



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 14 September 2021

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Tuesday 14 September 2021

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

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

Ministerial Portfolio Arrangements

[10.01 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on changes to the ministry that occurred yesterday.

Mr Roger Jaensch has been appointed the Minister for Climate Change. Sarah Courtney has been appointed the Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events.

QUESTIONS

Financial Support for Businesses

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.02 a.m.]

You finally announced support for businesses facing dire circumstances after weeks of pressure from Labor, the TICT and the TTIC, to ensure our vital Tourism and Hospitality Industry does not go to the wall. However, the devil is in the detail. This financial support, according to the scant detail you have released, will not be available until October, which is too late for some businesses already in difficulty. Why have you left it so late to act and will there be guarantees built into this program that businesses will not be able to receive grants unless they provide a guarantee to retain staff?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. She is right, some detail was released overnight and I will have more to say shortly with regard to that package.

The question I would pose to the other side is, what have you done? On this side of the House we have made representations to the federal government and we have been able to secure a very good package for businesses. Did you ring Albo? What position have they taken?

On that side of the House they raised some concerns with regard to the first package we put out. We responded very quickly and allowed those micro businesses to receive support. I will have more to say about the level of support we will be providing shortly.

What have they done? I went back today and checked the representation from the other side in regard to individual businesses or supports that might be needed. We have Ms Finlay who raised a range of matters in this House with regard to some smaller businesses. Where has the Leader of the Opposition been on this? As for those two on the front bench there -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. This is very serious and I call attention to standing order 45. The question is, will guarantees be built into the program that any business that receives a grant has to retain their employees?

Mr SPEAKER - Points of order should not be used to re-state the question. As far as relevance and standing order 45, as we know, I cannot put words in the Premier's mouth. He is allowed to answer the question as he sees fit.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, I will have more detail on this package in a moment.

We saw Mr Winter, yesterday, bleating about the circumstances. I make this point that needs to be understood: the circumstances in Tasmania are vastly different from the circumstances occurring in New South Wales or Victoria at the moment. In New South Wales, if you want to stay in one of their hotels, you cannot, because they are in lockdown. If you are someone from Queensland or Tasmania and you want to stay in New South Wales, stay-at-home orders are in effect. We are vastly different in Tasmania. Our industry is open. Tasmanians, South Australians, those from Western Australia, those from the Northern Territory and those from Queensland can visit Tasmania. The circumstances are vastly different. We have tailored the packages to suit our circumstances.

I come back to the two on the front bench -

Dr Broad - Which two?

Mr GUTWEIN - You two there, and you know who I am talking about. It was like being tag-teamed by Dumb and Dumber last week, Mr Speaker. I was being tag-teamed by Dumb and Dumber. I hope I get some questions on the Treasurer's portfolio because, believe me, I have a fair bit more to add in relation to those two.

Tourism Sector - Support Package

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.06 a.m.]

I note the Premier did not answer the last question ensuring that workers will be protected.

Yesterday your Minister for Finance, Mr Ferguson, dismissed Labor's calls for a JobSaver program to keep workers and businesses in the tourism sector afloat, saying that what had been already allocated was adequate. Yet this morning you have announced that after weeks of inaction there will be a support package.

Either the Minister for Finance is utterly ignorant, or you have deliberately kept him out of the loop. There is so little detail in this package that even the Minister for Finance is in the dark, just as businesses are with the lack of detail you have provided and the lack of urgency to roll it out, particularly given that 65 per cent of visitors to Tasmania come from Victoria and New South Wales.

Considering you are dragging your feet on this critical issue, is this an announcement designed to prop up you and your Government in a sitting week in this parliament rather than an announcement to support crucial businesses and workers in this state?

Mr FERGUSON - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I would like to draw your attention to the mistruths in the question. I will ask to make clear the misleading at the end of question time.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. By the sounds of it, the Leader of the Opposition is misleading. The Minister for Finance will clear matters up at the end of the day. Again, it is a pattern from you, on that side of the House, in misleading this place with the statements you make and the mistruths you spoke about last week when you brought down your Budget response. It is extraordinary, Mr Speaker. Power prices gone up under us, is that what she said? No, they have gone down. Registration, again a mistruth and has gone down. The Leader of the Opposition still has not cleared up that matter with the Integrity Commission, where quite obviously she is at odds with the CEO of the Integrity Commission.

Mr Speaker, you cannot believe a word the Leader of the Opposition says and I will treat that question with the disrespect it deserves.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Safety of Children

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.09 a.m.]

Last Thursday, after a century of horror and abuse, you rightly announced you would be closing Ashley Youth Detention Centre and replacing it with two therapeutic centres, north and south. When you announced Ashley would close you said unequivocally, 'The children at Ashley are safe and I want to be absolutely clear about that'.

Given the history of the systematic brutalisation of children at Ashley, we think more detail is needed. Budget Estimates reveal that more than half of the ED5 Code of Conduct complaints at Communities Tasmania originated at Ashley.

What steps are you putting in place to ensure the children held at Ashley are safe and what independent oversight will you make sure is in place over the next three years until that hell-hole is finally shut down?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question. As I said last week, unfortunately, as a result of the historic sexual abuse claims that Ashley has been confronted with, the challenges it faces, regardless of the very good efforts of the staff and the steps we have taken in the model at Ashley evidenced by the feedback from the custodial inspector and the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ashley will continue to be stigmatised.

As a result of that, there is a concern that I and this Government hold that the young people who need to spend time at Ashley are going to have challenges in their rehabilitation. It is not conducive to a therapeutic model. We have made the difficult decision to close that facility. We will continue to remain engaged with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Custodial Inspector. If there needs to be any further support provided, as I foreshadowed last Thursday, those supports will be provided.

There have been calls to do away with detention completely -

Ms O'Connor - Not from us.

Mr GUTWEIN - Well, from others. Unfortunately, we will need a detention centre. The model we are moving to will provide opportunities for detention. We will take a holistic view of what is required to ensure, in the first instance, that we do as much as we possibly can in the community to ensure young people do not end up in the system in the first place. If they do, there will be a therapeutic model to ensure we can do everything possible to enable them to rejoin our society when it is safe for them to do so.

We will continue to remain engaged with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Custodial Inspector. If there is a need for additional supports, those additional supports will be provided.

Tasmanian Businesses - Support Package

Mr STREET question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.12 a.m.]

Can you please outline to the House how the Government is delivering our plan to secure Tasmania's future, especially in relation to Tasmanian businesses affected by the extended lockdowns in New South Wales and Victoria. Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Street for that question and his real interest in this matter, as opposed to those on the other side of the House who have been prepared to play politics with this from day one.

We acknowledge there has been pressure on a number of businesses, particularly those that have been impacted by the shutdowns in New South Wales and Victoria. Last year, the Government committed more pandemic-related financial support as a percentage of its economy than any other jurisdiction in this country. There is no doubt that we recognise there are significant pressures on businesses. We have announced an initial \$20 million support package, which has been successful in providing relief but we said that if more is needed to be done, we would do more. I have been in regular contact with the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, and have had a number of conversations with Josh in recent days. The Deputy Premier, in my absence, put up a very strong case to the federal government that we needed more assistance. I thank him for that.

Ms White - You should be embarrassed.

Mr GUTWEIN - The only people who should be embarrassed are the two on the front seat there: Dumb and Dumber.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. You have often referred to the fact that we need to refer to members in this place by their appropriate titles. I ask you to draw the Premier's attention to that.

Mr SPEAKER - I will, and there should not be any personal reflections, Premier; 'the members of'.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will stop referring to Mr Winter and Dr Broad as Dumb and Dumber. Mind you, on the front bench there are a couple of people who do remind me of those two in that movie. Anyway, we will leave it there.

I can advise the House today that the state will partner with the federal government to take our jointly funded grants package up to \$50 million to ensure that businesses remain viable and can retain their staff over coming months until vaccination rates are above 80 per cent and it is safe to start re-opening our borders to those larger states.

The significantly increased financial support will be available quickly. There will be two further rounds of the existing program, which for an eligible business will deliver total grant support of between \$7000 in total for micro-businesses and up to \$110 000 for larger businesses. In total there will be three grants that will be available: one as part of the original program, plus an additional two. The second and third grant rounds will be paid in October and then November.

On top of this I can announce we will also provide an estimated \$20 million in additional financial relief for eligible tourism and hospitality businesses. Large businesses that employ people and pay payroll tax in the tourism and hospitality industry will also receive payroll tax relief from 1 January through to 31 December: the calendar year.

To make it easier for larger businesses - especially those that have businesses operating in different sectors, and there are a number because of the grouping provisions that are drawn together - and to limit the requirement for them to unpack their payroll tax payments for the first half of this year, the program will be delivered by Treasury through a combination of a waiver and a grants program, which will provide them with a grant in line with the payroll tax that they have previously paid.

We will also waive fees and charges from 1 July for six months such as vehicle registration and passenger transport accreditation fees for businesses like taxis, luxury hire cars, and tour operator buses and also licence fees payable to Parks and Wildlife.

Ms O'Connor - Why didn't you provide this information when Labor asked their questions?

Mr GUTWEIN - Because I had other matters that I wanted to inform the House of, not the least of which was the fact that the Leader of the Opposition continues to mislead in this place.

This massive boost in support will total about \$70 million, an increase of \$30 million on top of the \$20 million that we have already got out there, plus an additional \$20 million for the payroll tax relief and fee relief that I have just mentioned. This massive boost in support follows the unprecedented \$130 million package provided to Tasmanian businesses last year during the height of the pandemic.

To reduce the burden on businesses to access the first additional payment those whose applications were successful in the existing program will automatically receive the second payment. There will be no need to complete any additional paperwork. For the third payment, it will simply be a matter of providing confirmation that your circumstances have not changed. It is not a matter of having to apply for every grant along the way.

We are going to make it as easy as we can. Eligible businesses whose applications are currently being assessed also do not need to make any changes. The funding request will be automatically updated to include the revised payment levels. Businesses who have not applied but wish to have until 8 October to complete their application for this new supercharged round of funding.

The final round opens in November but there will be a very light touch for the requirement for the third grant round. It will just be confirmation that your circumstances have not changed.

Ms O'Connor - We are running over six minutes now on a Dorothy.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, this is important -

Ms O'Connor - You could have said it in one of your first two answers.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - and, as I said to you a moment ago, there were other matters that I wanted to deal with, which I have done: matters which I think are important for the people of Tasmania to understand.

The package that we are announcing today has been warmly welcomed by the industry. It will provide businesses with the opportunity to receive the financial support that they need to stay in business and remain viable. For those bigger businesses that employ workers it will provide them with the capacity to ensure they can retain those workers and keep them linked to their payroll.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 48. The Premier has had sufficient time to answer a Dorothy Dixier, the details of which he could have provided in his first two answers to Labor's questions.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order, Ms O'Connor. If it wasn't for your three interjections the Premier would have had substantially more time. The Premier is winding up.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is worthwhile making the point that we have a minute and a half longer because of your interjections but setting that aside we are supercharging the Business Grants Program to support those businesses that need support right

now and this side of the House is doing that; that side of the House does nothing more than whinge.

COVID-19 - Business Support Package

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, Ms HOWLETT

[10.21 a.m.]

The Premier has finally announced some more details about a new business support package. You would understand that many small businesses are struggling and have been struggling for some time now. How do you expect them to hold on for another month struggling to cope with the dire situation confronting the tourism and hospitality sector? What will you do to put some pressure on the Premier to speed up the process of this program so workers do not lose more hours and small businesses do not have to close their doors?

Government members interjecting.

Ms WHITE - You laugh about businesses shutting and workers losing their jobs? You have lost your way.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. This is a massive announcement today that will help so many small businesses around Tasmania. We have listened and we have delivered. We have put more than \$3 million of funds into the banks of those small businesses that need it.

Today's announcement of a \$70 million support package is a turbocharged package. What a package from our government! The Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments have worked together to deliver this significantly expanded and supercharged package for businesses with a total of \$70 million now available to those operators who have been impacted by border closure.

The existing Business Support Package will be boosted from \$20 million to \$50 million, jointly funded by the Tasmanian and Morrison governments with grants up to \$50 000 to be available to eligible businesses across two rounds of funding. On top of this, the Tasmanian Government will provide around \$20 million in financial relief for eligible businesses through waiving fees and charges such as payroll tax, vehicle registration, passenger transport accreditation fees and licence fees payable to Parks and Wildlife. This is a massive boost.

We have already put more than \$3 million into the banks of small businesses that need it throughout Tasmania. We have listened to the concerns of small businesses in Tasmania, hence why we have announced our micro-grants loan. We have acted. What has your side done?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Order.

Ms HOWLETT - You did not have an alternative budget. There was nothing in there for small business because there was no alternative budget.

Risdon Prison - Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation

Ms JOHNSTON question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.24 a.m.]

The Holyoake drug and alcohol rehabilitation program has been delivered at Risdon Prison for more than 10 years. It is the only alcohol and drug through-care model in the Tasmanian criminal justice system. To quote Holyoake's CEO from a recent *Mercury* opinion piece: 'We have walked beside our clients to get through their arduous journeys and have witnessed many reaching their goals through reintegration to society, reconnection with work, families and treatment'.

Are you aware that several months ago, Holyoake had to suspend its programs at Risdon's Apsley Unit for lack of a suitable room? Apparently, the room being used was water-damaged and contains asbestos. Surely, given the value of the program, a suitable location could have been found? Tragically, the hope Holyoake services may have given inmates has been extinguished. What measures are you taking to bring back Holyoake's rehabilitation services into Risdon Prison?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. At the outset I say Holyoake does deliver valuable services both in and outside of our prison. I thank them for their consistent work in that regard. There was damage to the roof at Risdon, quite significant water damage which has required some work in relation to asbestos as well. That is quite well-known.

Some damage was done to some of the education rooms and, where possible, replacement rooms have been found to continue to deliver important programs. It is important to note that we have a number of drug and alcohol programs. I am not aware of that Holyoake program specifically ceasing because from 30 June 2021 to 1 July 2021 there were 23 enrolled in the program and 22 completed the Holyoake Gottawanna Program.

In relation to your specific allegation that this has been extinguished, I would need to look into that further because that is not the information I have. I can confirm that some education programs were interrupted but, as I said, alternative rooms were found.

The TPS receives the support and assistance of a number of community organisations in the delivery of rehabilitation and personal development programs. As I have said at the outset, this currently includes Holyoake specifically targeting addiction. In addition to programs delivered by external service providers, the Tasmania Prison Service provides a comprehensive set of interventions internally that address alcohol and other drug issues and I was able to go through that week during Budget Estimates. Various group programs are being delivered which are solely focused on, or have a portion focused on, alcohol and other drug intervention including a resilience program, the EQUIPS addiction program and dialectical behaviour

therapy program in the women's prison, and the making choices program is due to commence this October.

On top of this there is also one-on-one counselling which is offered to those who need that type of intervention. As I ran through last week, there is a number of assessments done in relation to the minimum-, medium- and maximum-security prisoners. It is all on the record during Budget Estimates. Based on all those interventions being provided, the current model is superior in our view to what was offered previously when the Apsley residential program was operating with a very limited number of spaces available because of the limited number of beds in that unit. It is far wider-reaching and more effective so it is now having much greater impact and programs like that provided by Holyoake significantly contribute to that.

In addition, and in closing, Mr Speaker, we have committed an additional \$500 000 per year for five new therapeutic staff to work within our prison with a focus on delivering rehabilitation programs and importantly, drug and alcohol interventions. I am happy to report that the recruitment of those five positions has been under way and is currently being finalised. These new positions will allow for further expansion of our existing alcohol and drug treatment options that are available to prisoners to include brief intervention to those with lower drug and alcohol treatment needs or short sentences as well as the existing drug and alcohol counselling and group-based interventions for those with higher criminogenic alcohol and drug treatment needs.

The TPS employs a broad team of staff who deliver important intervention and reintegration services to prisoners who are affected by alcohol and other drug issues. We do not rely specifically on one program. I hope that demonstrates to the House that we have a number of different alcohol and drug interventions. Our staff include two full-time drug and alcohol counsellors, senior program facilitators, program facilitators, and other specialist therapeutic roles for specific interventions including psychologists and counsellors.

In addition, with the new therapeutic staff coming on board, this will further strengthen our team within the TPS and the external service provided by important programs such as Help One program by Holyoake.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Future Use of Site

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS, Ms ARCHER

[10.30.a.m.]

The Ashley Youth Detention Centre is a 51-bed facility and service infrastructure located on 32 hectares of cleared land adjacent to the Bass Highway. In three years' time, Ashley will finally close its doors as a place of abuse and sadness for young people.

The Brushy Rivulet Reserve outside of Westbury has significant natural values which the state Government has legally committed to the Commonwealth it will protect in perpetuity. It is also a rocky, high-fire risk area nowhere near gas, electricity, water or suitable road infrastructure. Will you commit to having a conversation with the Deloraine people about repurposing the Ashley site into a modern, therapeutic facility and remand centre?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her rather obvious question. As we have all been out doing media, everybody is speculating about this point. I will clarify for members in this House, following the announcement last Thursday, that the Ashley Youth Detention Centre will be closed and the Premier has outlined in his answer today the reasons for that.

Yesterday, my colleagues and I have discussed the potential use of the site for the northern correctional facility. Importantly, whilst discussions have occurred, no decision has been made. I make that clear: no decision has been made. Our priority has been on the closure of Ashley and the transition pathway to a more therapeutic model of care for our young people to be provided at two new locations, in the north and the south of the state. The minister for Children has been tasked to prepare that transition plan which the Government will consider in coming weeks.

The Government will now consider the potential future use of the current Ashley site further and any decisions would need to consider a range of factors including community engagement.

Tasmanian Businesses - Defence Contracts

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for ADVANCED MANUFACTURING and DEFENCE INDUSTRIES, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.32 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Liberal Government is securing Tasmania's future by delivering our plan in the Budget to support more businesses, win defence contracts and are you aware of any other alternatives?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will answer the last question first. No, I am not aware of any alternative plans, but I thank the member for his good question and his considerable interest in this matter, and how proud he is of our advanced manufacturing and manufacturing base on the north-west coast.

The Government is delivering on our plan to support Tasmanian business to secure lucrative defence contracts. In 2015, many would remember when Caterpillar made the announcement it would move its operation in the north-west to Rayong in Thailand. At that time, it was a gut-wrenching announcement for the Tasmanian manufacturing sector, particularly felt in the north-west region. Caterpillar employees and supply chain businesses were deeply affected.

Six years on, we have seen the sector innovate, differentiate and adopt industry best practice. In all corners of the state, we have seen a renaissance in modern manufacturing. We have seen manufacturing turnover rise to more than \$7.3 billion a year, directly employing some 18 000 Tasmanians and supporting more than 31 400 indirect jobs across the supply chain and support sectors.

In 2020-21, Tasmania's defence industry companies were awarded over 39 defence and national security supply and total value in excess of \$23 million. In the recent state Budget, we committed a further \$10 million to implement the Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan 2024 and other initiatives in this sector, and 2020-21 also saw a further increase in the number of Tasmanian companies becoming actively involved in defence tenders. Last week, in Estimates, I outlined some recent success stories.

As a Tasmanian defence advocate, Retired Rear Admiral Steve Gilmore has played a pivotal role in the implementation of the Tasmanian Defence Industry Strategy. Steve has assisted many Tasmanian businesses to navigate the complex defence sector and to identify future opportunities suited to Tasmania's niche industry capabilities and I thank Steve very much for his diligence and very hard work.

PFG Group is one of the companies the defence advocate and the defence Tasmanian team has been working with over the last 18 months and later today PFG Group will make a major multi-million-dollar announcement about its first successful foray into the highly competitive global defence sector.

PFG Group is an excellent example of a business that identified new opportunities in the defence sector and make a targeted and strategic move to diversify into this market. As announced last month, the Tasmanian Government has approved the provision of a \$600 000 loan to PFG Group to construct an 11 metre ultra-durable high-density polyethylene first-in-class prototype vessel. This prototype will deliver PFG Group an important opportunity to demonstrate the advanced capabilities of these vessels to prospective buyers in the domestic and international military and security domains in the future.

It is so rewarding to see Tasmania now seriously regarded as a state with a firm footprint in the defence sector. There are other tenders also soon to be announced which will further cement our place. Through the Tasmanian Defence Industry Strategy, we will continue to work with companies like these to assist them to identify and capture more opportunities in the multi-trillion-dollar global defence buyer market.

JobKeeper - Payroll Tax Issues

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, Ms HOWLETT

[10.37 a.m.]

The Estimates hearing revealed that 62 Tasmanian businesses tipped the threshold and have been slugged with payroll tax bills due to the confusion you created over tax treatment of JobKeeper payments. Those 62 businesses are out of pocket because you and the Government either confused or misled them with your claim they would be exempt from payroll. You stated three times in this parliament that businesses that have received JobKeeper would be exempt from payroll, full stop.

You know you got it wrong. You have changed your tune, yet you refuse to correct the record and 62 businesses have been slugged. How do you explain this and will these payments now be fully refunded?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am not sure what you do not understand. As you are aware payroll tax and the release are administered by the Minister for Finance.

Ms Finlay - That is the tune changed but not the record corrected.

Ms HOWLETT - Are you listening to me answer the question? I understand minister Ferguson was asked the question about payroll tax in Estimates last week by Mr Winter. For absolute clarity, as I have already indicated, businesses do not pay payroll tax on the proportion of their wages which are attributed to JobKeeper payments. This means that payroll tax is waived on JobKeeper payments. Therefore, there is an exemption from the need to pay payroll tax on the proportion of the wage bill.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Safety of Children

Ms WHITE question to the PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.39 a.m.]

We welcome the decision to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre after your meeting with Alysha, a worker from the site last week. You have had care concerns about the welfare of children at the site raised with you and in Budget Estimates last week the Minister for Children could not guarantee all children at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre are safe.

The site is not due to close for another three years. Have you had raised with you any recent concerns about the safety of children at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre? What will you do to satisfy yourself that children in detention at Ashley are safe especially, considering they will remain at this facility for the next three years?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it appears to me that once again the Leader of the Opposition - and I thank her for that question - is following the Leader of the Greens. I have already answered that question this morning.

My advice is the children at Ashley are safe. I have spoken with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and she has corresponded with me recently about her engagement with the site and the feedback she has received. She said she is not aware of any claims or any matters in relation to the children there. If she were, she makes the point that she would make the appropriate referral. I would expect that would occur.

We will continue to engage with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Custodial Inspector. Should we need to put in additional supports during the transition period, we will do so. I made that point on Friday.

Regarding the concerns the Leader of the Opposition wants to explore, and I am presuming Alysha spoke to you and raised a number of issues. I have asked her to provide

documentation. We have been in touch with her lawyer and have asked that any concerns be brought forward. They will be investigated.

Should we need to put additional support into Ashley, we will.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Future Use of Site

Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS, Ms ARCHER

[10.42 a.m.]

You have stated that the Government has commenced thinking about future use of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Given the Meander Valley community derives economic and employment benefits from the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, will you commit to holding a public meeting with the community about the future of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have answered a question already this morning about the early stages of all of this. Our focus is on the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. An announcement was made by the Premier last Thursday, in relation to that centre and the closure of that. I stated this morning that we will now further consider the potential future use of that Ashley site and that any discussions or decisions would need to consider a range of factors including community engagement.

Securing Tasmania's Future - Irrigation

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

[10.43 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is delivering on our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future, especially through delivering irrigation available to farmers across our state? Is the minister aware of any other approaches?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We are passionate supporters of small business. We have heard about that from the Premier and the Small Business minister this morning. Providing support to recover from COVID-19 is the way to go. We are delivering, with a lot more work to do.

People in this House, people in our rural and regional communities, particularly our farmers, know that water is liquid gold. Irrigation is transforming Tasmanian agriculture, delivering jobs, expanding production and productivity across our rural and regional communities and delivering premium produce. Today, I am pleased to announce that the Government has reached a new record, sustainably delivering 921 721 megalitres of high-surety irrigation water in 2021 -

Ms O'Connor - What about this report you refused to release? This minister is being misleading.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - This is an increase of more than 51 000 megalitres from the 2019-20 year. That's a 5.5 per cent increase on the previous year and 20 000 more than the target. With our continued investment it is anticipated that this will increase to more than 960 000 megalitres in the next 12 months.

Our farmers, our rural communities, will be able to expand high-value crops and increase rotations. They will be able to boost their yields, diversify into new enterprises such as wine grapes, leafy greens, various vegetables and berries. We have all seen the polytunnels on the side of the roads. The investment and jobs growth in regional Tasmania is obvious. The premium produce is in the supermarket. I was there last night and could see the Tasmanian premium produce. There is more to do and that is why the Budget has \$30 million to support water, \$23.7 million for irrigation -

Ms O'Connor - Water extraction, that is what your money is for. No science.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor - The minister is dangerous.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - I ask the member to withdraw that word.

Ms O'Connor - Why? It is just an opinion, Mr Speaker.

Mr BARNETT - A personal attack. She has called me dangerous. Please withdraw that word. I am asking the member, through you, Mr Speaker, to withdraw the offensive remark.

Mr SPEAKER - When a personal reflection and a member takes offence and asks for a withdrawal, then I ask you to withdraw.

Ms O'CONNOR - Unless it is the Greens, of course, asking for a withdrawal. I withdraw the accusation that Mr Barnett is dangerous.

Mr BARNETT - There is still more work to do. There is \$30 million in the Budget to support irrigation projects and other water initiatives. The Government is about wise use of water. Let me explain. It does not necessarily mean more water out of rivers, it means the wise use of water. For example, water used to generate energy can also be used for irrigation. Irrigation schemes regularly use dams to store winter water to use in the summer time when it is needed. In Tasmania, an estimate of 28 to 35 gegalitres runs off into the ocean each year. That is 77 million litres every day that runs out to the sea. We need to make the wise use of water a priority and we are. That is why we have worked on the Rural Water Use Strategy for more than two years. It was released in March this year.

We have now established the Rural Water Round Table, with the best brains in Tasmania looking at the challenges and opportunities in water use. There is \$1.5 million in funding support for those initiatives, including two new project officers working on the River Health Advisory Project. I have been asked about alternative agriculture policies -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Chair. Standing order 48 - the minister has been five-and-a-half minutes on a Dorothy.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Mr BARNETT - Much of that time rudely interrupted by the Greens leader.

The Opposition is either being misleading and deceptive or ignorant about federal irrigation schemes. It is all about good governance.

Ms O'Connor - Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind up, please.

Mr BARNETT - That is not happening in the Labor Party. There's an internal brawl between left and the right. What did the leader, Rebecca White, say?

Ms White - What does this have to do with water?

Mr BARNETT - She falsely -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. You asked the minister to wind up and he has ignored you.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Mr BARNETT - She has said there will be no further infighting; there would be no further infighting.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, you asked the minister to wind up and he ignored you.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Mr BARNETT - Ms White has lost two ministers, she has lost control of her party. With respect to the Labor Party: 'toxic' is what Bastian Seidel said. In conclusion, I say you cannot trust Labor. You can back in a Liberal Government to back agriculture and the wise use of water -

Mr SPEAKER - Minister, I need you to sit down.

Women's Legal Services - Distribution of Federal Funding

Ms HADDAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.50 a.m.]

The federal Budget committed \$129 million nationally for women's legal services for domestic violence-related assistance. Of that, Tasmania's allocation was \$1.5 million. You have been provided that federal funding but you have not yet distributed it to the legal assistance sector despite it being desperately needed. This was confirmed in Estimates last week when representatives from your department said you were still considering how and when the money would be distributed. Even your colleague, the federal member for Bass, Bridget Archer, has publicly criticised you for not distributing this money.

While you sit on this funding women statewide are missing out on legal representations. What is the delay and when can the sector expect to see these funds distributed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. She was clearly not listening at Budget Estimates last week where I painstakingly went through the additional funding in the order of \$2.2 million our Government is providing the legal assistance sector on top of the National Legal Assistance package provided by the Australian Government.

We acknowledge as a government the exceptional work of the legal assistance sector in Tasmania in providing free and low-cost legal services to keep the justice system within reach of vulnerable Tasmanians facing a disadvantage. That includes the Women's Legal Service Tasmania, which does a phenomenal job in supporting women by providing legal advice and assistance. Our Government is committed to helping, respecting and believing women and properly funding services such as the Women's Legal Service Tasmania.

Like many other providers in the legal assistance sector, women's legal services funding is quite complex and involves a number of different sources. The member would at least be able to acknowledge that.

The Women's Legal Service Tasmania receives funding from our Government and from the Commonwealth government under the National Legal Assistance Partnership together with funding for specific priorities such as Tasmania's Action Plan for Family and Sexual Violence 2019-22, which includes over \$500 000 for the Women's Legal Service Tasmania. This is on top of the state Government funding of \$128 500 indexed annually.

At the state election we committed additional funding to the legal assistance sector of \$2.2 million per year for four years, on top of the funding already committed under NLAP and the action plan. This is a record amount of state funding for that sector. I was pleased to announce the allocation of this funding at Budget Estimates.

Any criticism drawn to which the member has referred has been remedied and announced as part of this allocation the Women's Legal Service Tasmania will receive an additional \$50 000 a year for four years. I am pleased this additional support will provide the Women's Legal Service Tasmania with the full additional funding they requested to deliver their vital legal services for Tasmanian women. The Women's Legal Service Tasmania will receive over

\$1.85 million in state and Commonwealth funding in 2021-22. That figure includes Commonwealth under NLAP and additional Commonwealth NLAP funding announced in the federal budget. State top-up funding and our Government's additional commitment of \$50 000 that I announced at Estimates is included. It does not include additional funding throughout other sources such as the action plans to which I referred.

Due to the indexation of state funding, figures for future years cannot be specified at this time. The action plan is run by the Department of Communities Tasmania and involves \$800 000 over three years to provide additional legal assistance to people experiencing or at risk of experiencing family violence.

Funding of \$514 160.80 allows the Women's Legal Service Tasmania to continue its Launceston-based service to provide legal assistance to women experiencing or at risk of experiencing family violence in the north and north east of Tasmania. That is state funding. I hope the member took notice of that last statement because that does relate to the north and the north-east, which has been the issue of clarity and I am providing it and have provided it.

It is important to note NLAP funding is complex and comprises a number of different programs or streams. I acknowledge one of those is funding for Women's Legal Centres. In the 2021-22 the Commonwealth government committed \$129 million over four years to Women's Legal Centres across Australia to increase their capacity to deliver services to women, including those experiencing or at risk of family violence.

Since the handing down of the federal budget, the Commonwealth government has advised the funding it has designated for the delivery of dedicated legal services to vulnerable women by any legal assistance provider. This will ensure women and children can access support for a range of legal issues, including much needed family law and family violence assistance.

This funding will be delivered through the NLAP and Tasmania has been allocated \$5.31 million over four years for this measure. This approach has been confirmed in the amended NLAP bilateral schedule and I quote:

Under this bilateral schedule Tasmania will allocate and administer quarantine Commonwealth funding to community legal centres and/or the Legal Aid Commission and/or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service for delivery of dedicated legal assistant services to women.

The Commonwealth encourages Tasmania to allocate this funding to legal assistance providers specialising in the delivery of dedicated legal assistant services to women with a focus on women experiencing or at risk of family violence. Tasmania will allocate some of this funding to a community legal center in Tasmania that specialises in the delivery of dedicated legal assistant services to women only in each financial year of this bilateral schedule.

Our Government continues to work with the Women's Legal Service and with other providers in the legal assistance sector and to ensure they have the resources they need to assist Tasmanian women.

Jobs Hub Network

Ms OGILVIE question to MINISTER for SKILLS, TRAINING and WORKFORCE GROWTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.57 a.m.]

I note that the state Budget allocates over \$10 000 to extend the Jobs Hub network in Tasmania. Can you please provide some detail on what has been achieved through the investment in Jobs Hub to date and what is planned to extend this important work to make sure Tasmanians in other regions can also benefit?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question and her particular interest in the Glenorchy Jobs Hub. Our investment in Jobs Hubs around Tasmania is to make sure we are delivering jobs for Tasmanians and we are seeing practical results for job seekers and employers.

Yesterday, my colleagues, member for Clark, Elise Archer joined by member for Clark, Madeleine Ogilvie, joined others at an event to see the opening of the Glenorchy Jobs Hub. We heard, at this event, over 107 people have now registered for the hub in five weeks and we know that Tasmanians living in that community have already been supported into jobs, changing their lives for the better.

Mayor, Bec Thomas, told the gathering that Glenorchy has an unemployment rate about 3 per cent higher than the Tasmanian average and two out of five or around 40 per cent of Glenorchy residents do not hold any formal qualification. The Jobs Hub is providing them with the opportunity to get the skills and training they need. We heard from a young participant, Jayden Weeding, who said that after being unemployed for about 18 months being able to learn basic skills like how to prepare a resume, approach a job interview gave him the confidence to put himself out there and approach a potential employer. He now has a job and this is changing his life.

The new regional Jobs Hub network is funded in this Budget as a centrepiece of our \$13.5 million local jobs for local people's agenda with Glenorchy one of the seven Jobs Hub that will operate across the state. These hubs link job seekers with employers to address high unemployment rates in regions and importantly, also provide workforces with the people they need. The key lesson from the work so far, across all regions, is that local leadership and support targeted to the local community context is the key to success.

The South-East Regional Employment Hub has been a particularly successful example with the collaboration between the South-East Regional Development Association and Colony 47, which has supported 500 local residents into local jobs over the past two years.

Over the coming months, across our investments, we are going to see \$10.6 million delivered in the North West and West Coast Jobs Hub based at Burnie, the South-Central Jobs Hub based at Brighton, the Huon Regional Jobs Hub, the North East Jobs Hub at St Helens and the Northern Regional Employment and Business Hub.

This network will provide all regions of Tasmania with access to a regional jobs hub, tailored to local needs and led by local people who understand their own community. We are also supporting the Regional Jobs Hubs Network through the newly-established Jobs Tasmania Unit within the department of State Growth which is already leading the implementation and delivery of the 'local jobs for local people' agenda.

Jobs Tasmania is providing practical support to new and existing hubs by delivering common overhead support, workforce analysis and data mapping. Young people can find it particularly challenging and this is why we are engaging with training and work and this is why this year's Budget funds a pilot Youth Connectors program to operate in conjunction with the existing hubs in Sorell and Glenorchy and to operate in conjunction with George Town at a cost of \$1.3 million.

This is part of a broader Working Tasmania package, giving a range of incentives to employers through the Tasmanian Employer Bonus Fund, \$3.2 million for our Area Connect service, \$2 million for our Job Ready Fund, \$2.4 million for our Job Matching Service, \$1 million to extend TasTAFE's successful Skill-Up and \$850 000 for youth navigators. We will deliver this to Tasmanians because this was in our budget.

This side of the chamber has a plan. That side of the chamber has still failed to deliver a budget. When we look to the other side, it is the same old factional wars that are raging. The branches are now weighing in and it is the same embattled leader, leading the same divided Labor Party, that same Labor Party that still failed to deliver an alternative budget.

Time expired.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Member for Bass, Mr Ferguson

[11.02 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, during Question Time, I was misrepresented by the Leader of the Opposition, where she said in her question and asserted falsely that yesterday in an interview I had described the existing package of support for small business as 'adequate'. I would like to lay before the House a transcript of what I said yesterday, which I will provide to the House now:

We are a Liberal government. Unlike the Labor Party, we understand and support businesses. We have rolled-out our next stage of business support to those industries that have experienced a loss of trade due to interstate lockdowns ...

Mr SPEAKER - Excuse me, minister. As we all are aware, personal statements should be made by correcting the record and should not contain argument. It should only contain the facts. I will make that point to the whole House, and they should be as brief as possible.

Ms O'Byrne - And they should be done in other formal business after seeking leave.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Can I continue to read what I did say?

Mr SPEAKER - Yes.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you. I will continue -

763 businesses in Tasmania have taken up that support of nearly \$3 million.

Members interjecting

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON -

We will be constantly monitoring the situation. If we can do more to support businesses in a targeted way, we are prepared to do that, noting that our unemployment rate has fallen. We have more people in work now than before the pandemic. There is really a lot of vacancies out there as well so the economy is moving very well, but there are a small number of industries that continue to be affected - thinking hospitality and tourism - and we are working very closely with them.

I ask that the member withdraw and apologise for misleading the House. I indicate that if that is not forthcoming, the Government will consider what forms of the House should be used, including substantive motion.

Ms WHITE - I withdraw the use of the word 'adequate'.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, and apologise to the House.

Ms WHITE - I will take direction from the Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - Thank you. You have withdrawn the statement?

Ms WHITE - I have, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ferguson - You do not think you should apologise?

Mr SPEAKER - The member has responded as she sees fit. Any other ramifications the House can decide the process from then on. I cannot control that process.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION (TASMANIA) AMENDMENT BILL 2021 (No. 42)

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Ferguson and read the first time.

SITTING TIMES

[11.09 a.m.]

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

That for each of this day, Wednesday and Thursday sittings, the House shall not stand adjourned at 6 o'clock and the House continue to sit past 6 o'clock.

As the previous resolution of the House has established, 18 hours is provided for discussion of the dot-points from Committees A and B. I suppose that we would tackle three minister's outputs on each of the three days this week. Therefore, I would not imagine it is a long day beyond 6 o'clock, but we need to lift the sitting adjournment in order to allow us to conduct all that business this week.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Business Support

[11.10 a.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: business support.

There has been much said in this term of parliament about the importance of businesses in Tasmania, often referred to as the engine room and the backbone of our economy. This matter of public importance is raised today because of Tasmanian Labor's understanding of and engagement with businesses in Tasmania and our concern for the current eco-system within which businesses are operating.

In order to support a business, you need to understand how they operate, what pressures are involved with their current circumstances and what is needed to ensure that a business, often now operating in an environment with extra stress because of the border closures, needs to get through from this chapter of challenge to, hopefully, a positive summer season. Because of the pressure applied and the information provided by this side of the House to the Government, we know that micro-businesses, small businesses, medium and large iconic businesses across Tasmania are feeling the pressure in different ways.

A small business, a sole trader, might be the only person that brings in a wage to their household. They may be supporting families and communities across Tasmania. A business of a slightly larger size might be employing Tasmanians and that employee may be seeking the security and the stability of their wage in order to provide for their family.

Larger businesses are employing many individuals and the pressure on the business owner to ensure that they can continue to provide to their employees who, in turn, can provide to their families and who, in turn, then invest their wage into the local communities, as we know, is high. These business are critical for the survival of communities and families across Tasmania right now.

To support a business in Tasmania now takes not only understanding but timeliness of the support that is provided. It is only due to the pressure from this side of the House, and bringing to the attention of the Government the reality of the burdens right now, that the Government has acted, and now twice.

The first program rolled out for businesses across Tasmania refused to acknowledge the importance of micro-businesses; businesses earning under \$50 000. The Government refused to take a moment to understand the pressure on a small business compared to a larger business that may have reserves and adequate cash flow to get through this difficult time.

We are hearing from our community that this season is harder than last year and getting from this moment through to, hopefully, a positive summer season is finding people at their limit. While we now have some detail on the next level of support for Tasmanian businesses, we are none the wiser about how and when that support will be rolled out.

If October and November are when those first payments land in the bank accounts of businesses, they still have to get from here to that first payment. We have heard for weeks and have been providing feedback to the Government for weeks, as has business, that people are at their limit. Business owners are taking second and third jobs or standing themselves down to continue to provide for their employees, earning a second wage to pay the wages of their employees so they can maintain their skilled staff until summer.

It not only takes an investment of money but it takes time and skill to employ, train and maintain an employee, often when there are pressures to reduce hours or release an employee from their business. Does the commitment made by the Government in this package ensure that employees within a business have security in their position? We need to ensure that in the summer, once there is an increased level of vaccination and borders are reopened when safe for Tasmanian communities and business, we still have the employees who can deliver the exceptional service we have worked hard to deliver across Tasmania.

We have encouraged people to make a career choice in tourism and hospitality when at one point people saw it as casual employment or an opportunity through university or to add an extra income. We have many leaders in Tasmania who are demonstrating that you can have a career in hospitality and tourism. To develop that skill and excellence requires time and money. Business owners right now cannot afford to lose those employees and then reskill and retool for the summer season. To protect Brand Tasmania we support our businesses and their families and their communities. We need to make sure that the packages provided to support businesses are done in a timely way, are clear and can guarantee the security of workers in the businesses that they support.

It is important right now that businesses are backed by all Tasmanians, that Tasmanians get out and support businesses in a way that it is not just left for government. We know many people in our community are under pressure. They need our support, not only financially but emotionally, so businesses can survive this challenging time in a year harder than last year.

[11.17 a.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for State Growth) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for bringing up this matter again, fourth Labor MPI in a row on business. As I said in my contribution on the last Labor MPI on business, it would be wonderful if this signals that Labor has pivoted and after decades in this place suddenly taken a real interest in business.

Unfortunately, Labor has no track record to be proud of when it comes to listening to and working with businesses of any size in this state.

I fear that, yet again, Labor is seeking to distract this House, this Chamber and those watching and reading, from their dismal performance in Estimates last week and their total lack of an alternative policy platform or alternative Budget in this critical time of the year for setting our strategic agenda for government and for the parliament.

Sadly for Tasmanian businesses, again, Labor's interest is fleeting. They are a sometimes friend of business but only when it suits them. Businesses would do well to remember those times when Labor was last in government when business surveys revealed that business owners in Tasmania thought that the government of the day's policies were actively working against them. That is what led to businesses closing, people leaving Tasmania and our economy being the worst performing in Australia.

Happily, the reality now is Tasmania's economy and Tasmanian businesses are performing, on the whole, very strongly and showing some of the strongest signs of recovery of any state or territory in Australia through this pandemic period.

Unemployment is down and employment is up. More Tasmanians have jobs now than ever before and a large proportion of Tasmanian businesses are busier now than they have been for the last couple of years. That is true in the building and construction sectors: not only big businesses but very small ones too and everyone they buy supplies from and contract services. That sector is stronger than it has ever been.

Mining, forestry and farming are having an excellent run. We are supporting them. Their conditions are favourable. They are growing and investing and we are supporting them to do that.

There are small business owners, like those in Reiby Street in Ulverstone, who have told me that border closures and interstate lockdowns have led to people spending more money in their businesses over the last year or so than in previous years. They have been the beneficiaries of Tasmanians not being able to travel and spend their holiday savings. Instead of spending on themselves, their families, their homes, their hobbies and local businesses are getting the benefit. We know that is not the story everywhere for all businesses, sectors or parts of Tasmania.

Our Government knows that because we make a habit we are proud of - it is in our DNA - to listen to and work with businesses and have our ear to the ground to understand their needs and respond accordingly. That is why, over the last couple of years, we have not just suddenly discovered businesses because it is convenient for us to do so to distract attention from performance. That is Labor's schtick. We have been listening to and working with businesses all along.

From March 2020, a \$50 million Business Support Loan Scheme providing interest free loans to eligible businesses, particularly in the hospitality, tourism and seafood export sectors, \$1 million for the Temporary Visa Holder Skilled Employee Assistance Program, \$60 million Business Growth Loan Scheme, \$20 million for the Building Project Support Program, \$30 million for the Building Construction Support Loan Program, \$30 million for interest free loans for Tourism Development Loan Scheme and the list goes on.

The Government's \$80 million assistance program packages to small business has provided more than 21 000 grants to more than 14 000 Tasmanian small businesses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We know those most affected by interstate lockdowns and restrictions, the tourism and hospitality sectors and those who work with them, have been significant beneficiaries of that \$80 million support program plus \$300 000 has been provided to small businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector in a partnership between the THA, the Tourism Industry Council and Collins SBA to deliver business continuing and cash flow advice and \$1 million has been provided towards a mental health support program.

In August 2020, we introduced a Tourism Industry Market Support Program. In September 2020, a \$12.5 million, the first, Make Yourself at Home travel voucher incentive. In December 2020, the Hospitality Energy Rebate Grant program. Through 2020 and 2021 a number of marketing campaigns were delivered aimed at educating patrons and encouraging Tasmanians to travel around the state and support our industry. In April 2021, the Regional Visitor Attraction Hardship Grant program provided direct support to tourism and hospitality businesses. I could go on.

Ms O'Connor - Have you got a total there, minister? Is there a total for small business support?

Mr JAENSCH - We have not finished yet and we will continue to roll -

Ms O'Connor - No, but do you have a total to date?

Mr JAENSCH - I will try to get you a number on that. The point is on many fronts, across a long period of time for many specific industry business types and their needs, we have been responding and will continue to respond to support, particularly those hardest hit directly by border closures associated with the pandemic.

The events sector has not been overlooked either. There is a range of initiatives assembled particularly for them and we will continue to do so. Today, the Premier announced a support program worth \$70 million, focused primarily on providing support to those sectors still under pressure with these interstate lockdowns.

Time expired.

[11.24 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, Mr Jaensch stands up and wants to talk about Labor again. He complains we talk about business too much; the fourth MPI he points out. I was not sure it was the fourth MPI.

I make no apologies for Labor talking about small business and business support during this time at all. Labor does not make any apologies for continuing to talk about this issue. We have been talking about this issue for almost a month because it is a huge issue for Tasmanian businesses that are either tourism hospitality or tourism and hospitality exposed businesses in this state. We talk to them and they are struggling, struggling for quite a while now with extended lockdowns in New South Wales and Victoria and resulting border closures which have had a flow-on impact on Tasmanian businesses that have invested over two decades now into a tourism industry that successive governments have told them to. We continue to tell

these businesses tourism is the future of the Tasmanian economy and they are in all sorts of trouble.

We finally got an announcement last night of some substance. On 19 August, we pointed out the \$20 million business support package was insignificant, was never going to do enough, and we were ridiculed by the Government for saying that. They continued to rely on this \$20 million package for weeks, despite the pleas, not only from this side of the House but also from business, that it was not enough. They continued to maintain the line until all of a sudden yesterday, a release was dropped to media organisations to tell them about this plan. Then at 6 o'clock this morning, in-boxes received a media release to give some very scant detail about what this package actually is.

This was an opportunity for minister Jaensch to back-in the Premier and explain exactly what the package is, but no detail whatsoever because I do not know if he has seen it or is actually aware of it.

We heard a little bit from the Premier today. As I said, I do not know if the minister has actually seen it yet. We heard the Premier explain in question time today and, as Ms O'Connor pointed out at the time, he answered the question we asked as question number one as a Dorothy Dixier and question whatever number, to give us some scant detail.

It is an hour and a half later and it might have changed now, but before I arrived in question time, there was no information about this on the Business Tasmania website. If you are a business in big strife, struggling, you might have had to let off workers already and that has happened. You might be considering whether you can continue to employ your workers and you open a paper to see there is going to be some support. You think, fantastic, what a relief.

If I were them, I would go straight to the Business Tasmania website to try and find out. There is no detail about how this package is going to work. The only detail we have heard is from the Premier today in question time. On the off-chance they were not at work and were listening, they might have some more information. Outside of that, unless you were watching that answer, you simply do not know exactly how this is going to work.

The concern I have about the support is not only is it announced too late, but according to the media release which the Premier put out overnight that came out at 6 o'clock this morning, first the support will be based on your September quarter outcomes, which has not finished yet, and it also talks about the first round being available in October:

The \$50 million business support package will provide total grants of up to \$50 000 based on annual turnover with two funding rounds, the first in October and the second in November.

As Ms Finlay points out, even once these grant rounds are actually announced, then assessed and then the money finally gets out the door, is that going to be fast enough? Are we actually going to have enough support to keep these businesses going up until the point where they are unable to continue to keep their staff employed?

One of the big things we have heard from businesses during this time is that they desperately want to be able to keep their staff on, not only because they care about, support and

want to keep their people employed, but also because the skills they have trained up over in some cases, decades, cannot be replaced in a short period of time. The tourism and hospitality sector looks to being able to hold out until summer when we are able to safely open the border. That might be enough to allow the business to continue.

We have heard not only from the businesses themselves, but the people who are supported by businesses. Casuals without shifts, musicians without gigs, taxi and Uber drivers; these are people who are heavily reliant on the sector and who have not had enough support. Some of these have had access to the \$20 million program and what they have told us is either, 'I could not get access to it' or 'if I could it kept me going for maybe a week but I am already struggling again'. That was the absurdity and inadequacy of the first round which has been effectively proven by the fact that today they finally announced that it was not enough.

Last night I had a phone call from a very well-known tourism operator who rang me to say, 'thanks, Labor, for your advocacy. I heard Rebecca White on the radio this morning. Thank you for advocating for this because this is a really tough spot for me and my business. I have skilled, experienced professionals working for me who I cannot afford to lose. We appreciate that Labor is standing up for, not only my business, but for the sector that I represent'.

We have continued to talk about this over time. We have been criticised for continuing to talk about it. We will continue to talk about it because it is not just the businesses, it is the people who are reliant on these businesses who are really important, not just to Tasmania now but for Tasmania's future.

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this matter of public importance debate and acknowledge Ms Finlay's strong interest in and advocacy and effectiveness in this area of public policy. I do note that this is the fourth matter of public importance debate that Labor has brought on about small business. I say this in the context of the intergovernmental panel on climate change report which was released less than a month ago which has raised barely a murmur from either government or opposition benches.

Of course, we recognise the importance of advocating for small business and for there to be sustained and sustainable support for small business. I encourage Labor to move away from this narrowcasting and talk about some other issues that are also of deep concern to the people of Tasmania. The elephant in the room here is the Morrison Government's absolute abrogation of its responsibility towards businesses small and medium in Australia. As we know, Harvey Norman got \$20.5 million in JobKeeper which they are refusing to pay back even though they were totally profitable. There was \$13 billion which went to companies that increased sales between April and September 2020.

We had an outstanding scheme in place to support businesses and employees in JobKeeper where people were given something close to a living wage of \$1500 a fortnight. It kept businesses open, it kept people in their jobs. What we now know is that it ended too early and it was massively rorted. It is the taxpayers of Australia who are paying for that massive rort and a cash splash on corporations that manifestly did not need the money. Imagine, if you just do the maths, this vast sum of \$13 billion between April and September 2020, and a significant proportion of it going to corporations that did not need it. Imagine if the Morrison Government had invested that in supporting small and micro-businesses across

the country. We would not be hearing these daily stories of pain, of fear, of businesses closing and having to lose skilled staff.

We have had the Morrison Government buck-pass responsibility to the states for keeping the business economy alive. That is what has happened here. We have heard of substantial sums of money that the state is contributing in grants towards small businesses to keep them viable.

The Greens argue this should not be the responsibility of a state government and a state budget. The Morrison Government recognised its responsibility upfront in a pandemic and then it back-tracked frantically after giving away billions of our dollars to corporations that did not need it. Now they are pretending that we can safely open up and are pushing states towards ending their very sensible epidemiologically-sound border restrictions.

We have the federal Attorney-General, Michaelia Cash, making threats to states like Tasmania because we have taken the advice of Public Health and kept some hard borders in place. That is how helpful the Morrison Government is being. They have removed the money and now they are making threats. That is after playing politics in a pandemic by smashing into Dan Andrews, a Labor premier in Victoria who tried so hard to do the right thing, while Gladys Berejiklian - who has unleashed the Delta variant on this country - is let right off the hook. That is what we got out of the Morrison Government. That is why in this federal system it has been the states that have had to pick up the pieces, whether it be in providing emergency support to tenants or to small businesses, by making sure we have the Public Health measures in place that we need to have because the Morrison Government has abrogated its responsibility.

We are interested to know how the latest small business support that has been announced by the Premier this morning will be communicated to businesses and how we can make sure that it is distributed equitably to businesses that need it. Also, and I know this is usual and novel for this Government, but it would be great to have some transparency around the way that money is disbursed. As we know, last year, \$26 million was forked out to businesses and no detail was provided on those businesses, despite the fact they knew it would be a public process.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I express on behalf of everyone who cares about democracy the Greens' great frustration at what happened in question time this morning when we had two pointed questions from Labor on small business support. The Premier got up and twice used it as an opportunity to hop into Labor - entirely predictable. Then he got his first Dorothy Dix question from his own side and gave the information that could have and should have been provided in the answer to the first question from Labor.

In the 14 questions in the question time today, we had four Dorothy-Dix questions that took up more than 20 minutes because of the length of some of the answers. We had utter contempt for the way question time is supposed to be run in this place when there was an opportunity on the first question for that information to have been provided to the House in a relatively apolitical, reasonable and respectful way, but we did not get that. We got rubbish hopping into Labor and then another Dorothy-Dix question and a very long answer that was self-congratulatory and could have been dealt with in the first two questions.

I will close by acknowledging that the state Government has stepped in where the federal government has walked away. We do not know whether that is sufficient support for small

businesses. What we know is that there needs to be excellent communication and there needs to be equitable access to that support. We cannot have that level of public funding being disbursed willy-nilly to businesses that are favourites, for example, of the Liberal government.

Time expired.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I acknowledge the members of the Magra CWA who are visiting us, and also Mr and Mrs Hodge in the gallery. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

[11.38 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, it is a delight to bask in the glow of bipartisanship on a matter as important as small business. Everyone understands that the Liberal Party is a party of small business, it is a party that governs for small business. We get it. It is in our DNA. It is how most of us grew up. Certainly, that is how I grew up. The son of a plumber, dad was running a small business and I was lucky to be part of that family business during my apprenticeship. I know that the Premier has operated a pub and a range of other small businesses. We get it; it is part of who we are.

It is nice that Labor has come to the party. It is probably not as good as the bonfire that Mr Winter will be attending in the Derwent Valley shortly, which I am sure will be very enjoyable for him. There he can bask in the glow of the disunity and destabilisation in which he is taking part. It is truly wonderful to see the Labor family united and Mr Winter coming all the way up from Franklin to be with the good people of the Derwent Valley.

Mr Tucker - Right into Lyons.

Mr ELLIS - Right into Lyons, getting up into Mr Tucker's electorate and saying hello and congratulating them on a fantastic motion of no-confidence against the other Labor member for Franklin, who we know Ms Haddad endorsed warmly for the leadership.

This business support package has been described as supersized, supercharged, and turbocharged. There is a lot of hyperbole that we could put on it but the raw facts speak for themselves. It is \$70 million in business support grants for businesses that have been impacted by border closures. While the situation in Tasmania is far better than places on the mainland that are currently locked down, there are some sectors of our business community that are doing it tough. We have been working with them right through the pandemic and through the life of this Government. We are a government of small business; we are a government for small business.

There is an enormous amount of support in this package, similar to the existing border closure hardship support grants, which have already delivered \$3 million to 872 businesses. That is an enormous amount of support, particularly given that it is for a specific section of our economy. It is tourism operators who are impacted by border closures.

There are other parts of the economy, such as construction and agriculture, where small businesses are operating flat out, so we are proud to support those who are doing it tough as well as those who are doing well. There will be payroll tax relief and there will be waivers for vehicle registration for some of our transport operators as well as waiving national parks fees.

The Labor Party has not even looked at the cost of registration because it would prefer to mislead the parliament. We know it is an important relief for people. For example, mates of mine who operate bus tours on King Island have been impacted because their business is largely reliant on Victorian tourism. They will get significant support through the vehicle registration relief. Many business operators love to take people into Tasmania's national parks and show them around so the parks fee waiver will help. Waiving those fees in this period of hardship is about supporting them, it is about incentivising them and it is about making sure that people can check out the beautiful island we live on.

Labor seems to be trying to make a big thing of discovering small business but last week the federal shadow treasurer, Labor's Jim Chalmers, the would-be treasurer of Australia, said we are passing out blank cheques to businesses that did not need support -

Ms O'Connor - That is what the Australian Tax Office has said.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ELLIS - It is a staggering thing for someone who wants to be the Treasurer of this country to say.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Ellis does not seem to understand. That has been confirmed by the Australian Tax Office.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Ms O'CONNOR - He needs to tell the truth in here.

Mr SPEAKER - The member has the call. That is not a point of order.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Speaker I appreciate the inciteful comments from the Leader of the Greens.

This is what Labor truly believes in its heart of hearts. When you take away all the gloss, when you take away all the crocodile tears, we know what you guys think. You have spent six years in opposition demonising business by saying that they are the top end of town. This is the way the Labor Party speaks about people who are having a go, people who pay themselves last, people who are employing young people in our community. That is the way they think of them.

Ms White came in here and described it as a tired old formula of tax cuts. Mr Speaker, that is those businesses money. They are going to use that to employ more people, to grow, to invest, to make sure that our state is one of the best places in the world to live, work, raise a family and retire.

Two-thirds of businesses under the last Labor-Greens government thought that the government was working against them. Now we have the highest business confidence in the nation. That does not happen by accident. That does not happen because you came into parliament and raised a couple of MPIs. That happens with hard work, day after day from a government that governs for small business, a government that understands each and every one of these businesses in our community because we talk to them, because we are close with them and because we come from them.

This side of this House is extremely proud to support our small businesses doing it tough in the tourism sector. We are looking forward to working with them to continue to grow into the future.

Time expired.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2021 (No. 36)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2021 (No. 37)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

[11.46 a.m.]

Mr STREET - Mr Deputy Chair, I have the honour to bring up the reports of the Estimates Committee A on the Estimates of the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Tourism; Minister for Finance, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for State Development, Construction, and Housing, and Minister for Science and Technology; Minister for State Growth, Minister for Local Government and Planning, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Heritage; and Minister for Resources, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Minister for Trade, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence, and additional information presented to the committee.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Deputy Chair, I have the honour to bring up the reports of the Estimates Committee B on the Estimates of the Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, and Minister for Community Services and Development; Minister for Education, Minister for Hospitality and Events, Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Development, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Children and Youth; Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs, and Minister for Arts; Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Parks and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence; and Minister for Small Business, Minister for Women, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Racing together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence, and additional information presented to the committee.

DIVISIONS 1, 4, 7, 9, 12 and 13

(Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Tourism)

[11.49 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Deputy Chair, I add my welcome to the Magra CWA. If my memory serves me correctly, Magra covers the Derwent Valley, Brighton and Southern Midlands. Welcome to the parliament. We are very pleased to have you here.

The 2021-22 Budget Estimates was an opportunity to further outline the strong economic foundations that this Government has established over the past seven years and to explain our plan to secure Tasmania's future. The Budget provides funding for new initiatives which will help to meet increased demand for essential services, especially in our health system as well as supporting vulnerable Tasmanians. I was very pleased that in the Budget more than \$900 million of additional spending was included for Health. I said on election night that we would do more and we have done more.

It also provides the flexibility to ensure that we can continue to respond to the impacts of the pandemic. I have consistently said through this, there will be twists and turns, will be more to be done and we need that flexibility to ensure when more needs to be done, we can take those steps.

At the moment we are in a rare position in Tasmania, when you consider what is occurring up and down the eastern seaboard and importantly, whilst there have been recent COVID-19 scares in South Australia, we still remain open to South Australia, to Queensland and again, and even though they have had their challenges, the Northern Territory and WA. New South Wales and Victoria remain very problematic.

The Budget contains \$300 million-worth of flexible funding in the Treasurer's Reserve to ensure should we need to respond, whether that be with regard to health or whether it need be additional business support or support to the broader community, we can respond. That builds on the very strong support we provided last year with regard to a \$1 billion package of support, the largest package in the country as a percentage of one of the state or territory jurisdiction's economies.

That support package underpinned a range of support both with regard to our community and our non-government organisations and also in respect of the support the Government provided directly. The reason we were able to do that was because we built a strong budget position. I am proud of the fact that across all of the states and territories, we were the only state or territory that went into the pandemic with net cash and investments and money in the bank, as opposed to carrying debt like all of the others did.

With regard to the social and economic supports we provided, I was pleased this morning to announce further support to businesses impacted by those closures I have been speaking about with regard to New South Wales and Victoria. In New South Wales and Victoria, their life is vastly different from our lives here in Tasmania, or as it stands, in other parts of the country at the moment.

If you are a hospitality or a tourism business in New South Wales or Victoria, you are closed. You have no opportunity, as we do here in Tasmania, or certainly our businesses do, where Tasmanians can stay at, can frequent and spend at those businesses. For Tasmanian

businesses someone from Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory or Queensland can come and spend money in our businesses. We are in a vastly different position to where New South Wales and Victoria are. In New South Wales and Victoria, you are locked into your home under a stay-at-home order. Your movements are limited and therefore those businesses are in a completely different position to what businesses are here in Tasmania.

We acknowledge there has been a significant impact. A large proportion of our interstate visitation comes off the eastern seaboard. I am pleased to see direct flights to Western Australia and to South Australia now exist from both our southern and our northern airport in Launceston and understand we will see, over the coming months, an increase in those flights which will provide more opportunities for people to visit this beautiful state to support our businesses and to see, with regard to Tasmanian offering, is the jewel in the crown for this country. We are in a rare and unique position. A beautiful location and as it stands at the moment COVID-19 free.

Ms O'Connor - But you have to look after it better.

Mr GUTWEIN - There is always one!

Ms O'Connor - It is true and is what your own Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council said.

Mr GUTWEIN - With regard to the Budget, I am pleased with the investment we were making in the past, investment we are making into climate, renewables and future industries in Tasmania which will provide a rare opportunity, a moment in time, for us to grasp the multitude of opportunities that exist because of the long investment we have had in this state into renewable energy -

Ms O'Connor - And forest protection.

Mr GUTWEIN - the carbon sink that exists because of the forests we have. I have acknowledged on a number of occasions, that carbon sink came out of a lot of pain. There were many businesses, many families affected and many communities across the state, especially in regional and rural Tasmania impacted and should not ever be forgotten.

Regarding the package we have announced today, I was very pleased to put the final touches with the federal Treasurer last night. An initial \$20 million package we rolled out around a month ago has now been super-sized to \$50 million, \$25 million from the state and \$25 million from the federal Government to provide direct grants to businesses. Importantly, whether they be a small business that can receive a maximum now of up to \$7000 or a much larger business that can receive a maximum of up to \$110 000, this program will provide necessary support.

For those larger businesses that employ many Tasmanians, the payroll tax relief added to this package - a further \$20 million - makes a total package of around \$70 million. The payroll tax and other fee relief we provide will enable businesses to ensure they can remain engaged with their staff to ensure when we do reach a point we can sensibly and carefully reopen to other parts of the country, especially the eastern seaboard, they have the necessary work force available to them.

That being said, our businesses are not in the same position as those in New South Wales or Victoria, where they have been forced to stand down their staff because their businesses simply are not allowed to be open at the moment. There is a vast difference between our circumstance and the circumstance in those communities.

The package we brought down today will roll out quickly. There has been some questioning of this today, but those businesses that have already applied for a grant and have received a grant will automatically receive the second grant. The third grant will open up in early November and all they will need to do is confirm their circumstance has not changed. The current grant round remains open until early October and I expect we might see further businesses apply. At the moment, more than 800 have been approved and we will continue to ensure they receive their money quickly.

There was some discussion about the track to surplus at Estimates last week. I found some of the comments made quite extraordinary. I did note on one occasion Mr Winter, the member for Franklin, was quite confused, opened up and appeared to be attacking the Secretary of Treasury. I have the transcript here because it amuses me as much today as it did last week.

Perhaps without setting out the full extent of the journey you went on last week, I make the point you finished a two-page contribution by saying, 'You are quite right. I shouldn't have said anything, Treasurer.' For those wondering what had occurred, Mr Winter had confused GST and GSP, which staggered me. There is a vast difference between the two, but Mr Winter had somehow waded into it and at the same time managed to attack the Treasury secretary. It put the Treasury secretary into a position that he had to say, very clearly, 'No, we didn't.' I did not make any comment to actually square up the accusation you were making. I said this morning that last week was like being tag-teamed by dumb and dumber and I know I cannot directly reflect on the members there so I will not.

Tasmania's budget is now on track to surplus. We arrive at a cash operating surplus not this year but next year of more than \$300 million. I think it is \$368 million.

In the final two years we throw cash operating surpluses of more than \$500 million a year and deliver an operating surplus. It appeared those on the other side were not prepared to accept the operating surplus even when Standard and Poors, the global ratings agency, made the point that Tasmania's 2021-22 Budget shows an improving economic outlook that is supporting a return to operating surpluses. It staggered me that we spent so much time when the weight of evidence was so clear, so concise, yet that side of the House could not understand it.

The Budget is a clear investment in securing Tasmania's future. It will deliver our plan as we said it would. We will deliver \$10.7 billion over the next four years to our health system. That is an increase of \$900 million on last year's budget.

The Minister for Health outlined during Estimates this investment includes \$198 million to meet increasing demand and pressures being faced by our major hospitals and to support the opening of beds in these key hospitals. We are providing over \$196 million, just shy of \$200 million, in this Budget for 30 000 additional elective surgeries. The Budget provides over \$40 million to recruit an additional 48 paramedics to add to the 170 full-time equivalent paramedics and dispatch officers that we have recruited since 2014.

One of the key differences between our state at the moment and New South Wales is that in New South Wales they have hospitals on bypass, where they have stopped all elective surgery. They have taken health staff off the front-line to get vaccinations into people's arms. We are in a much better position than that -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, because we took action early unlike premier Berejiklian.

Mr GUTWEIN - We have taken action early every step of the way. Dr Veitch and his team of public health professionals have been outstanding through this. I understand personally the workload challenges they have been under. They have been outstanding. Digressing slightly from the Budget, Dr Veitch is a Melbourne supporter and has been a Melbourne supporter for a long period of time.

Ms O'Connor - He has had a good weekend then, hasn't he?

Mr GUTWEIN - He was telling me he supported them for more than the last 56 years, so he has had a good weekend and I will pass on my very best to Dr Veitch. I hope that his year continues to be as successful for him as it was this last weekend.

Back to the Budget, the minister also released the Tasmanian Government's long-term strategy, the Health Workforce 2040 Plan, which will help shape recruitment priorities and determine Tasmania's education and training needs for the service over the next 20 years.

In Education, Skills and Training, the Budget invests a record \$8 billion to enable Tasmanians to get the jobs that will support and drive our economy forward. The Minister for Education outlined during Estimates that from March 2014 to March 2021 the Government has employed 867 full-time equivalent staff across our education system, including teachers, teacher assistants and professional support staff such as school nurses.

That is an incredible level of employment and will help ensure our students have the best possible chance to get an education and set themselves up for future success. In the coming years we expect to see an additional 81 teachers recruited, including 40 full-time equivalent school quality literacy coaches commencing in 2022. A fourth annual recruitment campaign is currently under way to identify high quality teachers ready to commence teaching in 2022, with a focus on regional and high priority locations and specialisations.

There is also \$100 million in additional funding to build and improve classrooms and essential facilities with TasTAFE. TasTAFE will also receive almost \$100 million over the next four years. This will include \$37.6 million to fund 100 extra TasTAFE teachers and \$45 million for improvements to facilities across the state.

We are helping more Tasmanians in the home through a \$615 million package for social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives. We will build 3500 new homes by 2027, adding an additional 2000 homes to our current plan to deliver 1500 new homes by 2023. This was a recommendation from PESRAC, and one that we support. We will develop a first-ever comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy -

Ms O'Connor - I thought you supported all the recommendations from PESRAC?

Mr GUTWEIN - It is another one that we support. In fact, we support all of them.

It will consider demand across both the public and private sectors and formulate strategies to deliver sustainable outcomes for all Tasmanians. During Estimates the Minister for Housing outlined how Tasmanians have taken advantage of a range of grant schemes and support measures introduced by this Government, providing a lifeline to our construction and building industries at a critical time while helping more Tasmanians build or buy a home.

In our lockdown plan, should we have a case of Delta that was released a few weeks ago, the construction industry would also, for that short period of time, have been closed. That is challenging because they were kept open last year when we were dealing with a less contagious strain than Delta. This morning Victoria put its construction sector on notice for the next four weeks because hundreds of cases have been linked to construction sites.

In response to Delta, it is important that we could stop people moving because the only way that this virus moves is with people. That is why Public Health included a range of industry sectors, some that might have been surprised that they were included, in that plan.

The \$20 000 Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant, which complemented the Australian Government's \$25 000 HomeBuilder Grant provides Tasmanians with significant financial support to help them build or buy a home. Tasmanians took advantage of those schemes with more than 2000 applications for the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant being conditionally approved. There were 776 grants already paid and 3438 HomeBuilder Grant applications conditionally approved. Of those, 1294 have been paid as of 13 August and homes have begun construction.

In addition to these grants, the Government has increased the cap to stamp duty concessions from \$400 000 to \$500 000 to help those buying their first home and pensioners downsizing to smaller dwellings, providing over \$15 million of relief for Tasmanians entering the market. The Budget also includes an ambitious \$5.7 billion infrastructure program to support jobs and build better, safe and more connected communities.

Time expired.

[12.09 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - I rise to provide a report back on Budget Estimates in the Premier's output group. I want to talk about the role that government is supposed to play in our state, which is to provide opportunity for all and to support people to have a good life.

I note that there are a significant number of commitments that were made at this election that will not be delivered in this term. That is a broken promise to the people of Tasmania who went to the election voting for particular things to be delivered by the elected Liberal Government, to find that in this Budget a significant number of projects will only just commence in the last term of the Government. That is if it keeps its word. The Government has a woeful track record of delivering, particularly infrastructure projects. It is very good at making announcements but the Budget demonstrates that once again it is terrible at delivery. Many of the commitments they made at this election will not be delivered in this term of government. For the people of Tasmania who, in good faith, cast their vote at this most recent election, I think that is a terrible shame.

One of the other matters we discussed - and goes again to what it is we expect of government as a model employer - is the way that staff who raise complaints about their

treatment in the workplace are responded to by their employer. I am speaking specifically in this instance about the case of Alysha, an employee at the department of Communities, who worked at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and is still employed there but is off on worker's compensation, who has been raising concerns about why her complaint had been taking so long to progress and when she might hear a response from the government to that complaint.

As is now evident for everybody to see, very concerningly, the response to her complaint was not provided in a confidential manner to her. It was broadcast at a public Estimates hearing on Monday by the secretary of the department of Premier and Cabinet. That was not only a terrible failure of process, but it was an extraordinary failure of Alysha who was devastated to find out that the complaint that she had lodged about her treatment and the fact that she felt unsafe at work, not only had taken so long, but it was disclosed publicly before she had privately been told.

The Premier has now commissioned a review into the circumstances surrounding that matter and has indicated he is seeking a report to be handed to him within 30 days. It does not remove the responsibility that I feel sits with him to make sure that Alysha is supported over the course of the next 30 days because she has already been through the ringer. She has been through a process over the last 22 months that has affected her physically, emotionally and mentally, and now she has been asked to be patient while a further investigation is undertaken by the Government into how her complaint about her safety at work was handled.

I want to express in the strongest possible terms to the Premier that our expectation is that this employee be provided with all of the support and more that she deserves. I was concerned to hear from the complainant over the course of the weekend tell me that since she had the meeting with the Premier, since the complaint had been revealed publicly in Estimates on Monday, that no-one had been in contact with her to check in that she was okay. She is not okay. I followed up with the Premier's deputy chief of staff to make sure they were at least aware of her circumstances. I understand that the Premier's office has been back in contact with her, encouraging her to use the employee assistance program. That is just adequate, I would argue, given the circumstances.

I also ask whether we would have seen the circumstance last week where the Premier announced the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre if this brave woman did not fight to have her complaint heard and fight for those children to have their concerns dealt with. I do not think the answer would be 'yes'. I do not think the Premier would have announced on Thursday last week, after meeting with Alysha, that the Ashley Youth Detention Centre was closing, if he had not had that meeting with her.

Given what she has been put through and will continue to be expected to endure over the next month while this investigation takes place, I implore the Government to wrap its support around this woman who coincidentally or as a consequence, who knows, last week had her worker's compensation stepped down. As a result of being on worker's compensation because of the fact that her workplace could not be made safe for her, just last week after everything else she went through, she found out that her salary has been reduced to 80 per cent of what she would ordinarily earn.

These circumstances are appalling if you assess each of them individually, but combined it is alarming. Again, I take my hat off to Alysha for having the bravery to speak out publicly

about what she was witnessing - I know she spoke to the Premier about that - but also what she was enduring as an employee of the State Service and felt that she was being failed.

The point right now is that we do know from another Estimates hearing, not specific to this one but it gets covered in the dot points, is that there are six ED5 investigations currently under way at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. There are 12 occurring in the department of Communities. When I asked the secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet if she could tell me how many were under way in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, she said there were none and that one had been concluded this year but there were none in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. There are three code of conduct investigations under way in the Department of Premier and Cabinet at the moment but in the department of Communities there are 12 ED5s and six of them are relating to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

I was concerned to learn that the Department of Premier and Cabinet does not have oversight about the number of ED5s across the whole of the State Service. That is something the Government needs to address and perhaps through the review of the State Service that was tabled during Estimates on Monday, that can be improved so that the Government can see if there are patterns emerging across particular departments or particular areas within departments and they can act to address cultural challenges that might be persisting in those areas because that is what we have seen at Ashley; there is a problem with the culture there that has resulted in so many ED5s.

Ms O'Connor - There is a bit of a problem with Labor's culture too, you'd have to say.

Ms WHITE - Pardon? We are talking about the Premier and his Budget Estimates here.

Mr Deputy Chair, it would be a good practice for the Government to make sure they knew where the ED5s are occurring across departments and for the secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to be able to have that at hand quickly, if necessary, so they can understand what is going on across the culture of their organisation and their workplace.

I also want to remark on commentary made this morning by the secretary of the department of Health that she is going to advise the Government to achieve a 90 per cent vaccination rate for the Tasmanian community. I do not know whether or not the government has received that advice yet, but apparently on the ABC *Mornings* program with Leon Compton this morning the Tasmanian secretary of Health, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks said she will recommend that vaccination rates of above 90 per cent be achieved before Tasmania relaxes border restrictions. We did have a conversation about the national plan and I note in the press release the Government issued this morning about support for small businesses which are affected by border closures, that they reference their obligations under the national plan. I know the Premier has already spoken but, perhaps another member of Government in their contribution on this output group can provide some clarity about whether we will be adhering to the national plan and easing border restrictions when we reach the 80 per cent vaccination rate, or whether that will change in light of the advice that the Premier and the Government are expecting to receive from the Department of Health.

I also want to talk about the other portfolio matters that we dealt with in the Premier's output and it takes me to tourism. While we welcome the belated response from the Government to the challenges in the tourism and hospitality sector with the announcement of

a package of additional support today, it is concerning that there is still such little detail made available.

The Premier in his contribution earlier provided some further detail that was not provided for in either the press release or in his answers to questions today in the parliament that there will be maximum grants available. If you are a small business, a maximum grant of \$7000; if you are larger, a maximum grant of \$120 000. How do businesses know that? It is currently not available on the Business Tasmania website as far as I can tell. There has certainly been no broader communication to the business community, as far as I can tell. All they are getting are snippets at the moment. I believe the Government does not understand the stresses the businesses in the hospitality and tourism sector are facing at the moment.

If you speak to any of them, whether they are in the cities or the regions, they are bleeding cash. They are doing their very best to keep staff on the books because most of them, particularly in small businesses, have a personal relationship with those employees and want to make sure they are okay and they can make ends meet. It is smart business for them to keep them on, because when things get busy, they are going to need those skilled employees to be able to respond to provide the visitor experience Tasmania has become renowned for.

The concern we have, is not only are there too few details provided in the announcement we have heard today about this, it has come far too late. There are so many workers who have already lost hours, have already lost their jobs and there are businesses that are stressed to the point where they are reducing the hours or days they are operating.

There is the example of Doug who runs the Duke. He has got himself another job, working a full-time job Monday to Friday, then running the pub still Monday to Sunday and is doing that so he can use his wages from this other job to pay the wages of his staff so he does not lose them. That is how significantly detrimental the current circumstances are for the businesses that are in the tourism hospitality sector, that are very much geared toward the visitor economy.

We are concerned that not only has this come too late and there are not enough details provided, despite the Premier trying to make a big show about the fact he has this money from the federal government today, it cannot be accessed until October.

Mr Gutwein - That is rubbish. I have explained that twice. You are making things up again.

Ms WHITE - You are saying to me, right now, that if a business wants to access this funding they do not have to wait for their September quarter to lodge those details to show the 30 per cent reduction?

Mr Gutwein - If a business has already received a grant, they automatically get the second grant.

Ms WHITE - When do they get it?

Mr Gutwein - It will be paid as quickly as possible.

Ms WHITE - That is good news but that is very different from what is in that press release.

Mr Gutwein - I said that today in the parliament. You have been sitting there, not listening, because it does not fit your narrative.

Ms WHITE - I will let you interject because I want to hear what you have to say.

Mr Gutwein - I will very carefully go through what you have said because you have been misleading on a number of issues. You do not listen.

Ms WHITE - I will read directly from the press release so there can be no confusion. This is important. There are businesses right now wondering how they access information about this. To my knowledge there is nothing on the Business Tasmania website. All they have to go on is what they have read in the newspaper this morning. I do not know whether your press release is up on your website yet, Premier. It certainly was not before question time, but the press release I am reading from, says:

The \$50 million business support package will provide total grants of up to \$50 000 based on annual turnover, with two funding rounds, the first in October and the second in November.

It also references the September quarter:

Our additional support also includes -

- payroll tax relief for tourism and hospitality industry businesses where there has been a 30 per cent reduction in turnover in the September 2021 quarter;

That payroll tax relief will not be provided until they can provide details about the September 2021 quarter, so they cannot access that support right now. That is my understanding. Please tell me if I am wrong.

Mr Gutwein - You are struggling. You did not listen this morning.

Ms WHITE - Clarify then. Is what you have written there right, or is it different from that? This is why you need to provide further information, details and the applications guidelines on your website.

Mr Gutwein - I am going to look very carefully at your transcript again. You already have had to apologise and correct the record once today. There is a pattern here.

Ms WHITE - Mr Chair, I am allowing the Premier to interject on me, without asking for your assistance to control the House. It is important to hear what he has to say. One of the things he did say was that 'businesses can access support right now'. We will hold him to that because it is necessary and urgent that these businesses can access support right now. If that is found not to be the case, I expect the Premier to come in here and explain that.

Before I run out of time, I want to talk about climate change. That was another portfolio we examined in the output group. Last week, I had the opportunity to have a briefing from the University of Tasmania, who spoke about what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report means for Tasmania and how it was going to have an impact on our climate here, both with regard to temperature but on the impact on the ecology and the impact from rainfall, drought, fire, marine and sea level changes.

It is extraordinarily compelling evidence that demonstrates we do need to take action. The Premier, in the Climate Change output group, ruled out sectoral targets without hesitation. He did reference we might be looking to a global target of 2030, which might be net zero. He is seeking further advice on that but ruled out sectoral targets. Why does that matter? It matters because what we know at the moment is the carbon sink, which is the forests.

When the Premier talks about being net zero he takes credit for the fact a lot of it is from the carbon sink that is the forests, which is the evidence, as demonstrated through the scientific reports. What it does ignore is there are other emitters across our economy. If we are serious about meeting a net-target by 2030, which I think is what the Premier is actively considering, we should be measuring the impacts from other sectors also, even if it is only to make sure we are seeing improvements and are ahead of the national average.

If you are not confident enough you can set the sectoral target for each of the sectors across our economy where emissions occur, at the very least we should aim to demonstrate we are seeing lower emissions from those sectors compared to the national average, so we can maintain our position as a leader. It is critically important we take action on climate change, not only because of the impact we are seeing across our community, the environment, the impact it will have on businesses responding to the consequences of climate change that will have an impact on our economy but also because there is an opportunity here for Tasmania.

The IPCC Report and the information provided to me in a briefing by the University of Tasmania speaks about Tasmania as a haven. The university's paper says that:

Tasmania is already experiencing the impacts of climate change but is relatively well placed to adapt to this challenge and provide leadership on climate action. Tasmania's climate, lifestyle, and environment could be an important driver of positive migration over coming decades.

Premier, the opportunity here is for Tasmania to continue to be a leader, to make sure we are demonstrating in a way that is measurable, transparent and gives confidence businesses can invest here because there are conditions that will support them, and the Government is serious about tackling climate change, not only as an environmental concern but also as an economic concern. That is where having a commitment, not only to a target by 2030 but a commitment to how we are going to continue to lead across sectors compared to the national average is, at the very least, something the Government could be looking to do if you are not willing to commit to sectoral targets.

Our Tasmanian brand is fundamental to not just the tourism industry but to all of us who are living here now and future opportunities for our families and our children to be confident in the knowledge the Government is doing all it can to support all Tasmanians to have a good life. Tackling climate change is a very important component to ensure we can have a sustainable existence here in Tasmania and on this planet.

I look forward to the Premier providing further details of that grant program because what he has provided to date is inadequate and insufficient for any business to make a decision about their future. Given the urgency of this matter, that has to be provided without any further delay.

Time expired.

[12.29 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Chair, I was quite relieved to see the Premier in the Estimates room after his health scare.

A member interjecting.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I was. I tell the truth in this place. I was quite relieved. A lot of Tasmanians were quite relieved.

It was the longest day of the Estimates hearing and covered a vast array of topics. I want to pick up on what the Leader of the Opposition was saying about the critical importance of having sectoral targets as part of our response to global heating, about making sure we do not lose the momentum we had in part by accident, but also largely because of the work of conservationists over the decade and the difficult decisions and votes taken during the Tasmanian Forest Agreement process. We do see, in other parts of our economy, from agriculture to transport to waste, that emissions are increasing and the Jacobs Review of the climate act makes it really clear there are some risks ahead depending on the policy decisions that Government makes. I urge the Premier to be very mindful of those risks.

Also, perhaps the next time he is on the National Cabinet hook-up to have a chat with Western Australian Premier, Mark McGowan, who has made a commitment that Western Australia will end native forest logging in 2024. We know like here, in Western Australia vast tracks of native forest have already been logged and burned. There has been widespread land use change in Western Australia and loss of Kauri pine forests. It is some measure of leadership. Our understanding is that Mark McGowan made that decision following the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report which declared a code red for humanity and made it really clear we have to keep the carbon that is in the ground, in the ground, and we have to bank more carbon into the ground.

I want to go to a couple of the issues specifically raised in the short time I have. I sat there in mortification, together with Ms White, when the secretary of Premier and Cabinet revealed, after a 22-month investigation - let us call it that and it is probably a loose descriptor - of what happened inside Communities Tasmania following the lodging of a sexual harassment complaint. But 22 months after that the complainant finds out remotely, whilst she is in Perth, Western Australia, that apparently no breach has been found. That was a denial of natural justice. It obviously harmed Alysha whose courage and clarity I believe were the catalyst for the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre last week.

The decision made by the Premier, is absolutely the right decision, to close Ashley after nearly a century of torturing and harming children and young people. I am very glad to hear Labor talking about Ashley, because it has been a source of frustration to the Greens over the past six years while we have been advocating for closure, Labor has not seen the need to close Ashley or apparently read any of the evidence in the Noetic report, which makes a compelling case for the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

We want to make absolutely certain that those children and young people who will be incarcerated in Ashley within the three years, are safe. We believe that requires intensified monitoring, oversight and a stronger role for the Commissioner for Children and Young People but also for the Youth Custodial Inspector. The Premier has given us his reassurance those children are safe and we will be holding the Premier to that; there is no question about that whatsoever.

If the secretary of the Department of Health is putting to Government that Tasmania needs a 90 per cent vaccination rate before we ease our border restrictions, the Greens will certainly support that given what good stead Public Health has held us in to this point.

I asked the Premier about the recommendations in chapter 6 of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council Report and the particular recommendations on the need to do things differently. In that chapter on environment and sustainability I quoted a section from the report that says:

Tasmanians told us of their concern that Tasmania's environmental credentials don't truly stack up when a close look is taken.

This is increasingly and worryingly true. We have intensified native forest logging. We have a plan to double the value of the salmon farming industry over the next 10 years. Then there is minister Barnett's dangerous plan to increase the value of agricultural production ten-fold by 2050, which now we know from the scientists, including the former DPIPW water ecologist, Chris Bobbi, the former Director of the Derwent Estuary Program, Dr Christine Coughanowr, has the potential to do enormous damage to our freshwater systems as well as our groundwater systems. If we are to abide by what the Tasmanian people have told us in the PESRAC report and the Premier, I believe, recognises this, we are going to have to do some things differently. We cannot just carry on with business as usual, because it is business as usual that has raised flags with the people of Tasmania who contributed towards the PESRAC report.

I look forward to seeing the sustainability vision which the secretary of Premier and Cabinet assured us would be underway by early 2022. This is a critical piece of work. It is not just about looking after nature; it is about making sure we have the economic and social policy settings to hold us in good stead in what is going to be a very very difficult century for the people of this planet.

From the research done and published in *The Guardian*, people will be flocking to this island from all over the mainland and the world. That presents to us a unique set of challenges and opportunities which was also raised with Dr Woodruff and me in our briefing with the local climate experts coordinated by Professor Richard Eccleston last Friday.

We also asked the Premier about water policy and water quality, and how you balance the tensions between rural water use, government policy, the fundamental human right all Tasmanians have to fresh, clean drinking water and the need to make sure there is enough water there for industries, particularly potentially new and exciting industries like the hydrogen industry. This is a critical point in Tasmania's history where we have some science ringing some alarm bells about river health. We have seen there has been a decline in water quality monitoring. There is increased pressure on those resources and there are future industries that

will rely on our water resources and, of course, every Tasmanian in a growing population needs to have access to safe, clean drinking water.

PESRAC makes a recommendation: to meet future demands for water and ensure water quality is sufficient for agricultural and environmental needs, we need a broader water resource policy approach that addresses resource allocation, water security and water quality, setting specific targets and binding the state Government to monitoring and reporting as well as more transparency. This should be an immediate priority.

I asked the Premier if his Government has treated water security and quality as an immediate priority. The Premier said, 'I think that matter will be looked at in the sustainability report that DPAC is currently scoping.' I said, 'Do you agree that water is an issue?' Mr Gutwein said, 'It's certainly something.' The PESRAC report was a very good report informed by a group of very sensible people from a range of diverse backgrounds. I said at the time that it was my intention to accept their recommendations and to work on all of those recommendations, which we are.

I asked, 'Is water quality and security a priority for your Government?' and he said, 'I always feel like you're trying to trap me.' I said, 'No, I'm not. I'm genuinely trying to get information', which I genuinely was. I hope the Premier has a bit of a look, and maybe reviews some of the Estimates *Hansard* from last week in minister Barnett's Estimates, and pays attention to the water policy issue.

The other matters I wish to talk about in this Estimates I will deal with in the Treasury response.

[12.39 p.m.]

Mr STREET - Mr Deputy Chair, when I got up to table the reports, Ms O'Connor asked if I had a good week last week. I could barely contain my joy across the four days.

Ms O'Connor - You could not wipe the smile off your face.

Mr STREET - The fact you think that means I did a very good job of covering up my joy at being there, Ms O'Connor, if you thought I was not enjoying myself, so I would like to think that is a tick for my performance as Chair.

Dr Broad - Reasonably fair.

Mr STREET - Reasonably fair. Coming from you, that is an absolute recommendation, isn't it, Dr Broad, if you think I was reasonably fair and generous.

There are a few topics I want to touch on in response to the Premier's time at the Estimates table. The first one is the commission of inquiry. Later this afternoon, when we get to Aboriginal Affairs, I will have a little bit to say about truth-telling in a conversation that went on during that Estimates hearing. Without wanting to confuse the two issues, there is an element of truth-telling with the commission of inquiry in allowing people who have suffered terribly in our public institutions to come forward and tell their story. It is a really important factor in being able to move forward both as a government and as a state and instilling public confidence in our public institutions. We cannot rectify the situation with money but we can

allow people to come forward and tell their story and be heard and feel they have been listened to.

COVID-19 has been a critical issue over the past 12 months so it was no surprise there was talk of that during the Premier's Estimates hearing. The issue of mandatory vaccines and vaccine passports is listed here as a dot point. I accept that mandating vaccines is not a popular position for some people. I understand there are people who cannot be vaccinated for health reasons; they are not the people I am talking about.

I am talking about people who have made a conscious choice not to get vaccinated. There is a selfishness to that decision. The Pope said that being vaccinated was an act of love towards other people. That is probably slightly more flowery or effusive language than I would normally use. I am doubled-vaccinated. I did that partly to protect people I work with and 'love' is not a word that readily comes to mind when I think of the other 24 occupants of this Chamber. Getting vaccinated is an act of trying to help the people who surround us.

There was talk over the weekend from the Catholic Church about looking for exemptions. Quite rightly it was knocked back by both the Premier and the Minister for Health. I want to put on the record what Father Richard Ross from the Bellerive parish put in his bulletin on the weekend:

In response to the furore caused by the Archbishop's recent letter seeking exemption for clergy from the requirement of COVID-19 vaccination in order to provide ministry in aged care homes, I simply assert that I have been fully vaccinated. I have done this because I trust the science, I trust the medical profession, and I owe a duty of care to the vulnerable people in my family and my community. To make myself more important than those I serve is, in my understanding, contrary to the gospel.

I could not have said it better myself. I have only met Father Ross on a couple of occasions but he is one of the great people you will ever get the opportunity to speak to.

I also understand the hesitancy for vaccine passports but it is human nature that we have to reward behaviour that we want and punish behaviour that we do not want. Rewarding people for being double-vaccinated by allowing them to partake in activities that are not available to those who have made the conscious decision to not be vaccinated is an acceptable position for the Government to take. I hope that vaccine passports are not necessary for too long but I wholly recommend the use of them in the interim to encourage vaccination rates to go up.

Very briefly, another topic of interest was the restoration of the numbers in the House of Assembly. The Premier's point was well made that this point in the parliamentary term was not the time to be talking about it. I support the restoration of the numbers in parliament. We need this parliament to work better. It is not the easiest argument to make to people who work outside of this place that we need more politicians but we are starting to get there. You do not need to spend too long analysing the workload of ministers with multiple portfolios or, from a self-interested point of view, backbenchers with multiple committees to attend to understand that increasing the number of members in parliament would allow all of us to function better.

Regarding the Treasury output, Dr Broad talks about \$2 million a day -

Ms O'Connor - It's true.

Mr STREET - It may well be true, but we borrowed that money to invest in intergenerational infrastructure. There is a hypocrisy from Labor that I cannot stomach talking about debt when you promised \$2 billion-worth of extra expenditure in the lead-up to the May election over and above what we committed to.

The debt would be worse under a Labor government than it is under the Liberal government. At least have the decency to explain what your position would be on debt if you had been elected, fanciful as it may seem. Help us understand through an alternative budget - you have 12 months - your position on debt in relation to the election commitments you made. Were you not planning on funding the election commitments you made? Is that how you were going to reduce the debt?

Ms O'Connor - They did not think they were going to win.

Mr STREET - Exactly. How much easier is it to make promises to the Tasmanian people when you know you will not be made accountable for it?

I want to briefly touch on the Climate Change portfolio. Most jurisdictions in the world would give anything to have Tasmania's emissions profile and our position on climate change.

Dr Broad - Thanks, Labor.

Mr STREET - I am prepared to say that every party in this place has contributed to the position Tasmania is in now, through conservation of forests and investing in renewable energy and infrastructure. I wish that as a parliament and a state we could be more proud of where we are and where we are heading.

I saw billboards on the news on the weekend talking down an industry of critical importance to us and rubbishing this state. I hear people inside and outside this place talking down Tasmania and the environment. Most jurisdictions would give anything to have what we have. As a state, we need to take advantage of that right now.

We finished at 7 p.m. on the Tourism portfolio, by which time almost everyone at the table had run out of gas, but that is not to downplay how important the tourism industry is to this state. The visitor economy will pick up. You only have to see the growth in population in the 18 months since the pandemic to know that people do not only want to visit, they want to live here. In the same way I want us to be proud of our emissions profile and our position on climate change, and I want Tasmanians to be proud of the state. We have what everyone else wants.

The package the Premier announced today will provide substantial support to a number of businesses that rely on the visitor economy until such time as we can open our borders. Having spoken last night to businesses in the visitor economy, I know how happy they are with the support package that has been announced. They believe it will take them through to the point when we open our borders and the visitor economy takes off again. We should all look forward to the economic benefits that will bring.

[12.49 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to give my response to Estimates last week. I will focus most of my attention on the Budget session with the Treasurer. I had four hours to question the Premier about the Budget. Some of his answers were left wanting. The Premier was at pains to describe the growing debt, that is growing at the rate of \$2 million a day. It will grow for the next four years. That is the Government's plan.

The Premier was at pains to stress that this was all in response to COVID-19. 'Don't you believe COVID-19 happened?' and those sorts of comments were thrown back at me, but I was at pains to point out through my questions and ask the Premier about his growth and spending over a long period of time.

Since coming to government in 2014, it is clear that in the first two years of the Premier's performance as Treasurer, he showed some fiscal constraint. In his first budget the growth in expenditure was 2.7 per cent from the previous budget, which was under Labor, and in the following year his expenditure grew by 3.1 per cent. In those first two years the Treasurer showed some restraint in his spending but in the following year after that he seemed to lose all composure and the spending in 2016-17 jumped to 5.6 per cent. In the following pre-election year it was 5.2 per cent. You can see his growth in expenditure was already jumping by 2 per cent to 3 per cent.

In the post-election year he had all his election promises to pay for and his spending jumped to 5.8 per cent. This is well and truly before COVID-19 was even a thing. Before it had gotten out of Wuhan in China, the Premier's expenditure growth was almost at 6 per cent. If you do the average, his average spending since coming into government and being Treasurer and getting his hands on the state's finances, was already well over 4 per cent.

We then had the first impact of COVID-19 which was late in the 2019-20 financial year and spending jumped to 7 per cent. The following year it was 7.6 per cent, so these are the two COVID-19 years. We supported the measures that the Premier put in place and his expenditure growth on previous years was 1 per cent and rising to almost 2 per cent. This year, spending has grown up to 9.4 per cent expenditure growth. Part of that is in response to COVID-19 but there is a lot of excess expenditure in this Budget, especially from the election promises. If you average expenditure growth over that period of time since becoming Treasurer in 2014 it was something like 5.8 per cent.

In the first two years he showed some restraint and then he has let all restraint go, even before COVID-19. What we are supposed to expect, is that next year his expenditure growth will be down by minus 4 per cent. Despite having expenditure grow even before COVID-19, that rate is 5.8 per cent at the last budget before COVID-19. We remember also, that was the first budget that the 'D' word came up, 'debt', and all of a sudden we were looking at a billion dollars in debt across the forward Estimates. That was before COVID-19.

Spending was out of control, debt was on the horizon, debt was going to happen. The excuse that he has been able to leverage as much as possible has been COVID-19, but the pattern was already in place. The spending was already out of control and the debt was already on the horizon. What we are supposed to expect, despite this lack of fiscal constraint, is that next year his expenditure growth is going to be minus 4 per cent. He is going to spend less next year than he has this year, followed by a 1.4 per cent and 2.4 per cent and that is supposed to get the budget back into control.

The Premier is obviously embarrassed about this. He talks about being 'back in the black' and talks about his most favourable statistic. People are surprised. I went to all the TCCI events and he put up a table. I could see the business people who know how to read these things see that the debt is growing every year, yet the Premier is saying we are back in the black.

Even in 2024-25 the Premier's plan is to borrow \$420 million in that final year of Budget Estimates. He still does not have a good explanation for this. This is despite his claim that he is going to bring spending back under control. I do not see that happening.

If you look at chart 3.1 from the Budget papers, you see a definite fiscal gap opening up because total revenue is dropping well below total expenses. This is despite the fact that the Premier today, as we stand, is the highest taxing premier to GSP ever. What we are looking at is record debt. We are seeing across the forward Estimates, and the Premier does not have an explanation for this, apart from trying to throw it back in our faces and bag us out but he does not have an explanation for the growing levels of debt: \$3.5 billion. He has a record tax take and a record debt and growing expenditure.

This Premier has morphed from those first two years of fiscal constraint to a tax-and-spend Treasurer. That is what he is now; he is a tax-and-spend Treasurer. There is no evidence that I can see that he is going to control expenditure. We know this because throughout the Estimates period we heard about all these programs that are not funded in the 'out' years, years three and four. There are little dot-dot-dots where essential programs are not funded. Yet the Premier is trying to convince everybody, including the business community at the TCCI dinners that he is going to bring expenditure back under control. There is a 'pathway to surplus', he says.

What we see is expenditure out of control. This is not just in relation to COVID-19; this is stretching off into the 'out' years when hopefully COVID-19 is well and truly behind us. This is the pattern. This is not the pattern from the last couple of COVID-19 years. This pattern was established in his third budget when he gave up on fiscal control. This is what we see from the Premier: tax and spend, tax and spend.

The other thing that is evident is that we have seen the Fiscal Sustainability Report which is a warning, a loud alarm, from Treasury that spending is out of control. As far as I can see we are tracking the worst scenario that they model, which is the high expenditure scenario. What Treasury says is: 'Early action to correct fiscal deterioration will mitigate the severity of the measures required to effectively maintain fiscal sustainability'. In other words, the Premier needs to be acting earlier rather than later because acting later things get out of control and we spiral towards \$30 billion in debt. That is where we are tracking.

Of course, we need to spend money during this COVID-19 period but what about the out years? What about years two, three and four? Where are the measures that the Government is using to bring the budget back under control? We do not see that at all. We just see promises that he is going to cut spending by 4 per cent next year and that is it. It is implausible to believe that this tax-and-spend Treasurer is going to show some fiscal discipline starting next year.

What we are more likely to see is next year he will come to the table and we will be doing this in 12 months' time and what we will be seeing are the debt numbers increasing because he is a tax-and-spend Treasurer. His expenditure is out of control. The way that he is covering

that up is by borrowing money and then pretending that he is leveraging the balance sheet. When he talks about 'leveraging the balance sheet' what he is actually saying is: 'The state has an ability to borrow'. However, we have other issues because we have an unfunded tax liability, superannuation liability and the GBEs loaded up with debt. Saul Eslake points out that if you add that all up then Tasmania has the highest debt levels in the country apart from the Northern Territory which the Premier has described as a 'basket case'.

The Premier, in his job as Treasurer, needs to highlight, why is it? What are we actually getting for the debt trajectory, the \$2 million a day he is borrowing for the next four years? What is that going to look like next year? Is it going to be \$2.5 million a day, \$3 million a day, or is he going to show some constraint? Where is the spending that is going to reduce our costs in the long-term? Where are the investments to save us money in the long-term? Those are the sorts of things that we would like to see, rather than fiscal control just thrown out the window.

In the time I have left I will reflect on the member for Franklin, Mr Street's comments about COVID-19. I am double-vaccinated as well. My wife is double-vaccinated. My eldest is 12-years old and as 12-year-old vaccinations are available I will be trying to get her vaccinated, as soon as we can book. The booking worked wonderfully in Burnie and I hope the same thing works for the bookings for the 12-years-old.

Time expired.

[12.59 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER - I was going to finish on this matter, Mr Deputy Chair, but I will start on this matter of Dr Broad and Mr Winter, especially around their understanding of GSP and GST and debt. I will put in a special request to the Treasurer that he puts on some tutorial lessons for Dr Broad and Mr Winter, for the rest of the year and next year if required, until they can understand some of the budget formalities. I hope Dr Broad and Labor bring forward an alternative budget that is better than their attempt at their alternative leader.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2021 (No. 36)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2021 (No. 37)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Mr TUCKER - Before you walk out, Dr Broad, will you take up my offer of some tutorial lessons with the Treasurer? It will make it less traumatic for all of us and I think your leader also wants you to. We want you to be a good opposition even if we have to train you. We want an alternative budget, Dr Broad. We do not want an attempt at an alternative budget like the Labor Party's attempt at an alternative leader. Even you would agree with that, Dr Broad.

Mr Deputy Chair, what a shambles the Labor policy was on land tax and maybe you could get some tutoring on land tax as well, Dr Broad. I want to put on the record what Mr Gutwein said at the Estimates on land tax and especially about the Labor policy. I have carried this press release around with me because I was staggered when the other side put it out. I might get to that in a moment - their land tax policy, which was a thing of beauty during the election campaign. Yes, Mr Winter, a thing of beauty.

The Premier went on in great detail around our land tax policy and he said:

In the 2021-22 Budget we're continuing our reforms and delivering on our new tax changes. We are going to increase the tax-free threshold for land tax from \$24 999 to \$49 999; increase the beginning of the middle tax band threshold to \$50 000; increase the top tax band threshold from \$350 000 to \$400 000.

This will mean that more than 4000 taxpayers will now pay no land tax and more than 70 000 taxpayers will receive reduced bills of up to \$613 per year on average. This amounts to around \$14 million per annum or nearly \$60 million over the four years in reprieve for property owners over the course of this Budget.

The Commission of State Revenue is also going to accept the payment of land tax in three instalments for bills over \$500. Previously, this was only allowed for bills greater than \$1000. There will be a 50 per cent reduction in the premium component of the interest rate charged in unpaid tax from eight per cent to four per cent, again benefitting land tax payers.

Now, that is a land tax policy, Mr Winter.

I will now discuss mining royalties. As the Premier said in the Estimates, after he was asked by Ms O'Connor, 'I looked for them in the budget and I can't find them.' He said:

Mineral royalties is on page 90 of Budget Paper No. 1. It outlines the 2021 budget figure, what is in the 2021 preliminary outcome which is a significant increase in mining royalties and then across the forward Estimates and that just reflects strong commodity prices at the moment.

Might I say, Ms O'Connor, the only reason you could not find them is because they are no way near as big as yours. It was interesting when you made the comment, Ms O'Connor, we increased mining royalties by 150 per cent - the Greens raping and pillaging our environment for their budget. Funny that and 150 per cent -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Deputy Chair. I am not going to cop the 'raping and pillaging the environment for our budget' garbage coming out of Mr Tucker's mouth. Could you ask him to withdraw it, please?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - It is a general statement not directed in any particular -

Ms O'CONNOR - Could you provide some guidance then - point of order again, Chair. This morning, in a passing comment, I said that Mr Barnett was dangerous and I was made to

withdraw that statement but we can be accused of raping and pillaging the environment and that is not something that should be withdrawn? Why is there a double-standard?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - One was directed at Mr Barnett whereas Mr Tucker has made mention -

Ms O'CONNOR - So it is directed at both Dr Woodruff and I and that makes it okay? That is actually formalised bullying, Mr Deputy Chair.

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Deputy Chair, I find that actually offensive to have any of that language used in this place, especially directed at members of parliament. I would like Mr Tucker to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Again, Dr Woodruff, Mr Tucker has not directed it at any particular member -

Dr Woodruff - The point is, it was directed at members of parliament.

Mr TUCKER - Mr Deputy Chair, a 150 per cent increase. This is your electorate and your environment. As any farmer knows, the more you take out of your farm, the more damage you do and vice versa, the more you put back, the more you gain.

We touched on the gambling policy and discussed the Greens alternative budget. I will put on the record what Mr Gutwein said:

A statement of fact. It is true there is almost half a million dollars' worth of additional revenue that you were going to take from the gambling industry.

Ms O'Connor said:

\$400 000.

Then the Premier said:

Whose pockets does this come from? It comes from people who go to casinos to gamble. It comes potentially from people with a lot of money.

You are happy to take from the rich but not from the poor. This is the height of hypocrisy. You make out you are Robin Hood but that is a long way from the truth as you are taking from the poor also, as they go to casinos.

Last week, I raised several questions with the Premier, some more interesting than others. One in particular was about the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as the final report was tabled. I asked the Premier what the response was. The report was comprehensive and the Premier acknowledged that there are always matters you can learn and take on board. The report acknowledged that the Government and the department was quick to respond. The committee noted that the teamwork and ability to work in conjunction with each other across Government worked.

Regarding our ongoing emergency circumstances, the committee noted a comprehensive review of the Emergency Management Act 2006 will be carried out. In saying this, the committee was most complimentary of the Government's response. The overall outcome is the act has worked extraordinarily well in the past and it could do with a review so those who take a lot of the decisions have the opportunity to provide input.

In another question I asked the Premier if he could provide the committee with an update of the review of the Tasmanian State Service. The Premier acknowledged a review of the Tasmanian State Service was announced in 2019-20 state Budget to identify the structural legislative, cultural improvements that will transform the current structure, services and practices to deliver a more effective and efficient public service fit for the twenty-first century. It was acknowledged this review would be interrupted due to COVID-19. The Premier's Economic and Social Advisory Recovery Council stated in its interim report back in March to place the review on hold for a period of six months.

An interim report was released in November 2020. This report provided some preliminary observation and recommendations. These recommendations are to be considered in the final report by the Premier.

Last week in Estimates, the final report was tabled with 77 recommendations and incorporated the recommendations of the interim report. The recommendations are arranged into a strategic plan for reform across five key domains, being comprehensive and bold:

- (1) Principles and values.
- (2) Leadership.
- (3) Capability.
- (4) Workforce, and
- (4) Service delivery

Recommended changes range from the core foundations of the State Services which are provided in the State Service Act 2000 being: how we attract and foster leadership; how we build share capabilities; how we attract and retain employees, and how we deliver high quality service.

[2.39 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Mr Deputy Chair, I did enjoy the opportunity to participate in Estimates and I appreciated the way we were able to ask questions and often times, not all the time, we were able to get direct responses from departmental staff who are always good to have access to, particularly from Opposition where you do not always get that opportunity.

I want to start by clarifying an issue that the Premier raised earlier where, I think the word he used was that I 'attacked' his secretary for the Department of Treasury and Finance. If you read the *Hansard* from Estimates you will see that I did not. Of course, I did not because I know Mr Ferrall and I know how hard he and his team work, and the esteem in which they are held, not just on the Government's side of the Chamber but also on this side of the Chamber. I am not sure if there is anyone else in this place who has worked at Treasury as I have, but I have and I know how hard they work particularly at Budget time. It is very rare that there are any mistakes in that document. That is testament to not only Mr Ferrall but all the staff who work there. The Budget itself is beyond reproach when it comes to the numbers and the work that the department does.

The problem is not with Treasury, it is with the Treasurer. The way in which the Budget is described by the Treasurer is inaccurate, in my view. There is a compelling list of reasons why, none more so than Treasury's own document which is the Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2021 which is glossed over by the Treasurer. Seemingly he thinks it is unimportant. It is not. It is a call from Treasury that what we are doing is not sustainable.

In his contribution Dr Broad talked about how expenditure growth under this Treasurer has been over 5 per cent per annum. We are supposed to believe that this Treasurer is going to be able to rein in his spending and expenditure, in some cases, to negative amounts of expenditure over the forward Estimates but in other cases to very low levels of expenditure growth. I do not believe he can do it but we will get to see, we will be able to find out whether or not he can actually achieve the surplus that he claims in the year that he claims it.

The Treasurer in his contribution likes to pretend that the debt is totally about COVID-19 and the pandemic and that is what has brought this about. He announced the pathway to debt in 2019-20 - that was in the Budget speech - and I will quote directly from that Budget speech: 'that will mean the state will carry a manageable level of debt'. Those Budget papers pointed to \$1.1 billion in net debt over those forward Estimates.

Tasmania, going from having no net debt since 2005 - again thanks to Labor for paying off the Liberals' debt by 2005. Now we go for the first time since that period to net debt under this Treasurer. Seven years of expenditure growth compounding to about 5 per cent per annum on average leads us to the position where Treasury in its fiscal sustainability report is pointing to major structural issues with this Budget and yet we have a Budget and a Budget speech which does not recognise the real challenges we have. If you do not acknowledge that we have got a problem then it is going to be very difficult to fix it.

The debt is manageable, we understand, at this point in time and we understand that interest rates are low. The problem as showcased within the numbers in the fiscal sustainability report is that if we continue on this trajectory then the debt will continue to grow and it will become less manageable. One of the risks we face is the rising cost of servicing those debts. Interest rates are very low at the moment but that does not mean they will be low forever and almost certainly they will not be. At some point in time someone in the future is going to have to pay for the debt. The other claim is that the debt is all about infrastructure. Well, it is not. This Treasurer has consecutively carried budgets with the results being consecutively record-operating deficits so we have operating deficits over the last two years and we are predicting an even larger deficit. In fact, yet another record this year so it is not all about the infrastructure budget.

That brings me to another one of the claims and this was well-discovered by the shadow treasurer, Dr Broad, where he asked about the comment from the Treasurer that said: 'Over the course of the Budget and the forward Estimates period our infrastructure program and other job-creating initiatives are expected to support in excess of 28 000 jobs'. The question from Dr Broad was, 'Why is that not actually in the budget? Why is it only in this speech and why are you only saying that now?'. We found that that is because Treasury did not model this; the Premier did, the Treasurer did, and in the Treasurer's office presumably. The Treasurer said under questioning, 'We used a multiplier of five', so you certainly could not say there was a rigorous economic analysis of these numbers. The claim that there are going to be 28 000 jobs created is something that has been created in a political office rather than by Treasury and Finance. That is why we have to treat that claim with a very heavy level of cynicism.

Even if the claim is \$5 billion worth of infrastructure, you would have to believe that they would actually get that out the door. The Government has not had a 100 per cent infrastructure program out the door in a long time. It is barely over 50 per cent on the preliminary estimates from last year.

If you believed the multiplier of five and the political modelling that has been done by the Treasurer, you would have to assume that the Government also gets its entire infrastructure program out the door, which it will not do. I am very confident to stand here and say it will not get out the door. It never does, it never will. That is probably one of the only reasons why the debt will not grow quite as much as it otherwise would because the inability to get infrastructure out the door is one of the key challenges for this Government that it has not been able to properly deal with.

As I said, in terms of debt and deficit this is a path that the Premier chose himself, not because of the pandemic. He chose it before the pandemic and he freely announced that he was going to build \$1.1 billion in net debt for the first time. As I uncovered during Estimates, this is because of a spending problem that has been building up over time. Again, Dr Broad rightly pointed out that when you analyse the numbers in the first couple of years, it was actually former treasurer, Ms Giddings, who had the lowest expenditure growth of any treasurer in the last 25 years that I can see. Then you also have historically quite low levels of expenditure growth from the Treasurer, Mr Gutwein, but then he forgets about that. He forgets the part about fiscal conservatism and he goes for spending.

I might be able to accept the additional spending if I thought it was going to do some good, if I believed that spending this extra money was going to result in better health outcomes or better education outcomes, but it has not. The Government promised that by 2020 students would be at or above the national average in reading, writing or maths. The Treasurer stood here today and talked about his additional investments in teachers without acknowledging the truth that the NAPLAN results came out only a few weeks ago and the expenditure in additional teachers that he claims over the last few years has not actually been borne out in any results. The results in Tasmania were the worst of every state across every age group in reading, the worst in spelling, grammar and punctuation; and the worst in years 5, 7 and 9 in numeracy. Then you have the gall to come in here and say how well we are doing in education. We are not. Kids are being let down, not only by this Treasurer but by this Government and by the Budget once again.

We could say the same for health. Much was made in the lead up to the Budget that this was going to be a Budget that was going to see much more expenditure in health but I cannot believe it any more. We have heard this so many times, in so many budgets, that we are going to do a blitz on this or that, or there is going to be an elective surgery blitz. It never happens. I continue to talk to people whose health is severely affected by the inability of this Government to run a health system which responds to the needs of Tasmanians.

The state of the Budget is critical. What we need is some truth around our Budget and we are not getting that at the moment. John Lawrence said this was a dishonest Budget speech, or words to that effect, and he was right. What we need is to start telling the truth about our Budget situation. We are not hearing the truth from the Treasurer. We need to hear, not only what the situation is, but what the plan is to get out of the situation we are in.

We should see a budget next year that responds to some of the issues that are raised by Treasury in its long-term planning. We have not heard it in this Budget and that is disappointing.

Time expired.

[2.51 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY - Mr Chair, I rise today to talk to the outputs of the Premier. I want to identify outputs in a number of his ministerial areas. As Premier, the business support package that was discussed in Estimates; as Treasurer, COVID-19 support packages and tax; as Tourism minister, business support packages and funding for tourism. These are the matters that are concerning Tasmanians about their ability to support themselves, their families and their employees.

Last week was my first experience of Estimates, of asking questions and being disappointed with not being provided answers. I acknowledge the contributions of our Leader, Rebecca White; from our shadow treasurer, Dr Broad, from our shadow in finance, Mr Winter, and identify for us that there is nothing more important than when, on behalf of our community, questions are asked that answers are provided, that when announcements are made the detail is available.

Operating a business is harder and the environment is tougher this year than last year. That is why significant support was rolled out. Last year was horrendous for many businesses, micro, small, medium and large, across the state, particularly in the tourism sector.

Tasmania has built the reputation of Brand Tasmania by switching the mindset of Tasmanians to make a career in tourism a valued and respected career path. Many operators have invested heavily in time and finances to bring on and develop employees who can deliver the exceptional experiences that visitors coming to Tasmania expect. That excellent service is at risk because many of our businesses are bleeding cash. They are worried about maintaining their exceptional employees. They are worried about their financial circumstances and providing hours for their employees and securing the employment of people who, for many of them, feel like family.

Tourism peak bodies have been calling out to the Government for support. We acknowledge today, subject to pressure applied not only in Estimates but in recent months, that announcements were made. Coming into the House after lunch there is still no detail available. Businesses that woke up this morning and felt like there may be opportunity for support are now not clear on what that means and what they have to do to secure it. Faced with payroll, leasing, stock and other expenses they wonder if they can get through this week, next week, or whether they have to wait four weeks for support to reach their bank accounts.

When will details of the support packages announced today be available in writing, in order that businesses and their employees can have clarity and confidence in their decisions? It is putting pressure on their business finances, their personal finances and those of their employees and the communities in which they live. Businesses need to be assured of when this detail will be in writing and when cash payments for those eligible will be available in their bank accounts to support cashflow and ensure their ongoing operations into, hopefully, a positive summer season. Clarity and certainty are important; so too is understanding the implications. The Premier mentioned tax changes in his outputs.

We have heard concerns about misleading or misunderstood applications of payroll tax on JobKeeper payments. Initially, it was suggested it would be exempt. Then it was corrected, but not corrected on the record, that it would be waived. Now, we have new language regarding 'relief'. What does 'relief' mean for eligible businesses in Tasmania when they are considering their cashflow and their payroll tax liabilities?

Does it mean the can is being kicked down the road and they may not have to pay it back right now but will in future? Does it mean that it is waived or exempt? This level of clarity is essential for businesses making decisions on a monthly, weekly, and sometimes daily basis, on what they can continue to do, if they can continue to open their doors and provide the hours of certainty for their employees.

Tasmanian Labor, peak bodies and business operators want to understand. Will those eligible businesses that tripped over the payroll tax liability and paid payroll tax be reimbursed the full amount of those payments?

We have successfully traded on Brand Tasmania for many years. It requires everybody working together to understand and support those people delivering the products and services in that sector in order to benefit from future visitation when borders safely reopen. We still do not have direct answers to questions asked of the Premier this morning about whether payments to businesses will require the maintenance of their employees in their businesses. There is a suggestion that may not be the case.

What Labor and peak bodies want is payments to businesses to ensure that employees will be maintained in those businesses until borders open and visitation returns. We want to ensure that our Tasmanian businesses, the foundations of Brand Tasmania, continue to operate and develop and deliver great experiences and that when we have opened up airline routes people will make the decision to come to Tasmania to share good news stories.

Labor understands the pressure on business and the importance of delivering support in a timely way that is detailed and understood. We will support the businesses that, right now, are doing it tough.

My first experience of Estimates was disappointing from time to time. A question would be asked and no response would be directly provided. In parliament this morning when a valid question was asked there might be a valid answer and the exchanges deteriorated. For example, the Premier was asked to take back a reference to 'dumb and dumber'.

For me, new to this place, new to Estimates, new to question time, new to the importance of being able to stand up and support our businesses across Tasmania when we have people under pressure with their mental health and financial circumstances, often the pressure then applying to their home life, relationships and to their family members to lower the exchanges here and to lower the respect and not validate those existing concerns by those light and inappropriate exchanges across the Chamber at Estimates is really disappointing.

I am looking forward to being able to provide commentary on other outputs that occurred throughout the week. I am looking forward to, in the future, when questions are asked on behalf of businesses and peak bodies, those questions being taken seriously and the circumstances of businesses respected, answers provided, action taken and, in a timely and

clear and informed way, support packages are released so people can navigate, understand, take action and support themselves and their employees in their businesses across Tasmania.

[3.01 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to speak about the contributions made by the Premier and the conversations that were had during the climate change ministry part of the Estimates process. I want to say from the outset when the Government released a couple of weeks ago the Independent Review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 by Jacobs Company, there was a tremendous sense of hope in the Tasmanian scientific community and amongst people who have been actively working towards taking urgent and direct action on the increasing heating of the planet and the contributions we are making in Tasmania.

We were collectively hopeful that the Government would finally do more than talk and would immediately attend to the things that mattered the most for Tasmania. Those things are embodied in the Greens' Safe Climate Bill which is tabled in the House. In summary, they are about real action on reducing the emissions we make into the atmosphere that are dangerously heating the planet, strong protection of the carbon stores we have, and detailed and comprehensive plans for adaptation and working across government bodies - local, state and federal government.

It was shocking - and I said as much to the Premier when he presented the reports to Estimates which make it really clear the State Climate Change (State Action) Act being prepared at the moment will not contain sectional targets for Tasmania and it will not end native forest logging to protect our carbon stores. It is deeply disturbing the Premier can spin this as making the contribution that Tasmania and all jurisdictions need to make to do everything we can to curb the increase in greenhouse gases to remain below 1.5 degrees, which is what our country has signed up to in the 2015 Paris target.

It is deeply disturbing not only we are not doing that, but the Premier seems intent on continuing to spin the idea that Tasmania is and will remain the global leader in this area. I want to mention some details that were laid out very clearly in the independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act. They make it very clear the Paris Agreement requires all countries and subnational jurisdictions to do everything they can to mitigate emissions and are to legislate to do so. It makes it very clear on page 18 of the report that, like every other state in Australia, Tasmania is matching, unfortunately for us and our children, each other state and territory by not setting sectional targets. We are not leading the rest of Australia in this regard and worse than that, we have no plan to do so.

We are not planning on being a leader in Australia in this area, let alone in the world. We are not listening to the G20 Financial Stability Board and the framework they set in 2015, the taskforce on climate related financial disclosures that makes it clear businesses have to take appropriate assessments and pricing of climate related risks and develop voluntary climate related disclosures.

They make it clear in order to do so, there needs to be incentives for this and it is abundantly clear incentives in the form of targets is what is needed to help businesses adjust to what will be required of them by the global community in order we can not only maintain the market advantage of Tasmanian businesses into the future, but do what we must do, as every country must, to curb our emissions to being not only net zero but true zero.

This is what the Premier does not understand. We are not working towards net zero. We must work towards true zero. That is the only way the global community can respond in a true and effective way to the crisis of global heating. We have to not only reduce emissions to a level we might be comfortable with at the moment from a market point of view or from a personal lifestyle point of view, we have to be sucking out carbon from the atmosphere and we have to be doing that in the next few years. We have to be moving towards not emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. We must be net negative.

It was incredibly important to see the act the Premier outlined and is proposed in the documents he tabled, does not explicitly state that there will be sectional targets required. The Jacobs report was clear. The penetration of some of the programs and initiatives their review investigated were low and potentially may not yield significant emissions cuts.

These are the initiatives the Government has taken to date with regard to the small amount of initiatives in the electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the tiny initiative energy efficiency upgrades that would result in a reduction in emissions at the household level. These are pathetically small with regard to being relative to the need and the targets we should be setting.

Jacobs also makes the point they have had a negligible effect on reducing Tasmania's cumulative greenhouse gas emissions and the state is very well positioned to decarbonise sectors, other than energy generation if we have targets to drive them.

On behalf of Tasmanians who were expecting this Government would do something meaningful on climate change, it is very depressing and distressing to see the Premier cannot come to grips with the importance of us doing everything we can to reduce the amount of emissions, which have gone up since 1990 in the transport sector, the industrial processors, the product use and direct combustion sectors.

These are all areas that have gone up dramatically and the areas which have gone down, agriculture and waste, there is no reason to think they will remain low unless we set hard targets to require them to do that.

It is incredibly important we understand the agriculture targets for the Agrivision 2050 plan would specifically act to increase the emissions from the agricultural sector, unless targets and incentives are provided to prevent that from happening. It is incredibly important we have a climate plan and end native forest logging and do everything we can to make sure we transition that industry immediately.

I want to finish by saying the Premier was clear that we have a carbon sink because of the forests, and was clear it was because of the Forestry Agreement reached we have been able to have, as he said, a very good emissions profile and leverage off the fact of the ending of that native forest logging and the regrowth in those areas, but it is not enough. It is clearly something we will be taking up when the bill comes before the House.

[3.11 a.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to speak specifically on Committee A and the Estimate's hearings of the Premier and I am very pleased to do so. Whilst I was not part of that committee, I was very interested to have a look at the *Hansard* and each of the items that were discussed as part of that. It seems a little while ago now there was a budget handed down and we also had an

election. There were a number of items discussed in relation to the recent election which should be of interest and noted here in the House and I will do that shortly.

I also want to congratulate each of Labor's new members of our caucus on their contribution during Estimates. It is a foreign thing to enter into when you first come into parliament to understand how that works and be part of it. You all did a terrific job and I wanted to congratulate you on that. If you are anything like me, each time it gets that little bit easier and you understand the process. All things considered, it was a very good contribution made by all.

When we look at the Budget many of my colleagues who have spoken before me today have talked about debt, they have talked about the deficit and the Government's excuses around that. We have been on the record in this place before saying levels of debt are acceptable. Intergenerational debt is acceptable if it brings intergenerational benefit and intergenerational change across key parts of our community, across the socioeconomic indicators of our society and if it builds the infrastructure that is required for our communities and societies of the future.

This is where this Government has let us down over seven years. There are a number of capital infrastructure projects been announced, re-announced, committed to over many years and yet to be delivered by this Government. That is evident again in this Budget and yet there is a whole raft more of promises made at the last state election that will now need to be delivered by this Government. You only have to look back to the 2018 election to look at that track record and just across our electorate, across a key number of projects yet to be delivered by this Government that were committed to back in 2018. The first of those were the redevelopment of the Burnie court complex, the Cradle Mountain Master Plan and Cableway project which is an iconic project, not only for the north-west and north of the state, but indeed for the entire state.

It was all aimed at lifting the attraction at Cradle Mountain; about attracting more visitors and making the most of that beautiful iconic experience we have at Cradle Mountain and ensuring that continues on over future years. I have asked about this and know it was mentioned during this Estimates hearing, but it was also mentioned in a number of others also. It is concerning this important iconic project has not been delivered.

The other projects that come to mind are a antenatal clinic at the North-West Regional Hospital, the ambulance station upgrades at both Burnie and Glenorchy just to name a few. I am sure there are others across the each of the electorates. There are a number of significant roads projects which are yet to be delivered by this Government and yet we see more roads projects committed to and announced at the last state election. We look forward to the Government working really hard to deliver those. They are important to Tasmanians and it is important these projects get out the door. To date, the Government has not done a very good job on that.

In coming to the shadow health portfolio, it has become very evident to me over a number of years that we have had a number of commitments made by the Government, whether it be funding for staff, infrastructure, hospitals, beds or community facilities. The Government claims to be spending more and the Premier, in his contribution earlier today, noted there was a reference to his commitment at the last state election about doing better for health.

We are yet to see that across the state. Tasmanians are experiencing that firsthand: if you have fallen, fractured your hip, waiting for many hours for an ambulance to come, whether you are an over-worked and stressed health care professional in our health care system, whether you are the person waiting for an aged-care package and for that to be delivered to you or whether it is through the NDIS, we are yet to see the benefit of these commitments and these spending announcements. These are all issues which are impacting on our public health system and access to community-based services which has not been well-supported by the state or federal governments.

Whether you are waiting to see your general practitioner in your local community, there are long waiting lists for primary health care providers, and long waiting lists for outpatients. We really do need to see much more rather than just empty announcements.

For example, \$580 million has been committed for the Launceston General Hospital master plan, which we know the Health minister has approached his federal colleagues about because Estimates revealed that, but we are yet to see the money. The same is across irrigation, across the primary industries portfolio - we know there has been requests of the federal government for more money for irrigation projects across the state and it has not been delivered.

We have the latest announcement today which we are pleased has been made, but we have been calling for additional support for tourism and hospitality businesses right across Tasmania for a significant period of time now. This is not something that suddenly happened to these businesses. This has been ongoing for months as we look to what has been happening in New South Wales. Whilst we are not experiencing the full economic impact of those poor businesses and industries, and the people of New South Wales and Victoria given the current lockdowns, we are experiencing the impact of not having those states visitation to our state which is very significant. I know that local businesses have described it as locked-in with the current border closures which have been necessary, but we also need to look to support those businesses that are doing it really tough.

Today we saw another announcement, which others have talked about, which is very light on detail, time frames and the sense of urgency that exists right now for those businesses across our state.

During the Premier's Estimates hearings there was a lot of discussion regarding vaccination rates and an acceptable vaccination rate in the eyes of the Premier would be 80 per cent to 90 per cent, which has been talked about. Today's announcement talks very specifically about those rates and what that will mean for when we open up. It will be interesting to see whether this is linked to the funding being provided by the federal government and whether there is some -

Time expired.

Estimates of the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Tourism agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2, 4, 9, 11 and 13 -

(Minister for Finance, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing and Minister for Science and Technology)

[3.21 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to make my comments on the outputs in Committee A - the Minister for Finance and amongst many other portfolios, Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing. It was a privilege to be able to attend that committee and ask questions specifically in the housing portfolio, having been just recently named the shadow minister for housing and the Labor spokesperson for housing, all of one week prior to Estimates commencing. While I might have been new to the portfolio, hopefully everybody would acknowledge working in this place and working in our electorates as we do, I was not new to the issues surrounding the housing crisis in Tasmania. Indeed, the issues of housing and homelessness have been and continue to be the most significant in terms of the number of the people who come and seek support from my office, and that was prior to holding this portfolio.

Just being a member of society in Tasmania, people would recognise that housing and the cost of housing, the availability of social and public housing, the cost of housing in the private market both to rent and to buy, are all factors that are at crisis point in Tasmania for a range of reasons. It is a passion of mine to deal with the housing crisis and to make sure that people in Tasmania have a safe place to call home. Everyone deserves to have a roof over their head and it is increasingly worrying - it should be for all of us here - the number of people who cannot say they have a safe place to call home, who are living in insecure accommodation, who are couch-surfing, who are sleeping rough, who are staying in insecure arrangements with friends and family.

One of the things we talked about at the committee is that a lot of homelessness is quite hidden homelessness and it is a small proportion of people who are facing homelessness in Tasmania who are sleeping rough. It is terrible that there are people who are sleeping rough but it is a minority of those who are actually bearing the brunt of homelessness in Tasmania. There are people who are without their own safe place to call home who are not sleeping rough and they are those hidden homeless that we hear people talk about all the time and we pay attention to these issues, including those insecure forms of accommodation like living in a caravan, people living and sleeping out of their cars, sometimes with young families, and it is heart-breaking.

As people would know, homelessness affects people of all ages, in all regions of Tasmania and all demographics. It can be something that any one of us could face if our lives take a few difficult turns. People become homeless for a range of reasons, including losing their income or employment and of course there has been increasing pressure during COVID-19, the lack of affordable housing as well as things like family breakdowns, domestic and family violence, illness, transition from care or from custody, mental health issues, gambling and substance abuse. These are the issues that are raised by Shelter Tasmania when they speak about the homelessness crisis facing Tasmania.

They noted in one of their publications from earlier this year that in March 2021 there were 338 Tasmanians living without any housing at all but, as I said, that is a small proportion of those who are actually in a category of homelessness including couch-surfing, precarious and sub-standard accommodation. We know that the numbers are much higher. They note that there are 120 000 Tasmanians living below the poverty line. As cost-of-living pressures rise, including housing costs, on average Tasmanian rents have risen in recent times by about \$6000 a year if you aggregate figures across the whole state. That's a shocking fact that means that housing affordability is putting acute pressure on families and individuals who are

struggling to meet the costs of housing and who are, in worrying numbers, finding themselves facing the challenges that homelessness brings.

The housing waitlist is expected to grow. It is now sitting at about 4000 applications, which represents more than 4000 people because some of those applications would involve families. Those 4000 applications are set to grow to a little over 5000 on the Government's own projections.

We discovered at Estimates the very high number of people who are turned away when seeking emergency support. When people are facing challenges of homelessness, many people turn to emergency accommodation providers. There are a number of shelters that do amazing work in supporting people who need emergency accommodation and support.

At Estimates, we were quoted a figure from the 2019-20 financial year of 15 600 instances of people being turned away when seeking emergency homelessness support. The majority of those requests were for emergency accommodation. That does not necessarily represent 15 600 people because people could have called the same shelter multiple times or called multiple shelters seeking support, but it is masking a very real problem. For people to need to make multiple calls means they are in desperate need. There is not enough support and enough shelter accommodation available for people who need emergency care.

The minister undertook, and provided through a question on notice, a figure for the last year. It is a little bit lower. In the 2019-20 financial year, 15 600 instances of people seeking emergency support were turned away, and in the last financial year it was 15 221. That is a number that would concern every person in this place. The majority of turn-aways were in the south, 8973. In the north there were 4388 instances of people seeking emergency support who were turned away, and in the north-west the figure was 1860.

In 15 221 cases last year, when people sought support, there was none available. A large number of those seeking emergency support are people escaping from family and domestic violence. When there is no support for them they often end up going back to that violent relationship and that home, which places them and their children back in a dangerous situation.

We also talked about people on the housing waiting list. If they are previous Housing tenants and have left with a debt to the Housing department, they cannot be relisted on the Housing register until they have paid that debt by at least 80 per cent. The reason I raised that issue with the minister at Estimates is because of a worrying story I had heard from a constituent. He was happy to be back on the Housing register because he had paid down 80 per cent of his debt. I asked him how he paid back the debt and he said he had taken a payday lender loan.

Mr Chair, I am sure you have encountered people in your community who have sought payday lender loans. They charge interest rates of sometimes 200 per cent or 300 per cent. While there has to be accountability for the debts people owe to the Housing department, it seemed like a perverse unintended consequence that this Government policy was keeping a loan shark in business.

There are also struggles for those who are in housing who are either living in social or affordable housing or are in the private rental market. They are not homeless but are in precarious situations because of the availability and affordability of the homes they live in.

Both TasCOSS and the Tenants' Union of Tasmania anticipate that demand for social and affordable housing will be around 1000 homes per year for the next 10 years.

The Budget plans for the building and providing of more social and affordable homes but they plan for about 3500 to be provided over the next six years. That is only a little over half of the anticipated need. There are already 4000 people on the waiting list and that is set to rise to over 5000 over the forward Estimates in this Budget. The projected builds in this Budget will not keep pace with the anticipated need in these Budget papers, let alone any extra and unexpected need that may arise because of other factors that impact the housing market, including increasing private rental prices and increasing mortgage costs.

I am really worried about what that means for Tasmanians who are facing homelessness now and those who we anticipate will be in that situation. There will not be sufficient supply to meet the demand of people who need social and affordable housing.

We also spoke about housing maintenance. My office and many others, I am sure, have received representations from people living in social and affordable housing provided either by Housing Tasmania or community housing providers who are struggling with significant deterioration of their homes through no fault of their own and battling to have those issues fixed.

I talked about Kirsty Patterson who is a resident of Lenah Valley and lives in a housing department home. She is a single mum of five kids. There are serious long-term bathroom plumbing issues in her house, with human waste gathering in pools and puddles in the backyard and in the home. While it had been assessed when her story appeared in the *Mercury*, there was still raw sewage leaking through the pipes and the toilet would not flush. She and her kids were using the public toilet in the nearby park but that is not open all the time, so they still had to sometimes use the toilet at home and push the excrement down the toilet with a plunger. She said the stench in the house is quite overpowering because some windows do not open and some doors are jammed.

It is an extreme case. The minister acknowledged he was aware of Ms Patterson's situation and that his department was fixing the problem. The reason for raising such a serious example of deteriorating maintenance in a housing property is these are the kind of conditions most private home owners would rectify very quickly, yet people who are living in social housing or in Government housing are often left to wait weeks, months and sometimes even years, to have things people would not usually put up with, waiting for those things to be fixed.

We talked about a particular housing block in my electorate which has long-standing issues of black mould and other structural issues wrong with that building. One example was where a tenant described the wooden frames around the window were so soft you could push your finger through them and yet they were inspected, ordered to be fixed and the fix ordered was for them to be sanded back and repainted. I am no builder, but have renovated, painted and sanded back window panes. If something was to that level of deterioration, it is really a matter of throwing good money after bad if the approach of Government is to sand back windows in that kind of condition.

There are also serious issues with that particular housing block, when it comes to ventilation and black mould growing in the house which is something that individual tenants are held responsible for. It is not their fault mould continues to grow, because anyone who has

had that kind of thing happening in their house would know no matter how much you clean, bleach and scrub, black mould will continue to raise its head until something more structural is done. It is not enough to paint it with a mould resistant paint or, in some instances, there have been exhaust fans put in, but the damage has already been done.

The reason we went into that level of detail about housing maintenance is because it is a real issue for people who are living in social, affordable housing. There seems sometimes a bit of an attitude people should be grateful there is a roof over their heads. For some of these people, they have gone from living in their cars to living in conditions like that and end up sleeping back in their car because the conditions in the accommodation they have been provided are so worrying people cannot live safely in the home. It is not that they are ungrateful for having had housing finally provided to them.

When it comes to black mould, there are kids with respiratory issues who worsen and issues are exacerbated as a result of those conditions.

We asked a question on notice and the minister has provided a response on housing maintenance issues and active work orders. We discovered there are now 1463 active work orders across the state in provided Housing department homes. That figure does not include maintenance orders in houses run by community housing providers. This is only Government housing. Of those, there are 29 urgent, 135 semi-urgent, 847 general, 107 non-standard and 90 general work orders. Many of them are overdue: 18 urgent, and 74 semi-urgent orders are overdue. I have misread one of those figures. I will read that back in. The tenants who are living in those houses have been waiting a significant period of time to have those things fixed.

The Budget anticipated costs to actually rectify all of the work orders on the books right now for Government run housing, is in the order of a little under \$20 million. That is a significant chunk of money required for Government to be able to go in and do those assessments and fix those maintenance problems facing the housing stock they manage through Housing Tasmania.

Time expired.

[3.40 p.m.]

Mr STREET - Mr Deputy Chair, I want to take my time today to make some brief comments, particularly in the Infrastructure portfolio, comments that I was not able to make as the Chair of the committee last week. I want to talk about one project and that is the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet. I have been quite clear with the minister in the past, that until the plans came out showing the connections from this fifth lane into the top of Macquarie Street I was not convinced this project would work. I am happy to say now I have seen the animation and the plan in its entirety, I can see the value of this project and how important it is, particularly for my electorate of Franklin and people travelling from south of the city.

I want to put on the record I am extremely sorry some homes are going to be demolished for this project to occur, but what I would say is: what is the alternative? If we go to the other side of the outlet hill and go on the inside we would lose homes on the bottom side of the Southern Outlet and end up with a lane cantilevered over Proctors Road, some 50 or 60 metres up in the air, I would not be comfortable driving on that. The fact of the matter is we need this fifth lane.

The conservative estimates I have heard are that in the next 15 years there will be more than 10 000 extra people living south of the city. They are pretty conservative figures when you look at how quickly subdivision developments like Spring Farm and Whitewater Park at Kingston have sold. The fact of the matter is in the last 50 years 90 per cent of all dwelling approvals have occurred outside of Hobart and Glenorchy in the south of the state. This has meant we have now population growth south of the city in both Kingborough and the Huon Valley, also to the north of the city in Brighton and the Derwent Valley, out to the east in Clarence and Sorell and extending further than that, all driving in and out of the city each day. We have to do something to facilitate this increased traffic.

I want to be clear. Building more roads is not going to solve the problem in and of itself. We need to invest more in public transport and the minister was very clear in the Estimates when he was asked about it that is what we are going to do. South of the city the public transport we are talking about investing in is buses, because that is the option available to us. Unlike the northern suburbs which have the corridor preserved, we do not have that luxury south of the city. Buses have to share the road network that currently exists. There is no point putting increased bus services into the Kingborough and Huon Valley that will use the Southern Outlet in its current state.

The services will be inefficient, they will not provide any time savings or any incentive for people to get on them. What we need is an integrated approach which is an increase in public transport investment, but also an increase in the road network and in the efficiency of the road network. Mrs Petrusma and I worked collaboratively with the Minister for Infrastructure on the Algona Road development. There we are talking about a dedicated and separated lane of traffic or lanes of traffic down the Channel through Margate and Snug to allow those residents to come straight through to the city on the bypass without coming through the intersection at Algona Road.

We are also talking about the duplication of the Kingston bypass. During the infrastructure hearing, we heard Ms O'Connor criticise the Government for the Perth bypass which she felt was over engineered and over built. To a certain extent I can understand that when you look at it at the minute. The problem is, Ms O'Connor, when you build infrastructure for the now and not for the future you end up with what we have with the Kingston bypass, which is one lane in each direction underbuilt when it was built. Everybody knew it was underbuilt when it was built and now 10 years later we are having to spend the money to duplicate it. I well remember the building of the Kingston bypass because I was there for the opening; the first function I went to as a Kingborough councillor back in November 2011. A beautiful Friday morning -

Ms White - What an occasion.

Mr STREET - What an occasion, Ms White. Were you there, or do know about it through -

Ms White - I am in awe of the way you speak about it.

Mr STREET - Yes. I imagine it is well-talked about in Labor circles because it was announced on the Friday morning that this road development was going to be opened. This was a surprise to most people because I had driven home on it the night before. On Friday morning, I turned up to find that the newly built Kingston bypass was shut and the traffic

diverted down the Channel Highway to the old intersection. The traffic banked up from Kingston through Margate down to Snug while we waited for the federal infrastructure minister's delayed flight into Hobart Airport to land so that he could come down and cut a ribbon.

Ms White - It sounds a bit like *Utopia*.

Mr STREET - It was. I understand that these things happen. My point is that the infrastructure was not built looking to the future. Anybody from the Kingborough or Channel area knew that the bypass would need to be duplicated. That is why the corridor for it to be duplicated was preserved at the time. Labor did not put in the money to doing the project properly in the first place.

As much as the fifth lane on the Outlet is unpopular with some Dynnyrne residents - I completely understand that - and the head of Infrastructure Tasmania acknowledged in Estimates that communication had not been as good as it should have been, he was now personally communicating with the residents who will be directly affected and also those concerned about any indirect effects on Dynnyrne Road. The minister gave his assurance that these people will be dealt with fairly and compassionately.

There is no alternative. There is no point investing in public transport to bring people from the south of the city on the current road network. The current road network is full. Even if we diverted 25 per cent of the people who are causing that traffic into public transport to get into the city, the residential growth south of the city, combined with the current traffic would mean that those bus services could not do what we need them to.

I have spoken to Kingborough Council on a couple of occasions recently. I am excited about what they see as the future for public transport in Kingborough, particularly at Kingston Park. They have made acquisitions and are continuing to develop plans that will be exciting for Kingborough and the Huon Valley. I applaud them for their forward thinking. Kingston Park will be a transformational project for the south of the city, bringing housing and retail development as well as public transport.

I will finish with the Science and Technology portfolio. The shadow minister, Ms Butler, was critical of the investment in our ICT sector. I know, as does the minister know, what hand he was dealt when he came to government in 2014 and the under-investment that had gone on.

Dr Woodruff - So long ago, Mr Street, and it has been so woefully attended to since then.

Mr STREET - It is this revision of history, Dr Woodruff, that you trot out. Instead of investing in ICT infrastructure for the future, Dr Woodruff, we have been trying to bring it up to the current day. We have all heard the stories about IT workers running down Bathurst Street with extension cords.

Ms Butler - You guys stopped this strategy when you came into government.

Mr STREET - Not everything was perfect in March 2014 when we took government, Ms Butler. Your party did not leave a Utopian pristine state. Investments have had to happen

to bring things up to standard - not even to talk about the future. We are now talking about investing in the future. Before we did that we had to fix what was left behind.

I understand you were not here in 2014 -

Time expired.

[3.50 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - Mr Deputy Chair, I will talk about a number of areas in the minister's portfolio, but I was interested to read in the answers to questions placed on notice concerning data about the number of people turned away from shelters and accommodation in Tasmania every year.

A question that was raised with the minister in the portfolio of Housing was, how many people are turned away from shelters each year and can it be broken down per shelter and per region? The minister has provided an answer to this. I will read it into *Hansard* because it is important to inform the community of the extreme pressure our shelters are facing and what this means for the people who are desperately in need of accommodation and, in some cases, seeking emergency accommodation to keep themselves safe.

In the south: Annie Kenney Young Women's Refuge had 138; Bethlehem House, 60; Colville Place, 111; Hobart Women's Shelter, 3515; Jireh House, 2836; Launch, 11; McCombe House, 2270; Youth Care, 32. In the north of the state: Karinya Young Women's Service, 188; Launceston City Mission, 781; Magnolia Place, 3338; Youth Futures Inc., 81. In the north-west: Oakleigh House Family Shelter, 843; Warrawee Women's Shelter, 783; and Youth, Family and Community Connections, 234.

This refers to instances of requests, not individuals, and does not exclude multiple contacts from the same individual or contact with multiple shelters. It does demonstrate that we are not meeting the need of people who are seeking emergency accommodation. The number at the Hobart Women's Shelter, Magnolia Place, Jireh House and McCombe House are incredibly large. We are talking thousands and thousands of instances of requests that have been turned away over the course of the year.

There are huge pressures in the housing market for people trying to find an affordable rental and get into home ownership for the first time, but that is also impacting on those people who might be waiting for public housing. The public housing waiting list has grown to more than 4000. That data, along with the data I have shared about the number of people who are turned away from emergency accommodation in Tasmania every year, shows we are letting lots of people down.

Many of those people are vulnerable and many would be families. I am assuming, given the number is quite large at the women's shelters, many of them would be women with children and, in a large proportion of those instances, you could expect they would be escaping instances of violence. We have to do so much better.

It concerns me that the minister who has taken on the responsibility for housing has lumped it in with a portfolio of State Development, Construction and Housing, dehumanising the plight of thousands of Tasmanians who are desperate. It concerns me that the minister, when he speaks about housing, is going to do it based on the number of new dwelling approvals

in a way that is about construction. That is, of course, necessary but it is not connecting with the needs of people who are being turned away from shelters in desperate situations right now.

I want to talk about Infrastructure. The Government has a terrible record of delivering infrastructure projects. If you look at the Budget papers you can see, not only in the Department of State Growth output group but right across Health, Education, the Department of Communities Tasmania, there are projects that will not be completed in this term of Government, despite the fact that they were promised at the last election.

There were projects that we investigated during Estimates, but there are a couple I want to talk about which we are still expecting to see some further information from the Government. I am hopeful that when it comes to rail in particular, we might see some progress in this term of government. I raised some questions on behalf of the Derwent Valley Railway in New Norfolk and the minister confirmed that he will be tabling a notice in this place this year to hopefully give access to the line for that group so that they can start to operate trains again in the Derwent Valley. That is exciting news.

They are a volunteer organisation. They have been working incredibly hard, and I know that the Rail Regulator will still need to play a very important role here to grant them the ability to operate. One of the challenges they had has been overcome which is the insurance issue that has been funded by the Government, but the second challenge, of course, is access to the line. I am looking forward to seeing the tabling of that notice in this parliament. That is terrific news and I know that this volunteer organisation that has been working very hard for a very long time are hopeful of seeing that come to fruition.

The other rail project that we talked about is the Northern Suburbs Rail and the lack of any action there. The minister talked about how the Government was currently cash-flowing some of the investment that is occurring there, and he asked me to put the question on notice to seek some further information about what exactly the Government had paid for so far. The question I had was about how much the Government had cash-flowed for the Northern Suburbs Rail Project to date. The response to that from the minister was that \$343 887.50 has been committed, and of this, costs of \$199 612 have been incurred to date. That does not seem like very much money, given we know that there have been a number of different reports commissioned into the Northern Suburbs Rail.

I have not had time to reconcile those amounts against what has been publicly announced, but what we were most interested to understand was what has happened to the \$25 million as part of the City Deal that had been identified to help activate the Northern Suburbs Railway? The minister confirmed that none of that money has yet been drawn down by the Government to use. That is something that we will be looking to see in the next couple of budgets because the minister confirmed that it was meant for years five to 10 when rail is activated.

I remember the former minister for Infrastructure, Rene Hidding, saying that the rail would be operational in five years and that was a couple of years ago now. We are two years into that five-year commitment given by the former minister for Infrastructure. We will see whether or not they deliver on that promise.

The other initiative that I raised concern about was another rail project, the Abt Railway on the west coast. There was an audit conducted into the misappropriation of some funds associated with that particular project and we examined that in another output group with a

different minister as well. However, what the minister was able to share in response to the question we raised there is that there were commercial matters to do with the allocation of contracts which precluded further information from being provided to the committee. The important thing to note is that there are no concerns about the safety of that track but it is the expenditure of public money. There was a \$16 million commitment provided over a four-year period to upgrade the West Coast Wilderness Railway track, a significant icon on the west coast, a significant drawcard for the tourism sector there, and it is so important that we make sure we continue to maintain the line there and the sustainability of that business to support visitation to the west coast.

One thing I will touch on before I finish is Metro buses. I raised a question on behalf of my colleague about the number of assaults that have occurred on Metro buses, particularly with respect to antisocial behaviour and whether that had resulted in worker's compensation claims. There were 70 incidents of antisocial behaviour in 2019. It had gone up to 84 in 2020 but more concerningly in 2019 there were three worker's compensation claims made by employees of Metro. That had increased to eight in 2020. There seems to be a problem with antisocial behaviour on public transport, particularly the Metro network. You were asked further questions in GBEs but I just draw that to the minister's attention because he would be aware of it now as he provided the answer, and ask what he was going to do to ensure the safety of the workforce.

Time expired.

[4.00 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Chair, there were far too many topics covered in minister Ferguson's Estimates for me to cover them all but I particularly want to talk about the Gaming Control Act amendments which are currently being consulted with the community. I use that term quite loosely because, as we discovered in Estimates, when they talk about, for example, consulting on what the distribution of the Community Support Levy (CSL) will look like following the implementation of the amendments to the Gaming Control Act, we found out that, by design, the consultation on the CSL distribution is extremely narrow. It is so narrow we discovered in response, initially I think to a question from Ms Johnston, that no more than a dozen entities or organisations have been consulted through the current CSL process. One of them happens to be the Tailrace Community Church, a church in Mr Ferguson's electorate of Bass. There was an exchange across the table about why a single church in Mr Ferguson's electorate was consulted. He assured us at the table that it was not his church but it is a church that he goes to.

Mr Ferguson - No. You alleged it was my church.

Ms O'CONNOR - I asked you if it was. I want to know, for example, why the Hobart Baptist Church was not on that list? Why was the C3 Church not on that list? Why was one church in minister Ferguson's electorate consulted about the distribution of one of the most important pots of money for minimising the enormous human harm caused by gambling? We did not get a straight answer out of that but it sure has a stink about it.

We had a look at the work done by the Tailrace Community Church. We wondered if they, out of concern about this Government's policy, made a representation to Mr Ferguson about the proposed new gambling arrangements following the expiry of the deed because one

of the programs they run, which sounds like a great program, is about helping people out of debt. It is a way to be debt-free run by the Tailrace Community Church.

I bet London to a brick the reason they were consulted is because they saw exactly what was coming with the Liberals' legislation, made a representation either to the Premier or to the minister, and, in order to soothe these concerned questions, minister Ferguson has said, 'That's fine, we'll consult on the distribution of the Community Support Levy.' I do not know how many other dozens or hundreds of churches in Tasmania might have liked to have a say, Chair, but, unfortunately, because they were not in Bass and did not go and make a representation to minister Ferguson, they did not get a say.

We went back-and-forth a bit at the table about this Government's dishonesty over the tax rate for electronic gaming machines in casinos which was a matter that the Greens raised in the first few days of the recent state election campaign. Then the media picked it up and then ABC *Mornings* picked it up. There were questions put to both the Premier and to minister Ferguson about what the casino pokies' tax rate is that you have negotiated because, as we know, Chair, it is a multi-hundred-million-dollar question for the state of Tasmania and Tasmania's budget.

What did we get from both the Premier and his minister? We got dishonesty through the campaign. We got statements basically telling the people of Tasmania that this has all been sorted out in 2018; there is nothing to see here. Now we know, because of Right to Information documents obtained by the member for Nelson, Meg Webb, that the Government wrote to the Farrell family Federal Group in December last year outlining the proposed tax rates including the tax rate that would be applied to EGMs in casinos. It was stitched up last December. Both the Premier and the minister knew before they went to the election and did not tell the truth to the people of Tasmania, what the proposed tax rate would be. Complete dishonesty.

Also, at the table, we asked for examples about why there were two new forms of gambling in the proposed Gaming Control Amendments, one where it is automated table playing so all those jobs that apparently were going to be lost to the industry are irrelevant to this one because this is about not having a person there while another person is losing their money, in order to monitor the wellbeing potentially, of that person who is gambling. None of that in the way any more. A whole new form of gambling that will be coming in, or was certainly in the consultation draft of the legislation and then another whole new form of gambling which is simulated horse racing.

Layer upon layer of deceit here with the people of Tasmania about the form of the changes to gambling after the deed expires and after this House presumably - because we know Labor will back it in, and they will do so upstairs - passes that legislation. The one thing that was so important that was never made clear to the people of Tasmania, is that this is 'eternity legislation'. This is not like the deed which was first of all stitched up by a Liberal premier and then stitched up by a Labor premier. This is not a deed that has an expiry date. This is eternity legislation.

Under the amendments to the Gaming Control Act, licenses will be given to venues for a period of 20 years but if a venue holder says after five or seven years 'I don't want to be in this business any more, I am sick of watching people suffering and dying', not that I am expecting that to be said to government, but they hand their license back in and then it is redistributed for another 20 years.

What we know about the new gambling arrangements as a result of the fact that the Federal Group helped the Liberals to win the 2018 state election, is that poker machines will be in pubs and clubs and casinos for as long as there are human beings on this island - unless one very brave and very cashed-up government, comes in and shakes it up again in order to save people from poverty, homelessness and family violence, to save children from going hungry, being neglected and being abused, and to save people from mental illness, from addiction and from despair.

The legislation that will come before this House in October we understand, will embed that harm across generations of Tasmanians. I am surprised only one church has raised this matter with Mr Ferguson, and good on them for doing that, because if the depth was understood in the community of the human cost of the new gaming control arrangements that will be in place, we would have protests out the front of Parliament and we would have preachers on Sunday, condemning the Liberal Government.

There is a lack of understanding in the community about the extent of the harm that will be caused by this legislation. This legislation is the quid pro quo for the 2018 state election. It is absolutely bad, as is that laughably cheap casino pokies tax rate of around 13 cents, which the department went and looked at a casino in Far North Queensland to make a comparison. Why we are comparing ourselves to Far North Queensland, a capital city here and Far North Queensland 3000 kilometres away, I do not know, but, yes, I do. The reason we did that is because the Federal Group proposed that we do. It was the Federal Group's idea that in order to set a new tax rate for EGMs in casinos, the Department of Treasury and Finance should go and have a look at a regional casino.

Just as the policy that will be embedded in the legislation that comes before this House in October was designed and promoted by the Federal Group and the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, so was the casino EGM rate, basically stitched up or suggested by the Federal Group to this Government who of course, said 'yes'. They could not say no, Mr Deputy Chair. The reason they could not say no is because the Federal Group and the THA helped them win the 2018 state election.

I am completely unsurprised that through this campaign, what we had from the Premier and from his minister was nothing to see here, that was all decided in 2018, move on, let us tell you how terrific we are. The level of dishonesty in this portfolio on this issue is disgusting.

Time expired.

[4.10 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - I rise to speak on Committee A with Mr Ferguson. I am going to start by addressing Mr Street's contribution. I thought I had better correct the record as Mr Street has a few ideas on life before the Liberal Government. I thought I had better correct the record, because whatever diatribe he was going on with before, it was completely incorrect.

These are facts. From the 2013-14 state budget, 7.13, our Labor Government allocated \$28 million into the Information Communications Technology fund - fact. This is what we did:

The Tasmanian government has traditionally employed an agency-based model for managing and planning most of its Information Communications

Technology projects. This model has suited government well in the past. However, the development of a more coordinated and strategic approach to key elements of ICT within government is required to meet a range of pressures including:

- the challenges and opportunities facing the state are changing more rapidly;
- state policy responses increasingly involve coordinated responses from many agencies -

This is our work, by the way, not yours:

- - national policy responses increasingly involve collaboration by many governments; and
- budget measures are significant.

In 2014, the government will establish an ICT project fund with a funding allocation of \$4 million in 2013-14 increasing to \$10 million per annum in 2016-17. This initiative will establish provision of funding for significant state ICT projects -

This is what we were doing when you said it was a complete mess:

The ICT policy board will be responsible for determining which products will be funded from the ICT project fund. Potential projects include: the Integrated Tasmanian Government contact centre, budget information management systems, state revenue systems -

All the things that are still in a mess by the way, minister:

criminal justice information management system, emergency dispatch system and student management system replacement. This funding is included in finance general for budget purposes.

Then the Liberals came into government. They cast their first budget and guess what you did, Mr Tucker, because I do not think you were here - this is the truth -

Mr Tucker - Were you here?

Ms BUTLER - Yes, I was here but you were not here at all. You cut it from the 2014-15 budget. Here it is, table 7.1, infrastructure expenditure by agency. We go down, and on the footnote, under finance general, it says:

- (2) In accordance with its election commitment, the Government has abolished the ICT project fund effective from 2014-15.

That is what happened. The minister knows this and Mr Street now knows this. He was misleading the House; I am sure he would not have meant to do that. I have corrected the

record. You guys cut the budget when you got into government. That is fact. That is what happened. That is a budget paper and I read it out for the record. That is what happened.

Looking into some of the things that have happened in this portfolio in the last seven years, we asked a question about this during the committee. On 19 December 2015, the minister launched the Data Centre Action Strategy and tasked the Office of the Coordinator-General with attracting a tier three data centre to Tasmania. The executive summary reads:

This strategy outlines 12 key actions that will encourage national and international investment in data centres in the state.

It is a great idea and this is one of the things the minister was working on in 2015. We asked the minister in Estimates, after the launch of that strategy, nearly six years ago, how many tier 3 data centres have been launched in Tasmania? The minister could not provide an answer during Estimates, we took the question on notice. I will read into the record the response:

- (1) The Tasmanian Government is currently engaged with a proponent who has already built a data centre in northern Tasmania for its own use to expand the capacity for third party use next year and will be seeking tier accreditations as part of the expansion.

That is a lot different to the 3-tier data 2015.

- (2) Red Cloud did substantial work around data centre site selection in and around both Hobart and Launceston both before and after the announcement of its impending investment. Red Cloud narrowed the focus to suitable locations in Hobart, but ultimately withdrew from the project for reasons which it did not disclose publicly.

Another example of another failed project. That is the best way to put it. At the time the minister stated, and I will read from the message from the minister from 2015:

While there is a significant global competition for this investment, Tasmania has a key advantage that can differentiate attracting data centres to the state. We have a temperate climate reducing cooling costs, ready availability of water at globally competitive process and renewed energy.

Minister, there were so many things you were announcing at that time. Maybe this was going to be seen as your reason for cutting the whole IT budget which Labor had done when you came into Government. Maybe you knew better. Then you go on to state:

The data centre action strategy outlines a Tasmanian Government's approach to attracting future data centre activities to the state by promoting Tasmania to data centre investors and facilitating streamline investment.

Well, none of that ever happened, did it, minister? Here in 2016, he is still going on about something which never ever happened, \$40 million Red Cloud data centre to create jobs:

The Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering on our commitment to attract a tier 3 data centre to Tasmania. Perth-based data centre operator Red Cloud is presenting with a plan for a \$40 million data centre in Tasmania having finalised the purchase of 7000 square metres in the Spark business centre at Cambridge.

None of this ever happened, minister. Another project that did not happen:

Red Cloud expects the development to create 80 local jobs -

None of those jobs ever happened:

- during construction, and an additional 17 when operational.

It never happened:

In December last year, the Government released the Tasmanian Data Centre Action Strategy which outlined 12 actions to encourage further development of data centres within Tasmania.

None of that ever happened, minister. There was another article regarding the data centre, talking up how important this was to Tasmania. Then it suddenly disappeared and you never announced that it failed. It just disappeared like so many other projects this Government claims to be investing in: amazing announcements and how wonderful this is going to be for Tasmania and then it just does not happen, it just goes away.

One of the advantages in siting data centres in areas of low temperature is that you can capitalise on what is known as free air cooling, 'We would consume a lot less power having a data centre in Tasmania than what we would in the mainland'. That was from the company. So, what happened? What happened with Red Cloud data? Why did they pull out? How did you muck up this one, minister? 'The centre will enable faster development of new software applications and a high level of data storage'. I do not think that Tasmania has capitalised on this opportunity to fully develop technology on the island. The reason for that is a lot of companies prefer to develop on the mainland and simply use Tasmania as consumers.

That is what the company was saying: they do not think we had ever really embraced that. Guess what happened? I am not sure if you did not know, minister, when we asked you in Estimates what had actually happened with that data centre. Our information is they ended up building that data centre in Darwin. The Northern Territory could pull that off, but Tasmania could not.

You had also completely mucked up this amazing announcement from 2015 trying to compensate for the amount of money you cut from budget, the Information Communication Technology Fund, something Labor had budgeted for. It was sitting in that budget, you rocked up in 2014 and 2015 with about three or four policies and you cut it. You said it was a commitment to abolish the ICT project fund. It is your fault we are so far behind, minister, and you have not done much to account for that in the meantime.

My office has been contacting your office three or four times a week over the past two-and-a-half months over a constituent's housing matter I raised here. He has been living in

his car and he has been homeless for over 12 months. Can you please do something about it? It has been far too long.

[4.20 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - I want to reflect on a couple of things I raised with Mr Ferguson in his capacity as Minister for Science and Technology. Does Mr Ferguson, as the minister for Science, take the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report with the gravity they command?

I asked the minister whether he could summarise the key findings of the IPCC report. I referred to that report, and would like somebody to disprove me, as the biggest report on the planet. When you have the Secretary of the United Nations referring to the IPCC's report as a code red for humanity, speaking about the fact that the report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels before they destroy our planet and stating clearly that we have to combine forces to avert climate catastrophe, he is not over-egging it.

He is reflecting the seriousness of the findings that our international scientists are reporting. It does not give them any happiness to do that. They do not like the job they are doing of identifying the increasing heating of the planet, of clarifying the damage it is doing to every single global system - atmospheric, terrestrial and marine.

I have never met a climate scientist who takes pleasure in reporting the findings they are observing from experimental research and modelling of future projections of greenhouse gas emissions and investigating the impacts they are having already and will increasingly have on humans and all life on earth. There is no doubt that scientists, and the 11 000 scientists who wrote the letter that called for urgent and strong action from all global leaders, understand the gravity and they are desperately trying to communicate it to us.

It is a fair question to ask the minister for Science, who attended Science Meets Parliament and has more opportunity than most people in Tasmania to summarise the key findings. I would have expected a few comments on an urgent wake-up call for us all, a need to take further and stronger actions, a requirement for Tasmania to do everything it can in every single sector, a need to end native forest logging so that we keep our carbon stores in the ground and a need to have comprehensive and detailed adaptation planning, which we are clearly not doing in Tasmania.

A mix of those would have been a welcome response from the Minister for Science and Technology. Instead, despite the fact that the Chair of the committee kept interrupting, seeking to shut me down, to turn off the heat from the Minister for Science and Technology, Mr Ferguson admitted that he has not read the Summary for Policymakers. That may be acceptable except he is not intending to do it anytime soon. He has closed his mind to reading the simplified summary report, the summary of the summary report. It is about two pages long and he cannot be bothered.

He is not interested in reading any summarial documents about the biggest planetary report delivered. The Chair of the committee called my description of it as the biggest report a 'subjective assessment'.

There is nothing more important to life on earth than an understanding of how our planet is heating and what we have to do to wind it back as fast as possible. We do not get a second

go at this. In his contribution just before, Mr Street was attacking Labor about infrastructure bills and he said, 'We've seen the problems when we build infrastructure for the now and not for the future'. I will turn it back on Mr Street and the Liberals. We see exactly what happens when we set pathetic state climate action plans for the now and not for the future, when we do not set sectional targets for the future, when we do not look at innovations and targets to transform our society so that we prepare ourselves for an inevitably much bleaker and harder climate to live in. That is what we have to do now. That is what we have to do immediately.

The Greens are not going to stop talking about this. Mr Ferguson can put his hands on his ears as much as he likes but he has a very important job. The first job for the minister for Science is to listen to the scientists, to listen to our world-class scientists from the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, the University of Tasmania, the ACE CRC, the new Climate and Land Extremes (CLEX) research body. These are globally important and globally acclaimed research organisations. The scientists within them are the best in the world.

We need a minister for Science who is not only prepared to listen to them but to read what they have written. Tasmanians have contributed to that global research. We laud them for other things and this Government, this minister, is so happy to invite them to parliament and pump himself up around them so he should listen to them instead of using them for a PR exercise. It does him very badly and it does not advance Tasmania's interests.

[4.28 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - I rise to comment on the minister for Infrastructure. Before I get started on infrastructure, one thing we have heard the Premier say over and over again is about how the Budget is returning to a cash surplus next year. This is the Premier's preferred statistic. When he talks about a cash operating surplus he is assuming that infrastructure is not the business of government. The Government can cover its wages and consumables part of the Budget and the infrastructure that sits outside the cash operating balance is not the ordinary business of government. The member for Franklin, Mr Street, talked today about the Government investing in intergenerational assets.

Intergenerational assets, things like roads, need upgrading on a constant basis. That has always been the case for any government. Roads and upgrades to infrastructure are the business of government and they need to occur every year, otherwise the asset base runs down.

When the Premier talks about a cash operating balance, he is saying the infrastructure spend is not the business of government and once you can cover your wages and your consumables, then the state is in good stead. That is not the case and is his preferred statistic that he has only started using this year. Even the net operating balance does not give a true picture of the state of the budget.

The reality is, it is the fiscal balance that gives the true state of the budget and why the fiscal balance has been negative for a long time and why we are looking at debt. The plan of the Government is to borrow \$2 million per day every day for the next four years. If that was for intergenerational infrastructure projects, then they may have a reasonable argument, but it is not.

When it comes to infrastructure, we see that this Government simply cannot get its infrastructure projects out the door. We remember the last year's budget, where there was a billion-dollar infrastructure blitz and that is what was going to happen. Billion dollars is all the

Government were talking about during that whole budget session. What was the reality of it? Once again, massive underspend in infrastructure and that has been happening year in, year out because this Government cannot get its infrastructure out the door.

What was the record last year? They missed their target by \$400 million. Not a little bit - by \$400 million. They spent \$642 million: missed their billion-dollar target by \$400 million. What do we see in the next budget? We see a decline in infrastructure spending, \$828 million, and then across the forward Estimates we see \$982 million, then we get a billion, and then we get \$988 million. These figures never happen. How can we trust the Government to get infrastructure funding out the door when their record, every year, is they do not deliver the infrastructure spending they promise? It seems their infrastructure spending is their go-to piece when they try to balance their budget problems.

The Premier's spending is getting out of control. He showed some fiscal discipline for his first couple of years and since then, his spending has been out of control. The way he tries to bring it back into some sort of decent range is to simply underspend on infrastructure. What that means is our infrastructure projects do not happen and our infrastructure base is in effect, running down.

Some of the questions I asked were about the Bridgewater bridge. Infrastructure Australia had a look at the Bridgewater bridge project and I asked questions about it, Infrastructure Australia, when they reviewed the bridge design, said it was not of value. That is what I said, it was not of value.

Mr Ferguson - You said it was recommended against. Do not tell fibs.

Dr BROAD - Oh no, this is what I am saying. Then what the minister said was 'no they didn't', and I said they recommended against it.

Mr Ferguson - What are you reading from?

Dr BROAD - You have just made up something, is what you said, and you asked me to withdraw those claims.

Mr Ferguson - Are you reading from a hand-written note?

Dr BROAD - Yes. I can look at it on my phone if you want.

Mr Ferguson - You said it was recommended against.

Dr BROAD - This is exactly what Infrastructure Australia said in June 2019. What I said was, it was not of value and you said, 'No, they didn't'. Well, yes, they did. What they said was, 'The business case did not demonstrate that the benefits of the project are likely to outweigh the costs'. They went on to say, 'That the business case also identifies a number of unresolved engineering issues that could add further to the costs of the project'. They also mentioned the costs of maintenance on the existing bridge -

Mr Ferguson - Are you misleading parliament?

Dr BROAD - No, I am not. This is a direct quote of what Infrastructure Australia said:

The business case did not demonstrate that the benefits of the project would outweigh the costs.

That is not of value. Anyone says that. Yes, that is exactly what Infrastructure Australia said.

Mr Ferguson - This is not the withdrawal I was expecting. I was expecting a genuine withdrawal.

Dr BROAD - Oh, look, this is the history of this Government. It is in their lack of infrastructure upgrades. We have heard -

Members interjecting.

Dr BROAD - We have heard - interjections, Chair. You do have a job here.

We have seen the Devonport to Deloraine piece of the Bass Highway is falling to pieces. The whole section virtually from Devonport to Deloraine was downgraded to an 80-kilometre zone and there were potholes from one end to the other. Thankfully, the teams have been out there trying to fix the potholes but the base problems remain on that road. Not only does the road lack overtaking lanes, there are crashes along that section. The base of the road must be failing because we saw these potholes just completely spring out of the air. That road is in dire need of funding, but what we see is typically these projects get spruiked. What we want to see is action, minister.

The Wynyard to Marrawah is another case in point. We have heard from federal parliament that the large majority of the federal funding is backended. That was the case. This is the evidence given during their Estimates process. We need to see action from this Government. They get up there, big lights, they announce big figures like billion-dollar infrastructure blitz like they did last year and simply do not deliver. They have to do better. While I am at it, let us talk about the payroll tax. What we heard in this place, one of the -

Mr Ferguson - You got off the bridge quick.

Dr BROAD - I only have two minutes left, minister. If you want to grant me some more time maybe I will have a bit more of a go at the Bridgewater Bridge. I thought you might have had enough of that so I will talk about your payroll tax. The fact that for 62 businesses, the only reason they are paying payroll tax is because you misled them. We had the minister here saying it was exempt.

The minister, Ms Howlett, was saying that payroll tax was exempt. What that would have meant, if payroll tax was exempt, is that these 62 businesses would not have paid a dollar of payroll tax. Instead, they have waived just that little portion of payroll tax that the JobKeeper payments fell over. If Minister Howlett was right the first three times she spoke about it and that payroll tax was exempt, these 62 businesses would not have paid a dollar. The only reason they tripped over was because JobKeeper payments tripped them over. The portion of JobKeeper payments tripped them over the \$1.25 million threshold. If this Government had truly exempted, they would not have had to pay.

The Government thinks we are just making this up and it is not a real problem. Well, it is, because these businesses are raising it with us. You are tone-deaf over that side. They are raising it with us. There is obvious confusion, because even accountants were having trouble with this. When they came to do their end-of-year assessment, they got pinged. This was not just one or two: this was 62 businesses. That is a lot of businesses. We know this Government is a tax-and-spend government. They have the biggest tax to GSP ratio, Mr Tucker, in history. Not only are we looking at record debt, minister - \$3.5 billion is a record - your tax to GSP ratio is also a record.

This is a tax-and-spend government. Your spending is out of control despite your underspend on infrastructure. If you actually spent the money you said and promised you put in the budget for infrastructure, you would be even worse off and your debt would be higher. You are trying to control your debt by not investing in infrastructure. That is a pathway to a downgrade in infrastructure.

Time expired.

[4.38 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER - What a performance, Mr Chair. I hope he learned what payroll tax was when he saw the Treasurer just before. What a week. They are still bringing up these things - I am amazed that the church comes up again today. That one was really bizarre. I do not know how we get the corruption in the church from having a church putting forward something like that. Very bizarre.

I was interested to know what the Government is doing to ensure Tasmanian businesses have a high success rate when competing for Tasmanian government contracts. The answer, in short, is that the following policies have been introduced - Buy Local, introduce a loading, new economic and social benefits test, increase the lower value procurement threshold. As a result, in the 2020-21 financial year, Tasmanian businesses were awarded 90 per cent of agency contracts with a value of more than \$50 000 following an open procurement process, and 77 per cent of all agency contracts valued at more than \$50 000, including open processes, selective processes and direct engagement.

Out of interest, there were \$955 million worth of contracts awarded to Tasmanian businesses in the 2020-21 financial year. This Government has provided strong evidence that we are looking out for Tasmanians and doing what is best for our state. The next question I put to the minister was, what is the impact of payroll tax rebates for apprentices, trainees and youth employees in 2021-22 and how many jobs will it support? I am a great supporter of youth employment initiatives and the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council recommended that the state government extend the payroll tax rebate schemes for youth employees as well as for apprentices and trainees. The policy needs to be extended for a further 12-18 months to provide enhanced medium-term certainty to employers taking on new, young workers.

Extending the apprentice and trainee payroll tax incentive to all sectors - building and construction, tourism and hospitality and manufacturing - for a further 12-18 months will provide an incentive for businesses to take on young employees. As the Liberal Government has extended and broadened the payroll tax rebates for apprentices, trainees and youth employees, the rebate scheme for apprentices and trainees was extended to 30 June 2022 and expanded to include all industries.

The Government's tax rebate scheme is already supporting more than 2800 young people, apprentices and trainees. This initiative is expected to support a further 2000 full-time jobs in those groups. An amount of \$6.3 million has been budgeted to fund these rebates in 2021-22, with the estimated cost across the Budget and forward Estimates being \$18.6 million. The minister has indicated our scheme is working and the unemployment rate is coming down. It is pleasing to see 263 000 people in work in Tasmania, which includes these young people at an all-time record for Tasmania.

Quarterly payments for registrations was a Government commitment and I am pleased to say this Government has held to its commitment and the new quarterly registration payments became available on 1 July. This will make light-vehicle registration payments easier by spreading the cost over 12 months, eliminating bill shock. Having this option to pay registration renewals every three months means Tasmanians can keep their vehicles registered and, therefore, insured. More importantly and hopefully, this will eliminate the public safety risks people take in driving unregistered vehicles on our roads. It has proven to be very successful, with 16 772 Tasmanians taking up the offer as of last week. The reminder service available is something I encourage all to use.

Regarding the Liberal Government's new Derwent Ferry Service, it is important to try to limit the traffic congestion for commuters. The minister confirmed an average of 440 passengers travel on the ferry each day. This is another success for the Liberal Government. Passengers report the ride is faster and smoother than they expected, and that the coffee and snacks available on board in the morning or the beer and snacks available in the afternoon are a great way to travel. I recommend it to you, Mr Winter, and I hope you do use it.

Additionally, the service is a great option for passengers coming into the city, choosing to walk, cycle or be dropped off at the pier. The service is supported by existing Metro services, particularly the Turn Up and Go services that run every 10 minutes along Clarence Street and Cambridge Road. The expansion of the service is subject to the success of the trial. Judging by the way it is going at the moment, I am positive it will be a very good move.

Following on from this, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has committed to introduce e-scooters to Tasmania. The minister's update on e-scooters is that this Government is going to allow e-scooters on Tasmanian infrastructure and I hope that you are going to try them as well, Mr Winter. I am looking forward to it myself. The scooters are expected to be seen this summer, being mindful of other users of our infrastructure. Under the current regulatory and legislative framework, e-scooters with a maximum power output of more than 200 watts are classified as motor vehicles, unable to be registered and therefore not permitted on any public street, road, footpath shared path or open public space. We do have enough police running around here - unlike what you guys here did with the police force - to enforce it.

Our Liberal Government has found amendments required to the regulations to allow these modern e-scooters to be used at certain speeds on most local roads, footpaths, shared paths and bicycle paths. A range of safety measures will be introduced including amendments to the Traffic Act 1925 to give the police power to take e-scooters if a rider is flouting the road rules and riding dangerously. To aid enforcement, an additional rule will be included that specifies that people must not ride an e-scooter without due care and attention or reasonable consideration to others.

Continuing on the path of pedestrian infrastructure I asked the minister in Estimates if he could please outline the action Government is taking to boost active transport such as cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, which he answered, ensuring this Government is meeting the Budget commitment and delivering on promises. Two billion dollars have been invested into Tasmanian roads and the road network over the next four years. Yes, this investment has provisions for dedicated shared paths and cycle links.

Answering my question specifically, \$6 million is committed to cycling projects from 2022-23, linking cycling routes on local roads as we continue to work with local government. Many upgrades are under way providing for shared pedestrian and cycling pathways. One of the biggest projects will be the provision of a shared pathway across the Tasman Bridge, being a very big game-changer for the Derwent crossing. Projects like these highlight the government's commitment to boosting the active transport options around the state in assisting to ease our congestion challenges.

As I am strongly aware, car licences are very important to our rural and regional areas, especially for our younger people. Availability to services in these areas are limited and require people to have licences. Our youth especially need to have their independence within these areas and we need to keep our youth safe and protected on the roads whilst not penalising and placing restrictions on them. The minister reassured me that the initiatives are in place to make it easier for young people to get their licence. We have made it easier, cheaper and at the same time safer, with Plates Plus Tasmania, more supervised experience behind the wheel and fewer steps in obtaining their licence. The online hazards perceptive test will improve safety outcomes. What welcome news to know that our learners now only need one visit to Service Tasmania once they have passed their test. The inconvenience of trying to get to a Service Tasmania outlet under the old system is now streamlined to one visit, rewarding our young drivers - everyone likes to be praised or rewarded for good deeds.

[4.48 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Mr Chair, I rise to contribute on Infrastructure and Housing, and to Finance if I get time as well. I was not going to speak on it but I heard Mr Street speak about the fifth lane and his conversion to being a believer in the fifth lane. I must say I have not been able to be converted yet. The minister knows that over a period of time I have been talking to him about this project. My view is that it is not particularly likely that it will be successful, yet, here we are three and a bit years since the election commitment albeit the minister was not the minister at the time, committed to the fifth lane. We are now finally at consultation with the community to find out what they think about it.

We have heard that residents of Dynnyrne are not happy. The suggestion that consultation might resolve anything seems unlikely. Those people, quite rightly, value where they live and their homes. I feel for them as this project goes forward. It seems from their perspective inevitable, despite the consultation.

On the weekend I asked members of my community if they thought the extension fifth lane was going to work. This is the feedback:

Nora: Wouldn't it be better to at least try all of the other many options that have been suggested before considering this stupid, soulless and insanely expensive idea?

Samantha: I cannot understand how demolishing people's homes would make traffic flow better.

Alison: A very short-sighted decision that will not create a solution. I feel for the home-owners concerned.

Andrew: This concept is a short-term band-aid and the sore under it remains and is increasing in size.

Roger: A pointless exercise in its own right. There is no easy fix, but I would suggest some other things.

Yvonne: This is not going to solve the problem. I travel the Outlet every day and things like this will make things worse.

Paul: It would want to work better than the Sandfly roundabout.

Eva: Nope. There was a noticeable decrease in traffic through town when the Eastern Shore ferry began which may slow the issue but it won't necessitate traffic from the south.

Anne: I cannot understand how it will fix the issue. The bottleneck is caused a lot further up.

Chris: Absolutely no. The experience of other cities which have tried extra lanes informs us this won't work.

Phil: I can't understand how it will fix the issue.

Andrea: That money would pay for a lot of free shuttle buses to the city. The problem only occurs for an hour twice a day.

Bernard: Get real problem solvers to look at the issue.

This goes on. There is 100 per cent no support in this. It is a small sample size of people that I engaged with but I did not lead them. I asked them what they thought and they said 'it will not work'. That is consistent with the conversations I have in my area every day. People do not believe this will work, which makes the whole idea of consulting a little bit farcical. There appears to be very limited, if any, support for the project, certainly in the Kingborough community.

If the people sitting in traffic every day had a glimmer of hope that this might work, you would get a different answer. No-one understands how this will work.

I have looked at the video that appears to have convinced Mr Street. It has not convinced me. It appears to be a different concept to the one I saw late last year which appeared to show more progressive treatments for Macquarie Street and Davey Street.

It will be interesting to see how the project progresses. If it is a legitimate consultation, and I hope it is, perhaps some of the feedback from people I am hearing from will be considered and we might see an approach that is a little more realistic.

The other issue I want to talk about is housing. We raised during Estimates the matter of Huntingfield. The minister thought I would not enjoy our interaction. I enjoyed it quite a lot.

Mr Ferguson - I am not convinced.

Mr WINTER - Huntingfield is emblematic of the Government's attempts to -

Mr Jaensch - Build more houses for Tasmanians who need them.

Mr WINTER - Mr Jaensch interjects to say build more houses because that is what he has not done at Huntingfield. Not a single home has been built. Two years after the grand announcement they were going to fast-track this development, they do not even have a development application approved for a single home. All they have is a development application approved for a roundabout. Even then they tried to take the council on through the Planning Appeals Tribunal. What a farce.

The council puts into its conditions that it wants to see a north-bound slip lane as a response to consultation from its community.

Mr Ferguson - You deliberately did not bring this up in Estimates. Why are you bringing it up now? I am curious.

Mr WINTER - You brought it up, minister and that is why I am bringing it up. The minister brought this up and it was answered by the minister's advisers. I appreciated that update at the time, because it clarified something for me. It is, that it is no longer in the Planning Appeals Tribunal because the council has dropped the condition and the roundabout will be built without a north-bound slip lane. Community consultation said that if a new roundabout was going there, include a slip lane.

During that debate, it was very clear what the community thought. There was mention from councillors that the applicant was happy with the matter. I am not sure what happened, minister, but despite the council's intention that they could work together on this matter, you took them to the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal, which is very disappointing.

Mr Ferguson - You did not bring this up at Estimates.

Mr WINTER - You did, minister.

Mr Ferguson - You did not, and you asked me not to respond to it.

Mr WINTER - You did, minister, and that is why I am raising it.

Mr Jaensch says it is about building houses, and he is quite right, it is about building houses but it is also about building infrastructure. Mr Street was right when he said, 'We need to plan for the future'. We are about to build a roundabout at Huntingfield already knowing

that at a later date we are going to have to build a slip lane attached to it. You are already announcing that you will build a slip lane later.

Mr Ferguson - That is right, because you know whose idea it was?

Mr WINTER - I do. There has already been an announcement that they will build a slip lane later. How much is it going to cost to do a second stage of that project instead of doing it at the start? If there had been adequate planning for infrastructure around Huntingfield from the start, perhaps this would have already happened.

It is about housing, as Mr Jaensch says, it is about building homes during a housing crisis when people are crying out for homes, when house prices are going up, when there is not enough supply, when builders are looking around for land to build on. However, we haven't seen anything yet at Huntingfield.

We got the answer at the end of this engagement on Huntingfield when talking about timelines:

Now that we have a development application for the roundabout, we can proceed to construction. We are putting a construction RT - a request for tender - to the marketplace around 1 October. We would hope to commence construction in early January.

I assume that is for the roundabout:

And then have a DA for stage one resolved by the end of this year, if possible.

Then they are talking about starting construction in the middle of next year, three years after the commencement of the fast track.

That is only for stage one. We have a 450-lot housing subdivision through a process that was invented and is a creation of this place but it has not worked. My message is to work with local government. I say this to all developers. The way the state Government tried to deal with Kingborough Council is the reason why nothing has happened there.

Mr Ferguson - Is that right?

Mr WINTER - That is exactly the reason. The lack of information in those developmental locations is obvious because there have been two requests for further information. Engage thoughtfully with a local government would be the advice for any developer. Engage in good faith and you will get a better outcome instead of trying to slap an incorrect zoning on a site that is inappropriate and creating a process that did not work.

Time expired.

[4.59 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you to all of the members who have contributed today in this debate where we canvass the progress of Estimates committees last week. I enjoy Estimates. I know that not everybody does. It is a long day, it is a long week and I particularly thank those members who are not ministers who spend a lot of time on those committees. It is a big effort.

The public does not perhaps have an appreciation of that task. It was my opportunity, as minister with many portfolios, to speak about the Government priorities laid out in the Budget. I enjoy the questions that come from all MPs at the committee, including from my own colleagues in the Liberal Party and from the hostiles - which is what they are - from the Greens, the Labor Party and the independent.

That is how it should be because you are there for scrutiny. The Opposition did not do a very good job. It was a very shallow effort indeed. It was one of the poorest I have seen and that is saying something because I thought it was a low-water mark at the last budget last November when Mr Winter was not here. I do not want to spend a lot of time canvassing over the debate today but I will respond to a few points that have been made along the way.

In my Infrastructure and Transport portfolios we are getting a huge amount done. I stand by the fact that we bolstered the funding available for Infrastructure in last year's budget. Why did we do that? Because it was about making sure we fully-filled the space if the private sector had retreated. The private sector did not retreat and we delivered \$624 million of infrastructure in the financial year. I will say it again: \$624 million delivered by this Government which is a phenomenal effort during a pandemic. That is astonishing.

Also, I stand by the Government's decision at the last election to take projects to the people that were beyond the electoral cycle. By the way, that is what the RACT has been calling for. By the way, that is what business groups and industry have been crying out for.

Ms Dow - We did too in our roads package.

Mr FERGUSON - What you have forgotten, Ms Dow, is that your Leader just criticised the Government for doing this and yet you have just told us that that was one of your pre-election policies as well. We have been criticised for taking policies for infrastructure delivery beyond the Government's term.

Ms Haddad - You have been criticised for failing to deliver on any infrastructure project you have announced since 2014.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear your embarrassment but you walked right into that. I did not think that you would do that. The RACT and industry have been calling for stronger pipelines of projects over longer than four years. The jibes add nothing, but with our plan which is now in the Budget which has been supported by the people at the election, I am really comfortable standing by that, and I will stand by it every day of the week because I work with industry on a daily basis. I do not just ring them up every four years before an election and ask them for ideas which is what happened with the Labor Party before the election. We work with them really closely.

One of the frustrations they have had is lack of predictability of workflow and we are eliminating as much as possible that unpredictability and by having stronger pipelines, you can start the work on planning now for a project that might commence in three years' time. If there is a shock we can bring it forward. If there is a resurgence in the private sector we might even consider pushing something out. We need to meet the needs of industry by a more co-operative relationship: precisely what we signed up for in the MOU so we stand by that.

Dr Broad got an embarrassed look on his face when he accidentally strayed into the area of making sure you spend more on your infrastructure investment than the cost of depreciation each year. I challenged him but he did not take the interjection wisely. I asked him: when was the last time that happened? It was under the Labor-Greens Government when they spent less on infrastructure in a year than the cost of maintaining it. What that means is that you had not maintained it. It had gone backwards in real terms.

Mr Deputy Chair, nobody could deny that our longer-term work, for example, on our main north-south link, the Midland Highway, which is our first ever 10-year action strategy, is delivering and people are appreciative of the safety benefits that have arisen as a result of that which is now two-thirds complete. The three major sections are to be finished in coming years.

At Estimates we discussed the project with the Bridgewater bridge. Frankly, I am shocked that Dr Broad brought that up again. He has misled the House today because I actually have *Hansard* in front of me, not a handwritten scrap. Dr Broad said to me and I quote:

Infrastructure Australia rejected your last Bridgewater Bridge funding pitch based on a lack of value. Do you anticipate that Infrastructure Australia will recommend funding the build for the new Bridgewater Bridge and when will that be likely to happen?

Dr Broad, of course, has fled the Chamber because he knows I am going to bring him back to this point. He walked away from that during his contribution just now. He cannot rewrite the *Hansard*. I explained to Dr Broad that no such rejection occurred, as well as the fact that the project was now fully-funded by the federal and state governments according to those business plans. It was now subject to assessment of the tender proposal from CPB Contractors and McConnell Dowell. That is very good news. I explained this to Dr Broad and again that is why I am shocked that he would bring it forward today. During the discussion it became clear to the Committee that there was an appalling lack of understanding of that process on the part of the Labor Opposition, let alone any idea of the status of the project - from the people who promised to build this bridge when I was still a schoolteacher.

There were questions without a skerrick of fact behind them, asserting things that were without foundation, a bit like what we saw from the Leader of the Opposition in Question Time today, just making stuff up when she was, indeed, forced to retract that assertion and withdraw it, proven caught out. I find it appalling that MPs would do that in this Chamber.

It is fair enough to get something wrong, by the way, if you genuinely get it wrong, but I am seeing more and more of this habitual practice of asserting something you know is not true because it might help you cut through and I think that is pathetic and should be beneath any MP in this House. I stand by it. The Tasmanian people deserve a lot better than this. It is lazy and dishonest behaviour from the Opposition.

If Dr Broad made an innocent mistake, the right thing to do would be to say, you got me, I withdraw that, but he has come here today and doubled-down. He made it up. I invited Dr Broad to either withdraw his claims or to tell me what page number he was reading from. He said he would go back and look. I am yet to hear him respond and his contribution today makes me concerned and I will be checking the *Hansard* further because we are no longer tolerating misleading parliament. We are just not.

Undeterred by this embarrassment, Dr Broad then went on to ask a series of questions about the depth of the mud at Bridgewater. It is worth noting that Labor had criticised this Government for doing geotechnical work to inform the bridge design. That happened here in this Chamber, just there at that dispatch box. We are no longer going to accept these baseless claims and questions and we will call them out as they are made.

During the Infrastructure and Transport Estimates, a range of other investments were also discussed and plenty were overlooked by the Opposition. That did surprise me but that is how it is. Our investment in roads and bridges alone, in my own portfolio area, is 245 per cent higher than Labor and the Greens last year in office. That is not inflation; that is a game-changing quantum of magnitude of improvement in our infrastructure investment. That is not inflation, that is a decision. That is a priority. That is a decision of Government to invest in infrastructure that has long been neglected, and we still have a fair bit to do. That is why I find it rings very hollow when I hear members opposite belly-aching about infrastructure, noting that we had a deliberate strategy during the pandemic.

The Bass Highway, which I am very glad got a mention, and I will repeat because I was the first out of the blocks on this, personally and clearly dissatisfied with the pavement failure - but we are now seeing the benefits of the \$280 million co-investment between the Gutwein and Morrison governments - on the Bass Highway, from Deloraine to Marrawah. We have been clear on that. I spoke at the Estimates about the northern roads package as well, and the south-east traffic solution. I got a bit of interest in this, which I welcome. The now \$350 million package of projects will dramatically improve the travel time reliability for commuters in the south-east region. It is fantastic.

On a very positive note, I was pleased to get questions about heritage rail and the support we have provided to the heritage rail operators around Tasmania. That is something, for the most part, we are able to agree on. On that matter, I was pleased to receive support from the Leader of the Opposition for the corridor notice that I am yet to table but I know it is being drafted. I will introduce that table here at this Parliament and in this House and I hope that can assist the Derwent Valley Rail to run on its short section of line around the old New Norfolk Station.

I would like to see a more constructive Opposition and support from the Opposition for our record investment in roads and bridges. We have seen so much politics played on this matter, yet I do not think it is getting the Opposition anywhere. I do not think it is working for you. Everybody knows that wherever you go in Tasmania you are seeing roadworks, improvement and upgrades. You would think, listening to the Opposition, that nothing is happening.

Ms Dow - Davey Street.

Mr FERGUSON - That is a street we did not even own a couple of years ago. We have assumed somebody else's liability and we are fixing Davey Street. We are doing all this work. Maybe a bit more support would go further and people in Tasmania might start to rate you a bit more.

In Transport, we did talk about the Derwent River Ferry Service. I am a big fan of this. I know others are as well. All who have not had that opportunity yet will be given a warm

welcome on board, coffee in the morning or a beer at night. I would love to travel with you if that is convenient.

It is working and I am so grateful that people are jumping on the ferry. It has got a bright future, even though it is in a trial year. It is only about three or four weeks in. I think it is going very well. I do not want to jump the gun but we look forward to that being considered for the long-term.

I discussed our allocation for more buses on high-demand routes. Our policy, which was endorsed by, of all groups, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, usually friends of the Labor Party. It said this was the policy to get on board with - extra park-and-ride, upgraded all-access all-weather bus stops for DDA compliance, helping local government with its responsibilities and, importantly, common ticketing for Metro and other public transport providers. We appreciate the support of the Tasmanian Bus Association. It says the investment is one of the best it has seen.

We are modernising Tasmania's transport services. I am proud to be the minister for public transport. We need to place more emphasis upon it, particularly in congested routes. It is part of the solution. Mr Street outlined this particularly well in his contribution. I would not have done so had Mr Street not himself said it, but he was not convinced. He came to speak to me about it. He has done his job as an MP. He has raised the issue as he said he was not convinced. His input has assisted us in having another look at it.

We have taken to the community not just an extra lane on the Southern Outlet, which some people still falsely believe is all this consists of, but an integrated solution of park-and-ride, a longer extra lane, an extra lane on the Macquarie-Davey segment, a clearway through Macquarie St opening up an extra lane there and 70 extra services a day to help people get in and out of the city. These things are co-dependent; they need each other to work. What is at the centre of this is the public transport priority.

Left-wing politicians have been talking about public transport for a while. Along comes a Liberal government, prepared to invest in this, take the hard decisions around the infrastructure to support public transport, and guess where the left go? Running for the hills. They are opposing a public transport solution to take congestion off the roads, to put some priority onto PT, to encourage people to leave the car at home.

Mr Jaensch -Best socialist transport minister ever.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you. I just cannot accept that compliment. Too far, Mr Jaensch. The socialists over there, your lectures on public transport, forget it, because we are delivering. It is not easy and we have the highest of sensitivity and concern for people who are concerned about their homes. They will be treated honestly, not with lies. They will be treated decently, with respect, one-on-one meetings happening. They will be treated generously if there is a property impact for them as we take the more difficult decisions and deliver better public transport outcomes.

The lefties in this House whinge about public transport. Well, here is a government prepared to invest and make difficult decisions about the best infrastructure to support it. What do you do? You play the lowest common denominator. You tell lies to the public. You say 17 homes will be demolished. You say it does not deal with the bottleneck on Macquarie and

Davey streets. You say it does not provide impetus for public transport. Those things are not true.

Ms Haddad - How many homes then?

Mr FERGUSON - You know the answer to that.

Ms Haddad - What is it?

Mr FERGUSON - You know the answer to that. I have said it clearly - far fewer than 17. We are not putting a number on it while we have proper, respectful conversations with homeowners one-on-one. I will no longer tolerate those mistruths and they will be called out.

If some people want to oppose a public transport outcome and play the low-base politics of frightening the community at Dynnyrne Road, then just reflect on what you are stopping. Have regard for the people of Kingborough, have regard for the people of the Huon, have regard for the congestion challenge.

I am pleased to take on a difficult task in housing. Yes, it is part of my State Development, Construction and Housing portfolio and necessarily so. You can look after people with conviction and compassion and show a concern for how we can support them through shelters, supported accommodation, disability support and importantly, better managing as much we can, the demand on our housing register, also known as the waiting list.

You cannot have that succour and compassion if you are not prepared to build more. That is why this is deliberately a portfolio about generating more supply. We are seeing a growing population. If we cannot deliver more supply, then all the compassion in the world will not assist somebody who needs a roof over their head. That is why I stand with the shelter providers, why I am learning more every day as I go about my work and why I am investing the time, doing the sleep-outs, trying as much as I can to learn and looking for solutions.

To her credit, the new shadow, the third in a few months, Ms Haddad, came to the table with a suggestion. In good faith I have taken that on board and have told Ms Haddad we would see if we could make it work. It has to be about the range of strategies, one of the main ones being supply. I thank you for that, Ms Haddad.

You and I have a joint responsibility to try to find solutions and then have your arguments over politics. You still have a fundamental duty to find solutions. That is where my head is at and that is where it will stay. I thank you Ms Haddad for at least trying on that one day to come forward with something and leave it with me as a challenge. I will see what we can do with that.

The Hobart Showground project is a phenomenally exciting one. The \$42 million investment we are making in this Budget will provide for the construction of 450 homes, with the land for 150 of those being transferred to Housing Tasmania. Our extra \$315 million is beyond the four-year budget cycle so we have that strong pipeline of delivery.

We will never walk away from the 1500 extra homes between now and 2023. Mr Jaensch designed that, to his credit. We are also making sure it is clear about our future intentions and

the Budget delivers, as we promised, the extra \$315 million. That is taking us to a total of 3500 new social houses to be built out to 2027.

We have, for the first time, Mr Winter on the record supporting Housing at Huntingfield. If I am wrong about that, let me know. This has been beset by politics that have been reflected in Mr Winter's remarks today. This is an innovation of the Housing Summit from 2018. It is important that we got that rezoning done and it is now important that council be allowed to do its jobs as a planning authority with the DA.

I am frankly going to be quite intolerant of political behaviours which try to come between the applicant, in this case the Government, and the council. They have a job to do and we intend to deliver housing at Huntingfield. Thank you, Labor and thank you Mr Winter, for finally supporting housing at Huntingfield.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Finance, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing and Minister for Science and Technology agreed to.

DIVISION 2, 6, 9, 10 AND 11 -

(Minister for Communities Tasmania, Minister for Local Government and Planning, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister for Heritage)

[5.20 p.m.]

Ms DOW - Mr Chair, I rise to report on the Minister for State Growth and Minister for Local Government and Planning components of the Estimates Committee A hearing.

We began the morning session with State Growth and from the outset we asked a series of questions about what the difference was between the Minister for State Growth role and the Minister for State Development role which is a new role in the Government, to understand more about the level of responsibility that the Minister for State Growth has. As members would be aware there are a number of portfolio areas which are included in the Minister for State Growth. It would appear that primarily the responsibilities for the Minister for State Growth are around the Office of the Coordinator-General, business and industry development and other roles that were alluded to during the morning session.

We also asked a question about strategic growth. When the Premier came to office he spoke very positively about the importance of strategic growth across Tasmania; that it was important that Tasmanians, no matter where they lived, had access to services and opportunities across the state. That focus and emphasis on the strategic growth seems to have dropped away. We were told that it had been absorbed into Jobs Tasmania, part of Ms Courtney's portfolio, around some of the regional jobs hubs. I would like to put on the record that it was our policy, a policy that we developed in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 and Tasmania's difficult economic times during that. It was also part of our jobs plan which was part of our budget reply -

Ms Ogilvie - When was this?

Ms DOW - Last year.

Ms Ogilvie - It has been going on for years, so you did not come up with it last year.

Ms DOW - It was a signature policy of both of those key pieces of work of the Labor Party, and I acknowledge that the work was being done by SERDA for a very long time without Tasmanian Government assistance. They have done a tremendous job.

Ms Ogilvie - It is good that you adopted it. We like that.

Ms DOW - We actually thought that we would see it roll out across the state. It was our policy idea and you liked it so you adopted it.

Further to that, there is not a minister for Strategic Growth so it was interesting to understand that focus has somewhat been lost by the Government and it was really a signature position of the Premier when he came to his position as Premier. We think strategic growth is pretty important still and that we should be looking at investment right across Tasmania and particularly the regions. There should be initiatives around place-based responses to economic and social economic challenges across the regions. We will be watching with great interest the Jobs Tasmania initiative but also each of the jobs hubs which have been promised across the state to understand their progress, and holding the Government to account on each of those to make sure that they do deliver to regional Tasmanians.

That then took us to output area 1.2 which was around industry business and development. We looked at that across the out years of the Budget and there was a significant decrease over the last final years in the forward Estimates. We questioned the minister about that and what became obvious was there was a bit of confusion about where the Northern Cities project sat within the Budget and whether that was part of the Office of the Coordinator-General or whether it was part of industry and business development. There were a couple of inconsistencies in the responses provided by the secretary but that was clarified later.

I know the minister attended the opening of the university campus in Burnie on Friday, as did Mr Jeremy Rockliff and my colleague Shane Broad. It was a fabulous event. It does beg the question around the Northern Cities projects now that a number of those are drawing to completion particularly on the north-west. I put on the record the need for the Government to still look at economic stimulus projects across the north-west and the north of the state. I understand that the UTAS development in Launceston is starting to take shape. I was speaking with representatives from Fairbrother at the opening on Friday and they were saying how they were looking forward to getting involved in that project and delivering that one in the north. They have done an outstanding job with the north-west project at the Burnie site of the UTAS revitalisation project. It means there will need to be dedicated focus and attention from the Government around further stimulus and investment in projects of significance across the north-west as well as these projects that are coming to an end.

The minister could not explain why the funding in the out years in that line item, 1.2, declined over those last two years of the forward Estimates.

Mr Jaensch - You just explained it yourself.

Ms DOW - I did not because that was the explanation that you used at the time. You were the secretary and you were referring to a different output group which should have been referred to in the Office of the Co-ordinator-General.

I understand that what was provided at the time was around election commitments and those obviously being delivered in the earlier parts of the budget in the earlier years rather than the last years of the forward Estimates. However, it still does raise some questions in our mind about whether you are actually cutting funding to business and industry development in those out years and I still seek some clarification from the minister on that.

We move then to red tape reduction and the red tape reduction role, the co-ordinator's role, the reports that are published annually, what has actually been achieved in that role and the cost of that role to government. It was said at the time it was absorbed as part of the Office of the Coordinator-General so we were not able to be given a figure around the salary of the Red Tape Reduction Co-ordinator, Mr Clues, or really any value around the work that he is doing so it would be good if the minister could provide some more information in his response today.

Another area I really want to touch on as part of the red tape reduction work the Government is so proudly doing across the state is around the Tasmanian Regulatory Reform Report. I raised this last year in Estimates and I believe the year before. Submissions were sought for this project from a number of stakeholders. I think it was in 2018. Since then two tranches of legislation have come to the parliament as a result of this work that was done but, to date, we have not seen the outcomes of that report. It has not been formally released. We do not know what was in it. We do not know what it recommended. All we have been given is tranches of legislation to support and I understand there will be a third one. So, today, I ask again, and give the minister the opportunity, considering he is the new Minister for State Growth, to publicly release this report. It is important when you are developing legislation that people take the time and effort to make submissions to that report and that legislation, that those things are made public, particularly if you want us, in parliament, to support those tranches of legislation and the evidence base behind them. It is important that we have that full information. To date, we have not had that. Again, I ask the minister to release the report.

I do not understand what is so bad in the report that you will not release it. There are consecutive numbers of ministers now that have refused to release the report. Does it not shine a very good light on the regulations within government departments? Is that why you will not release it? Or is it because you want to use it to create change across local government and say it is local government that is holding up a lot of regulatory processes across the state?

I will give the minister the opportunity to:

- (a) table the report, finally, so that we have that evidence base that supports the legislative changes in tranche 3 that we will be asked to support in this place, and
- (b) tell us what the evidence base is. Tell us what and who supported these regulatory changes and what makes them so important.

I look forward to your releasing the report, minister.

We talked about the Tasmanian Development Board and the loans scheme provided through that, and some good information was provided to us through that process. I asked a series of questions regarding the Hermal Mill. At the 2018 election there was a forestry grant provided by the state government at the time, very close to the time that caretaker mode was to be implemented, and there was also a loan offered to the Hermal Group around the timber mill that was being proposed to be built at Highclere south of Burnie. It was an exciting project at the time. In responses provided during Estimates there was some information provided about upcoming development applications and the amount of funding that had been provided by the Government thus far of \$4.5 million as part of that forestry grant to the Hermal Group. We were not given time frames during Estimates. When will that mill be built? Where will it be built if it is not to be built at the Highclere site? How many local people will it employ? It is an important project which the Government was quick to support, particularly on the eve of the election in 2018. We have not seen the commitments that were made come to fruition. It is an important project for the timber industry in Tasmania and for jobs in the north-west region. I look forward to an update on that, minister, in your report this afternoon.

Another project that has been around for a long time is the Cradle Mountain Master Plan and Cable Car Project. This was also an election commitment in 2018. We asked questions about that. It is not clear from Estimates what is holding up this process -

Ms O'Connor - It takes a while to build a proper Disneyland, Ms Dow.

Ms DOW - It is taking too long, Ms O'Connor. I look forward to the minister providing further updates because that is an iconic project for the north-west and for the state. It is an important investment.

There has been an expression of interest process which was to be released in 2019 about the Gateway precinct development and the critical private investment that must occur alongside the Government investment on the site. We did not get the information we wanted through the Estimates process.

I also asked about the Western Explorer and the feasibility study that was done by the state Government in 2018. That report has not been released. During Estimates, the minister deflected to the minister for Infrastructure, saying that it was his responsibility. It is a matter for State Growth as well and would bring great economic benefit to the west coast and Circular Head communities. It was a commitment of ours at the last state election to seal that road and link those two communities, and to secure the economic development opportunities which those local communities believe could be delivered by sealing that road.

The other investment in infrastructure I wanted to talk about under State Growth was regional housing and the importance of that to economic development, particularly when we look at industry growth across regional Tasmania. Yesterday there was media reporting and I asked the minister about this. He was previously the Minister for Housing and would have been well aware of the need for planning and investment in housing stock, particularly on the west coast and Circular Head in line with pending industry growth. I asked him to provide a time frame as Minister for State Growth for working with those local communities to ensure, particularly on the west coast, there is a plan and a policy direction that supports investment in housing stock to enable industry growth. The minister could not give me a time frame but the West Coast Council has looked to provide rates remissions for up to three years to anyone who makes local investment in housing in their municipality.

The time is ripe and of the essence. Key industries within those areas, including mining, renewable energy in Circular Head, the meat industry, the salmon industry and the mining industry on the west coast are suffering because they do not have the available housing stock. There was a representative from MMG on the news last night speaking about the number of positions currently available at MMG that could be filled right now. They attribute the lack of suitable housing stock across the municipality as a reason for them being unable to attract staff.

The final point in State Growth was the enterprise centres. It was pleasing to hear that the Cradle Coast Authority will receive funding for an enterprise centre in the north-west.

That brings me to Local Government and Planning. We spent quite a bit of time talking about local government. We spoke about the code of conduct process and how ineffective that is and the fact that there is a review at the moment with submissions being called for. We asked for a clear time frame.

There has been a lot of dissatisfaction about the effectiveness of the code of conduct for a long time. Those involved in local government, whether it be the workforce or elected representatives, want to see changes to the code of conduct.

With the review of the Local Government Act now being drawn out, this is an important amendment to legislation that needs to be considered now. The Government sat on its hands regarding the code of conduct and its ineffectiveness. This now needs to be addressed as quickly as possible to provide certainty to the sector.

We looked at local government elections. There has been discussion in the community about those being pushed out in line with whatever happens with local government reform across the state. The minister could not provide us with information about that and deflected that back to the work of the working group.

Feedback I have had from the sector is about time frames. Things should not be rushed if there is to be a local government reform process. Certainty of elections is important to people, particularly given that they are four-year terms. The minister should provide certainty to the sector around when the local government elections will be held in Tasmania.

We asked about the resourcing of the Local Government Division. The Local Government Division is doing a lot of work with the review of the act, with the review of the code of conduct and with the work on local government reform. The feedback we have had suggests that the Local Government Division is under-resourced. That was not the view of the minister or the director of Local Government, Mr Limkin. More resources are needed due to the breadth of work that needs to be done over the next while.

It has come to our attention that the Attorney-General intervened in the code of conduct case that Dorset mayor Greg Howard is currently involved in. There are some concerns about that in the local community. When we asked the question during Estimates, it was said that it was quite normal for the Attorney-General to represent the code of conduct panel against the person whom the complaint was made, in this instance Mr Howard. It has been perceived by the local community that there has been an overreach by the Government with the Attorney-General intervening in that case. The Government must clarify to the local community why that has occurred and if it is an ordinary process.

We also learnt about charitable rates remission. This has been ongoing for a long time. The Government was not able to make a decision but finally has. It has backflipped in some regard. It has criticised us in the past for putting pressure on it to make a decision but it was good to finally see a decision made. The Government has not publicly talked much about that. You will need to inform the community when you do make public what you have decided to do in amendments to the Local Government Act and charitable rates remissions for independent living units across the state.

We spoke about the PESRAC recommendation and some of the sticking points around what is being asked of those who are part of the working group and we had further discussion around that.

I move now to Planning to say that we learned that the Statewide Planning Scheme is a long way off and that planning is not faster, simpler, cheaper and fairer across Tasmania under the Liberal Government, despite their 2014 election commitment. There is still a lot of work to do. The minister has stood strong on his commitment to deliver the local provisions schedules by the end of this year, but it is not looking as though that is going to happen with a number of them still being outstanding.

There will also be the review of the SPPs next year and there is all of the work that has not been done around the regional land use strategies that should have been done concurrently alongside the local provision schedules and the other regulatory work that is being done around the new scheme.

There has been a significant deficit in strategic planning.

Time expired.

[5.41 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to talk about the conversations we had across the table with the minister for far too many portfolios - State Growth, Local Government and Planning, Environment, Aboriginal Affairs, Heritage and now one of the most, if not the most, important portfolio in government, the portfolio of Climate Change.

I will make the point that there is an inherent conflict between having a minister who is the minister for State Growth on the one hand and the minister for Environment and Climate Change on the other. If you have a government philosophy which is any and all developers are welcome to roll through the door of the office of the Coordinator-General and negotiate potential access to protected areas or Crown land, it is in conflict with the portfolio that should be about protecting nature, and making sure, for example, that the state is meeting its statutory obligations to prepare a state of the environment report - it has missed two deadlines to do that so far - and also to take meaningful action on climate.

This is a minister who, when I once had a crack at him about native forests, made the blithe response that, 'Oh well, trees grow back'. Yes, of course, trees grow back, but the carbon that is lost in the native forest that is logged, chipped and burned takes, according to the scientists, about a century to recover the carbon that was lost in the process of clear-felling, chipping and burning. Hopefully, Mr Jaensch, who once was a member of the Tasmanian Climate Action Council, will refresh himself on some of the science.

This was our opportunity as Greens, to ask the minister with the Coordinator-General at the table, what is happening through the expressions of interest process, which not only the Greens describe as opaque; it is felt to be opaque by a broad cross-section of Tasmanians from anglers to bushwalkers, to conservationists, to tourism business operators.

We wanted to know how many expressions of interest have gone before the Coordinator-General, and how many are now to lease and licence phase. Four are at lease and licence in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, three of which are operational, and the fourth one is the disastrous proposal to privatise Halls Island at Lake Malbena - which has effectively already been privatised but I will get to that in a minute - and allow for heli tourism. That so far has not progressed.

As I said at the table at the time, I do not think the Government is going to win this one. I pointed out to the minister that Mr Hackett seems to be under a profound delusion about the status of Halls Island, which he was given an exclusive lease over, Halls Island and Reg Hall's hut for the grand sum of about \$80 per week. Mr Hackett, on the proposed heritage listing of Halls Island talks about it as one of the most important huts and he says:

As custodians, we will use income from the standing camp to assist in covering the significant maintenance and upkeep of our historic hut which is available for no cost public visitation by simply contacting us.

The good thing at the table was we got clarification from the minister that it is not Mr Hackett's hut. Mr Hackett is the lessee. The hut does not belong to him. It is an effective privatisation because it is an exclusive use arrangement, but there is a fair bit to go on that one because it is now before the federal government.

I know that the Liberals want to bring in their anti-protest laws to stop people from defending places like Lake Malbena and Halls Island but it will not work for fly-fishers and bushwalkers who are determined to defend their right to access those places, as they have for generations, and to enjoy them without having to book it through the Hacketts or organise helicopter access into the TWWHA, which damages the wilderness experience for everyone else who happens to be quietly enjoying the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area at the time.

We also asked questions about the \$3 million in public funding from the Commonwealth that has gone originally to Ian Johnston's company which had the Maria Island Walk but also had two expressions of interest lodged, one for a walk along the South Coast Track with half a dozen huts and the other one at South East Cape. Then there is the proposed Darlington expression of interest on Maria Island. We got no clarity at all about that \$3 million; whether or not Experience Co, which has bought Ian Johnston's business, has that \$3 million. That is extremely worrying. For heaven's sake, it is only public money, I know -

Mr Jaensch - Federal.

Ms O'CONNOR - It is federal public money and the minister had no idea what had happened with the \$3 million that went to a private developer to facilitate that expression of interest process.

Then we were into a back and forth discussion about how the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area master plan was rewritten in 2015, finalised in 2016, and it gave specific carve outs to those expressions of interest process which had already been flagged with Government, the most notorious of which is the carve out of the wilderness zone that allows for the development at Halls Island in Lake Malbena.

I also asked the minister, as did Ms Dow - I guess for very different reasons - about the proposal to build a cable car at Cradle. It is part of a bigger concern that the Tasmanian National Parks Association, the Wilderness Society, other bushwalking groups and the Greens have about the commodification of wilderness.

It is a difficult area of public policy. You need to be able to provide people with equitable access to places that are protected for their natural and cultural values but you also need to protect the values that draw people to those places in the first place. We do not think that this Government has the balance right. It went full steam ahead in 2014 with an expressions of interest process that was most certainly conducted behind closed doors, that required us to go through a prolonged process of right to information and then to seek review from the Ombudsman and then, five years later, get any details over the leases and licences.

We know this has been a stitch up from the very beginning. The issue here is we will lose wilderness values, natural values and cultural values if, as a state, we do not get this right. People come here from all over the country and all over the world because we have something that the world is rapidly losing and that is wild, unspoiled, unmechanised nature.

When I talk to minister about heavy infrastructure inside protected areas - these huts, cabins and things that have never been allowed in there before - he took issue with me describing it as heavy infrastructure. He said that is just our view. No, there is really solid science around the impact, for example, of a single hut on wilderness values in the world heritage area. You can map it, you can see it. There are metrics there. This is not about the Greens making something up. This is information that has been put on the public record by the Environment Defenders Office, by incredible wildlife ecologists like Professor Martin Hawes, by the Wilderness Society, as examples.

Again, I ask the minister to have a good, long hard think about the kind of infrastructure, for example, that we are putting in at Cradle Mountain which, when I was there three weeks ago, was so hefty and garish, right there near Dove Lake. It changes, and not for the better, the experience of going to Cradle Mountain.

There are many parts of the world that understand the way to manage parks is not to put more infrastructure and more commercial buildings in there so you can stuff more people in. It is to have really management and from time to time introducing visitor caps on people going into parks. We know that even the Government's own study has told us that at the height of summer within a few years there will be 6000 people a day on the Bay of Fires walk. We cannot sustain that. We need to recalibrate this policy so that it is about the protection of natural and cultural values, and get the balance right, actually get it right, so we can look after this place, which is our job.

Time expired.

[5.51 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Deputy Chair, I acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners and continuing custodians of the land on which we gather today and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

I acknowledge and thank all the people who have supported me and my part of Government through the Estimates process: the chairs, who did an excellent job; the secretaries of the committees; the Hansard staff; and other attendants who were able to conduct and support the committees throughout that busy week.

I thank also the department secretaries and their teams for the extensive preparation that goes into Estimates week and the follow up, their assistance on the day, and the preparing of answers to questions taken on notice which is a process still underway.

All of this excellent process and hard work is meant to give Tasmanians, through their parliament, the very important mechanism for scrutiny of Government Budgets and the policies that they support and I thank everyone involved in making that possible.

Mr Deputy Chair, I was pleased to have the opportunity last week in Estimates to announce the structural and organisational separation of the Environment Protection Authority from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment into a stand-alone independent state authority. This important reform will reinforce the existing independence of the EPA, provide clarity on the role of the EPA, and remove any confusion relating to perceived conflicts of interest. The EPA, as the authority, the board and the director have always been independent and their decision-making independent from government and any minister and this will not change. The separation will result in the policy and government-led functions of environmental management remaining with DPIPWE while the statutory functions including assessment and regulation remain with the EPA, clearly separating the roles.

As part of these reforms the Tasmanian Government also announced that we would broaden the EPA's responsibility for environmental assessments in Tasmania. Further details on this will come to fruition in the coming months as we transition to the new arrangements.

Importantly, to meet recommendation 2 of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council's final report the Tasmanian Government is also committed to provide the EPA with additional resources to undertake its environmental assessments. This important reform is not happening in isolation. The Tasmanian Government is considering an approvals bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth. We have the PESRAC Final Report which highlights the importance of sustainable development. Projects for assessment are becoming more and more complex and we have previously committed to streamline Tasmania's environmental regulatory framework. We, therefore, need to make sure we have a strong EPA model for the community and developers to have confidence in and we are confident that these changes will deliver on that.

Once again, I thank staff in advance for their cooperation during the process of these reforms. We will do everything we can to make sure that the delivery of services to both government and to other customers of government is as seamless as possible.

Last week I also reiterated and touched on the work of our Government in building our circular economy, and some important waste initiatives that are proceeding. We remain committed to implementing a waste levy and introduction of a container refund scheme. I was pleased to be able to respond to Labor's questions on the container refund scheme and provide an update on how a scheme operating in Tasmania will result in positive outcomes for the environment, reduce the rate of litter, and provide opportunities for charities and community groups.

We are investing \$4.5 million in improved management of organic waste in Tasmania and \$3 million to partner with industry to invest in a crumb rubber plant to help media commitment to use crumb rubber in our future road resurfacing programs.

The Tasmanian Government is also committed to phasing out single use plastics by 2025 and, together with the Australian Government, funding an industry contribution, we are investing \$20 million in Tasmania's plastic recycling industry. We have made significant investment into the protection of our threatened species, committing \$300 000 for a review of the threatened species strategy and \$1 million to implement recommendations in the swift parrot recovery plan.

We have reaffirmed our commitment to support the Save the Tasmanian Devil program, extending the additional \$450 000 in funding out until 2024-25. This is on top of the approximately \$1 million committed to the program each year.

I was pleased to be able to update the committee on the progress of the review of the Tasmanian Threatened Eagle Recovery Plan. I am eagerly awaiting a briefing from my department, summarising findings of that review and recommended next steps in coming weeks. The Tasmanian Government's commitment to the protection of our threatened species is significant and our budget demonstrated our strong investment in the management of threatened species.

In the area of local government, I highlight and reaffirm our Government's ongoing commitment to a strong local government sector that is capable of providing appropriate levels of service delivery to the community well into the future. Local governments have moved quickly across Tasmania to deliver social and economic support packages for their communities including rates relief and hardship policies and programs, adopting zero per cent increases on general rates for the last financial year, and vital economic stimulus in the form of capital works.

Throughout COVID-19, they have been faced with significant uncertainty and they are still dealing with that. I am proud of the way that local government has stepped up and supported its community, being able to keep its essential services underway, particularly to support things like the unanticipated but welcome surge in interest in building and record levels of development applications they have been processing over the last 18 months, supported by our stimulus measures but being supported by local government through its planning role. I appreciate the work they have been doing.

We are committed to keeping the local government sector strong and to ensuring that our local government division is able to continue supporting councils and their stakeholders wherever possible.

The Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Committee consulted widely across Tasmania through its process. One of the important recommendations that it brought forward was for the parliament, the government and the other parties here, to jointly support the process for significant structural reform of local government. In this Budget, and without pre-empting the outcomes of that process or the details of its design, this Government has made a commitment in the budget of \$500 000 per year for two years to support that independent panel process, should it get up, to ensure that local government can see that we are committed to supporting that recommendation from PESRAC, if we can secure the necessary agreements across the Chamber and across the parliament.

The funding for the independent panel brings the total anticipated expenditure for local government in 2021-22 to \$2.84 million, an increase from \$2.29 million in last year's budget. This will allow the local government division to continue its integral role in supporting statutory responsibilities of the Director of Local Government leading regulatory and policy-based initiatives that support the local government sector to be sustainable and to strengthen the links between councils and the state government.

In Ms Dow's contribution she referred to the discussions we had in the Estimates hearing regarding the Code of Conduct process which we acknowledge is an area for more work and that is why we have a review process under way right now in close consultation with the local government sector. At present, we are working through the matters raised by local government and other stakeholders through that review with a view to improving and strengthening the Code of Conduct provisions which were in the first place created by this Government in response to requests from local government.

Ms Dow also referred to local government elections and the Local Government Act review and correctly reflected that the timing of those was something we indicated needs to be addressed pending our discussions on the next steps of the structural review of local government under the PESRAC recommendations. I look forward to those discussions continuing with Ms Dow, Dr Woodruff, Independent member for Clark, Kristie Johnston and with the Legislative Council in due course.

A Code of Conduct case was raised by Ms Dow relating to one council in particular, and as we discussed at the Estimates table, Ms Dow would accept it is inappropriate for me to be making any comment on matters that are currently under the consideration of the Director of Local Government in his independent role. It is a statutory office there.

The Statewide Planning Scheme was another matter that Ms Dow referred to and referred to it being a long way off but the good news for Ms Dow is that her old council at Burnie already has it and it is operating and delivering benefits. I congratulate Burnie City Council for the great work that it has done to be the very first council in Tasmania to have fully adopted the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and shown the way for so many others. There are now seven councils which are enjoying using Australia's first Statewide Planning Scheme. For some of the draggy-tailed councils which did not get aboard so early and are not as progressive as Ms Dow's old council is, I reckon they will be seeing what is going on and as the numbers build they will be seeing that they are being left out and they are not getting the benefits that will accrue as more and more councils have the same rules.

Previously, the former government that we replaced when we came in with our policy to create Australia's first Statewide Planning Scheme had already gone through a very long,

expensive and arduous process of replacing around 30 local planning schemes with around 30 interim planning schemes which did not do anything to improve consistency of approach or to reduce complexity in our planning system. I am very proud of the work that local government has done across the state as planning authorities to address those needs and to deliver to their communities the beginnings of Australia's first statewide consistent planning scheme. I again congratulate Ms Dow's former Burnie City Council for being the first cab off the rank with that as many other of the Cradle Coast councils have.

In the Planning portfolio at the Estimates table I was able to announce the release of the Tasmanian planning policies scoping paper which asks the community as a whole to give us feedback on Tasmania's first draft Tasmanian planning policies and their ideas on what other issues and policies should be addressed. One of the questions asked in that scoping paper is how people believe that important issues like climate change, our recovery and our sustainable future development as we recover from the pandemic should be addressed in planning policy. Should they exist in standalone policies, for example, or should they be embedded in all policies that are relevant? I am looking forward to broad engagement with that and the development of those Tasmanian planning policies over the next 12 months.

I also outlined how we are approaching the review of Regional Land Use Strategies with both short-term actions to address current pressures in terms of residential development and land supply, as well as settlement planning and longer-term actions to develop a more robust framework for our Regional Land Use Strategies for coming decades before the comprehensive review of those strategies starts. These are actions that we have committed nearly \$4 million to over the next three years.

Finally, I was able to announce how we are responding to key recommendations from the independent review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. In order to appropriately recognise the critical role of the Planning Policy Unit in delivering our planning reform agenda, the unit will receive an extra \$700 000 in direct funding over the next 12 months. We are also going to relocate the Planning Policy Unit from the Department of Justice to the Department of Premier and Cabinet which will provide clearer separation between the PPU and the Tasmanian Planning Commission and reduce any confusion over their respective roles - one to develop policy, one to undertake independent statutory assessments.

I take the opportunity to thank councils which have worked hard to finalise their LPSs and also the Tasmanian Planning Commission which undertakes their assessments - sometimes in difficult circumstances - in such a professional and thorough manner. I look forward to us moving from the Tasmanian Planning Scheme into the next stages of our planning reform agenda over the next 12 months.

I want to speak briefly about State Growth because there were a couple of matters raised by other members when they stood up here. As Ms Dow pointed out, we discussed the Northern Cities Initiative which is clearly in the management and responsibility of the Office of the Coordinator General which is part of my State Growth portfolio. The Red Tape Reduction Coordinator and the excellent rolling program of work there to continuously make more lean and efficient our work across government, was discussed and the new reporting format was also given some scrutiny.

The question was raised by Ms Dow, as it was in the parliament, whether we would be releasing a Tasmanian Regulatory Reform Report. This matter was also raised in the

Legislative Council Estimates hearing. The advice that I have and the answer that I gave there is the same and remains unchanged. The report was confidential advice to Cabinet. It formed part of Cabinet deliberations as part of the Red Tape Reduction Reform Program which occurred under the stewardship of the previous minister. As the document formed part of confidential Cabinet deliberations and, therefore, attracts cabinet-in-confidence designation, it cannot be released on that basis as per the accepted conventions.

Ms Dow raised the Hermal Project in the north-west and the Cradle Mountain cableway project and expression of interest process there and responses to those matters raised here again in her report were, I understood, answered in the Estimates process and will be on *Hansard* for anyone to see.

Ms Dow raised the Western Explorer Project, the sealing of the Western Explorer on the west coast and correctly identified that she had raised that with the wrong minister - that is Mr Ferguson's project to speak on. I will not be providing any more updates on that or the west coast housing matter which should have been more correctly referred to Mr Ferguson as minister for Housing, the minister responsible for the long-term statewide strategic housing plan project.

In the minutes I have left I want to address a couple of matters Ms O'Connor raised in her contribution regarding the State of the Environment reporting role, which was discussed at the Estimates table. I reiterate for the record that the preparation of the State of the Environment Report is the responsibility at the moment, under legislation, of the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission. I cannot direct them but what I have done is commissioned a review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, including whether it is the suitable body to be undertaking that work in future.

Ms O'Connor - They need resourcing from DPIPWE, minister. That is the way it always worked in the past.

Mr JAENSCH - We had a discussion about that. That review will be presenting me with some advice in coming months and I look forward to discussing that further here.

Ms O'Connor also spoke about the Experience Company and the transfer of funding between owners of that organisation which again is not our jurisdiction as it is federal funding and we are not party to those agreements.

Ms O'Connor also spoke about the Cradle Cableway and referred to the 'hefty and garish' infrastructure now at Dove Lake. I remind Ms O'Connor that the new infrastructure at Dove Lake is a viewing shelter with grass on the roof and it is replacing a car park and a road, which the Greens hate.

Time expired.

[6.11 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Chair, I have some comments to make about a wide range of Mr Jaensch's portfolios. Both Ms O'Connor and I asked questions on behalf of interested stakeholders.

We had some important conversations about the proposed legislative changes that are coming down the line for local government. I want to raise some comments made by the Director of Local Government and the minister and seek a response from the minister at some point. I asked about strengthening the code of conduct process to protect employees, especially councillors, who make complaints under the code of conduct process, and witnesses who attend to provide evidence on behalf of either the accused or the complainant. There have been numerous stories publicised of the failure of that process to adequately deal with repeat offenders, or to provide safety for people during the code of conduct process itself.

The Director of Local Government said:

The minister said we had been consulting with the sector and seeking community feedback as well as potential legislative changes in the code of conduct framework.

Mr Limkin, the Director of Local Government, also said that there was:

... a process of reviewing the code of conduct, we have run three targeted sessions with local government to inform the discussion paper, which the Government put out in late August to seek community feedback.

The discussion paper looked at four things, further strengthening and clarifying the grounds of code of conduct, the panel chairperson, removing a perceived conflict of interest in the code panel chairperson, empowering a legal member, looking at confidentiality processes, implementing council dispute resolution procedures and other matters the community wanted to consider.

I understand the result of that process has been a number of recommended reforms to the legislation and the Government has issued approved reforms, and No. 20 related to legislating eight good governance principles from the Local Government Good Governance Guide and linking the guide which links to behaviours in the code of conduct process.

From what was outlined in the local government questions that I asked, I do not know that the process the minister and Mr Limkin outlined was specifically in relation to code of conduct matters. It was the whole of the Local Government Act review and it requires contact with people who have been applicants or respondents in the code of conduct process personally, to ask them how they would improve the process if they were being involved again.

People can make general comments about these things, but it is the specifics of whether people are presenting information in the room next to the person they are making a complaint against, the way in which information is received and the timeframes for responses. There are a whole lot of procedural factors which are critical to improve that process and I am not confident that the general Good Governance Guide which is being legislated would necessarily capture the specifics of the code of conduct process that are so important to get right. I urge the minister to consider, in addition to what has been done, contacting past people who have made complaints to the code of conduct process.

I want to go to the announcement for an independent EPA. There is no doubt that the EPA is moribund in its current form. It is failing to protect environmental values and failing

to put the environment ahead of the requirements listed in the statement of expectations that govern the board. We were concerned to hear that although the minister made a pledge that the EPA ought to be independent - actual and perceived independence - when we drill down into it the questions I asked elicited an answer which does not fill me with confidence that is what is going to be delivered.

The minister made it clear that he believes that statements of expectation is a normal process. It may well be a normal process, minister, but it is by no means normal for a truly independent statutory body to have the sort of statement of expectations that currently govern the EPA. We will be looking in a lot of detail at reducing the ministerial influence which currently occurs over the EPA, in addition to the general interference that the statement of expectations runs on the EPA's ability to perform its functions as it ought, to put the environment first.

I asked about Robbins Island and the importance of that beautiful place as a globally significant shorebird and waterbird habitat and its place in the fly-way for birds from the Arctic Circle and indeed latitudinally around the globe. I drew the minister's attention to the information which is in the public domain that 150 disease-free Tasmanian Devils live on Robbins Island and the importance of retaining that island for a protection zone for Tasmanian Devils. I referred to the very distressing and sad experience of the Maria Island non-captive insurance population that was established a number of years ago. It was created as an artificial non-captive population. It was supported by many groups and individuals, conservation-minded people, who understood the threat to the Tasmanian devil.

We have since learnt, tragically, the whole penguin population, 3000 birds, are dead on Maria Island. We must understand the unintended consequences of meddling with nature in this way. The existing disease-free population of Tasmanian devils on Robbins Island are critical to keeping Tasmanian devils disease-free and not becoming extinct. I asked Mr Jaensch why Robbins Island was not Ramsar listed even though it fits all the criteria under the United Nations Convention. We will be raising this with the minister. It is clear from the response from Mr Crane on behalf of the minister that the department has not been given the resources. It ought to be done for the protection of those shore birds and the Tasmanian devil.

[6.22 p.m.]

Mr STREET - Mr Deputy Chair, I am not sure whether I will need my full 10 minutes but there are few dot points I want to touch on from Mr Jaensch's time at the Estimates table last Wednesday. I will almost go in reverse order because we finished with Aboriginal Affairs and Heritage. We have had a number of very good Aboriginal Affairs ministers in the time we have been in Government. No one who watched the Estimates hearing last week, particularly the Aboriginal Affairs section, could doubt the sincerity of the minister's statements on the engagement process with Aboriginal people.

Ms O'Connor - I would agree with that. There are other things he does not do so well but his sincerity on that is top notch.

Mr STREET - Ms O'Connor, you can never just pass a compliment without giving a little backhander at the end of it.

Ms O'Connor - Just a tiny touch up on the way through, Mr Street.

Mr STREET - I am sure Mr Jaensch did not expect anything less.

Regarding truth-telling and a pathway towards treaty I was heartened to hear the minister talking about the need to listen rather than talk or dictate terms to Aboriginal people. We have talked to Aboriginal people and dictated terms and told them what they need to do to be accepted or to be acknowledged or to be believed for the last 220 years. It has got to where we are right now. The Aboriginal Affairs minister is intent on engaging with Aboriginal people but in engaging with them, not necessarily in a conversation but in listening to what they have to say and what they need, what they want, what their aspirations are for the future and where they want to see us going. I do not know what process we will have in place regarding truth-telling but it is incredibly important that it is a process that the Aboriginal people believe in and trust. I am sure, minister, that you understand that and believe that and we will make sure that is what is instituted.

Towards the end of day three we talked about the container deposit refund scheme. I should not admit this but I am going to, I am still not across all of the details of how this scheme is going to work. I listened intently to the questions the Leader of the Opposition asked you and the responses from the department officials. I am still not there.

Ms O'Connor - Welcome to our world.

Mr STREET - But I believe in the Government's intent in instituting this scheme. I talked this morning of the need to be proud of Tasmania's emissions profile and our attitudes to the environment. The intent of the refund scheme is good. When the rubber hits the road, we will see whether it works or not. I am waiting to see its implementation and make sure that I understand it properly, minister.

During the State Growth section there was mention of enterprise centres, which gives me the opportunity to give a shout out to Scott Duffty and his team at the Kingborough and Huon Business Enterprise Centre. Scott is a force of nature. The small businesses and start-ups in the Kingborough and Huon region are extremely lucky to have a resource like Scott and his team. He moves heaven and earth to get stuff done and to help anybody who is willing to have a go. Thank you to Scott and his team.

In the area of Local Government and Planning there is a dot point on short-stay accommodation. I do not agree with the recently introduced regulations from Hobart City Council around Airbnb, but I think that it is good that they are bringing them in because when they are instituted and they make bugger-all difference to rental affordability in Hobart City Council and every other municipality around the state, the Greens councillors in Hobart City Council might get their head around the fact that what we need is residential development in the Hobart CBD to help with the housing crisis.

They need to understand that every time they refuse a development, all they are doing is pushing the housing supply out of Hobart to the outer suburbs, which leads to the urban sprawl that the Greens complain about in this place, chopping down trees to make more land available for subdivisions which increases the traffic congestion problems in the city.

All three levels of government need to take responsibility for housing affordability and homelessness. We talked about homelessness in this place today but I urge local government members and local councils to take responsibility for their area and promote sensible

development in their municipalities. They are part of the solution and too often at the minute part of the problem.

Before I finish, I will touch on the kunanyi/Mt Wellington cable car. I am a supporter of the cable car. The minister knows that. I understand that there are people who do not support the cable car and I do not have a problem with that. Opposing views are fine. However, I cannot stomach the hypocrisy of the people who oppose the cable car. In the last fortnight we have had a media release from Hobart City Council about increasing the number of mountain bike tracks on Mt Wellington. Not a word about that from the people who oppose the cable car. They talk about it being a sacred mountain. I would never walk or climb on Uluru knowing what Indigenous people think of Uluru but there has to be some intellectual consistency to the arguments about not having a cable car.

To argue that Mt Wellington is sacred ground while you do not have a policy to close the road to the top, support mountain bike tracks on Mt Wellington, support walking tracks on Mt Wellington, support abseiling down the Organ Pipes, support rock climbing up the Organ Pipes and then somehow claim a cable car is a desecration of a sacred site is not consistent. It is hypocritical. I say to the people who oppose it, at least be consistent in your arguments against it. If you do not like what it is going to look like, or you do not like the impact that it is going to have, make that argument but do not try to make an argument about a sacred site whilst you support everything else that goes on on the mountain apart from the cable car.

[6.30 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Mr Deputy Chair, I will talk about local government and planning.

To start with local government, as a councillor directly involved in them, I have been passionate about the code of conduct. As part of the code of conduct process I have been both the defendant, and also a witness and party to another matter where one councillor was alleging a breach against another. The process does not work the way it is going and it has not been working for a long time. The complaints from the sector to the minister - not this one; this one is a fairly new and shiny one - but to previous ministers have been going on for a long period, at least a couple of years and probably longer.

It all culminated late last year where the sector passed a motion which said it had no confidence in the code of conduct process. To its credit, the local government division in DPAC held a forum for local government representatives. I have been racking my brain trying remember when it was. It was at some stage while I was still mayor. It had some really good input from local government members, mayors, general managers and people who had been involved in the process. In some cases, they spoke very passionately about their experiences having been, I would say, a victim of the process and of the code of conduct panel.

We are all elected members in this place so we all know what it is like to be attacked by members of the public. That is part of the job - that is fine. That is not necessarily a bad thing.

The problem with the code of conduct process is when you are found guilty or in breach of a code of conduct panel and, in some cases, unfairly. The case I want to talk about more than any - and I do not know her very well - is Councillor Deborah De Williams from Sorell a couple of years ago. Her treatment by the panel and then the coverage afterwards, I know, was really difficult for her and grossly unfair in the way she was treated. It is available on the

DPAC website. You can read about the situation from her perspective, not just from her perspective, you can see exactly how they came to the wrong conclusion:

Ms De Williams allegedly has said, 'I want to get out of here as quickly as possible, away from a certain person.'

The report goes on to eventually find that she had breached the code of conduct for a very innocuous statement.

Likewise, there is the story of the mints which has been talked about quite a lot down in the Huon Valley where a code of conduct was lodged and then investigated into whether council had handed out mints at a council meeting. That is the sort of thing this code of conduct panel is doing.

The sector has been yelling about this for a long period of time. As I said, I formally took a Notice of Motion to an LGAT meeting. It was supported almost unanimously to say that it did not have confidence in the code of conduct process. Still, here we are in September this year and we are now consulting. I am pleased that the minister says that the Government is consulting on this matter but it is way too late. This has taken a long time for anything to happen. You can say that it is up to councils to manage their own affairs and make their own workplaces safe, but the fact is there is a code of conduct and it is not working. The process does not work, the decisions have been wrong, several times, and it is not fair on the elected members.

They are not professional full-time elected members like we are. These are people who have a day job, they have their own stresses and they do it, most of the time as councillors, as a part-time job. They do not need to be exposed to this. They are often frightened of what people are going to do.

In some communities we have vexatious, serial people who continue to put code of conduct charges against their local elected members and it makes life really difficult for them. I have a list of some of these cases. They are frighteningly bad decisions that continue to be made. I hope that we get something a bit better through the process the new minister has embarked upon.

Planning - 'faster, fairer, simpler, cheaper'. It is amazing that it was said.

Ms Butler - How long ago?

Mr WINTER - It is in that alternative budget, it was in the policy; it was still being claimed in 2015. I can find releases from the then minister for Planning and Local Government, Peter Gutwein, on 24 September 2015, almost six years ago, in which he said, 'We are delivering on our commitment to make planning faster, fairer, simpler and cheaper.'. Not even the other side could claim they have ticked that box.

Ms Butler - No interjections. Silence in the Chamber.

Mr WINTER - No. Of all the claims, this is the one they cannot defend. Of all the things they said going to that election, this is the one that really became dishevelled.

I think the minister was calling it a statewide planning scheme in his contribution but that is not what we have. We have a statewide planning system but it was a promise to have a statewide planning scheme and there is not. There is not a single statewide planning scheme, as was promised. There are currently seven. The minister, very helpfully, and I thank him for running through where the councils are at by number and not by name, which was fine, and, amazingly, got to the point where two councils have not even started the process, for whatever reason. There are two draft LPSs not yet submitted to the commission but work is in progress, those two being Dorset and King Island.

Mr Jaensch - You should not be attacking them on the record.

Mr WINTER - I am not attacking them. They still have not started the process. After seven years of this, maybe the Government could consider that there could have been a problem with the process for taking on the new statewide planning scheme or system or whatever else we call it. The minister wants to sit there and pretend as though everything is fine. That is okay with me. It is comical, really.

What we heard about was a plan for a faster, fairer, simpler, cheaper planning scheme that was a plan on a page, presumably, a bit of whiteboard marker, this will sound good, we will put it out there, this will make people happy, a great announcement but the implementation -

Mr Tucker - This is the first time I have heard from you guys in seven years.

Mr WINTER - You have never heard of this, the policy?

Mr Tucker - No, from the Labor Party on this.

Mr WINTER - You have never heard from the Labor Party?

The minister has said previously that he wanted all these LPSs in by the end of the year. Quite rightly, you said that is not going to happen and it is not. We are looking at least eight years and potentially a bit longer to put these schemes in place.

What we have leftover, after we finally complete statutory planning and the end of this process that has taken eight years, is the problem of the Tasmanian land use planning strategies, which are so woefully and dreadfully out of date that we continue to hear from people across Tasmania who want to build homes but they cannot. They cannot because the land use strategies are woefully out of date, or their local council does not have the statewide planning scheme. I am quite happy to give examples to the minister if he is looking for them.

Only a couple of weeks ago, I was talking to a developer who is waiting for every single council in his area to sign off on a very small amendment. I am talking to another developer whose development is outside the urban growth boundary because it has not been updated for such a long time. This is the problem with a policy on a page, a policy of which you have not really considered all the implications.

The issue in Tasmania now is all about land use strategy. At the moment we do not have a clear time line and when the strategy will be out, which means we are going to continue to wait.

Time expired.

[6.40 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - Mr Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments on Mr Jaensch's Estimate's performance and some of the significant concerns that I have around the area of heritage, but also some of the treatment of members of the Aboriginal community.

I will start with the heritage issue. First of all, it is yet unclear to me whether the Government has legal advice as to the way they have conducted removals or placements upon the list and some of those questions are outstanding. We are still trying to get some understanding from Government about that.

Whilst the *Hansard* from upstairs has just arrived I have not yet seen it and if the minister can let me know if he has answered me the questions on notice yet. Have they come through? Any of the questions on notice that you took?

Mr Jaensch - From your hearing?

Ms O'BYRNE - Yes, from Heritage. Are they still on their way?

Mr Jaensch - I think they are on their way.

Ms O'BYRNE - That may help us to unpick -

Mr Jaensch - We only got the *Hansard* late yesterday.

Ms O'BYRNE - But you had the questions on notice given to you? The department would be working on them.

Mr Jaensch - We generally cross reference it with the *Hansard*.

Ms O'BYRNE - Yet we still do not have answers on that. I am concerned that we do not have answers on that. These are issues that have been raised in the past. They remain outstanding as to whether or not the legal advice exists that says that the way that the removals from the heritage listing was conducted was legal.

It also became clear during the Estimates process that despite there being an obligation to engage with owners, because we want a good relationship with owners of heritage properties, we want to be able to work with them, whether or not people whose properties are nominated are being advised of that. In the Estimates process the evidence of the committee said that they could not guarantee that that was the case. We look forward to getting an understanding of what has happened there.

My biggest concern was about the National Trust. The National Trust is really important for Tasmanians. It is important to those many volunteers who give significant hours to make sure that the National Trust works. In your Budget you have assigned \$300 000 which you indicated was originally was an investment in the trust's future. In the Estimates downstairs you said that they had had a bit of a rough year through COVID-19 and this was going to support it with that. By the time you appeared in Estimates in the other place it became clear that you had made yourself aware of some of the significant issues of concern around the trust

and that is whether or not they are able to do the work that they need to do and whether that work is being done appropriately.

When we spoke to you in the lower House it took quite some effort to get a commitment and an answer from your department as to whether you had received any advice on whether the trust was operating in such a level that the Government had received advice on what would happen if the trust was absolved. In the lower House -

Mr Jaensch interjecting.

Ms O'BYRNE - Sorry? You said, 'really nothing to do with us, it is an organisation we give grants to, really not much of our problem at all'. You eventually took on notice whether or not the department had received that advice. There was a little bit of trickiness about the answers: 'I have not heard anything, has the department heard anything, oh! we do not want to say, we will have to take that on notice'.

Mr Jaensch interjecting.

Ms O'BYRNE - I am sorry I cannot hear you when you talk while I am talking. What are you telling me?

Mr JAENSCH - I think there was some trickiness about the question too.

Ms O'BYRNE - No, there was absolutely nothing tricky about the question. I wanted to know and you failed to answer whether there are significant concerns around the National Trust and whether those concerns are such that your department, you as minister, the agency, had received advice about what would happen if the trust needed to be absolved. To have that advice being provided to you indicates your awareness of the significant problem. Your answer in the lower House was to say, 'it is nothing to do with us, we fund them as a grant body, it is really not our problem'.

I spoke to my colleagues in the upper House to see if they could flesh it out a bit further. What they did discover was that it is not so much a hands-off thing, is it, minister? A Heritage staff member sits on the board of the National Trust. There is a reason they sit on the board; it is to ensure that this incredibly vital organisation is operating at a level that it is supposed to. We now know from our evidence upstairs that you actually have already started to look at what would happen if the trust fell over. According to your evidence upstairs - and I have only just read it because the *Hansard* has only just arrived - the Government would have to assume responsibility for those properties and create a plan forward.

The fact that the trust is in significant problem is an issue for the state, an issue for the state budget, and it is an issue for you as minister. I am concerned that when we asked you questions you were not able to say whether you had an understanding of that risk to government and also the risk to those significant properties and the risk to the connection that so many Tasmanian volunteers have with the National Trust properties. They give uncomplainingly of their time, they are committed to the properties and Tasmanians are committed to those properties.

You still need to answer some questions about what is happening with the National Trust. Concerns have been raised by members and volunteers that one of its financial issues is not all

due to COVID-19 as you would have us believe but actually due to some management issues at the Trust. That it is an obligation of Government and your inability to answer that is concerning.

I will go to Aboriginal Affairs as I have a short period of time. Once again, I have pleaded the case for the Tasmanian Elders Council. To take members who were not here before back through that, a few years ago your federal colleagues in some bizarre decision-making process, probably because of their view about Tasmanian Aboriginal people, decided to remove the funding from the Tasmanian Elders Council.

It is that core funding that allows the Elders Council to do the wonderful work that they do in community. They are incredibly trusted and respected within community. The removal of that funding has been terrible for them. It was of such concern to the government at that stage, that former premier Will Hodgman met with them. He sat down with them and, across the table, looked Tasmanian Elders in the eye and said, 'I will help you to try to get that money back', which was great; we would want a premier to do that, 'and if we can't, we will fund you'.

He was neither able to get the federal funding back, nor did he meet his commitment to funding them. The answer is, 'We have given them some other grant money on other projects'. But those other grants monies and those other projects come with jobs, with responsibilities and with additional work. This is about the ongoing day-to-day funding that the Tasmanian Elders need to exist. If it was not for the fact that they own their building, they would have folded by now. They are running on the smell of an oily rag and the good will of people and they are waiting for that commitment to be met.

Why does it still matter? It matters because the Elders Council matters but also because we are about to engage in a difficult process of truth-telling, of treaty and a rebuilding of relationship with the community, who frankly show the greatest generosity in their story-telling and their engagement with us.

If we look back over the years of history and what we have done to our First Peoples, the fact that they still generously, openly, tell their stories, are prepared to sit down and work with us, trust us, is a huge commendation to their engagement. We need to think very carefully about our engagement. If we want to say to this community, 'Please trust us, please work with us, we want to go through a process of truth-telling, go through a process of treaty, but by the way, that promise we made to you a couple of years ago, we are not doing that', it is that kind of behaviour over again from governments, that undermines our relationship with community.

If we cannot come at a couple of hundred thousand dollars, then no wonder there is nothing in the Budget that indicates what kind of costs there might be in a proper treaty negotiation truth-telling.

The Victorian Government has committed some \$68 million towards their process, and it is a long and complex process. I accept you don't yet know exactly what this process will cost, but it is going to cost something. The fact that you will not come at a couple of hundred grand for the Tasmanian Elders Council, does not leave an awful lot of confidence in those members of the community that you need.

If we want this process to work, we need the Elders to work with us because that provides an engagement of trust and a building of a relationship to do that work. Minister, I again plead

with you to sit down with the Tasmanian Elders Council and support them in the funding commitment that your government made. Frankly, if former premier Will Hodgman had never promised it, it would have remained an issue with the federal government. It would have been disappointing, we would have argued for it, but he made a promise. He sat across the table and looked at people and made a promise.

The fact that there are members in the Elders community who now refer to him as Snake Eyes, does not provide the kind of environment that I know you genuinely want to create for our future relationship with our First Peoples. This is a small thing that you can do to build confidence, build faith, to build a relationship to continue to pursue these things.

Mr Jaensch - I met with them last Friday.

Ms O'BYRNE - Did you give them a commitment for funding?

Mr Jaensch - I met with them last Friday.

Ms O'BYRNE - Did you give them a commitment for the funding? Did you honour the commitment?

Mr Jaensch - We had a good conversation.

Ms O'BYRNE - Did you honour the commitment from your former premier?

Ms Ogilvie - You asked him to meet with them and he already had.

Ms O'BYRNE - But we still do not have the funding.

Ms O'BYRNE - Ms Ogilvie, your new party meet with them regularly, promise the world and deliver nothing.

Time expired.

Dr BROAD - Mr Chair, I want to discuss the Estimates process and a couple of key dot points raised with minister Jaensch. I will speak about red tape reduction and the statewide planning scheme. Maybe I will cross into a few other areas, if you give me some time.

I refer to the statement the member for Franklin, Mr Winter, was talking about. This is the Tasmanian Planning Scheme fact sheet from when the now-Premier, Peter Gutwein, was the minister for Planning and Local Government. In this nice fact sheet he talked about how:

This is all about creating a planning system that is fairer, faster, cheaper and simpler, that will make it easier to invest in Tasmania, encouraging more economic development and job creation. One statewide planning system will provide confidence for those looking to invest and expand. It means housing providers, developers, designers, planners and builders who operate across different council areas from Bicheno to Queenstown, Devonport to Dover, will not need to use a set of different rules for each place.

This is just not the case. I point out that there has not been a red tape reduction in building a house. How do I know that? My wife and I built a house in 2007 and we built a house starting in 2019. I can tell you that the red tape has not reduced in the building industry; it has massively increased. I will give you an example: the plans that we had were with the same council, same designer. In 2007 it was seven pages, and in 2019 it was 22 pages. There was a whole bunch of extra things that had to be included in the plan. That is a massive increase in red tape. That is three times the red tape just on that measure alone. If we want to talk about -

Members interjecting.

Dr BROAD - You are obviously a bit upset about that. I have not gone back and looked at the exact cost that it was before we started to even scratch the ground. Before we even started to scratch the ground back in 2007, if memory serves me correctly, it was between \$10 000 and \$12 000 of upfront costs to get the planning approvals, to get all the tests done, before you could engage a builder and actually start building

In 2019 - we started building in 2020 and kept building throughout COVID-19 - it cost us at least \$25 000 before we had even scratched the ground, before a builder had even driven in a peg, and before we started any process of building. It cost \$25 000 just to get to the point where you can start to build compared to well under half that back in 2007. Why did this happen? Because of the statewide planning scheme.

Central Coast is very advanced in their planning scheme. They are one of the councils that spend the quickest. A few things happened and this is about the red tape. I can tell you that the planning scheme triggers 'discretions' all the time; it triggers discretions. When I was a councillor at Central Coast Council something like 80 per cent of building approvals for houses in town were triggering a discretion of some description - discretions around setbacks, discretions around all sorts of things.

I argue that if just about every building application is triggering a discretion, there is something wrong with the planning scheme and this has not been fixed. In our case, we triggered discretions. We triggered discretions because our garage was not set one metre behind the rest of the frontage. That is aesthetics. We wanted our garage set in front of our frontage. Okay, it triggers a discretion so now, instead of getting the stamp straight away it has to go through the process of being advertised. There are extra costs because we wanted our garage in front of the rest of the house. It is just obscene. Red tape reduction? It has not been reduced.

I built a house at Turners Beach. There is a local overlay at Turners Beach. In the new planning scheme there is still going to be a local -

Ms Ogilvie - How many houses are you building?

Dr BROAD - This is the same house. There is a local overlay. You do not have one statewide planning scheme that will provide confidence to those looking to invest and spend. You do not have a planning scheme which means that anybody from Bicheno to Queenstown, Devonport to Dover will not need to use a different set of rules. It is just not true.

The local overlay at Turners Beach means different height restrictions, different landscaping, different rules, and it is going to be the case with the new scheme. You have not

solved the problem. For example, height restrictions. We had to do a landscape plan. I get right to the end of the planning process and the council says: 'no, now you need a landscape plan because in Turners Beach 50 per cent of your frontage has to be landscaped'. It has to be trees, shrubs or vegetation. So, I drew a little picture saying: this is going to be shrubs. 'No, that is not good enough. Your building designer has to do it.' Then the building designer drew a few pictures of where the shrubs are going to be and back to council. It was just a matter of sketching but it is that painfulness of the planning scheme.

The other things that we had to do: you have to put in an electrical plan at the planning stage. Why do you need an electrical plan for a planning approval? That should be in the building section. That should be dealt with in building, not in planning. That holds everything up. That is extra red tape.

These are things that Government has not fixed. This Tasmanian Planning Scheme fact sheet is just not happening. It is rubbish. Red tape has not been reduced. Costs have gone up. Hassles have gone up. Electrical plans, surveys, energy efficiency. Energy efficiency approval; again, it costs more money. It gets sent off to some consultant who punches all the figures into the system. We had to get down to the detail of who the window manufacturer was and the specifics about the different window designs so that we could meet energy efficiency. It was very painful. It is probably not -

Mr Jaensch - It is probably not relevant to the Estimates hearing.

Dr BROAD - Probably not with planning but definitely with councils.

In our planning approval the council specified that we had to pay \$3500 to get a new crossover and reinstate the single crossover because we wanted to move our entrance. You cannot argue with it because it is in your planning approval. That is a rort. That is anti-competitive yet it is baked into the system: \$3500 for five metres of kerb and then about 10 metres of a cross-over - I would have to get the figures to get you the actual per metre cost - but this width of concrete and the length should not cost \$3500. It did because it was baked into the planning approval. You cannot argue about it.

Other things have happened too, like fire ratings and so on. There was a case where a dairy farmer wanted to sell his dairy farm. The guy who was buying the property wanted to excise the house so the dairy farmer could keep his house because the farmer next door did not want a house. Guess what? He had to get a bushfire plan. This is a house sitting in the middle of about 200 acres of irrigated pastures and he had to get a bushfire plan. It is grassland, irrigated pastures, but he needed a fire approval.

These sorts of red tape are nonsensical nonsense baked into the planning scheme. They have not been fixed. This whole fairer, faster, cheaper, simpler model is not fairer, it is not faster and it took us heaps longer to get our planning approval for our second house compared to the first one. It was not faster, it was not cheaper. In fact, it was twice the cost at least -

Mr Jaensch - You should stop bagging out your old council.

Dr BROAD - No, this is your planning scheme, minister. You have not fixed this. You have had a few goes at it. You have not fixed it and you will not fix it. For you, red tape reduction is a line on your ministerial responsibilities. It is not something that you are

achieving. This is a measure on you. This is under your Government. Red tape is increasing, costs are increasing. It is getting more complicated. It is rubbish.

Time expired.

[7.00 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER - Dr Broad, you might need a bit of tutoring from our Planning minister because everyone has to get a fire plan done when they build a house. Just because you are a politician does not mean you are exempt.

Dr Broad - No, that was not me; that was someone else.

Mr TUCKER - That was not you? You have to get a fire plan.

Ms Butler - There is the man who wants to put a prison in a bushfire prone area.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Order, members. Mr Tucker will be heard in silence.

Mr TUCKER - Thank you, Mr Deputy Chair. The Government has continued to cut more red tape to boost economic recovery. It is an issue if you raise it consistently and we are continuing to reduce unnecessary barriers. Too many times I have been told of the burdens due to unnecessary regulation as well as being a significant impediment to the efficient and effective operation to businesses. It can create delays and add uncertainty to approval processes.

This year there have been reports released, one that shows only those reforms that were commenced or completed in 2020 as well as the snowballing work on reducing red tape over years. It is worthwhile to know that the report shows during 2020, 25 red tape issues were identified with 18 of those now resolved and the remaining seven making strong progress towards resolution.

Building and construction is important to the state and reducing the impact of red tape allows for the speed up of permit approvals across the state and local government. Since the commencement of the red tape reduction program in 2014, 144 issues have been identified with 123 fixed, representing an 85 per cent success rate in removing red tape issues.

It is another reason why our economy is leading the nation, ensuring Tasmania is one of the best places to do business within Australia. I would also like to mention and elaborate on the matter of how the Government is building a strong economy by getting delayed building projects off the ground. As we are well aware, the private sector is perilous to do rebuilding and expanding our economy. This is why the Liberal Government has allocated \$10 million in the Budget to establish a building project support program. This program will bring forward stalled community or commercial projects, assisting in motivating the building and construction sector and supporting jobs. During our recent election, we committed to increase the program by \$10 million, enabling more shovel-ready projects to get off the ground.

The minister announced only a few weeks ago that 12 local projects would now be able to proceed under this program. To ensure we stay on track, a second round of the project opened a couple of weeks ago to help more projects get off the ground.

We have had some good news from the minister regarding exciting developments in the Antarctic sector. A recent report released by Antarctic Tasmania shows the Antarctic and Southern Ocean sector is contributing approximately \$159 million to Tasmania's local economy. Without a doubt, this is impressive as it is \$38.4 million more than the two years prior. This sector provides research, training and support services to the Australian Antarctic Program and employs nearly 950 people locally.

Fire management is something I am a strong believer in. To see our fire management strategy incorporate cultural burning is a welcome addition. Tasmanians can learn a lot from the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This brings me to sophisticated land management practices such as cool burning. Cool burning has played an important part in shaping Tasmania's landscapes and ecology of tens of thousands of years. In recognising and understanding this long time, rich, cultural environment, the Government is continuing to work with Aboriginal communities with the view to re-establishing cultural burning practices in Tasmania as part of our overall fire management strategy.

Ten grants have now been approved as part of our recent Cultural Burning Grants Program. The Cultural Burning Grant funding is to support burning-related activities such as equipment, cost of travel to attend burn locations and support for cultural burning training. The Parks and Wildlife Service has employed three new Aboriginal cultural burning staff, including an Aboriginal burning project officer to support the development of policy and management of the program along with two specialist Aboriginal fire rangers to work with communities to identify potential cultural burn sites.

The involvement of Mr Dillon, chair of the Aboriginal Heritage Council, provides Aboriginal representation to assist and inform the Parks and Wildlife Service with the implementation of traditional land management techniques.

The National Trust has faced challenges throughout COVID-19. The Budget helps to support Tasmania's historical heritage places as key drivers to our visitor economy. This is why the Budget includes an additional \$300 000 this financial year to support the work of the National Trust in Tasmania.

The Liberal Government's commitment to our heritage is apparent throughout the Budget and across the state, with \$600 000 over four years for the West Coast Heritage Centre at Zeehan to continue to manage and maintain its unique collection of mining heritage that helped build Tasmania; \$250 000 for painting and maintenance of the iconic heritage-listed Currie Lighthouse on King Island, which is an integral part of the island's skyline and a great tourism drawcard; \$100 000 for the final stage of the imperative signage at Highfield Historic Site at Stanley; \$665 000 to purchase and renovate St Paul's Anglican Church as part of the Stanley Discovery Museum; \$6.8 million for stage 3 of the Maria Island Rediscovery Project, which includes heritage building upgrades and revitalisation of the Darlington Precinct; and \$2 million to support the wonderful volunteer-run Don River Railway museum and workshops at Don to develop a rail experience.

The minister also recently announced a \$1.25 million funding agreement for the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority to lead the development of a convict memorial hub at this important National Trust property.

Jobs are important to our economy. The Government is supporting business through the provision of loans. As the pandemic continues to impact business, the Government acknowledges the impact it has had on businesses and on thousands of Tasmanians who are working across our state. We have a number of loan programs that are available to help businesses grow and create jobs. These are: \$30 million Building Construction Support Loan Scheme; \$50 million interest-free Tourism Development Loan Scheme; \$100 million interest-free loan to assist Incat to construct a new, large, high-speed vessel; \$600 000 interest-free to the PFG Group; and a \$60 million Business Growth Loan Scheme.

The Business Growth Loan Scheme assists Tasmanian businesses to recover, adapt and grow, as well as assisting to develop and enhance business models that support employment, retention and business growth. Under this scheme, 52 loans totalling \$15.4 million have been approved. Initially this scheme was established for 12 months, which would have ended now. The Government has extended the scheme for a further 12 months.

Important support programs like this are clearly working for Tasmania and I commend the minister for them.

[7.10 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY - Mr Chair, I rise to make a short contribution about the minister's information provided at Estimates on regional land use strategy.

Across a lot of portfolio areas, many within the minister's responsibility, people talk about activating private development, activating the economy and opening up land for development. We talk about housing, homelessness, rental pressures, house price pressures, land price pressures. It is not a linear issue. It is a complex web of integrated issues that if addressed concurrently can provide a whole lot of relief at one time.

House prices go up because demand is strong. Opening up supply takes the pressure off house prices. That also has a similar result on rental pressures. Right now, rental prices, house prices, land prices are skyrocketing beyond the capacity of many young, but also established Tasmanians, to enter the housing market, and even to enter the rental market.

I am hearing every day of people who are being forced out of their current property due to rental increases or changes of ownership and have nowhere to go at the same rent. I am talking about the Regional Land Use Strategy in this element because it is a massive impediment to unlocking land for private developers to help reduce pressure in the housing market.

The minister talked improvements in the Regional Land Use Strategy. Announcements can be smoke and mirrors. Our northern Regional Land Use Strategy, written in 2016, was almost out of date when it was published.

There have been pressures since then to open up land for local developers that love our local region and want to invest locally. An announcement early this year about amendments simply moved the boundaries and meant developers not to have to go through the regional land use amendments process. It transferred the financial responsibility from the collective of councils within a comprehensive review of the Regional Land Use Strategy to individual developers having to fund their own regional land demand and supply studies, which then becomes their corporate data that is not shared and understood across the region. Developers

in the north and south that I am aware of are now choosing to invest outside Tasmania because it is easier and they can find land available to them. I am talking significant multi-million-dollar investments that are going offshore because the Regional Land Use Strategy has not been reviewed and updated.

Minister, I understand there has been an investment in the Budget and time allocated for the real review of these regional land use strategies, to inform land demand and supply so private developers who want to invest in Tasmania are activated to do so. It is having a material and significant impact in the private area of development which is then impacting on affordable and social housing opportunities.

Many private developers would participate in that area and seek to support solutions for our broader Tasmanian community. However, at the moment their opportunities are being limited because the Regional Land Use Strategy has not been appropriately reviewed.

Estimates of the Minister for State Growth, Minister for Local Government and Planning, Minister for Environment, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Heritage agreed to.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

The House adjourned at 7.15 p.m.