about. This motion is about seeking justice for Tiffany Skeggs and other victims/survivors, who were offended by the behaviour of Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson, and they should do the decent thing and come in here and apologise. It should not be left up to other members of the Gutwein Government to do that on their behalf, to defend them, defend their behaviour and to continue to offend Tiffany and other victims/survivors through their disrespect and their lack of attendance for this debate.

I heard the minister speak on behalf of the Government in response to this motion. If I heard you correctly, Deputy Premier, you said that you speak for Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer. The question I have is why can they not speak for themselves? There is no reason why they cannot be in this place to speak for themselves.

I noted that the Deputy Premier spoke a lot about the commission of inquiry and its very important work. Given that the traumatic and awful things that happened to Tiffany Skeggs were, in large part, a catalyst for the establishment of the commission of inquiry, I find it

galling, to a degree, for the Government to make the case that because they have established the commission of inquiry it somehow absolves Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson of any responsibility to say sorry to her. If it were not for her, arguably there would be no commission of inquiry.

The Deputy Premier is quite right to commend the courage and bravery of those who have come forward, people like Tiffany Skeggs, who had the bravery and the courage to come forward, who have been instrumental in the catalyst for the Government establishing the commission of inquiry. It was her story, her experience, that was shared in this place on 10 March, and the questions that were asked on her behalf were met with groans by ministers in Peter Gutwein's Cabinet. They continue to refuse to apologise to the person who I would say, in large part, is the reason for there being a commission of inquiry. I am offended by that. I believe many people would be. It is incredibly jarring.

The Deputy Premier said that we should do everything we can to protect our children. You have our full support in any action the Government needs to take to do that, but I remind the Government that Tiffany was a child once too. She was not afforded that protection. We have an obligation and a responsibility to support her, to make sure that she can heal because of our failure to provide that protection. She has been left feeling devastated by the way Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson responded to the question that was put to them on that day, and more devastated by their failure and refusal to apologise to her. I cannot understand why they cannot say sorry.

The Deputy Premier also said that the Government is working on a number of areas that can be improved, and talked about work that is happening across the department - which is commendable - but what about in the Cabinet? I would argue there are many areas that can be improved in the Cabinet, particularly when it comes to the behaviour of Cabinet ministers, in particular Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson, who are colleagues of the Deputy Premier, who he has to try to defend in a roundabout way in this debate on this motion today. They could have walked in here themselves, stood at the lectern, and done the right thing, to save the Deputy Premier from being put in that very uncomfortable position.

The Deputy Premier went on to speak about, I think it was IT systems, and said that with increased accountability there will be increased safety for our young people. What about the accountability of ministers in the Gutwein Government? I did not want to get up here and talk about the Deputy Premier this much, but following on from that contribution, I found so many elements of it jarring, given that it is because of the behaviour of Mr Ferguson and Ms Archer that we are even having this debate in this place at all, their refusal to apologise.

Unfortunately, the Deputy Premier has now been brought into this. That is because their behaviour and their actions have tarnished the entire Government. This is a matter of integrity for the Government now. Their refusal to do the right thing and to apologise, for whatever reason I honestly cannot understand it, means that every member of the Gutwein Government is now tarnished as a consequence. Every member of the Gutwein Government has been looked at differently by victims/survivors over the course of the past two weeks and not in a good way.

The only way for the Government to redeem itself in any small way now is for those two ministers, Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson, to apologise. I urge their colleagues to speak with them about the necessity to do that. Even if it is only for their own reputation but most importantly it should be to help Tiffany Skeggs heal after what she has endured from the age

of 11. The trauma she has experienced in that time has unfortunately been compounded now by the actions of the Government, the very Government that set up a commission of inquiry that is purporting to be protecting children and preventing abuse occurring in our state when arguably the actions of those two ministers is abuse. It is offensive. It has caused hurt, it has caused harm. Their inability to see how much that has hurt Tiffany and other victim/survivors is beyond my understanding.

We commend the motion that has been put. I am not sure if in the minutes remaining we can expect to see Ms Archer or Mr Ferguson to come into this place, but they will need to vote on this motion. They will need to be recorded, again, in the history books as voting against apologising to a victim/survivor. I cannot understand it.

Ms O'Connor might want to wrap up. I believe you have that privilege with the motion, and I would be happy to give you the Floor. Perhaps before Ms O'Connor does that, I will put the call out again to those ministers and ask them to come and apologise. Please, for Tiffany, do the right thing.

[3.28 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the fall guy for these two arrogant ministers, the Deputy Premier, for their contributions. I listened very carefully to the Deputy Premier. I have absolutely no doubt at all he is totally committed to seeing justice for victims/survivors. It is really regrettable that he had to be wheeled out to provide cover for the ministers, Ms Archer and Mr Ferguson, who throughout this debate have not had the courage to show their faces in this Chamber.

I acknowledge that Ms Skeggs is watching our private members' time today and what she most needed and wanted to see was those two ministers come in here and do the right thing. Again, they have been given an opportunity to do so and failed. Shame on them. Shame on them for not having the decency and the integrity to acknowledge they were wrong, they caused harm and apologise.

I commend this motion to the House. As Ms White has noted, it will be the first time in an hour we see those two ministers in here and it will not be to do the right thing. It will be to vote against this motion that calls on them to apologise.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 8

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 10

Mrs Alexander (Teller)
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff

Mr Street

PAIRS

Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad

Mr Tucker
Mr Gutwein

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Fuel Prices - Motion Negatived

[3.35 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I advise that a vote will be required.

Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Acknowledges:
 - (a) the serious financial pressure being placed on Tasmanian households by the rising cost of living;
 - (b) that the most acute pressure is currently being felt with basic, non-discretionary expenses such as fuel, housing and utility bills;
 - (c) wages are not keeping pace with the cost of living; and
 - (d) that this pressure is felt equally by business owners.
- (2) Notes that:
 - (a) in May 2020 the Premier, Hon. Peter Gutwein MP, stated that if fuel prices in the State 'continue to be out of step, this Government will continue taking further action and will consider price capping';
 - (b) in November 2021 Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs, Hon. Elise Archer MP, stated that the 'Government has made it clear that should further action be required to support Tasmanians to access cheaper fuel prices, including the introduction of legislation, we will consider it'; and
 - (c) according to the ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission), Hobart has the highest fuel prices of any capital city, being nearly 20 cents/litre higher than other capital cities.

- (3) Calls on the Premier to outline how his Government will give effect to fuel price capping and when the fuel price legislation will be introduced.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Braddon, I will just interrupt you there to welcome the rest of the Scotch Oakburn College year 9 students. Welcome to the Chamber.

Members - Hear, hear.

Dr BROAD - Thank you, Mr Speaker, and welcome Scotch.

This is a very serious matter. What we see is serious financial pressure being placed on Tasmanian households, and what we see from the figures is that inflation has gone up in Hobart 4.5 per cent and wages are not keeping pace, because wages on average have only gone up 3 per cent. In effect, that means that every Tasmanian has taken a 1.5 per cent pay cut on average. In effect, that means that people have 1.5 per cent less in their pockets, and those figures actually came to the fore before we have seen this rapid escalation in fuel prices.

Fuel prices rising as fast as they have is putting pressure on everything across the board, because we know that fuel is a key part of our economy and it puts the price up of everything. Trucking will be more expensive, taxi trips more expensive, and profit will be down on any business that relies on using cars. This is putting pressure on households, there is absolutely no doubt.

The real impact here is discretionary expenses, so fuel - which I will talk about mainly in a minute - but also housing. I have spoken already in this place about the increase in housing. We know that Hobart is the least affordable capital city in the country, and that is putting enormous pressure on households, where we have households paying half of their income on rent. That is the definition of being well and truly in excess of the rental stress mark, which I think is 30 per cent of income.

Tasmanians are going backwards financially. Wage growth is only 3 per cent, and we have seen just recently teachers sign a temporary agreement of less than 3 per cent, I think 2.2 per cent, which is definitely not keeping pace with the cost of living which is going up at the rate of 4.5 per cent. This is showing up in falling consumer confidence as well, which according to ANZ, is now negative in Tasmania, and consumer inflation expectations - how people think things are going to go - are the worst that they have been for a decade, and housing is causing particular strain.

Hobart is the least affordable capital city for renters, and price increases of nearly 30 per cent in a year have put home ownership out of reach for many. How can you save, Mr Speaker, when you are paying such extreme rents like we are seeing? That is, indeed, if you can find somewhere to rent. The impact of that, as I discussed yesterday, is that we are seeing record numbers of Tasmanians leave the state.

Despite what people on the other side say, we have had two quarters of negative population growth. In the June quarter, on net there were 173 fewer Tasmanians. In September 2021 - the most recent update - Tasmania's population shrunk by 476, which is the third-worst that it has ever been on figures that go way back to 1981. So, pretending that the state is not facing headwinds, that everything is fine, is just not realistic. We are seeing significant headwinds and the figures bear that out.

Wage growth is not keeping up with the cost of living. Consumer confidence is down. Consumer inflation expectations are the worst they have ever been. With housing, Hobart is the least affordable city.

There are broader economic consequences when households are under this financial pressure, so we are seeing Tasmanians leaving in record numbers. We are seeing a people recession - 4358 departures of Tasmanians moving to the mainland in the June quarter. That broke the previous record that goes way back into the 1990s. It is an unwelcome record that was broken again when the last data came out, with 5243 Tasmanians leaving for other states. That is a huge number. That is almost one in every 100 Tasmanians.

Less money in people's pockets and people leaving the state is making life tough on businesses, too. It is not just me saying that. Two independent surveys from NAB and Roy Morgan have found that Tasmania has the lowest business confidence in the country. Low levels of confidence or business investment dropped nearly 10 per cent in the December quarter - nearly three times as bad as the next worst state. We were three times worse than the next best state. This in turn led to the whole state economy going backwards. State final demand, which is essentially a measure of Tasmania's domestic economy, shrunk in the December quarter by 1.5 per cent.

The Tasmanian state final demand went backwards by 1.5 per cent in the December quarter. That was well below the national average of a 2.9 per cent increase - so the economies in the rest of the country are growing at the rate of 2.9 per cent. What is Tasmania doing? Tasmania's economy went backwards by 1.5 per cent. We are facing significant headwinds and people are leaving the state.

It is particularly concerning, this sharp drop in capital investment - almost three times worse than the next worst result. The Premier's boasting is not borne out by the data, and it is clear that families and businesses and individuals are suffering. Cost of living pressures are hurting far too many Tasmanians, and unfortunately it looks like things are going to get worse unless there is a reverse in the economy.

We have talked about business investment in this place, about how tough businesses had it during the shadow lockdown through the January months. I spoke yesterday about how consumer or household spending went backwards in this state, across the board, by an average 17.5 per cent. Consumers are hanging on to their cash - and this was before the war in Ukraine.

The real concern, and this is why I am saying we are facing headwinds, is that consumer spending went backwards by 17.5 per cent - and that was before the war in Ukraine. That was before petrol prices headed north of \$2.20. The pressure really has not come on yet. I am sure that there are businesses heavily reliant on fuel, which pay a lot of money for fuel, which have not quite been able to pass it on to their customers - if indeed they can pass it on to their

customers. That indicates we are facing strong headwinds. The Government has to face up to it and take action, and that is why I bring on this motion today.

We have to talk about fuel prices, because fuel price has a massive impact on our economy and confidence. I have been hearing stories about people who did not go away during this past long weekend because they thought the cost of fuel for towing the caravan to their favourite spot was probably out of their reach. People are making choices now about their spending. If people fill up their car every week, the amount of fuel money that they are putting in, is money that they do not spend elsewhere in the economy, and most of that money does not remain in the state.

If that same amount of money is spent in a cafe or retail store, that stays in our economy and gets spent again and again and again. With fuel prices, a large chunk, the vast majority of it, heads overseas.

Discretionary spending is not just fuel. It is about utility bills, for example. Now we are facing TasWater increasing the cost of water bills by \$395 across the next period. Then we have had the Government putting in place a bin tax, which is a blunt instrument. There are no incentives in the bin tax to reduce your waste at the individual level but people are going to be paying for that in their rates. The Government is not doing enough in this area.

Getting on to fuel prices. There is, absolutely, an impact of the war in Ukraine, there is no doubt about that, but the fuel price has been an issue for such a long time. So much so that the Government has used spin to get around it when fuel prices have risen sharply in the past. As I have said, the Premier has stated:

If fuel prices ... continue to be out of step, the Government will consider taking further action and will consider price capping.

Is the Premier actually considering that? Or is this one of these moments where an idea or a promise is thrown out there, just to wait until the political storm passes. Indeed, the Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs said something similar:

The Government has made it clear that should further action be required to support Tasmanians to access cheaper fuel prices, including the introduction of legislation, we will consider it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, is the minister actually considering this? It has been in place a long time, and this was even before the impact of the war in Ukraine. A report from the Australian petroleum market, from the December quarter 2021, highlights that if you compare Hobart to the other capital cities, people in Hobart are paying over the odds. In December 2021, the average fuel price across the five largest cities was 162.8 cents. In Tasmania, it was 175 cents, and that is 12.5 cents over the average of the five largest cities. You might say it costs a little bit more to get fuel to Tasmania, and maybe it does, but that does not explain why somewhere like Darwin is only 3.8 cents dearer than the five largest cities.

The minister has talked about fuel watch apps and so on, so I checked out the FuelWatch website this morning. What is the difference between the mainland and Tasmania today? This morning, the average in Hobart was \$2.21.2 for a litre of fuel; Melbourne was \$2.07.1; Sydney was \$2.11.3; Brisbane was \$2.08.7; and Darwin, which does not have refining facilities and

still needs to truck fuel long distances to get there, was \$2.11.5. We were 10 cents dearer than even Darwin this morning, and that bears out in the figures. We were roughly that differential when the figures came out in December 2021.

I checked during the lunchbreak, and Hobart is still \$2.21.2. Melbourne has gone down \$0.01 down to \$2.06. Sydney has stayed the same. The average fuel price is \$2.11.03 but Brisbane declined by almost \$0.02 down to \$2.06.09 and Darwin declined by \$0.03 to \$2.11.02.

What is happening in the Tasmanian market? Why is it that we are so out of step? This is having a significant impact on our state economy and it continues to do so. You look across today's petrol prices in Hobart and you see that we just do not compare. If you are dealing with diesel then fuel prices are even higher, they are up around \$2.34. This is going to create real issues for consumers. Is the Government serious about implementing legislative change to make sure that this does not happen, to make sure we are more in line with other states because this is having an impact. It is having a huge impact.

Is this simply a case of the Government throwing something out there to simply get through a political moment? We know that from Monday the Government is going to make all public transport free and we commend them for that. That was actually something that the member for Elwick, Josh Willie, recommended but five weeks is not enough. People are only going to figure out the buses are free -

Ms O'Connor - They are not doing it for the cost of living. They are doing it to get people on buses because people are scared to go on buses.

Dr BROAD - Ironically, the last time they tried free bus transport under Mr Hidding, I think it was free in off-peak periods. If my memory serves me correctly, up to 8 a.m. it was free and the numbers on the bus actually went down. This will be an interesting experiment. I really hope that people do take up the offer and take up the free public transport and get used to being on public transport but there is a whole bunch of people that public transport just does not suit.

For example, in my own electorate of Braddon, there are roughly 22 000 car movements over the Forth Bridge every day. Those people are not going to be able to get onto public transport. Those people are driving and are being impacted by high fuel prices. The Government seems like it is trying to get away with it by throwing out glib lines. I would be really interested to see if the minister speaks on this motion and if the Government is committed to bringing in a legislative fix, what legislative fix is the minister considering? Is the minister true to her word and actually considering it or is it just another case of trying to get around, like an excuse?

The community grants for community groups are heavily reliant on using cars to help people out, transport to treatment and community groups like that. That is great. That amount of funding available to help them get through this period is great. What about that bigger picture? Fuel prices are impacting all the time because Tasmania is out of step. I note that, once again, the Premier has written a letter. We heard that the Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking for fuel prices to be dropped, maybe muck around with excise. I really hope it is successful this time but the Premier's success rate from other letters that he has written is not terribly good.

We have talked about it today: the letter to the Commonwealth Games Association, that did not go particularly well. The time that the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister and asked for more support for businesses during the COVID-19 period, that did not go very well. When the member for Braddon, Mr Rockliff was acting premier and also wrote seeking more COVID-19 support from the federal government, that one did not go well. With the health funding, again from Mr Rockliff, asking the federal government for more health funding, that did not go very well. Just like when the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister asking for a better deal on GST, that did not go very well. Indeed, I am not sure if the Premier got any response from when we wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, asking about Senator Abetz's alleged comments about Brittany Higgins. I am not sure whether that letter was responded to. Or indeed, we have the embarrassing situation where Mr Barnett wrote a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister seeking support for irrigation funding that he had committed during the election campaign and got a 'yeah, nah' response.

I am not sure that the Premier's letter writing, especially to the Prime Minister and his federal colleagues, actually carries a lot of weight. If there is a drop in the excise, I argue it is definitely not because Tasmania's Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking for it. It would be because other people potentially with more influence have written to the Prime Minister asking for the same thing. It looks like the federal government may just be slipping out a small payment, a little bit of cash, a couple of hundred dollars or something like that as a pre-election sweetener.

But it remains: the cost of living is a major problem. This economy is facing serious headwinds. This Government appears to be in denial. We hear time and time again, even the Premier, getting up and arguing that business confidence is up and that business investment is up, two weeks ago, right when reports came that said business investment was down 10 per cent. Business confidence is down and yet the Premier came into this place on a Dorothy Dixier and argued the complete opposite.

Are they serious? Are they actually serious about improving the cost of living? This is a basic job of government. When you have inflation running at 4.5 per cent, wages are only going at 3 per cent, people are struggling, and that was before fuel prices went up over \$2.20. Are they serious about doing something about that cost of living pressure? Are they serious about introducing some form of legislation to redress the balance that we can all see, that Tasmanian customers at the fuel pump, are paying over the odds? What are they going to do about it?

The app is not working. It is doubtful that a letter to the Prime Minister is going to work. I ask that the minister and the Premier outline their legislative agenda in this matter, otherwise we know that it was all bluff and bluster.

[3.58 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs) - Mr Speaker, from the outset, our Government will not be supporting this motion, but that is not because we do not recognise that many Tasmanian households are doing it tough at the moment - they are - but our Government is acting swiftly because we know Tasmanians are under pressure. It is also because this motion is again politically motivated. It is calling for unnecessary legislative changes, based on no evidence of price gouging by our local retailers, who are themselves doing it tough.

While our Government is working on measures to support them and not tear them down, unfortunately the Opposition refuses to accept that the legislative measures that are open to us are in cases of price gouging. That is not occurring. The member for Braddon is shamefully trying to capitalise on the terrible events happening globally and particularly in Ukraine by bringing on this motion today.

All jurisdictions across Australia and many worldwide are seeing the cost of living rise due to the pandemic, and other supply issues, and Tasmania is not immune to this. That is why, unlike members opposite, who simply continue to take political pot shots on this, without offering a single policy or proposed solution to address any of the issues or have any real understanding of what legislation is open, our Government remains committed to reducing the cost of living for all Tasmanians.

We have listened to concerns from the community sector regarding the impacts of the recent fuel price spike on the delivery of their services. That is why our Government has taken and continues to take decisive action on the cost of living, including fuel pricing.

The Minister for Community Services and Development announced yesterday that our Government will provide one-off grants of up to \$2000 to alleviate any immediate service delivery pressures for the state Government's vital community service partners. The \$100 000 community services relief package will augment other measures being undertaken across government to help ensure supports for Tasmanians in need can continue uninterrupted. One-off grants will be available by application to the Department of Communities Tasmania, which will assess eligibility and administer the measure and will help minimise the impact of the fuel price spike to a service's existing budget.

All Tasmanian-based not-for-profit non-government community service organisations that deliver essential services to people in need, such as those delivering emergency food relief or community transport, can apply. If the community service cannot cover the difference in fuel costs or reimbursement via their current funding arrangements, either state or federal, they can apply for a grant.

This important support will be available until the end of April and is in addition to the further significant measure announced yesterday by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport where we are ensuring that people across the state can get what they need and get where they need to go.

Our Government is making all public bus travel across the state, including those run by private operators, free for five weeks starting on Monday 28 March to also help to alleviate the impact of current higher fuel prices. As the minister outlined, our Government will foot the bill for this initiative which has the dual purpose of supporting family budgets and encouraging commuters to switch from private car travel to public transport. The Tasmanian Government heavily subsidises Metro and other private providers of public transport around the state. At this point, we see a temporary highly attractive measure such as free bus travel as one option the Tasmanian Government can activate to ease cost of living pressures.

This is in addition to the emergency support which is already available to individuals and families in need through our family assistance program which is delivered by our charity partners and provides direct relief to families suffering financial hardship, as well as our ongoing emergency food relief funding. Our family assistance program continues to provide direct relief to families suffering financial hardship to increase provision of direct emergency

relief to Tasmanian families suffering financial hardship and preventative support programs that are ancillary to provision of emergency relief. This funding is provided to the Salvation Army, St Vincent De Paul, Anglicare, Hobart City Mission and Launceston City Mission.

Other actions our Government is taking to ease cost of living pressures on Tasmanians more broadly include \$308 million over four years and concession support for vulnerable Tasmanians for water, electricity and rates. We have the lowest or among the lowest regulated electricity prices in the nation. After price hikes of 65 per cent under Labor, we capped prices for four years and last year delivered the \$125 winter energy supplement for 93 000 Tasmanians. We also froze water prices for two years.

During COVID-19 we waived school levies at a cost of \$14 million in relief to families and we also waived all school debts for 2019 and prior. We provided and are providing free sanitary items in all Tasmanian government schools. We are investing \$1.4 million to expand the school lunch pilot to an additional 30 schools. We are providing \$5 million for additional laptops, supporting education costs. We have increased funding for emergency food relief. We have provided ongoing support to NILS Tasmania to help Tasmanians access financial support. We have provided funding through the family assistance program to provide direct relief to families suffering financial hardship.

We have continued support to people and families impacted by COVID-19. We have doubled the value of Ticket to Play sports vouchers. We are delivering the lowest third-party car insurance premiums in the nation. We are delivering \$220 million in land tax relief. Throughout the pandemic we delivered the largest social and economic support package per capita in the country.

In just a few years, we have done more on the cost of living than Labor ever did, and Labor's record is one of a 65 per cent increase in power prices. This disastrous measure alone caused immense pain to households struggling to pay the bills, and at the same time under Labor and the Greens, business confidence was at rock-bottom and two out of three businesses believed the Labor-Greens government was working against them, whereas under our Government since 2014, in nominal terms prices have decreased 5.4 per cent for residential customers and 15.8 per cent for small business customers. Labor and the Greens drove Tasmania into recession, they broke the budget and 10 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs.

Ms O'Connor - You actually have not even looked at the data. When did it start turning around? Yes, late 2012-13 - global financial crisis?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Ms ARCHER - Labor still has no vision or plan - isn't it interesting, Mr Deputy Speaker, I sat in silence in the hope that I would not get interjections.

Labor still has no vision or plan, and this motion on cost of living pressures and rising fuel prices is no different, clearly demonstrating yet again that they are all talk and no action. The Labor member for Braddon should be aware these higher fuel prices are due to global fuel market uncertainty and we understand the impact it is causing on cost of living pressures. Fuel prices in Tasmania and indeed worldwide have increased significantly throughout 2022. Prices are driven by an increase in demand and more recently, due to global supply uncertainties. It would not hurt the Opposition to read *The Economist* views on this.

Numerous commentators have said this is not because of price gouging; this is because of the global market. It is unclear whether this will be a short-term market outcome, but the current situation is having real impacts on businesses and consumers, and this is particularly the case for Tasmania as a small regional island economy.

I note the recent commentary by the federal Treasurer, who has warned that the price of petrol is likely to continue to increase in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and subsequent sanctions may increase the cost of living as the price of petrol and other commodities are impacted. Accordingly, in addition to the measures I have just outlined, I can also advise and confirm that the Premier has written to the Prime Minister to highlight that the significant increase in fuel prices is having real impacts on businesses and consumers particularly in Tasmania, as we are a small island economy that faces numerous challenges in having comparable petrol prices to mainland capital cities.

Accordingly, and acting quickly on behalf of all Tasmanians, the Premier has requested a temporary reduction in the Australian Government fuel excise to avoid adverse economic impacts on Tasmania as it continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. While I look forward to the Australian Government's response to the Premier's correspondence, I note the reports of the Prime Minister signalling further measures to counter the rising cost of living, potentially including temporary petrol excise cuts early this week. I understand the Prime Minister has stated he is 'very conscious of cost of living impacts', recognising that higher prices 'don't just hit the economy and hit family budgets when they fill up, but they have a knock-on effect across the economy'.

It is important to recognise that our Government has acted to promote competition in the local market by introducing a mandatory real-time price recording scheme, the free app, FuelCheck TAS, and a website which helps motorists easily access fuel pricing information. The FuelCheck TAS website and app allows consumers to make informed decisions and find the cheapest available fuel in their area. The real-time fuel price reporting allows Tasmanians to see the price variation along their usual workday commute, or as part of the route taken for their holiday trip. This drives competitiveness in the market. Again I stress that we are not seeing price gouging. Retailers are doing it just as tough.

Ms Butler - How do you know? How can you know?

Ms ARCHER - How do we know? You are alleging there is price gouging?

Ms Butler - No, I am asking how do you know?

Ms ARCHER - On the record, you are saying that retailers are price gouging?

Ms BUTLER - On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, that is a misrepresentation of the question that I asked the minister. I asked the minister, 'How do you know?', and she is misrepresenting. Can you please ask her to withdraw right now?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms Butler, that is not a point of order. I will not be asking the minister to withdraw the question.

Ms ARCHER - Ms Butler should withdraw the question. I will ignore I ever heard that, because it did sound to me like an allegation. If it was not, then fair enough.

Ms Butler - You cannot ask questions.

Ms ARCHER - You will have the chance to make your own contribution.

The real-time fuel price reporting allows Tasmanians to see the price variation along their usual work day commute, or as part of the route taken for a holiday trip or other trip. I am confident that the FuelCheck TAS app will continue to put downward pressure on fuel prices and improve price transparency for motorists as a market-driven product.

Importantly, this fuel price reporting scheme delivers a more transparent and competitive retail fuel industry.

I encourage all Tasmanian motorists to download the free FuelCheck TAS app, and of course the Government continues to support a number of other measures, including alternative fuels, and including electrification, hydrogen and biofuels as a longer-term solution.

To speak to the substantive point of this motion, which has been again raised by Labor following a series of failed attempts at gotcha moments by Ms Butler last year on this - our Government has made it clear that should further action be required to support Tasmanians to access cheaper fuel prices, including introducing legislation, we will consider it. To clarify yet again - and I stress this point and make this very clear on *Hansard* - this measure would only be called upon in cases where we would see price gouging or anti-competitive behaviour by fuel retailers as areas our Government could potentially look at under the consumer law framework and protections.

I do not believe that is happening. There is no evidence. I call upon Labor to provide any evidence that this is occurring in Tasmania, if they think this is occurring. If they cannot, they should stop attacking, by implication, our retailers, like they are today.

As a result of the actions we have taken, including the introduction of real-time fuel price reporting through our FuelCheck TAS app, we have seen the positive impacts of greater competition with private retailers offering cheaper fuels to motorists prior to the current global conditions. As at 2 March, 266 service stations across the state are registered to update fuel prices to the public FuelCheck TAS app at the fuelcheck.tas.gov.au website, and there were over 112 905 downloads of the two available apps or visits to the website - the other app being the RACT's.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) has actively engaged with industry groups and fuel retailers. CBOS continues to closely monitor the reporting of price information by retailers, as well as directly contacting and visiting both large providers and smaller independent stations to ensure that all retailers are informed and complying with their responsibilities under the scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Labor should stop insinuating that price gouging by local retailers is occurring without any evidence. Our Government will continue to take decisive action to address cost of living pressures, which includes providing support for Tasmanians to help offset the impact and challenges of fuel price increases.

[4.14 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, yes, we have spoken to fuel prices many times, especially over the last two years. They have escalated to quite substantial levels, and Labor has never insinuated price gouging. The minister has completely muddled up what we are talking about today.

What we are talking about is that in 2020, Premier Gutwein stated that if prices became too out of kilter with the mainland, he would take measures, and the minister has also reflected that they would take steps to help reduce the cost of fuel in Tasmania if it became too expensive.

Words do have to mean something. If you are going to say something, mean it. If you are going to make promises and pledges to the people of Tasmania that you will help them with their cost of living pressures, and that you will step in and assist them if fuel prices become too expensive, then you do that. That is basic decency. That is a basic transaction. When people elect you as a member of parliament, if you say you are going to do something, you do it. Words have to mean something.

The Gutwein Government has allowed for these petrol prices to soar, and their promise of intervention has been broken. We have the highest fuel prices in the country and it is damaging the Tasmanian economy. The latest data from the ACCC proves that petrol prices in Hobart are much higher than any other capital city in Australia. We know you have been promising that you would step in if they did get too expensive -

Ms Archer - I just explained the circumstances we cannot -

Ms BUTLER - Words have to mean something, minister, and that is what we are here about today. That is what we have been raising with you time and time again, on behalf of the people of Tasmania. At the start of the December quarter, the average fuel price in the five larger cities was \$1.62.8 cents, whereas Hobart was 12.2 cents higher, at \$1.75 cents. Labor has never alleged that there is price gouging. We are making you -

Ms Archer - They are the circumstances we legislate for.

Ms BUTLER - Labor have never alleged that, minister. Now, if you understand the argument that I am talking about today - and have been saying now for 18 months - you promised to step in. You both promised to step in and intervene on behalf of the people of Tasmania if the prices became too expensive. You made that promise.

You can admit, you can say sorry - oh actually, you do not do that, do you? - but you can say sorry, I should not have said that, there is actually nothing I can do. You could be honest on that level, or you could step in and make sure your words mean something. You have a choice there. There is a choice there.

It is time for this Government to take action, and you did say you would do something about the petrol prices. Tasmanians are hurting. Businesses are hurting. We know that the spin-off effects are increasing costs, right across Tasmania - up to 20 per cent in some cases. If the Premier is unable to do anything about petrol prices, then why did he promise to intervene? Why did you promise to intervene if you were never going to do anything about it? It feels dishonest, and that is very much what keeps coming across.

We have been imploring you for years to step in and do something about fuel prices. Either you are going to step in and do something, or you are going to step in and say, 'look, there is actually nothing I can do about it'.

The Australian Institute of Petroleum's weekly petrol report for the week ending 20 March 2022, shows the average price last week across the country was \$2.12, with some states as low as \$2.05. Tasmania had the highest average prices of any state or territory at \$2.21. I do not think it is fair to claim that the current situation can be directly attributed to the conflict in Ukraine. Tasmanians have been paying too much for fuel for quite a long time, minister.

In September 2020, the average price of fuel in Tasmania was \$1.22. That was when the Premier advised the first time that he would intervene if prices became too expensive. In March 2021, the average fuel price in Tasmania was just over \$1.41 a litre, and by November 2021 it had risen to \$1.75. This was already a 24 per cent increase in the price of fuel. That was last year, between March and November, well before the Ukraine conflict happened, minister. That was when we were talking to you, saying the fuel prices are going up, minister. Please honour your pledge and step in and do something.

We know that your FuelCheck app was introduced to apparently mitigate the problem of rising fuel prices. It has not done that at all. I do think it was quite a useless band-aid policy idea, instead of stepping up and taking some real action, making some legislative change, stepping in to reduce the cost of fuel - because that is what you and the Premier said you were going to do.

I have been speaking to quite a few people in the community about the impacts of fuel prices on them. You are not listening to us; we have been imploring you to do something about fuel prices for quite some time but I thought maybe you will listen to these stories.

Before I go there, the other day I stopped at the Triabunna petrol outlet and had a really good conversation with the man who runs it. He puts six cents a litre onto his fuel. He has always run his business like that. He was explaining to me how he comes up with that price and how difficult it is to keep an eye on each petrol outlet - where they buy it from, when it arrives and then what their mark-up is, according to the different places and locations of where they need to be. That was a really interesting conversation. I would like to thank him for his time. I spent a fair bit of time in his workshop. He is a really nice fellow.

From a resident of St Helens, when I asked him what the impact of fuel was on him, he said:

It is terrible. We are suffering pretty badly in St Helens. I can't see any reason why the Government are allowing this. Only 8 per cent of our fuel comes from Russia. The Government are allowing it, getting more taxes and letting the petrol companies run the show.

A resident from Brighton says:

It's affecting us now. We are feeling it -

Mr Ferguson interjecting.

Ms BUTLER - Do you not want to listen to what people are saying, minister?

Mr Ferguson - No.

Ms BUTLER - These are Tasmanians. A person in Brighton said:

Ms Archer - Do not lecture to us. Do not do that.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, you are not interested?

Ms Archer - I am sitting here listening.

Ms BUTLER - Good. Thank you.

It affects us now. We are feeling it. We have to rethink all our driving.

Ms Archer interjecting.

Ms BUTLER - Sorry. Do you want to interrupt what I am saying?

Ms Archer - It does not give you the right to be rude.

Ms BUTLER - These are from people. This is for you to listen to, minister.

Ms Archer - Stop being rude. You do not need to be rude.

Ms BUTLER - I have said sorry about four times, have I not? It is a word that you obviously do not understand.

Our financial situation isn't the best. It costs us twice as much as it used to.

From a Southern Midlands farmer -

The diesel cost is increasing our general cost. Diesel is an expensive cost when running machinery. It is an essential item to our business. Like us, most farmers have a contract with the supplier and it is structured differently but, yes, our community is really feeling it.

From a food truck owner and parent living in regional Tasmania -

With the food van it was already hard enough to turn a profit with low attendance at events this summer, which is when we were supposed to be putting money aside to survive winter. Now we are thinking of not attending events if we aren't 100 per cent sure we can at least break even. Events are already struggling with food vans pulling out of events last minute if the workers have COVID.

On a personal level, I doubt these free Metro tickets will help anyone in rural Tasmania if it doesn't include Redline buses. Even if did, the schedule is so infrequent that we wouldn't be able to use buses for work and school runs due

to having to change bus lines, et cetera. It might help city folks but what relief is there for rural people that have further to travel?

Also, as a business owner, watching the cost of living rise for everyone, I wonder how many businesses are going to suffer because people can no longer afford to go out.

The price of petrol is going to negatively impact everyone and a few weeks of bus tickets is not going to help us personally or a business. There are still plenty that are struggling and the Government is not doing enough.

From a resident on the east coast:

The rise in fuel is hurting us. The increase of 30 per cent affects the general freight of foods and household goods, the running of vehicles, farm equipment and associated costs.

The free bus is a great idea, however, cannot be beneficial for rural communities. Swansea: one bus in the morning, one back in the afternoon. Need a private vehicle or a community car for appointments with specialists. We're in strife.

From a Hobart resident:

Proving expensive and my son who is a tradie is finding it very hard as he travels all over for work so constantly buying petrol.

From a Dunalley resident. This one is quite sad:

Rurally, obviously, that has an added impact given resources and supplies are at a distance and it is a direct equal reduction of resources from another pocket in the family budget when people are already penny pinching. This just means not ordering winter wood, not turning on heaters, fewer, shorter showers, less and poorer quality cheaper food. It is immediate and these significant jumps in price for both fuel and all things affected by fuel, all goods and services, result in less of everything. And if one has capacity to work more, less time, working more to compensate and tighter belts.

There are reports that our vegetables will go up 75 per cent in supermarkets. Any community or person without a garden to grow their own food is in trouble food security-wise.

My mum is a disabled pensioner in the city. She has not been able to afford fuel to visit me since Dad died last week; it is that tight.

This is something from a north-western resident:

I can honestly say that we are spending more time at home only buying fuel when we are near the cheaper outlets and generally tightening our belts.

From a Launceston resident:

With the petrol prices increasing we are finding our retirement savings are being delved into, plus our supermarket spending has also increased, which is also contributing to our savings being depleted.

From a Deloraine resident:

I need to drive from Deloraine to Launceston three days a week to support my parents who are in their eighties and live in their own home. Because of the cost of fuel I will need to rethink their support.

From a Bridgewater resident:

As a pensioner we have to limit our outings because of the petrol rise, plus every single grocery item has risen and how far can you stretch a pension?

From another Bridgewater resident:

I choose the places carefully before I go. It is making it too expensive to go up north to see my granddaughter.

From a New Norfolk resident:

The fuel cost is a real problem for us - less freedom, kids don't get out as much. We used to love going for drives and we can't afford that now.

From an Exeter resident:

For us oldies, it means more careful shopping trips and social travel. More sharing of cars. Us oldies have it pretty good if you have secure housing. It is the families and working people who are suffering on low wages and/or insufficient social security payments.

From a St Helens resident:

We have parked one of our cars. Far too expensive to run two now.

From a winery owner:

Future transport costs will add approximately 65 cents per bottle alone. Tractor, diesel, fertiliser spray will rise on top of that.

From a crop-dusting pilot:

I had to get on to bringing fuel from Wagga. It's a \$1 a litre cheaper delivered into my tank including the boat - figure that out. They rob us blind here. It doesn't make any sense at all.

I thought that was quite an interesting quote. I hope you are listening, minister, because it is really important that you understand the impact that these fuel prices - that have been a long time coming - which could have been, according to the claims that you and Premier made, managed better. We could have had a much lower fuel price if you had taken the actions that you stated that you were going to take from 2020.

Like I said, your words do have to mean something. If you are going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk. You tell the people of Tasmania, 'We'll step in. We'll intervene. If prices get too expensive, we'll take action' but then you never do. You have people in situations now where they cannot go to visit their grandchildren; they are going to have to make choices between food, shelter and whether they will buy wood for the winter. Minister, you have a real problem here. You need to step up and either explain why you stated that you could help, or do something about it and actually help.

[4.29 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we are quite comfortable supporting this motion. Most of it lays out some of the facts relating to the challenges people are having with cost of living at the moment. I listened very carefully to the minister for consumer protection's contribution. She answered some of the questions, or dealt with some of the issues, that are in the notice of motion. It was very nice to see her in the Chamber after her absence during our private members' time when we were calling on her and her colleague, Mr Ferguson, to apologise to Ms Tiffany Skeggs. I am not sure how Dr Broad feels about Ms Archers' response and whether he felt that there was a sincere effort made to deal with some of the questions that he raised, particularly about how the Government is going to give effect to fuel price capping.

Dr Broad - No answer there.

Ms O'CONNOR - No answer there? Okay. We will be supporting this motion. I wanted to, and again this goes to the profound disconnect between members of the Government and what is happening in the community, and Ms Butler is to be commended for that work she did reaching out to people to find out how soaring fuel prices are affecting everyday Tasmanians.

Can you imagine being reliant in some form or another on Commonwealth income support, having a part-time job and having to fill your car with petrol at a bit over \$2.21 a litre, while your rent is going up and the cost of so many other elements of living a dignified life are going up as well? The rise in petrol prices is having a profound impact on people's capacity to work, to pay the rent, to feed their children, to go to university or TasTAFE. This is compounding what was already very financially straitened times for many Tasmanians.

As we know, due to the policies of state and federal governments, we also have wage stagnation in this country. There is a deliberate, concerted effort to keep, not just downward pressure on wages, but to crush the hopes of Australian workers that there would be some kind of equity and social justice in the system and that they would be able to look forward to wage rises. We know that the really big end of town, the corporations, only one in three of which pay tax, are working with governments to keep wages suppressed. We have wage stagnation, increasing house prices, increasing rents and its costing people between \$90 and \$100 in an average car to fill up the tank.

There are mechanisms that the Government can use to ease petrol price pressure, but the long-term problem here is our reliance as an island on imported fuel. What we really need to see from Government is an accelerated commitment to increasing the number of electric vehicles in the government fleet - and that is not just about ministers. That is about everyone who works for government and in government agencies. There are plenty of good quality increasingly affordable electric vehicles on the market. As we know, when government purchases electric vehicles, at a certain point in time they go into the second-hand car market and that enables more Tasmanians, who are not the richest people in this country, to purchase a second-hand electric vehicle.

I know there has been an accelerated rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure but it is still insufficient. The Government could commit to not only increasing the number of electric vehicles it purchases and use its fleet power to do so, but it could commit to, for example, a massive rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, particularly reaching into rural and remote areas of Tasmania, who so often just miss out.

Yesterday's announcement about five free weeks of Metro bus travel was really interesting. It is commendable at one level because it is a cost of living measure but it really came out of nowhere. It was a weird announcement because suddenly a government which has taken very little interest in cost of living struggles for Tasmanians is announcing free Metro bus travel.

I am very interested to hear what patronage is like, not only on Metro buses but also on the other private operators in the bus system, particularly those who are servicing rural and regional Tasmania. I am sure other members in this place are getting correspondence from people who are highly alarmed at the lack of mask wearing on closed buses with windows that do not open, getting onto buses where drivers have surgical masks hanging under their chin and letting unmasked people onto buses where there is no ventilation apart from when the doors open to let people on or off.

Members in here know that some particularly vulnerable cohorts of people rely on public transport, young people, students and older people who either do not own a car or who cannot afford to own a car. There is a set of demographic vulnerabilities in public transport during a raging global pandemic where, in Tasmania now, we have had 73 000 of our people infected with COVID-19, where the Government has completely taken its hands off any form of protections for everyday Tasmanians.

Tasmanians are not stupid. They do not want to get on a bus and catch COVID-19 from someone who has got on a bus without a mask because the Government has told them that is just fine in defiance of the evidence of epidemiologists, like Professor Nancy Baxter from the University of Melbourne School of Geography and Population Health, like Professor Raina MacIntyre from the Kirby Institute, or Professor Brendan Crabb from the Burnet Institute. All these esteemed independent health experts are sounding the alarm and saying we have rampant community transmission. In Australia, reported case numbers are soaring.

We have a new sub variant BA.2 on the loose which is driving up hospitalisations and deaths in Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States. These experts are saying that if you want to keep yourself safe, wear a mask. Independent experts, not captured Public Health officials but independent epidemiologists, virologists and immunologists, are saying to be safe right now wear a mask. They are telling us this is a very serious virus. They are giving

us the message that we are not getting from the Premier, and to be fair, they are not getting from Tasmania Public Health either.

There has been a choice about language here where people are told that Omicron is 'mild' or 'milder'. That is a choice that has been made by the Premier and the Director of Public Health. The Director of Public Health could, for example, have said, yes, it seems on the evidence that Omicron is a less severe variant of Delta but it is at least as severe as the wild Wuhan version of the virus.

In our opinion, it is not a virus that you want to catch. It is not a virus you want to invite into your body because there is some concerning evidence coming in from around the world about the impact that it has on the human body. It can profoundly age our cells. They have just released research which shows that a three-year-old who contracted COVID-19 after the acute phase, had a cell age of a 37-year-old. This is the sort of information that Tasmanians are not being given.

This is a very serious virus and many people get it, which is why they are keeping their masks on. They do not want to catch it and they do not want to infect anyone else. They are avoiding public transport and retail outlets. Have a look at the mobility data. Dr Broad detailed it earlier. In retail, in hospitality, we are seeing people vote with their feet on this virus. That is why I think this Government announced a five-week-free Metro run - bless you, Mr Speaker, I hope that is just a cold.

We will be supporting this cost-of-living motion. We think it is important that the parliament has the opportunity to talk about these issues because that is why we are here. We are here to represent people who right now - and this is not a platitude - are really doing it tough. I agree that for many Tasmanians, the cost of housing, the cost of petrol, food, clothing and shelter is making life stressful. I believe it is one reason why we are losing so many of our people to interstate. It is a cost-of-living issue.

There are whole lot of things you can do to bring down the cost of living. It would be great if, instead of every question time having those four banal, vacuous Dorothy Dix questions with read-out answers that we are insulted by, we had a government that came in and said, 'We recognise that there is huge cost-of-living challenges for Tasmania at the moment. Some are caused by contemporary events such as Putin's devastating assault of Ukraine. Some of them are caused because there is a supply issue in the housing sector and, as a government, we recognise that there are levers that we can pull that can genuinely take the pressure of people'. Those levers are talked about in this motion to some extent.

We support Dr Broad's motion. I am interested to hear if there is any more coming from Government on this. We believe it is a perfectly factual, reasonable motion. Therefore we will support it.

[4.43 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion. It is an issue on the tip of the tongue of Tasmanians that I speak to, and I am sure the other members speak to, as we see fuel prices go well above \$2 a litre. The flow on effects - pardon the pun - are becoming more and more obvious as we continue to see prices, as Mr Barnett would say, go up and up and up. That is having a real impact right across all industry.

One of the questions I have been asking business over the past few weeks has been: what are the fuel price changes doing to you and your business? I was at the Tasmanian Harness Racing meet at Elwick on Saturday night. I asked one of the trainers about it. He said that he is increasing the training fees for his clients. That is having a flow-on impact within the racing industry.

Ms Butler and I went to meet with some transport operators on Monday and talked about the impact the fuel prices is having on their business. I will not name the business but they were able to tell us about the impact that it is having on their customers, the way they are able to pass it through to their customers. It is okay for them but that is starting to see impacts on businesses large and small.

Large supermarkets, for example, are going to see extreme increases in their transport costs. Some of the very large ones, for example Coles or Woolworths or IGA, will probably be able to withstand that for quite a while; they are incredibly large organisations. At some point in time, these fuel price increases will start hitting the supermarket shelves. Tasmanians will start seeing not just the pain at the bowser, but they will start seeing it on the supermarket shelves. They will start seeing it in all aspects of their lives. We have already seen the price of building and construction going up, but now we have tradies driving long distances to do their work, and they are having to fill the car up with petrol or diesel at much higher prices.

We know that fuel prices are a product of both domestic and international forces; no one is denying that but I was surprised when I heard the comments from the Premier some time ago indicating that he might step in. That is the subject of the motion from Dr Broad that we are here debating. The honourable Peter Gutwein MP stated that if fuel prices in the state:

... continue to be out of step, this Government will continue taking further action and will consider price capping.

I am not sure if another premier in Tasmanian history has threatened such action on the industry before. I am sure for many Tasmanian fuel users at that time it was a very popular thing to say. They saw it on the news or read it in a newspaper, and thought, 'All right, we might step in and take action'. If fuel prices were an issue then, it is a very big issue now. They must be wondering if Premier Peter Gutwein was talking about price capping or stepping in back then, what is he going to do now?

That is the subject of the motion today. Perhaps it was yet another distraction. If the Premier says that he can fix this problem, and he was considering it, when is he going to act?

This is an issue that is being felt perhaps most directly by Tasmanian consumers as we speak, but we know it is part of Tasmania's growing inflation problem. The cost of living is growing and getting more out of control every day. We have seen housing costs grow for a considerable amount of time, to the point where Tasmania is now the least affordable place in Australia to live. We are seeing Tasmanians leave in droves because it is becoming unaffordable for so many people to live here.

I was looking at some of the prices of rental ads only recently - \$600 per week for a one-bedroom apartment in Hobart - and thinking back to my time as a renter, less than \$200, and that was not that long ago. I shudder to think how young Tasmanians, in particular those who are just starting out their working life and starting to build their own family, how they are

dealing with the rental crisis and the cost of housing. Those young Tasmanian families building their first home, desperately trying to get in to this market are seeing that prices continue to go up. I think about the people who are saving, but they cannot save quickly enough to keep up with the growth in prices across Tasmania.

It is a cost-of-living crisis. As I said, this has flow-on effects for prices right across Tasmania. It is not just the transport costs on land, of course. There is the price of shipping. There are no good alternatives. Electric vehicles are very difficult to come by. They are unaffordable for most Tasmanians, and that gives very little option.

It was great to see Mr Willie's suggestion about free public transport being taken up by the Government. We thank them for doing that. It was a good initiative from Mr Willie and one that we appreciate the Government taking up but, of course, they could do more and I hope they will.

For many Tasmanians public transport is not an option. We hope that, over time, the public transport system in Tasmania can be improved to a point where it is more of an option for more Tasmanians. At the moment, it is not an option. It is not an option for tradies who need to cart themselves, their workmates and their gear across town to work in businesses and worksites across our major cities and rural Tasmania. It is not an option for Tasmanians who have to do the child-care drop-off. It is not an option for everyone. It is a good initiative that we hope will help a lot of Tasmanians with their cost of living, but it is not going to be an option that can support everyone.

Mr Speaker, the motion also talks about the accrued pressure that is being felt with basic non-discretionary expenses, like utility bills. I want to talk about utility bills because there are some increasing pressures on Tasmanian families that have not yet been felt. The three I want to talk about are the Government's bin tax, the sewerage costs that are going to go up, and what Aurora is planning to do with electricity bills in the coming future.

The bin tax must be the most poorly designed tax you could imagine. They have managed to design a bin tax that provides no incentive for people to produce less waste. In fact, it charges you just as much whether you produce no waste at all, or you fill the bin up right to the brim and leave the lid open. It makes no sense to do it this way. There are other jurisdictions, like Queensland for example, that have done it very well and could have been replicated here, yet the Government decided to make its own way, and that will be felt by Tasmanians next financial year.

It will not just be felt next financial year, but it will be felt when the price goes up two years after that, and then goes up again, two years later. That is when Tasmanians will start feeling it. Just because they are bringing it in with a smaller amount to start with does not mean that Tasmanians will not notice. When the prices go up for tradies as they drop off the waste from their building construction sites, and when people who have just done the weekend clean-up drop it off to the tip, and when they just put their bin out on the weekend, they are going to feel that tax.

Power prices are proposed to go up by Aurora. Their submission to the regulator asks that they be able to charge every Tasmanian for the aurora+ app, irrespective of whether they use the aurora+ app. It is contrary to what I thought I knew about the Liberal Party, because they are going to ask every Tasmanian to pay for something, irrespective of whether they want

to use it or not. This is not user pays; this is everyone pays. Every single Aurora customer is going to pay for the app. Many of those customers, because of the technology at their household, will not actually be able to use the app, even if they wanted to. They will still have to pay, and the price will go up. It is about \$3.8 million dollars that Aurora wants to take from Tasmanian electricity users, in a cash grab: a cash grab from Tasmanian households and businesses that are already feeling the impacts of the cost of living under this Government; the huge cost of living increases that continue to plague Tasmanian households and businesses, and which will, as I said, continue to go up and up.

TasWater also has a submission with the regulator at the moment. They went with the Premier's plan: a publicly available document from 2018, where he proposes 3.5 per cent increases in water and sewerage bills for every Tasmanian family. TasWater submitted that to the regulator. They want to increase the costs for Tasmanian water and sewerage bills - TasWater bills - by 3.5 per cent next financial year, 3.5 per cent the year after that, 3.5 per cent the year after that - \$395 that will equate to over the period. That is what they want to increase. That is what they want to slug Tasmanians who are already doing it tough.

You have a bin tax proposed and celebrated by this Government. You have a TasWater price increase slug by this Government, celebrated by the Premier when he got his MOU deal through on the TasWater increase. You have Aurora, which has not been able to get enough users onto their aurora+ app, and so have now asked the regulator if they can charge every single Tasmanian electricity user - business and households - to pay for that app even if they do not want to use it, or cannot use it. Many of these households do not have the meter boxes that actually allow them to use the app anyway.

The cost of living impacts on Tasmanian households. When you put all of these things together - this is only just the beginning. This is the canary in the coalmine. This fuel price issue is just the start of the cost of living rising for Tasmanians.

Amongst all those problems, perhaps the biggest is that real wages are falling. It is not as though these are happening as people's wages increase. We actually have real wages going down. Tasmanian pay increases are not going up fast enough to cover the costs of living that are rampantly going up across every aspect of Tasmanians' lives. This is going to be a really serious issue. We know housing has been a massive issue for Tasmania. We have been in what has been described as a housing crisis, since, 2018 and it has not got any better. From all of these things, I would implore the Government in particular, but all members, to support the motion, to acknowledge the hardship that is being felt by Tasmanian families, who are going to be under such a huge and a significant amount of stress over the next period.

What we are seeing because of this cost of living pressure, and real wages going down, is a fall in consumer confidence, which according to the ANZ is now negative in Tasmania, and consumer inflation expectations are the worst they have been in a decade.

People can see this coming. They can see it already, and I do not think many of them know about the tip tax yet; they will soon. I do not think they know about what Aurora Energy is planning to do with aurora+ yet, and I do not think they know what TasWater is planning to do yet - but they will soon. This is going to hit in the second part of this year. These cost-of-living prices are about to engulf many Tasmanian families.

Housing is causing a particular strain. Hobart is, as I said, the least affordable capital city for renters, and the price rises of nearly 30 per cent in a year have put home ownership out of reach for so many Tasmanians.

There are broad economic consequences when households are under financial pressure. As Dr Broad put it earlier this week, and today in his contribution, one of the ways we are seeing that is with so many Tasmanians starting to leave the state. I have heard members opposite, in my brief time in this place, talking about Tasmanians leaving in droves. Well, there are more Tasmanians leaving in droves now than ever before. One of the reasons must be that Hobart is the most unaffordable capital city anywhere in Australia. You have the lowest wages anywhere in Australia right here in Tasmania - 20 per cent below the average across the nation - and yet we have the most unaffordable housing for renters. You put those two things together and a larger and larger percentage of your household income goes into housing, then you have the petrol price issue on top of that. Water, power and a brand-new tip tax courtesy of the Gutwein Liberal government.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 8

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 10

Mrs Alexander (Teller)
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Street
Mr Tucker

PAIRS

Ms Finlay
Ms O'Byrne

Mr Gutwein
Mr Tucker

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Housing Policy

Continued from 9 March 2022 (page 62).

[5.07 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Mr Speaker, I seek to continue my contribution from the last meeting of the House when we commenced this. Mr Tucker initiated this motion.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is, is a vote required?

Mr FERGUSON - Mrs Alexander could say yes, Mr Speaker.

Mrs Alexander - Yes, Mr Speaker.

Mr FERGUSON - I appreciated Mr Tucker raising this item on behalf of Government members to continue to discuss and debate the merits of the Government's historic boost into housing through the housing package announced by the Premier in his annual Premier's Address earlier this month. It has been widely applauded by stakeholders. I am not surprised because it is historic; it meets some of the targets that some of the most optimistic stakeholders were calling on the Government to set as our target.

I have already sensed around the place a lot of excitement that not only will the Government continue to meet its target of 1500 additional new homes in the middle of next year, they are being built right now. We are not making people wait until the middle of next year for 1500 homes to suddenly appear on that date. They are being progressively built as we speak. The second mid-stream target is the additional 2000 that we committed to at the 1 May election, less than a year ago, where we put up as our Government's future vision to take out Housing with a future and more ambitious target again of 2000 on top of the first 1500 by 2027.

The Premier, on behalf of the Government, and I am very pleased to support him, has announced a policy development of taking our next target to the total of 10 000 additional dwellings, social and affordable homes, by 2032.

I will come back to the package in a moment. It was a pivotal address when you take the social and affordable housing measure targets in tandem with the range of private sector development incentives that were also announced, you are looking at a major influx of new property stock coming into Tasmania over the next 10 years. I have already heard a couple of our political opponents, particularly from the Labor Party, who have been unable to support our package. They have not yet been able to say a good thing about it.

A member - It was just an announcement.

Mr FERGUSON - That is interesting. The Labor Opposition had the opportunity, more or less equal time to the Government, to outline their alternative vision. There was time. The debate was adjourned as a courtesy to allow the Opposition to have a bit of time to look at the Premier's Address and, no doubt, score a few points from it, be negative as usual but maybe come up with some alternative policies of their own. After all, it has been less than one year since they promised all of their policies at the May election.

I noticed this morning that Dr Broad dropped one of them like a hot potato. He actually dumped his land tax policy today. That is the first time I have heard of a policy, from that election, of the Labor Party being dumped within a year. That has gone. I was very surprised. He actually walked into his own trap on that because he was being reminded by - I think it was

Mr Tucker - that Labor said it would take the scalpel to land tax in order to give relief to shack owners and private property owners and to put downward pressure on rents. It was only then that Dr Broad ran away from the policy that I would have thought was still current Labor policy. I mean, that is what the voters would have thought.

Dr Broad - You just make stuff up.

Mr FERGUSON - You say I am making it up but they are your words. You are damned by your own words, Dr Broad. When you say, 'You are just making stuff up' to quote you, Dr Broad, I quote you. You ran away from it. You said it did not work.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Did you just say 'exactly'? I think you might have. This is interesting because it is sometimes the little interjections that shine a light on where Dr Broad is at on this. If Labor want to ditch that policy, which included cutting land tax for property over \$500 000, which is not in the Government's policy, I think Dr Broad should explain himself to the voters, to the people of Tasmania. Dr Broad came into the debate and said Labor will support the Government's land tax cuts but then gave a speech about all the reasons why he should not support it. Very negative.

Dr Broad - You are making stuff up.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I am not making stuff up. What I am doing is outlining to the House your record which is unravelling in your own hands. They are the facts. Dr Broad, if he chooses to explain himself, that is his decision. I suspect he will not want to talk about it, just interject from the sidelines. What happened is that Dr Broad said that they would vote for the legislation and then explained all the reasons why they should not and was in furious repetitive agreement with Cassy O'Connor, the Leader of the Greens, member for Clark -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order.

Mr FERGUSON - on a range of matters. They were having a wonderful agreement in the Chamber. It was beautiful to see the Labor-Greens working together like they always do.

I highlight this because it is hypocrisy writ large. The Labor Party still have it on their website, by the way, Dr Broad. You might like to deal with that. It is still on the Labor Party website, that cutting land tax will put downward pressure on rents.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Anyone can see what is going on. The embarrassment is very apparent. All of the calls that have been made -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - If the member for Braddon and the member for Franklin wish to have a discussion, you can go outside and have that so I can listen to the contribution.

Mr FERGUSON - They are a bit wounded, Mr Speaker.

I want to put a couple of other facts on the record as well. Rapidly rising house prices are something that the Government is very aware of and is acknowledging. Also, it is worth reminding the House that it is not a purely Tasmanian phenomenon at all. It is happening right around the country. You are seeing historically low interest rates. They have created cheap money for investment. It has been part of monetary policy. It has been fuelling a property boom right across the country.

I will remind the House that this time two years ago major mainstream economists were forecasting that house prices in Australia could be cut in value by as much as 40 per cent. That was pretty concerning back then, members will remember. The opposite has happened. House prices have really increased. Those interest rates continued to come down, there was a lot of stimulus into the national economy and we have also seen solid growth in employment and an unbelievably low unemployment rate now in this country and in Tasmania.

In fact, the front-page story of *The Australian* newspaper today talked about the lowest cost of unemployment now to the federal budget as a result of the continually decreasing unemployment rate. That is a good thing. These are some of the factors that explain why we have seen the boom in the property sector here in Tasmania.

Increasing house prices is a national trend. Our very strong local economy - which members opposite should not talk down - and the fact that our state is one of the proven safest and most desirable places in the world to live, to raise a family, to get a job and to start your own business: these are all the reasons why people are not leaving the state in droves like they were under Labor and the Greens and why in many cases people are returning home, people who previously were Tasmanians are returning home and, of course, new Tasmanians as well.

New homes are also costing more. Input costs are up. We know that that has occurred as well. That has been well-documented. Land prices are at higher levels. Material prices have been growing at a high rate and fortunately Tasmania has had the highest annual wage growth in the country at 3 per cent, moderating for many people some of those cost increases.

We already took a strong plan to the election. I was pleased and it should be on the record that the Liberal and Labor parties - the mainstream parties, when they are not doing deals with the Greens - had equivalent targets on housing. We properly funded ours and Mr Jaensch really called the cat on that one back in the day when the former member for Franklin who was the Labor shadow under-funded the public and social housing package by something like \$80 million. Nonetheless the targets were equivalent.

It is the case that we are now implementing that plan, properly funding it, and we are also taking that step to a new level by looking over the horizon yet again, well past a future election date, out to 2032. That is a massive 10-year \$1.5 billion housing package to build on those existing reforms and to take further action to address affordable housing, recognising that Tasmania has a higher rate of home ownership than the national average by a few percentage points. I think it is about 70 per cent compared to around 67 per cent.

Many people who are in housing who either own their own home or are in a mortgage and paying off their own home, are quite pleased that their home values have gone up. However, there is concern, as others of us, about making sure that the next generation - young people or first homebuyers or people who have been out of the housing market - can have an opportunity as well and to not give up on their dream of home ownership. That is why we have taken this ambitious program of works forward. It is not just about the short-term, medium and long-term targets for social and affordable housing but also creating a new vehicle, a statutory authority in Housing Tasmania, to be better equipped and charged with increasing housing supply to deliver more affordable homes and units and ensure that we leave no stone unturned to deliver the stock of houses and services required to cater for growing demand.

I expect the Labor Opposition to scrutinise. That is their job. I expect the Labor Opposition to be occasionally negative and point out areas of weakness or areas of improvement needed. Fair enough, that is what Oppositions ought to do but they ought to support this. They ought to support this and they ought to say so. I encourage members opposite to find the grace to do that at some stage because so far, the record does not say that.

It is an opportunity because this housing statutory authority will be here to stay for many years into the future, including under future governments of different colour to Liberal and we need to support this because it will be empowered to deliver.

We are delivering a range of measures, not just the ones that I have mentioned already. I would like to take the House through some of these. We are delivering a range of measures designed to build more homes and make it easier for Tasmanians to get into the market. In particular, finding ways to allow people who are renting who do not want to rent who would rather own, help them with some opportunity to enter the housing market. They might have felt excluded because they look at the price and say, 'I could never afford that. The bank would never lend me that much money.' We would like to encourage them to have another look. So, we are helping less advantaged Tasmanians, as I have outlined, with the 10 000 new social and affordable homes.

Expanding and reforming the HomeShare program: it will become the Housing Market Entry Program to allow more low-income Tasmanians and first home buyers with the opportunity to buy their own home.

Investing \$10 million into a residential land release rebate is all about dealing with that issue that the previous minister for housing and minister for planning, Mr Jaensch, outlined, the 'wicked' problem of having significant residentially zoned land right around Tasmania in private ownership, but it is not available for people to buy a block. We looked innovatively at how we could unlock some of that land. We do not own it; its zoned appropriately, it could be used for housing but is not available. Some would call it potentially land-banking.

I also remind the House of the fact some people own land holdings but do not have the financial wherewithal to take it to market, for example, to do the civil work, the consultants and the planning to get their DA approved and to get their land taken to market. We are providing an opportunity for those landowners to take that land, not just to get it developed, but also to take it to market to get those blocks as individual lots of land on the market, for sale so that future homebuilders can get their hands on it and start to invest in their own future. It is an incentive, rather than a tax, which members of the other side of politics from ours continually talk about.

I have already mentioned the land tax argument, so I will not go through that again now, but it does present downward pressure on rents, if you reduce land tax. Do not just take it from me; take it from the Labor Party as at 1 May last year. That is what they said. It was something that the Labor Party once believed in, but now they are walking away from it.

I also make the point that you are seeing significant land value increases. For example, just in the last 12 months, median house prices and land prices have moved very significantly in the last 12 and 24 months. That will roll into, in real terms, increases in land tax bills that will be presented to owners of property after 1 July, the assessment date. If we do not intervene, I guarantee you that those increased amounts will mean that landowners, in many cases landlords, will immediately say to themselves, we need to increase this in future rent calculations. It is a fact, because it is an input cost to the landowner, to the landlord, to the property owner who is renting their property.

Some people have said to me, including in this House, that somehow we should guarantee that the amount of the land tax cut should be guaranteed by government as reducing the rent by that amount. We have never said that. That is a strawman argument by the Government's opponents. We are saying very clearly that if we do not intervene, you can bet your bottom dollar that the amount of the increase of land tax will absolutely be added to future calculations for rents. That is how the real world works.

It surprises not the Labor Party on this particular matter, but it surprises me that the three Greens members here have been making that argument. I think that they do so, in a way that does not add to the debate. Is that fair?

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - I think that is fair. The Labor Party can speak for themselves but perhaps that helps explain why they will at least be voting for the legislation when it is finalised, hopefully tomorrow.

I have happy news, that today, the Government was able to get the final stages of the affordable housing and youth employment support bill 2022 passed through both houses of this parliament. It went through the Legislative Council today.

This has been supported by everybody in this House. I think that is the case. Thank you to Labor and I think the Greens on this one. The bill means that we are now able to increase the support that we provide to first home buyers and pensioners who are downsizing. The stamp duty, which in legal speak is the duty through the Duties Act, the duty concession threshold rises from \$500 000 to \$600 000. Remember, just one year ago we had it at \$400 000. It also continues the first home owner grant for an additional 12 months out to 2023.

I am really grateful that bill has passed so quickly through both Houses. I really respect that and appreciate it. So many pot shots get taken across the Chambers, but this bill has been widely supported and applauded.

When I discussed this with the Real Estate Industry Association only two weeks ago, they were very grateful. They told me that it would make a real difference. By the way, they said the same about our reforms to Homeshare Tasmania, the Housing Market Entry Program. Once I explained it to them and showed them the threshold, some of them said to me that this

is not just a scheme for low-income Tasmanians, this is a scheme for low- and middle-income families in Tasmania. You can see from the income limits that apply, whether it is a single person, a couple, whether there are dependants. I encourage the House and any members of the public who may be listening to jump on the Homeshare Tasmania website and have a look at the thresholds because they are quite attractive.

We have also seen that government intervention has been needed in a range of other areas. Time will not permit me to go on in relation to that but the support that we have provided for shelters in Tasmania is an area that is very close to my heart.

Ms O'Connor - He is still talking?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, I will keep talking about that, Ms O'Connor.

We are seeing 15 additional units to Magnolia House in my home town of Launceston. That is really needed. I dare to dream that everyone supports that and not want to shoot holes in it. That has been approved and that is now under construction. It is an area where we have seen a need to do more. It is about providing more supply in areas where the stakeholders have talked to the Government about what they could bring to the table and what they would need from government to make that a reality.

We are seeing additional support for young people, who are sometimes caught in the cracks of a system where they are too young to be independent on their own, but unfortunately by circumstances they are not able to live at home. Our Youth to Independence centres are being offered now in all the three regions.

Members may recall the previous name of the Youth Foyer, the Youth2 Independence model is really attractive to me. It is not just about housing for adolescents and young adults, who cannot be housed at home. It is about supporting them on their growth journey and it is the opposite of a cul-de-sac or a dead end. It is not 'here is your home and suck it up'. That is not what it is about. It is about 'here is your home and here are the supports that we are going to provide for you and with you in partnership'. So much so, that clients for these services are asked to sign an agreement to continue their training and education journey. It is not just a place to lay your head at night. It becomes a place which will give you security and an ongoing commitment to your future life goals. That is why Anglicare, together with the Government, have come up with Youth2Independence. It does speak immediately of the value that we place on young people ultimately being masters of their own destiny and the support that they require right now.

In conclusion, since the commencement of the Affordable Housing Strategy, we have now provided 1254 more homes. That includes, 1121 social housing dwellings and 133 supported accommodation. We have assisted 512 low-income families into home ownership for the first time, released 356 affordable land lots and helped 382 families into private rentals. That is set to increase as a result of the package.

Bearing in mind that people are interested in our targets and delivery, there are now 1342 homes and units of homeless accommodation in the pipeline. We are on track to build our 1500 new public houses by June 2023. I have brought into effect the month-by-month data. Previously it was three monthly; we are not doing it monthly to try to give people a better insight into the ongoing transparency of how our data is presenting. The numbers do fluctuate; sometimes up, sometimes down, but it continues to show that the pipeline of work is making a

difference for people and that we are on track to meet out 1500 new houses by June of next year.

In conclusion, I thank Mr Tucker for raising the motion. I commend the motion to the House.

[5.30 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on this motion that Mr Tucker has brought to the House. It is a pity he is not here to hear the rest of the debate. He has been given the chance of two hours' worth of debate, so obviously the Government views that Mr Tucker's motion is worth two lots of time in this House.

There are some definite issues with this motion. There are some factual issues. It starts at point 1, which agrees that Tasmania has experienced significant growth and population growth. Well, not anymore; as I have said, the state economy has gone backwards by 1.5 per cent.

Mr Ferguson - There are 45 000 more people here. The state economy is leading; 3.9 per cent unemployment rate.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - Am I causing you offence? If I am, then I am sorry I have caused you any offence. I feel better after that, thank you. Sorry if I have caused you any offence, minister.

What we are seeing is we have a population recession - two quarters of negative growth. It looks like I am offending the minister further. Well, if I am, I am sorry.

Significant economic growth? In the last quarter we went backwards 1.5 per cent, while the other states went ahead 2.9 per cent. That puts us at the bottom of the pile. That is a 4.4 per cent difference from the other states. I do not think that is the economic growth that this motion alludes to.

Population growth going backwards, economic growth going backwards. We know January was really tough. I have given the figures about how far back household spending went in January, and now that fuel prices have gone through the roof, we are looking at a pretty difficult first quarter of this year when the figures come out.

We are a hair's breadth from the state officially being in recession, but you would not get that from this motion - and indeed, anything that Mr Tucker says are the same lines they have been using for eight years.

The facts are that the economy is going backwards and people are leaving the state. It is irrefutable. It talks about acknowledging the only way to meet growth and demand is to increase the supply of housing. That is fair enough. The only way to stop Hobart being the most unaffordable capital city in the country is to build more houses, is to increase supply - unless there is a mass exodus from Tasmania.

Point 3(b): that the Government's bold comprehensive plan will deliver 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032. The Government is very happy about this so-called bold

plan - so proud that they have listed it as one of their key achievements of eight years of government. This is on their list of key achievements. I quote from the Premier's media release:

Key achievements:

- Committing to a new 10-year plan to supply 10 000 affordable and social houses by 2032.

That is being banked as an achievement. It is beyond a joke, this Government -10 000 houses over 10 years is 1000 houses a year, which works out to a little bit less than three houses a day from the moment they announced it.

What is the actual rate? Is it three houses a day? No. I did not hear three houses a day from the minister; I did not hear that at all. What is their record? They built 251 houses last year, I think. They need to build 1000 - that is 750 more per year. Is this achievable? Well, the Government have banked it as if it has already happened. It is a complete joke, and that is why this motion is just not based on reality.

The Government really should consider updating the talking points that they hand out to their backbenchers. It is a bit of an issue when the Government wants to use up two hours of parliament's time to debate points like this, and pat themselves on the back when, as I have said, Tasmania is facing significant headwinds. We are teetering on the edge of recession. More people are leaving the state now than ever, and even if you take the point that people are moving to the state - and they are - the population is still going down, and it is accelerating.

Last quarter was the third worst ever, when records go back right the way back to 1991. Is that of concern to the Government? No. We heard Mr Tucker in an earlier contribution today try to come up with some sort of excuse for it about Medicare listings or something, or net international migration. I have been talking about net interstate migration, not international migration. I just do not think this particular motion deserves any more discussion.

[5.36 p.m.]

Ms O'Connor - All pre-prepared and written for you, Mrs Alexander, as usual?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Oh dear. Okay, more workplace abuse. I suppose that since this is a workplace, we do not abuse each other.

Mr Speaker, it is good to look at the context in which all these changes have occurred in the markets and particularly how it impacts on Tasmania. I thoroughly appreciate the contributions that were made earlier about some of the pressures on the cost of living, and some of the factors that have impacted on Tasmanians. A recent survey by the University of New South Wales found that Tasmania outperformed other jurisdictions, and was the only state or territory government to grow social housing sufficiently to keep pace with population growth. I genuinely like to understand circumstances and contexts; after all, globalisation has basically interconnected markets and nations.

In a recent article published by *Business Insider* in February 2022, there was a very comprehensive look at the new Australian Bureau of Statistics figures and the link with the RBA's plans to tighten monetary policy. That particular article talks about the fact that while wages increased by 0.7 per cent in the December quarter of 2021, so did inflation - so it is recognising that there is a significant impact of inflation, which actually outpaced wage growth. That has basically complicated the RBA's suggestion that it may lift rates in June this year, and that is to be watched, because we keep talking about housing prices and the cost of borrowing money. However, the analysts said its approach so far has been less aggressive compared to other central banks around the world, so the RBA is still holding onto it.

Looking at wages, the seasonally adjusted wage price index - WPI - saw an annual growth rate of 2.3 per cent. However, inflation over the same period hit 3.5 per cent, resulting in a 1.2 per cent gap between the two of them.

Michelle Marquardt, the head of prices statistics at ABS, said the past quarter saw the rate of annual wage growth continue to rise from a low of 1.4 per cent at the end of 2020. The proportion of pay rises reported over the December quarter was higher than usually seen at this time of the year, she said. It was driven by award updates won by unions, state-based public sector enterprises agreements, along with an uptick in wages and salary reviews.

Annual public sector wages saw a strong rate of annual growth of 2.1 per cent, while private wage growth remained steady at 2.4 per cent. The fastest growing industry for wages was actually in accommodation and food services, which were up by 3.5 per cent over the past 12 months. This was largely due to the last years minimum wage increase that only kicked in for the sector in the December quarter of 2021.

She continues by saying, Tasmania saw the highest rate of annual wage growth at 3 per cent, whilst Queensland recorded the highest quarterly rate of wage growth at 0.8 per cent. It is important to look at that. There is also a mention in the same article, that many business leaders have warned that sharp wage increases could actually hurt business growth and productivity as they continue to recover from most recent COVID-19 wave.

Sarah Hunter, Senior Economist of KPMG, also suggested that many private sector firms were choosing to financially reward their workers through higher bonuses rather than a permanent increase in base pay. When bonuses are taken into account, hourly wages in the private sector rose by 3 per cent year on year in the December quarter, significantly faster than the headline of 2.4 per cent which has excluded bonuses.

There is a context that we need to look at when we start analysing various factors that actually impact Tasmania as well.

Further on, the Urban Reform Institute and the Frontier Centre for Public Policy published recently their 2022 international housing affordability. In their report, they have discussed that in relation to assessing housing affordability, sometimes housing affordability is evaluated just by simply comparing house prices. However, without consideration of incomes, housing affordability cannot be assessed with any real meaning for potential buyers and so, we need to look in the context of incomes. Housing affordability is, in fact, house prices in relation to incomes.

Academic research associates the actual declining of housing affordability over recent decades with stronger land use regulation. In particular, urban containment regulation can produce substantially higher costs. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in a report called *Rethinking Urban Sprawl: Moving Towards Sustainable Cities*, has concluded that the urban growth boundaries and green belts of urban containment must be accompanied by sufficient land for urban expansion to maintain affordability. This land needs to be competitively priced to keep house prices from rising disproportionately to incomes. In housing markets with the least affordable housing, urban containment policy is typical.

The OECD also cautions that housing affordability can deteriorate if sufficient developable land is not kept available within urban growth boundaries. This urban expansion land must be large enough to retain the competitive market for land, the preservation of which was stressed by Anthony Downs of the Brookings Institution.

In relation to the above comments, it is great to see that the Tasmanian Government has taken steps that support these findings. In the past 12 months to December 2021, new supply completed has also included 31 lots of land released. This is why I have done that introduction to put into a context that there are some steps being taken that support some of the outside Tasmania pieces of work that have been completed by various reputable institutions.

The residential land rebate will assist and incentivise developers to bring new residential land to market by providing rebates to offset the cost of installing power, water and sewerage infrastructure to new lots. The scheme will incentivise the release of thousands of hectares of privately-owned vacant residential zoned land across Tasmania, which could deliver about 60 000 lots for residential development.

Rebates will be for amounts of up to 10 000 per lot, up to a maximum of 40 lots per subdivision comprised of two components, number one, power infrastructure and then water and sewerage infrastructure to a maximum 5000 per lot.

The Premier talked about land availability and what is being done about this in the state of the state address, and I quote:

One thing that will be a critical factor in increasing housing supply and improving affordability is the availability of land. While recent estimates indicate that 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 landowners to activate this land. However, we recognise that there is more that we can do and this includes providing amendments that will allow the Tasmanian Planning Commission to consider more contemporary growth forecasts when rezoning land.

Rezoning proposals for residential development will be able to be considered on their merit 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 and to keep the supply of land flowing, we are extending our funding commitment but all other criteria of the program will remain the same. It is often easier to develop a greenfield site on the edges of our towns than to develop an infill site within the centres.

It is also important that we look at what suggestions have been made in Tasmania by community services and peak bodies. That is very important because they look very closely into the housing and homelessness stress. Shelter Tasmania has indicated in the report that they have completed, *Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia* and that was their submission in June 2022. Under the header of Housing and Homelessness, Shelter Tasmania commented:

Homelessness can be ended with an adequate supply of appropriate, affordable and secure housing along with the support needed to help people stay housed. Action from all levels of government - local, state and national - is needed.

They identify that this includes an increased supply of public and community housing to provide rental housing that will remain affordable in the long term, increased investment in Tasmanian homelessness and crisis accommodation support, a strategic approach that integrates forward planning for housing with the other key government portfolio areas, including population growth, land use planning and economic development. Most importantly, they also say this has to be done in collaboration with the community and development sectors. That is important. It is not fully done by the Government; it has to be done in that collaboration.

The question then is, how has the Liberal Government responded to some of these recommendations? Looking at that and there are a number of figures here and information that I could refer to. We have 1355 units of new social housing, supported accommodation and homelessness accommodation projects currently in the pipeline of works. These are projects where land is secured and we have progressed the project milestones. Of these 1355 units of new social housing, supported accommodation and homelessness accommodation projects, currently in the pipeline of works, 1060 are new social housing dwellings, 192 are new units of supported accommodation and 103 are units of homelessness accommodation.

These projects, as well as others, are all scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2023. This current pipeline of works forms part of the Government's delivery under the Affordable Housing Strategy which sets targets of 2351 new social housing dwellings, more than 200 new units of supported accommodation and more than 150 units of homelessness accommodation to be delivered by the end of June 2023.

It is also worth mentioning that in the past 12 months or just over 12 months to December 2021, new supply that has been completed includes 270 long-term homes, 59 households assisted into home ownership through the HomeShare program and also 31 lots of land release, which I referred to earlier.

Since the commencement of the Affordable Housing Strategy there have been 1234 new long-term homes built. The Tasmanian Liberal Government took a strong plan to the election, and now has taken the next step by announcing the 10-year \$1.5 billion housing package to build on the existing reforms and take further action to address affordable housing.

The new statutory authority, Housing Tasmania, will be charged with increasing housing supply and deliver more affordable units and ensure we leave no stone unturned to deliver the stock of houses and the services required to cater for growing demand.

Expanding the Homeshare program to be the Housing Market Entry Program to allow more low-income Tasmanians and first home buyers the opportunity to buy their own home is a fantastic scheme. I spent some time talking to Peak Finance which supports applicants to the Homeshare program. They confirmed that since the announcement the calls that have been received have almost tripled. That indicates how well it has been received through the response from people in the community.

There is an investment of an additional \$10 million into the Homeshare. The Government is extending the First Home Owner Grant.

Due to concerns around the absence of shelters in regional areas, the Tasmanian government also made an election promise, to commission a \$50 000 visibility study for a new safe, emergency accommodation facility in the northern Midlands.

The Tasmanian Government has committed additional unprecedented investment of \$350 million towards housing and homelessness initiatives to 2027, which includes: extending the social housing building pipeline by providing \$280 million resulting in an additional 2000 social housing dwellings; investing \$20 million for the new supported accommodation facilities in the north and northwest of the state; providing \$15.3 million for new youth housing initiatives; increasing the property value threshold for our 50 per cent stamp duty concession for first home buyers and pensioners downsizing; and increasing housing supply with a \$2.5 million new secondary dwelling incentive program

This range of initiatives will be supported through a \$2 million investment towards the development of a comprehensive long-term Tasmanian housing strategy that will bring together a range of approaches across the public and private markets. By increasing the supply of housing we have the best chance of reducing the pent-up demand and therefore moderating prices.

We had a lot of discussion and we are very much aware of the rental situation, so I would like to talk about that, specifically in relation to rental support. The Government has provided significant assistance to date; more than \$4.258 million has been provided to tenants and landlords during the COVID-19 period.

The Residential Tenancy Act 1997 provides a number of safeguards for tenants to ensure that they are protected during these trying times. If a tenant believes a rent increase is too high, they may apply to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to determine that the increases are reasonable.

Ms O'Connor interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mrs ALEXANDER - The commissioner may order the increases unreasonable and prevent entirely or determine it is partially unreasonable and reduce the value of the increase. For the 2020-21 financial year the commissioner received 17 applications. Of these, six were

determined to be unreasonable, eight were determined to be partially unreasonable, with a lower amount being ordered and two were determined to be reasonable and one was withdrawn.

As of 20 October 2021, the commissioner had received a further five unreasonable rent applications. One was determined to be reasonable, two partially unreasonable and a lower amount order; one unreasonable and one remains under assessment.

As demonstrated by the introduction of the residential tenancy protection, our Government will introduce and amend legislation based on need and evidence. I do not believe imposing a tax on empty homes will work. Nor do I nor this Government believes that we can tax our way to better housing outcomes for Tasmanians. There are other ways around it.

Our priority is to address the long-term issue of housing affordability with our comprehensive approach to increase housing supply. This is the only way to combat rising housing prices and puts downwards pressure on home prices and rentals. We should definitely avoid higher taxes. There are no problems that cannot be resolved; try to resolve all problems that arise and avoid increased taxes. The easiest way is obviously to reach for a tax hike but there has to be other ways first and foremost. The Liberal Government has a plan to tackle housing affordability head on.

In the financial year 2020-21, our Government invested \$90 million capital expenditure for housing, which was a big investment. Previous government invested only \$28.9 million. So, that is about one-third of what has been invested in 2020-2021. In a sense, this Government is playing catch up; ramping up the investment level to catch up and ensure that we get to a level where we can provide the necessary accommodation for people looking for homes.

In 2020-21, 99.7 per cent of Housing's capital budget was spent, which is good. If it is spent that means that every dollar coming in has translated to real-world action to assist those facing housing stress. The commitments the Government has made are already resulting in real-world delivery of housing to those in need and support for accommodation for our most vulnerable Tasmanians.

I believe that the Tasmanian Liberal Government will continue doing all it can to maintain the gains and deliver more housing and homelessness support right around the state. I also believe that we are on the way to addressing the housing shortage with the highest record level of dwelling approvals and building activity since the 1980s.

[5.58 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I will stay at my desk.

We do not support this motion, it is self-congratulatory propaganda that contains within it the untruth that bringing down land tax will place downward pressure on rents. I note that the Government is clapping itself on the back for building fewer than 1300 new affordable homes in seven years. In four years, under the Labor-Greens government, we built 2200 new, affordable, energy-efficient homes. That is because we prioritised providing homes to people who needed them and we recognised that safe, affordable housing is the foundation for a successful life.

This Government has failed on housing. It has failed Tasmanians who need a home. That is why so many of our people now are going to the mainland. We cannot possibly support

this rubbish motion and I hope that other members in this place see what a load of bollocks it is too.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[5.59 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Sport and Recreation) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Public Trustee - Guardianship and Administration in Tasmania

[5.59 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, tonight on the adjournment, I wish to speak about the strong and very growing concern around the Public Trustee, and the system of guardianship and administration that occurs in Tasmania.

Members of this place would know the history of what has happened in Tasmania, and heard the heartbreaking stories through their offices, the parliament, the media, and also through the outstanding work of Advocacy Tasmania, who last year highlighted many of those heartbreaking stories of people subjected to terrible suffering and terrible hardships through the guardship and administration system in Tasmania.

As a result of their relentless campaign in raising many of the stories of people who have been subjected to that system, many of us have heard them through our offices as well. The Government did commission a review into the Public Trustee. Damian Bugg QC conducted that review and released a report to government.

It was an utterly damning report. It even shocked people who work in the system. It shocked people who already knew how bad things were. For me and many others, the most damning part of that report was his finding that, for an astonishing 26 years, the Public Trustee had misunderstood their duties under the act. That is more than two decades where an organisation entrusted with looking after the affairs of some of the most vulnerable people in this state had a fundamental misunderstanding of its roles and duties. Those roles and duties are looking after people who are sometimes at their most vulnerable: making their medical decisions, financial decisions, personal decisions - decisions that fundamentally affect their lives.

The result of their failure to understand their roles for more than two decades has been a failure of those individuals, and their families, carers, advocates and all who care for them and who love them, and it has caused devastation to their lives, losing tens of thousands of dollars, losing their belongings, their homes, their autonomy - losing the right to make decisions about their own lives. Their families and loved ones losing the right to advocate for their loved one.

Often when these orders are made it is during a time of short-term crisis where people might have momentarily, or for a short period, lost capacity to manage their own affairs, but they can regain that capacity.

Once you are locked into that system, it is almost impossible to get those orders changed or reversed. It often starts with bedside hearings in hospital, while people are still unwell, or they are still in crisis. They could still be recovering, they could still be heavily medicated, but decisions are made in those traumatic and urgent situations, and then they are very much fixed and hard to change.

Sometimes those bedside hearings are held over the phone with someone the person does not know and has never met. They might not have a family member or a loved one or a support person or an advocate present. Sometimes, the capacity tests are done by people who are not qualified to do them. Sometimes, the person subject to the hearing does not even know that the phone call is in fact a hearing, making a decision about putting their lives under the control or through the public guardianship system.

Then, without their full knowledge or their consent, decisions are made: major life decisions by people who have not met them, do not know them. They do not know how they live, or how they want to live. These people have lost their voice. They have lost their rights in many cases. They have lost their dignity.

Once those decisions are made - often those urgent bedside decisions - that is when things really start to unravel, and things that we have seen, the many heartbreaking stories. Things like people's accounts being closed down, their houses being sold, their belongings being collected and sold or taken to the tip. People being refused access to their own money to do things like buy basic essentials to live, as well as buying things for family and enjoying their lives. Often, these are people who should be enjoying their lives to the best of their ability, and they are prevented from doing that.

Just a few of the stories that people would be familiar with.

Michael Burles' story has been shared in the media many times. He was supported by Hobart Community Legal Service, who have been outstanding advocates in this space. He suffered a fall at home, he was taken to hospital, and an urgent order was made on his behalf. He was taken to aged care - he thought for respite, but it was not respite. It was permanent and, without his knowledge or his consent, he had his house sold and he had his belongings taken from him. Some of them were sold, some of them were taken to the tip. He also had a funeral plan that he had been paying \$50 a month into for nine years. That was closed, and he lost all of that money. That was the case that the Community Legal Service supported him in taking to the Supreme Court.

Another story, whose name I will not share because she does not want to, but she tells a harrowing story of voluntarily entering into the public guardianship system. She describes it as having been described to her as something where she could get some help when she needed it, but be able to still make her own decisions about her money, so she voluntarily went under administration. She said it was the worst decision she had ever made; they destroyed her life. She tried to end her life six times because of what she was going through. She ended up in a psych ward. She learned that her social worker had not advocated in the way she had expected,

and it was the worst decision that she had ever made. She lost her dignity, she lost her money, and she lost her ability to make decisions on her own life.

The minister has said she will consider the recommendations of the report, but that she is waiting for advice from her department before she can make any public comment. However, as Advocacy Tasmania has made clear, that is too long to wait. There is too much at risk for action not to be taken now.

I encourage the Government to look at the things that Advocacy Tasmania is calling for, including urgently implementing a streamlined and fair process that allows for the review of people already in the system, embedding a human rights principle approach for updating decisions, and, importantly, removing the gag provisions that stop people talking about their own cases and their own stories.

Mr Speaker, without a complete overhaul of this broken system, the culture that pervades that system will not change.

Time expired.

SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY - Junior Sports Program

Glenorchy Basketball Association - Good Sports Awards National Club of the Year

[6.06 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Sport and Recreation) - Mr Speaker, sport is an important part of many young Tasmanians' lives. It has benefits not only for physical health and fitness, but also provides valuable social opportunities, like being part of a team. These social aspects can also play a big part in helping athletes to manage their mental health and social wellbeing. Sport, particularly team-based sport, can have many positive impacts on a young person's life, including improving resilience, enhancing social development and encouraging social connectedness.

I was fortunate to recently attend the launch of SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY's newest program, the Junior Sports program. As we know, prioritising mental health is so important in all aspects of life. This new program aims to provide the younger generation of Tasmanians with mental health awareness, and also the tools and strategies to help them deal with some of those internal struggles. Importantly, the program will be a free offering to junior sporting teams around the state, to help our young athletes recognise and manage the pressures that come with playing sport.

I commend Mitch and his team for the amazing work they have done to promote awareness around mental health. I have heard first hand from sporting clubs who have benefited from the SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY sports program, and I am sure the Junior Sports Program will be just as successful.

In my inaugural speech in this place, I made the commitment that any time I had the opportunity to stand here and talk about mental health awareness and removing the stigma around it I would, because it is so important as leaders in our community that we do so any time we can. I was given the opportunity to speak briefly at the launch of the Junior Sports Program, and I made the point that this program would have been so beneficial to me as a kid.

It was no one person's fault, but I absolutely detested going to school, just hated it. The best day of my life was in year 12 when I left school for the last time and did not have to go back. But sport was where I felt comfortable as a kid. It was where I felt safest, where I felt most confident in myself.

At the launch of the Junior Sports Program, I made the point that once I dealt with the issues I had in my mid-twenties, I was able to identify that I had been suffering from those problems since the age of probably 11 or 12, and if the Junior Sports Program had been in place, I actually think it would have benefited me enormously at that age in identifying those issues and working through them, perhaps saving me more than a decade of battling issues that I did not really understand.

I commend Mitch for the work he has done with this sports program, and I wish him all the best with it. I am sure the Junior Sports Program will be incredibly successful.

I also want to speak briefly about the importance of sporting clubs, and extend a big congratulations to the Glenorchy Basketball Association for recently being crowned the Good Sports Awards National Club of the Year. This great club was awarded the honour for inspiring positive culture change and building a healthy and more family-friendly club environment where everyone feels welcome. Clubs like the Glenorchy Basketball Association are vital in encouraging young Tasmanians to lead active and healthy lifestyles. Our Government recognised the power of sport and the role that local clubs play in engaging people from all parts of the community and fostering community connections by providing places to be social, active and develop skills and values. We want more Tasmanians to get active and dream big, no matter where they live, what their age or their circumstances. We are investing significantly into the state's sport and recreation sector to make this possible.

I can assure this place that we are working hard to get more young Tasmanians moving into sport and one of my key priorities as minister for Sport and Recreation is increasing participation at the grassroots and community level. We believe that every Tasmanian deserves to lead an active and healthy lifestyle and we will do everything we can to encourage and support them to achieve this.

Tasmanian Greens - Fiftieth Anniversary

[6.10 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, happy birthday to the Tasmanian Greens. Fifty years ago, on this day a group of people met in Hobart's Town Hall, 23 March 1972, two days after the writs were issued for the state election to be held only four weeks later on 22 April. The United Tasmania Group, the world's first Green Party was formed to contest that election. Centre Party, Kevin Lyons had resigned as deputy premier leaving the Liberal Bethune government without a majority and forcing an election.

In the chaotic politics that followed the late and wonderful Green, Dick Jones, saw there was a great opportunity. In a rowdy meeting at the Town Hall where the shouts of Hydro workers were trying to drown out the people who were there to stand up for a beautiful drowned, drowning lake. This motion was passed:

In order that there is a maximum usage of a unique political opportunity to save Lake Pedder - now an issue of national and global concern - and to implement a national well-researched conservation plan for the state of Tasmania, there be formed a single independent coalition of primarily conservation orientated candidates and their supporters.

That was the beginning of the United Tasmania Group, the Tasmanian Greens, the Australian Greens and the global Greens which are now in 90 countries around the world. We are in government, currently, in six European countries: Germany, Ireland, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Finland and in New Zealand. We are part now of a global Greens network and it all began here on this beautiful little green heart-shaped island at the bottom of the world. It began with the campaign to save Lake Pedder from flooding by the Hydro Electric Commission. History tells us, and we know this, that that campaign to save Lake Pedder was temporarily lost.

The assaults on nature and particularly on this beautiful island are relentless and the next campaign in the early 1980s was the fight to save the mighty Franklin River and we won that fight. A consequence of that was that a shy young doctor, who was launched onto the national stage in a campaign to save Lake Pedder, found himself here: Dr Bob Brown, elected to the Tasmanian parliament in 1983 as the member for Denison.

In 1989 Dr Bob Brown was joined in this place by other champions for Tasmania, Christine Milne, Gerry Bates, Lance Armstrong and Di Hollister. They went into an accord government with Michael Field and the consequence of that government was that we had the balance of power in Green hands for the first time in history. Logging ended in the national estate, the woodchip quota was slashed, forests were saved, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was extended and Freedom of Information laws were enacted. Like all unhappy marriages, it did come to an early end. Rest in peace.

In 1992, all five Greens members of parliament were re-elected to this place by Tasmanians who wanted something better, something greener, something fairer for their island home. Five Green independents became the five Green Party MPs. Bob went off to the Senate and Peg Putt was elected into this place on a countback.

Another really important period in Tasmanian political history was in the Rundle minority government in which the Greens campaigned hard for forests, secured gun law reform, gay law reform and an apology to the Stolen Generations. As we know, naked fear and self-interest saw the major parties collude to cut the numbers in this place from 35 to 25.

We were also in government, implementing Greens' policies and standing up for Green values between 2010 and 2014. There were two Greens ministers in a cabinet of nine. It was not exactly what you would call a joyful marriage but we made things happen.

We knocked off the Tarkine Link Road, which at that time was not supported by the Liberal opposition. We delivered a massive rollout of free energy-efficiency house upgrades to low-income Tasmanians and thousands of new affordable energy-efficient homes. We built twice as many new homes in four years as the Liberals have in seven. We restored TasTAFE, implemented an Aboriginal dual-naming policy for lutruwita/Tasmania, and delivered the first elder abuse prevention plan that Tasmania had seen.

We also made sure that Tasmania had working with vulnerable people registration. We commissioned Australia's first forest carbon study, confirming the priceless carbon stores in the native forests of which we are all custodians, and some of us take it more seriously than others. We drove a ban in this parliament on lightweight plastic bags. We helped to ensure 170 000 hectares in the Southern Forests, Florentine, Nevada Plains, the Western Tiers and the Mount Field National Park were added to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

We helped to get the loggers out of 570 000 hectares of iconic battleground carbon-rich forests. They remain outside those forests to this day. These are forests that the Greens have fought long to defend and we will never give up on wild Tasmania, and we will never give up on those beautiful forests. It becomes even more important in a time of climate emergency that you have Greens in this place campaigning to see those carbon reserves protected for current and future generations.

We had a lovely party at Town Hall on Saturday night. Bob Brown was there, Christine Milne, Peg Putt, Di Hollister, Jerry Bates, Nick McKim, Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Rosalie and me, and we were joined by hundreds of loyal Greens supporters. We were joined by some of those who were part of the original United Tasmania group.

The take-home message from that night was: we have been here for 50 years, we will be here for another 50 years, and thereafter, because this is the green century, and now more than ever, you need to have good, strong Greens underpinned by a set of values in parliaments.

Burnie Court Complex

[6.18pm]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak about the announcement today made by the Government about the Burnie court and the decision to move to an expressions of interest process over the course of the next three months to look at sites which can be utilised in the Burnie CBD.

From the outset, I put on the record my thanks and congratulations to the community members who have advocated so strongly against this flawed proposal that everybody in the community thought was a stupid idea. I congratulate the business community, who really felt that Liberal Government had turned their back on them, particularly when we know that 50 000 people each year use the court complex in Burnie. That will have a devastating and significant impact on the Burnie CBD.

It is pleasing after many years that the Government has decided to listen to the community, to meet with them last week, even if they did not hold a community meeting. I look forward to them doing that in the future as they look to what sites are possible within the CBD. I understand that there are a number of possible sites. I want to put on the record that I hope the Government is genuine in this and at the end of that three-month period, they do work with the business community and council to ensure that the Burnie court complex stays in the Burnie CBD. The Burnie community got a win today. The Government needs to act in good faith, uphold that win, and ensure the court complex does not move outside the CBD.

I know the timing of this is around a federal election. Of course, this enables a deep breath to be taken, a pause on this project. I strongly encourage the Government that this not

to be just about putting a pause on it for now and undertaking some consultation because you have not done that before, but in fact undertaking authentic process looking at all the solutions and possibilities that there are within the CBD. The facts are that no-one disputes that the current court complex is not fit for purpose. There is no doubt that the Burnie CBD requires revitalization. I have said in this place before, the Government should be working more closely with regional cities, towns and communities to increase vibrancy within their CBDs.

This Government supported the move of the University of Tasmania from Mooreville Road closer to the CBD to increase the vibrancy and for economic stimulus in and around the Burnie CBD. It was ironic that they would then take a \$40 million development, which blew out from \$15 million, and develop that in the suburbs where it is not wanted. Importantly it took away vital economic stimulus from the Burnie CBD.

Mr Ellis today delivered his Dorothy Dixier about the court. Let us not forget that he endorsed the proposal, the public works. He was not there in person. I hope that your commitment to this, Mr Ellis, has grown over time and that after meeting with people last week you really do see the importance of continuing to work with the Burnie community. I will be working very closely with them. The announcement today of this proposal is not the end.

I congratulate the community. They have done an amazing job and they will continue to do that, I have confidence in that. I will support them through every part of their continued campaigning to keep the court in the Burnie CBD. I encourage the Liberals to be genuine in their consultation process and expression of interest process. I would even ask them to state that they are going to move away from the Mooreville Road complex in its entirety. They have not done that yet.

Today is a win for the community. Let us see if that win is upheld in good faith by the Government. I look forward to a positive announcement for the Burnie CBD and access to justice across the north west coast.

Amos Family - Bicentenary

[6.22 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, on Saturday I was honoured to attend the bicentenary of the Amos family, held at Cranbrook at four different sites: Glen Gala, Gala Kirk, Gala Estate and Cranbrook House.

The Amos family emigrated from Scotland and set foot in Hobart Town on 17 March 1821. More than 400 people attended the event, including 250 people from interstate and nine from New Zealand. They found accommodation in Cranbrook, frequented the restaurants in Swansea and different sightseeing adventures, so it was a really good influx of tourists to the area. More Amos descendants could have attended but there were people who could not get there due to floods. Jules' brother could not get there due to flooding in Lismore.

It was a unique gathering of the Amos family and friends to celebrate the arrival of the two brothers 200 years ago. There was a moving tribute to the pardedarmerne people undertaken by Julian Amos. Dewayne Everett-Smith was meant to attend but he was a close contact so he was not able to attend. It was very heartfelt, very respectful. That was a tribute and a welcome done on behalf of Dewayne.

There was an exceptional speech made by Kate Warner reflecting on the value of family and the human need for connection. Kate unveiled a cairn which was draped with an Aboriginal flag and a Scottish flag. The names of many different descendants were placed in paving stones in a kind of moving motion towards that cairn symbolising the people leaving Scotland and their journey then out to Tasmania and their movements. It was really nicely done; nothing too glitchy and tacky. It was really simple but really nicely done.

There were some fascinating history sessions throughout the afternoon, interspersed with light musical entertainment and lots of wine. It was a story that resonated because it was a microcosm of the broader Australian story. That is what kept coming through with these 400 plus descendants - of immigrants emigrating from a land far away to make a new life and the promise of that new life here and the history of what they went through around Cranbrook. It was 200 years ago and it was extremely remote. A lot of those family members endured hardship. There were some successes and there was also some absolute tragedy.

The catering was excellent. Most of the people there expressed their joy at how well it was organised. There was a really lovely feel to the whole event.

I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to such a memorable event and also thank the East Coast Heritage Museum in Swansea, which put on a special display of the family memorabilia. It was a very special event for the east coast of Tasmania.

Public Works Committee - Absence of Mr Ellis at Meeting in Burnie

[6.27 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I will be brief tonight. Many people, including Ms Dow, know that I was lucky to have a baby during the COVID-19 period.

Like many families, we have been separated for quite some time from our families who are on the mainland. In the process, I know a lot of parents and grandparents have not met their grandchildren or had the opportunity to introduce their children to their grandparents. With the announcement that Tasmania was opening up its borders to the rest of the country, we knew that Western Australia would probably close their borders so we made the decision to introduce little William to his grandparents in Western Australia, knowing that it would probably be months and months before we would get that opportunity.

I know politics is a lot of backwards and forwards. I have a thick skin, I know that. We made the decision to be with William's grandparents on 13 December when the Public Works Committee hearing met in Burnie every day of the week. I know that a lot of parents around the place would do a similar thing. I have spent a lot of time talking to the community in Burnie about the Burnie Court and consulting. I was there last week and have read every scrap of paper that has been written about it and submitted, unlike other people in this place.

I want to put it on the record because it is an important thing that families get to see each other and that there are ways that we can contribute. There are a lot of people who are very involved with the Burnie Court processes including local residents, council members and others who I know have not been able to make some of those meetings themselves. In speaking with them, they are pretty understanding.

I am not a sob story, but seeing as it has gained some interest I would like the opportunity to put that on the record that this job is one that we have to work around families and it is very important that we, as members, are understanding of that as well.

Business Excellence Awards
Dormition of the Theotokos - Greek Orthodox Service
House of Guidance - Mosque in Kings Meadows
Respectfulness in the Workplace

[6.30 p.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. I need to recognise a couple important events that have happened in Launceston. One was that I had the opportunity to participate at the Business Excellence Awards, organised by the Launceston Chamber of Commerce and Spirit Super. The executive officer, Will Cassidy, and his team did a brilliant job. It was amazing to see so many businesses there, young entrepreneurs, and looking at the people who received awards that evening. It was amazing to hear how innovative they were and how much vibrancy they brought to the community and how enthusiastic they were, a true example of business resilience. That was a fantastic night. Congratulations to everyone who won an award that night, but also to those who put their name forward to be considered, as well as to the Launceston Chamber of Commerce, Spirit Super, and their team.

Another event I attended on Saturday got me thinking about inclusion and being inclusive and mindful of how diverse a society we are. We are so diverse, not just in our thinking and beliefs, but also in our spiritual faith and everything we do. I had the opportunity to participate in the service at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in South Launceston where Bishop Bartholomew of Charioupolis, who was the Archiepiscopal Vicar of Canberra, was visiting Tasmania on behalf of the Archbishop Makarios of Australia. The Bishop Bartholomew of Charioupolis also met with the Premier on Friday. I was overwhelmed and blessed by the warm welcome and generosity of the community there. Everyone was so welcoming.

It was interesting to see that there were many people from the Greek community in Hobart who travelled especially for the occasion. The church was packed. There were not just people from the Greek community, but also quite a good number from the Eritrean community. Many people from various continents, including me, were there and participated in the service.

I also noted that on Friday 19 March there was a new mosque opened in Kings Meadows in Launceston called the House of Guidance.

It is important to note that we are a diverse society. That includes faith. For some people, faith is very important, and we need to respect that. We also need to respect that when we have our discourse and dialogue in the House here, if we talk about the House as being a workplace, workplace safety comes in different forms. It is not just physical safety, it is also mental and spiritual. If we look at the definition of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in the workplace, that comes in different forms.

The events I participated in and attended on Saturday, as well as reading about the new mosque, made me think that we are a diverse society. That diversity comes not just in

physicality, gender, the way we speak, the way we talk, the way we walk, it comes in different forms. It is important to remember that any workplace should respect these things.

The House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.