



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 10 November 2020

REVISED EDITION

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

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

End of Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill - Proposed Legislation

[10.02 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Madam Speaker, the issue of whether to give terminally ill people the legal right to end their life - and under what circumstances - should be handled with the utmost care and compassion. The member for Mersey, Mike Gaffney's private member's bill, End of Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying), will have its third reading today in the upper House. Without reflecting on that process, should it pass a third reading today it will arrive in this place this week - possibly later today.

The responsibility for this legislation passing into law will rest with this House, and that is a responsibility that places considerable weight on all members in this place. Should this legislation become law, it is incumbent on all of us to ensure it is the best law possible and affords real protections for the most vulnerable in our community.

I have given this matter considerable thought, and have spoken in recent days with the Leaders of the two Opposition parties and also with the Independent member for Clark about the approach I will outline to the House this morning. I have also spoken this morning with Mr Gaffney and outlined the Government's approach to debate on this bill.

It is our intention that the legislation will be brought on for debate this year at the end of the Budget session, and the House will proceed with the second reading debate on 3 December. To provide an opportunity for all members to contribute and express their intent on the legislation, the second reading debate will occur before parliament rises this year and the parliament will sit an additional day on Friday 4 December to enable that to occur. Should the bill pass its second reading in the lower House, and to ensure sufficient time is provided through the Committee stage, with the agreement of this House the bill will become the first order of business for this House when parliament resumes in late February or early March next year.

In the intervening period, so that all members can be fully informed on the bill, which has had a number of amendments in the other place, Government agencies will be tasked with providing advice on the implementation of the bill - not the policy intent. This information will be provided to all members prior to the committee stage.

Just as other jurisdictions have utilised independent processes to ensure such legislation is the most robust it can be, I have requested the University of Tasmania to establish an independent review panel to consider the amended legislation, and provide their views on how the legislation compares to similar laws in other states and around the world, focusing on the protections in place for the most vulnerable in our society. I have also requested UTAS to provide a view from the review panel in terms of end of life considerations such as palliative

care and advance care directives related to our current framework, and what other steps could be considered prior to the legislation taking effect should it pass this place.

The UTAS process will remain independent of Government. However, I have requested that the review panel include experts in law, health and the social sciences and related fields. I anticipate the review panel will provide its findings for all members of parliament in late February next year. It is the Government's intention that the Committee stage of the bill will commence shortly thereafter as the first order of business upon the resumption of parliament, subject to the agreement of this House.

It will be up to UTAS to manage its own processes. However, I also expect that, since the bill was amended during its passage in the upper House, key stakeholders should be able to make submissions to that process now the legislation is being presented in its final form to this House.

It is not the Government's intention to delay implementation of the legislation by postponing it to the Committee stage to early next year. As members would be aware, the upper House amended this bill to extend the time for implementation of the legislation from 12 months to 18 months. It is my intention that, should the bill pass its second reading in this place early next month, an amendment to the bill be moved that the effective start date for the 18-month period be the passing of the bill through the second reading, should that occur.

It is the Government's intention to ensure that if this bill passes that Tasmania will have the most robust laws possible. I hope that the steps outlined today will provide all members with the opportunity for a more informed and considered debate on this significant and complex issue.

Liberal members, as previously announced, will be afforded a conscience vote on the legislation. I urge all members of the House to take a respectful approach to all views that will be shared through this important debate.

[10.06 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and thank everyone who has contributed to the debate on this matter so far. Overwhelmingly, it has been respectful and thoughtful. I particularly recognise the work of Mike Gaffney and members in the other place for their efforts to debate the bill. The topic of voluntary assisted dying is intensely personal, and I pay tribute to everyone who has shared their own story and made time to contact MPs to convey their views on this bill.

I am disappointed, and the Labor Party is disappointed, that we will not be able to finalise this bill and pass it this year. It was our hope and expectation that we would be able to. I appreciate and thank the Premier for the call that he made late yesterday to update me on the announcement that he has now publicly made. Having discussed the matters with my colleagues this morning, we are of the view that the delay in finalising this bill will cause unnecessary hurt and confusion for those across our community who are desperate to see laws passed. I apologise to them that the parliament will not be able to finalise voluntary assisted dying laws this year.

To Jac, Nat and to countless others who have been at the forefront of this campaign, I am sorry there will be no final outcome this year. However, these laws will pass because the time has come for us to respect the wishes of people to make their own choice about how they end their life with dignity and in peace.

[10.07 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that the Premier has put a lot of thought into how the House will deal with this complex but necessary legislative reform, and I appreciate the conversation we have had. I share the frustration and the sadness of those many Tasmanians who have been advocating for this reform for such a long time.

There are many in this House who would prefer that the legislation was debated and passed this year, but we understand that is not possible. I also apologise to all those people who have worked so hard, including Jack and Nat and Mike Gaffney, that the passage of this bill will be delayed.

This is a necessary and compassionate reform to our legal system. For those members who watched the upper House debate, we recognise that members of the upper House applied themselves to this debate with great thought and care, and went through the legislation rigorously and made a series of amendments - only a small handful of which are substantive in regard to the effect they will have on the bill's implementation.

When we see the amended bill, either later today or this week, members of the House of Assembly will have an opportunity, for the first time, to see the amended bill as a whole. We will then have the best part of a month to five weeks to go through that legislation while we are doing the rest of our work, and to make sure that when we come back in here to debate the second reading speech, we are ready and that we put the people of Tasmania first in our contributions. I believe that the legislation will pass. I believe it will be a new day in Tasmania. Victoria and Western Australia already have voluntary assisted dying schemes in place. Queensland is moving down this path. Increasingly, people recognise that this is a necessary reform and that it comes from a place of deep, deep compassion and respect for human dignity and autonomy.

Dr Woodruff and I look forward to this debate and to casting our votes for a safe legal framework for voluntary assisted dying in Tasmania.

[10.10 a.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I thank the Premier, as I believe he has chosen a very pragmatic way forward. This is an issue of the deepest importance to many people in this Chamber. I, too, would like to express my view that the Legislative Council has done a power of work. I suspect the community mood has been exemplified during that debate.

To my understanding, Premier, the proposal that you have for the process and the way forward does not affect the start date. That was maybe misunderstood. My understanding is that these two things will happen in parallel. I support the review. It is really important in this place where we do have voices that may not be in the majority at all times, we need to be able to come to the table in an independent way. I support that. We all have the deepest compassion

and care for everybody who is going through end of life. In the last couple of weeks I have had the experience of one of my relatives dying, so it is top of mind for me right now.

It is essential as a diligent Government, as a diligent parliament, that a proper consultation process happens. It is acceptable that that happens in parallel with other moves. All perspectives are welcome at the table of government and at the table of democracy. All voices ought to be able to be heard fairly. That is the trajectory we are on here, so, I thank you, Premier.

QUESTIONS

Small Business Hardship Grant - Publication of Recipients

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.12 a.m.]

The Public Accounts Committee has made it clear that it believes that a list of recipients of the \$26 million Small Business Hardship Grant should be released publicly. The chair of the Public Accounts Committee, Ivan Dean, has made it clear this issue is not going away. He said -

The committee is of the position that the information should be provided publicly. If that does not occur the committee will obviously consider the response received from the minister and we would have further discussions on where we would go from there.

The only advice you are relying on to avoid releasing the information is from the very department that administered the scheme - the same scheme that has been roundly criticised as being unfair, confusing and inconsistent. Premier, what are you trying to hide?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I reject the assertion in that question from the Leader of the Opposition. As a starting point, the secretary of the Department of State Growth, Mr Kim Evans, was interviewed and publicly stated -

We have got businesses, many of whom are still under stress, some of whom, sadly, are suffering from mental health issues and to aid their recovery I don't believe it is in the public interest to have their details published. That is different from having the operations of these schemes fully scrutinised appropriately by the relevant bodies.

These schemes can be scrutinised fully by the relevant bodies. The Public Accounts Committee has all the details. The Auditor-General is reviewing that process. It appears that those on the other side want to release a list and allow a public shaming to occur of businesses, to pit small businesses against each other, to pit Tasmanians against each other. The Public Accounts Committee has that information and they can go through it chapter and verse. In fact, they had more information than what I had seen on this.

Mr O'Byrne - That is not the point.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point is you want to put small businesses under the microscope. You want to pit small businesses against each other at a time when these businesses have had to face the most difficult of circumstances, the most horrific of circumstances, where their livelihoods were taken away from them as the result of the need to deal with a pandemic.

The Public Accounts Committee has that information. I cannot understand why they want to push that into the public domain and publicly shame businesses -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - The advice is very clear from the secretary of the department. I will finish where I started. The secretary has said that we have businesses, many of whom are still under stress, some of whom, sadly, are suffering from mental health issues -

Ms O'Connor - He is not a mental health expert.

Mr GUTWEIN - You have no qualifications in terms of mental health, but even you can tell when you are talking to a business that is under stress. I am certain of that. I am certain that even you would be able to form a view as to whether a business is under stress.

Let me finish where I was going to. We have businesses, many of whom are still under stress, some of whom, sadly, are suffering from mental health issues to aid their recovery. I do not believe it is in the public interest to have their details published. That is what the secretary has said and I have accepted that advice.

Small Business Hardship Grant - Publication of Recipients

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.17 a.m.]

The secrecy surrounding the small business hardship grants program is unnecessary. It stinks. You have made what should have been a routine disclosure into something controversial. Former Liberal chief of staff, Brad Stansfield, has called you out. He said -

There is, of course, absolutely no good reason why this information should not be released. In fact, it is standard practice.

The editor of the *Mercury*, Jenna Cairney, was even more scathing -

The Tasmanian Government has a well-documented problem with transparency. Whether it is electoral donations, Right to Information requests, or in the latest case, the recipients of business grants, the default position is always secrecy.

You have implied that there is some shame in businesses applying for assistance when it is clear that no-one is begrudging businesses receiving support in the middle of a pandemic. Why have you unfairly dragged all recipients of the Small Business Hardship Grant program through the mud simply to avoid scrutiny of your Government's decisions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. Again, she raises the issue of secrecy. The shadow treasurer has the information. The member raises Brad Stansfield - I hardly ever listened to him when he was here anyway -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - I am hardly going to take his advice from the stands now. He is not in this. He is sitting in the stands. He is not out in the arena.

The Auditor-General is reviewing this. The Public Accounts Committee has been provided with the information. We have been transparent. They have the list. The Auditor-General is going through these processes. Under the Financial Management Act we have met our obligations under the law. I have been provided with advice that it may not be in the best interests of people to release this information. I take my position responsibly. I try to act as responsibly as I possibly can, and on the basis of that advice that it would not be in the best interest to release that list widely, I have taken and accepted that advice.

As I have said, we have provided that information to the Public Accounts Committee, who can pore over that and form their own view. If they form a view -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, this is most unchivalrous.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, if the Public Accounts Committee forms a view that there are matters that need to be further explored, there are other mechanisms available to them. Their default position is that they want to release it publicly and we have been advised that that would not be in the best interests of some of those businesses. We have accepted that advice.

I say to members: allow the processes to go ahead. If the PAC believes there has been some form of maladministration or malfeasance or some other issue, they can use the processes available to them, but do not sit there when you have the list and your default position is simply to play politics with it and release this publicly when we have heard that this may not be in the best interests of businesses.

Launceston General Hospital - Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse Claims

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.22 a.m.]

Parents, former patients and staff at the Launceston General Hospital are still struggling to come to the terms with the news that six sick children were sexually abused for nearly two decades by a male nurse. My office has been contacted by deeply concerned current and former staff, worried a pervasive culture of blame-shifting is preventing uncovering how our health system failed young children and enabled this abuser's behaviour to continue.

Your independent investigation has limited terms of reference. It only examines THS systems and does not go to hospital culture or individual actions or cases, which does nothing to allay their concerns. This abuse being investigated occurred over 18 years at the LGH but the man in question was also employed at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, on the *Spirits of Tasmania* and was a long-time volunteer for the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association.

There is evidence of prior complaints made about this individual that went nowhere. As Emily Shepherd from the ANMF said:

We have to get everything out in the opening. That is what is owed to those who may have suffered abuse or who have fears for those they love. We must make sure this can never happen again.

Will you listen to the ANMF and your staff at the LGH and establish a commission of inquiry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question on what is a very serious matter and I know that all members in the House share my absolute concern around this and particularly around the allegations that have been raised.

I want to be very clear that the safety of children in our care is our absolute priority. We have announced that an independent investigation will be commissioned and we are going to ensure that this occurs appropriately.

The charges laid and the allegations that have been made in various forums against the deceased former nurse are abhorrent and we have acknowledged the community's very serious concern about this matter. We have finalised and released the terms of reference for the independent investigation and the outcomes will be released to the public.

Maree Norton has been appointed to undertake this important work. She has strong experience across a range of legal areas and the Department of Justice will provide administrative support for the conduct of the investigation. The terms of reference are now available on the Department of Justice's website and details regarding how members of the public will be able to provide information to the investigation will be outlined shortly.

We know this is a very difficult time for many in our community and in the Launceston region in particular. We are committed to supporting anyone who comes forward with information and the Government will take any necessary action. I can assure the Tasmanian

community and members of this parliament that the Government is committed to ensuring the independent investigation is fully empowered to examine all and any matters relating to this issue.

I have given my assurance to the ANMF that the terms of reference are designed to capture a broad scope of investigation. The terms specifically say the investigation will address any other matter relevant to the systems of Tasmanian government agencies deployed in responses to historical allegations of child sexual abuse and that the investigator identifies in the course of this investigation as warranting investigation and discussion.

These terms were developed in consultation with the secretary of DPAC and the secretary of Justice and included legal advice as well as engagement with the investigator. The investigation is being handled at arm's length from Government and the investigator will be empowered to conduct their investigation as they see fit. We are committed to getting this right and we are taking these matters extremely seriously. Importantly, the outcomes of this investigation will be released to the public.

The secretary of the Department of Health, the Premier and I have all been resolute in our commitment that these matters are brought to light. Anybody with information continues to be actively encouraged to come forward and people will be supported to provide information to the investigation. If there is any evidence of criminal behaviour uncovered during the course of the investigation, these will be referred to the police or any other body necessary. The independent investigation will be fully empowered to recommend any appropriate next steps.

In the question from the member she referred to comments made this morning by Ms Shepherd around the fact that we should never have this happen again and I think all members in this place will join me. I remain absolutely committed to this. I remain committed to the members of the Launceston community, the current staff, the current patients, the former staff and the former patients. I look forward to this inquiry being fully investigated so our community can have comfort about the safety of our children.

COVID-19 - Business Recovery and Job Creation

Mr TUCKER question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.28 a.m.]

Can you please outline to the House why it is important to support Tasmanian businesses to help create jobs, rebuild confidence and to help our community to recover from the impacts of the pandemic?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker for his question and his interest in this very important matter. The pandemic has had an immense impact on our way of life and our community. It has also had an impact on our economy, but we are in a good place. We have every reason to be optimistic about our future as we work to rebuild and seize the opportunities ahead.

The recent CommSec state of the state report for the third report in a row ranked Tasmania as the best performing economy in the nation. Tasmania came out on top in five of

those economic indicators and had the highest growth on a decade average for population, equipment investment, housing finance, dwelling starts and retail trade. Population growth was up 89 per cent, home loans up 75 per cent, retail spending up 11.4 per cent, dwelling start-ups 9.5 per cent, and equipment investment up 15.2 per cent on the decade average. There are more Tasmanians employed right now than this time last year - one of just two jurisdictions in the country to have that level of employment growth.

This report is proof that because we entered the pandemic from a position of strength, with one of the strongest economies in the country and no net debt, we were able to deliver the largest economic and social support package in the nation as a proportion of our economy at well over \$1 billion. Our support has worked. It has helped to sustain our economy. Our plan to rebuild is delivering results. Building approvals grew 18.8 per cent and construction loans increased 21.9 per cent in September. Home loans are 35.5 per cent higher and retail trade is up over 14 per cent, again higher than September last year.

We have plans to do more, such as 2300 more homes as part of our \$3.1 billion construction blitz to rebuild the state. We are also working with the federal government. I have spoken with the federal Treasurer and recently written to the federal government to encourage it to extend the very successful HomeBuilder program beyond 31 December 2020. My leader provided advice that should the Australian Government extend that program, then the Tasmanian Government would also extend the Tasmanian HomeBuilder grant for the corresponding period. This would enable the crucial support this program provides to the Tasmanian construction industry to strengthen the Tasmanian economy and support jobs on an ongoing basis.

We are committed to continuing this record of growing jobs, growing our economy and providing businesses with certainty and confidence that they need to grow, hire and train workers. They are the lifeblood of our recovery.

This week's Budget will include an investment of over \$22 million to significantly boost jobs for apprentices, trainees and youth employees. We will extend the current payroll tax rebate for all youth employees for a further 18 months. We will extend the current payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees for a further 12 months.

We will extend both rebates to all industry sectors. We will extend the Targeted Apprentice and Trainee Grant for Small Business to any small business who employs an apprentice or a trainee until 30 June 2022. These programs are already supporting nearly 4000 apprentices, trainees and youth employees. With these measures, we expect that they will support a further 4000.

We entered the pandemic from a position of strength - nothing could be more true - a strong economy and a strong budget position. Now is the time to use that strength, to use our strong balance sheet as an economic stabiliser and as an economic driver, to provide as many Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses with the support they need to regain their lives and their livelihoods. Now is not the time to take a step backwards.

On Thursday, Tasmanians can expect a budget for our times. It will underpin and generate jobs and provide the certainty and confidence that our community needs. It is how we will recover and reinvigorate our economy while we rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

It would be remiss of me, once again, not to call on the Opposition to release an alternative budget this week: not some form of alternative that is linked to some form of glossy brochure with some jobs in it. Release an alternative budget.

I am certain the Greens will do one. Kooky as it will be, at least they have the courage of their convictions to explain to the Tasmanian people what they stand for, and importantly how they would pay for it. Labor has that opportunity this week. I hope that the shadow treasurer does not, once again, squib that opportunity.

COVID-19 - Access to Vaccines

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.33 a.m.]

The coronavirus has ravaged our planet and it continues to rage in many hot spots around the globe. As we cautiously open our borders, our minds are now turning to what comes next. Global medical experts have hailed a dramatic coronavirus breakthrough today, predicting normal life may return by Easter. Pfizer has announced its vaccine was more than 90 per cent effective, wildly exceeding initial expectations.

Every Tasmanian, no matter what their economic circumstance, should have access to the vaccine. This will be the largest global inoculation program since polio. People are asking what arrangements are in place to ensure that Tasmania is prioritised. Tasmania has an older demographic. All the actions your Government has taken to date have been to prioritise the health and safety of Tasmanians.

Have you spoken to the Prime Minister to ensure that older Tasmanians will be prioritised in accessing the vaccine? I ask the question of you because it has some budgetary implications but if you wish to ask one of your other ministers to answer it, I am very comfortable with that as well.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the independent member for Clark for her question and her interest in this.

Let me start with our older generation. The Prime Minister is aware of the vulnerabilities that Tasmania has. Throughout my engagement with National Cabinet I have made it clear that our first thought has been to protect those most vulnerable. We have an older and more vulnerable population than any other jurisdiction in this country. That was the reason we took strong action early. That is the reason that we were the first to move on cruise ships. That was the reason we were the first state to put in place border restrictions, quickly followed by other jurisdictions around the country. Australia, if it were a ship, has a range of watertight compartments that state premiers and first ministers decided they could tightly wrap up and ensure their communities were safe. They were the actions we took. We led the country with that.

Regarding the roll out of the vaccine, what is positive is that on almost a daily basis we are hearing more positive news about the vaccine. The formal advice I have received is that

we should have a vaccine available within the first quarter of next year. A point I have made in discussions at a national level is that Tasmania has a good reputation for rolling out vaccines. The vast majority of our population accepts vaccination. We have a very low level of anti-vaxxers. We have demonstrated with flu vaccines in the past that we can mobilise quickly and that we can roll vaccines out.

We will work with the Australian Government in steps they have taken and the arrangements they have put in place with a number of providers. We are not just backing one horse in this race. As soon as a vaccine is ready, the state will be ready to roll that vaccine out quickly, targeting where we can those most vulnerable but ensuring that we get a wide coverage across the state as quickly as possible.

COVID-19 - International Arrivals and Quarantine Program

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.37 a.m.]

The Prime Minister has told Tasmanians that we need to accept our fair share of international arrivals leaving destinations around the world to come home in the wake of COVID-19. Tasmanians are demanding transparency from the Government about what this arrangement means and how prepared the state is to deal with potential COVID-19 positive cases. Have you received any advice about the percentage of these arrivals who will likely be COVID-19 positive?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. The Prime Minister has told the state nothing. What I have said publicly over the past couple of months is that Tasmania will always do its bit for the country. In the same way that we would not turn our back on Tasmanians when we locked our borders early on in the piece, we will not turn our back on helping Australians, some of whom will be Tasmanians, returning from some desperate circumstances around the world.

At a national level with international visitors coming back, the level of infection has been around 3 per cent. Steps have been put in place to ensure that number is driven down as low as possible. Any international visitor that comes back on a mercy flight must have a COVID-19 test before they get on that flight. They are also provided with a medical review, as I understand it, before they get on the flight.

We have run a successful quarantine program in Tasmania. Communities Tas has managed that program exemplarily. We will have the support of the ADF and police. They will manage quarantine in Tasmania. We will dot every 'i' and cross every 't' regarding best practice for these people.

I am not sure if the Leader of the Opposition supports us bringing Australians back home. I have said consistently, we will not turn our back on these people. They are in desperate circumstances. They are Australian citizens, many of whom have worked overseas on contract and their contracts have ended. They have had no opportunity to leave. Unfortunately, they

have found that in many countries, the social security systems provide them with no support at all.

I know the member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, has been dealing with a number of these people. Everyone boarding the plane will have a COVID-19 test - they must be negative. Everyone will have a health review before they board the plane. That will ensure the chances of a COVID-19 positive person being caught, is maximised, or being housed in our quarantine is limited as much as possible.

The update I received last night indicated there were, I think, 10 positive cases across the country. All of them were in hotel quarantine. All of them were returning travellers. There is a chance that we will see a COVID-19 test in one of our hotels. However, I am confident we have the systems in place to ensure we can manage those hotels appropriately, and to ensure we can manage those COVID-19 positive patients should they occur.

Budget 2020-21 - Mental Health System for Children and Adolescents

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.41 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the upcoming State Budget will deliver on the Government's commitment to develop a more user-friendly and integrated mental health system for children and adolescents?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin, Mr Street, for his question and his longstanding interest in this matter and other mental health issues.

The Government has a plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania, and that includes strengthening the essential services Tasmanians need and rely on. The 2020-2021 State Budget is focused on recovery, especially in our community, and we are committed to building a contemporary, integrated model of mental health care so our children and young people can receive more holistic support at the right place and time.

We acknowledge there are longstanding issues and gaps within our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), which is why we commissioned a review last year. That was part of the recommendations of the Southern Integration Mental Health Taskforce Report commenced under the previous Health minister, minister Ferguson.

We welcome reform to CAMHS, because young Tasmanians deserve nothing less than the best possible mental health supports and services. The review is key part of the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program and was undertaken by independent consultant Professor Brett McDermott. Professor McDermott has expertise in child and adolescent psychiatry and the development and delivery of contemporary CAMHS elsewhere in Australia.

I am now in receipt of the final review report, which has found that despite the best efforts of the dedicated and skilled CAMHS staff, the current system is overburdened and unable to

respond adequately to young Tasmanians with the most challenging and complex mental health needs. The system is inaccessible to those needing specialist care, inconsistent around the state, and needs significant, systemic and structural change, together with additional investment to align with contemporary practice.

I stress this is not a reflection on the hard work of the CAMHS staff. They have been hampered by barriers imposed on them over many years by a system that is not contemporary. The review makes seven recommendations:

- one statewide CAMHS service needs to be created;
- CAMHS's model of service needs to better reflect the Australian National Mental Health Strategy;
- CAMHS needs to embrace a range of model-of-care service reforms to make service delivery more efficient, contemporary and cost-effective;
- current CAMHS services should be appropriately funded, to provide best practice interventions for consumers with severe and complex needs - and in doing so providing stakeholders with the CAMHS expertise they require;
- reform of CAMHS should be supported by dedicated CAMHS management structures and workforce initiatives;
- mental health leadership strongly advocates for CAMHS community clinics to be provided with suitable accommodation; and
- reform of CAMHS should be supported by an increased CAMHS capacity and service development evaluation and research.

The Tasmanian Government accepts all the recommendations, and we are taking action now to begin implementing what is a long-term vision for CAMHS. The Government's response - which I will have more to say on later today - gives effect to the review recommendations, and captures the changes required to reorientate CAMHS. One example is improving mental health services for children in out of home care. We recognise the importance of a dedicated service response for children and young people in out of home care. My colleague, the Minister for Human Services, Roger Jaensch, is very supportive of this approach and I thank him for his advocacy in this important area.

We will establish the first, highly specialised, intensive mental health intervention and consultation service for children and young people on an interim or finalised child protection order.

I thank everyone involved in the review process. We are commencing this fundamental shift in the delivery of CAMHS straight away, with phase one of this long-term reform funded in Thursday's Budget.

COVID-19 - Health Screening at Tasmanian Ports of Entry

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.46 a.m.]

Tasmanians have made enormous sacrifices to achieve the enviable position that we are in today with no confirmed COVID-19 cases for months. Thousands of people have lost their jobs, businesses have gone to the wall and all Tasmanians have had to give up some freedoms. We are at a critical stage in our fight against the virus as we take the necessary step to re-open our borders to mainland states. On 19 October you reassured Tasmanians that appropriate systems were in place to screen people arriving in Tasmania. You said, and I quote -

On arrival at the airport or sea port terminal in Tasmania passengers will undergo health screening including temperature checks and questions regarding whether they have any symptoms.

Are temperature checks for passengers mandatory, and can you guarantee that all passengers entering Tasmania will be temperature checked?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. We take the situation with our borders very seriously. When I spoke with the Prime Minister on Saturday morning, I was very pleased to hear that although he had flown in on the VIP jet, he was temperature checked and health screened when he entered the airport.

Ms O'Connor - And we let him in anyway.

Mr GUTWEIN - We did let him in. It was very positive to have him here. I enjoyed working with Rob Pennicott on Saturday morning, and having that very authentic tourism operator in Tasmania spruik the best of Tasmania to the national media. It was fantastic.

Health screening at Tasmanian ports of entry commenced on 31 August. All travellers arriving in Tasmania have been asked to answer health symptom questions and have a temperature check as part of the COVID-19 measures. The health screening process includes the completion of an electronic form asking public health generated questions. Arriving passengers receive an SMS 24 hours prior to arrival to request they complete the electronic health screening form. Health screening is focused on passenger arrivals at Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, King Island and Flinders Island airports, and the *Spirit of Tasmania* terminal in Devonport. That is a standard protocol.

We have situations at the airport where essential travellers are coming in, but my understanding at this stage is that health screening is there for all passengers. If the Leader of the Opposition has an example of a person not being screened I would be pleased to hear it, because my expectation is that everyone would be screened.

Future Source of Energy Generation

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.50 a.m.]

As leader of our state and minister for such a critical portfolio, you have a responsibility to do everything you can to help secure a climate-safe future. This was never going to be easy, but it is the job you signed up for. Unfortunately, instead of transitioning away from climate destructive industries, it seems your Government is more interested in opening new ones. We already knew the Tasmanian Liberal Party supports a local thermal coal export industry, and now your Minister for Energy has made clear he wants to burn native forests for energy generation.

As you know, because we wrote to you with the detail, energy generation via biomass, such as native forest products, has been condemned by leading scientists for its 'massive climate effects'. Put simply, establishing forest furnaces in lutruwita/Tasmania would be a climate and biodiversity disaster.

Your Energy minister wants any excuse to tear down more native forests, but we do not think you agree with him on this one. No Climate Change minister serious about their portfolio would even contemplate burning native forests for energy, let alone condone it. Will you today pull your minister into line and rule out the burning of wood and other products from native forests as a future source of energy generation in lutruwita/Tasmania?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question and her interest in this matter. I believe she acknowledged, concerning climate change, our emissions and the position we have at the moment, that Tasmania is doing very well -

Ms O'Connor - Because of our forests.

Mr GUTWEIN - We can both agree that we are doing well - four years in a row with zero net emissions, going brilliantly.

Ms O'Connor - You can thank the Labor-Greens government for that - the Tasmanian Forest Agreement.

Mr GUTWEIN - We are going brilliantly and I am very proud to be the Climate Change minister for the jurisdiction in this country that is not only leading this country but is one of the world-leading climate change -

Ms O'Connor - What about biomass?

Mr GUTWEIN - jurisdictions in regard to actions.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. I am struggling to hear.

Mr GUTWEIN - I know we have a difference of opinion regarding the need for a native forest hardwood industry -

Ms O'Connor - Have you replied to the doctors yet? We're with the science.

Mr GUTWEIN - Regarding what you have suggested, you are completely wrong, completely off the page and the minister has recently written to you on this matter.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, he said 'wood waste' in that letter.

Mr GUTWEIN - Residues are a lot different from knocking over a native forest to put into, as you put it, 'the forest furnaces'. I can assure you that is not going to occur. It is simply more scaremongering from the Greens on this.

The Government has been consistent and we have always intended that renewable energy targets toward the TRET would be based on solar, water and wind. The harvesting of native forests specifically for renewable energy production is not part of the TRET. We announced publicly weeks ago, and I understand the member was briefed last week by the minister's office, and the minister wrote to you yesterday again to confirm that once more that what is in the TRET is solar, water and wind.

Ms O'Connor - Have you read the letter? Did you read it?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - To ensure that the Leader of the Greens and this parliament are comfortable with what we are proposing, we will be ensuring that any new renewable energy source to be declared by this Minister for Energy or a future minister for energy, will be through a disallowable instrument, giving the parliament -

Ms O'Connor - You're welcome. That was our proposal and good on you for accepting it.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - So we are on the same page on that one?

Ms O'Connor - About that, yes.

Mr GUTWEIN - We are on the same page. I am not sure what page we are not on on this.

Ms O'Connor - Rule out native forest biomass.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - I am not sure what page we are not on. On this side of the House we accept that we will have a native hardwood industry. You have done your best to make it a much smaller one than it was a few years ago, but at the end of the day it is an important industry that provides jobs for Tasmanians in what is a renewable industry.

I am not sure where the Leader of the Greens is going on this -

Ms O'Connor - We want you to rule it out.

Mr GUTWEIN - The reason I say that is because on so many issues the Greens have changed their view. They backed coal once. I remember when I was a boy Bob Brown was backing coal. They backed hydro but they are starting to go wobbly on that. Interestingly enough, they used to back wind farms. I can remember a certain Greens member in this place calling them parrot-blenders and working hard to shut them down. You will change your mind on matters when it suits you.

The Minister for Energy has made the Government's position perfectly clear to the Greens. Regarding any change to the TRET, which is focused on solar, water and wind, if there is to be any change in any new renewable energy source to be declared by the Minister for Energy, it is this parliament that will make that decision, whether it be this current Minister for Energy or a future one.

COVID-19 - Health Screening at Tasmanian Ports of Entry

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.56 a.m.]

You have had months to prepare for the safe reopening of Tasmania's borders. You are about to allow 450 from overseas to quarantine in Tasmania, along with a further 700 international fruit pickers. You have promised that every 'i' will be dotted and every 't' crossed to keep Tasmanians safe. However, Labor is aware that passengers on at least one flight from Melbourne to Launceston last week were not temperature checked on arrival. How can you expect Tasmanians to have confidence in the state's COVID-19 defences when holes are already emerging? Are temperature checks mandatory or not?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. If there was a flight last week where somebody got through without being temperature checked, why have you waited until today?

Ms White - Your office was told last week.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will need to check that, Madam Speaker.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - Very clearly our policy position is that anyone coming into Tasmania will have a temperature check and a health screen. If that has not occurred I will follow it up and get more information on it. At this stage it has not been brought to my attention. I am presuming if it was brought to the attention of my office it has been forwarded on to the Deputy State Controller, but I will follow it up and see where the matter is at.

Hospitality and Tourism Industry

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, HOSPITALITY and EVENTS, Ms COURTNEY

[10.58 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Government is working with industry to grow our skilled hospitality and tourism workforce, helping more Tasmanians to get jobs, boosting confidence and supporting our community?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question and particularly his interest in jobs in regional areas of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Government has a plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania, with the 2020-21 Budget set to create jobs, invest in our community and provide certainty and confidence for a better future. Our nation-leading tourism and hospitality was and still is one of our greatest competitive strengths and this Government is its strongest supporter.

Prior to COVID-19 industry growth, tourism and hospitality enterprises were already experiencing skills and labour shortages and while these challenges are not unique to Tasmania, it is critical that proactive strategies are put in place to increase both the supply and the retention of skilled labour.

It is clear that Tasmania's capacity to cater for our increased visitor numbers and deliver our outstanding visitor experiences will be driven by the skills of our dedicated workforce. Today I am pleased to announce that the Tasmanian Government will deliver \$1 million in the 2020-21 Budget over two years to support the establishment of a new not-for-profit registered training organisation. Led by industry, the RTO will help build specific skills to meet the demand of emerging markets, including training that is not currently available and training experiences that reflect a post-COVID-19 industry.

It will create new pathways and improve access and employment opportunities for Tasmanians living in regional areas as well as help businesses and industries grow. From apprentices to front-of-house staff to chefs and restaurant managers, we want Tasmanians to have a wide range of training choices tied to meaningful and sustainable career pathways.

I acknowledge and commend the efforts of both the THA and the TICT on their strong advocacy, development of position papers and the industry engagement they have undertaken in putting forward the business case and developing the model for the new RTO. Informed by these peak bodies, the RTO will complement private training providers as well as TasTAFE's Drysdale.

To support the investment in skills and workforce development the tourism and hospitality workforce advisory committee is currently being established with representation from the THA and TICT. This will align the tourism and hospitality industries with other key sectors like the building and construction industry that provide skills advice to the Government through a similar model.

The Tasmanian Government has clearly demonstrated its commitment to these important industries throughout the pandemic. We are now focused on continuing to work with peak industry bodies and the education and training sector to deliver and maintain a sustainable workforce that will help Tasmania achieve its long-term tourism and hospitality potential.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please, order.

Ms COURTNEY - Later this week we will outline the economic platform this state needs to create jobs and provide certainty and confidence for our community as we build the Tasmanian economy. This is in stark contrast to the other side. We know they do not have a plan. We know they will not have an alternative budget. They fail to represent to the Tasmanian community what they stand for. All we ask for is a fully costed alternative budget.

Land Tax - Increase in Charges

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.02 a.m.]

Over the last few months Tasmanians have been receiving their land tax bills. Some of these bills represent significant increases. Some have doubled and some have tripled in a matter of years. The bill shock experienced by many, particularly those that have had humble shacks in their families for generations, has been massive. Shackies have voiced their concerns publicly.

Mr Barnett - What about the shack tax. Come on. You are the author.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is Pavlovian. You idiot.

Members interjecting.

Mr O'BYRNE - Sorry, I withdraw. Shackies have voiced their concerns publicly saying they believe they have no option but to sell their family shack.

Premier, you have dismissed these concerns out of hand, saying that it is a good thing the valuations have increased. You have callously ignored the unfairness of bill shock which is undermining the Tasmanian way of life. You have not always had this position. Let me quote some of your comments on the public record from when you were shadow treasurer -

The Tasmanian Liberals have consistently argued that land tax is an unfair tax that stifles investments and costs jobs. We have been the only party that has consistently been calling for land tax to be reduced and eventually phased out altogether. To do anything less is not an acceptable option.

How can Tasmanians trust anything you say when you have so blatantly broken the commitments you once made?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for that question. I wonder whether on Tuesday next week, when and if he brings down his alternative budget, he will outline the costings of the tax giveaway that he has just embarked upon. It is implicit in his question that he wants to either provide hand back tax or change the rate of land tax that some people are being charged at the moment. It is implicit -

Ms White - Did you promise to abolish it by 2020? Yes, you did.

Mr GUTWEIN - We need to understand whether the shadow treasurer will provide a fully costed policy next week on his land tax give back.

Nobody likes to pay tax. The point I have made previously is that land tax operates usually once every five to six years there is an valuation. Between valuations a factor is applied that increases the value of the property in line with property increases around the state over that period. That factor reduces bill shock. Then a valuation is undertaken.

I understand that people are annoyed at their land tax bills. No-one likes paying it, whether it is this year or last year or the year before. Bills have gone up not because the Government has changed the rate or applied a new tax. The reason bills have gone up is because property values have increased. When we went into this pandemic, one of the major concerns that we had in this state, as we did right around this country, was that as a result of the pandemic we would see a crash in the property market. I am pleased that we have not seen that. I am pleased that the economic and fiscal stimulus we have provided has kept our economy strong. It has kept values up and it has ensured that those people that own property external to their principal place of residence are seeing an increase in their personal wealth.

I know they do not like to pay tax on it. We took a policy to the 2010 election. It was a fully costed policy that demonstrated a process. We put that to the Tasmanian people and unfortunately we lost that election because you lot got in in 2010 and then caused a recession. That was a policy that the Tasmanian people did not support. Unfortunately, what they got was a Greens-Labor government that took us into a recession.

Nobody enjoys paying tax. The reason that land tax bills have gone up is that land values have gone up. While some people are annoyed at having to pay additional tax this year, the fact is their wealth has increased as a result of property values rising.

It was implicit in the question that the shadow treasurer has a policy to cut land tax. If that is a policy that he supports, if that is a policy that side of the House stands by then it is incumbent upon them next week to bring down an alternative budget and demonstrate how much this would cost the Tasmanian budget. How much tax would he give back? In doing so what services would Tasmanians miss out on?

Land Tax - Increase in Charges

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.08 a.m.]

As shadow treasurer, you repeatedly promised to abolish land tax by 2020. Now you are Premier not only have you broken that promise but land tax bills are the highest they have ever been with many shack owners and mum and dad investors facing significant increases. Let me read you a few quotes, Premier -

Land tax bills have increased by, in some cases, tens of thousands of dollars which will ultimately lead to a loss of investment and jobs and businesses going to the wall.

Retirees, renters, businesses large and small are all affected and ultimately consumers end up paying as in many cases these costs are simply passed on.

These are not my words, Premier, they are yours, as shadow treasurer. Do you accept that your backflip on your commitment is costing jobs, damaging investment and sending businesses broke?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for his question and for the opportunity to deal with the last part of his question. This side of the House has a policy to waive land tax for those businesses that have been significantly impacted by the pandemic this year. The value of that waiver is expected to be around \$40 million. That is a policy we have that we have already announced.

I am not sure what your policy is because I think you have not announced one, but I do know what your policy used to be. I make the point to these shack owners that you are purporting to support, that land tax rates in Tasmania have not changed and have remained the same since 2010. The only thing that has changed in that period is that the Labor-Greens government, including the current shadow treasurer, Mr David O'Byrne, removed the previous concession for shack owners. You actually put the tax on them. The hypocrisy, Madam Speaker. He is arguing against a tax that he introduced. It was him.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Clearly the House is not able to control itself this morning. Let us take a deep breath and remember where we are.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know exactly where we are. I am not sure about the alternative universe over there.

The tax the shadow treasurer is railing about is the tax that he introduced. At times in this place every now and then you get bowled up a half-volley -

Mr O'Byrne - Here we go.

Mr GUTWEIN - If you would stop interjecting - I know this is embarrassing for you but I want to speak a bit more about your tax before I finish. Madam Speaker, he purports to be concerned for these people. I have made the point that unfortunately no-one likes to pay tax and the reason that land tax bills -

Ms O'Byrne - This is actually your defence?

Ms White - And you're not going to do anything about it.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne and Leader of the Opposition.

Mr GUTWEIN - have gone up is not because the Government changed the rate but because land values have gone up and, as I have said, in terms of our broader economy, that has increased the wealth of all those people who own land or property. The galling thing about this is that he is actually talking about the tax that he introduced - David O'Byrne's shack tax.

Mr O'Byrne - That is rubbish. People are going to listen to this and know you're a tin ear.

Mr GUTWEIN - I hope they do listen to this because the very next question they should be asking you is, why did you put it back on? Why did you reintroduce it? Why did David O'Byrne tax shacks?

We have not increased taxes. I will finish on this point. This side of the House will not be introducing any new taxes, unlike that side of the House who introduced a shack tax which they now rail against.

Budget 2020-21 - Planning and Development Approvals Process

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr BARNETT

[11.13 a.m.]

Can you update the House on actions the Government is taking to simplify the planning and development approvals process and help Tasmanians invest to build houses and support jobs and confidence?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his excellent question and his interest in supporting a growing economy and our community during these difficult times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been very challenging. It is one of the largest shocks we have had for our economy and our community in our lifetime. It is thanks to our strong economy and a strong balance sheet that the Government has been able to provide nation-leading support and stimulus measures to keep our economy going and to rebuild a stronger economy. As we rebuild, we know the best way to get our budget back on track and create more jobs is to bolster confidence and grow the economy.

To help Tasmanians get on with the job of creating houses and infrastructure that was referred to in the question, the Government will provide further funding support to both the Land Titles Office and the Property Services Division within my department in this year's Budget. These funds, an additional \$1.2 million over four years for the Land Titles Office and \$2.2 million over two years for the Property Services Division, will help resource these areas to help ensure timely decision-making. The Land Titles Office and Property Services Division receive thousands of applications or lodgements annually regarding titles and the use of crown land respectively.

Now more than ever Tasmanians want Government services to be more responsive, more accessible and more connected, and so they should be. The additional funding the Government is providing will mean faster processing of property transaction matters with respect to Crown law and also the timely release of titles to market. The commitment will also allow the Land Titles Office to commence work towards transitioning from a paper-based system to an electronic conveyancing system, saving time, effort and money.

The Property Services Unit will be progressing information technology improvements to its systems to ensure that the needs of Tasmanians are best met. On top of this support the Government will also provide \$2.4 million over four years to build resourcing, regulatory and permitting processes, helping ensure approvals are provided with statutory time frames within those time frames.

This will unlock investment and provide job-creating activity in Tasmania by cutting the red tape, streamlining the process, reducing the holdups and letting Tasmanians and businesses get on with what they do best and that is creating jobs. It is important to note that this is consistent with the Premier's Economic Social Recovery Advisory Committee recommendations to gain momentum, build the economy and inject further confidence into our economy.

In short, we are rolling up our sleeves, getting on with the job and delivering. That is in stark contrast to the other side that have no plan. They are just into gotcha moments, relentless negativity. We still do not know any commitment from the other side as to whether they will deliver an alternative budget. That is the question and we are waiting expectantly. The Greens will be doing that. They have already committed to that today. They have done it in the past and we congratulate them for that.

In conclusion, we are getting on with the job. We are simplifying the planning and development approvals process to help Tasmanians invest further, to build houses, to support jobs and deliver further confidence in our community. We have delivered before and we are going to deliver again.

Time expired.

TABLED PAPER

Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation - Annual Report 2019-20

[11.21 a.m.]

Mr Street presented the annual report for 2019-20 of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation.

Report received.

JUSTICE MISCELLANEOUS (COURT BACKLOG AND RELATED MATTERS) BILL 2020 (No. 35)

EVIDENCE (CHILDREN AND SPECIAL WITNESSES) AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 31)

NEIGHBOURHOOD DISPUTES ABOUT PLANTS AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 35)

ON-DEMAND PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES INDUSTRY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 34)

RESIDENTIAL TENANCY AMENDMENT (COVID-19) BILL 2020 (No. 37)

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION (REGULATORY REFORM AMENDMENTS) BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 39)

ARCHITECTS AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 6)

RAIL SAFETY NATIONAL LAW (TASMANIA) AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 7)

ANZAC DAY TRUST WINDING-UP BILL 2020 (No. 33)

STATE SERVICE AMENDMENT (VALIDATION) BILL 2019 (No. 52)

VEHICLE AND TRAFFIC AMENDMENT (ROAD VEHICLE STANDARDS) BILL 2020 (No. 8)

TEACHERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 50)

Bills agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

SITTING TIMES

[11.29 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business)(by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That for this day's sitting the House shall not stand adjourned at 6 o'clock and that the House continue to sit past 6 o'clock.

This is to allow the items on the Order of Business on the blue today to be considered.

Motion agreed.

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) (by leave) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House, at its rising, adjourn until 12 p.m. tomorrow.

It is unusual that the House sits on Remembrance Day. It is happening tomorrow that the House will sit on 11 November. When we had a good look at the history books, the last time that happened was about 2010. A very wise decision at that time was made to allow members who wished to attend local services to be able to do that and for the House to meet at a later time, protecting all the business, which I will move in a subsequent motion, but that would allow us to do that. Members remaining in the precinct will be welcome to a minute's silence on the grounds at 11 a.m.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I indicate that we will be supporting this. This is an appropriate measure for the parliament to take to ensure that we are able to pay our respects on a significant day in our calendar, not only for the section of our community who have served but for those families that have lost loved ones or had to make sacrifices for those who have served this state and this country in armed conflict.

It is an appropriate measure. It is something we did when I was here in 2010 and it is a small thing that we do but something that is significant and important. We indicate our support for that motion.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Order of Business

[11.32 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) (by leave) - Madam Deputy Speaker, to put that into effect to allow members to attend local services in the community or to reflect in their own way with colleagues in this precinct, I move -

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

(a) the Order of Business for Wednesday 11 November next being as follows -

- (i) Acknowledgement of Traditional People
- (ii) Prayers and Reflection
- (iii) Questions seeking information
- (iv) Papers, Answers to Questions on Notice, and Government Responses to Petitions
- (v) Messages

- (vi) Introduction of Bills
 - (vii) Other Formal Business
 - (viii) Matter of Public Importance
 - (ix) Private Members' Business -
 - Opposition members - 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.,
 - Tasmanian Greens - 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.,
 - (x) Adjournment
- (b) the suspension of the sitting of the House at the completion of 'Other Formal Business' until 2.55 o'clock p.m.

Members will be aware that the Government is forgoing its own time tomorrow. We will catch up in advance today, and additionally our backbench has offered not to proceed with Government private members' time to help all these pieces fall appropriately into place. I commend the motion to the House.

[11.33 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for forwarding the exact motion to us earlier this morning, but also indicating late last week that this would be the order of the day to allow us to consult to ensure that we can get through the business. We acknowledge that the Government has tomorrow forgone its private members' time and support the motion as read.

Motion agreed to.

SESSIONAL ORDERS

Amendment to Standing Orders 49 and 63(2)

[11.34 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) (by leave) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that unless otherwise ordered, for the remainder of the Session, Standing Orders 49 and 63(2) be suspended and the following Sessional Orders be inserted in place thereof -

'49 Answers to Questions must be in writing

When Notices of Question are given, the Clerk of the House shall publish them in the Notice of Question paper, and the reply shall be given by being laid upon the Table of the House within 15 sitting days, or if the House is not sitting, within 30 days of being given, and a copy thereof supplied by the Clerk of the House to the Member who has asked the Question.

- (2) A Government response to each Petition that the House has received, shall be laid before the House within 15 sitting days of its communication to the Premier, or if the House is not sitting, within 30 days. If the House is not sitting, the response shall be provided to the Clerk of the House, who shall communicate the response to the Member who tabled the Petition.'

This was the subject of a proposal received by the Government from Madam Speaker. It speaks for itself in terms of its merit. I had a good look at the record and governments over many years have done an appropriate task of responding to questions, but I say that variously. There is no perfect government on this one and there have been times where questions have been outstanding, to the frustration -

Ms O'Connor - For more than a year and sometimes three.

Mr FERGUSON - I will join you, Ms O'Connor - sometimes never answered by previous governments, including the one you were part of.

We can clean this up and do a better job. In respect of questions that are provided on the Notice Paper, there has never been a provision to allow a response to be made with any time frame at all, so this will do two things. One, it will capture an intended time frame of 15 sitting days, which if you had a run of sitting weeks would be three weeks, but in the absence of the House sitting, for example over a recess, to accommodate that so that it is still captured within 30 days. The second thing it does is provide for the opportunity for it to be done out of session. That is some innovation that is occurring there which makes perfect sense.

The second sessional order being inserted is to allow for responses to petitions. The same comments could largely be made. It is already the case that there is a 15 sitting day provision in the sessional orders.

Ms O'Connor - Which is routinely ignored.

Mr FERGUSON - What the Government is moving for is to establish in the orders that in the absence of the House sitting there be 30 days, more or less a month, to allow a response to that petition, but further, that can be provided out of session.

In respect of answers to questions, I draw on the advice I have received and will read into *Hansard* and the debate, advice that applies to our parliament concerning guidance from *House of Representatives Practice*, seventh edition, edited by David Elder, Clerk of the House, a very good man. On page 564 under 'No obligation to answer', it says -

It is the established practice of the House, as it is in the House of Commons, that Ministers cannot be required to answer questions. Outright refusal to answer questions is relatively rare, being restricted largely to questions dealing with clearly sensitive and confidential matters such as security arrangements, Cabinet and Executive Council deliberations, and communications between Ministers and their advisers. Further, if a Minister does not wish to reply to a question on the Notice Paper ultimately he or she

may choose simply to ignore it (despite any reminders given in accordance with standing order 105 - see page 571). The question then eventually lapses on prorogation of the Parliament or dissolution of the House.

Occasionally Ministers reply to questions in writing by stating, for example, that the information sought by a Member is unavailable or that the time and staff resources required to collect the information cannot be justified.

I will not go on but I commend that advice. It helps shape the understanding that although the Government is bringing forward this amendment quite happily and enthusiastically, it needs to be understood that nothing changes the fact that you cannot put words in someone's mouth. The advice I have had puts it this way: the parliament has privilege but so does the executive.

I propose that these sessional orders be given an opportunity to work and members who may have had occasion to feel that their question has not been answered in a timely fashion will find this very satisfactory.

This should not be a debate right now, where people would score political points because it would be very easy and convenient for me to do the same in respect of the time I have served in opposition, but I can say that this is a contemporisation of our sessional orders, noting when bills have been brought through this House that require documents to be tabled before the House very often now, which was not always the case, out-of-session arrangements have been made.

I hope this pleases members of the House. I commend this motion and thank Madam Speaker and our Clerk for the advice that I have received that has assisted me to move this way just now.

[11.40 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that it is the Leader of Government Business's wish that we do not overly debate this motion but it is worth placing a few truths on the public record. The Greens warmly welcome time frames set for answers to questions put on notice but also to petitions.

Under this Government there has been a degree of casualness at best and contempt at worst for those processes of the parliament where members put questions on notice on behalf of our constituents or stakeholders, and they are routinely ignored, where we table petitions that have routinely not been responded to.

Of course we support the insertion of new sessional orders and hope that in time they become Standing Orders of the House. In part we are having this debate about changes to the Sessional Orders because of correspondence sent to the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and me, and ccd to the Speaker of the House of Assembly and the Independent member for Clerk from Civil Liberties Tasmania. They analysed government responses to petitions and this is what that analysis found -

An analysis by Civil Liberties Australia has found the following concerning statistics for formal electronic parliamentary petitions during the period 1 April 2014 to 17 October 2020. This is based on an assessment of information on a parliamentary website as at 17 October 2020. I note this is

not a new problem, and that it appears a similar situation existed under the previous ALP government.

Our findings:

- 32 parliamentary e-petitions are marked as being 'closed' between 1 April 2014 and 17 October 2020 and are no longer accepting signatures
- Of these 32, 18 have been tabled in the House of a sponsoring non-government Member of Parliament
- The information provided to the public on the parliamentary website indicates the government 'must' table a response to all tabled petitions within 15 sitting days
- Of these 18 tabled e-petitions, 17 have now passed their government response due date yet only 4 have received a government response. This amounts to a 24% response rate. This is compared to a response rate in the Legislative Council of 73%, which is three times higher, or three times better and more responsive
- The 13 petitions which have been tabled but not received a response within 15 sitting days were signed by nearly 5,000 Tasmanians (4,920)
- The remaining 14 petitions are marked as 'closed' but not yet tabled by the sponsoring non-government MP

Mr Richard Griggs, Tasmanian Director of Civil Liberties Australia says -

I hope you agree this situation needs to be rectified in the interests of good governance and accountable government. We believe the health of the system of petitions is an indicator of the health of democracy. Tasmanians who take the time to consider an issue that affects them and their community and put their name to a formal parliamentary petition to their government are owed a response.

...

... citizens should be shown respect and be provided with a response from government which sets out the government's position on the issue raised by the petitioners.

Civil Liberties Tasmania makes a number of recommendations, a number of which have been adopted through this change to the sessional orders. I urge the Premier, if he has not responded already to Civil Liberties Australia's correspondence, to do so.

Before I sit down and I know we will debate the motion establishing the Estimates Committees tomorrow, I want to raise this issue with the Government. The Liberals call themselves the party of small government. What we have for Estimates is a coagulation of 36 portfolios. Some of them are questionable as something you would establish within a

portfolio, for example Strategic Growth. As a result of that, what has happened to the Estimates schedule is that important opportunities for members to ask in areas of portfolio where they have specific interest or responsibilities will be denied because time has been cut short. For example, for Environment and Parks we have gone from five hours in total to a total of, I think, three hours. It is highly problematic. Most damning, is that the portfolio of Climate Change, the most important portfolio in government, has half an hour. That is simply not good enough. We will be going to the Leader of Government Business and having a look at the Estimate schedule.

[11.45 a.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I support sorting out how we deal with petitions and other communications from our constituents in this place in a more refined and contemporary manner. We can be doing much better in the digital space. With e-petitions we could be more responsive, but it is right across how we run parliament.

This is an issue I have spoken on in this place many times, particularly through this pandemic, where we have had to be more agile, we have had to work from home, we have had to deal with our constituents from our offices, from our homes, sitting on the bed, wherever we happen to be to keep this place going.

We have shown that we can be agile, we have shown that we can be creative, but we need to see in the Budget some funding for the digitisation of parliament, so we can run that properly. I would like to see a standing committee established to do this task. We can look at things like how we are dealing with our constituency enquiries, the education side of how we run parliament, and documentation processes. Everything can be made more transparent and open. This is something that we can do as a sophisticated and contemporary parliament. It is something we ought to do as MPs together. It is not to do with parties. It is to do with how we run things in this place.

The library does a great job and our IT guys do a great job. We need to get them to work together. I would like to see that happen. Hopefully, at some point, we will see some funding. The Minister for Science and Technology has put some big dollars into improving how our IT is managed. We need a transformation project for parliament. This is something I would like to work on, and when I am no longer in this place to look back on these times and say, we made some real changes to bring our democracy more directly to the people through social media.

I am almost obsessively interested in how we can engage better with social media, from things like petitions but right through to the nasty stuff that happens that prevents people from wanting to participate in public life or even become candidates for parliament. That is my contribution; a third way discussion but we need to have it. I implore the Government to listen.

[11.48 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, we will support this motion and the changes to standing orders 49 and 63(2) for the remainder of this session. We hope that this will create a precedent that subsequent governments and parliaments can adopt and will form part of the standard operation of this house.

I will take with a nice dose from the Leader of Government Business that this was welcomed and endorsed by the Government, hence their moving it, but let us not pretend that

motions such as this and changing the standing orders happen in a vacuum. They happen as a response to pressure and advocacy, not only outside this House but inside this House.

I echo the words of other members who have spoken about their level of frustration regarding responses to petitions and questions that we ask on behalf of people. There is a better way of doing it and that is what this motion is trying to do. I do not pretend that either party of government are without fault. It is important that this has been done.

I acknowledge the work of the Speaker in giving voice to these issues and facilitating a civil debate on these proposed changes. We consider the changes are important, and they add to the workings of this House. They add to the transparency and the responsiveness of this House to the people of Tasmania, which we should all strive for. We support the motion.

[11.50 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contribution. That is a great little debate and we can all take a dose of modesty when we consider these issues, because many of us in this place have been in government and in opposition - and to be a MP you need to have a very good memory.

The Government has a very strong record of responding to these issues but this is an example that, with the necessary humility, there is always scope to improve. That is exactly what we are intending to do. When a petition is brought by any one of us on behalf of our constituency it is actually not a petition for the government. It is a petition for all of us to consider, which is why the Clerk reads out the words of the petitioners. Everybody gets to hear it and it is good manners to listen. You do not have to agree to them - that is not the point. You have to listen to them and allow those constituents to be heard. So, while the government does respond to those petitions, it is within the remit of every member of this House to consider what their own response might be. If you strongly agree, or disagree, with the petitioners there is the opportunity for you to rise on the adjournment debate or through a bill and allow your perspective to be heard.

The point is to ensure that the Tasmanian community, which elects us to this place on issues of the day, is able to be heard and represented. I am aware of people who have tabled petitions they do not agree with, and I support that - because only 24 people in this place have access to the form of the House that is a petition. The other half million people do not. Their access is through us, as their local members. It should not matter whether a member tabling a petition agrees with its contents. You are doing your job by allowing those voices to be heard in this place.

Thank you all for your contributions. I commend the motion.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Land Tax

[11.53 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: land tax.

I rise to talk about this issue, which has had intense public debate and interest. We have heard many stories of people who have issues with changes in their land tax arrangements, in terms of their exposure or their ability to pay.

When the Premier was on his feet and said, 'no one likes paying tax', on the whole, I believe people in Australia want to pay a fair tax. It is not about paying or not paying tax. We all understand our tax revenue funds essential government services such as health and education, builds roads, supports biosecurity and invests in a range of assets to improve our community. In some way or another, we all benefit from a fair and reasonable tax regime, because it is Government money that goes to building the kind of society and community we hope to achieve.

The Premier said, 'people do not like paying tax'. I do not agree with those comments. Clearly, some people do not like paying tax and they pay a lot of money to try to avoid it, and those people should be pursued to ensure they do pay a fair rate of tax. However, I believe most people in a country like Australia - a social democratic country, that has clear institutions and clear roles of government delivering services - believe there is a fair tax rate.

The argument then becomes about the fairness of particular taxes, and the equity of them - and some of the perverse outcomes. By virtue of the current regime on land tax, we have seen that some people have received bills over the last two or three years that have not only doubled, but in some cases tripled - and in some extreme cases, quadrupled.

When you hear those sorts of outcomes, governments need to listen and respond to what are potentially perverse outcomes in tax regimes. They should constantly review the tax mix to ensure that fairness is applied, and there are no extreme outcomes which fundamentally impact on Tasmania's way of life. This is not an asset that is monetised or is cashed-in on a regular or irregular basis. This is, for example, a shack that has been in people's families for generations; it is a part of their way of life and many are very humble homes. However, the market has moved, resulting in some shack owners having significant increases in their tax.

That does not necessarily mean that people should not pay tax. We argue that there should be a fair part of tax. This debate goes to the heart of the credibility of the Liberal Government and the Premier and Treasurer.

Land tax has been a debate in this state for many years. The Government has said unequivocally that it will not review land tax. However, these are the words of the shadow treasurer from 2009 -

Land tax has a massive impact on the Tasmanian economy, especially on poor Tasmanians and if we cap land tax at the time then the budget will not suffer and those people that have been slugged with massive bills will be able to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

The shadow treasurer then went on to say that -

Reducing land tax in Tasmania will stimulate the economy. Our plan is to do this in an affordable and responsible way ...

He also said in a series of press statements that they 'will abolish land tax by 2020. The Tasmanian Liberals are the only party that believe in abolishing land tax'.

This is not calling for a review, or a change in circumstances, or a change in brackets or a change in the multiplier effect applied by Treasury. This is an unequivocal view of the Liberal Party at the time that they would abolish land tax. Another statement from the then shadow treasurer, 'This is another area where Tasmanians will see that only the Liberals are offering real change by abolishing land tax'.

They are the only party committed to abolishing land tax in Tasmania. The hypocrisy of this Government; the hypocrisy of this Treasurer and Premier saying when he was currying support in Opposition that the Liberal Party is the only party committed to abolishing land tax because it is bad in a whole range of reasons - it is bad for business, it is bad for Tasmanians, it is bad for poor Tasmanians.

The Labor Party has never said we would abolish a land tax. The Labor Party said it needs to be a fair regime of land tax. When elected to government, and with the opportunity over the last six and now seven budgets, the Treasurer has had the opportunity to follow through on his commitments in opposition. He has had the opportunity to alleviate some of the pressures of land tax on a particular cohort of paying members of our community but he glibly dismisses their views.

There are extreme outcomes of doubling, tripling and quadrupling a tax they have to pay in a short period of time. That is clearly perverse and unfair. It is clearly bill shock, which particularly undermines many people who have shacks but do not see their shack as a financial asset in terms of a monetary return. It is a perverse outcome. The hypocrisy of the Premier to get up and dismiss it and basically say, 'Well, we understand no one likes paying tax' - that is not fair. People want to pay a fair tax. And then to say, 'Well, the values have gone up and therefore there's nothing we can do' is diametrically opposed to his position in opposition.

It is not so much about Labor and Liberal in terms of land tax rate, it goes to the character and credibility of the Premier and Treasurer. He has done it on old-growth logging. He has done it on tax, claiming that they would bring in no new taxes. He brought on a point of consumption tax on the racing industry, a tax they said they would never commit to.

Time expired.

[12.00 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is NAIDOC Week 2020, and the theme of this year's NAIDOC Week is 'Always Was, Always Will Be' Aboriginal land. It is important, if we are going to have a matter of public importance debate here today, that we recognise we are standing on the land of the palawa pakana people. It was never ceded. That is the truth that this parliament needs to understand and work towards resolving.

It galls me that at the start of NAIDOC Week we are having a debate about land tax, which has a point I have yet to discern from Mr O'Byrne. We are on Aboriginal land. There has not been true reconciliation. Land returns have stalled. There has been no significant return of lands for almost 20 years. We are no further advanced on negotiating a treaty with the first Tasmanians. In too many parts of this island and this country we still celebrate

26 January, which is a day regarded by Aboriginal people as invasion day, and rightly so. We still do not have dedicated seats in the Tasmanian Parliament. As a member of the inquiry that was established to look at the House of Assembly restoration bill, I know you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would support dedicated seats in the Tasmanian Parliament for the palawa pakana people. I simply reinforce to the House that it was a unanimous tripartisan recommendation to the parliament that we work towards dedicated seats for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. It would be a start.

It might refine our thinking a little so that when it is NAIDOC Week we have a debate in this place about how far we have yet to go towards true reconciliation - the steps we need to take, the truths we need to hear, the land we need to give back, the special dates we need to change.

This always was and always will be Aboriginal land. The Parliament of Tasmania should permanently fly the Aboriginal flag. I note that it is up this week, but surely the Tasmanian Parliament should acknowledge that it needs to raise the flag and keep it up.

On the question of land tax, it reminds me of growing up on Minjerribah/Stradbroke Island, home of the Quandamooka people, where the locals were priced out of the island because land values went up so far and so fast that low-income people just could not afford to stay on the island.

We have to be very careful here in Tasmania because we are not a wealthy state and for many Tasmanians their wealth is in their shack. We recognise that this is the system we have and the land tax rates that have been set and applied this year are what are in place, but if the Government can provide relief to small businesses for land tax, why can't there be some gesture of relief to property owners?

I will read into the *Hansard* some correspondence from my constituent, Mr Appleby of Sandy Bay, who writes:

I am writing this letter in the fervent hope that Residential Landlords might be spared the manifestly excessive increases in Land Tax for the 20/21 financial year and I wish to add my voice to others who have already raised this issue.

Land values have been rising consistently in Tasmania for a number of years and it would appear that I (and many others) have now been catapulted into the highest land tax bracket.

Due to the highly regressive nature of the land tax table this has caused a catastrophic increase in my land tax assessment which has risen by 46% this year after a 25% increase last year. This constitutes a significant financial impost which will cause me (and others) considerable hardship at this very trying time.

This comes at a time when residential leases have been temporarily invalidated by emergency measures imposed by the State Government. This means that -

- 1) I am unable to Increase Rents.
- 2) I am unable to Evict Tenants, even when they refuse to pay their rent.
- 3) Any tenant can refuse to pay rent even if not affected financially by the pandemic.
- 4) I am encouraged to negotiate with tenants for lower rents where necessary. I have negotiated a lower rent with one tenant and renewed a lease with another at the same rate and thus I am already facing a significantly reduced income for this financial year. This is despite my costs (Rates, Land Tax, Water Rates and Insurance to name but a few) increasing significantly.

I am a fully self-funded retiree relying on two streams of income. These are -

- 1) Shares ...
- 2) Property Rentals ...

This has resulted in a significant reduction to my income. I would also like to point out that I have not received one cent of assistance from the Federal Government.

Ms O'Connor, I fervently hope you will give my financial situation (and that of others in a similar position) due consideration and lobby the government to support the reversal/deferment of the Land Tax increases for the 20/21 financial year and lobby to revise the structure of the land tax rates to reflect the increased land values which now apply in Tasmania.

Like many members in this place, that is only one piece of correspondence I have received from a constituent in relation to their shock when they opened their land tax bill this year.

I simply urge the Premier and Treasurer to consider whether there is any relief that can be provided to land tax bills in this year, because all across the community people are suffering. People have been dealt financial impacts and government should be able to adjust its policy somehow in order to provide a measure of assistance.

Time expired.

[12.07 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions so far and can say that I have listened to a number of passionate speeches from the shadow treasurer. That was not one of them.

We know many Tasmanians are doing it tough due to the impacts of the pandemic and the Government has and will continue to do everything we can to respond and support people,

particularly those who are doing it the toughest and struggling with businesses, struggling with employment and struggling with the costs of living. We have responded.

That is precisely why this MPI is about land tax. One thing that has so far failed to be mentioned is the fact that the Government waived the final tranche of land tax accounts for the 2019-20 financial year, announced earlier this year, a direct intervention into supporting people during a period of incredible uncertainty and financial hardship. We did not interrogate each and every one of those accounts and see who needed help the most. We needed to intervene quickly and take pressure off in a policy sense and we did that.

It is surprising to me that the Labor Party would ever want to have a debate on land tax. The Premier has already given a very decent account of himself in responding to the questions around previous policy commitments made by the Liberal Opposition at an election that we did not win. That is why I am still surprised that the Labor Party, in the week of the Budget and in the week before their expected alternative budget - which if time permits I can come to but time will probably beat me - to bring up land tax.

It is the Labor Party that wants to bring in the vacant shack tax. It is the Labor Party who is pretending to suck up to people who are in receipt of land tax notices when they are the ones who actually removed the shack exemption on land tax. I was here in 2011. I believe I was sitting in Mr O'Byrne's seat and it was Mr O'Byrne, sitting in that seat and the premier, Ms Giddings, sitting in that seat and Rebecca White sitting in one of those seats. It was that government that went to the 2010 election promising shack owners they would not be paying shack taxes or land taxes on their shacks. It was that government just one year later that removed that exemption. Do not forget your history, I say to the Labor Party.

We are supporting people through difficult times. Any suggestion that the Government has in some way amended, changed, altered, increased those tax rates is without foundation. We have not laid a finger on that calculation rate, which is set in the 2010 legislation. We have not increased it. We have not changed it. We have not changed the revaluation time frames. We have not changed the adjustment factor time frames. None of those things have happened. We understand that it was a decision by this parliament in 2010 to avoid bill shock: instead of having people getting a massive increase every six years it would be smooth. That was a decision taken by whomever was the Treasurer at that time and this parliament.

I accept and I am sympathetic, as is the Premier, to people who might be struggling at the moment. That is why we brought in the waiver in the last financial year. It is why the Government brought a bill through this House to allow for provision for more waivers on commercial land where owners are experiencing hardship, which they do need to be able to demonstrate, during the pandemic, providing land tax relief in this financial year.

We understand, as the Premier has outlined, that not everybody wants to pay tax. I am not sensing any real policy statement by the Labor Party. If Mr O'Byrne and the shadow treasurer are fair dinkum about this, and I do not believe they are, they would do a number of things. They would explain why they removed the exemption in 2011. They would develop a policy on this and say how much it would cost and what they would cut to pay for it. They would dump their shack tax policy, which they took to the last election. I say through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the shadow treasurer and your Leader, Rebecca White, you took a policy to the last election that said if you own a shack and you do not live in it or you do not

rent it out to a residential tenancy then there will be an extra tax put in place to punish you for being so greedy that you would have a shack. That is precisely the policy.

Mr O'Byrne - That is not for Tasmanians and you know it. Do not mislead the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The member for Franklin has had his turn.

Mr FERGUSON - The Liberal Party exposed the tax. The Labor Party did not like it. It was uncomfortable. I think I am reasonably well read on these things. Unless I have missed something, it is still Labor policy. Unless I have missed something, the vacant shack tax increase, the special new tax, is still Labor policy. That is what Labor took to the last election. They claimed it was a housing initiative of course but it was actually a tax on people that Mr O'Byrne would pretend to be advocating for today.

The claim of dismissal or ignoring or not caring can all be set aside because they are wrong. The Government has not increased land tax. We have not increased land tax rates. We have not changed the method of calculation. We have not changed the role of the Valuer-General in determining periodically what is the current market rate and the wealth of that property. If anybody is experiencing difficulty in paying their land tax we would like to hear from them via the Commissioner of State Revenue. They can apply to the commissioner and the commissioner is able, if he is persuaded, to defer lump sum payments. He can enter into arrangements for people to pay their land tax by instalments.

It is only the other side of the House that has a plan to increase taxes on shacks.

Time expired.

[12.14 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute on this matter of public importance. In particular I want to highlight the impact of land tax on the private rental market and on housing affordability and availability generally within this state.

The crisis in housing affordability and availability existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem is well understood. The issue is that it has not gone away. About 40 000, or one in four, households are living in the private rental market across Tasmania so this issue affects a very substantial proportion of households in our community. It does the heavy lifting, it has been said, in a housing market where people are struggling to get into home ownership, renting on average 10 years, so longer and longer in order to save for a home deposit. The shortfall of approximately 11 300 social and affordable houses is pushing more and more people into homelessness.

Anglicare's report on rental affordability released every year has consistently shown us that there are very limited options: in some cases, no options at all for people on very low incomes to access private rental properties. More than 30 per cent of the average household budget is expended on rent, generally the largest proportion of the household budget. The latest rental affordability report put out by Shelter said that an average income household in Hobart would be placed in rental stress if paying the current medium rent. Low incomes and an inadequate supply of rental housing continue to drive this decline in rental affordability in Hobart. Even in regional Tasmania the average household seeking to rent would be facing rent levels around 26 per cent of its income.

Other authorities have more to say on this. Hobart has been, for a couple of years now, one of the most unaffordable capital cities in the country. Regional parts of Tasmania are not far behind. In Launceston, and parts of the east coast and other parts of regional Tasmania, people are really struggling to find an affordable rental property. House rents in Hobart have been up over 27.2 per cent over the past five years. Recently there has been some softening of the rental market. Estimates are that that decline of around 4.3 per cent in rental prices amounts to around \$20 or so extra in average weekly household budgets. That is being described as temporary relief just like the income support measures that have been slowly reduced by the Commonwealth Government.

It will take some time for market corrections to flow through the economy because most people in the private rental market are in lease agreements of 12 months or so. The October CoreLogic report and the Tenants' Union of Tasmania Tasmanian rent report of the June quarter 2020 showed that whereas the overall change in medium rent was up 5 per cent for the year, in places like the north-west it was up 10.2 per cent for that year. I will be looking with interest what happens in the next quarter which will more accurately reflect the impact of COVID-19.

The REIT president, Mandy Welling, said that Hobart's annual growth was 2.6 per cent above the national average. She said that renters should not expect to see that situation continuing, that rents were expected to change dramatically over the next few months and that those short-term reductions are expected to be short lived.

Prior to the pandemic more than 8000 low-income Tasmanian households were experiencing rental stress. Sadly, more than 20 000 Tasmanians lost their job during this pandemic. About 3500 Tasmanians were on the social housing waitlist, a figure that has been increasing due to the lack of social housing and unaffordable private rental markets. The latest quarterly housing report to September 2020 is now overdue. In the report before that the Housing minister reported that just five new social houses had been completed of a target of 350 or 80 per annum promised from the commonwealth debt waiver.

Much more needs to be done in housing affordability and availability, including accelerating the building of social housing. Housing security goes hand in glove and is fundamental to job security, to engagement in education and training, and to contributing to society generally. All of these things underpin economic recovery. In terms of the land tax bills reported to be increased by 30 per cent, or 40 per cent this year, what will landlords do? Well, as the ABC recently reported, and as the member for Clark, the Leader of the Greens, has said, people like Peter and Jill Wood and Maxine Lowry are not all wealthy investors. We are talking about mum-and-dad Tasmanians, some of whom have inherited shacks, and that is part of the lifestyle we enjoy as Tasmanians. Others have invested in the private rental market in order to make a contribution to their superannuation as they get older.

The recently established Tasmanian Residential Rental Property Owners Association, has argued that ultimately all of this will impact not just landlords in the short-term, but also tenants in the long-term. Most recently, Louise Elliott wrote an opinion piece that said -

Landlords are certainly considering their risk appetite and the decisions they make will, sadly, ultimately will be detrimental to tenants. And it will cost the government more. Fewer rental properties, higher rents, more demand on social housing and more pensions to be paid out will be just a few of the consequences.

It has recently been argued that a number of properties have transferred from the short-stay market back to the private rental market. Investment returns remain high in that private rental market. The latest data report on the short-stay accommodation sector for the period to June, as I understand it, is now significantly overdue - some two months overdue. The report previous to that showed that some 400-plus properties had transferred from the short-stay market into the private rental market but it is not clear how long that correction will remain.

Time expired.

[12.22 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the hypocrisy of Labor bringing this issue here as a matter of public interest is unbelievable. The easiest thing to do as a politician is to pander, and tell people what they want to hear. The fact is that Labor removed the exemption for shack owners in 2011. They took the shack tax to the 2018 election. This Government provided a waiver on land tax because of the COVID-19 situation. It provided ongoing waivers for land tax to some people. If Mr O'Byrne and Labor's position is that the waiver should be ongoing, then it is incumbent upon him next week, when he brings down his alternative budget - which we know he is not going to do - to fully cost the waiver he is proposing.

The other tricky thing he has done, is that he has not really proposed a waiver. What he has done is give bit of a nudge and a wink to shack owners to say, yes, Labor is on your side, and the Government is terrible and all it wants to do is increase your land tax. He is not prepared to go on the record and say that he would extend the waiver, because he knows he cannot cost it. He is not prepared to do the work to tell Tasmanians what services he is prepared to cut in order to provide that waiver.

That is pandering. It is absolute, galling hypocrisy from Labor once again. It is becoming a theme in this place, and not a particularly attractive one.

[12.23 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, there was some colourful language there - a very interesting contribution.

I have the great benefit of not being part of a party, so I can speak directly about what constituents are telling me. I will make a quick contribution on a couple of contacts I have had, from people who have pointed out anomalies in the rates of land tax between themselves and their neighbours. Those issues are quite real, and it is something that we need to consider. I will be writing to the Government and seeking assistance to try to sort out some of these issues.

The issue is not only about our Tasmanian culture and the way we live here on our beautiful little island with our shack culture and living by the sea and all the activities we know and love to do. However, times have changed and there is a great deal more pressure on property in Tasmania. I am deeply concerned about our kids as they move forward into the stage of life where they are looking to buy houses, loaded up with HECS debt, and now if they choose the wrong course, even more HECS debt, unable to get a start on the property ladder and perhaps even delaying being able to have a family because they are paying off the debt we have loaded them up with.

We have seen this new model come completely unstuck in America. It is something I am very concerned about here. It is a multi-layered issue with state and federal components to it but the intergenerational equity issue is extremely important. We need to be thinking about this and focusing on it in Tasmania. One of the things we can do is alleviate some of the cost of higher education if that is where things are headed. We would love our children to be able to stay, live and work in Tasmania, but to do that we need to provide jobs, accommodation they can afford and career trajectories, whether they go for a while and come back - how we manage those things.

I want to get on the record about the real impacts for people, families, kids - my kids, your kids, all of us have families - and about how we move forward with this stuff. I do not mind paying tax and feel it is part of being a decent person in a democracy and our community, but I like to see my taxes spent wisely as well.

I note that some people, when it comes to land tax, particularly in this pandemic year, have had a rotten year and need a bit of help smoothing the cash flow. That is a real issue. We have done that with other contractual relationships such as leases and licences where people have needed a bit of extra help. That is the big-picture stuff we ought to be thinking about whilst we go through the details and nuts and bolts of how land tax operates and I hope at some stage we will be able to have that bigger-picture discussion.

Matter noted.

END-OF-LIFE CHOICES (VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING) BILL 2020 (No. 30)

First Reading

Bill received from the Legislative Council and read the first time.

ELECTRICITY, WATER AND SEWERAGE PRICING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 40)

Second Reading

[12.28 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance - 2R) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the Treasurer has prepared this bill and I am bringing it through on behalf of the Government for reasons that have been explained. I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

Throughout this unprecedented global pandemic, the Government has remained committed to reforming and adapting administrative arrangements to manage and mitigate the impact on our economy and community. In these challenging times, the maintenance of our essential infrastructure services such as electricity and water and sewerage services is critical.

The independent regulation of electricity and water and sewerage prices is a forward-looking process, with pricing proposals and regulatory determinations extending out a number of years into the future. The regulatory pricing periods for both these industries are due to expire at the end of the current financial year. However, the current pandemic is creating widespread uncertainty. This affects the ability of our regulated service providers to plan ahead to determine the needs of customers and the costs of service delivery, both of which impact upon pricing outcomes. Uncertainty and risk usually lead to the application of financial contingencies that may place upward pressure on prices.

This bill extends the current regulatory periods for electricity and water and sewerage by 12 months. For electricity, this will apply to the regulatory periods for both regulated small customer retail prices and the regulated feed-in tariff rate. The bill extends the regulatory periods on the same basis that applies under the current regulatory determinations. This will provide additional time for both Aurora Energy and TasWater to better assess their respective current and future operating environments and provide pricing submissions to the Tasmanian Economic Regulator that reflect the most efficient outcomes for the Tasmanian community.

This bill amends the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995 to extend the application of the 2016 standing offer price determination for regulated standing offer electricity prices by 12 months to 30 June 2022. This will allow the Tasmanian Economic Regulator to approve prices for 2021-22 under the provisions of the current price determination.

The bill also extends the application of the 2019 regulated feed-in tariff rate determination by 12 months to 30 June 2022. Again, the extension of the regulatory period means that the Tasmanian Economic Regulator will calculate the regulated feed-in tariff to apply for 2021-22 on the same basis that currently applies.

This bill also amends the Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008. The bill will extend the application of the 2018 water and sewerage price determination by 12 months to 30 June 2022. This means that the maximum prices for 2020-21 stipulated in the 2018 water and sewerage price determination will remain unchanged for 2021-22.

However, the Government and TasWater signed a memorandum of understanding on 1 May 2018 with commitments to accelerate water and sewerage infrastructure investment and deliver improved water and sewerage services. The MOU also included a price freeze in 2019-20 and an annual price increase cap of 3.5 per cent from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

In addition, water and sewerage prices have been frozen for 2020-21 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that actual prices for 2021-22 will be lower than the regulated maximum prices contained in the extended price determination and are expected to continue to be set in line with the annual price cap provisions contained within the MOU.

These amendments will also ensure that TasWater's current approved price and service plan will apply for an additional year to 30 June 2022. This will result in the approved customer service arrangements and customer service contract continuing unchanged into 2021-22.

To further maintain the current regulated service arrangements, the bill also amends the customer service code issued by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator to ensure that the minimum service standards set out in the code for 2020-21 will also apply for 2021-22.

The bill also sets the next water and sewerage regulatory period to align with the extension of the current regulatory period, with the next regulatory period to commence on 1 July 2022 and run for four years until 30 June 2026.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this bill is another example of the Government acting to ensure that regulatory arrangements respond and adapt appropriately to the current pandemic situation.

The amendments within the bill will provide time for Aurora and TasWater to develop pricing submissions that better reflect the likely future needs of the Tasmanian economy and community. This will result in pricing proposals that are more efficient and based on less uncertainty than would currently be the case.

The bill will maintain pricing and customer service outcomes in line with the current regulatory arrangements and does not place any additional regulatory or administrative burdens upon Aurora or TasWater.

The amendments will provide for improved regulatory outcomes in terms of prices faced by the Tasmanian community while ensuring efficient financial outcomes to support the ongoing sustainability of these essential services.

I commend this bill to the House.

[12.34 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Minister for Finance for stepping in on this. I have had a conversation with the Treasurer and understand the reason for it and accept that he is taking this on behalf of the Treasurer. This is a sensible amendment bill that responds to a unique set of circumstances. I will at the outset acknowledge the briefing from department officials and thank them for their ability to answer all our questions - the complex ones and the simpler ones from me. I appreciate their briefing on this. It gives us a greater understanding of the motivation and the workings of these pricing proposals and the regulatory determinations.

The bill responds to a unique moment in time. As the minister outlined in his second reading speech, we have been confronting some significant challenges across our community, both business and private. Bills such as this, to respond to that need, are completely appropriate.

The bill amends the Electricity Supply Act 1995, to extend the application of the 2006 standing offer price determination for regulated standing offer electricity prices by 12 months, to 30 June 2022. It also extends the application of the 2018 water and sewerage price determination by 12 months, to 30 June 2022. It does this in context of the MOU that was signed in 2018 between the Government and TasWater, in relation to a range of matters. It also amends the current customer service code issued by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator to ensure that the minimum service standards set out in the code for 2020-21 will also apply for 2021-22, providing the businesses and the community with the certainty that is required.

We acknowledge the Government's steps in taking this approach with electricity. However, we are still surprised they have not dealt with the issue of bill shock that many Tasmanians are facing when they open the energy bills they have received for the last two quarters. We have heard some horrific stories of bill shock from Tasmanians who did the right

things and their usage has increased significantly, from staying at home when they were asked to do so, studying, working and schooling from home. They have done the right thing by the Government and by the rest of Tasmania by staying home and therefore their usage has increased. We know Tasmanians have some of the highest bills in the country by way of our usage and our energy usage profile.

We know many Tasmanians have suffered bill shock and we have been calling for the Government to acknowledge that beyond the measures they have taken. We believe the measures taken to assist people to confront and pay their energy bill do not go far enough. We seek a repeat of the Government's pre-election strategy, in the summer of 2018, where they sent out an energy supplement to Tasmanians. This was not a discount on their bill. It was a letter and payment, signed by the Premier and signed by the energy minister, made directly into people's homes. You do not have to be very cynical at all, minister for energy, to realise the motivations of your Government at that time to curry favour with a certain part of the community to curry votes.

Then when Tasmanians desperately needed you to be there, to provide some level of assistance to deal with the issue of bill shock it was not an election time so you were nowhere to be seen. While this bill goes some way towards smoothing out and making this arrangement an extension of the existing arrangement, and moving into the uncertain future particularly in the next 12 months is appropriate, I would not be patting ourselves on the back too much because there was an opportunity for you to step up and support many Tasmanians who were suffering with enormous energy bills over and above their normal time, but you were nowhere to be seen. I wonder if there was an election in the wind whether you would have acted as you did in the pre-election sugar hit in 2018.

We still call for that. We still think it is appropriate for those Tasmanians who are suffering from bill shock of their energy bills should be provided with a level of assistance over and above what has already been announced by this Government. It continues to be our position.

The second reading speech outlines the memorandum of understanding signed between the Government and TasWater on 1 May 2018, with commitments to accelerate water and sewerage infrastructure investment and deliver improved water and sewerage services. There are some significant question marks over that deal and the potential perverse outcomes and pressures that will be placed on TasWater. That memorandum of understanding followed a two-year war that was waged by this Government on TasWater to seek a hostile takeover of TasWater. The Premier, the Treasurer, took that policy to the election of 2018, but on the day of the opening of the new parliament backflipped and effectively capitulated after a two-year war trying a hostile takeover of TasWater. They signed an MOU purported to deliver a whole range of benefits for the community. At the time we raised some real concerns about the nature of that MOU; about the financial capacity of TasWater to deliver on an accelerated infrastructure program.

Part of the reason for the MOU and the \$200 million injection over 10 years for TasWater was to speed up its capital program and bring projects like the Macquarie Point treatment plant into scope. We know that is not in scope and we heard recently from evidence provided to a committee in the other place that that investment is significantly under risk. There is no plan to do that. The pricing outcomes of that MOU are putting significant pressure on TasWater's

books. Typically with this Government, whenever there is a tough issue they try to kick it down the road.

With TasWater, despite trying to take it over for two years and backflipping, they have claimed a \$200 million cash injection will deliver a range of benefits for the community. We have not seen that. We raised significant concerns at the time of the MOU. We supported the passage of that MOU and the subsequent legislation through this House on the basis that it was not constructive for a government to be at war with a utility, creating great uncertainty not only in that business but across the community. We raised significant concerns about the ability to bring forward that capital program. We raised significant concerns about the future financial viability of not only the infrastructure program but of TasWater. We are starting to see evidence seep through that what we warned about only two years ago is now starting to come forward.

COVID-19 has had a massive impact on TasWater, but there are some fundamental questions still to be asked. They need to be answered by the Government. The claims that you made in not only justifying the war but saying that a capital injection would bring forward the infrastructure program - there is no evidence the infrastructure program has been brought forward. There is real concern about what the arrangement looks like in terms of TasWater's financial situation, particularly heading into the eighth, ninth and 10th years of that arrangement.

We support this necessary amendment bill. It goes some way to providing certainty and ameliorating any unexpected outcome from these price determinations because the existing ones obviously will be continued. We think it is a massive missed opportunity for the Government not to acknowledge the issue of bill shock in our electricity prices and the bills that struggling Tasmanians have been facing over the last two billing periods. Massive bill shock. We think it further exposes the lack of delivery on their commitment to peace in the war they conducted with TasWater. Having said that, we will support the bill.

[12.45 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the Greens support this legislation. It is a necessary bill in a time of pandemic. It will provide some certainty to both Aurora and TasWater about the prices that may be set over the next year, but it will reassure Tasmanians that there will not be upwards pressure on the price of their power, water and sewerage.

We are heading into a calamitous global recession. I do not want to be what Mr Tucker would call the doomsayer, the Cassandra, the prophetess of doom, in this place, but all the signs are there that the world is heading into a significant serious and deep global recession. At some point the rubber is going to hit the road with things like regulated price setting. It is really important that in Tasmania we have an independent economic regulator and a system of setting prices that is by and large above politics. At some point, the Government or parliament is going to have to take the brake off the economic regulator. Otherwise, what is the point of having an independent economic regulator?

We need to be mindful of that and the potential for very significant shocks to people when they receive their water and sewerage bill and their electricity bills. I hope that is something the Government is actively considering. While it makes sense to extend the

regulatory pricing period to the middle of 2022, economists are telling us that we are only just beginning to see the evidence of a global depression.

The Reserve Bank, for example, when it cut interest rates to 0.5 per cent, is projecting that interest rates will stay at record lows for years to come. That is an acknowledgement that the global economy is staggering and reeling as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. I too have spoken to constituents who got a terrible shock when their electricity bill arrived this year. The months of lockdown and the pandemic were the winter months, so not only were people home more and there were more people in the house during the day, it was colder. Of course the power bills have soared. Any government that is thinking about this clearly and strategically and wants to deliver long-term cost-of-living benefits to electricity consumers needs to have a look at the Labor-Greens government's energy efficiency rollout program. That is how you deliver permanent savings to people on their electricity bill.

We need a robust concessions scheme in place. Tasmania has had that for many years. It makes all the difference to the lives of people on Commonwealth support, or low-income people. We are going to see the price of utilities increase. You cannot keep a lid on electricity price rises for ever. The same goes for water and sewerage. I encourage the Government to think about this. For a fraction of the allocation, for example, of the \$3.1 billion infrastructure fund, we could roll out free energy efficiency upgrades to every single low-income household in Tasmania for about \$2500 a household. That will reduce their power bills by hundreds of dollars every year, as well as bringing down our emissions from energy, because, of course, we do still import coal power across Basslink.

Rather than having to bring in legislation which allows Aurora and TasWater to effectively tread water on their costs, the Government needs to be thinking about long-term investment in bringing down the cost of living for Tasmanian households.

I know there is a financial wall between the expenditure of government as such and a government business, but there is an allocation of a \$3 billion-plus Infrastructure budget, so why isn't the Government supporting TasWater to upgrade some of its critical and failing infrastructure? Surely this is the time.

It would have a very similar effect on employment but it would also mean we are modernising and strengthening our water and sewerage infrastructure and we will need to do that in part because of the accelerating impacts of climate change and the likelihood that some of our water and sewerage infrastructure simply will not be able to cope with the high levels potentially of inundation, extreme weather events and the like.

The Greens would be encouraging government to think a bit more long term about how it invests public money in bringing down the cost of living, as well as assisting TasWater, which has been handed a hugely difficult task, to upgrade some of the infrastructure that we know desperately needs upgrading, such as Launceston's water and sewerage system. It is a really hard ask of government to put primarily the cost of all of that on TasWater, which means the cost is borne by customers.

We support the bill because it is a necessary extension of the regulatory period in a time of pandemic, but let us start thinking more long term about how we permanently bring down the cost of living for Tasmanian electricity users by investing in megawatts, which means energy efficiency, and providing some sort of structural capital investment support for

TasWater in order to enable it to upgrade the infrastructure that every single Tasmanian relies on.

[12.52 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to stand here as Minister for Energy in support of the Leader of the House and Minister for Finance and also the Premier and Treasurer on this very important bill and to indicate up front that there is not a government in history that has done more to focus on the cost of living and the cost of doing business.

We have introduced and implemented measure after measure to ensure that Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses can respond to the challenges they have before them and to keep, wherever possible, the cost of living pressures and business pressures down.

Frankly, it was irksome to hear the shadow minister for energy and finance preaching to this Government and trying to send a message that he is in support of small business and others in this great state of Tasmania when the member has a track record of being minister for economic development under a Labor-Greens government that lost 10 000 jobs and this state went into recession, not to mention the fact that over that seven-year period there was a 65 per cent increase in electricity prices.

Ms O'Connor - You know that was about the gold-plating of the network. It was nothing to do with the government of the day. It happened across the country.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, you have had your contribution, thank you.

Ms O'Connor - I would like the minister to tell the truth.

Mr BARNETT - Of course Labor and the Greens are very embarrassed by that fact, not to mention their call at the time for power rationing during that very challenging time.

We are a Government like no other that has a special focus on delivering for Tasmanians and during this COVID-19 pandemic people have been working at home, schooling from home and of course there have been power bills for some households and they have been impacted and that is why we have implemented unprecedented levels of support. The Premier has delivered \$1 billion worth of support for Tasmanian businesses and the Tasmanian people, the Tasmanian community. In fact it is more than double the level of support provided by any other state relative to our size on a proportionate per person basis. We are proud of the support we have provided.

Electricity and water customers have needed that support in these times and we have responded by waiving the quarterly electricity and water and sewerage bills issued to small businesses from 1 April 2020 this year. In fact there were an estimated 34 000 small businesses that benefited to the tune of some \$27 million in terms of that bill waiver. This is a very significant commitment for and on behalf of the taxpayers of Tasmania to support those businesses during the coronavirus pandemic, the greatest health and economic challenge we have had in our generation. We have responded and in fact have delivered.

There was a \$1000 grant to power customers within an embedded network and those customers that operate in a larger complex like a shopping centre building or hospital. In fact the criteria has recently been reviewed and provided another two months for broadening that criteria so that they can respond and gain that \$1000 grant. On top of that you have the \$45 million of concessions, one of the most generous concession systems in Australia here in Tasmania delivered under the Gutwein Liberal majority Government. This is good news and it should be noted and commended. It is one of the most generous schemes in the nation.

On top of that the Government has recently announced a 1.38 per cent decrease in regulated electricity prices for the 2020-21 year. That is also good news - electricity prices have gone down. In real terms they have gone down 12 per cent for households and 19 per cent for small business, in stark contrast to the 65 per cent from the other side. It is very good news and we will continue to do everything we can to help those in small businesses and to help Tasmanian residential customers.

We have the Aurora Energy \$5 million COVID-19 grant. They are a fantastic partner supporting Tasmanians wherever possible and I note that there is still some \$4 million available from that fund. If anyone is struggling with their bills I urge them to contact Aurora Energy. Reach out to Aurora Energy as soon as possible to make your situation very clear.

In conclusion, I want to say that deferring this by 12 months is strongly supported, extending that regulatory review period of the retail costs of power and water prices by another 12 months to 30 June 2022. It effectively freezes the review of the retail cost for water and electricity services and I strongly commend this bill and thank the minister for delivering on it. The Government remains cautiously optimistic that its power bill relief initiatives are working well and that this bill, together with all those initiatives, will continue to support the Tasmanian community.

[12.59 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Madam Deputy Speaker, in the minute I have before we suspend, and I will respond in further detail. I thank members, particularly the Opposition and the Greens, not so much for their commentary but their in principal support for the bill. This is an important further measure, as we have said.

This is not a set-and-forget process. Throughout the whole period of this pandemic since it really hit our state in a big economic, social and health way in March, we have been working methodically through the range of areas where we can be providing support.

I thank those who have acknowledged those initiatives, in particular the fact that the Government has the most generous response package of any of the states and territories around the country as a proportion of GSP. We are leading the nation very strongly. That helps to point to the fact that Tasmania is leading the strongest rebound.

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

ELECTRICITY, WATER AND SEWERAGE PRICING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 40)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Madam Speaker, Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Connor have raised a number of energy issues, and my colleague, Mr Barnett, the Minister for Energy, has already responded. I have some further comments to make for the benefit of the debate.

We recognise the cost of living impacts that have been experienced by Tasmanian residential consumers and corporate customers. The Government has provided over \$1 billion in support to the Tasmanian community through these difficult times. As I said before the break, that is more than double the level of support provided by the next state, relative to our size. We understood energy and water customers needed support during these times. The Government truly appreciated the bipartisan - indeed, the multi-partisan - support we received when those decisions were being made. Decisions were being made in short timeframes, and to know that we were able to bring those matters to the House and receive support is a matter of historic record, and is appreciated.

Electricity and water customers received support. The Government responded by waiving quarterly electricity and water and sewerage bills issued to small business from 1 April 2020. We also have the Government's \$45 million Electricity Concession Scheme, which I am advised is regarded as one of the most generous schemes in the nation.

In June, the Government announced a 1.38 per cent decrease in regulated electricity prices for 2020-21. This decrease is phenomenal when you realise that very few businesses would be in a position to do that, and in view of the history of increased power prices, Mr Barnett has already reflected on that in his contribution. Over the last six years, this government has delivered prices that have reduced, in real terms, by 12 per cent for households and 19 per cent for small business. That is phenomenal. It is something people cannot lose sight of, nor think that it was an automatic process that simply happened. It did not. Government, by working with its businesses, has been able to achieve some fantastic outcomes.

The Tasmanian Economic Regulator's Comparison of Electricity and Gas Prices Report from September shows that Tasmanians continue to experience some of the lowest of power prices in Australia.

Aurora has been a fantastic partner through the pandemic. The GBEs, in particular Aurora, have been keen to look after their customers - our Tasmanian community. I thank the management and the board of Aurora for the compassionate actions they have taken, with the support of the Premier and the Minister for Energy. I do not know if that has been the case in the other states, especially where there may not be the same structure of ownership. It is a very positive story for Tasmanians.

Matters concerning TasWater were also raised, and I will provide a high-level response. Mr O'Byrne in particular, commented on the memorandum of understanding. He is correct in that the initial level of assistance pledged by the Government was \$200 million. However, that

changed in the 2019-20 budget. The assistance was increased and reprofiled. The \$200 million equity contribution was brought forward, and is being funded over five rather than 10 years, and has been supplemented with a further \$100 million in grant funding over a further five years.

Funding has been developed in consultation with TasWater to ensure that TasWater remains financially sound, noting it is currently 98 per cent owned by its local government owners, but also ensuring that capital is invested where it is most needed.

It is a matter of record that I have been applying the pressure of government that we are able to, given we are a 2 per cent equity holder in TasWater. We have advised TasWater of the need to resolve issues in their Capital Delivery Office, particularly by working with the Civil Contractors Federation and the government. While not in any position of power in this matter, we have been working to bring the parties together to find ways for tenders to go to market.

TasWater management needs to continue to keep a close eye on that process. However, I am hearing more positive signals from the civil contractors community. I will continue to closely observe this area to ensure we get maximum capital out the door, so that, as well as the legacy issues TasWater is dealing with in some cases - with infrastructure in poor condition and going well past its economic life in some cases - those jobs are done and Tasmanians are employed to do them.

The timing of investment and capital projects moves around due to different factors including competing needs, project complexity, project management and planning considerations. I will not go through the outcomes the government wanted to achieve in its previous policy proposal to take over the business. That is now in history: opposed by the Labor Party, I understand opposed by the Greens, and certainly opposed in the Legislative Council. We are improving impacts on the community and helping TasWater to have its best chance of success.

Ms O'Connor, on behalf of the Greens, raised concerns about energy prices. I thank Ms O'Connor for those remarks and concerns about prices, and her linkage of that to the current global recession. I do not own a crystal ball; if I did, I would not know how to use it. I do not know what the future holds to allow us to respond to claims about future global economic circumstances. However, I do know that electricity prices and the futures market are telling a different story to the one outlined by Ms O'Connor in her contribution. I am not making predictions today, but I am advised the current outlook - based on Australian Stock Exchange future contract market prices - suggests that mainland wholesale prices would remain stable over the foreseeable future. If anything, a global recession would be expected to reduce demand and put downward pressure on prices. If anybody has taken a look around the markets - and I do not think it is ever wise to pinpoint today's market movements, whether they are up or down - but if you take a general -

Ms O'Connor - Thank you, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks to Pfizer actually, for their phenomenal success in developing a stage 3 trial with more than 40 000 participants obtaining more than 90 per cent improvement. That trial, together with the political stability that is emerging out of the United States, can perhaps help explain that recovery.

I do not want to focus my remarks around the last few days of economic recovery on stock exchanges. That is never prudent politics. It is usually luck that you might try to link something from today's movements around a particular issue. However, the market attitude has completely turned around from 23 March. They will continue to go up and down no doubt, but there is no doom and gloom.

I thank Mr Barnett, Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Connor for their comments. On behalf of the Premier and Treasurer, I appreciate the support for the bill. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

ENERGY CO-ORDINATION AND PLANNING AMENDMENT (TASMANIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGET) BILL 2020 (No. 43)

Second Reading

[2.41 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy - 2R) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read a second time.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that the energy sector is rapidly changing. Australia's energy market is undergoing a major transformation from dependence on fossil fuels to predominantly using renewable energy. Comprehensive and diverse variable renewable energy generation, with dispatchable energy generation for firming, is required to enable a sustainable transition.

Tasmania is already punching above its weight in generating low-cost, reliable, clean energy for the nation, producing nearly a quarter of Australia's renewable energy while consuming just 2 per cent of the nation's energy. We have world-class wind and water resources at our disposal in Tasmania. This, combined with our firm dispatchable hydroelectric generation, places Tasmania in a unique position to drive the nation's energy transformation. We can harness the immense potential in renewable energy to grow our economy, attract investment, create jobs and transform Tasmania from being Australia's leading renewable energy state into a world leader of low-cost, reliable and clean energy.

To help achieve this plan, the Government is developing the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan which outlines our vision and suite of actions to develop renewable energy generation in Tasmania over the coming 20 years. The final Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan, which will be released in coming months, sets out clear objectives and actions to turn Tasmania into a renewable energy powerhouse. A key pillar of the action plan will be the setting of a world-leading Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target which will see Tasmania doubling its renewable electricity generation by 2040.

This bill sets the ambitious and achievable renewable energy targets that will underpin the decisive action that the Tasmanian Government is taking to encourage investment in our renewable energy sector.

With our Tasmania First energy policy, we have committed to Tasmania being 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy by 2022. Tasmania is on track to reach this target before 2022 with the recently completed Cattle Hill Wind Farm and, under construction, Granville Harbour Wind Farm; projects helping us achieve this. These projects, when fully operational, will provide an additional 256MW of generation capacity. Such projects represent hundreds of millions of dollars of investment and hundreds of jobs, particularly during construction, in regional areas of Tasmania.

The Energy Co-ordination and Planning Amendment (Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target) Bill 2020 before you today will help build upon such successes by legislating the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target (TRET) and supporting interim target.

Achieving the TRET will increase the state's renewable energy output equivalent to 200 per cent of 2022 renewable electricity generation levels. This means by 31 December 2040, 21 000 GWh of electricity generated in Tasmania will be from renewable energy sources. An interim target has been set to achieve half of the TRET by 2030, with 15 750 GWh of electricity generated in Tasmania to be from renewable energy sources.

The TRET and interim targets legislated by the bill apply to electricity generated by equipment connected to the National Electricity Market in Tasmania. Renewable energy sources including wind, solar and water (including hydro), and other energy sources declared by the minister will contribute to these targets.

Whilst it is anticipated that the majority of increased generation will come from large-scale renewable energy sources, it is envisaged that distributed energy sources, such as rooftop solar, will contribute to the targets.

Another renewable energy source that could contribute to the TRET is a form of bioenergy. This could involve sources such as agricultural waste, biomass-based components of municipal solid waste and biomass from sewage or wood waste. Given the unknown nature of how technologies may evolve to utilise these sources, it is prudent that no particular source is ruled out as having the potential to contribute to the TRET. But let me be clear that while the Government supports bioenergy and the job-creating opportunities it represents, we have been consistent in that we have always intended renewable energy sources that are set to contribute towards the TRET to be based on solar, water and wind. The harvesting of native forests specifically for renewable energy production is not currently required or anticipated to be part of the TRET.

In terms of how we declare additional sources, it is vital that we give this important legislation the strength it deserves. This legislation sets out a long-term vision out to 2040. With this in mind, today we are tabling an administrative amendment so that new sources of renewable energy to be declared by the minister will be through a disallowable instrument.

The economics of Tasmania's wind offering suggest that significant build-out of new renewable electricity generation will occur in the state. Renewable energy is one of Tasmania's greatest economic opportunities. By legislating the TRET, the Government is providing the

energy sector with investment confidence. It also provides a clear signal to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) about Tasmania's strong commitment to developing its renewable energy potential to support changes to the National Electricity Market (NEM). AEMO has noted this by including the TRET in modelling of the latest Integrated System Plan (ISP). The ISP identifies Marinus Link as an actionable project, one that is critical to address cost, reliability and security issues. This means that Marinus Link is absolutely required and forms an essential part of the NEM's optimal development pathway.

While the TRET strengthens the position of Project Marinus, the interim and final targets will only be achievable with the full commissioning of Marinus Link.

The growth in renewable electricity generation driven by introduction of the TRET has the potential to support a Tasmanian renewable hydrogen industry where low-cost, reliable and clean electricity will be critical to its viability. Renewable hydrogen also has the potential to support the delivery of the TRET by increasing on-island demand which will support increased renewable electricity generation.

Renewable hydrogen production is an emerging industry and Tasmania is well placed to leverage our competitive advantage. Tasmania is in the box seat to deliver cost-competitive renewable hydrogen on a grand scale, with the cost of production estimated to be 10 to 15 per cent lower than from any other Australian power grid.

Tasmania's Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan aligns with, and is complimentary to, the National Hydrogen Strategy. This includes the announcement that the Commonwealth Government has committed more than \$370 million to establishing an Australian hydrogen industry. In addition, Tasmania's pumped hydro energy storage opportunities, as part of the Battery of the Nation, will support the nation's transition away from a reliance on thermal generation. In particular, Tasmania has a strong competitive advantage in deep-pumped hydro energy storage. The first phase of Battery of the Nation will involve investment of up to \$1 billion and create around 300 construction jobs. More broadly, a 1500 megawatt Marinus Link with Battery of the Nation will stimulate:

- \$7.1 billion into the local economy;
- up to 1400 direct and indirect jobs associated with the interconnector and supporting transmission; and
- up to 2350 direct and indirect jobs associated with the renewable energy developments over a decade.

The Tasmanian Renewable Energy Coordination Framework is currently being developed. This framework will support and manage the growth of the Tasmanian renewable energy industry. The scope relates specifically to the new generation and associated transmission required to achieve the TRET and support Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation. With the confidence setting the TRET will give to the market, this framework will provide the practical measures to support growth in the sector.

As we continue to manage and rebuild from COVID-19, we are focused on growing jobs in those areas where we have a competitive advantage. Introduction of the TRET will support this by helping strengthen investment in our renewable energy sector. It will help drive

important projects such as Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation, which will generate billions of dollars of investment and thousands of jobs in Tasmania.

It is important to note that these two projects are interdependent. Renewable electricity generation and the transmission infrastructure to support it go together. One of the challenges associated with these ambitious projects is to ensure that the generation and transmission projects are managed in an orderly way to ensure the best outcomes for the state and the people of Tasmania.

There are benefits in enabling parties to share some non-public information about proposed renewable energy generation developments. This could include situations where two or more prospective generators are developing projects where proceeding completely independently could result in overexpenditure or duplication of infrastructure.

Provisions of the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act 2010 are designed to prohibit certain anticompetitive behaviours. These provisions are, quite rightly, comprehensive and robust. They are so robust that the mere sharing of non-public information can give rise to an inference or presumption that there has been cartel conduct or anticompetitive behaviour.

This means that licensed electricity businesses and prospective generators are naturally cautious about sharing information about their projects, even where cooperative approaches to developments, including shared development of connection and transmission infrastructure, could result in avoiding expensive and unnecessary duplication, thereby achieving more efficient outcomes and lower prices overall.

This is not a problem unique to Tasmania. The issue has been recognised nationally, and there is a comprehensive reform package being developed to address the problem. The reform package is called the Coordination of Generation and Transmission Investment, or COGATI. This is a significant but complex reform package; however, it is nowhere near complete. We do not propose to wait for the other states and the Commonwealth to reach agreement on the detail. We are taking a proactive approach to developing local solutions to meet our own needs, on a timetable that works for us.

The ability for jurisdictions to apply carefully considered exemptions from prohibitions on certain conduct is recognised within the Competition and Consumer Act. The development of legislative exemptions is not a novel innovation. Exemptions have been used in many aspects of the economies of Australian states where the importance of competitive outcomes has been balanced with the need for more orderly and efficient arrangements.

The many examples from across the country include energy, water and sewerage and the transport sector. Within Tasmania, specific exemptions previously enacted by parliament include:

- Competition Policy Reform (Tasmania) Act 1996;
- Electricity Reform Act 2012;
- Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995;
- Electricity Supply Industry Restructuring (Savings and Transitional Provisions) Act 1995;

- Gaming Control Act 1993;
- Rail Company Act 2009;
- TOTE Tasmania (Sale) Act 2009; and
- Water and Sewerage Corporation Act 2012.

We have worked with the electricity businesses to understand the rationale for an exemption. We have also engaged in discussions with officers of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to develop a narrow exclusion to ensure that licensed electricity businesses and prospective generators are able to share limited non-public information for the benefit of the orderly development of the Tasmanian electricity grid and, ultimately, Tasmanian customers.

The exemption proposed in this bill has been crafted so that TasNetworks may not share with generators or potential generators information about connection costs that it has been provided by other competing generators. This obviously includes Hydro Tasmania but also includes the numerous potential wind generators who are seeking to develop Tasmania's world-class wind resource.

What this narrow exemption does do is allow TasNetworks and generators (including Hydro Tasmania) to share information about modelling assumptions and technical information about potential network capacity.

Not being able to share some limited information in certain circumstances means that businesses could be making sub-optimal decisions based on a less than complete understanding of some of the technical aspects of future grid connection and operation. This is a multimillion-dollar market, and both the Government and businesses need to be armed with sufficient information to make responsible decisions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill will help to grow jobs, Tasmania's economy and cement Tasmania's position as a world leader in renewable energy. We will continue to work with entities and proponents to ensure an efficient outcome for the Tasmanian community.

The TRET is a world-leading target that will place Tasmania as the renewable energy epicentre of Australia. Its enshrinement is the start of a very important journey for all Tasmanians.

I commend the bill to the House.

[2.56 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for allowing his officers to brief the Opposition on this important bill, and for his comprehensive second reading speech which plots out the arguments for and the complex nature of the matters we are dealing with in what seems like a simple bill. However, it does deal with some complex matters, not the least sharing information between TasNetworks and the potential generators and how that will work in the future.

We support the renewable energy industry in Tasmania, working with successive governments over a generation, encouraging investment in hydro generation. It was the Labor Party through the 2000s that invested significantly in this area which has laid the groundwork for -

Dr Woodruff - Excuse me, the Labor-Greens government at the federal level.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, I am not referring to that. I am referring to the Bacon-Lennon government in terms of Basslink.

It was the Labor Party on its own that invested significantly in Basslink and ensuring that there was a connection to the mainland so the extra renewable energy that we could generate could be sold into the mainland for return of investment and benefit to Tasmanians. It also significantly underpinned our energy security. Whenever we talk about energy provision in Tasmania the fundamental question that needs to be answered every time is energy security and what provides energy security to Tasmanian businesses, to families across the state to ensure that we can keep the lights on.

As an island we are heavily reliant on our own generation. Basslink as the redundancy assisted us in supporting a whole range of businesses in keeping the lights on. We went through a significant challenge in 2016 when this Government struggled to respond to the energy crisis of their own making. I will touch on that in a moment. It was the Labor government over many years that has invested not only in the Hydro, not only in Basslink but we were the first to build the wind farms in Tasmania in Woolnorth and Musselroe. These were the Labor investments to maximise the opportunity of our renewable energy resource. That has proven to be a foundational decision for the decisions that are now being made to make best use of what is a renewable energy future.

Tasmania has been and will continue to be supported by both major parties. At times the Greens seem to peel off and have a different opinion on wind, and a different opinion on various forms of generation. No doubt they will put their positions on the record. It is unequivocal from the Labor perspective of our support for renewable energy. We continue to provide that support. We will support this bill in enabling us to take that next step and to ensure that the opportunity, the jobs, the investment and the future underpinning and energy security of the Tasmanian energy generation sector can be guaranteed. That is important.

When you look AEMO's integrated system plan report, the challenge we have is that a decision on whether to move to renewables or not on-island is being clouded by the national politics of renewable energy and the anti-renewable energy champions inside the federal Liberal Party. It is all well and good to connect to a national market, but if the national market is not governed by a government that is co-ordinating investment in renewable energy and focusing on renewable energy, then all of the work that we are doing to encourage renewable energy on-island comes to nought. The problem is we have a federal government that has continued to have this fight over carbon-intensive generation -

Mr Street - Been following federal Labor today, David?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, we have sorted it out. Our policy is unequivocal in terms of supporting a renewable energy future for Australia. Our policy is very clear in supporting the ISP. The problem is the federal Liberal government has been very clear about its priorities

when it comes to energy. It has announced taxpayer support for gas-fired power plants, and even for coal plants, both extensions and new plants. It refuses to support a more renewable energy future. That is the challenge we have. Marinus Link and the Battery of the Nation only make sense in a renewable energy-powered mainland. The Marinus Link feasibility study makes that clear. It is Tasmania's great storage capacity, coupled with our wind resource that sits at the heart of our renewable energy future. To deliver that future we need a federal government that is not anti-renewables and that will act as support for growth of renewable energy. The AEMO ISP makes it clear that under the current policies, which is referred to in the report as a slow change scenario, Marinus Link stage 1 is not needed until 2036. Stage 2 is not needed at all.

AEMO has made it clear that with pro-renewable policies and much more renewable investment on the mainland, the case for the Marinus Link is brought forward into the 2020s. That is the kind of future we want for Tasmania. Unfortunately, the politics of the Liberal Party, the internal war over this issue - you can shake your head, Mr Street, but that is true.

Mr Street - It is the hypocrisy of your lot tearing themselves apart this morning.

Mr O'BYRNE - No. You are in government federally and you are investing in coal, you are investing in gas and you have a federal senator for Tasmania -

Members interjecting.

Mr O'BYRNE - We support the ISP and renewable energy. You have Senator Eric Abetz even advocating for nuclear energy. The federal Labor Party in terms of the shadow minister is clear to support - pardon?

A member - You always have the high moral ground.

Mr O'BYRNE - You have a federal Liberal government which is backing in coal and gas. That is what they are doing in terms of their policy.

We support the Australian Energy Market Operator Integrated System Plan and the ability to have a national transmission network that enables and encourages renewable energy and renewable energy projects across the country. The AEMO ISP report makes it very clear that unless there is a change in the federal government, Marinus struggles to stack up in terms of time lines, not only stage 1 but also stage 2. We know that the politics is played virtually every day.

I remember back at the end of 2018 when the minister and I had an exchange across the Estimates table about one example of how COAG is not working on this matter, when you had the then New South Wales Liberal environment minister wanting to move a motion around committing targets to zero net emissions by 2050. That was torpedoed by Angus Taylor. This is a Liberal state government wanting to move a motion around zero net emissions by 2050 and a pathway towards that, which is good for Tasmania, but then you had a Tasmanian minister who represented minister Barnett voting with Angus Taylor to torpedo a motion that would have supported and was in the best interests of Tasmania.

The politics of energy nationally, particular within the federal Liberal Party, is the biggest risk to Marinus, and the biggest risk to the billions of dollars of investment and the thousands

of jobs which could be created by Marinus Link. The commitment to the Marinus Link and the ability to build that brings on line all of the proposals and projects that are in the pipeline, all the wind projects across the state that could be built, but without the commitment to Marinus, without the capacity of Marinus, there is a real question mark about that investment.

The AEMO ISP Plan makes it very clear. It says that the Marinus Link timing is heavily influenced by emission abatement policies of the federal government in a national grid. It also says -

Marinus Link, two new high voltage direct charge (HVDC) cables connecting Victoria and Tasmania, each with 750 MW of transfer capacity and associated AC transmission, should be progressed such that the first cable can be completed as early as 2028-29 (should the Step Change scenario emerge)

because the AEMO ISP talks about various different scenarios and that is policy related -

or no later than 2031-32 (should the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target [TRET] be legislated or the Fast Change scenario emerge, and the cost recovery be resolved). This requires delivery of early works for both cables to be completed prior to a final investment decision in 2023-24. If by then the Tasmanian Government does not legislate the TRET, or if there is no successful resolution on how the cost of the project will be recovered (from consumers and/or other sources), then the project schedule should be revisited. Marinus Link's first cable is on the least-cost development path in all scenarios except for Slow Change,

which is the current environment we find ourselves in.

Marinus Link's second cable should be able to be completed as early as 2031-32, with the decision rules for its completion to be defined in the 2022 ISP.

That is the next iteration of the AEMO's ISP report. The report makes it clear again -

If we find ourselves in the Slow Change scenario, then AEMO will reassess the need to progress development of the Marinus Link ...

This goes to the two principles here. We support the state Government in moving to legislate this target because it provides certainty, it sends a message to the market and makes it clear about the best of intentions for Tasmania, but we have the fundamental issue of who is going to pay and how is it going to be allocated because that is yet to be resolved. Whilst many people have talked about the beneficiary pays principle, that is still to be resolved in COAG. We are concerned because of the politics at the federal level because with a federal government underwriting and backing in coal and gas, that does question our ability to deliver the environment where Marinus stacks up, and then you have Victoria and other states agreeing to a beneficiary pays principle.

There have been a number of reports and I am sure the minister has seen them. Again, they are opinion but they are informed opinion. By raising them I am not saying we agree with

them but having the potential for a stranded asset, having technology and other renewable projects come online in the mainland changes the market dynamics, particularly in the slow change scenario. We could be doing all this work on-island but the challenges nationally and off-island are not being resolved.

This is only one piece of a very complex puzzle, we acknowledge that, but if we are to deliver on this, the work needs to be done, and if there is a COAG decision we would want the Tasmanian minister to vote in Tasmania's interest, not to just back in blindly the federal minister who has been on the record as being anti-wind. In my view, Angus Taylor, in some of the comments he has made, is not a friend of Tasmania. Whilst he mouthed the words around pumped hydro, we know that some of his decisions are actively working against the best interests of Tasmania and that needs to be taken into account.

We know if we are not able to get Marinus online, our energy market, particularly with the major industrials, is delicate and if one of those major industrials removes themselves from the market or close, we have a significant challenge in terms of not only keeping a good hand on energy provision in Tasmania but the reliability and some of the challenges we will face in terms of the regulator's response to pricing in Tasmania and what that will do to consumers across Tasmania. We think that will be a massive challenge.

We have heard maybe four or five times that there has been a fast-track announcement of Marinus but we know it is going to take some time. In our view, it is all related and the AEMO ISP plan makes it clear, because with Basslink, essentially the process started in the late 1990s, construction commenced in 2002 and finished in 2005. When you look across the world at the Viking Link and the North Sea Link, the Viking Link commenced in 2015. It is double the length and more complex because of the environment it is in. Construction commenced in 2018 and is due to finish in 2023; a very quick turnaround time compared to Tasmania.

That is not necessarily a reflection on TasNetworks and Hydro. It is a reflection of the environment we find ourselves in when you have a federal government that is actively undermining a renewable energy future for the country. Therefore, of all the states that have the potential uplift advantage of a renewable energy future for the country, it is Tasmania because we are world leading and we need to continue to be at the cutting edge of that. It is not just about what we build, what we generate and what we sell. It is about the intellectual property and the international expertise we can build that creates a fantastic opportunity for our renewable energy businesses in Tasmania.

We support this bill. We are very concerned about the national environment we find ourselves in. We wish we had a federal government that was working in Tasmania's interest and supporting the ISP and the full benefits of what it will provide for our country, the jobs it will create and reducing the country's zero net emissions. Having said that, we support the bill with those concerns.

[3.15 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is galling to sit here and suffer through a lecture on taking strong action on renewable energy and reducing the devastating and accelerating pace of the climate emergency from a member of the Labor Party, the same party that is in lock-step with the federal Liberal Party. A unity ticket between the federal Liberal and Labor parties for the last decade has held Australia back. It has put us into the ignominious

position of being pariahs internationally because of our galloping increase in federal funding for fossil fuel industries.

Albanese and Morrison have stood shoulder to shoulder, shamelessly embarrassing all Australians and all young people and waving a red flag for the expansion of the gas industry. That is shameful. For that member to stand in this place and point the finger at the Liberal Party without pointing it right back at his own party is disgusting. He will be held responsible by the young people of Tasmania for his words. They can read them and listen to that lecturing and hypocrisy.

What we really need to hear is some spine from the Labor Party at the federal and the state levels. The Labor Party in Tasmania did not vote with the Greens' motion to ban thermal coal mining in Tasmania. What a joke of a party, to put their hands on their hearts and say they care about real action on climate change.

On to this bill. The facts are all too clear and should be known to every member in this House. However, it is hard to keep up with the increasingly alarming reports appearing from the scientific community as they struggle to understand the rate of change they are observing in the planet's systems. They have now established a new risk category of threat, which is existential.

Scientists have talked about dangerous climate change and catastrophic climate change, but increasingly scientists are reaching for the term that best describes where we are as a human community. We are taking actions day by day, which is placing us at existential threat to the survival of not only the human species but of every other species on this planet.

There is no doubt that only the strongest possible reductions in emissions together with drawing down of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere would give us any chance of remaining below this increase of 1.5 degrees that would enable this planet to remain in a habitable form for our children, for their children and for all those who come after them.

Even if the Paris Accord target of 1.5 degrees to 2 degrees is met, we cannot exclude the risk, reputable scientists such as Professor Will Steffen, who is fortunately working in Australia, say of a cascade of feedbacks that could push the earth's system into an irreversible hothouse earth pathway.

There is no doubt about the gravity of the situation. The fact that we are in a climate emergency demands a strong response. We have a scientific as well as a moral imperative to act for the people today and all those in the future, to stop the heating and to reduce our carbon emissions. We ought to be working every day to take actions to give young people a habitable, life supporting planet. That means that we need renewable energy and we need to stop using fossil fuels as fast as possible. Under 10 years is what the scientists are saying.

The Greens have always supported renewable energy development. Christine Milne, when she was senator for Tasmania in the Labor-Greens government, was the architect of the world-leading ARENA, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, the renewable energy target and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. These three bodies have enabled Australia to take some steps, albeit without the support of a comprehensive federal government policy because the Liberal and Labor parties have been in a death spiral trying to outdo themselves bending

over to fossil fuel companies and keeping the line of continual exploration and mining going for coal, gas and oil companies.

Despite that, we have made grounds in this country. There is enormous innovation in renewable energy technologies. There is enormous appetite among Australian, and Tasmanian, people to do more to take what action we can.

A renewable energy target must be part of the actions that we take in Tasmania. We support a target for renewable energy.

It is concerning that this second reading speech does not mention the words 'climate change'. There is a disturbing lack of comment about the reasons for this bill. The minister's second reading speech talks about Australia's energy market undergoing a major transformation from dependence on fossil fuels to predominantly using renewable energy with no discussion about why that is happening and no talk about what the imperative for that is.

We know what is going on here. The minister has made it very clear in other parts of his second reading speech that this is unfortunately a PR signalling exercise to the Australian energy market operator. It could be so much more. Despite that, it has the capacity to deliver so much more for Tasmania. As it stands this is the principal reason that we have this bill before us today.

The bill does set a target for doubling renewable energies from the assumed 2022 levels by 2040 and 150 per cent above the baseline by 2030. The bill does not give any mechanisms about how those targets can be achieved. It is important to understand that this bill lacks enormous detail in the mechanisms. The bill proposes twice what Tasmanians are projected to need to be self sufficient in energy by 2040. What will be the Government's renewable energy intentions? Nothing much has been released that is concrete. We do have the draft Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan. Why hasn't that been signed off? The second reading speech says that it will be coming in coming months. It is unusual and concerning that we do not have the Renewable Energy Action Plan to guide us as legislators in understanding what the renewable energy target will be enabling. What will it be bringing forth when its goal is double the energy requirements Tasmanians are predicted to need for ourselves.

What we do know, is that the draft renewable energy action plan plans to double our power generation through windfarms. We currently have, at our estimation, 228 turbines functioning in Tasmania. Another 652 are proposed or under construction, and that will produce 2671 megawatts of energy by our estimation, from the figures that are publicly available.

Under the plan there will be 10 more windfarms in addition to Cattle Hill, in addition to Granville Harbour and Robbins Island. All of those windfarms are in the north. None of them are planned for the south of the state. We need to understand what the impacts of those windfarms will be. Real and reasonable concerns have been raised by many communities across the north of the state, that the government is planning a major industrialisation for the whole of north Tasmania. There has been no plan for where that will occur, nor has there been consultation with communities about these proposals. Communities are facing them one-by-one as they grow like mushrooms, but without any coordination with communities, or any

consultation to enable windfarms to be considered in an orderly fashion and with some planning.

TasNetworks is proposing to build the two additional connectors from Tasmania to Victoria, and Hydro is planning to build the Battery of the Nation. It is not clear how much dispatchable capacity would be available to Victoria from the Hydro and the pumped hydro in Tasmania, but the two Marinus Links are argued to be two, 750-megawatt links totalling 1500 megawatts of dispatchable energy to Victoria and beyond.

We desperately need to get off coal- and gas-fired power, but we need to understand who will benefit directly from the renewable energy target that this bill will enable. The argument is that dispatching of renewable electricity across interconnectors would help displace fossil fuels from mainland energy markets. It would make a contribution from Tasmania towards reducing the climate emergency. In that frame it is manifestly a benefit to Tasmania and to the planet. However, we have to consider the costs as well as the benefits. Renewable energy in Tasmania comes predominantly through windfarms, overhead lines and undersea cables. Each of these has an environmental cost, a social cost and economic costs. The Greens are concerned that all of those costs remain hidden, or have been obscured to the community, or are being downplayed and dismissed by the Government in its approach to furthering renewable energy.

We have an extraordinary number of intact ecosystems in Tasmania. The recent report by Swiss Re, the second largest global reinsurer, measuring biodiversity and ecosystem services across the planet, has identified that, overall, Australia has the eighth worst ecosystem and biodiversity quality on the planet. Only 2 per cent of our ecosystems are considered to intact. About 50 per cent of those intact systems are in Tasmania. We have quite an extraordinary responsibility to maintain the quality of the biodiversity and the functioning of the ecosystems in Tasmania. Many of those places are in the beautiful Tarkine, in the forests of the north-west, in the beautiful areas in the central part of the state.

That is a major reason for our concern about the lack of planning with the rolling out of transmission lines across landscapes that have endangered species and threatened forest communities.

The Government has made no effort to have any comprehensive consultation process with communities about the impacts of overhead transmission lines. They have handed that work to companies like UPC, who in the community's own words, have made an appalling effort at consultation; a cynical effort. They have made it clear to the community that they are not interested in hearing what they have to say. They might hear it once, but they do not want to hear it two, three or five times, and they do not want to get back to the community. They do not want to have public meetings where people are in the same place at the same time and could ask difficult questions. The Government takes no responsibility for the impacts on local communities and is happy to hand over to international corporations to do that work on their behalf.

Furthermore, we have no idea what the real costs of the Battery of the Nation and Marinus projects would be. There are enormous issues here, when we already have more than \$800 million debt from Basslink 1, and when we are talking about putting new infrastructure in, that would have a 40-year horizon with price tags starting at \$3.5 billion for Marinus. We

do not have a final cost for Battery of the Nation. We have to understand how much of that will end up being paid for by Tasmanian customers in their power bills.

Until it is clear that those costs will not be paid by the Tasmanian Government, or by Hydro Tasmania or TasNetworks - and through them, by the Tasmanian people - we and many others in Tasmania remain deeply cynical about the cost benefits to Tasmanians from those two large pieces of infrastructure.

The Australian energy market operator does not require this bill to be signed off this year. We were advised of that in the briefing, and the minister continues to state that. It is not true, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator Integrated System Plan, which said the Tasmanian renewable energy target would need to be legislated prior to a final investment decision in 2023-24 and they say, 'If by then, the Tasmanian Government does not legislate the TRET, then the project schedule should be revisited'.

We do not understand why the minister continues to peddle what appears to be a mistruth when AMEO has said it needs to be done in the next three years' time - not that it needs to be signed off this year. What is going on, and why is there a rush? There are huge risks economically.

I thank Climate Tasmania and the members of Climate Tasmania who provided their thoughts on this bill and made a submission. They raised questions about whether this bill is an effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and said that, in the context of a climate emergency, we have to consider whether the proposed suite of Tasmanian projects is likely to contribute to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. They made a submission previously to the draft Renewable Energy Action Plan, and they argued that in terms of reducing Tasmania's emissions, other sectors in addition to electricity are more important than electricity generation. Their implication from government documents is that the export of renewable electricity from Tasmania through mostly wind farms is a necessary and cost-effective source of dispatchable renewable electricity that would be needed on the mainland to remove coal-fired power stations when they retire. We are very concerned that the Government is pushing this as the only future without considering the other competitive risks to that happening and the social and environmental costs of Battery of the Nation and Marinus.

It is only recently, in the last week, that we can see how quickly the tech industry is moving to respond to the climate emergency and the opportunity to get into the marketplace and displace coal and gas-fired power. Just on Thursday the biggest battery in Australia was announced, the largest in the southern hemisphere, by the Victorian government, a 300-megawatt big battery in Victoria. That comes on the back of each state in Australia - Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, all the other states - making very significant investments and commitments to big battery storage to provide an opportunity for stabilising the grid, increasing the capacity of transmission links and providing emergency security response and all the other things we need to transition into a renewable energy grid.

It is the case that just about all wind and solar projects proposed for the grid now arrive with a battery-ready option attached to them. When you have the big utilities setting up with enormous battery capacity - we are talking 200 megawatts in New South Wales from AGL and 1200 megawatts in all from AGL, just one company alone - it tells us that the speed of change in the battery market is enormous.

In summary, we do not trust the level of spin and secrecy from this Government around Battery of the Nation and Marinus. We are especially concerned about what this bill will enable. This bill is silent on other renewable energy sources. It provides an opportunity for biomass burning to be utilised and declared a renewable source by the minister.

The world science community is rapidly making a U-turn in their understanding of the serious impacts of biomass burning. The latest work by European Union scientists made it very clear that we must completely change our monitoring and reporting conditions for biomass accounting and there are no acceptable payback times that are realistic and compatible with maintaining the targets set by the Paris Agreement. I am reading from the European Science Advisory Council to the European Parliament. They say that recent estimates are that 1.5 degrees may be exceeded in 10 to 20 years and an acceptable payback period for accounting for biomass emissions should be no longer than five to 10 years.

The Victorian Government has ruled out the possibility of declaring biomass burning a renewable energy source. They could see the dangers of going into that place, the dangers of the emissions that would occur and, more to the point, the incredible dangers to the loss of biodiversity from native forests if they were declared the potential feeding stock for biomass furnaces and for a massive clear-felling spree that would have decimated what remains of the beautiful Victorian forests. The Victorian government has declared that wood products from timber from native forests, waste products from timber from native forests and sawmill residue and biomass from native forests cannot be declared a renewable energy source.

Despite what the minister and the Premier might like to pretend, this Government is fully committed to biomass energy. The Department of State Growth website makes that very clear. It is listed as a biomass resource under renewable energy. It is listed as a priority area, including, and I quote, 'harnessing renewable energy based on Tasmania's endowment of residues from the agriculture and forestry industries'. This Government is intent on exploring and using every opportunity to use our native forests to feed into biomass burning opportunities when they arise and if they can be encouraged to arise and be developed as business opportunities. We wrote to the Premier to put our very real concern that this needed to be ruled out for this to be a genuine renewable energy target. To be genuine it must not include biomass burning. The Premier did not respond which was unfortunate, and instead the response from the Minister for Energy makes it clear that they are not prepared to rule out biomass burning. They say they are -

... open to adopting sustainable practices that minimise waste and turn underutilised bioproducts into value-added propositions that would include wood waste.

There can be no argument at this time in this climate emergency to use wood or wood products from native forests to feed into furnaces and to call that burning, clear-felling and all the waste on the floor and the emissions from that a renewable energy source. It would be a disastrous place for us to go as a planet. It would be a terrible stain on Tasmania, and it would be devastating to the biodiversity of forests, the plants and the animals that they protect for our joint heritage.

It is clear that the Government has invested a lot of time and is very interested. The Greens put in a right to information request on correspondence around biomass and this substantial body of work has come back. The funding that has been put into that makes it clear

that, whatever the Government says, biomass burning is on the agenda and biomass burning has to be ruled out.

We flagged to the Premier that we would be seeking to amend this legislation. I can say to the House that we will be going into Committee on the bill so we can amend it to rule out biomass burning. It gives the Premier time to change his mind. I hope he will understand that this is something he carries as part of his leadership. He can step in and accept this amendment. That would be a fantastic thing for Tasmania. It is an opportunity for the Liberals and Premier Gutwein as Minister for Climate Change to set the course for where Tasmania needs to be in the future. It starts today. This bill is going to 2040 and we want to make sure that biomass burning has no part of that.

Time expired.

[3.45 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, there is nothing like politics to get in the way of an issue that everyone in this place basically agrees on. Renewable energy generation is one of Tasmania's great competitive advantages and one of the things that we should be concentrating on in the future.

I will make a short contribution on the bill. Renewable energy is one of Tasmania's key strengths. It is one of our competitive advantages. It is well-known and well-proven. It is part of who we are and it is part of where we have come from. All around Tasmania there is evidence of the foresight and the fortitude of Tasmanians gone by in developing a renewable energy system that is the envy of not only Australia but also the world. It is not just about the past. There has never been a more important time to invest in Tasmania and to invest in jobs. We need to be putting in place the settings to help Tasmania respond, to help it build and grow its way out of COVID-19 and into a prosperous future. There are opportunities for Tasmania in both the local and national sector.

The Australian energy industry is one in transition. The global supply and use of energy is dramatically shifting as countries are now looking for cleaner renewable forms of energy in order to decarbonise their economies. Older forms of generation are gradually switching off. In the rest of Australia there is an ever-growing shift to intermittent forms of renewable energy like wind and solar.

Tasmania is the nation's leading renewable energy state. It is perfectly placed to deliver what the country needs - low cost, reliable and clean energy that will create jobs, help lower emission and put downward pressure on electricity prices.

TRET will double our renewable generation to a global-leading target of 200 per cent of our current needs by 2040. The importance of this target cannot be understated. Through legislating the target, we are confirming our commitment to a sector that has the potential to deliver Tasmania billions of dollars of investment and thousands of jobs through greater investment in wind-pumped hydro and renewable hydrogen initiatives. This is a fantastic signal not only to the Tasmanian and Australian markets but to the world. By introducing a renewable energy target, we can greatly strengthen investment in our renewable energy sector and drive our major projects such as Marinus and the Battery of the Nation.

There is a strong link between our jobs-generating projects and the TRET. The AEMO has noted this by including the TRET in the modelling of its latest integrated system plan. The ISP identifies the Marinus Link as critical to the future of the national electricity market. This means that Marinus Link is required to ensure the Australian power grid remains stable, reliable and affordable.

Renewable energy is our future and the future is now. We are on the cusp of reaching an envied status of being 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy generation by 2022.

Wind, with the recently completed Cattle Hill Wind Farm and under construction Granville Harbour Wind Farm, will achieve this status. There are more projects on the way such as the wind farms at Jim's Plain and Robbins Island. I welcome these job-creating outcomes and opportunities that particularly benefit Tasmania's regional areas. We need to be encouraging and supporting new developments, hence the importance of the TRET. We are going to surge past our status of being 100 per cent self-sufficient. It only makes sense that we reach for the much greater target of 200 per cent.

Setting an industry-leading target such as the TRET is one part of maximising our renewable energy competitive advantage. We also need the participants in that industry to take the action required to deliver on their projects.

The legislation also provides for an exemption from the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act 2010 to allow the sharing of information between generation and transmission project proponents. This will greatly help with facilitating a shared approach to development of connection and transmission infrastructure and will assist in avoiding expensive and unnecessary duplication of project assets.

This is the way forward. This is the way Tasmania's long and important renewable energy sector can take the next leap forward and become a global example of how a best-practice renewable energy system operates.

The TRET is the way forward for an abundant Tasmanian renewable energy market that places downward pressure on prices, increases Australia's grid reliability and creates thousands of jobs for Tasmanians.

[3.50 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, the first thing I want to do is commend my excellent colleague, Dr Woodruff, on her thorough second reading speech contribution and examination of this bill and agree with everything that Dr Woodruff has said.

My second point relates to what Mr Street just said where he had a swipe at us about getting political about renewable energy. The issue is there is actual renewable energy, which is verified by science and common sense. Then there is the political interpretation of what renewable energy might be, which is why we are having a discussion in this place now about the Government's apparent will to burn native forests for energy.

We are in this position as a country where we are playing catch-up on tackling climate change because we have two parties at the national level who have been in lockstep on backing the fossil fuel industries. It probably has something to do with the massive donations that have gone from fossil fuel interests into the Liberal and Labor parties. Last year, in the Electoral Commission returns, about \$1.3 million was donated by fossil fuel interests to the Liberal

Party, the party of Government, and about \$700 000 to the Australian Labor Party. That is why this nation is an international laggard and a disgrace on climate inaction.

All over the world right now there are young people who are, for the first time in about four years, feeling much more optimistic about the future because come 20 January the adults will be back in the room in Washington. In all likelihood will have a United States administration that is reinvigorated on the need to take urgent climate action. It means that young people are more hopeful now about world leadership on tackling climate change.

I hope we see some real shifts in Australia from both the major parties, who need to recognise you cannot, in a time of climate and biodiversity emergency, have a gaslit recovery. You cannot, like the Labor Party has done repeatedly out of one side of its face, back Adani and coal mining and coal exports, and then on the other signal, particularly to young people, that they take climate change seriously.

I note the passing out of the shadow cabinet today of one of the true dinosaurs of the Australian Labor Party, Joel Fitzgibbon. I will read into *Hansard* what the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union had to say on the departure from the shadow cabinet of Mr Fitzgibbon, one of the greatest cheerleaders for the coal industry this country has ever known and who established the parliamentary Friends of Coal -

'Australia needs an urgent worker-led COVID jobs recovery, including a proper response to climate change, putting to bed irresponsible gas-led COVID recovery plans,' says the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU).

The resignation of Labor Party frontbencher and Hunter MP, Joel Fitzgibbon, signals a time for the ALP to get serious about climate change and creating safe, secure and well-paid jobs.

The national secretary of the AMWU, Steve Murphy, said, 'As Joel Fitzgibbon transitions to the backbench, my mind is with the thousands of workers who have been damaged by his lack of ambition and honesty. Our economy and energy needs are changing fast, we need to face these challenges with workers front and centre.'

I could not agree more. While we are talking about the similarities between the two major parties nationally and at a state level, I need to highlight that Labor's primary industries and resources shadow minister, Dr Broad, supports burning of native forests to produce energy, despite the fact that increasingly scientists around the world are saying the burning of native forests for energy is a climate catastrophe in the making and that we are liquifying our beautiful carbon-bank forests to produce energy instead of protecting them and restoring those areas which have been deforested in the past.

The federal Labor Party does not support native forest biomass. The Victorian Labor Government does not support native forest biomass. In fact Victoria's minister for climate change, Lily D'Ambrosio, has issued a very clear directive that in the renewable energy target legislation they passed in 2017-18 - and she has done this by a declaration in the *Gazette*, but for the removal of doubts, Lily D'Ambrosio has made it clear - wood and wood products from native forest are not renewable energy. That is what common sense tells us too.

I will be completely unsurprised if, when we move our amendment to make it really clear that native forest biomass is not renewable energy, the Labor Party does not support that amendment, even though it would substantially provide some integrity to the bill. Before the Government agreed to include the disallowable instrument that requires the minister to come into this place should he believe or want to declare another energy source to be renewable energy, the bill until that point would have allowed Mr Barnett to wake up one morning and decide that a particular source of energy was renewable energy and make an order that would go into the *Gazette*, but there would be no recourse to parliament. Part 2 of the bill is really clear that it allows for the minister to declare another source of energy beyond solar, wind and water as renewable energy.

We have to move past the cultural and ideological paralysis that we have in Tasmania where the two major parties will bend over backwards to support the continuation of deforestation. We have to move past this. I do not know how many people here have seen David Attenborough's documentary. There is also a short version of the five things that humanity can do in order to rein in our emissions and begin the process of cooling the planet a little rather than accelerating its heating. I think number three in his list of five things we must do is stop deforestation and start reforestation. We need to protect the carbon stores we have, our forests, and we need to plant more forests in order to draw down more carbon. But in this place we have a government and an opposition who not only back in native forest logging, which is heavily subsidised, but would clearly back in a forest furnace, the burning of trees, to produce energy. If Dr Broad does not agree with my summation of their position I look forward to him getting up in this place and explaining what their position is, because I read *The Advocate* too, Dr Broad, and I saw your comments in *The Advocate*.

We know that wood energy produced from both hardwood native forest and some softwood plantations in the European Union is going gangbusters and that has meant there has been massive deforestation in order to feed the growing EU demand for wood products and wood pellets to feed into its bioenergy plants. There is a wood plant in the United Kingdom which was a former coal plant called the Drax plant. It was once Britain's biggest coal plant but now burns millions of tonnes of wood pellets each year sourced primarily from North America, which is devastating hardwood forests. Drax soaks up hundreds of millions of dollars in so-called green subsidies per year, meaning the expensive energy produced is largely subsidised by taxpayers under the guise of taking action on climate change. Without subsidies, the industry is not viable.

Here in Tasmania we have a long, sorry and extremely expensive to taxpayers history of subsidising the native forest logging industry and cosying it along every step of the way, unless you are in the situation where you have Greens in government and an industry because of a global downturn that comes to government on its knees looking for help as it did in 2010-14.

The subsidies going into the native forest logging industry continue. The subsidies that would be required in order to make any kind of forest furnace viable would be substantial, but we know that politically in this state, both the major parties would stump up in order to throw the mendicant native forest logging industry yet another lifeline. Not only is it unjustifiable on the science to continue to log our native forests because of the impacts on a climate and biodiversity, it is totally unjustifiable, unscientific and uneconomical to even contemplate liquifying our native forests and putting them into a forest furnace.

The European Parliament's science advisory council only two months ago called on EU lawmakers to introduce a radically new standard to recognise that biomass burning is not carbon-neutral but instead has 'massive climate effects'. The consensus statement from scientists of the 28 EU countries advises that 'swapping coal with biomass often increases net emissions to the atmosphere when the whole life cycle is properly accounted for'. They say the current carbon emissions calculations do not reflect the reality of climate heating or the urgency to stop adding more emissions.

As Dr Woodruff pointed out, we have had an exchange of letters with Government where we initially detailed our concern to the Premier and Minister for Climate Change and requested that a specific clause be put in the bill that rules out the use of native forests for energy. We received a letter not from the Minister for Climate Change, but from the Minister for Energy and Resources. First of all, it was rather cowardly of the Premier and Minister for Climate Change not to respond to our letter which was written to him through the context of climate, not energy. This is an issue about forests. It is not an energy question, which is why we wrote to the Minister for Climate Change, yet we got back a letter from Mr Barnett. In that letter Mr Barnett points out that we requested in our letter to the Premier that -

- (1) the Government declare that native forest wood products, waste, sawmill residue or biomass should not be counted as renewable energy sources towards Tasmanian renewable energy target; and
- (2) that any new sources of renewable energy to be declared by the minister are made through a disallowable instrument instead of a ministerial order.

We now have a disallowable instrument that will be inserted into the legislation, and that is a bare minimum of what this bill needed. We were not giving all power to a Minister for Resources who is 100 percent behind the accelerating deforestation of Tasmania's landscape. We have the disallowed instrument, but we do not have any commitment from Government not to promote, subsidise or facilitate a native forest biomass plant in Tasmania. Mr Barnett makes it clear, as we move through the rebuilding of a Tasmanian economy, it is critical that we remain open to adopting sustainable practices that minimise waste, and turn underutilised by-products into value-add propositions.

A standing native forest with 300- or 400-year-old regnans and an incredible complexity of flora and fauna, is not a place that delivers by-products. It is an intact ecosystem, that even while we are debating here today, is drawing CO₂ out of the atmosphere and sequestering it. It is an insanity for a Government to contemplate turning native forests into energy, in a time of climate and biodiversity crisis but, State Growth - good old State Growth; where would we be without them - the State Growth website on renewable energy is very clear that this Government would, if it could, establish native forest biomass in Tasmania. A government department has already jumped ahead of the minister in announcing that native forest, that biomass for wood, is a renewable energy source. The website front page says -

Priorities for the renewable energy sector include:

- facilitating development of distributed embedded generation projects including wind, mini hydro and biomass technologies in particular.

- harnessing renewable energy based on Tasmania's endowment of residues from the agriculture and forestry industries.

We are used to being gaslit in this place. We are used to having the Premier and Government ministers tell us something is true when it is not, or is not true when it is. The Premier said in this place this morning that native forest biomass - and I am paraphrasing him here - but words to the effect that it is not part of the Government's plans. In that case, why is the Department of State Growth - which is engaging with businesses, corporations and rent seekers - advertising forest biomass as a renewable energy source, if it is not part of the Government's plan?

Dr Woodruff earlier had the results of the right to information application that we made to the Department of State Growth on the issue of biomass. It is about two centimetres thick, most of it is redacted and there are a whole lot of black pages, but it is very clear: there are people working in the Department of State Growth on establishing native forest biomass in Tasmania. I ask the Premier and Minister for Climate Change, first of all to have the guts to answer his own correspondence, but not to treat us like fools, because the Department of State Growth has let the cat out of the bag. The right to information document does the same. The minister's letter to us does the same.

What did they do in Victoria? I will read from *Hansard* from the Victorian minister for climate change, who was asked this question by our wonderful colleague in the Victorian parliament, Ellen Sandell -

The definition of renewable energy in the bill ...

and it was a renewable energy target bill -

does not explicitly rule out counting as renewable energy the burning of native forests as biomass. Does the minister anticipate that burning native forests as biomass will be classed as renewable energy under the VRET (Victorian Renewable Energy Target)?

Ms D'Ambrosio says -

I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. The Labor Party has always been very consistent in its position in terms of refusing to use native wood for renewable energy target schemes. That has been the case federally and it has been the case in Victoria. That will continue. Providing this bill is passed, there is a power in here for the minister to declare a whole range of other renewable energy sources, but also to define what potentially may be excluded from that. I have been very clear with anyone who has asked me this question over the journey that we have been in government that native timber would be excluded from the VRET auctions.

They can do it in Victoria. Why can we not do it here? We should be able to rule it out. Labor, in this parliament, should be consistent with their federal and Victorian colleagues and the scientists, and have enough backbone to say they do not stand with the burning of native forests for energy, that it would be a crime against the climate, it would be a crime against the forest and intrinsic values, the extraordinary diversity of life that they sustain. It would be a

crime against young people, who would see a government burning forests to produce power when there is abundant hydro, solar and wind resources.

It would most certainly damage our brand. Our brand is imperfectly upheld by some of the practices here in Tasmania, but it is of enormous value to our producers and exporters. It gives them the edge in markets all over the world, and we must do everything we can to protect the brand and to make sure it has integrity because a brand without integrity is meaningless.

In closing, the Greens will not be opposing this legislation. We recognise there is a strong desire in the community for climate action and for a rapid investment in renewables and uptake of renewables. We also believe that people increasingly want to see an end to native forest logging.

As Dr Woodruff has pointed out, this bill has significant deficiencies in that it provides no pathway to reaching 200 per cent renewables by 2040. There are also enduring questions about Marinus Link itself and Battery of the Nation, and who will pay for it. We are already looking at somewhere in the order of \$7.1 billion as the price tag that has been put on Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation. Tasmanians are rightly asking - what would be in it for them? Will they have to pay for it either upfront or through their power bills over the journey, as they do now for Basslink? The question of who would pay for Marinus Link still has not been answered by Government. The House should also hear the minister answer those questions that were put by Dr Woodruff about the changing scene on the mainland, the new battery technologies that are being taken up, the move, for example, in Victoria - they are investing in a 300 megawatt, I understand it is a \$84 million big battery near to Geelong. They want that in place by next summer. New South Wales announced yesterday that they would be going out to auction for 12 000 megawatts of renewables and 2000 megawatts of storage to replace coal.

If you just step back from this issue and look at it objectively, it is hard to escape the conclusion that we are already being left behind by the technologies that are coming online and increasingly being taken up by governments. It was the South Australian government that led the way with the big Tesla Battery. Is Marinus Link a real prospect? A number of us have our doubts particularly in how rapidly we are seeing governments move. Is it not amazing how after decades of inaction we can see such sudden and sharp and positive shifts in the right direction? It is almost like as a species we have to be confronted with annihilation before we get off our backsides and are able to act collectively in the collective public interest, in the interests of humanity and life on this earth.

There are questions around Marinus Link. I am an Australian first. We all are. My heart is in Tasmania. We need to look after this island's energy needs. We need to look after this island. Should we have surplus that we are able to sustainably generate and ship north, I believe that we should: we have a responsibility to do that. We need to have the conversation as a community about what cost we are prepared to bear.

I think most Tasmanians do not want to see the north of this island turned into an industrial park. Most Tasmanians would like to think that our energy generation assets here will be largely Tasmanian owned. There is a huge question over who would own our energy assets should we meet the 200 per cent renewable target and be pumping across Bass Strait the

equivalent, or thereabouts, of what we are using now. About 60 per cent of the energy infrastructure across the country is owned by a Chinese company.

Did I hear you scoff, Dr Broad? Do you think that -

Dr Broad - Yes, I did not think you were going to get to the Chinese this time, but you have, so that is -

Ms O'CONNOR - I am sorry you are not interested in matters of sovereignty, or the security of our infrastructure.

Mr O'Byrne - Which company are you talking about?

Ms O'CONNOR - I said, 60 per cent of our assets across the country are owned by Chinese companies, and they are. It is a legitimate question to ask who would be owning our energy infrastructure in the future? We believe it should be owned by Tasmanians. We believe that farmers should be able to generate their own power through small-scale renewables on farms and trade their surplus across to other farms.

We have to stop, in Tasmania, being this cargo-cult state where we just love the big thing. We can achieve a substantially increased level of renewable generation without turning Tasmania into an industrial park. We should have much more focus on distributed generation. Small-scale solar farms. We need some windfarms too. I am not one of these people who finds them unattractive. I find them rather beautiful, but they should be in places where there is no other significant impact on the environment or on a community. There is one windfarm proposed for Tasmania that sticks out like the proverbial and that is the Robbins Island windfarm. That proposed windfarm, which would be the largest windfarm in the southern hemisphere, is on a wetland that should have had Ramsar listing. It is an incredibly significant and sensitive site. We need to be able to plan in Tasmania for where we put our wind farms and we should have a renewable energy mapping process in place.

[4.20 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, the member who has just resumed her seat has been in this place a long time and she can pick the exact second that she has run out of time, so props to you.

Ms O'Connor - That was a devastating blow. You just cannot help yourself, can you?

Dr BROAD - I was not bagging you out; I was just making a comment. If you want me to bag you out, I will.

What we have heard from the Greens today is a lot of talk about a climate emergency. It is the biggest issue that we are facing and those who come after us. The climate emergency is something that we need to do something about yet the Greens try to walk both sides of the street - talk about the emergency but then bag the solutions. That is the way they are -

Dr Woodruff - No, we are not. We did not bag anything. We raised a whole lot of questions.

Ms O'Connor - You think biomass from native forest is a solution, clearly.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - Once again, they cannot even let me begin before interjecting, despite the fact they were both heard in virtual silence. Absolutely intolerant of any opposing views.

The Greens are apparently the only ones that care: the only ones that care about climate change and the solutions that we need to put in place. One thing that we do not hear them say is how proud they are of Tasmania for being net-zero. The Greens should be going to all their colleagues around the world and talking about Tasmania being a place, a state, a jurisdiction that is net-zero in carbon emissions.

Ms O'Connor - Because of our forests.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Dr BROAD - This is something that the world is aiming for by 2050. The world is aiming for this, or at least the majority of the world is aiming for this by 2050. We are already there, yet you would think that Tasmania is a logging coupe from one end to the other and that Tasmania is devastating the environment. Yet we are net-zero and have been, as the Premier said today, for the last four years. That is something that we should be proud of. That is something that the Greens should be shouting from the tree tops. Instead of being up there swinging in the wind they should be talking about how Tasmania is net-zero. We should be proud of that.

Dr Woodruff - That is total rubbish, Dr Broad. Do you remember the energy crisis?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr BROAD - That is something that should put us at the forefront of people's minds when they think about investing somewhere. Where should you go if you are climate conscious? You should come to Tasmania and invest because we are net-zero already. What we are trying to do as a state is move even further down that road and have even more renewable energy and drive a renewable economy to make us even better, to offset other states' emissions. This is something that we should be all working together on.

This bill should be non-controversial. There should not be much debate about the intent, yet the Greens use their emotive language and their skills in politics to talk about forest furnaces, demonising a proposal that is not even in Tasmania. There are no proposals before us, yet that is a good reason to grandstand and to again drive a political wedge between the political parties on the floor in this place.

What we should be doing today is talk about how we can get renewable energy up to the target of twice the energy that we require. We are net-zero. That is something we should be proud of. You cannot walk both sides of the street and bag out all the renewable energy projects that we are talking about.

Dr Woodruff talked about all the bad things that windfarms do, apparently. How can we get further down the road with renewables? How can we increase our renewable energy in the state if we cannot have wind turbines and power lines?

Thankfully the Greens were not a political force when Tasmania was electrified. When we first started talking about putting up powerlines in this state to electrify our homes all those 100-odd years ago, could you imagine if the arguments were running, 'Oh, you can't have powerlines'. Imagine powerlines running past your house so the horse and carriage has to go around the power pole. These are the arguments that they would have put up back in the day and these are the arguments they are putting up now. You cannot have powerlines. How outrageous to have powerlines in this day. Yet the Greens have confirmed today that they do not support renewable energy and renewable energy projects. They will stand in the way of any renewable energy project that has a wind turbine or a powerline associated with it. They were against hydroelectricity, they were against wind farms; they are against everything.

Dr Woodruff talked at length about overhead powerlines and undersea cables. How are we supposed to get renewable energy to offset the coal-fired power stations on the mainland if we cannot have overhead powerlines and undersea cables? You cannot have it both ways.

Dr Woodruff - I didn't say they shouldn't be there. I said there should be a plan, Dr Broad. You should talk to your communities in Braddon -

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - You cannot campaign on a problem and then bag out all the solutions.

Dr Woodruff - Desperate and sad.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff, this is my final warning.

Dr BROAD - How can we get rid of the brown coal-fired power stations in Victoria that are horrendous for our climate? How can we get Victoria to transition away from that dirty brown coal?

Ms O'Connor - They are buying batteries.

Dr BROAD - They have batteries, but what do they need to fill those batteries with? You have to have both generation and storage. You cannot have it both ways.

In the past, they have bagged out our industrials due to their energy use and so on. Would they rather that these industrials left Tasmania and were fired by coal or something on the mainland? You cannot have it both ways.

We have this straw man argument. At least the Greens are consistent; they are more interested in the politics and along the way they have exposed their hypocrisy. What they have built up now, and they have done it in the media over the weekend using their very clever language as they do, they talked about forest furnaces. I did not hear the first Greens member who spoke, Dr Woodruff, talk about forest furnaces, so I thought that was going to be the end of the debate, but then Ms O'Connor stood up and used that very powerful emotive language that she is very good at, and said the words 'forest furnaces'.

There has been a fair bit of work done on biomass in Tasmania. From what I gather and the research that is done, it does not stack up. You are talking about a moot point. Nobody is

talking about going into native forests, cutting them down and sticking them in some sort of wood-fired power station.

Dr Woodruff - If it's a moot point you won't have any problem finally ruling it out.

Dr BROAD - The reasons why is because they do not stack up economically. Wind farms, solar, all that other stuff, is way better. Nobody is talking about it and we do not support that. What we support is genuine residues from sustainably managed forests.

This is in effect a moot point because it does not stack up. It does not stack up if you use agricultural waste, it does not stack up if you use rubbish, and it does not stack up if you use wood residues. When you harvest a tree, a tree is round and planks are square or rectangular, so there is wastage. There is the outside, the sawdust and the branches, and so on, that come with it, but they are more often left on the forest floor, but from the tree that ends up in the sawmill there are residues. What do we do with those residues? Do we bury them or send them overseas to make paper? There is not a real market for that. What is wrong with some of those residues being used to power a factory? It is already happening. Most of the sawmills in the state use a portion of their residues to heat their boiler. That happens already. We are not talking about something that does not happen.

The Greens want to rule out generating electricity from the product, so what should we do with that residue? Should we bury it? What would that do? What happens to the carbon when you bury it? Yes, it all comes back to forestry: just stop harvesting trees - and I will get to that in a second. What would be wrong with a biomass project where residues from a sawmill could be used, along with trash from agricultural operations like when you harvest a crop of wheat there is straw left, and that could also go into that same process, or even municipal rubbish could go into something like that.

The thing is you have this technology that is being developed and it is not like sticking it into a wood fire that you see in your house and all the smoke comes out the chimney and it is not really good for your neighbours. We are not talking about a project like that. We are talking about getting it to a very high temperature where it gasifies and the vast majority is burnt, and that energy can be converted into steam and therefore electricity.

Those sorts of projects happen around the world. Is it better for that rubbish to be buried in landfill? We will see some emissions come out of that. Isn't it better to have another project where a biomass facility could burn that and generate electricity, along with all other sorts of biomass? There has been work done on a similar process to create biochar. It is going along the same road but economically it does not stack up. All this stuff about going in with the chainsaws and knocking down all our native forests and sticking them in a forest furnace, as the member for Clark says, is just not going to happen. It is absolutely a straw man argument.

The Greens are going back to their core issue, which is forestry. We know that they want an end to all native forestry and all their campaigns keep coming back to that because they are losing relevance. They are looking to reignite, pardon the pun, debate and politics and campaigning in an anti-forestry sense. They are really struggling for relevance because there is only a small group of these forest activists that are moving between these different astroturfing groups to give the appearance that it is a mass movement but it is not. They are doing everything they can to try to make any issue they can think of about native forestry. This again is yet another example of that. It is astounding.

Ms O'Connor in her contribution talked about moving past cultural and political ideology. I believe the Greens need to do that too. They need to move past the idea that everything is about forestry. They should be proud of Tasmania. They are not proud of Tasmania. Fundamentally the Greens are not proud of our state.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Please ask Dr Broad to withdraw that ridiculous and incorrect statement. Dr Woodruff and I are both immensely proud of this island and its people and we love it.

Madam SPEAKER - I think that is fair enough.

Dr BROAD - Madam Speaker, I am talking about the greens movement. I did not point that at any one particular person.

Ms O'Connor - The greens movement is proud of this island, which is why we fight so hard for it.

Dr BROAD - You are constantly talking it down. You should be proud of Tasmania being at zero and you are not. You should be proud that half the state's -

Madam SPEAKER - Could you just apologise if you have reflected on the members.

Dr BROAD - I withdraw, just for their satisfaction. Half the state is in some form of reservation and you should be proud of that. That is far in excess of any jurisdiction anyone can name. Tasmania's zero net emissions: you should be proud of that. You should be talking about that all the time, but instead you talk about how native forestry is like this huge industry. You would expect Tasmania to be a burnt-out logging coupe from one end of the state to the other and it is not. That is just a blatant falsehood.

We can talk about other myths, like the Greens always espouse that forests are static, so if you look at a forest it will always look like that. They completely miss the point that forests reach equilibrium where carbon in equals carbon out and those sorts of things. Anyway, let us not let our political ideology cloud anything. Everything is about forestry, including this bill -

Ms O'Connor - Actually everything is about the climate.

Dr BROAD - Yes, well let us be proud of our net zero. If all the other jurisdictions in the world were like Tasmania we would not have a climate issue, would we? This is the point I am trying to make.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, from our forests that have been protected. That is why we have got net zero. You cannot even bring yourself to say it. You are supposed to be a scientist.

Dr BROAD - If all the other jurisdictions were net zero, we would not have a problem. I digress.

I am not sure if the Liberals are going to move the amendment about the disallowable instrument. That is a good thing. That should be enough to get the Greens over the line to show that their straw man argument is indeed a straw man, and they need to focus on renewable

energy. Perhaps they should start their campaign against windfarms and powerlines. But, that is good and should hopefully calm them down a bit.

We need to do more than talk about renewable energy - we need these projects to go ahead. The Liberal Government needs to get on with Marinus. It is a significant hold up, and my colleague, Mr O'Byrne, member for Franklin, went through this. We need to get on with it - if we are waiting until 2030 before we get Marinus up and going we may miss the boat. Other projects on the mainland may undermine the business case for Marinus if we delay. Delay could be the death of Marinus.

We will not know about the business case until 2024 - this supposedly is fast tracking. A delay until 2024 to establish the Hampshire to Staveton link stops Jim's Plains and Robbins Island from going ahead. That infrastructure is vital for the project to go ahead. We need the Government to do more than talk about it, or put on the hard hats and high-vis and relaunch it.

In conclusion, I note that the Greens are at least consistent. I did not think Ms O'Connor was going to get there but she definitely was talking about forests. That has been their reason for existence for a number of years. She managed to slip China into it. In her contributions in this place at least she has ticked that list - 'I need to talk about China, I need to talk about forests, and then I will sit down'.

[4.38 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, it is an honour to finish this debate before we move into Committee. I thank the speakers who have contributed during this debate. Both major parties have indicated their support for the bill. This is not simply nation-leading legislation - it is globally-leading legislation. I am pleased and proud to be part of a government that is delivering on our policy objectives and our ambition to reach a target of 200 per cent self-sufficiency and renewable energy by 2040.

This is an historic occasion, and it is a great honour that all of us in this place have the opportunity to vote in support of this legislation, notwithstanding the comments and criticisms to which I will respond. Support across the Chamber is indicated, for which I am very grateful.

What it will do is lock in the low cost, reliable and clean electricity options we have in Tasmania right now. Affordable, reliable, clean energy is what Australia and the rest of the world wants and needs. Tasmania is delivering, thanks to our natural comparative advantages, such as our water resources. Tasmania is 1 per cent of Australia's land mass, but we have 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall with some 27 per cent of Australia's water in reservoir. Hydro Tasmania is the largest water manager in Australia. I am pleased and proud to be a minister in this space.

We also have the advantage of wind resources. Parts of Tasmania are very windy much of the time. As a state, we are blessed to have these natural advantages and resources to use for the benefit of the Tasmanian people for decades to come; indeed, for generations to come. This legislation enshrines these ambitious targets, but I believe these are targets that can be met - not only 150 per cent by 2030, but 200 per cent by 2040.

I will respond to some of the observations that have been made. It is slightly comical that my shadow, Mr O'Byrne, has made reference to the Liberal-National Coalition Government on the same day the shadow minister for agriculture and resources, Joel

Fitzgibbon, has resigned from the shadow cabinet, in part due to concerns about the Labor Party's energy policy. It is somewhat hypocritical to point the finger at the Liberal-National Coalition Government when your colleague, Joel Fitzgibbon, has just resigned from the shadow cabinet in federal parliament today.

The federal Labor Party has to work out its policies, but I note that it was Stephen Jones, on behalf of the federal Labor Party and the Opposition, who took credit - at least in part - for Marinus Link. He gave it full support, for which the Tasmanian Government is very grateful. I hope full support from the other side of the House will come. The whole point of setting up a long-term vision and target is to build bipartisan, indeed tripartisan, support across the parliament. I draw the attention of the House to the level of hypocrisy coming from the Labor opposition.

I am pleased and thankful for strong support from the federal government for our efforts to grow Tasmania's economy and for the strong support for our energy policy. This started as a Tasmania First energy policy launched by the former premier, Will Hodgman, and me at Lake Gordon prior to the election. Tasmanians come first. The Prime Minister referred to our energy policy as recently as Saturday, and said he is keen to come back to Tasmania. No doubt there will be more to say about that in coming weeks when he does return. We are pleased with the Prime Minister's support to fast track Marinus Link planning and approval processes - to go through the process in a very thorough way but as quickly as possible.

We are proud that Infrastructure Australia has identified Marinus Link as one of the top 15 infrastructure projects for Australia. We have been lobbying our federal colleagues for years to secure that commitment. More recently in the federal budget the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, backed by Angus Taylor, federal minister for Energy, my counterpart and colleague, have indicated on the public record some strong support for Marinus Link being one of the top three transmission infrastructure projects that the federal government will get behind and say, 'Yes, it is required. We will back it in with \$250 million across those three infrastructure projects'.

All of that is on the back of the Australian Energy Market Organisation, the independent organisation that identifies and puts together the integrated system plan which says the Marinus Link first cable is an actionable project. That means that it is required, essential and important to the National Electricity Market in the 20 years ahead. The second link is also an actionable project and the design and approval process between now and 2023-24, when the financial investment decision is made, is also an actionable project.

This is good news for Tasmania. This backs in our government policy and the hard work we have been putting in, not just in recent months but recent years. This is saying, 'You are on the money; you have something very valuable in Tasmania for the rest of the country; you have something that is so important to us which is affordable, reliable and clean electricity'. This is exciting news. We are backing it in, and it is not just Marinus Link, it is the Battery of the Nation plans, which means pumped hydro thanks to the work of Hydro Tasmania.

There has been some debate about that during the second reading debate and I can indicate that there are three projects that are identified as the top of the list in terms of the 3400 megawatts of potential pumped hydro projects. They are Lake Cethana, Lake Rowallan and the Tribute power station on the west coast. Those three are being very carefully considered as we speak to be one of those pumped hydro projects that would then proceed subject to further

feedback from the federal government and the underwriting new generation investment terms and conditions which will need to be negotiated between our Government and the federal government. That means a long-term commitment to that new-generation investment based on that pumped hydro project proceeding.

These are exciting times for Tasmania. As I and the Premier have said publicly and privately, this is one of the most significant economic opportunities for Tasmania in not just a decade but beyond that as well. This is part of our plan to move through COVID-19; this is part of our recovery plan to progress our renewable energy plans for Tasmania. We have talked about Marinus Link, we have touched on Battery of the Nation and there was a reference to renewable hydrogen.

I am excited about the opportunities for Tasmania in terms of renewable hydrogen because we have the best of the best in this state when it comes to renewable hydrogen. We have identified Bell Bay as a hydrogen hub as well as Burnie. We have made available the expressions of interest process with some 23 applications and in regard to the assessment process the response to that will be made available in the near future. You will see opportunities, not just in terms of feasibility studies but in terms of projects going forward. We look forward to more information in that regard and I am looking forward to making that available to members of the public and to the parliament together with others in the not too distant future.

It is exciting because we have what is called green hydrogen which is clean hydrogen made from 100 per cent renewable electricity. That is different from brown hydrogen, which is made from coal, and it is different from blue hydrogen, which is made from gas. It is different from other forms of hydrogen.

We have the best of the best in Tasmania. We are blessed with these natural resources and as a government we are taking this opportunity and grasping it with both hands and we have plans to deliver. That is why we are so busy in the renewable energy space. It will deliver thousands of jobs. It will deliver billions of investments. In terms of Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation, we are talking in excess of \$7 billion of investment. It will deliver improved energy security for Tasmania and Tasmanians, not just business but our residential customers as well, and downward pressure on electricity prices. We are pleased and proud on this side and I am pleased with the support today for this historically important globally-leading legislation.

I would like to respond to the query about competition issues from Mr O'Byrne and to indicate in terms of the exemption for businesses from the Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act, the purpose of the proposed amendments is to allow greater sharing of information between key parties in the energy sector to facilitate the two energy initiatives, Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation. This is limited to licensed generators and prospective generators and the transmission network service provider TasNetworks.

The Commonwealth Competition and Consumer Act 2010 has some very strict prohibitions designed to anticompetitive or cartel behaviour. Some of these prohibitions are so strict that the mere sharing of information could expose parties to the risk of prosecution. For the most part, these prohibitions are well and truly justified but there can be times when

there is a real need to allow parties to share information. This need is recognised in this legislation.

The Competition and Consumer Act contains a provision, section 51(1)(b), to allow a state act to exempt certain behaviour that would otherwise be breaches of the Competition and Consumer Act as long as it is expressly legislated. It should be noted that it does not apply to sharing information about pricing or cost inputs.

Is Tasmania the only state with this issue? Part of the national reform projects to modernise the regulation of the grid has been a project called the Coordination of Generation and Transmission Investments, referred to as COGATI, and this comes up regularly at our COAG energy ministers' meetings. The national reform package is designed to achieve greater coordination, reduce duplication and get a more efficient outcome. Unfortunately, the reform process is not moving as fast as we would like in Tasmania, and not fast enough for us to meet Tasmanian's needs in relation to Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation, so we are taking action now and getting on with the job.

What if generators need to share more information, or act in reliance on that shared information? If following the sharing of information, the various parties need to have further exemptions in relation to acting on shared information to facilitate further coordination, then there are several options available. That could include authorisation by the ACCC, a joint venture approach to develop shared connection infrastructure, or on a case-by-case basis a more specific exemption that could be provided by regulation. I share that information because we want to get that on the record. It is a fair question by the shadow minister and I wanted to respond accordingly.

In terms of some of that history that the shadow minister has referred to, I acknowledge past governments have made contributions, whether it be in terms of Basslink or hydro industrialisation. We have a proud history in this state of hydro industrialisation going back 100 years - Waddamana and what has happened since. In fact my hometown of Launceston was one of the first cities that was lit up by electricity thanks to a hydroelectric power station at Duck Reach. My wife and I were walking up there some weeks ago and we looked at the history, the heritage and the educational information on the Duck Reach Power Station. It is definitely worth it for any Launcestonians or others walking through the Gorge. If you walk further up the Gorge you will see that fantastic piece of history which is another world first. It was a world first in the early 1900s and here we are, some 100 plus years later, and we are moving into another world first for and on behalf of Tasmania and that is what we are delivering.

I acknowledge past governments have been absolutely supportive of this nature. That is why I am trying to build support across government and the community.

Regarding the Greens, the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, I can address a few of those concerns. It is a little comical. I appreciate the Greens' support for the bill. They have expressed some concerns and I will share some remarks on their views on bioenergy shortly. The Bob Brown Foundation is anti-Marinus Link and is doing everything in its power to kill that project. I received correspondence from Jenny Webber, who has a management role at the Bob Brown Foundation, and had to respond. The most recent report they released has so many flaws, based on flawed assumptions; flawed understanding of Marinus Link and its future.

Dr Woodruff - None of that report has been disputed by TasNetworks or Hydro. Very interesting.

Ms O'Connor - The report raises a series of questions and issues.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, may I remind you where you are?

Mr BARNETT - The Greens are clearly conflicted with the Bob Brown Foundation being so adamant, so opposed and so critical of Marinus Link and the windfarm transmission line developments and the renewable energy developments on the north-west coast.

We heard from the Premier this morning in question time in response to the Greens' questions on bioenergy. The Greens many decades ago supported coal or were against it. They supported hydro and were against it. Any major renewable energy development, where are they? They are not there.

It is disappointing regarding that history but maybe history will not repeat itself in this regard. Let us wait and see.

Ms O'Connor - I thought you were trying to build collaboration and tripartisanship.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr BARNETT - The Premier indicated earlier and Shane Broad indicated earlier, Tasmania has four years of net zero emissions. You do not hear congratulations and well done on your target of getting so close to the 100 per cent, so close to getting to 200 per cent by 2040. That is the target. You do not hear from the Greens, congratulations and well done.

Let me advise the Chamber who I have heard from, because we have released the draft Renewable Energy Action Plan. We have had strong support from the World Wildlife Fund. I have had two meetings with them in recent weeks and months and ongoing communication with my office, for which I am very grateful. A strong advocacy on behalf of the conservation organisations around the world; they recognise that Tasmania is taking a leading role. In fact, they think the target should be higher than 200 per cent by 2040. We do not agree on everything, but that is okay. They are very supportive of what we are doing.

There has been reference to our draft Renewable Energy Action Plan and why do we not have it all finalised? That is because we want to engage with the community and want their feedback. We are consulting. I want Tasmanians to own this plan that we have for the future, not only to 2040 but in all of our energy renewable plans across the board. It is because we are engaging, consulting and want that community feedback.

We have had very strong and positive feedback to that draft plan. The final plan will be released before the end of the year. That is the plan at this stage. I look forward to making that available. We had a terrific response to the children's version of the draft Renewable Energy Action Plan. There were more than 80 submissions on that. We want our future generation, our kids, to embrace, to be involved and to take a sense of ownership of our plans for the future that will deliver jobs, investment, cleaner energy and a cleaner climate. They have embraced it and the feedback has been terrific.

There has been a view expressed by Dr Woodruff that there has not been enough community engagement. One of my key messages, not just to the energy businesses but to the renewable energy proponents, is how important community engagement is. I have written to them, I have communicated with them, when I meet with the proponents I say community engagement is a top priority for the Government.

I am thankful for the work of the national wind energy commissioner, who has been to Tasmania on a number of occasions prior to the pandemic. I look forward to his further visits with the borders opening.

That is further engagement with the community. His wise counsel is greatly appreciated. Dr Woodruff asked why we are bringing this legislation in now. She said we were rushing it as we do not need to do it until 2023-24 in advance of the financial investment decision.

We want to get on with the job. P for proactive. P for positive -

Dr Woodruff - But you said it was required this year and that is not true.

Mr BARNETT - P for professional -

Dr Woodruff - You were not being honest.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr BARNETT - We are delivering. We are getting on with the job. We do not want to wait. Why would the Greens want us to wait until 2023-24? It is an absurdity to even think that. Then we have views from elsewhere to say we have to get on with the job, move on with it.

We are getting on with it. We have worked so hard behind the scenes. You probably have no idea of the time and effort to progress this important renewable energy policy for Tasmania. This TRET legislation is a critical part of that.

Tasmania is blessed in so many ways. We have now three renewable energy zones. These are not zones that are identified by me. They are identified at a federal level, by a national regulator. The three zones are: the north west and the west coast; the central highlands through to the centre and then the north east. These zones are set up for renewable energy development. This is fantastic. This is so good. This says that we have what the rest of the nation wants and needs.

There is a reference to batteries in Victoria and the 300 megawatt battery that Victoria is progressing. Of course, we need batteries. There are no issues with that. It is all part of the solution that has been identified by the independent regulator, the Australian Energy Market Operator. The national regulation says we need Marinus Link. This is part of our future. This is part of the long-term plan. It is in the integrated system plan. They are actionable projects but batteries are definitely part of the future.

We are talking about dispatchable energy and deep storage. That is what we have in Tasmania. We are strategically and brilliantly placed with our topography and geography to have pumped hydro. According to a Hydro Tasmania report many months ago we have 3400

megawatts of capacity of pumped hydro. On top of that you have the enhancement of our existing hydro-electric schemes.

Tarraleah is one of those on the public record. That has been carefully considered. Thanks to the federal government commitment through ARENA, thanks to the state Government commitment through Hydro Tasmania that work is ongoing in terms of the feasibility of a redevelopment or a whole new power scheme at Tarraleah.

The opportunities are galore. We will chase these opportunities and the opportunities for Tasmanians and deliver those jobs and economic development in the decades ahead.

I have mentioned the draft Renewable Energy Action Plan. There is the Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan. I touched on hydrogen a little earlier. We are excited about that and the prospects in the years ahead.

I will now refer to bioenergy. Dr Woodruff and Ms O'Connor referred to bioenergy and painted it, of course, as a dreadful opportunity and a dreadful thing for Tasmania and the use of native forests for that purpose. Let us be very clear because I put this not only in a letter to Cassy O'Connor and Rosalie Woodruff yesterday, and I would like to refer to a couple of quotes from that letter that was referred to earlier by Ms O'Connor, but my office and my department have briefed the Greens on this and this has been on the public record some weeks ago in terms of the Government's plans. I will extract part of that letter so that it is very clear what I have said on behalf of the Government.

The Government has been consistent in that we have always intended the renewable energy sources that are set to contribute towards the TRET to be based on solar, water and wind. The harvesting of native forests specifically for renewable energy production is not currently required to be a part of the TRET.

As we move through the rebuilding of the Tasmanian economy from the impacts of COVID-19, it is critical that we remain open to adopting sustainable practices that minimise waste and turn under-utilised byproducts into value-add propositions. This could indeed involve sources such as agricultural waste, biomass-based components of municipal solid waste; biomass-based components of sewage and wood waste. Given the unknown nature of how technologies may evolve to utilise these sources it is prudent that no particular source is ruled out as having the potential to contribute to the TRET.

Bioenergy is an internationally recognised form of renewable energy, with bodies such as the Australian Renewable Energy -

Greens members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER - I am sorry too, minister.

Mr BARNETT - I will just finish this quote:

Bioenergy is an internationally recognised form of renewable energy, with bodies such as the Australian Renewable Energy Agency undertaking significant work in the bioenergy industry to ensure that it can play a role in supporting Australia's energy transition as well as helping Australia to further reduce its emissions.

In terms of how we declare additional sources, it is vital that we give this important legislation the strength it deserves. This legislation sets out a long term vision that will help Tasmania recover from COVID-19 and build from that base over the decades to come.

With this in mind, and for other reasons, we will be tabling an administrative amendment so that new sources of renewable energy that are declared by the Minister will be done so through a disallowable instrument.

I concur with the remarks by my other shadow, Shane Broad, earlier about his support for that and the commonsense approach of that and how that might allay the views of the Greens. At least Ms O'Connor indicated that that was a step forward from their point of view, for which I am appreciative.

There was a reference in terms of bioenergy and I will touch on that a little bit further. There was a reference to Victoria and what was done there but there was no reference to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth in their legislation has listed a whole range of renewable energy sources and the list is very long indeed. Ms O'Connor rightly noted that Victoria does not include it. Victoria has a policy to close down their native forest harvesting by 2030 or thereabouts and that is a policy we simply do not support in Tasmania. This is the policy of the Greens.

In terms of forestry, this is their policy. Their policy is to halt native forest harvesting altogether. Bingo. That means thousands of Tasmanians would be on the unemployment scrap heap on day one once that occurred. Halted, bingo, out of work. Native forest harvesting, you are out of work. In terms of native forestry, let me make it very clear. I am pleased and proud to be the minister responsible for our forests which are sustainably managed. They are sustainable forests. Wood is good, Madam Speaker. Wood is recyclable. It is sustainable. It is renewable. In fact it is the ultimate renewable. We have it here in our Chamber. This is containing carbon sink. This wood is good for our environment. Wood is good. I am pleased to confirm that wood is good.

The Greens have a different perspective on forestry to the major parties in this Chamber. In terms of forestry we have thousands of jobs that are to be thrown on the unemployment scrap heap, a \$1.2 billion industry, and particularly in those rural and regional areas, those forest contractors, forest businesses and jobs are so important. That is why we are so keen to have our workplace protection legislation passed through this parliament because those jobs are important. When you go and tie yourself to equipment to stop people making -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I genuinely think the minister is misleading the House. The Workplace (Protection from Protestors) Amendment Bill has sat in the Legislative Council for almost exactly one year and if the Government is so keen for that legislation to pass, why has it stalled it at the bottom of the list upstairs? Tell the truth in here.

Madam SPEAKER - You know that is not a point of order.

Ms O'Connor - You cannot have him blatantly being dishonest in here.

Madam SPEAKER - He is a minister and I am sure he is not being dishonest.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I know you know that to be true. It is a very important bill and we have every intention of it being passed through this parliament. This is important legislation and this is clearly a question for the Labor Party as to whether they will support our workplace protection legislation. Will you or won't you? We know the views of the Greens: they oppose it. We want to protect the jobs and the families of those people working in the industry from getting on with doing their job and protecting those businesses from invasion in their workplace. Similar legislation has been passed at a federal level with federal Liberal and Labor support in other states including Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia, all with the support of the Labor Party. Here in Tasmania they are so tied up with the Greens it is not funny.

Let us have a couple of other comments on the importance of bioenergy. I was pleased to officially open Tasmania's bioenergy future online summit on Monday morning. Bioenergy has a very important role to play in Tasmania's energy future. Crop waste and remains, manure, sludge, rendered animal fats, used oils, food and organic waste, timber harvesting and processing residues, construction and demolition woody waste can all be used to generate bioenergy and by-products. Shane Broad, my counterpart in the resources space, was talking about the various uses of bioenergy, not just for energy but for heating and for a whole range of other purposes. It is already used in Tasmania and we have a vision to grow that use and that opportunity going forward.

We can create liquid transport fuel from used cooking oil and forest harvest and processing residues. We can create gas for heating and power from poultry farms, animal manures, brewery sludges and dairy and meat processing waste. We can create heat from timber and agricultural industry waste residues, as I and Dr Broad indicated earlier, and municipal waste to heat manufacturing processes and homes. We can create cooling from industry residues, agricultural residues and municipal waste. A bioenergy facility can produce a combination of these energy sources, so bioenergy is the original, oldest and most versatile form of renewable energy. Bioenergy has the potential to displace fossil fuels in every market so why won't the Greens come on board?

Ms O'Connor - Just be honest. It is biomass from native forests we're against, not all bioenergy. We are fine with sustainable bioenergy.

Mr BARNETT - It would be nice if you could clarify that for the record. During the Committee stage that would be useful.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, so I can explain, Madam Speaker. The minister repeatedly is misrepresenting us and our position and that incites interjections.

Madam SPEAKER - I think you are a bit bigger than that, Ms O'Connor. Try not to be incited.

Ms O'Connor - Thanks, Madam Speaker, but we're not going to let blatant untruths stand on the record unchallenged.

Madam SPEAKER - Okay, thank you.

Mr BARNETT - I draw to the attention of the member that there is a Committee stage coming up where she can express her views. I am expressing the views of the Government. We recognise bioenergy can assist the Government in delivering its commitments and priorities related to climate change, waste management, forestry, agriculture, regional development, COVID-19 recovery as well as energy, which is why we have opted for a whole-of-government approach. We have tasked the development of the state's bioenergy vision to the energy team in the Department of State Growth. They have had criticism from the Greens during the discussion this afternoon but I thank the Department of State Growth for its contribution and in so many other respects.

We are definitely progressing in a big way in Tasmania. This is going to help us through the COVID-19 recovery phase. This will be one of the best and most significant economic opportunities in the decade ahead. That is renewable energy.

It is a key part of the Tasmania brand. I will just finish on this point. The Tasmania brand is something that this Government has strongly supported. It is out in the community. It has been well-received and well supported. The Tasmania brand is clean and fresh, it is pure, it is natural. Getting to 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy is part of that brand. If a business comes to Tasmania and invests and wants to manufacture a widget, or if a business comes to Tasmania and wants to create some sort of service they can say, 'We are part of the Tasmania brand. We have 100 per cent clean energy from Tasmania'. This is part of the Tasmania brand. This is an exciting opportunity.

Sanjeev Gupta is behind the recent purchase of TEMCO South32 at Bell Bay. One of the key reasons that underpins that investment was our energy policy. It was great to be able to meet with Sanjeev Gupta on a number of occasions to hear his views and to know of his plans to make green steel, know of his plans to be carbon neutral by 2030 and to know of his support for our energy policy in Tasmania, which has secured those 270 odd jobs at TEMCO subject to the Foreign Investment Review Board approval. Let us not beat around the bush; this is very significant. I thank the many stakeholders I have had contact with over the years in support of our energy policy, specifically to NTD and Mark Baker who has been very supportive of not just our TRET legislation, our plans for renewable energy but also the circular economy in bioenergy and opportunities there. There are so many stakeholders, I am not going to list them all. They are appreciated and I am very grateful for that.

In conclusion, I will be putting forward this amendment which says that we have been consistent as a Government, that we have always intended renewable energy sources that are set to contribute towards the TRET to be based on solar, water and wind.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

**ENERGY CO-ORDINATION AND PLANNING AMENDMENT (TASMANIAN
RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGET) BILL 2020 (No. 43)**

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

Section 3 amended (Interpretation)

Dr WOODRUFF - As we spoke about in our second reading speech, Ms O'Connor and I on behalf of the Greens wrote to the Premier with our concern about what this clause could enable. We believe we have to do everything we can to rein in global heating, and that this renewable energy target bill has to drive a decrease in carbon emissions.

We pointed out to the Premier that the science in this area has been advancing apace and is coming to the conclusion and consensus position, at least within the European community, that there must be a completely different manner of accounting for carbon emissions from forest furnaces. Where we have been to date has substantially underestimated the real carbon emissions from the whole lifecycle of native forest felling, burning and transportation into biomass furnaces, and then the emissions from the burning of the native forest wood itself.

These carbon emissions leave aside the real issue of the loss of biodiversity that would come from felling native Tasmanian forests to be part of biomass burning based on native forest wood in Tasmania. Leaving that aside, we are very concerned that the European Academies Science Advisory Council has called on law makers to introduce a radically new standard that recognises biomass burning is not carbon neutral and has massive climate effects. That was a consensus statement from the scientists of the 28 countries in the EU. It also included two European countries not in the EU - Norway and Denmark. Those scientists advise that swapping coal with biomass often increases net emissions in the atmosphere when the whole lifecycle is properly accounted for. The current carbon emission calculations do not reflect the reality of climate heating, or the urgency to stop adding more emissions.

In simple terms, there is not enough time to grow back trees to absorb enough carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to make up for the biomass emissions chain and the emissions that are lost during the cutting and burning process. That is why we encouraged the Premier to amend the bill to rule out biomass burning from native forest wood, and native forest wood products in this bill: not, as the minister misleadingly would have you believe, all bioenergy. We are talking specifically about those from wood products originating from native trees.

I have three amendments and I will read them in as a block.

Mr Deputy Chairman, I move -

First Amendment -

By inserting the following paragraph before paragraph (a) -

- () by inserting the following definition after the definition of *energy*
in storage -

excluded energy source means any of the following energy sources:

- (a) fossil fuels;
- (b) materials or waste products derived from fossil fuels;
- (c) wood or other products originating from native trees; or
- (d) energy sources prescribed by the regulations.

Second amendment -

By inserting the following after paragraph (a) -

- () by inserting the following definition after the definition of *National Electricity Market* -

native trees means trees that:

- (a) are of a species that existed in Tasmania before European settlement; and
- (b) are not sourced from a plantation.

Third amendment -

In paragraph (c), after 'means', by inserting ', other than an excluded energy source,'

Mr Deputy Chair, these amendments seek to clarify and make it abundantly clear to anybody reading the renewable energy target that the energy sources that can be called renewable cannot include any that come from fossil fuels. In Tasmania that could include thermal coal. This Government and the Labor Party have refused to rule out mining of thermal coal in Tasmania. That is deeply concerning. Why would you refuse to rule it out if you do not want to rule out the possibility of mining and using that on-island? We have to rule that out as any potential renewable energy source including, as happens in other places, by mixing thermal coal and forest products together in furnace burning.

The second thing that this amendment makes clear is that the products we are talking about are wood originating from native trees and we specifically clarify that those are species that existed in Tasmania before European settlement and do not include plantation trees. Dr Broad said it is a moot point to say that we do not support this. It must be abundantly clear that we cannot be using native forest product. As Ms O'Connor has made so clear, this is not just forest waste. When we talk about logging native forests, everything that exists in those forests has a functioning purpose in the beautifully rich and intact ecosystems of Tasmania's native forests. They are highly biodiverse and recognised around the planet for being part of diminishing, high-functioning, biodiverse ecosystems. There are precious few of them left in Australia, less than 2 per cent across the whole of Australia, and Tasmania has about a half of that 2 per cent.

We hope that the minister and the Premier will change their position. It is very disappointing that the Premier is not here. The Climate Change minister ought to be here on this very important bill. There is no more important matter to attend to as the Minister for Climate Change today than to be here to talk to the passage of this bill and respond to the issues we raised with the Premier and Minister for Climate Change and expected to have a response from him.

We hope the Government understands it is time to remove biomass energy from native forest wood from the Department of State Growth's website. It is no longer appropriate in 2020 with the accelerating pace of heating on the planet, and the new understanding amongst expert scientists around the world is that it is no longer appropriate to consider the possibility of that as an energy source. It once seemed like a good idea in the 1980s and 1990s but things have changed. They have changed dramatically for the worst and that is why we have to be really focused on only having renewable energy from truly renewable sources and not from those which have such negative emission consequences and biodiverse impacts as biomass burning from native forest would have.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - For clarity, before you resume your seat, Dr Woodruff, you said you had three amendments. They could all be dealt with as one.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is what I am proposing.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - I want to make a brief contribution on these amendments. To make it really clear so that no-one who reads this *Hansard* in the future believes what the minister has said about our position on bioenergy more broadly, just because the minister is refusing to make a distinction between energy produced from other biological sources and energy produced by native forests does not mean we cannot. There is a clear and sharp distinction between the two. That is why we think it should not be too big an ask for the Government to support a clarification in this legislation that makes it clear that bioenergy from native forests would not be regarded as renewable energy, as it is not in Victoria.

This position is backed up by the University of Tasmania which in its submission to the Government's renewable energy action plan made it really clear. I will read from the 'Bioenergy in Tasmania' section:

Using renewable biomass to produce energy is becoming an established method for generating low-emissions energy and, where organic waste is converted into energy, is a key element of the circular economy. Across the OECD bioenergy accounts for 2.4% total energy generation whereas in Australia it accounts for 0.9% of output. Modern waste-to-energy systems have a particularly important role in reducing methane emissions (which are 30 times more potent than CO₂) from waste sites. However, large-scale bioenergy generation can be controversial and is contested in many communities where forest residues and biomass farmed on what were previously food producing lands are used as feedstock. These issues, combined with Tasmania's abundant hydro and wind energy resources, suggest that large-scale bioenergy generation is unlikely to become a significant part of Tasmania's future energy mix.

There may be scope to develop small-scale bioenergy plants linked to industrial, processing and waste management facilities.

The recommendation is no. 9 -

Bioenergy generation in Tasmania should focus on small-scale operations using existing waste materials for feed stock. Native forests products should be excluded from the process.

We have the EU scientists, we have UTAS experts, and we have commonsense saying that we should rule out the use of native forest feedstock for bioenergy. Yet the Government is refusing to rule it out. It has a Department of State Growth page on its website that promotes native forest biomass as renewable energy. This is the stuff of a troglodyte mindset which refuses to hear or see what the scientists are saying. The reason there is some risk here is because the market for our native forest woodchips is in decline and has been in decline for some time.

While the Energy minister and the Climate Change minister cannot admit that the reason we are a net carbon sink is because of our forests that are protected, the Greens will come in here every time and say that. Tasmania's forests give us our positive climate profile. That cannot be disputed. It would be a great day to have a minister for climate change, or a minister for resources, acknowledge that instead of trying to use the Greens as a punching bag on this issue.

Tasmania is a global climate leader for two primary reasons: one, because we protected our forests, and two, because we have a massive renewable hydro-generation infrastructure. It is our forests, however, that are drawing down carbon. It is our forests that should be protected. That is why 250 doctors and other allied health professionals wrote to the Premier last week and said -

It is great to see Tasmania has recorded net zero carbon-dioxide emissions for the fourth year in a row as detailed in the State and Territory Greenhouse Gas Inventories 2018, released in June.

The doctors say -

It is critical, however, to recognise how this has been achieved. The data reveals Tasmania's forests are the critical factor in our state's favourable emissions profile.

This achievement mainly resulted from a reduction in native forest logging since 2005.

Given Tasmania's privileged position of not relying on fossil fuels for energy generation, the most important climate action we can take in the interests of human health is to protect native forests.

Mr Deputy Chair, when you look at the graph of our greenhouse accounts, you can see we began to become a net carbon sequesterer in the year 2013. That is when the line on the graph changes substantially, because of the forests that were set aside under the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, and also the avoided logging that happened before that when the market

started to reject Tasmania's products because they are not sustainable - and that is why we cannot secure, or Forestry Tasmania cannot secure forest stewardship certification. That is where the risk is.

We have a native forest logging industry which is heavily reliant on subsidies. We have a global market which is moving away from this product quite quickly. We have a Chinese government prepared to use punitive trade measures against Australia and has already said no to our beef, barley, some of our wine and now our crayfish. We need to be prepared for the possibility even that market will be closed to our native forest products. Not that they care about FSC certification, but there is a problem here for the industry because the global market is turning hard against it. That is why we are concerned that the Tasmanian Government will throw them a lifeline by promising them a native forest biomass future.

We know there are people in the industry - like Terry Edwards - who support native forest biomass for energy production. That is why we are concerned. We will not accept abuse about it. We come in here to defend the forests and to speak up for meaningful climate action, and that is what we have done today.

Mr O'BYRNE - Mr Deputy Chair, clause 4 of the bill identifies the renewable energy source being solar, wind and water, and the original bill in clause 4(d) refers to 'an energy source declared under section 3B'. That clause states -

The Minister, by order, may declare an energy source to be a renewable energy source for the purposes of this Act.

That has been highlighted as deficient. The minister and the Government have committed to dealing with the process with a disallowable motion. We consider, as my colleague Dr Broad articulated, that is an easier and simpler way to manage issues around what is in and what is out, having taken into account that the technology and other developments in this space will need to be accommodated by the Government moving forward. Our view is that the Greens are seeking to create an issue where there is not one. There are no forest furnaces.

It is an awkward way to deal with an issue that could become quite complex in terms of a disallowable motion which has the flexibility of covering a whole range of different changes in technology and uses. We prefer the Government's approach to resolving this issue.

Mr BARNETT - We will not be supporting any of these amendments by the Greens. It is all consistent with the Greens' policy of closing down the native forest industry in Tasmania - and indeed in other parts of Australia - and that would put thousands of Tasmanians out of work.

Ms O'Connor - So, now you are saying there is a connection between the industry and biomass plans?

Mr BARNETT - Madam - Mr Deputy Chair -

Ms O'Connor - Do not call him madam.

Mr BARNETT - You continually and rudely interrupt. I am attempting to respond to your contributions in the Committee stage. This is consistent with the Greens' policy to halt

native forest harvesting and close down the native forest industry in Tasmania. That is behind all three amendments put forward by the Greens. Let us be very clear on that point.

The Greens wrote to the Premier on 5 November and part of that letter stated -

It is critical you rule out the burning of wood products from native forests as a renewable energy source that could be counted towards Tasmania's target. Biomass from native forests is not renewable energy.

In 2018, the Victorian Government declared that native forest wood products, waste, sawmill residue or biomass cannot be included as renewable energy sources within the Victorian *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000*.

As Minister for Climate Change, we ask you to amend the TRET Bill in a similar fashion to explicitly make clear that native forest products cannot be declared a renewable energy source by the Energy Minister.

The Greens' position is very clear - they are backing the Victorian Government amendment. I responded on behalf of the Government yesterday, and was consistent with advice previously provided to the Greens. In that letter, I was very clear that we have consistently said our renewable energy sources, in terms of contributing to the TRET, are water, wind and solar - and that the harvesting of native forest specifically for renewable energy production is not currently required to be part of the TRET.

In the letter, we also talked about the importance of other aspects of rebuilding the Tasmanian economy: '... it is critical that we remain open to adopting sustainable practices that minimise waste and turn under-utilised byproducts into value-add propositions'. I then said this could indeed involve sources such as agricultural waste, biomass-based components of municipal solid waste, biomass-based components of sewerage and wood waste.

Dr Broad talked about wood waste and wood residues being used in boilers and for heating purposes and energy purposes in saw mills, and in other industrial facilities around Tasmania. It is already happening - and why would we want to rule it out? It seems obscure and absurd. As what I went on to say in my response to the Greens, given the unknown nature of how technologies may evolve to utilise these sources, it is prudent that no particular source is ruled out as having the potential to contribute to the TRET.

There has been little comment with respect to the Commonwealth Government. To be very clear, the Commonwealth Government's legislation - the Renewable Energy Electricity Act 2000 - defines eligible renewable energy sources for the purpose of the Renewable Energy Target Scheme as including - and lists a whole range of these - hydro, wave, tide, ocean, wind, solar, geothermal, hot dry rock, energy crops, wood waste, agricultural waste and the list goes on. I will not go through all of it.

The Renewable Energy Electricity Regulations 2001 clarifies the meaning of wood waste and it includes biomass from a native forest. It is included in the federal legislation, so why would we in Tasmania want to exclude that? This is an ideologically driven amendment by the Greens simply to gain and garner support from some of their supporters in Tasmania or in Melbourne and Sydney. That is my view of the reason and rationale behind this effort.

We have made it very clear that we wanted to strengthen the legislation, the approach of continual improvement wherever possible, and that is that a ministerial order can be delivered and be made a disallowable instrument. We have no intention of supporting these three amendments and look forward to moving the amendment very shortly in regard to the disallowable instrument.

Dr WOODRUFF - The minister is all over the place and is making a series of contradictory statements which paint the picture beautifully for why this amendment is needed here. On the one hand he says there is no intention of native forests being used for biomass burning, and on the other he accuses us of wanting to shut down the native forest industry -

Mr BARNETT - Point of order, Mr Deputy Chair. Dr Woodruff is misrepresenting my position and I ask her to be accurate in terms of my position.

Dr WOODRUFF - If the minister would sit down, I will finish my speech so that he can see I had not finished representing his position. Minister, you accused the Greens of wanting to close down the native forest industry and 'risk thousands of jobs' by inserting this in the bill. You cannot have it both ways. Either the Government has no intention of biomass burning, in which case just accept the amendment and rule it out, or the Government has an intention and if this amendment were to be accepted we would effectively be seeking to close down the native forest industry and 'risk thousands of jobs'.

The minister is not making any sense. What we are doing as the Greens is standing up for science and for climate action. That is all this is about. If the minister calls us ideological, we are ideological about listening to the science. If that is an ideology, I do not mind, and I am signing up for it. I have always been a pragmatic person who looks at the reality of the world, which is probably why I became an epidemiologist. It is also probably why I joined the Greens, a party which looks at the evidence and listens to the science.

Like other members of the Greens and people who vote Greens, many people in Tasmania are confused by the fact that the Government was prepared to listen to health experts during the COVID-19 emergency and do what needed to be done to put thousands of Tasmanians out of jobs overnight. The Premier came in here at one point and said 20 000 people had been put in unemployment because of this Government's decisions to take a strong response to the COVID-19 emergency to safeguard people's lives. That is what leadership looks like and we do not understand why this Government is incapable of showing leadership during the enduring emergency which we will all live with for the rest of our lives.

Whether COVID-19 disappears next March, next year or the year after from a vaccine, we all hope that happens, but one day we will not be living in a COVID-constrained world. That is the nature of coronaviruses. Things will change, but for the rest of my life and every person in this Chamber, everyone who is watching, we will be living in a climate emergency, so we do not apologise for listening to the science.

This is not extremism. This is the Scientific Advisory Council for the European Parliament who are warning their lawmakers to turn around and change their accounting system. Next year they will be changing their accounting system dramatically. Biomass burning will be gone. It will not be counted as a renewable energy source. They have not got to that decision yet but that is where they are heading. That is what they are flagging has to happen.

This is us listening to the science. To listen to a dinosaur in the Liberal Party talking about retrograde history is disappointing, but I am not surprised that the Tasmanian Labor Party would walk away from the history of the Gillard federal government and from the current Andrews Labor government in Victoria and from the policy of the Labor Party on this issue because they are so conflicted in Tasmania. They are incapable of making any different move on anything to do with energy or native forests from the Liberals. They could not have a position if they had to save their lives, so I am really disappointed and really unsurprised at the same time that the Labor Party would not support the science and not stand with all those young Tasmanians. I see members of the Labor Party wringing their hands with concern about climate emergency and talking about how important it is to take action. Well, this is what action looks like. This is voting for action. This is voting to make really damn sure that we do not go down a crazy path of cutting down native forests and feeding them into a furnace and calling it renewable energy and job stimulation. There are so many ways -

Mr O'Byrne - Go and find a forest furnace then. Where is it? There isn't one.

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not mind calling it a fantasy. Let us just rule it out. Let us rule out one of the Greens' kooky fantasies. That would be fine if you are so sure but in actual fact it is not true because it is very clear from the minister's letter there is every intention to keep this open and live, either as a form of signaling to people in the party and supporters who want to keep the dream alive that somehow we can kickstart a native forest industry and one of the things it could be used for is biomass burning, because otherwise why would you use the phrases like the minister has used that this could indeed involve sources such as biomass-based components of municipal solid waste, biomass based components of sewage, agricultural waste and wood waste. Wood waste is included.

Also minister, you go on to say in your letter to Ms O'Connor and me -

Given the unknown nature of how technologies may evolve to utilise these sources it is prudent that no particular source is ruled out as having the potential to contribute to the TRET.

Wrong. It is entirely prudent to rule out technologies that are dangerous and will enable massive emissions of carbon. Just because a new technology comes along it does not mean you have to take everything that is created and use it. You have to have a plan to rule out the dangerous ones and that is why we have to rule out native forest biomass burning and make sure that it has no place in Tasmania ever in the future.

Question - That the amendments be agreed to - put.

The Committee divided -

AYES 2

Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

NOES 22

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney

Ms Dow
Mr Ellis (Teller)
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad
Ms Hickey
Ms Houston
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms Standen
Mr Tucker
Ms White

Amendments negatived.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 -

Part 1A inserted

Mr BARNETT - As I foreshadowed, I have amendments to clause 5 which have been circulated. I will not go through too much about this because we have made it clear that it is wind, water and solar which have been identified under the TRET legislation. I have made it clear that the harvesting of native forest specifically for renewable energy production is not currently required to be part of the TRET.

We announced this publicly some weeks ago. My office briefed the Opposition and the Green representatives. I wrote to the Greens yesterday to confirm this. What is in the TRET is solar, water and wind. What we are ensuring with this amendment is that any new renewable energy source to be declared by the minister for energy will be through a disallowable instrument. It gives the parliament the full opportunity to review renewable energy and what counts towards the TRET. The amendment will bring the order within the scope of section 47 of the Acts Interpretation Act. That means that any future order must be tabled in both Houses of parliament, and is then subject to disallowance in the same way as a regulation.

As I have indicated in the letter to the Greens, I hope that may alleviate some of their concerns. Obviously not all of them. I believe it strengthens the bill. We are all about continual improvement wherever possible. This is a further improvement to the bill based on our nation-leading and globally leading legislation. I look forward to feedback on that. I will leave it there and am happy to respond to any queries.

Madam Chair, I move -

First Amendment -

In proposed new Part 1A, proposed new section 3B

Leave out 'The Minister'.

Insert instead '(1) The Minister'.

Mr O'BYRNE - As in my previous contribution on the previous amendment this is a sensible amendment which provides the minister and the House not only flexibility, but a level of scrutiny that can adapt to changing technologies and emerging trends in this area. We support the amendment.

Dr WOODRUFF - We will support this amendment. We encouraged the Government to make this amendment. We welcome the fact that the Government has taken up our suggestion. It is important that on such important matters as this the decision to declare a renewable energy source should come to parliament as a disallowable instrument instead of through an unaccountable ministerial order.

Some of the things the minister included in his response to the Greens after we wrote requesting that an amendment like this be added into the legislation were sources that could -

... involve sources such as agricultural waste, biomass-based components of municipal solid waste; biomass-based components of sewage and wood waste.

It is clear that all those forms of waste, if we are just looking at municipal solid waste or sewage, can involve chemicals that can be toxic to human health. It can involve not only smoke pollution depending on the quality of the burning, but also have repercussions across the whole collection chain. It is really important to understand exactly what might be fed into biomass burners and what the implications are.

From a carbon emissions point of view, but also in a biomass burning plant, we do need to understand what is going in and what is coming out.

A number of European countries that have for years rested their waste solution on incineration plants have been back peddling very quickly from that position. They are now becoming widely discredited because of their emissions and because of some of the toxic outputs that come from these incineration plants.

It is very important that the parliament has an opportunity to consider the implications, the risks and most importantly to consider the carbon emission contribution from any biomass burning operations or any other renewable energy source, in addition to solar, wind and water that could be declared. We do support this amendment.

Mr BARNETT - I am very pleased to hear the support for this amendment. I appreciate the support across the Chamber. This may be the last opportunity to indicate my thanks to the department for their support.

Madam Chair, I have an amendment to this clause. I move -

Second Amendment -

In proposed new Part 1A, proposed new section 3B, at the end of the proposed new section, insert the following subsection -

- (2) Section 47(3), (3A), (4), (5), (6) and (7) of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1931* applies to an order under subsection (1) as if the order were regulations.

I have circulated that in the Chamber. We have dispensed with that formality. On this occasion I pass on my grateful thanks to the department for all their work over many months. Likewise, to my office, Charles in particular, who has done a sterling job on this and other parts of the energy agenda. Congratulations, well done and many thanks. It has been a long time coming. It is nation-leading, it is global-leading legislation. I am pleased with the full support, not only for this amendment but for the bill. We will look back on this legislation in decades to come and say it built the foundation for the future and paved the way for Tasmania as a renewable energy epicentre for the globe.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 8 agreed to and bill taken through the remaining Committee stages.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read the third time.

GAS INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 32)

Second Reading

[6.10 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy - 2R) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read the second time.

The Gas Industry Act 2019 was passed by parliament last year, along with its cognate legislation, the Gas Safety Act 2019 and the Gas (Consequential Amendments) Act 2019.

I remind the House that the creation of these two new acts separated industry regulation provisions from industry safety provisions from the Gas Act 2000 and Gas Pipelines Act 2000, and eliminated inconsistencies and duplications between them.

The Gas Industry Act 2019 and Gas Safety Act 2019 have not yet been proclaimed because time was needed to review regulations and codes made under the acts to ensure consistency with the powers and operation of the new primary legislation. It was during this review that two issues were identified in the Gas Industry Act that were not previously identified through the extensive consultation on the 2019 acts. The bill before the House provides for amendments to the Gas Industry Act to address these two issues.

The first issue relates to the meaning of retailing of gas. The way 'retailing' is defined in the Gas Industry Act means that retailers selling only to customers using more than one terajoule of gas per year would not need to be licensed. This is an unintended consequence of the Gas Industry Act and may have undesirable outcomes for industry and customers whose gas use is above one terajoule per year.

One such outcome arises because codes only apply to participants who are licensed. This means that the Gas Customer Transfer and Reconciliation Code would only apply to licensed retailers and would not apply to a retailer who supplied exclusively to larger customers. This would potentially create poor outcomes for industrial customers and larger commercial customers when switching retailers. This is because the obligations in the code that require retailers to transfer customer data upon request would not apply. This could adversely impact orderly arrangements when commercial and industrial customers choose to move to a different retailer.

A further undesirable consequence is that it creates an uneven playing field for licensed retailers who retail gas to both small and large customers. These retailers would have a greater compliance burden than retailers who may enter the market and retail gas only to larger customers without an obligation to be licensed. There is no justification for this competitive disadvantage being imposed on retailers servicing the small customer segment of the gas market.

The bill before the House amends the 'retail' definition to be consistent with its historical meaning under the Gas Act 2000. The threshold for the categorisation of small customers was introduced in the Gas Industry Act, where previously it had only been provided for in the codes. The threshold of one terajoule continues to provide better alignment with national arrangements for customer protections. However, this amendment severs the link between the threshold and the requirement to hold a retail licence. The Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator has advised that this is an appropriate way of addressing this issue. Gas industry representatives also agree.

The second issue being addressed by this bill relates to the ongoing management and administration of the gas codes.

After considering the existing gas codes, to ensure consistency with the new act, the Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator identified the benefits for providing greater flexibility for the regulator in administering the codes, including the ability to review and amend the codes, and improving ongoing efficiency.

There are currently four Tasmanian gas codes. Three of those codes were issued by previous ministers for Energy - the Tasmanian Gas Distribution Code, the Tasmanian Gas Retail Code and the Tasmanian Gas Bulk Customer Transfer Code. Only one has been issued by the regulator; the Gas Customer Transfer and Reconciliation Code.

The Gas Industry Act as it stands requires that any review of a code may only be conducted by the issuing authority, and further, that any amendment of a protected provision must be approved by the Minister for Energy. This has created unnecessary procedural steps, which this bill intends to remove.

The bill before the House enables both the Minister for Energy and the regulator to review or amend any code, regardless of who issues the code. In line with this principle, it also removes reference to protected provisions altogether.

The bill will, however, ensure that both the minister and the regulator communicate with each other about administration of the codes, while still providing greater autonomy for the regulator to undertake the ongoing routine management of both the current and any future codes.

The regulator has the statutory obligation to act in a fair and equitable manner, taking proper account of both the interests of licensees and, importantly, the interests of customers. I know that the Tasmanian Economic Regulator takes the role of protecting the interests of customers very seriously, both in relation to this legislation as well as other legislation under his remit.

This bill removes procedural steps that do not serve to enhance the ongoing management of the codes. Accordingly, there are efficiencies in ensuring that the regulator has an appropriate level of flexibility in the ongoing review and management of the codes as the market continues to mature.

I commend the bill to the House.

[6.16 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I indicate that we will be supporting this bill. It is finishing off the work that we did back in 2019 with the Gas Industry Act and the Gas Safety Act. This is hopefully the final instalment to ensure those two acts can now be proclaimed and put into good use. Clearly, the two reasons for this amendment bill relate initially to the operation of the market and to remove any inefficiencies or uncompetitive behaviours and providing greater support to those retailers to ensure there is clarity around small and large customers. It makes a lot of sense and is following the recommendations of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator and we support that.

Second, it is dealing with the efficiency of procedural steps that are taken by both the minister and the regulator to manage the four codes. It is an appropriate and sensible way to go. Minister, you have our support and hopefully with the passing of this bill we can finalise the work of the Gas Industry Act 2019 and the Gas Safety Act 2019 and move on.

[6.18 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the amendments in the Gas Industry Amendment Bill. These are a number of small changes that follow the changes to the Gas Act from late 2019. It separated that into the Gas Industry Act and the Gas Safety Act. It was not long after they proclaimed that the department identified a number of things needed to be corrected, particularly that the definition of gas retailer needed correcting. A further change was also proposed to allow the Gas Regulator to review codes approved by the minister. After a good and thorough briefing, thank you very much to the staff who provided that, I am comfortable that they are warranted and important amendments to the Gas Industry Act.

We cannot let this bill go past without making some comments about the situation of the federal Liberal government at the moment and its position on gas and the so-called gas-led COVID-19 recovery.

The Prime Minister's announcement that gas would be part of a COVID-19 recovery is disgraceful. It struck a lot of fear and anxiety into the hearts of people around Australia who have been campaigning for years about concrete action on climate change - concrete action to address the climate emergency.

There is no doubt that once in the 1980s and 1990s gas was considered to be an important move as a transition away from coal and oil. Those were the days where we had the luxury of thinking that we had an extensive amount of time to transition away from what we already knew - that the world was in trouble. We actually knew that in the 1950s but we knew it quite clearly in the 1980s and 1990s. We understood the greenhouse gas emissions were heating the planet. We could see where we were heading. The science was still at an early stage and at that point, when I was working as an epidemiologist on the health impacts of climate change modelling projections into the future, it seemed we had an opportunity to at least change the direction of Australian energy policy and finance, and divert it into gas.

We have since come to understand that the emissions from gas and the so-called fugitive emissions that are emitted during the drawing of gas from deep parts of the earth are incredibly high greenhouse gas emissions. It puts gas into an extremely risky category, in terms of the quantity of emissions that are coming from a single joule of gas. It is quite clear the last thing we should be doing at this point in 2020 is shovelling public funds into fossil fuel corporations to expand gas. Even though this was spruiked by the Prime Minister as essential for COVID-19 recovery, in fact all of the projects that are lined up for gas under the federal Liberal Government are certainly not short-term. There will be no short-term jobs from the gas-led recovery.

It is a total lie that any jobs, any substantial industry is created when you put public money or even private money into gas fields and to gas transportation. It is a lie that it is a big job-creating industry. Simon Holmes à Court, who is well-known for his energy analysis and commentary and is considered as somewhat of an expert in the area, tweeted recently that one company in Australia that produces 400 megawatts employs just 13 full-time staff. That is by no means an industry that the federal government - or any government - should be focussing on in a COVID-19 recovery.

It is not surprising to see recommendations for a massive expansion of gas, when the federal government put gas industry executives to lead the COVID-19 economic recovery. No alternatives were recommended by that COVID-19 recovery committee; and what a surprise when we had someone like Andrew Liveris who was the Saudi Aramco and Worley[OK] board member. Saudi Aramco is the largest gas company in the world and he is also a member of the Worley Board.

When you have someone like Mr Liveris as the task force head, it is no surprise that the recommendation is we should put all of our finances into gas. The Liberal Party's energy policy represents the best interests not of Australian jobs, not the future for Australian children, not the future for environmental conservation; it represents Liberal Party donors. That is what federal Liberal energy policy represents. It represents the donors to the Liberal Party, the fossil fuel companies - Woodside, Santos, Origin Energy. Those are the companies that will benefit from the so-called gas led COVID-19 recovery. Stacking the COVID Economic Commission with gas cronies has made the gas-fired climate acceleration plan predictable, but it is still shocking.

Most Australians who understand the gravity of where we are in terms of climate heating are struggling to understand how somebody who calls himself the Prime Minister of Australia can put money into a gas-led recovery, after having watched and listened to the heartbreaking stories of people all last summer in eastern Australia - towns burnt down around them; watching forests burn that have never burned in human history - rainforests in parts of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland; watching communities and brave firefighters who died valiantly trying to save their communities.

People do not understand how a Prime Minister - who knows that more than 1 billion native animals died last summer; that fires of a type never before seen in Australia were witnessed and bravely fought by firefighters by helicopters, on the ground, foot by foot, month by month - can put money into a gas led recovery.

It is not only the Australian energy market operator that has made it clear that Australia does not need more gas generation. It is not just CSIRO scientists who made it clear that gas generation will mean a more expensive form of electricity than renewable energy. It is not the economists who know that gas extraction creates far fewer jobs. It is not the scientists who are telling us that gas is totally incompatible with Paris goals. It is not the investors themselves who understand and who do invest with an eye to the future - they understand that gas has bad returns. There is no money to be made in gas unless it is fundamentally underwritten by public taxpayer money. That is the disgusting thing that the federal Liberals are up to at the moment.

Tomorrow, there is a bill on the table for discussion in the federal parliament, seeking to change the public Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) to allow it to fund fossil fuel projects. It was set up as a Clean Energy Finance Corporation to provide finance for renewable energy to bring down greenhouse gas emissions. This Liberal-National Government is gutting the CEFC, if they have their way in the House in Canberra tomorrow, to enable it to fund fossil fuel projects. Not only that, the bill would allow the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to use the fund to support gas fired power.

In addition, the bill will exempt the CEFC from the requirement that every single project they fund must deliver a public benefit. It must be profitable. This is a complete attack on the CEFC and the functioning of the CEFC. Everything the CEFC has done has been incredibly beneficial to Australia. The money that has gone through the CEFC and has been handed out to renewable energy generation is why we have huge amounts of galloping expansion in battery technology; incredible forward leaps. Despite the troglodytes making energy policy in the Liberal Party and all of the failures to come up with a united plan with the states and territories to show leadership, the business community have been calling for this loudly for five years now.

Year on year they have been calling and pushing for energy policy clarity, but not like this, not energy policy clarity that is leading us back to the 1980s and is taking us away from the Paris targets that will ensure we resign our children to living in a world which is fundamentally uninhabitable. We have to resist and we will resist what the federal Liberals are doing to energy policy in this country. We cannot have a climate policy that supports more fossils fuels. Investing in the problem is not the solution.

One ray of hope I see on the horizon is the election of Joe Biden as the President of the United States. That party has made a really strong commitment to the United States reengaging with the international climate community and to upping the ante on the commitments not only

within the United States - and let us face it, they have a long way to go - but sitting around the table with other countries. Prime Minister Morrison had better watch out because there is going to be a lot of pressure on this federal Liberal Government to change its approach.

We are the international pariah when it comes to our position on climate change and we are falling behind countries around the world at a time when we ought to be going into a leadership role. We have the smarts, we have the track record and we have incredible scientific expertise in Australia. Some of the best climate scientists in the world come from Australia and from Tasmania. Our marine and Antarctic scientists are the best in the world.

We have an opportunity to move on and skip gas and never go there. I certainly hope that the Greens and others on the crossbench tomorrow will be putting pressure on Labor not to support the bill and will be working to make sure it does not pass.

The minister talked before and I want to pick him up on some Orwellian doublespeak he used. The term 'blue gas' is not true; it is a lie. No such thing exists; it is black gas. You cannot put gas in a different category. You cannot colour reform gas. Gas is a fossil fuel as dangerous as coal and oil and as dangerous as burning native forest biomass. We cannot have those sources of fuel any longer. No greenwashing, bluwashing or any colour washing of fossil fuels will make any difference. People, especially young people, are smart. They are not stupid. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Energy in Tasmania can call these things what they like, but people understand that they are toxic to the planet and the sooner we can get rid of them as a form of energy generation the better.

We understand that here in Tasmania there are 12 000 gas connections and we do not understand that there is any expansion of the gas market being proposed. We do, of course, need to create a hydrogen alternative and we dispute the idea that the manufacturing industry is reliant on gas. There are alternatives and the sooner we can create a hydrogen alternative the better it will be for Tasmanian manufacturing industries.

[6.35 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the Gas Industry Amendment Bill 2020 and I do so as possibly the first gasfitter to speak in this place. It is a privilege to represent the men and women of that wonderful industry that brings heat to the homes of pensioners in the middle of winter, that helps us cook our food, that manufactures fertilisers for farmers around the country and does so much good for people here in Australia and around the world because it really is a transformational input for manufacturing and it supports the wellbeing of people right around the world.

The Government recognises that natural gas is important for both commercial and domestic users in Tasmania. We will continue to support the sale and the supply of gas to Tasmanian consumers through ensuring a sound regulatory framework for Tasmanian gas users and operators.

This bill includes a minor change to address a drafting issue relating to retailing of natural gas and an improvement to the efficiency in which the regulator conducts his reviews of gas guidelines. Improving the efficiency of regulations can have positive flow-on effects to natural gas users and that is a very important thing. The companies and households that use gas expect to be protected and supported in how they use gas and ensuring the Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator is provided greater flexibility in administering gas codes, including the

ability to review and amend the codes, will improve the ongoing efficiency of the Tasmanian natural gas market. That brings down prices and supports people with the cost of living.

The bill before the House enables both the Minister for Energy and the regulator to review or amend any code regardless of who issues the code. The bill will however ensure that both the minister and the regulator communicate with each other about the administration of the codes while still providing greater autonomy for the regulator to undertake the ongoing routine maintenance of both the current and any future codes.

This bill is also addressing an unintentional issue with the drafting of the Gas Industry Act which passed parliament last year. I note that the act, whilst passed, is yet to be proclaimed. This issue relates to the meaning of retailing of gas. The way retailing is defined in the Gas Industry Act 2019 means that the retailers selling only to customers using more than 1 terajoule of gas per year would not need to be licensed; in other words, large gas consumers who have retailers who are not covered by regulations and oversight by the office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator. It is clearly an unintended consequence of the Gas Industry Act 2019 and could have undesirable outcomes for the industry and customers alike. We have seen broad support for the principles outlined in this change. For example, gas is a competitive market and when a gas customer would be transferring between retailers the gas customer transfer and reconciliation code would not apply. The bill before the House amends the retail definition to be consistent with its historical meaning under the Gas Act 2000 where a licence will be required to sell gas to customers of any size, large or small. This is an appropriate way of addressing this issue.

[6.40 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my honour to sum up the Government's position in support of this bill.

I thank members for their contributions and support for the bill. The final speaker, Felix Ellis, is the first gasfitter to stand in this parliament and to speak on this bill. Congratulations and well done. Perhaps the first plumber as well? It is good to have you and your generation in this parliament to share your perspective. From the north-west coast, you are a strong advocate for your community. We will listen and learn as you make further contributions in this place and elsewhere in Tasmania.

Gas will continue to have an important role to play. Gas supports a whole range of applications in industry, transport, direct heating and industrial processes where it has replaced fuel oil and coal, particularly along the north-west coast and the north. More than 11 000 residential homes are connected to gas.

It is important and accepted, but the Government is promoting our renewable energy future. We have been debating that for hours this afternoon, and in that historic debate passing through this House, we are fast approaching the target where we are coming close to being fully self-sufficient in renewable energy by 2022 - and then 200 per cent renewable energy for 2040.

There was a question about blue hydrogen from Dr Woodruff, who was questioning my remarks earlier about blue hydrogen. It is clearly understood that hydrogen can be made from gas. It is referred to as blue hydrogen. In Tasmania we have green hydrogen, which is renewable hydrogen made from renewable energy. It is made from water, electricity, which is

renewable electricity, and you need the infrastructure such as road, rail and port. They are the three key ingredients to the manufacture of hydrogen, at least in Tasmania.

We have what the rest of Australia and the rest of the world really needs. The fact is the rest of the world is moving to 2030 and will be manufacturing hydrogen. There is a national hydrogen strategy, \$370 million backed by the federal government, \$300 million in concessional loans, \$70 million in grants. It is on the public record. Woodside has made an application for part of that funding -

Dr Woodruff - Why didn't Tasmania get money from your federal Liberal colleagues?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr BARNETT - I am making the point that Woodside, that will be based in Tasmania, has made an application for some of that funding, if you were listening. It is on the public record, together with Country Renewables. I am making that note. I will not be unfairly and incorrectly criticised for referring to blue hydrogen as made from gas.

Regarding Tasmania, we have green hydrogen or renewable hydrogen. That is on the record. Brown hydrogen is made from coal. We have the best here in Tasmania. We are standing up for that. As Energy minister, I am promoting the credentials we have in Tasmania and will continue to do so.

There were some drafting issues with the 2019 legislation. This corrects that with regard to retailers and how they operate in Tasmania and with respect to codes and the appropriate arrangements that are in play. These are administrative amendments. I would call them minor amendments but they are necessarily important amendments, so we have support and confidence in the gas sector and the gas industry here in Tasmania.

I conclude the discussion and debate by thanking my department for their support and getting this matter right, fixing what has deemed to be an administrative matter that could have been done better. We have now done the job. We are here for continual improvement. Thanks to the department for getting that job done. I appreciate their support, as usual. I have said that before privately and I say it publicly today. I appreciate that and likewise Charles in my office, for your terrific support. I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

MOTION

Terms of Reference for Review of Phasing Out of Suspended Sentences

[6.46 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to deal with a motion that is necessary for this House and the other place as well in relation to a review that needs to occur.

Madam Speaker, I move - That this House -

- (1) Notes that the draft terms of reference of the review laid before the House that have been prepared in consultation with the Sentencing Advisory Council pursuant to subsection 2(3) of the Sentencing Amendment (Phasing Out of Suspended Sentences) Act 2017.
- (2) Approves the terms of reference of the review noted at (1), in accordance with subsection 2(4) of the Sentencing Amendment (Phasing Out of Suspended Sentences) Act 2017.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government strongly believes suspended sentencing is fundamentally flawed and remains committed to phasing-out suspended sentences. In doing so, the Government is acting on the deep concern from sentencing experts and the community about the flawed option of suspended sentences. The Sentencing Advisory Council is an advisory body formed to provide the Tasmanian Attorney-General with high level independent advice on sentencing in Tasmania. In 2014, the then Attorney-General (the late Dr Vanessa Goodwin) asked the Tasmanian Sentencing Advisory Council to examine options for phasing out suspended sentences of imprisonment in Tasmania and introduce alternative sentencing options.

In March 2016, the council publicly released its final report on the phasing-out of suspended sentences and confirmed that Tasmania's use of suspended sentences is higher than all other Australian jurisdictions. This heavy reliance on a sentencing option, which is at times incomprehensible, continues to diminish community confidence in the sentencing process, particularly when the council's research revealed that 34 per cent of suspended sentences are breached by re-offending and only half of those are ever followed up. Of those that were actioned, the suspended sentence was only activated in about half of those cases. As the Sentencing Advisory Council observed, these figures show that the punitive nature of this sentencing measure remains somewhat illusory.

The council's report confirmed that Tasmania's use of suspended sentences is higher than in all other Australian jurisdictions, partly due to the limited range of sentencing options that were available at that time. The report also revealed that around 45 per cent of Supreme Court offenders who breached their suspended sentence were not subject to any breach action.

The Government considered that the high use of suspended sentences, coupled with the failure to act on many breaches of suspended sentences, has contributed to the lack of community confidence in this sentencing option. The sentencing option has been abolished in Victoria and New Zealand.

The Sentencing Advisory Council report proposed a new sentencing model, recommending that the Government's reforms to abolish suspended sentences and introduce new sentencing options be phased in over a five-year period. The Sentencing Amendment (Phasing Out Of Suspended Sentences) Act 2017 was an important step in delivering on the Government's election commitment to progressively phase out suspended sentences of imprisonment and replace them with a range of alternative sentencing options. The act provided for a number of amendments to the Sentencing Act 1997 and related legislation. All except three provisions of that act have already commenced, including in broad terms providing

for the new sentencing options of home detention orders and community correction orders and removing probation orders and community service orders as sentencing options.

The 2017 act provided for these two new sentencing orders of courts whilst removing probation orders and community service orders as sentencing options. The 2017 act also provided for limiting the circumstances in which sentences of imprisonment can be suspended. Following consideration by parliament, the act as amended included the framework in section 2 for a review to be conducted before those sections were considered for commencement.

Turning to the review, the amendment inserted into the Sentencing Amendment (Phasing out of Suspended Sentences) Bill deferred the phasing out of suspended sentences until after a review conducted by the Sentencing Advisory Council of the sentencing options now available to the court. The amendment requires that the review commence no sooner than 18 months after the commencement of home detention orders and community corrections orders.

Section 2 provides for the review process following which the commencement of the remaining three sections, namely sections 8, 10 and 19 can be considered. These sections will remove suspended sentences of imprisonment as a sentencing option for certain offences, except in exceptional circumstances, and remove the power - except in exceptional circumstances - to order an offender to remain on a suspended sentence of imprisonment or have a suspended sentence imposed as a substituted sentence where the offender has breached a condition of their suspended sentence.

As required by the act, the draft terms of reference have been developed in consultation between the Government and the Sentencing Advising Council. The terms of reference of the review require the approval of both Houses of Parliament before the review commences and this is by way of this motion currently before us today. The motion before the Houses is pursuant to section 2 of the Sentencing Amendment (Phasing out of Suspended Sentences) Act 2017. The purpose of the motion is to approve the terms of reference of the review so that the Sentencing Advisory Council may conduct a review in accordance with those terms, hence the reason I said this motion is a formality.

The Sentencing Advisory Council has indicated that it will complete the review within 12 months, following which its report in relation to the review is laid before the Houses of parliament. The Government may then give notice of an intention to commence the final three sections of the act, being 8, 10 and 19. The notice can be considered by parliament and disallowed by either House, if that intention is not supported.

While the focus of the review is not mentioned in the act, it is considered that the review is intended to focus on how the current phase of measures have operated since their introduction.

Turning to the terms of reference of the review - the terms consulted on between the Government and the Sentencing Advisory Council focus on three new sentencing options introduced under the act namely home detention, community correction orders and the court mandated drug diversion program or drug treatment orders.

The terms of review are broad in nature, requesting that the council obtain a breadth of information relevant to these three sentencing options and provide relevant findings and observations. They enable the council to consult widely in this regard. As I have mentioned,

the council has indicated it will be able to produce the report within 12 months, commencing from the date the Government provides notice under section 2(5) of the act.

For the benefit of members, I will provide some brief information about the three sentencing options introduced by the Government that have been operating for some time and will be the subject of the review.

Turning to home detention - as an alternative to prison, home detention orders are a suitable sentencing option in a broad range of circumstances. These orders allow for the punishment of an offender through restrictions on their liberty while incorporating conditions to protect the public and aid an offender's rehabilitation. Offenders are not eligible for these orders if they pose a significant risk of committing a violent or sexual offence during the intended operational period of the order.

Core conditions attach to every home detention order, including conditions designed to effectively supervise and rehabilitate the offender. Electronic monitoring is a core condition of a home detention order, unless dispensed with by the courts for special reasons such as immobility or illness of the offender. Working with Community Corrections officers an offender's activities are planned, timetabled and approved in advance allowing their movements to be monitored through an electronic monitoring device.

As at 30 June 2020, there were 61 orders subject to electronic monitoring under a home detention order, an increase of 30 orders from the first year of operation. Before sentencing to home detention, a court is first required to have considered a pre-sentence suitability assessment which is prepared by community corrections. The time frame for the completion of this assessment is six weeks. Seven additional probation officers have been employed to undertake these assessments and case management of offenders who are subsequently sentenced to home detention.

From 14 December 2018 until 30 June this year, Community Corrections had received a cumulative total of 420 assessment requests for suitability to sentence to a home detention order. Persons who are sentenced to these orders are required to wear an electronic monitoring device at all times which is monitored by staff in a dedicated unit of Community Corrections, namely the Monitoring and Compliance Unit. Community Corrections has employed 28 staff in the Monitoring and Compliance Unit which operates a 24-hour shift roster. This is comprised of 24 monitoring staff including six supervisors which allows for three monitoring officers and one supervisor per shift and four support or management staff.

The monitoring team is responsible for monitoring all offenders subject to electronic monitoring in real time, and responding to alerts or anomalies in information and tracking in accordance with violation protocols. Monitoring operations commenced on 19 March 2019. As at 30 June this year, as I said, there were 61 offenders on home detention. You can see from the figures of assessments that not everyone is placed on home detention, and therefore the suitability assessment is critical in ensuring that the appropriate people receive these types of orders from the court. Out of the 61 offenders, these have ranged from one month to 18 months on home detention. Eighteen months is the statutory maximum in length. The highest number of orders ranged between four to six months duration.

The total number of home detention orders completed in 2019-20 was 79 and the completion rate was 78.5 per cent. Sixty-two orders were completed successfully and 17 were

revoked - noting that supervision orders include legacy probation and community service orders. Community correction orders have not been reported separately.

Community correction orders were included in the sentencing framework to take the place of both probation and community service orders. These orders allow a higher level of flexibility for the courts to make the orders that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of individual offenders and achieve community safety outcomes. A community correction order is a single order that can incorporate conditions for either community-based supervision, community service or both.

Community correction orders are an appropriate sentencing order either alone, or in combination with other orders, for a wide range of offending. Depending on the length of the order and the specific conditions imposed, community correction orders can be both a punitive sentence option but also help offenders address the factors that led to their criminal behaviour in the first place. Many of the conditions that were imposed with the previous community service orders and probation orders have become available under community correction orders. Those conditions include a requirement to submit to the supervision of a probation officer and/or perform community service for a specified number of hours.

Additional conditions that were not expressly available with community service orders and probation orders can be imposed with a community correction order, such as an offender not associate with specified people, be present at particular places or not be absent from their premises during specified times. Approximately 1000 such orders have commenced in both 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Dealing with the third example, court mandated drug diversion, as an alternative to prison as well the court mandated diversion program is tailored specifically to offenders who commit crimes as a result of their abuse of illicit substances. Court diversion officers work with offenders whose risk of reoffending can be addressed by treating their substance abuse issues while remaining in the community. The program was expanded in February 2017 to provide the Supreme Court with this sentencing option under the Sentencing Amendment Act 2016. Entry to the program is subject to an assessment process and subsequent court order.

CMD, as the participants come to know it, involves participants being required to attend frequent urinalysis testing, individual counselling sessions and group counselling, as well as weekly appointments with their allocated court diversion officer. It is by no means an easy option, but one which produces very successful results where an offender is willing to submit to the program and be given this last opportunity by the court.

I must stop here to deviate from my notes. I have seen many of the graduations from the CMD program. For those who truly submit to the program and recover, so they fully rehabilitate from their drug addiction, their lives are completely changed and turned around. It is very rare that they maintain employment, but I went to a graduation recently where one of the participants was able to maintain his employment because his employer was wonderful at supporting him. He also had family support from his parents, but knowing the intensity of this program I honestly do not know how he kept working and maintained that level of commitment. He is quite a changed person. I had a chance to talk to him for some time afterwards. From my contact with the participants it truly has been an incredible program; not one which lets an

offender off lightly by any stretch of the imagination, but goes a long way into rehabilitating an offender and giving them one last chance.

One of the other graduations I attended was the first southern Supreme Court CMD order from one of our acting judges, Porter, who attended the graduation as well. Often the sentencing judge or magistrate will also attend. The magistrate attends because they preside over the graduation and the final order releasing them, or discharging the order. I wanted to make those anecdotal comments.

In the last financial year there were 70 drug treatment orders and 17 bail diversion orders. In conclusion and as outlined earlier, the terms of reference before the parliament and certainly this House have been prepared in consultation between the Government and the independent Sentencing Advisory Council. The act provides that a House of parliament may pass a motion approving, or refusing to approve, the terms of reference. It does not provide for the amendment of the terms which is consistent with the act's expectation that the Sentencing Advisory Council be consulted.

If approved, the Sentencing Advisory Council will complete the review over the next 12 months. Within five sitting days of receiving the report the minister - that is, me - must lay a copy before each House of parliament. The minister may at that time or afterwards lay before each House a notice of intention to commence sections 8, 10 and 19 of the act to commence those phases of the suspended sentencing reforms. A House of parliament may within 10 sitting days of that notice disallow the commencement of those sections, as I said previously.

In closing, the motion before us is to allow the Sentencing Advisory Council to do this important work in accordance with the amendment that was made in the other place to the bill so parliament can be fully informed of the effectiveness of these recently introduced sentencing options and consider any proposed commencement of the future reforms. Parliament retains the discretion to disallow the future reforms after considering the report. I commend the motion to the House.

[7.05 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I indicate that Labor will be supporting the terms of reference. As we have heard from the minister in her explanation, bringing these terms of reference to the parliament was as a result of an amendment moved to the 2017 Sentencing Amendment (Phasing Out of Suspended Sentences) Act and will equip the Sentencing Advisory Council with the terms of reference they need to review the alternative sentencing options that have been listed in the terms of reference.

I acknowledge that the Attorney-General said that part of that legislative requirement made sure that the terms of reference cannot be amended in the parliament, but I note that there seems to be a bit of an omission. I acknowledge that they have been developed in consultation with the council. In the work they conducted in 2015 the Government put together a range of suggestions of ways they could achieve their aim of phasing out suspended sentences. They did not overtly say they did not support suspended sentences being retained as part of a suite of sentencing options available to magistrates and judges, but they worked within the terms of reference that were provided to them at the time to put together a range of options for consideration by government to have a look at how they could achieve their aim of removing suspended sentencing.

I will put on the record again, as Labor did at the time, that we do not support the entire removal of suspended sentences as one of a range of sentencing options available to the Tasmanian courts. We put those views on the record very clearly a number of times. They are not just held by the Labor Party; they are held by many other stakeholders and people who work in the criminal justice system.

For example, at the time of the original bill being debated, the Tasmanian Bar Association's representative at that time said that they did not support the abolition of suspended sentences from Tasmanian law and as a principle they would prefer to see them retained. The Law Society of Tasmania in 2017 also indicated that they remained opposed to the removal of suspended sentences as a sentencing option. They also indicated that they did not agree with the two-year cap that was suggested for community corrections orders, but said in conclusion that they supported sentencing reform based on sound policy and good legislation which they did not believe the 2017 bill represented.

Similarly, Civil Liberties Australia made it clear that they support the retention of suspended sentences and also expressed concerns about the increased reliance on fines, which was one of the parts of the original bill. I will get to that in a moment as well. The Community Legal Service of Tasmania said they do not believe that suspended sentences should be removed as a sentencing option and they welcomed the Government's decision to broaden the range of sentences that can be imposed. They had no problem with broadening the types of sentences that can be imposed but suggested that suspended sentences should not be removed from Tasmanian law and said that there was no evidence to say that works.

It was very encouraging to hear the Attorney-General speak so positively about the results of the court-mandated drug diversion program that operates in the Magistrates Court and has recently been extended to operate in the Supreme Court as well. I share the admiration the Attorney-General has for the staff working in the court-mandated drug diversion scheme and the offenders who take those orders because they work incredibly hard to make sure that those orders, which are not a light-touch order, work, and they do work.

As we heard from the Attorney-General, they also mean that people can do things like retain their employment, maintain housing, maintain family connections and maintain parenting responsibilities when alternative sentencing options are available to courts. The court-mandated drug diversion scheme is one very good example of a problem-solving court that is working well in Tasmania and working well in other parts of the country and the world.

Many places in the world are introducing increased alternative sentencing options and increasing the availability of problem-solving courts. I would like to see those things expanded upon more. We know that when somebody is sent to prison, whether it is for three years or three months, people lose their housing, lose their jobs, and lose their connections to family. They come out into society often diminished in their capacity to re-engage in a productive way. Their lives are often ruined as a result of that interaction with the criminal justice system and with incarceration.

That is not to say that crime should go unpunished. Justice needs to be done. Removing a sentencing option from a suite of options available to the judiciary is something that I cannot reconcile with good sentencing policy in this state.

When people go to prison in Tasmania, 47 per cent of people who exit Risdon return there within two years. That is a very concerning figure. It is nearly one in two inmates who serve time in prison in Tasmania return to the criminal justice system within two years of having been released. That is not a good result for those inmates and it is not a good result for our community. What it means is that one in two people have returned to offending, for a range of reasons. They are not good results for our criminal justice system or for Tasmanian people.

Part of the reason that people return to Risdon is because of the conditions in which they are treated when they are there and the conditions in which they are released to. There are national statistics from the Productivity Commission that 54 per cent of prisoners exit prison into homelessness and 78 per cent exit prison into unemployment.

I challenge anyone in this place to feel like they would have the best chance of rehabilitating their life if they are exiting prison, more than half into homelessness and nearly 80 per cent into unemployment. It should not surprise us that with those odds, 47 per cent return within two years.

There are close to 650 prisoners at Risdon. It is overcrowded, over capacity and it has been happening under this Government's watch since the very beginning. The minister asks what would I do in her position. I would be increasing alternative sentencing options, which is what we are discussing right now. There is a policy intent of this Government to increase the prison population. Removing suspended sentences entirely will add to that.

In Risdon right now, there are double and triple bunking inmates through the complex. Cells designed for one inmate are housing two inmates, and cells designed for two inmates are housing three inmates. With the rate of lock-downs very high under this Government, in the case of two men double-bunking in the men's prison, that is a six-metre square space; a small space. Sharing that space for hours on end becomes particularly difficult with the frequency of lock-downs happening across the prison system.

The reason those lock-downs are increasing and are persistent is because of staff shortages. That is something we have talked about in this place before. They average 10 to 14 short per shift, sometimes up to 18 or 20. The prison simply cannot operate in the way it needs to, to operate safely for both staff and inmates when they are that short-staffed. Rolling lock-downs is the only option for the prison to open units and to be able to do their work safely for staff and for inmates.

One correctional officer I spoke to recently, who has worked there for a long time, told me that out of the six shifts he worked in the previous two weeks, the unit he was assigned to in those six shifts had been unlocked only for one morning and one afternoon.

The prison is crowded. The prison population has increased significantly under this Government. We should be looking to alternative sentencing options. The rate of nearly 50 per cent of people returning to prison is not something we should be proud of as a state or as a parliament.

A magistrate working in a Tasmanian court system described Risdon in this way in a sentencing decision in February this year -

As far as our jail system goes at the moment it's probably the worst possible time for anyone to do anything about rehabilitation. It's like putting a jug of milk in a cupboard, leaving it there for six months and then taking it out and thinking it's perfectly okay to drink. As far as critical rehabilitation programs, there is a desperate need for them to be reinstated.

That has been backed up by the Custodial Inspector who has released a number of reports in recent months tabled in this parliament which go to the very heart of conditions at Risdon Prison. Now is not a time where people are being offered rehabilitative options that can allow them to not be one of those one in two who are returning to prison within two years.

It is true what the Attorney-General says by interjection that this motion is about alternative sentencing options. We support alternative sentencing options and want to see an increase in those. However, removing suspended sentences entirely from the suite of options available to magistrates and judges is not the answer.

It touches on the things that we have talked about in here before around parliament's role of setting laws and the judiciary's and the magistrate's role of implementing and applying those laws. It is not our job as members of parliament to set sentences for people who face the court system in Tasmania. It is our role to put in place responsible laws that allow the judiciary to do its job of assessing each case as it is presented to them and making a responsible decision to impose the penalty that is appropriate in the circumstances to that offending.

The Sentencing Advisory Council in the work that led to the 2017 bill made a range of recommendations and gave three options for the way the Government might like to look to forming its bill. The option that the Government went with was one that indicated that they would, instead of suspended sentences, focus on the three things that are named in these terms of reference: community corrections orders, home detention orders and drug treatment orders. Those are named in the terms of reference.

The other two areas that are available are an increase in fines and also, of course, an increase in imprisonment. Those things are not part of the terms of the reference but I believe that they should be. I acknowledge that we cannot amend the terms of reference but it would be interesting to know when the Sentencing Advisory Council conducts its work it provides the information to parliament. I am eagerly awaiting the results of its work because it is important that we know how home detention orders, community corrections orders and drug treatment orders are going; how many have been issued and how successful they have been, but there was also an indication in that original legislation that there would be an increased reliance on fines rather than suspended sentences. It is a shame that these terms of reference do not extend to informing the parliament on how much more reliance there has been on fines.

It could become a bit of a self-perpetuating problem whereas alternative sentencing options fines are relied upon by the courts and if enough people are unable to pay those fines they will find themselves incarcerated for failure to pay fines. Often we are talking about some of the poorest people in Tasmania who will not have a high capacity to be able to pay fines set by the courts. It is a shame that that is not included in the terms of reference.

I am also interested to know how many offenders who have faced the courts have been imprisoned rather than having made available to them one of the three sentencing options mentioned in the terms of reference or, as I said, a fine. What would also be interesting to

know is an estimation of the cost involved because they also indicated in their work in 2015 that the anticipated cost of implementing these changes was somewhere in the vicinity of between \$27 million and \$50 million. Those figures were in 2015 and implementation obviously began later than that after the bill passed in 2017, so it would be interesting to know an anticipated cost of implementation of these measures so far.

I was grateful to the Attorney-General's office for recently arranging for my colleague, Michelle O'Byrne, and I to visit their Monitoring and Compliance Unit within Community Corrections that the minister mentioned in her contribution. That is the unit overseeing the home detention scheme. It was very instructive to see that in practice and see how those staff within Community Corrections monitor people on home detention and people who are using monitoring devices in prevention of family violence.

There is some shared ground there. I want to see an increase in alternative sentencing options and that is why these terms of reference are very important. It was good that that amendment was made to the original act in 2017 so that these terms of reference could come to the parliament and the results of that work will come to the parliament as well.

I hope that the minister has not pre-empted the results of that work by the Sentencing Advisory Council because I was a bit concerned and actually a bit surprised by some of the colour in her language in describing suspended sentences as a flawed option and saying that the reliance on them was incomprehensible. I believe that providing people with options to rehabilitate their lives, options for treatment -

Ms Archer - Why did you ask the question on Peter O'Neil in question time, then? That was a suspended sentence. Try defending that one, hypocrite.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms HADDAD - Madam Speaker, I will conclude my comments by saying that I support the increased use of problem-solving courts and I support the increased use of alternative sentencing options in the Tasmanian courts. However, suspending a sentence should remain as one of the options for the judiciary to use as they see fit in dealing with offending that comes before them.

We know that when people are equipped with the tools they need to be able to enter into alcohol and drug treatment, enter into mental health treatment, be provided parenting courses or education in other areas of their lives that they would benefit from, then people can be diverted from the criminal justice system and set on a path where their lives can be improved. As I said earlier, not just their lives but the lives of all Tasmanians, because when we see a reduction in offending we see safer communities and we all want to live in safer communities.

We need to get to a point where we see less than those huge numbers of 47 per cent of people returning to prison within two years, more than 50 per cent living in homelessness and 78 per cent in unemployment. Those are figures that we need to see on a downward trajectory. Until we see those figures on a downward trajectory we will not see offending rates easing in Tasmania, and we all want to live in safer places. We need to be able to work with people who find themselves tied up in the criminal justice system in a way that allows them to improve their lives and allows them to do the best that they can to avoid finding themselves back in Risdon Prison, because while we are doing that we are failing Tasmanians. We are failing

those people who find themselves in prison and we are failing our communities that we all want to see improve and be safer.

With those comments I support the terms of reference and very much look forward to the results of the Sentencing Advisory Council's work being presented to the parliament and hope that at some point maybe through a different form of the House we may be able to hear from the Attorney-General about those other points I raised about the increased reliance on fines, and also about the estimated cost.

[7.26 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, the Sentencing Amendment (Phasing Out of Suspended Sentences) Bill passed in 2017 and it was not supported by the Greens. We have long stood with the evidence of what works in turning around rates of recidivism, keeping the community safer, and ensuring that we use public moneys in Corrections to rehabilitate people rather than to lock them into a life of continual crime. We have always supported any legislation that will achieve those outcomes.

It is very well understood by the legal profession and people who look at prison regimes around the world that prisons lock people into a criminal cycle and it can often be for life. They lead to less safe communities and take an enormous amount of public resources. You have only to look at the huge changes that are occurring in parts of the United States. Texas is outstanding in that area where they have closed four prisons in the last handful of years, so there are big changes in place. They all draw from a similar well, and that is providing a range of alternative sentencing options, and a suite of rehabilitation which is genuine and properly financed. In this regard, this Government has dropped the ball in almost all of those areas, albeit with some important exceptions.

One of the first things that the Liberals did when they came into Government was to cut the REO program. It was a mere \$200 000 a year at the time; a program successfully run by charities working with people as they exited prison to make sure they had a house, to connect them to housing, and also to support them to get a job and help them reintegrate with their family and reintegrate into the community. That program established under the Greens Corrections minister from 2010 to 2014 was so successful by the time the Liberals defunded it that it had zero per cent recidivism from the inmates who went through the program. Of the people who exited prison, none of them reoffended. That is an extraordinary accomplishment and it speaks volumes about the ideology which governs the Corrections portfolio under this Government, which came in 2014 under a mandate to be tough on crime and to make populist decisions which, on the face of them, look as though being hard on people is going to be effective and make the community safer. In fact, all the statistics since 2014 are worsening.

The rates of violence in prisons from inmate to inmate and from inmate to officer, have been going up. Rates of compensation claims from prison staff and sick leave of prison staff, have gone through the roof - not to mention the actual number of people in prison and also community crime rates. The annual rates each year for certain crimes in the community have also been increasing. It gives the lie to the idea that the so-called tough on crime approach makes the community safer. That is what people want and it is what they are looking for in a corrections minister and in a government - they want a government that keeps people safe.

When you do not fund education and literacy programs for people in prison, that has an effect on their ability to go out and get a job, rather than petty crime and petty theft or selling

drugs. Many people who go to jail have very low literacy rates. They need support. That is a perfect time to help them get an education, and the first thing is to learn to read. All of those programs have dropped off.

Ms Archer - No, they haven't. Rosalie Martin.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, it is great that there are some exemplary models, but I can assure you that over the years I have heard from staff and from people who have been working providing that literacy education, through TasTAFE, that it has evaporated.

Ms Archer - No it is not. We have re-released TasTAFE.

Dr WOODRUFF - There is a problem. Maybe something has changed in the last five minutes but there is a real problem with options that are there.

Ms Archer - Stop making stuff up.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is there on paper, but inmates cannot access it because they are in their prison cells. They cannot have the education programs because the cells are not open for people to attend. You can say that, but minister, I hear time and again from officers who are talking about the experience of inmates, or from legal representatives where inmates cannot get to those sessions.

It is one thing to offer them on paper and to have them funded on paper, but it is another thing to seriously make them available to people, and to keep them up on a regular basis so people can learn to read. It is not easy to enable an adult to learn to read.

Let us return to the motion at hand. Suspended sentences were one tried and true method for reducing reoffending. They remain a method that can be chosen by judges as an alternative to incarceration. The original Sentencing Advisory Committee, on the then Liberal Party's policy proposal to abolish suspended sentences, was prevented from examining that actual question and from asking whether abolishing suspended sentences would be the correct path to take. The terms of reference given to the Sentencing Advisory Council did not enable them to make a deliberation about whether suspended sentences should be abolished.

Now this bill has passed through the lower House, although the Greens did not support it. It went to the upper House and the bill was amended by Leonie Hiscutt, presumably under pressure from other Legislative Council members. I have not read the detail of that debate, but the amendments that were provided in the bill are that suspended sentence provisions were not able to commence until between 18 months and two years have passed since the commencement of the other provisions. Those provisions referred to in the bill commenced on 14 December 2018, so it is not quite two years but I am assuming it will be by the time this bill passes here and the other place - if it passes.

Ms Archer - Is it 18 months, no sooner than 18 months.

Dr WOODRUFF - It would be two years from December 2018.

The second amendment provided that the terms of reference for a SAC review are to be provided to both Houses of parliament, and that is the current stage.

The third amendment was that the report by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute (TLRI) is to be tabled, and the SAC in the terms of reference before us has advised that that will occur within 12 months.

The fourth amendment was that a notice of intention to commence sections 8, 10 and 19 is to be tabled, and not disallowed within 10 sitting days.

Madam Speaker, I will make a few comments about the terms of reference. The terms of reference is an important document. The SAC has approved them and has been involved in their development. I think that is correct?

Ms Archer - They have been actively involved.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Greens do not support the phasing out of suspended sentences for the reasons I have given. It is important for judges to be able to determine what the appropriate sentencing option is and alternatives to imprisonment.

We support the other matters that the terms of reference for this review will investigate, namely, home detention and community corrections orders, and court mandated drug treatment orders. These are very important options for judges to have and are essential, as the minister has said, for people to be able to have full rehabilitation if they have drug addictions. They also provide opportunities to relieve stress on the prison, and provide people with opportunities to be involved in a range of community correction activities.

There are only four terms under the terms of reference for the SAC dealing with the phasing out of suspended sentences. That seems very paltry given the big question about suspended sentence orders and what contribution they make. We would have included more extensive terms, but I am persuaded that number 29 - any other matters considered relevant - should give the Sentencing Advisory Council plenty of scope to examine and make recommendations about any other matter they consider relevant in this instance.

The lack of detail does not preclude the SAC from extensively writing on any matter that they think to be relevant. On that basis, we are comfortable with the terms of reference that have been provided, and we look forward to reading the results of the report when it is finished and tabled within 12 months.

[7.39 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the member raised that final point. It is usual for that final term of reference to be included in a collaboration between government and the SAC so they can comment on any other matter as they see fit. It is important.

This motion was a rather mechanical motion coming before this House. Unfortunately, members have chosen to rehash the debate which was actually passed by the House with this requirement. That is why I am bringing this motion through the House today.

It is slightly annoying to hear some of the mistruths that are continually espoused by members in this House who do not have personal knowledge of many things they are saying. I find it particularly galling when Ms Haddad starts talking about our corrections systems when the state that Labor left our prisons and corrections system in was absolutely appalling, with

very little money spent and the closure of the Hayes Prison Farm being in motion. Not one additional correctional officer was put in their election policy for the 2018 election. In fact their corrections policy was virtually non-existent. They have the cheek to come in here and criticise when we are the Government that has actually implemented the alternative sentencing options which allow us now to look at phasing out suspended sentences.

I remind the House of the rather damning figures in relation to suspended sentences. The Sentencing Advisory Council's research has revealed that 34 per cent of suspended sentences are breached by re-offending and only half of those are ever followed up. Of those that were actioned the suspended sentence was only activated in about half the cases.

This is why the community has lost faith in suspended sentences. They do not have any punitive value, where as the alternative sentencing options that our Government is responsible for, home detention, not only takes away a certain amount of individual liberty, it actually serves to rehabilitate because they can maintain a home, they can keep working. They are the alternative sentencing options that we support because they are well rounded and have that punitive element but also have the rehabilitative element.

I am constantly looking at ways to implement more rehabilitation programs within the prison. Risdon Prison is restricted because of its size, because of its capacity. This is why we are building the Southern Remand Centre, which will be completed at the end of next year. It is important to provide modern facilities for the staff as much as for prisoners. In fact, even more so for the staff that have to work in these environments, to provide the rehabilitation programs, to facilitate all of these programs and training and skills and literacy areas that all of the members talk about. You cannot do it in a bubble. You cannot do it with the current facilities we have.

I was not going to go into too much of that but things are constantly said in this House that are simply not true. What I have said only scratches the surface. This motion is necessary to get the terms of reference passed so that the Sentencing Advisory Council can do the work that it has been asked to do in relation to the provisions of the bill that we took through the House and is now an act. I look forward to receiving the Sentencing Advisory Council's report within the estimated time frame of 12 months.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[7.44 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

HIA-CSR Tasmanian Housing and Kitchen & Bathroom Awards

[7.45 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to talk about the HIA-CSR Tasmanian Housing and Kitchen & Bathroom Awards which were held on Friday night.

Last Friday afternoon, 6 November, the Tasmanian Housing Industry Association held the awards which were virtual for the first time. HIA executive director Stuart Collins said that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, HIA has been committed to delivering its awards program to ensure members continue to be recognised and are able to celebrate excellence in building design, innovation and sustainability.

On the night, the winner of the major awards, the HIA-CSR Tasmanian Home of the Year was Davies Design and Construction. They won their award for the stunning contemporary home which harmoniously combines a mix of materials, including bricks, cement sheet, copper and Colourbond with products sourced from around the world. Apparently, the site also has a really striking street appeal, a maximisation of outlook. It has a north-facing orientation and practical layout. That was seen as exceptional by the judges. Also, the level of detail and finish, according to the judging panel, was simply awe inspiring. That is a quote.

Other award recipients were Dylan Coad from Cunic Homes, who won Apprentice of the Year. The award for the best business partner was awarded to Leanna Mitchell from New Trend Homes Tasmania. Ronald Young and Co Builders and Wilson Homes respectively took out the award for the category of professional, medium and major builders.

As in previous years, the awards were well supported by CSR, Independent Roller Door Services Group and other HIA industry partners whose support remains critical in ensuring events which celebrate industry success continue.

I take the opportunity to congratulate all the people who were nominated, the winners and finalists. Each year the awards attract an outstanding array of entries across a number of different housing forms. This year was no exception. The awards also presented an opportunity to acknowledge individuals and businesses for their professionalism, innovation and positive contribution to Tasmania's building and construction industry.

World Teachers' Day

[7.48 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, on 30 October, World Teachers' Day was celebrated in Australia. This is my first available opportunity to speak on this topic after the event.

Most countries around the world celebrate World Teachers' Day on 5 October when much of Australia is enjoying a well-deserved school holiday period. In Australia World Teachers' Day is celebrated on the last Friday of October instead.

World Teachers' Day was established in 1994 by UNESCO to recognise the vital role of qualified teachers in our society. World Teachers' Day recognises the high quality of early

childhood teachers, teachers, casual relief teachers, principals and early childhood leaders and the significant contributions they make in classrooms and in communities. The theme this year was A Bright Future.

I have a son who is perilously close to starting high school. I am very proud of the fact that he desperately wants to attend his local high school where he most certainly has a bright future ahead of him thanks to the early childhood educators and teachers who have influenced him so very positively since he was very young. He has, with the exception of just one day in eight years, been very keen to go to school. That has something to do with the friends around him, and it has something to do with the soccer at lunchtime, and it has something to do with Pokémon, Fidget Spinners and Bay Blades and whatever else the trend was at the time. But the one constant, and we have checked in on this regularly, in his enthusiasm for going to school has been his educators or his teachers: Lou, Angie, Bianca, Pauline, Alicia, Sarah, Katy and Simon. These early childhood educators and others from Uniting Care, Scott's childcare centre, gave him the best start. He was learning through play from day dot. As he got older and went into after school care he was challenged and given more responsibilities. We will be forever grateful for the safe, kind and caring learning environment those educators provided, not to mention the kindness they showed me when I missed my son's first steps and when they explained to me what slap-cheek was or when I worried as a single mum about my job security or could not work out with my sleep-deprived brain how to tackle toileting or sleeping dramas.

When he started kindy at Campbell Street Primary School, the lovely Mrs Oldfield welcomed him with open arms into her kindergarten, while two days a week in the room just next door, Pauline and Bianca from CamKindy continued to support his learning and development. Ms Walch, Ms Wisniewski now Kennerley, Mrs Perkins, Mrs Fall, Mrs Kidd and Mr Chadwick. These classroom teachers have all had a profound impact on his life and on ours. They have been led by two principals in our time in the school community, Ricky Oates, who sadly for us moved schools last year since this is our son's last year in primary school, and Jo Waldon, who masterfully steered the school through this extremely tough year 2020.

In 2020 many non-teachers who were trying to support their children with learning at home articulated, perhaps for the first time, the monumental respect they have for teachers and the work they do. In one sense this recognition is wonderful. However, it does say something that it takes a global pandemic for many to realise the importance of this profession. It is a calling.

Those who have been so called to it make magic. They give more than they receive, they care deeply, they are values driven, they put others first, they are kind, they are smart, they are motivated, they are influencers, they are leaders, they are project managers, psychologists, lab technicians, explorers, artists, directors, conductors, jugglers, researchers, life coaches, diplomats, communication experts, and that is all before 9 a.m. on a Monday.

I am deeply appreciative of the teachers who played a part in our lives. I am very excited too about the teachers who will play a part in it. It is a calling, it is a bright future and I thank these teachers and all teachers and staff in schools that support the education of our young people.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Review

[7.53 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Madam Speaker, today I release the Government's response to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services review and a significant step towards developing an integrated pathway for children, adolescents, their families and carers to better navigate the mental health system. The Tasmanian Government is investing \$4 million in the upcoming 2020-21 Budget to commence phase 1 of implementing the comprehensive recommendations made in the review, all of which have been accepted. This includes establishing statewide leadership roles to guide the changing service for a single unified CAMHS and to ensure a consistent service response across Tasmania.

Phase 1 will also support changes to the way CAMHS responds to demand, acknowledging the need to respond to children and young people who have the most complex and challenging mental health presentations. Changing models of care will enable CAMHS to realign services so they can do stronger partnerships and linkages with other services and government agencies. For example, part of CAMHS core work under this shift in service delivery will involve engaging more closely with school nurses and other development programs within schools. We will also begin developing new programs to ensure everyone receives a specialist age-appropriate service, as I outlined this morning.

One example was improving mental health services for children in out-of-home care. We will establish the first highly specialised intensive mental health intervention and consultation service for children and young people on interim or finalised child protection orders. The first component of the youth early intervention service will be implemented by the end of 2021-22. This new service will focus on early recognition and treatment for young people experiencing early psychosis and other emerging severe and complex non-psychotic disorders. Key elements of the service will include flexible access for assessment and treatment, assertive outreach and interventions tailored to individual need.

The role of perinatal and infant mental health services in reducing emotional stress on parents and the impact of that stress on developing children cannot be underestimated. This initial investment supports an increase in the capacity of existing perinatal and infant mental health services to provide coverage to the north and north-west of the state.

Our Government's response signals a fundamental shift in the delivery of CAMHS in Tasmania, with a focus on integration, changing models of care to enable CAMHS to respond to demand, particularly in relation to severe and complex cases, addressing service gaps by developing new programs and building better links with other services and government agencies under a new organisational structure.

Such systemic change is a long-term proposition, requiring commitment from many stakeholders over an extended period and I thank very much the hardworking staff within CAMHS and all participants involved in the review process.

Our Government is committed to getting this fundamental shift in the delivery of services right and we are getting started straight away to ensure that young Tasmanians can receive the best possible mental health care.

The time I spent this morning in question time did not permit me to put all of that on record, so I wanted to commend all those involved with the review and I look forward to seeing some real but much-needed change when it comes to the delivery of mental health services for our children and young people in Tasmania.

Ringarooma Show
On the Town - Prostitutes and Brothels of 19th Century Launceston
Launceston Poetry Festival

[7.56 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, it has been very difficult around the COVID-19 period to attend all of those really amazing events that happen in community and I have desperately missed the show season. I really like going to country shows. They are full of fabulous produce and fabulous people and are a wonderful opportunity for people to get together. It was with some delight that I was in a position to be able to attend the Ringarooma Show on the weekend. I congratulate Sheri Mahoney and the entire organising crew for the amount of work they did. It is hard enough to put on a show, let alone having to put on a show during the period of COVID-19.

It was a smaller event than normal. Some of the standard feature events were not there but it was wonderful to be able to see the animals that came along, the produce from the local school, the fantastic SES who were on display - and I give a shout out to all of those SES workers, many of whom were involved recently in the search for a child who was lost on the Derby tracks and they were very thankful when they were able to find him and safely bring him home, so it was great to see the SES there.

Sheri said, and she is quite right, that the community just needs a day like the show which brings together all the families and the wider community, especially after this year. Everyone needs a good day out, to have a good time and forget about everything. I can assure you they did not forget about COVID-19 safety. We had to book our tickets online and we had some wonderful bands and everybody was appropriately distanced but it was a wonderful opportunity to get together and buy some great produce.

I also give a shout-out to the Dorset Community House who had their smoothie bike. Many members of parliament would have tried a smoothie bike by now where you ride the bike and crush the smoothie and enjoy the produce at the end of that, mixing both good exercise behaviour and some good outcomes.

It was a shame that there was no woodchopping but we are hoping that will return next year and the North East Axemen's Association is really excited about being able to produce an event next year for woodchopping. It is a fantastic thing to be part of.

I was also there with the member for McIntyre, Tania Rattray. I almost accidentally bought a puppy but managed to avoid that at the last moment. It was a very cute puppy and I am sorry because the young child who was trying to sell this gorgeous little kelpie was a really good salesperson and I hope that puppy found a good home by the end of the day.

The other issue I want to raise in the time available is a book called *On the Town - Prostitutes and Brothels of 19th Century Launceston*. I acknowledge the recent publication by

Launceston researcher, Dianne Cassidy, who originally comes from Braddon. I believe she was a schoolmate of Alison Standen's.

As the shadow minister for women, I acknowledge the importance of this book in documenting the often forgotten lives of women from Launceston's history, and there are many stories that I intend to bring out over the next few weeks about some very famous Launceston women. Author Dianne Cassidy is a former staff member of the library in Launceston and she continues the tradition of retired staff in researching, writing and publishing stories. Years of serving the public has honed their research skills and this book is a testament to that. We often find that the historic record is dominated by high achievers, and in many of our records they are notably men with their positions of power - as opposed to women whose trail of archival records can often unfortunately focus on their failures.

Nineteenth century, class-conscious Launceston was especially difficult for ex-convict women in a colony so keen to leave behind the hated stain of convictism. We often forget that Launceston was a bustling port city but, just like other cities around the world, sex work was an integral part of it. The author does not shy away from the risks - violence, sexually transmitted diseases and coercion. We also learned the history of criminality and street work that came for many convict women.

I am very glad that Dianne Cassidy is bringing these stories to light. I believe her book is incredibly important. It is a missing piece in what is a jigsaw puzzle. People in my electorate of Bass who are avid readers of local history will, I am sure, enjoy *On the Town* because it is a very important addition to our book shelves.

In conclusion, I congratulate Cameron Hindrum on his work in bringing together an evening to pay tribute to contemporary Australian women poets, as part of the Launceston Poetry Festival. I was able to join a group of women who were asked to read a poem by a contemporary Australian woman poet celebrating the work of women and celebrating the fantastic work. I was very pleased to read a poem that was set in Hobart, not Launceston; but it was about snow, and in Launceston many people would recognise that we had a phenomenal snow day, and that magic of feeling childlike again is captured in the Gwen Harwood poem I read that evening.

I congratulate that group. They were not expecting a lot of people and it was standing room outside in order to adhere with COVID-19 rules at the Grand Chancellor, that very kindly hosted what was an important event as part of the very successful Launceston Poetry Festival.

**Anna Stewart Memorial Project
Derwent Valley Railway Preservation Society**

[8.02 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I rise to speak about an event that you also attended - the Anna Stewart Memorial Project.

The event was held on Thursday 5 November and you and me, the Leader of the Greens, Cassy O'Connor, and the Independent member for Nelson, Meg Webb, joined together to present to a fantastic group of women who had been brought together by Unions Tasmania's women's committee. The Anna Stewart Memorial Project is an annual program. It provides a week of learning and empowerment for women across Tasmania who have come from different

workplaces, backgrounds and experiences. It is an opportunity for them to learn how they can gain extraordinary new skills and be empowered to make a difference both in their workplaces and in their communities.

I acknowledge the contributions and the very thoughtful and honest stories that were shared by the panellists, including yourself, Madam Speaker. I hope those stories gave some real insight into what it is like to be a woman, not just in politics, but a woman who is leading in her field in Tasmania. It gives some hope and some encouragement to those people who were part of the conference program.

There were many questions that we also took and hopefully we were able to answer those adequately and provide some advice and inspiration.

I congratulate the Unions Tasmania women's committee and their chair, Karen Tantari, as well as Marta Hondul Lenton from Unions Tasmania. I recognise how important it is that we have events like this, where women can come together and share their experiences and support other women to grow in confidence and to learn new ways to go about their work. I have no doubt that those women will have gained so much from the week they spent together.

The event concluded on Friday, with a broader women's conference where they heard from other amazing speakers from other parts of Australia, about how they can take action in their workplaces to support one another and support women to have a better life, and build a better community. I know from personal experience that my involvement with days like that when I was just learning my job were incredibly important and made a huge difference to my self-esteem and confidence and really helped me enormously. I congratulate the women's committee on the work they continue to do year in year out because I know it makes an enormous difference to the women who are able to participate in programs like that.

I would also like to talk about an event that I attended in my electorate on Saturday in the Derwent Valley. I was invited to join with the Derwent Valley Railway Preservation Society for the launch of a restored locomotive. Members of this Chamber would know that my colleague, the President of the Legislative Council, Craig Farrell, is a big train fanatic. He has been a member of Derwent Valley Railway for many years. He was, of course, in attendance on Saturday. It was a really special occasion. I acknowledge the committee, in particular Paul Jones, the president, and Owen Andrews, the secretary, for the work they did in organising the event.

The locomotive was named U5 and was an ex-Tasmanian Government Railway locomotive that had been rebuilt in the Launceston workshops after it came from the Snowy Mountain Power Scheme. This locomotive did a lot of work in Tasmania. When it was disposed of in the 1980s it was purchased by a man by the name of Ted Lidster who is a member of the Derwent Valley Railway Preservation Society. It was at that point that it found a new home in New Norfolk. It has been there ever since.

There are only six of this class built in the world. One of them is in Tasmania. It was fundamental in helping to rebuild the West Coast Wilderness Railway, which has become the ABT Railway, and the Derwent Valley Railway. It has played a big role in Tasmania's heritage rail system. It has undergone a massive renovation which has been performed entirely by volunteers. It is a beautiful shiny red. It was named on the day with a special unveiling of the plaque that had also been crafted by a member of the committee in honour of Ted, who is the

owner of it. It was therefore named Ted. He was chuffed and did not expect it whatsoever. It was lovely to see how humbled he was by the recognition his peers had given him.

An extraordinary number of hours were dedicated to carrying out that restoration work. A lot of skilled labour was required and is entirely voluntary. They do it because they love it. They hope to be able to get back on the railway soon and provide the exceptional tourist rail experience they were able to provide many years ago. It would be wonderful to see the trains back on the track, travelling up and down the Derwent Valley.

The biggest problem for them is insurance costs. It is a huge burden for those small volunteer organisations to meet the costs of insurance. They have put a request in to the Tasmanian Government to hopefully get some support from the Budget which will be handed down on Thursday. We are desperate to see some of that support provided, not just for them but for heritage rail and tourist rail across Tasmania so we can start to get some of these trains moving again and support our volunteers. The economic benefit would be enormous. Not only would it be a major drawcard for tourists, but locals would love it too. I would love to be able to jump on the train and go down the Derwent Valley and get off at Mount Field National Park. It would be well received by the community. They, like the Labor Party, are looking forward to Thursday to see whether there is any support for their insurance cost, to make sure they can get that railway back up and running.

The House adjourned at 8.09 p.m.