

Tuesday 11 June 2019

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

QUESTIONS

Health - Correspondence from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.02 a.m.]

On 16 May the executive director of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Andrew Brakey, wrote to you requesting urgent action to rectify the horror story that is unfolding daily in Tasmania's emergency departments on your watch. Mr Brakey's letter paints a picture that could not be clearer. Mental health patients are not receiving the care they need, staff are in dangerous and unacceptable positions where they cannot do their jobs, and people's lives are at risk on a daily basis. That letter was sent to you 26 days ago. It has been on your desk for almost a month. How can you explain the fact that you responded to this urgent letter only an hour ago?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and we welcome feedback, advice and suggestions from anybody in the health community that wants to help the Government to meet the increasing demand on our emergency departments. The Government is determined to work with the ANMF and health stakeholders so that we can provide better and more timely care to emergency department patients.

The Government is serious about this. We have demonstrated that through our additional funding for mental health, through the additional beds that we have opened for mental health, which I know have been very welcomed by stakeholders and by members of this House. The Government works very constructively with the ANMF. It is a matter of record that the ANMF has written to me. The Government always engages with and has replied to the ANMF. If the members opposite want to play sport with timing that is just unhelpful. We are focused on meeting the needs of our patients. That is what our record is.

I can confirm that I have, and I believe the Premier also has, written to the ANMF. If the letters were sent this morning members ought to welcome that because the ANMF has some good suggestions to make. We are taking them very seriously. I ask the Opposition Leader, rather than playing political games with mental health, to get on board with our positive agenda, which is about doing two things: one, building the facilities that the previous government promised to build but never got around to doing, and, two, working with health stakeholders and our senior managers to provide better care through our increased staffing and through our increased measures to work with our managers to ensure we get better patient flow.

The key is better patient flow: actually listening, actually working. We will never stop listening, nor working, so that we can give Tasmanians a better health system.

Health - Correspondence from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.05 a.m.]

Have you even read Mr Brakey's horrifying depiction of what is happening on a daily basis in the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department? Mental health patients are waiting in the emergency department for a bed in the psychiatric ward with no beds available. It has been today confirmed by you that patients are waiting for periods of up to 183 hours, more than seven days. The situation in the ED has now become such a crisis that nurses are expressing feelings akin to post-traumatic stress disorder. If you had read Mr Brakey's letter you would finally understand the nightmarish conditions that occur daily on your watch.

The ANMF requested you either meet with them or provide the names of senior health department officials who can offer the help that is urgently needed by Monday 27 May. Did you convene that meeting?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member again for her question. The Government is willing to meet with the ANMF. I meet them regularly. I have also invited the ANMF to our Access Solutions meeting. I am convening a meeting with the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine so that we get all the right people together, with a focus on solutions, not on politics.

The Leader of the Opposition, last time we met, more or less said that the Labor Party would not take advantage of our Access Solutions meeting. A very destructive approach.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 145 goes to relevance. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question which is, did he meet with the ANMF, as they requested, on 27 May? I am not talking about any other meeting, simply the meeting they urgently asked of the minister on 27 May.

Madam SPEAKER - Unfortunately, that is not a point of order but I have allowed you to put it in on *Hansard*.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Government has expressed an openness to meet with the ANMF more regularly than we already do. If the Leader of the Opposition does not like that, then unfortunately it shows that there is a focus not on working on solutions, which is what the Government is doing.

We regard the ANMF as an important stakeholder. We listen to their feedback and respond to their letters. The Leader of the Opposition wants to play politics with mental health. That will not help anybody. We are focused on solutions and addressing the issues that have been raised with us by the ANMF.

Housing Tasmania - Eviction of Tenants

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH

[10.08 a.m.]

Last week the Full Bench of Tasmania's Supreme Court found your department, Housing Tasmania, was wrong to evict a long-term tenant, Gregory Parsons, a man with a disability, due

solely to the expiry of his lease. The court found Housing Tasmania tenants are entitled to natural justice, which they are not being afforded by your Government. In Estimates last week, under questioning from Dr Woodruff, you flagged using public funds to appeal against the court's decision. In the middle of a deepening housing crisis you persist in wanting to make it easier to evict public housing tenants into homelessness. Do you believe Housing Tasmania tenants are entitled to natural justice? Will you now rule out an appeal, aimed at weakening their protections?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. As I said in Estimates last week, Housing Tasmania will take some time now to consider the implications of the court decision. Housing Tasmania manages its tenancies in line with the Residential Tenancy Act, as it always has, and as it did under previous governments, and works closely with its tenants to maintain their tenancies.

Eviction is only an action of last resort and only occurs if a tenant seriously and repeatedly breaches their tenancy agreement and defaults on arrangements that are made to ensure they comply with their lease, including refusing to engage with support providers.

If a tenant takes reasonable steps to remedy breaches, such as entering into arrangements -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Relevance. I asked the minister whether he will rule out using public funds to appeal the Full Bench of the Supreme Court's decision and now he is just reading from a brief.

Madam SPEAKER - I hear your question. As you understand I cannot predict what the minister is going to say. It is not a point of order. Minister, please proceed.

Mr JAENSCH - As I have said Housing Tasmania will be considering the implications of the court decision and provide advice to me on the matter.

Health - Correspondence from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.10 a.m.]

The AMA, the emergency department registrars and paramedics have found it necessary to go around you and go to the media or to the Opposition to raise serious concerns about the emergency department. Also, your relationship with health professionals is now so broken that the ANMF has found it has no option but to go around you and elevate their concerns to the Premier. You have failed to respond to their letter, you failed again to look at the horrific scenario that unfolds daily in the emergency department and you failed to convene a meeting they asked for.

On 6 June after giving up in frustration that you will not act, the ANMF took their pleas for action to the Premier. We know that the Premier has instructed you to now respond to the ANMF letter. What else has the Premier asked you to do in response to the hospital crisis?

ANSWER

Lest the Leader of the Opposition continues to mislead the House I should allow you, Madam Speaker, and members of the House to know that she has misrepresented the ANMF's letter. In

fact, Mr Brakey, the executive director in the final paragraph of the letter that the member refers to asks:

We ask that you confirm your willingness to attend such a meeting or, in the alternative, the name of the senior members of Mental Health Services (with authority to make some decisions which require funding) by no later than close of business Monday 27 May 2019.

Once again, the Leader of the Opposition conflates in order to try to make negative politics out of this. I am advised that those meetings are occurring on an ongoing basis. Any suggestion that is being continually peddled by people opposite that people are not listening or do not care is completely rejected and is just wrong.

Ms O'Byrne - Did you organise a meeting by 27 May or not?

Mr FERGUSON - That is the voice over there of the most hands-off negligent health minister that the state has ever seen.

We are going to continue to work closely with them. I have been asked by the member what is the Government doing - great question. This Government is working on solutions. We are working on how we can help people in Tasmania. It is through no cause of the fault of the Government. It is through no cause of fault of our staff. There is a simple reality that we are trying to meet today's demand in yesterday's hospitals. Our hospitals are overloaded. It is matter of record. We are very space constrained, because that is a reality of the consequence of the redevelopment that was left in turmoil -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - that the previous government talked about, but could never get around even to laying the first brick. I sense and understand there is frustration around the need for more capacity, which we are building. What the Premier and what the Government is doing is focusing on -

Mr O'Byrne - The Kingston Bypass, Brighton Bypass, East Derwent Highway.

Mr Bacon - Two ships.

Mr FERGUSON - building the infrastructure that we need -

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne and Mr Bacon warning one.

Mr FERGUSON - We totally accept that we always need to do better in mental health and that is why the Government has stood up the eight extra bed equivalents for Mental Health Hospital in the Home. That is about showing that we can be innovative and creative in opening more capacity. I ask the members opposite to welcome that. It is an important new contribution. You have often asked me to open more beds in mental health and now that we are doing it we see a continuation of that negativity.

I am interested in real solutions not the negative politics, which is being rehearsed by members opposite who have no alternative, who have no plan. They are too lazy to come up with any alternatives and they are too lazy to even bother with an alternative budget, which might have shown - if they had have done one - that they were serious about doing the work.

The Government will continue to work closely with out expert clinicians. We will listen to their suggestions. We have provided funding in the Budget of \$30 million, which is available to allow better patient flow to meet demand and also to address and put in place the good suggestions that I believe will come forward at the Access Solutions meeting. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to rethink her rejection of that meeting. It is an important meeting and we ask people of goodwill to come together to help Government identify solutions so that we can do better for mental health patients who, in some cases, are waiting too long for care.

Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 - Update

Mr SHELTON question MINISTER FOR HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH

[10.15 a.m.]

Can the minister please update the House on how the Hodgman Liberal Government is progressing its \$125 million Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 to provide more homes for those Tasmanians in need?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Shelton for his question, interest and support in this matter. The only way to ultimately address our housing shortage and to reduce homelessness is to provide more homes for people who need them. That is why we are boosting the supply of new social and affordable homes, expanding the capacity in our shelters, and building new ones.

We have heavily front-ended our \$125 million housing commitment in stage 2 of the Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan with \$10 million brought forward, bringing the total allocated in this coming financial year to \$68 million. So far, as at the end of May, we have delivered 316 new homes out of the 372 social housing dwellings target in our first action plan. We currently have over 100 more social houses nearing completion. We have also assisted a total of 1438 new households of the 1600 target. As part of our consultation for this new plan, it was made clear to us by the housing sector stakeholders, that they wanted to be able to manage the construction phase and plan with more confidence over a longer period of time to avoid bottlenecks in the supply and delivery of the houses under our new action plan. This will enable them to better manage their workforce and suppliers, and enables houses to be brought online in a more consistent manner over the life of the plan. Under the action plan, we committed to release an indicative program of tenders for supply projects over the term of the action plan to help inform and build capacity of the construction industry to prepare for this investment.

Madam Speaker, today I am announcing the release of that indicative program which sets out the work plan for the next four years. I table the document today and it will be available on the department's website from today. The work plan gives the industry estimated time frames, costs and yields from our program of works to deliver on our targets. It will allow builders, community housing providers and all other partners to plan ahead to see the delivery of more homes for

Tasmanians in need. The indicative tenders will allow us to keep up the momentum we have already established as we deliver even more homes.

Last week, we released tenders for the construction of two important new housing projects. Our Wirksworth development is a key Government initiative in Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan. The Wirksworth facility will be the first of its kind for Tasmania, providing affordable, high quality care -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, Ms Standen and Leader of the Opposition, please calm down.

Mr JAENSCH - and accommodation to elderly Tasmanians who are financially disadvantaged, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This facility will include residential care beds with independent living units and the facility will have the capacity for up to 50 residents. The construction of the facility is expected to create 50 full-time jobs and provide total economic activity of \$30 million, as well as creating approximately 31 full-time jobs over the long term for aged care staff.

Tenders have also been called for the construction of a 25-unit social housing complex on an inner-city site at 23-25 Goulburn Street, Hobart. The Goulburn Street residential development is a key project for the Tasmanian Government to increase the supply of social housing, as listed in action 3.4 of our action plan. The project is estimated at a value of \$9 million and will generate local employment in the south and greater Hobart regions of the state.

As the indicative tenders show, there will also be tenders released soon for more social housing including through regional supply, meeting demands right across the state.

By providing more certainty we can deliver a pipeline of initiatives to increase the supply of homes to Tasmanians in need. We also need to be working as well to address the immediate and urgent needs of people who find themselves homeless. We need to expand the capacity of the shelters for them to move into and more houses for them to move into after their time in transitional accommodation. We need to be working at all parts of this system and this Government is.

Housing Tasmania - Eviction of Tenants

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.20 a.m.]

Your minister for Housing has refused to rule out appealing the Supreme Court judgment that found Gregory Parsons was unfairly issued an eviction notice and that Housing Tasmania tenants are entitled to natural justice. As Premier, knowing Tasmania is experiencing a housing and homelessness crisis, how do you explain his refusal to rule out appealing the Supreme Court's decision to the High Court?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is a question that has been answered by the minister who has explained the circumstances surrounding this and the appropriate course of

action to consider the implications of the court decision. Housing Tasmania manages its tenancies in line with the Residential Tenancy Act and works closely with tenants to maintain their tenancies. Eviction is an action of last resort and only occurs if a tenant seriously and repeatedly breaches their tenancy agreement and defaults on -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. On behalf of Gregory Parsons, I ask the Premier to withdraw that statement. It implies that Mr Parsons abused or breached his lease or residential tenancy agreement, which is untrue.

Madam SPEAKER - Unfortunately it is not a point of order.

Mr HODGMAN - Madam Speaker, all I am simply doing without any implication is outlining for the member who asked the question how the Residential Tenancy Act is applied and where eviction as an action of last resort only occurs in those circumstances. If a tenant can make reasonable steps to remedy breaches, such as entering into an arrangement to pay off arrears or to take action to avoid the eviction, then eviction will be stopped. Tenants are provided also with clear information about their responsibilities and potential consequences for continued behaviours.

We will appropriately consider the implications of the court decision before further action is taken.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Could we have a bit of respect for each other as a parliament, please?

Ms O'Byrne - Madam Speaker, he has just defamed somebody.

Madam SPEAKER - According to the Standing Orders he has not.

Health - Correspondence from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.23 a.m.]

How many suicides or attempted suicides have been recorded in the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department in the past six months? On 6 April a meeting was convened after as many as three attempted hangings in the emergency department in a two-week period. The ANMF has concluded, and told you, that despite this urgent emergency meeting, and I quote:

Unfortunately matters have continued to deteriorate.

Do you find it acceptable that acutely unwell Tasmanians are becoming so desperate about not being able to access the treatment they need and becoming trapped in the emergency department for days on end that they are attempting to take their own lives? How do you explain not responding to the ANMF by 27 May, as they urgently requested, and how can you claim to have a good working relationship with health stakeholders when you ignore their pleas for help?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, first I counsel the member opposite on two points. First, not to make such claims when the Government enjoys a positive working relationship with our stakeholders, including unions. People who are serious and fair dinkum about this issue recognise that it is a complex puzzle. We are facing capacity issues which is affecting patient flow.

The second point to counsel the member opposite is to be very careful and much more careful than you have been when you deal with suicide, including method and place.

I find the way you have asked that question is well outside the communications charter and that is well encouraged by those people who work in the sector who understand the impact that words like that can have in terms of the effect that it will have on vulnerable Tasmanians.

Ms White - If you had responded to their letter to have a meeting with them -

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms White, warning number one.

Mr FERGUSON - I would like to come to the substance of what is really at play here and that is the Government's determination to provide more timely care to people who need it in our emergency departments including, not the least of which, are people looking for mental health support.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to continue only with her politics, she will help zero Tasmanians. We are fair dinkum and interested in supporting more people to get the care that they need. I can demonstrate that we are committed to rebuilding the Peacock Centre which the Labor Party is opposing. The Government is committed to building a new centre.

Ms White - Don't lie.

Mr FERGUSON - Don't lie? If the Leader of the Opposition would like to indicate the Opposition's support for the Peacock Centre, that would be welcomed. It would also be a first. Second, we are building a new centre at St Johns Park but we are not prepared to make people wait for those facilities to be built, which is why the Government empowered the Chief Psychiatrist to get underway the Mental Health Hospital in the Home right away. We have put that resource for the new buildings into an interim solution which is already in place now. The Government has provided funding for that. We should be grateful for the work our clinicians have done to stand-up that new support. It is the equivalent of eight new beds and we will continue to grow that to 12.

I ask people to welcome these good things that are being done by the Government, by experts. They are advising the Government on how to provide more care, how to provide better care to people and the early feedback is very positive. We discussed this at the Legislative Council Estimates last week where the feedback was very positive and already providing better supports to people, which in some cases is helping them to not even need to go to hospital at all.

Members opposite ought to welcome that because it is part of our agenda with Rethink Mental Health. The Government is actually doing things, taking action while the Opposition bring their politics into this House which is very expected, very predictable. Where is the alternative plan, where is the alternative budget? Where is the preparedness of the Opposition to participate in the Access Solutions meeting?

Ms White - I will be there. Sarah Lovell, the shadow minister for health, will be there.

Mr FERGUSON - Oh, you will be there now. That is a welcome change. That is a better approach.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I understand your frustration but I am asking you to be more businesslike with the way you are asking questions and stop the interjections. Minister, you have a few minutes left.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Government has replied to the ANMF and it is a thorough reply. We have also met with their request for the right people to meet with them. That is happening. There are even weekly meetings now underway which the Government has supported, particularly around meeting the roster requirements for the psychiatric emergency nurses which this Government funded. We recognise that there is always more we can do.

While the Leader of the Opposition and the former failed health minister talk about letters and dates, this Government is taking action, providing more funding, opening more beds, with a willingness to continue to listen and work with health stakeholders and we will never stop.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr FERGUSON - This behaviour helps nobody. We will never stop working for our community. It is our record; they are the facts and we will continue to open up more support.

Budget 2019-20 - Tasmania's Economy

Mr TUCKER question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.20 a.m.]

Can you outline how the 2019-20 Budget is ensuring Tasmania's economy remains strong so that we can continue to invest in the essential services Tasmanians need?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the one political party and the Government that takes ensuring that our economy is strong and continues to be strong as an important and critical priority. Without a budget in good shape, as it is, we would not be able to invest more into essential services, into our schools, into our hospitals, into our public housing, into the infrastructure that our growing state needs. That is what this Budget is all about.

The plan we took to successive elections to ensure that our economy continues to be strong is working because, as we learned last week from the latest ABS statistics around state final demand, Tasmania has the strongest performing economy in the nation. Over the year to March 2019 state final demand grew at 5.2 per cent, which was the highest annual growth rate in the nation. It has

not happened by accident. It has happened because the Government has invested strongly in our competitive strengths. We have cut down the barriers to business investing more and to employing more Tasmanians. We have cut red tape. We have reduced business costs and we have invested in infrastructure. This Budget will, like never before, invest in job-creating infrastructure, not only to support our growing state but to support ongoing jobs. There are 10 000 more jobs forecast from this Budget alone.

We are also investing in our greatest and most important asset, young Tasmanians, to give them the education and skills they need to be part of our economy. A key commitment of this Government is to ensure that the strong economy we have not only continues, but is better shared and enjoyed by Tasmanians who are able to participate in a strong economy. That is our vision and our mission.

As this Budget and the budget Estimates process last week revealed, we are doing more to invest in essential services for Tasmanians. We recognise that there is a lot more to do. We are only able to do it because our Budget is in good shape and because our economy is so strong. We will deliver across the forward Estimates balanced budgets. They will be in surplus; not the forecast deficits that we inherited from Labor and the Greens. These surpluses are important because they are our insurance policy against unintended or unexpected events like our bushfires, for example. They will ensure we can invest more in the essential services Tasmanians need.

We are investing \$8.1 billion into supporting a better health system. That is 32 per cent or thereabouts of our Budget now dedicated to hospitals and to hiring more staff to work in our health system. We are investing \$7.1 billion into education and training over the next four years. That is 358 new staff, including 250 more teachers, 80 extra teacher assistants, more support staff, new schools, school rebuilds and upgrades. We are extending the number of our schools to offer year 12, establishing early learning centres, redeveloping our school farms, improving TAFE facilities and many more investments, including needs-based funding for students with disabilities and free preschool for disadvantaged three-year-olds. We have also increased our investments to support mental health and wellbeing in our schools, with more psychologists, social workers and nurses.

The minister has outlined more housing. This is a priority for this Government. We recognise the critical need to provide more affordable housing. As the minister has outlined, we are accelerating the building of new homes, more homes. We have front-ended our action plan. We have extended funding for emergency support to provide secure and safe accommodation options for Tasmanians who are homeless or at risk of being homeless as part of our \$125 million Affordable Housing Action Plan.

There is a lot more to do, but our capacity to do so is only possible because our Budget is in surplus and we have a strong economy. We have needed to demonstrate fiscal constraint and make some difficult decisions. There will be savings and efficiency measures across government. We need to continue to have an effective and efficient State Service. Tasmanians would expect us to ensure that the Tasmanian people are getting better services that are affordable and sustainable. We need an affordable and sustainable public wages policy: one that is fair and one that is affordable. If we do not do these things then we will not be able to invest more and to deliver better services that Tasmanians need and deserve.

In conclusion -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 48, the Premier has been on his feet for five-and-a-half minutes answering a Dorothy Dix question from his own backbench.

Mr HODGMAN - I will conclude. The Opposition offered no alternative budget. They said after our Budget that our priorities were warped but is still not explaining what they are or what they would do differently.

We will get on with the job of delivering our plan because it is delivering results and we will focus on what is important to Tasmanians and not the silly political game playing that we get from members opposite.

Health - Correspondence from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.36 a.m.]

The eight-page letter sent to the Premier by the ANMF paints a heartbreaking picture of the dysfunction in Tasmania's public hospital and the impact on both staff and patients. Your failure to support Tasmanians who are suffering mental ill health is particularly damning. Mr Brakey said,

Psychologically unwell patients have hung themselves in the department, others have given up waiting only to be found hours later scaling the Tasman Bridge. Patients are literally dying waiting for care at the RHH. We are also advised by our community mental health teams that patients are not turning up to the RHH as they know they will not get the attention that they need.

How can you read such a horrific depiction of the hospital system on your watch and not respond until an hour before question time?

Ms Archer - We need to say how to contact Lifeline when people watch this.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms Archer, that is not helpful. Ms Archer, are you continuing to talk?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Government takes this seriously. We are reforming mental health. We have nation-leading reforms to mental health which we have outlined in our Rethink Mental Health plan, which has been universally endorsed by stakeholders. It is about opening more resources. It is about ensuring that they are made available in the place that people require at the time that they are needed. We will never stop working to meet the needs of the Tasmanian community. We will never quit. We will never walk away from the task of helping people get the health care they need at a time of crisis.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Could I please have a bit of silence from this side of the room.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government is determined to solve the complex puzzle which we are presented with, which is increasing mental health demand and constrained facilities. The Leader of the Opposition has not mentioned this in her questions today.

Ms White - The coroner said you should replace them. You did nothing.

Mr FERGUSON - I will take the interjection in passing to make the point that both the previous government and this Government with decreasing occupancy did scale down in-patient beds to make way for the demolition of B Block. In the meantime, demand has increased and we have opened those beds up again.

Ms White - No you have not.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear the Leader of the Opposition with her false claims. We have opened eight extra beds. They are up now. They are mental health hospital-in-the-home bed equivalents. If the Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to accept the advice of the Chief Psychiatrist that they are bed equivalents then it shows that she is stuck in the 1970s on mental health. If the Leader of the Opposition is claiming that the only model is in-patient beds then that is, unfortunately, a failure of policy, because we are physically constrained.

I want to go back to the beginning of the member's question. I have to call it out. That is an inappropriate thing for the member to be bringing to this public forum.

First Home Owner Grant - Extension

**Mrs RYLAH question to MINISTER FOR BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION,
Ms COURTNEY**

[10.40 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the latest Hodgman Liberal Government's initiative that will not only improve housing affordability but benefit our booming building and construction industry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We know our plan to build a stronger economy and create more jobs is working and this was evidenced last week with state final figures confirming that Tasmania has the strongest economy in the country, the first time in 15 years.

This has not happened by accident. It is the policies of the Hodgman Liberal Government that is supporting Tasmanian businesses and backing industry to grow. While we are continuing to support the positive momentum of the building and construction sector, we know that there continues to be a high demand for social and affordable housing.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is proud to help young Tasmanians enter the property market, particularly in the case of new buildings, which increases housing supply and helps underpin jobs in our building and construction industry all across Tasmania. This is why we have allocated almost \$68 million in 2019-20 to boost the supply of social and affordable homes. This additional funding, under our 10-year Affordable Housing Strategy will see a further 1500 new affordable homes built, creating an estimated 900 construction jobs.

In addition to this investment, the largest ever state investment into affordable housing in Tasmania's history, there are a range of other Government policies that we have implemented that help to improve housing affordability across our state. We have established and extended the duty concessions for up to \$7000 for first home buyers of established homes and for pensioners who wish to downsize. We have continued land tax exemptions which provides a three-year land tax holiday for conversion of short-term rental accommodation to longer term rental, as well as the new builds to be placed into long term rental.

These initiatives form part of a comprehensive package that will assist more Tasmanians to access appropriate and affordable housing by providing incentives to build and lease residential properties.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, warning number two, Ms O'Connor, warning number one.

Ms COURTNEY - Madam Speaker, I am delighted that my colleague, the Treasurer, will today be tabling the legislation required to enact the extension of the first home owner grant. This will extend the \$20 000 home owner grant for a further 12 months to 30 June 2020, which will assist Tasmanians to enter and remain in the rental and housing markets. Without the extension, the grant amount of \$20 000 would revert to \$10 000 on 1 July 2019.

Our first home builders grant will extend the grant of \$20 000 for eligible first home buyers who either enter an eligible transaction for the purchase of a newly constructed home, or the construction of new home -

Ms O'Byrne - Are you announcing this when it is not even your portfolio?

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, warning number one.

Ms COURTNEY - from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 inclusive. This extension to the \$20 000 first home owner grant will mean that Tasmania continues to have one of the most competitive home owner grants offered by any jurisdiction in Australia.

As minister responsible for building and construction, I am very pleased to advise that the extension of this grant will obviously be felt by the industry. Only last week the ABS data on lending to households and businesses show that Tasmania's construction industry is still recording the strongest growth in the nation in terms of building new homes. In the year to April 2019, lending for construction of new homes grew by 12.5 per cent compared to the previous year, which is a stark contrast, the national average declined by 7.4 per cent.

Importantly, Tasmanian is seeing -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing order 48, the minister has been reading from that script for four minutes now. I ask you to be aware of that, given how little of question time is left.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. Please continue, minister, but I do ask you to speed up your reading.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is disappointing that the other side do not want to hear about these initiatives. They are making a real difference for Tasmanians and for the building and construction industry across Tasmania.

Tasmania is also seeing the strongest growth in the nation for lending to first home buyers, with 2010 first home buyer finance commitments recorded in the year to April 2019. An increase of 22.6 per cent -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Let her get to the end of it, please.

Ms COURTNEY - compared to the previous year. These results are consistent with the general growth in the Tasmanian economy that I mentioned earlier.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, you asked the minister to wind up almost a minute ago. She has just revved up and kept talking. Obviously, her written words on the script are finished.

Madam SPEAKER - I will give her one more sentence.

Ms COURTNEY - The Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to supporting the economy and creating jobs, unlike the other side where we have seen no plan, no alternative budget, and no plan for Tasmania's future.

Health - Adolescent Mental Health Units

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.46 a.m.]

Less than two weeks ago, on 30 May, you released a statement to the media in relation to adolescent mental health beds that said:

To be clear - the K Block facility is designed and built as a dedicated Adolescent Mental Health Unit and the Ward 4K Redevelopment will provide a new 36-bed contemporary facility, which will include Tasmania's first dedicated Adolescent Mental Health Unit.

This is simply not true, is it? Is it not true that the 16-bed unit in K Block at the Royal Hobart Hospital and the 8-bed unit at the LGH are not dedicated adolescent mental health units when that is what you promised families. Did you deliberately make this promise that you did not intend to keep? Did you not know what you were promising because you are not across the health portfolio? Or did you deliberately mislead Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. I will make it very clear that I have never and would never mislead Tasmanians about this - have never, would never. I stand by the Government statements on this. It is something that is overdue. It should have been

built years ago, but was not. We are committed to building those facilities. We are building and will open dedicated mental health units for young Tasmanians in brand new wards.

This was explained very clearly to the Opposition in parliament two weeks ago. It was again explained properly in Estimates, not just this year, but also last year. I will repeat this for the member who has not been paying attention: the Government is building dedicated mental health units. Let me give some detail. The redeveloped Ward 4K and the LGH feature single bedrooms designed to meet contemporary adolescent mental health care requirements, as does the new adolescent ward at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

As I have made clear, exact bed numbers within the units and the model of care are currently being worked through in consultation with expert clinicians, including the Chief Psychiatrist. These details will be confirmed as soon as possible. I am as keen as anyone to know more about what the best clinical advice is. The Leader of the Opposition should be asking me to guarantee that we should listen to that advice and respond. That is exactly where we are at.

The member who asked the question is misrepresenting again. The Government is very clear about this. I have been very clear about this. I do not mind putting some context here. We are committed to doing this right. They could have been and should have been built years ago.

Ms O'Byrne - You told Tasmanians there would be a dedicated unit.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Ms O'Byrne, this is warning number two.

Mr FERGUSON - Twelve months ago at Estimates I said to the Estimates Committee:

... because they're not just mental health for adolescents; they are adolescent beds within the paediatric zone.

I then said:

From dealing with local clinicians, particularly in Launceston, the model is based on mental health and other adolescent health issues. The beautiful thing is that it is an adolescent unit, so they will have their own eight-bed zone there and 16 at the Royal.

The Leader of the Opposition has obviously not been keeping up. We have been very clear about this. Connie Digolis said last week it was never her understanding that the wards would be exclusively for mental health patients. She said 'this confusion is unhelpful as it diverts attention away from the fact there will soon be beds available for young people where previously there were none'.

Madam Speaker, this is too important for that negative politics to continue any longer. Stakeholders have been clear and the Government has been clear. We are building 24 beds for adolescents in Tasmania which have never been previously available. As we build them, we are consulting with the right people to get the best mix for our young people and we are building dedicated inpatient adolescent mental health units in our northern hospital, in our southern hospital and the exact numbers are subject to consultation.

Members opposite should welcome it. After all, these facilities were promised years ago. It was promised on 1 May 2009. On 27 September 2009, Lara Giddings, minister for health, said that the new unit would be funded and was expected to be ready for patients within approximately 12 months, not 12 years, but the Labor Party never did it. When Michelle O'Byrne was the minister in 2010, Ms O'Byrne said that the government would deliver on those undertakings but would not say when the unit would open.

The record is clear and the facts are clear. We are building dedicated mental health units for adolescents and we will also ensure that the best advisers on this, including the Chief Psychiatrist, are part of the key design so that we get the bed mix right, the model of care right so that we can be providing better care to adolescents. It is the Hodgman Liberal Government that is delivering those facilities with full funding, which puts the previous government's record of shame absolute in the gun.

Mr O'Byrne - Dragging Will down now.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne, warning number two.

Tasmanian Economy - State Final Demand Figures

Mr TUCKER question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.53 a.m.]

The Premier mentioned that the Tasmanian economy is strong. Can you please update the house on the state final demand figures which came out last week and what this means for Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker, member for Lyons, for the question and his interest in this very important matter.

Tasmania's economy is booming. The economy is now the fastest-growing in the nation and that is something we should be proud of in this place. The ABS data released last week showed in the March 2019 quarter over the year, state final demand grew 5.2 per cent compared to a year earlier. This was the highest growth rate in the country. Not only are we the fastest-growing state or territory in the nation, it is a complete contrast to what is occurring nationally, with GDP growing at only 1.7 per cent. This result is the first time in nearly 15 years in which Tasmania's annual growth and state final demand has led the nation. Last year, Tasmania grew the fastest in the nation on a per capita basis. Now Tasmania is growing at the fastest rate in the nation.

This growth demonstrates confidence in our economy. The economic growth was underpinned by Tasmanian household consumption growth of nearly 3 per cent over the year, which was the highest in the country. Private investment grew by 6.45 per cent over the year to March and it was again the highest growth rate in private investment in the country. Last week the ABS also reported that Tasmanian exports have grown again with an increase of 5.7 per cent in the year to April compared to the previous year. We have exported now \$3.74 billion worth of goods last year, supporting local businesses and jobs right across the state.

In February, the Premier launched the Tasmanian Trade Strategy and the Budget contains \$4.4 million over four years to underpin that. The plan will increase the capacity for local businesses to get their goods and services to markets across the world to markets that are demanding that they have access to what we have.

I was asked what this means for Tasmanians? It means more jobs. It means more investment by our businesses. Data released recently shows that private investment in Tasmania grew by 12.9 per cent over the year to the March 2019 quarter in real trend terms. This backs up the nation leading private investment that I have just outlined above and it was in stark contrast to the result nationally which saw private investment actually decline nearly 1 per cent over the same period.

It means more money for housing. This budget brings forward funding into next year to ensure that we invest a record amount to underpin our affordable action plan. Nearly \$68 million in total funding next year, including more than \$40 million to build and provide homes for Tasmanians who need them. As the minister this morning has outlined, our long-term plan to increase supply broadly across the state is working. Our building sector is the strongest in the nation. We have the highest growth in building approvals, the highest growth for commencements, the highest growth rate for completions. Underpinning this is the strongest rate of growth in engineering and building work done which grew 15.3 per cent over the year to March while the nation as a whole declined over 6 per cent.

We have the strongest finance for housing construction and the strongest growth in the number of first home buyers entering the market. All this means more homes for Tasmanians, more investment in the sector and importantly, more jobs for Tasmanians.

Since coming to Government, we have seen the creation of nearly 13 000 jobs. All of this is in stark contrast to what occurred to the state's fortunes under that lot when they were in government. The results of the failed Labor-Greens experiment are written in the history books: \$1.1 billion in deficits, 10 000 jobs lost and an economy that had gone into recession and then flatlined.

The turnaround in Tasmania's economy is no accident. It is built on the back of strong and disciplined management by the Liberal Hodgman Government and importantly it is underpinned in this Budget by \$3.6 billion

Member Suspended

Member for Bass - Ms O'Byrne

Ms O'Byrne - Built on the back of people who cannot get emergency care or housing.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Ms O'Byrne, I am going to have to ask you to leave the Chamber until the end of question time, thank you.

Ms O'Byrne withdrew.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Under Standing Order 48 the Treasurer has been on his feet for nearly five minutes on a Dorothy.

Madam SPEAKER - I will ask the Treasurer to wind-up, thank you.

Mr GUTWEIN - Our population is growing at a decade high of 1.15 per cent showing that people want what Tasmania has to offer.

Clearly those opposite never had it when they were in government. They do not get it now. What the last two weeks have demonstrated is that on that side of the House they stand for nothing; they have no plan; they could not bring down an alternative budget and all they can do is carp and complain.

Health - Adolescent Mental Health Units

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER FOR HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.59 a.m.]

In that same media statement in relation to child and adolescent mental health units you said:

The construction works on these new facilities will be completed this year, with timing around opening to be determined in consultation with clinicians and local hospital management.

Is it not true that just last week in Estimates hearings you were asked when these child and adolescent mental health beds, not units, would be operational and the best information you could give was:

The new adolescent unit at the Royal is funded from 2020-21 financial year. The 16 beds at the Royal are funded in that financial, not the one upcoming, the following year. The beds for Launceston are funded in the 2019-20 financial year.

When pushed on this you were unable to be any more specific. Will you stop misleading Tasmanians and come clean about how many beds will be dedicated to child and adolescent mental health and when will they be able to take patients?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I welcome the question. It is only possible for us to have this conversation because the Hodgman Liberal Government is building these facilities. They are years overdue. Lara Giddings, as health minister, said in 2010, 'Just one year away'. No that is not right; it was in 2009, just 12 months away. They are nine years overdue because guess how many bricks the previous government laid? Zero. Not one. It has fallen to this Government to build these facilities. The Leader of the Opposition should be ashamed of the way she has conducted herself on mental health today. She has gone well outside the bounds of what is acceptable about discussing suicide and mental health in this House. I sincerely hope that vulnerable people have not heard anything she has said this morning because of the effect I know it can have on them.

Ms White - Why do you not do your job? If you had got back to the ANMF it would not have even been raised.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Leader of the Opposition, that is warning two.

Mr FERGUSON - I will address the question very directly. We are building eight beds at Launceston and 16 beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital, which makes it possible for clinicians to give us advice about what is the best suite of services to give to adolescents which they have been denied up until this time. It is correct that we are funding those 24 beds.

I am proud to be part of the Hodgman Liberal team that is building the facilities and has put forward funding in the Budget to staff and open all of those beds. Both of the facilities provide dedicated mental health beds as well. I know the Leader of the Opposition does not like this. I know that the Leader of the Opposition does not have a health policy. I know the Leader of the Opposition does not have an alternative budget because she is too lazy and is more comfortable sitting on the fence.

I also draw the attention of members to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is very sneaky. She has failed to mention in her question that I have also said not only are we looking for the best advice and the best guidance from the Chief Psychiatrist, I want to make sure we get the number right. I do not want too few or too many. We want to also be able to provide for the general health needs of adolescents and the surgical needs of adolescents. The Leader of the Opposition ought to quit this false narrative. You can hold up what you want but you cannot even hold up your own policy because you do not have one.

We are funding those beds; it is all laid out in the Budget. Look at the look on the face of the Opposition Leader - very unhappy that we are building these facilities.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I am bringing question time to a halt. We have run out of time.

Time expired.

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 24)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Gutwein** and read the first time.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion to Suspend Standing Orders - Move a Want of Confidence Motion in Minister for Health

[11.06 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion to suspend Standing Orders to move a Want of Confidence Motion in the Minister for Health. The motion is in the following terms -

That the House -

- (1) Has no confidence in the Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson MP.
- (2) Notes that Tasmania's health system has been under-funded by around \$100 million per year as identified by 2017 RDME Consulting report titled An Analysis of Health Funding for the Tasmanian Health Service.
- (3) Notes the minister's relationship with health professionals has broken down to the extent that they are now going around him to highlight issues of grave concern.
- (4) Acknowledges correspondence from Royal Hobart Hospital registrars, Ambulance Tasmania paramedics, the ANA and the AMF, all describe unacceptable and dangerous conditions for patients and employees in the health system.
- (5) Highlights the minister's deliberately misleading statements regarding child and adolescent mental health facilities at the Royal Hobart Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital.
- (6) Notes that in the five years he has been the Minister for Health the state of Tasmania's health system has become worse and he is unfit to continue in the role.
- (7) Notes the report of the Auditor-General No 11 of 2018-19, Performance of Tasmania's four major hospitals in the delivery of the Emergency Department's services.
- (8) Highlights with concern, an increase in ambulances ramped for greater than 30-minutes since 2012-13 of 239 per cent, despite an overall increase in ambulance presentations of only 20 per cent over the same period.
- (9) Further highlights with concern a significant downward trend in patients with a length of stay of less than four hours in the emergency department at all four major hospitals in Tasmania, noting that there is a wide body of research indicating that emergency department stays of greater than four hours are linked to higher rates of adverse events.
- (10) Notes that the rate of emergency departments adverse events has increased across all four major hospitals by around 60 per cent during the period he has been the Minister for Health and that adverse events are defined as an event or circumstance that could have or did lead to unintended or unexpected harm, loss or damage to any person receiving care or services from health services, and can include avoidable deaths.
- (11) Points out with concern that mental health patients are languishing for more than seven days in the emergency department and that while they are waiting for a bed they psychologically deteriorate, self-harm and attempt suicide.
- (12) Remind members that the minister delayed the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment by a year and has now confirmed a further delay of completion of stage 1 of the redevelopment.
- (13) Notes the minister continues to deny access to women to legal reproductive health services in the public health system.
- (14) Notes that this House has voted to establish health round tables with key stakeholders and all sides of politics to examine solutions for the health crisis and that the Minister for Health has

done nothing to progress those cross-party efforts and deliberately ignored the will of this House.

- (15) Reminds members that ministerial responsibility is a fundamental tenet of Westminster democracy. That means ministers must take ultimate responsibility for failures in their portfolios.
- (16) Further notes that the minister has demonstrated through his lack of action, a complete disregard for the health of Tasmanians and for the wellbeing of his health workforce, and that Tasmanians should not be expected to suffer the consequence of his incompetence any longer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have moved to have a vote of confidence in the minister in this House. It is serious. Over the last week, we have seen more information come to light that requires this urgency motion. That is why we are seeking to have the leave granted and the suspension of standing orders so that we can debate the motion of no confidence in the minister.

I remind this House that when we moved for a no confidence motion in the minister in the last session of parliament this House blocked it. It is the first time that has occurred since 2003. This Government is running from scrutiny. They are not willing to defend this minister. If they agree that he should continue in this role they should get up and defend him today. They should not run away from the motion that is before the House. They should debate the motion that is before the House. They should demonstrate why they think he is capable of continuing in this role. This side of the House does not believe that this minister should be in the role of Health minister any longer.

He has failed to do basic things that are expected of a minister: responding to letters in a timely manner from key stakeholders who raise incredibly serious matters; misleading the public and misleading families, who have been informed by him that there will be a dedicated adolescent mental health unit at the Launceston Hospital and the Royal Hobart Hospital to then last week backtrack and claim there are beds but not units. They will be medical beds, surgical beds and mental health beds, but not standalone, dedicated mental health units, which is what he said just two weeks ago in a press statement, in black and white.

This minister is slippery. He does not deal with the substance of the problems facing the health system. He spins his way out of situations that are before him. He does not get back to people in a timely fashion. He is incapable of doing anything other than appearing to be spin; there is no substance. We have no confidence in his ability to fix the problems in the health system. In fact they are worse. Independent analysis, his own annual reports from his department, demonstrate that.

This vote of confidence motion must be debated. Standing orders need to be suspended. We would be seeking for there to be no time limit for this debate, particularly given that the motion previously was not able to proceed because the Government is too unwilling to defend this minister. We want to have the debate on this motion today. It is an urgent motion. We are seeking leave now to suspend standing orders so that we can bring it on immediately. There can be no more important thing for Tasmanians right now than to have confidence that there is a functioning health system that can care for them and their loved ones in times of need.

It is a fundamental responsibility of government to provide an essential service like health care. It is a fundamental responsibility of a minister to ensure that his workforce is supported and that patients can access the care they need when they need it. This minister is failing. The Government

is failing. The minister continues to claim that a meeting, the Access Solutions meeting, will be the solution to all of the Government's woes.

The point is that the Government needs a new minister for health. It does not need a meeting. It needs a new minister. We are calling for members to support the seeking of leave.

Time expired.

[11.13 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Government provides absolute support for our Health minister, Mr Ferguson. We demonstrated that support just a few weeks ago when we had a 10 to 12-hour unlimited debate, as I recall, for the want of confidence in our Health minister.

Mr Bacon - Two weeks ago.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - A few weeks ago, yes: a very lengthy debate where members of our Government rose to speak very highly of the contribution of Michael Ferguson in the role of Health minister since March 2014. It is a role that has particular challenges. Mr Ferguson inherited a basket case when it comes to a health system in Tasmania.

Mr Ferguson has demonstrated that he is investing more in health, some \$8 billion across the forward Estimates, 500 more nurses in our health system. Stunts like this, particularly when we have had a debate such as this a few weeks ago and indeed another debate more recently. Stunts like this do not do one thing for one patient in Tasmania; it helps no-one. It helps no-one in Tasmania. All this does is mask the ineptitude of those opposite who had 63 hours or so of scrutiny last week when it comes to budget Estimates and failed. They had their opportunity to produce an alternative budget where they could have spoken more about Health, and they failed to do it; failed to outline an alternative, when it comes to health or policies, with respect to the health system in Tasmania.

What the last few weeks have demonstrated is not the want of confidence in the Health minister but the want of confidence of those opposite, the alternative government. People do not want just whingeing; they want people to step up and produce a policy -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The minister is not addressing the matter before the House. If he cannot stand up and say why we should not be moving want of confidence in the minister, he should accept it and sit down.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - As members will be aware, I gave the Leader of the Opposition plenty of latitude in her contribution but I ask the Deputy Premier to address the actual motion, and that is the seeking of leave.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will address that in the sense that this is really an opportunity for the Opposition to try to mask the fact that they have no solutions for health, no alternative budget, and clinicians themselves do not want the politics. They want the politics upheld to stop -

Ms O'Byrne - Why do you think they write to us?

Mr ROCKLIFF - They want the Opposition to come up with some solutions. They recognise, as we all do, the challenges within our health system. That is why we are investing more than ever before when it comes to our \$8 billion investment in our health system. That is why there are more frontline staff than ever before. It has been under the watch of Mr Ferguson -

Ms O'Byrne - With a 60 per cent increase in adverse outcomes; you would be proud of that, wouldn't you?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Deputy Speaker, under the Health minister, Mr Ferguson, there is more funding into health, there are more resources into health, the beds that were closed, the wards that were shut under those opposite have been reopened by Mr Ferguson, and that is acknowledged. There is not one person on this side of the House who does not acknowledge there are challenges within our health system.

We have record funding going into our health system. We are confronting those challenges. What people would like to hear for once from those opposite, and the clinicians also want hear this: they want the politics to stop and they want the Opposition to produce an alternative budget, alternative policies and to be constructive.

The Government has absolute confidence in our Minister for Health. We demonstrated that a few weeks ago when we had a very lengthy debate in this House, some 12 hours -

Ms O'Byrne - More and more has been revealed since then.

Mr ROCKLIFF - in this House, open-ended, if I recall, where members on all sides got up and spoke on a want of confidence motion in our Minister for Health. Our Government members spoke very highly -

Ms O'Byrne - They could not go more than 10 minutes each.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and were very supportive of the work that the Health minister, Mr Ferguson, has done over the course of the last five years, particularly with the basket case that he inherited -

Ms O'Byrne - They could only speak for 10 minutes each.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne. Second warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - from the very person that consistently interjects opposite. This is just a classic stunt, a poor stunt from those opposite. Of course we have confidence in our Health minister.

Time expired.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, on the seeking of leave, the Greens will always support the House being empowered to have these debates. When something as serious as a want of confidence in a minister is put, then the House should be given the full

opportunity to debate that question of confidence. I will only be speaking on the seeking of leave and the procedural matters. Dr Woodruff will make a contribution on the substantive question.

The notice of motion detailing the Opposition's reasons for lacking confidence in the minister is quite lengthy. It has a number of points in it, a number of which are statements of fact of great concern, particularly the correspondence from RHH registrars, Ambulance Tasmania paramedics, the AMA and the ANMF who all describe unacceptable and dangerous conditions for patients and employees in the health system. It is a matter of great regret that this Health minister has such apparently fractious and at times dysfunctional relations with key stakeholders in his portfolio.

The letter from the ANMF and the request for a meeting should have been dealt with much more promptly than it was and to - sorry, Ms White, what was that?

Ms White - An hour before question time.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. As the Leader of the Opposition interjects, the letter which the minister received more than three weeks ago was only responded to an hour before question time today.

We are quite comfortable having the debate. We still have not had in this place a thorough response from the Health minister to the Auditor-General's deeply concerning report of two weeks ago. The report of the Auditor-General number 11 of 2018-19 looked at the four major hospitals and the chronic and critical issues that confront people who present to our emergency departments. They are matters that this House should be able to debate in full and have a comprehensive response from the Health minister, who tried to put a spin on that report by saying he welcomed it. We know that is not true because it was a damning indictment on his administration of the portfolio.

The part of the notice of motion which I personally have some trouble accepting as fact is to say that the minister has a complete disregard for the health of Tasmanians and for the wellbeing of his health workforce. I do not think that is a statement of fact. If we proceed to the substantive debate on want of confidence we would be looking to have that amended. You have to make your notices of motion on wants of confidence fact-based. I do not think it is true to say the minister has a complete disregard for the health of Tasmanians. We can point to shortcomings in his administration of the portfolio but it is not a statement of fact to say he does not care.

Should we proceed to the substantive debate we would be seeking to make some amendments. We are very comfortable supporting the seeking of leave.

[11.24 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - The Deputy Premier nailed this in his contribution. It is just a stunt. The point that was made in the closing remarks of the previous speaker sums that up.

Ms O'Connor - Do not quote me to make yourself look good.

Mr GUTWEIN - Do not quote you? You have just put it on *Hansard*. You have stood in front of a television camera and you have explained it.

Ms O'Connor - I do not need you repeating my words back to me.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point I just heard the member make is that the motion itself is not factually correct, regardless.

Again, what we see from this side is a paucity of ideas, a paucity of substantive proposals regarding health. All they want to do is get personal. That is what they want to do.

When you look at the efforts of this Health minister compared to what occurred in the past, this motion, what is being moved, demonstrates it is simply a stunt. Have a look at what this Health minister has achieved. More than 550 more nurses employed in the system. More than 160 medical practitioners in the system. More than 100 allied health professionals employed in the system. More than 90 paramedics employed in the system.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Treasurer, on the question of seeking leave, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - They have a view of this minister's performance and they want to seek leave on that regard. It is perfectly reasonable for this side of the House to explain the performance of the minister and the reasons why that motion is nothing but a stunt.

Mr Bacon - Remember who is in charge here, Chair. Remember who is in charge.

Mr O'Byrne - You do not go after one of your own.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mate, we know who you are going after.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the Treasurer is in dispute of your ruling there is a way that he can do that. Otherwise he should be addressing the formula motion before him, which is the seeking of leave.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. I will refer the Treasurer again to the seeking of leave. I have allowed a certain amount of leniency and I will with all members.

Mr GUTWEIN - I am speaking exactly to that point and making the very clear and salient point here that what is being proposed here in terms of seeking of leave is simply a stunt.

Mr Bacon - Have you read the letter?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Bacon, you are officially warned for constant interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - The performance of this Health minister, in terms of what is occurring in health at the moment stands in stark contrast to that side of the House. He has employed nurses, doctors, allied health professionals and more paramedics. The point he has made on a number of occasions is that he is bringing to fruition the rebuild of the Royal, as well as other significant capital investments around this state. You only have to look at that side of the House in terms of their progress on the Royal to know just how much of a stunt this is.

Mr Bacon - You refuse to even read a letter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon, second time.

Mr GUTWEIN - They began in 2006. The contrast could not be clearer. The contrast could not be greater. In 2006 they proposed the rebuild of the Royal. I make the point they do not like the fact -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the matter is seeking leave.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Thank you. Treasurer.

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of seeking leave what they intend to do is bring on a motion, which this side of the House does not agree with. It will not, as the Deputy Premier suggested, improve the health outcomes for even one Tasmanian. The contrast between what they are attempting to do and our defence of the minister on this side of the House could not be clearer. In 2006 they began a process to rebuild the Royal. They wasted \$10 million on looking at the waterfront. By the time we got to government in 2014 how many bricks had been laid? Zero. Not one brick had been laid.

This minister has overseen a complex project that will come online this year.

Mr Bacon - This year?

Ms O'Byrne - Will it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - He began that process in 2014. In eight years from 2006 to 2014 they did not lay one single brick.

This is the sort of parliamentary tactic you do when you have nothing else to do: when you stand for nothing. They had an opportunity to outline an alternative health policy. Did they, when they had the opportunity in responding to the Budget? They did not change one single thing. They did not remove one of the investments that we are making. They did not reach in and say that we would save money here and we would spend it better here. They did nothing at all.

Mr Bacon - Is this the seeking of leave, is it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I can understand they do not like their failings being pointed out and the fact that this is nothing more than a stunt by a lazy and tired Opposition that has nothing else to offer the people of Tasmania. That is apparent for all to see. They want to use the forms of this House to make a political point because they have no other point to make. Nothing else to defend. No policies, no platform. All they can do is personalise the debate and target the Health minister.

I come back to the point I made of the contrast between the performance of this Health minister over the period of time that he has held that job: 550 more nurses put on; around 160 more medical practitioners and more than 100 allied health professionals; 90 more paramedics and he has got the Royal Hobart Hospital back on track.

Time expired.

[11.31 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will reflect on the member who just resumed his seat. In that sort of performance, we know that in this Government it is not only the Health minister who is a problem. We clearly have a Treasurer who is tone deaf. We will replay those words you just uttered in this House to those people who are raising serious concerns about the health system that this bloke is managing and you are chronically underfunding and showing disrespect to.

On the matter of seeking of leave, why do we seek leave as a matter of urgency? It is because the matters are urgent. It is because the health system is in crisis. When the Health minister is on his feet in an insipid display in question time of mealy-mouthed, weasel words, in answer to the direct questions we put to him, this is his mantra: we welcome all suggestions; we welcome all opinions; all views. He says that but the demonstrated experience and the demonstrated action by this minister is exactly the opposite.

The letter from the ANMF is not a list of suggestions; it is a cry for help. It is a cry for help from a system that he is chronically mismanaging. The member who just resumed his seat had an opportunity by interjection to respond. If he had read the letters from the nurses he would know. Let us be clear. This is not just a list of suggestions that maybe we can tweak a few things. This is fundamental to the safe operation of our health and emergency services. I quote from the letter:

The situation in the DEM for the PEN has now gone beyond crisis point.

Beyond crisis point. That is why we are seeking leave as a matter of urgency because the staff of the system are saying it has gone beyond crisis point. This is not just a run-of-the-mill, we have got a couple of ideas, we will run these up the flagpole and see if the minister will like them. This is your staff, minister, saying that this has gone beyond crisis point. When you hear the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer flailing about, attempting to defend their minister's record and their Government's record saying this is a political stunt, here is another quote from the nurses, the employees of this Government in the system:

Many of the PENs express feelings akin to post-traumatic stress disorder as they recount stories to the ANMF seeking our support.

Is this a stunt? Is this a stunt by the union? Is this a stunt by those nurses? This is a letter that was sent to the Government and to the minister in mid-May. A letter was sent subsequently to the Premier, a much longer letter, more of a cry of help from the staff and the workers in the system, the health professionals that we rely on every day to keep Tasmanians safe: a second letter, a second follow-up letter to the Premier and they get up here in defence and say, stop playing politics. How political is it to ignore a letter crying out for help for weeks about suicide, about traumatic circumstances in our emergency department? Then cynically, an hour before question time, you have a perfunctory response to the union saying that 'we will take these issues seriously'. How can they and how can the people of Tasmania believe you?

You dare get up on your feet and say we are playing politics when you failed to respond to an emergency cry for help saying the situation is beyond crisis point and you dare accuse of us of playing politics. The reason why we seek leave as a matter of urgency is because the circumstances are urgent.

This is not the only letter, this is not an out-rider, not an exception to the rule: this is now the rule. We have had the AMA, the paramedics, the Auditor-General, report after report, plea after plea, call after call for action, for change from this minister and this Government and all we have heard are platitudes, weasel-words and this perception of 'we are listening'. If you were listening, these letters would not be written. If there was action, these letters would not be written. If there was movement, consideration, if there was a heart from this Government, these letters would not be written and people would not be dying: a 60 per cent increase on your watch.

This is shameful and we will get up every day of every week, giving voice to the concerns of health professionals and the victims of your system that you have had five years to fix, five years to work on and five years to come up and build relationships.

The problem, minister, is you. You need to move on, this Government needs a fresh start in this portfolio and that is why we are moving this important debate to be had. In question time, in his defence, when we raised issues about his series of statements which contradicted each other, he gave an impression there would be a unit. Clearly the words used by the minister multiple times have been confusing and he has either deliberately confused himself or he has deliberately tried to confuse others to muddy the waters. In his response, he got on his feet and was quoting a press report from 2009. No wonder he is too busy to meet with the ANMF when they ask, because he is too busy Googling, trying to save his own skin. It is disgraceful.

In response to mental health issues, in response to letter after letter, plea after plea from health professionals, all the best you can do is get up here and quote a newspaper report from 2009. Here is a tip minister: less Googling, more action and more listening and sitting down with your workforce to see if you can come up with a response.

We know you cannot, because you are in a rut. You are in a corner, you do not know what to do and we know what will happen. There will be a crisis summit that is coming up around Access and you talk as if these are new things, as if these are things that should be surprising. These issues have been growing for years and you have been asleep at the wheel on this.

You have not responded and for every issue now that is raised in Health, you say wait for this crisis meeting. Well, it is too late for you.

Time expired.

[11.38 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that we need to suspend Standing Orders today to have this debate because it was incomplete two weeks ago when the Labor Party moved to have a vote of no confidence. It was gagged by the Government.

This is such an important matter. It comes, yes, on the back of the ANMF letter which the Greens raised in Question Time, the issues that Mr Brakey, on behalf of ANMF, raised about the psychiatric emergency nurses.

It was something we asked questions of the minister two weeks ago. I asked the minister on behalf of the Greens what he would be saying to the ANMF in response to their plea for a meeting. I asked how he would be responding in real terms to the dramatic reduction in psychiatric emergency nurses in the Department of Psychiatry at the Royal Hobart Hospital and the extreme stress this has created on nurses and other staff who are working in the department; the incredible

attempts to restaff the department that have failed because of the stressful conditions - where nurses from the mainland come in to fill positions, stay for a shift the ANMF said in its letter, and then move on, move back, run away essentially, from conditions which are unsafe for staff to work within, let alone for mental health patients desperately in need of care.

Today we need to have this conversation. The ANMF plea to the minister to respond to the severity of the crisis in the mental health unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital was on the back of the scathing report from the Auditor-General, which has been totally swallowed up by this Government in the Budget.

We have not attended to the detail of this blistering series of recommendations about a culture in the Department of Health which is toxic, which has created dysfunction in organisational flow. We will support a move.

Time expired.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Move Want of Confidence Motion in Minister for Health - Motion Negatived

[11.41 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition - Motion) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent a motion of want of confidence in the Minister for Health from being debated forthwith.

Members on this side of the Chamber have made very strong arguments for why we must have this debate now. We must debate the motion that is before the House, the want of confidence motion in the Minister for Health.

I remind the members opposite, who claim ignorance when it comes to the concerns raised by the ANMF - despite the fact that each of the Cabinet ministers was written to; they each received a copy of this letter. I remind members of the order in which this occurred and the reason why we need to have this debate.

The Minister for Health received a letter from the ANMF, written directly to him on 16 May. The Minister for Health failed to respond to that letter until an hour before question time today. A cynic would believe that he did that deliberately. What is worse is that they asked, and I read from the letter directly -

We ask that you confirm your willingness to attend such a meeting or, in the alternative, the names of the senior members of the Mental Health Services (with authority to make some decisions which require funding) by no later than the close of business Monday 27 May 2019.

to address what they called 'the urgent need for your attention and support regarding mental health services at the hospital'.

The minister failed. He failed to not only respond to the letter but failed to convene a meeting by the deadline the ANMF set. Failed to even pick up the phone and make the phone call to the secretary and say, 'I have received your letter. I respect the concerns you have raised. I understand and hear what you are saying, let us talk about this in detail'. Not even the decency of a phone call.

The secretary of the ANMF was forced, because of the ignorance of the Minister for Health and complete lack of regard for the very serious matters raised in that letter, to write to the Premier on 6 June. That correspondence was copied also to me, the shadow minister for health, the Leader of the Greens, and the spokesperson for health in the Greens, and every single Cabinet minister. I read from this directly, because this is why we do not have confidence in the Minister for Health. I find it very hard to believe that any of his colleagues can too when the ANMF says -

Premier Hodgman,

... ANMF members are appealing to you to exercise your duty of care to all Tasmanians to secure a safe health system.

This letter is damning. It talks about the need for support to be provided to staff, for patients seeking support who are presenting with mental ill health. It talks about the urgent requirement to meet. This letter to you, Premier, finishes with a plea for you to call them, for you to set up a meeting, for you to take a role here, to show some leadership. What did we find out today? The Premier has ordered the minister to respond, which he did an hour before question time.

The letter that the Minister for Health provided to the ANMF does not talk about setting up a meeting as requested with the clinicians that are advised in this letter. It does not address the particular concerns that are raised. It ignores the plight of those staff who are working in a health system. I will go into this in the debate, but I fear again that the minister is going to seek cover and protection from his colleagues and not allow the debate, so I will talk about some of these matters now.

It talks about ANMF members being upset at having to constantly inform patients who are acutely unwell and in severe pain that they must continue to wait, despite experiencing extensive hours of waiting, or worse, they must commence treatment for their illness in the waiting room with little privacy, comfort or dignity. Elderly patients, children and patients dying of cancer are waiting in corridors with ambulance officers for sometimes an entire shift, or longer, without admission.

It is not uncommon for a patient in the waiting room to deteriorate to a level that requires a lifesaving intervention. ANMF is aware of one death in the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital waiting room in the past three months. This is incredibly serious. We must debate this motion before the House today. We must debate confidence, or lack thereof, in the Minister for Health. A meeting will not save this minister and you cannot put off making a decision until then.

The minister has shown through his half a decade as Minister for Health that he is not capable of performing this role. He is negligent in his duty to the people of Tasmania. He is negligent to those patients who are waiting and have not received the treatment that they should expect in a Tasmanian hospital system.

Half a decade as the minister. He shut beds in the mental health ward and has ignored the pleas for help from the AMA, the ANMF, medical registrars, the Medical Staff Association, paramedics.

They have all written, all raised concerns, who have all asked for us to ask you questions in this place and in Estimates, because they are not getting anywhere with this minister.

You can talk about record health funding, but it means nothing if you have no relationship with the people who deliver that funding in services to our patients in the hospital system. The minister does not have the respect of the health workforce. He does not have the respect of key stakeholders in his portfolio. That is why they are going around him and they are writing to us and they are writing to the Premier. They are not listened to by this Minister for Health. You can give him all the money in the world, but if he fails to talk to people, to respond to their concerns, to sit down and work with them then it means nothing, because he does not have their respect. He does not work with them and provide leadership in a system that is in crisis.

The ANMF says it is in crisis. The AMA says it is in crisis. Patients, people, the community, families: they know our health system is in crisis. It has become worse under the Minister for Health. It is not money that the health system needs, it is a new minister with a heart. A minister who cares. A minister who can work constructively with people, who will have the decency to respond to a letter that he receives from the key stakeholders in his portfolio, to pick up the phone, have a conversation, sit down with people and act with decency. People right across Tasmania depend upon that.

They expect a health service that will support them and care for them, that will support their loved ones who work there and who depend on those services, and who right now are let down by this Minister for Health.

Time expired.

[11.49 a.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, any matter concerning our health system, the support that Government can provide to those who work within it and, most importantly, those who need good care in our health system is a matter that we take very seriously, including debates in this place. As we have said before, when it comes from an Opposition party that is a policy free zone, has an appalling record of its own, it is a little galling to say the least. Not only today do we find out again that they are a policy-free zone; they are good at political game playing; they are also a one trick pony. We are having these repeated stunts in our parliament that do nothing to help our health system or the people who work within it. Of course we take on board the views of experts and concerned constituents, from our patients and from our medical staff about what needs to happen. It is why we have increased our investments.

It is why we have responded to rapidly increasing demand and strains in our health system that are confronting any government around our country, as they are here. They have been met with increased investments; different ways of approaching, better solutions to improved health services, all supported by this Government and all of the minister's colleagues; a very hard-working and diligent minister, yes, and he is subject to all the silly name calling and the petty politics, the petty pointscoring by members opposite that does nothing. It helps no-one and it certainly will not distract us as I have said before from getting on with the job of wanting to deliver a budget that once again is being held up by the Labor and Greens opposition who would rather sit in here and make petty political points. Get into silly name-calling: we have had that all morning, achieving nothing, delivering nothing. It is actually slowing down the delivery of a budget and its progress through this parliament.

It demonstrates that all this is about is once again making their one and only political point. It is the only thing they bring forward. Could they produce an alternative budget? No. They say our priorities are all wrong but when asked what are yours, what would you do different? There is absolute stunned silence; they offer nothing. One minute they say they will come to a meeting, then they will not. They will reserve the right to do as the Opposition Leader has done in the past.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Premier at the moment is misleading the House. We have written to him and requested meetings with him. We have written to him suggesting things. He has ignored every single one.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr HODGMAN - What will happen is the same thing that happened after the housing forum. The Leader of the Opposition came and appeared to participate in trying to find some solutions to our housing demand and then reserved the right, once the meeting was done, to go outside and criticise everything that had been considered and agreed upon by stakeholders, experts and all those who wanted to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

This is again just a rehash. It is a repeat of all the Opposition, the Labor-Greens opposition can offer in this place. We have had hours and hours of no-confidence motions moved by the opposition parties. We have had all sorts of stunts. Who will forget them putting 3000 pictures out the front of Parliament House. As if that was going to help anyone.

In contrast, under this Government and this minister, he has employed an additional 800 FTEs in frontline health, increased health funding by nearly \$2 billion since the 2013 budget - yours - and opened more than 130 new beds across the state. What have Labor and the Greens done? Waste time and achieve nothing. We have certainly got a strong track record but we have always acknowledged there is more to do and, yes, there are a lot of views of what we can do better. We are not getting anything at all from opposition parties; perhaps occasionally from the Greens but nothing at all from Labor.

When it comes to meetings that the minister has undertaken, I am told in the last 12 months alone he has attended more than 100 stakeholder meetings. We do take on board all the views of interested participants in not only those forums but also our constituents who write, email or ring us up. It is a constant area of effort for this Government and it is matched by our willingness, not only to listen but to respond where we can.

It is important also, and this is in no way to not accept any responsibility which of course we do, as does this minister who has not walked away when it would have been easy for him to do so. He has wanted to stick to the job at hand, to stay the course and deliver what he set out to do and that is a far better performing health system. There has been, these are the facts, an increase in demand, a 21 per cent increase just on the Royal Hobart Hospital alone, in cases presenting to our hospitals and they are more complex.

We need more capacity, as has recently and so often been pointed out by the minister. We actually have yesterday's hospitals not meeting today's needs. That is why we have had to undertake the massive redevelopment of the Royal Hobart Hospital and increase capacity in our other hospitals.

Over the next five years, we will finish the Royal Hobart Hospital, the Launceston General Hospital and the Mersey redevelopments, open more than 300 more hospital beds and recruit almost a thousand new staff into our health system. All this is only possible because our budget is in balance and we are able to afford this - open new mental health facilities, including for adolescents; 27 community-based mental health beds in more modern facilities and recruit 50 more paramedics. We have comprehensive master plans in place for all of our major public hospitals. We will continue to listen, to engage, and to work damn hard to make sure that Tasmanians are getting the health service that they need, and that we recognise still falls short.

Changing the minister is the only thing those opposite have; they have no policies, they have no ideas, no alternative budget, and no health policy that could stack up. They had seven versions of the health policy in the election campaign and it is little wonder they are a little risk adverse when it comes to developing a new health policy. They know it takes work and it requires a lot of effort. It certainly requires a lot of substance and capacity, more than the Opposition party have ever been able to demonstrate. They offer no policies; they do not, in their alternative budget, come forward. Changing the minister, as our health professionals said, will not change anything. We will not give you a green light to again disrupt our parliament's business.

Time expired.

[11.56 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Why are you so scared, Premier? Why are you so scared to have a decent debate in this House about the competency or the lack of competency of your minister? When we were here a couple of weeks ago in the wake of the Auditor-General's report, in the wake of a damning report that showed a 60 per cent increase in adverse outcomes, you stopped the debate. You did not test your numbers on the floor; you did not let us have that debate. Do not come in here and say that this is a stunt we do every week; this is the option that we had to bring to account this minister who fails to negotiate fairly with his staff and with his stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, this minister comes to this House and says, 'I have a great working relationship with them, we meet regularly. In fact, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation and I are going to meet every week now'. What on earth happened to the meeting they required before 27 May? What on earth happened? If this minister has such a good and strong relationship with the AMA they would not have given us a copy of a letter that was written directly to us to get us to ask questions in Estimates, because when they ask him, he does not respond. He nods in the House, he does platitudes to the media, he puts out a press release, but he does not respond to the genuine concerns of the Australian Medical Association.

We would not be having this debate today if things had not progressively worsened. We now have the knowledge that back on 16 May, the ANMF wrote to him, desperate for a response, begging him to meet with them about the crisis that their members are experiencing; begging him to engage. Did this minister engage, Madam Speaker? Was there a meeting before 27 May either with himself or, they made it easy, they said, 'Please give us someone in the hospital who has the capacity to make these decisions. We will meet with them if he will not meet with us.'

Did the minister do that? No. So, what had to happen on 6 June? Another letter had to be sent and because they had been ignored by so many people, the letter was copied to the Deputy Premier, Jeremy Rockliff; Treasurer, Peter Gutwein; Health Minister, Michael Ferguson; Attorney-General, Elise Archer, Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, Jacquie Petrusma; Minister for Resources, Guy Barnett; Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Sarah Courtney;

Minister for Housing, Roger Jaensch; Madam Speaker, Sue Hickey; Leader of the Opposition, Rebecca White; Sarah Lovell; Leader of the Greens, Cassy O'Connor; and Dr Rosalie Woodruff.

It was sent to the Premier because this minister did nothing and this is a desperate plea. As Premier of Tasmania, ANMF members believe you hold the final authority responsible for the state of the health system in Tasmania. You must be fully informed about the situation experienced by your nurses. As Premier of this state, ANMF members believe you are letting people with mental illness down in Tasmania, by failing to address the situation for patients presenting to the department of accident and emergency with mental illness.

If he had such a good relationship with the ANMF, why did he not meet with them? Why in order to get any response, did they have to write to the Premier, copy in every Cabinet minister and members of the Opposition? What happened over the weekend? We went from a minister who blatantly ignored the desperate pleas for help from the people he apparently has such a great working relationship with, to one hour before this parliament sits, they get a letter. How cynical, how shameful, how pathetic, how political.

The minister who stands in this House and accuses the Opposition of playing games and politics, waited until one hour before question time to respond to this to buy himself out of trouble. Not because he gives a damn about what is happening in our EDs, not because he was concerned about the issues raised by the AMA, by the paramedics or by the ANMF, but because he wanted to give himself some political cover. This is not a place where you get political cover, minister. This is a place where you are held to account. A censure motion and a want of confidence motion are the tools that this House has to bring you to some kind of responsibility for your behaviour.

The minister has been running around saying, 'Don't worry, I have a summit happening, everything is okay and I have \$30 million I can use'. How many times has he already spent the \$30 million? The people attending the summit would have you believe the \$30 million is for ED solutions. In Estimates last week you told us it was to pay for all the unaffordable staff positions because we now find out that many people employed in the health system are going to have to go. Because of a new audit, they have decided they are not affordable positions. That is coming out of the \$30 million. Every solution this minister seeks comes out of that \$30 million, including his mental health solution. It is going to come out of the magic pudding of \$30 million.

This minister does not tell the truth. The weasel words he used to explain it, 'I would not want people to be misled about my intentions and what I meant around mental health because we never said we were going to have dedicated facilities'. Except he did. He said it time and again in this House, to stakeholders in the community and in a press release only two weeks ago.

Do you know how he explained it when he scurried into the House at the end of the day when he thought nobody was watching? 'I am really sorry there has been a mismatch of words'. We have non-core promises, we have outright lies and a mismatch of words. Did you misspeak, minister, time and again when you promised?

The reason we are here is that if minister could work with stakeholders to find genuine solutions, then we would have had it by now. I said when we stood here two weeks ago, if the only predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour then what we know is that this minister will say what he needs to say to get him out of trouble today, out of trouble on the Royal timelines, out of trouble on the deaths that have occurred in ED, out of trouble on the suicide issues and out of trouble on mental health.

He will say what he needs to say to get him through the media cycle. Then nothing happens. The outcome is that people die. People are dying. This minister might say, 'I care and nobody else does', but the reason we raise this is because Tasmanians care. The people who have lost loved ones care. Every member of this House cares. The difference for us is that every single member in this House is the government on watch when this occurs and every single one of us is liable for this minister's actions.

He must be stood down so that we can find a way to resolve our crisis in the health system because this minister is incapable of doing that himself.

Time expired.

[12.03 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, this continues to be an issue which the parliament must focus on above all others. We urgently need this debate today. The parliament was not allowed to have it last time.

Two weeks ago, the Auditor-General's report raised serious comments about the state of our emergency departments and made strong recommendations that must be attended to immediately. He made it clear that people who are accessing emergency department services are at greater risk under this Government. They are at a 60 per cent greater risk of having an adverse event. They are less likely to access a bed when they need it. The Auditor-General also made it clear that there were savings in the health service that have not been achieved: savings that do not cost money but require leadership and cultural change to fix the problems, the blockages in the system. They mean we could have up to 3000 extra bed days a year than we have now. That was before this Treasurer delivered his awful Budget which is denying what Tasmanians have been asking for - properly funded mental health services.

What we have in this Budget and from the Minister for Health is slippery language and a failure to deliver the dedicated adolescent mental health unit that this minister has been promising, that Coroner Olivia McTaggart called for so passionately in her coronial inquest recommendations four years ago. After the tragic suicide of six young people in 2015, Olivia McTaggart made it clear there must be a dedicated acute youth mental health unit in Tasmania.

Another coronial inquest is now in train after another young Tasmanian lost their life after they had to travel out of the state to get mental health services because acute mental health services were not available in this state.

Two weeks ago in parliament we heard slippery language from this minister. The Greens raised the issue on behalf of the ANMF about the psychiatric emergency nurses. I asked the minister in question time what he meant about the 16 beds in the Budget. The Budget does not say they are for a dedicated acute mental health unit for adolescents. It does not say those words. It says 16 beds in an adolescent ward. That is not the same thing. The minister came in on the MPI and three times he said, 'We will provide dedicated adolescent mental health services'. 'K Block is designed and built with a dedicated adolescent mental health unit.' He said again, 'It will be a dedicated adolescent mental health unit'.

I asked him specifically to point to where in the Budget it said those words. He did not, but he said he was saying it and had on many occasions. He implied that his word was truth, that I should trust him and that we should all trust his words. I would like to see it in black and white and so

would the parents of young people in distress. Where does it say the word 'dedicated' and what does 'dedicated' mean? I also asked him that in the budget Estimates.

The minister said during question time that there is a 'primary purpose'. If there is a primary purpose it means there is a secondary purpose. If there is a secondary purpose it means it is a multi-purpose ward, it is not dedicated. 'Dedicated' according to the Oxford dictionary means 'exclusively allocated to or intended for a particular purpose'.

That is not what we are getting, but that is what the minister keeps saying. He came into parliament again that day and retracted his words because he realised he had put himself in a situation where he had promised things that are not happening. He said he had been advised that during Ms O'Connor's contribution he appeared to indicate that all 16 beds on the new adolescent ward in K Block would be for mental health patients. 'I confirm and reiterate my assurance that there will be designated mental health beds on the ward. However, not all 16 beds will be for mental health patients'. You cannot have it all ways. You cannot have a 'dedicated' adolescent mental health patient unit that is also available for other adolescents, or available for other mental health patients of different ages. How stupid does he think Tasmanians are? The people who care about these things, the parents, the young people who need these services, can look into this Budget and can see the truth: this minister is spinning a Budget and what we have got is we have got 16 beds. We just cannot take the minister at this word.

[12.10 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I appreciate the support I am receiving from my colleagues who are actually being very fair-minded about the fact that the Government has worked very hard in health. We listened to the former failed health minister in silence. We listened to the former Opposition health spokesperson in silence but they do not like to hear the truth of what the Premier has had to say.

I will add to that and I will begin my comments on this question by again refuting what has just been said by the member from the Greens because the Government has been very consistent. I certainly have acknowledged that at only one point I could have used my words more carefully and I immediately moved to correct that. It shows that the member opposite is not able to have the good grace to accept that. I have been very consistent. I stand by the press release. I stand by the comments that I have made at Estimates, including one year ago.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - If I could please be heard. What is on display is that the Opposition is unhappy that the Government is building the facilities that we need to have. There will be dedicated mental health beds. There will be a unit within that ward and that is not unusual. For example, you might have a stroke unit within a neurosurgery ward.

The fact is that the Labor Party has no health policy. They have been too lazy and they are too unwilling to even have an alternative budget. They do not like it; it is uncomfortable for them. So, they plan, what can we do today? In their meetings they have decided what they can do today. We had better have another stunt. It is a simple fact that the Government in fact supported a no-confidence motion being debated on 30 April and it went for 10 hours. The matter was resolved with a vote on the floor but the Labor Party does not want to accept it because they want another stunt.

They do not want to listen to a different point of view. They have to keep being rude. Labor is policy free and they are on the fence. They have walked away from the health portfolio over there and they do not like the fact that the Government is building the facilities that they promised to Tasmanians but never got around even to laying a single brick. It is this Government - and I do not take personal credit - not only has it laid the first brick, it will lay the final brick on that redevelopment which is the enabling capacity that we need.

Mr Bacon - Tell us when? When?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon.

Mr FERGUSON - This member continues to interject because he does not like it. We are building the facility and it is in its final year.

Mr Bacon - When? Tell us when.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon.

Mr FERGUSON - If you would keep up with what the Government has been doing you would acknowledge that, but you do not like it.

Also, in the Budget which we are debating today - or supposed to be - we have full funding for stage two of the redevelopment which includes a bigger emergency department for the Royal Hobart Hospital. The Labor Party does not like that our mental health funding that we have provided as a result of the election is four times bigger than that promised by Ms White in the election, which was her big play for health. They did not do the work. They promised 10 beds but could not even say where they would be.

Importantly, we are committed to do the work. I want members opposite to understand this. It is not a simple matter. It is not a simple job. It is very complex when you have got today's demand in yesterday's hospitals. We are now building the extra capacity that we need and I can see that members opposite do not like it. We have employed 500 more nurses. We funded the psychiatric emergency nurses which were left unfunded by the previous government when we came to office. We have opened 130 new beds across the state. We have worked very closely with stakeholders. We listen to them all.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Again, this is the skill of your debate. You cannot listen to the other side. You do not like it. The facts are too inconvenient for you. You do not like them.

We have engaged with stakeholders and just in the last year had about 100 meetings with them. We get that work done. We do not put out a press release every time we sit down with someone. We do the work. We do the planning. We go to budget. We get results and we then open extra beds and we open extra capacity.

Labor just wants to waste time. This matter has been addressed already. Rebecca White has no case and she is trying to fend off David O'Byrne and keep him at bay. The Government is actually focused on solutions.

Ms Butler - Have you met with those families who have passed away? Have you looked both parents in the eyes and said, 'Look, I'm sorry.'

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - On 19 June - this is the skill of the Labor Party's debate. They cannot listen to any other point of view; on 19 June we are bringing all of the right people together so that we can address solutions.

Ms White - What about 30 May? What about the press release you put out.

Mr FERGUSON - A really pathetic performance from members opposite. We want the right people in the room. The Leader of the Opposition has even been invited, herself or her replacement delegate from the Labor Party, because stakeholders are calling on politicians to work together. The Labor Party is incapable.

Ms White - Like all of the motions and the letter I wrote last year that were ignored. Don't patronise me, Mr Ferguson.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - It is quite a nasty and personal approach from members opposite, but we are focusing on solutions, actually helping people, opening more capacity. We have opened an extra eight beds for mental health, which has already happened.

Ms White - In their homes. They are not beds. They are actually in their homes.

Mr FERGUSON - But you do not like it. You are resistant to it. You have even opposed us rebuilding the Peacock Centre, which was burned down and you played politics with that. Plainly, today is a day for getting the Budget through so that we can get the \$8.1 billion for health. Again, you want to hold that up.

Ms White - We passed a RAF earlier.

Mr FERGUSON - A cheap political shot. Once again, an unwillingness ever to listen to an alternative point of view.

We have the redevelopment on track and it is a good thing because the Liberals started that building and it is the Liberals who will finish it. Next year we will have a winter where we are actually in there. This is the final winter without the redevelopment. We object to your stunts and games.

Time expired.

AYES 12

NOES 10

Mr Bacon
Dr Broad

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett

Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Ms Hickey
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

Ms Courtney
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Hodgman
Mr Jaensch (Teller)
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mrs Rylah

PAIR

Ms Houston

Mr Tucker

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The results of the division: Ayes 12, Noes 10. In accordance with standing order 358 this motion requires a two-thirds majority, therefore, the noes have it.

Motion negatived.

SITTING TIMES

[12.24 p.m.]

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

That for today, Wednesday and Thursday of this week, the House shall not stand adjourned at 6 p.m. and that the House continue to sit past 6 p.m.

In accordance with the resolution the House has already agreed to, we have provided for up to 18 hours of debate for the committee stage report on the two appropriation bills. I indicate that while we have allocated two hours per each minister's outputs, that allows for the 18 hours, but depending on how much the House wishes to scrutinise or debate each of those, we will monitor. It is our intention to speak with Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Connor as to that.

I would like to indicate that we will monitor how today goes and have a disposition to probably go a little bit later on the Wednesday night and hopefully arrange so that we have the remaining ministers and time together with the First Home Owners Bill for Thursday so that we can be aiming to have a normal adjournment time at approximately 6.00 p.m. on Thursday.

[12.25 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, on the motion put forward by the Leader of Government Business we are prepared to sit for as long as it takes to get through this issue, despite the allegations in the previous debate that we are delaying matters. We are prepared to do the work that is necessary in the time that is put in so we would support the extension for tonight and tomorrow. I am working on the assumption - and I am not sure if I have it - but on Thursday that we would finish at the normal adjournment time. I seek from the Leader of Government Business an indication, for the management of our speakers, et cetera, what time tonight and what time we

can probably have a discussion for tomorrow, but if you can give us an indication about time tonight that would be good.

[12.26 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I will speak from my chair very briefly to say we are quite happy to sit late tomorrow night, tonight, Thursday night, if we need to. Dr Woodruff and I will be here doing our work, as ever.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mental Health

[12.27 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: mental health.

It is important that we have services in Tasmania that support people of all ages who may be suffering from mental ill health. It has come to our attention that there are deficiencies across the state when it comes to delivery of services to support people. This is why we need to have the debate today because there are a number of areas where there needs to be improvements made.

Without reflecting on the previous debate, I point out that there have been a number of matters that have come to this House's attention in the last two weeks which is the last time we had a comprehensive debate on a no-confidence matter. It was longer than that. There has been more information about how the minister has failed following the Auditor-General's report, which is a very lengthy document that details significant problems in the health system that have become worse since the time he has been the minister.

There has been a confirmed further delay to the Royal Hobart Hospital development, a project that was delayed a year by the minister and then expected to be available by August this year, now delayed until September, perhaps the end of the year. Now it will not be available to take patients until the new year with no new beds funded until the new financial year so that is winter next year.

There have also been competing statements made by the minister with respect to the provision of mental health beds for young people. These are children, adolescents, young people in our state who right now do not have dedicated adolescent mental health beds and the minister said very clearly in a press release on 30 May 2019 titled *Adolescent Mental Health Units already being built* and I quote:

To be clear - the K Block facility is designed and built as a dedicated Adolescent Mental Health Unit and the ward 4K Redevelopment will provide a new 36-bed contemporary facility which will include Tasmania's first dedicated Adolescent Mental Health Unit.

In conversations that were had last week during Estimates, along with other members on the committee, we asked a number of questions respecting the provision of beds for adolescents

suffering from mental ill health. The Chief Psychiatrist of this state provided a response to a question, I think it was to Dr Woodruff, where he could only confirm two beds would be for mental health. That does not, for me, describe a unit, particularly given the statements from the minister who said,

To be clear - the K Block facility is designed and built as a dedicated Adolescent Mental Health Unit.

Two beds do not make a unit. The minister has raised the expectations of families with young people that there would be a service available in their home state for acute mental health treatment. He cannot, and he still could not today, detail the timeline for when those beds would become available. Are they in the Launceston hospital or the Hobart hospital? Just a vague financial year, which is a 12-month period of time, but nothing more definitive than that about when those beds would become available or, indeed, how many beds would be made available for patients who are dealing with mental ill health.

This is important. Early intervention is the best way we can support young people to recover from mental illness. Making sure they have access to services early, and acute services where necessary, is vitally important.

I do not want the minister to talk about something that happened 10 years ago. He has been the minister for half a decade. The minister needs to take responsibility for the fact that he made very clear commitments to people that there would be dedicated adolescent mental health service units at the Launceston and Royal Hobart hospitals. Now he has come into the House as late as two weeks ago saying he had mismatched words. Yet he continues to repeat those same words. People deserve to know the truth. They deserve to know how many beds and when those beds will be opened at Launceston and the Royal Hobart hospitals. The minister would know this information but he refuses to share it. Or perhaps he does not know this information and it is a demonstration again of his hands-off approach to the Health portfolio.

This is a negligent Health minister as demonstrated by correspondence that was also shared over the last couple of weeks from the ANMF. A letter that was written to him on 16 May that he did not respond to until an hour before question time today. So concerned was the ANMF that it had not received a response to its concerns regarding psychiatric emergency nurses and staffing at the Royal Hobart Hospital in particular, but also right across the state, that it wrote to the Premier on 6 June.

Madam Speaker, I know you received this letter. I received a copy of this letter as did every Cabinet minister. It details a scary state of affairs for Tasmania's mental health services. I will draw your attention to some of the issues that are facing our workers in the mental health system -

The Department of Psychiatry is currently experiencing significant bed block worse than most other areas. It has the highest number of nursing vacancies in the RHH and until this month was experiencing some of the highest overtime and sick leave rates.

That was a direct quote from the ANMF letter written to the Premier because it could not get a response from the minister despite writing to him nearly a month ago.

The letter says that,

On average between seven and nine mental health patients are waiting in DEM for a bed on DoP each day.

We also know from advice provided by the minister to Estimates that the longest wait for a patient at the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital is 183 hours. A mental health patient waited 183 hours. That is seven days in the emergency department for someone who is acutely unwell, with a mental health condition waiting to access a bed. Worse, at the North West Regional Hospital someone waited 188 hours in the emergency department before they could access a bed. That is more than seven days. The emergency department is the worst possible place to wait for somebody who is suffering mental ill health.

The ANMF also writes about the Department of Emergency Medicine, which is where these patients are waiting. It is a dire state of affairs. It is incredibly concerning.

Time expired.

[12.34 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has no policies on mental health. They have abandoned what they even took to the election. There is a lot of politics being played: way too much for my liking. The Government is more than willing to be accountable and scrutinised on our policies and the delivery of them.

We are now delivering our \$104 million commitment to mental health. It is a record. I know members opposite do not like it when we remind them that these initiatives set new records. We know; we understand the pressure. If the Leader of the Opposition's argument rests on an idea that the minister or the Government do not care, they are wrong; they have no argument. If their arguments rest on a claim that the Government thinks we have done enough, that is wrong. This Government is very passionate about mental health; I am, as a father and as a school teacher. That is what I bring. That explains why we would put such an effort in. It is for the Leader of the Opposition, with all of her free advice, cheap character assessments and, frankly, the sort of nasty, poisonous, personal reflections that continue to be offered, to explain why her commitment to mental health was just one quarter of the magnitude of the Liberals.

I do refute, I have been there, I have explained this already, and I will not continue to rehearse it, but I will reject the claim by the member opposite, who has just resumed her seat, that the Government has been misleading the community. Nothing could be further from the truth. We will be setting up those units. I am not able to give an exact number of the beds that will be in the dedicated adolescent mental health units because I am awaiting that advice. I am quite open about that point. You ought not to claim that that position means the Government is being slippery or dishonest. That is a most appalling claim. The Chief Psychiatrist is my chief adviser on this and the Chief Psychiatrist said this -

At the moment, the models of care for those two units ...

Notice how he has used the word 'units' -

... the models of care for those two units are being finalised and, until they are, I cannot actually tell you precisely how many there will be.

I will deviate from his quote for a moment to try to help members opposite to understand why there is this misunderstanding. We are building a 16-bed adolescent unit for Hobart and an eight-bed adolescent unit at Launceston, within which there will be dedicated adolescent mental health units incorporated. I now return to the Chief Psychiatrist's words -

I can indicate the actual occupancy of children, that is people under the age of 18, is about 6.5 beds per day throughout the year. We would expect to meet demand as we are going to be meeting something in the order of 6.5 beds in the start.

If we are all committed to adolescent mental health, these kinds of reassurances ought to bring us together, not divide with the very nasty toxic approach that I continue to hear.

We are building the physical facility, we have funded the staff in the Budget and we are awaiting the clinical guidance, about what is the best split mix for mental health and for surgical and for young people with medical needs.

Is the Leader of the Opposition making a case that each one of the 24 beds should be just for mental health? I do not think Dr Woodruff is, but are you? To do that, when we are getting advice that the occupancy that would be anticipated at this early stage, is in the realm of six-and-a-half, what about the young people who need health care before and after surgery and for their general medical needs?

As the minister, as the Government, we are waiting for that advice. I am certainly not withholding it. When it is received and when the Government looks at that advice and considers the advice, we will make further statements about it. I will no longer tolerate members opposite making claims on honesty when we have been very transparent on this, including as far away ago as one year ago at Estimates where we made it clear, and I quote myself here -

They are not just mental health for adolescents, they are adolescent beds within the paediatrics.

Minister, did you say 6.8 beds?

I had been quoting the Chief Psychiatrist earlier in my contribution. It was at Estimates with the Legislative Council. He used the figure of 6.5, but neither you nor I should hold him to that while he continues the work of planning his advice to Government.

I invite members opposite to stop playing politics with adolescent mental health. We are building what you promised in 2009 but failed to deliver.

In 2009, health minister, Lara Giddings said -

These will be one year away, 12 months.

One year after that Michelle O'Byrne was the health minister and did not deliver them. In fact, the government went on for a further four years and did not deliver them.

We are building them. I wish it had been done years ago. It was not and we are proud to be doing it for Tasmanians and we will not have the shine taken off this by people who are wanting to score a political hit. We are doing a lot in the mental health area. We have taken a long-term vision

approach which includes not only 10-year aspirational targets but short and medium-term actions as well. We are rebuilding the Peacock Centre and we are commencing the Mental Health Hospital in the Home trial. That commenced in March. This is making a real difference and again, politicians gloss over this stuff. I have met the teams. They are saying to me that this has really improved the care for patients.

They are saying to me that it is helping patient flow. It is improving access in wards and improving access in the emergency departments. Does the Government think we have got this all stitched up? No. I come back to the point that we are working with our stakeholders, we are certainly looking at solutions and if we can do more, we want to do more and we will do more.

To hear the Labor Party trying to make political hay on mental health is appalling. The Leader of the Opposition should be ashamed for the way she has brought descriptions of suicide into this House in a way which is completely out of step with contemporary thinking about the way we speak and communicate around suicide and self-harm.

I have explained this in the past. I have arranged for briefings for members which some have taken advantage of and I encourage a greater level of sensitivity to how that subject is treated and restate this Government's commitment to mental health.

[12.42 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it is pretty galling to stand up here and have to talk about the words, but the words matter. We are actually talking about young people's lives and we are talking about improving the services for young people in acute stress, mental health distress in Tasmania, particularly in southern Tasmania and also in northern Tasmania.

We have a situation where young people and children are admitted in mental health distress to have intensive acute psychiatric services support but, at the moment, into wards for adults. That is untenable in a society like Tasmania, to continue to place young people into wards with adults. Children who may be eight, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20, into situations with people who might be 40, 50, 70, and up and who have a whole life and emotion and, frankly, an energy level which is utterly inappropriate for a child to be exposed to.

This is the context within which Coroner McTaggart made her very strong recommendation to the Tasmanian Government and I am quoting from her judgment:

That a dedicated inpatient unit for adolescents or young persons between the ages of 12 and 25 years be established, designed around the needs of that cohort, including the treatment of those suffering from an acute state of mental illness or suicidality.

She also went on to make recommendations that there needed to be a multi-systemic approach, a multidisciplinary facility for young people suffering from an acute state of mental illness or suicidality. They must have comprehensive through-care and aftercare models to provide ongoing community-based risk management as children exit from acute care.

The words are that the minister promised and has continued to promise a dedicated acute adolescent and child mental health facility in the south and the north, yet again we see that he continues to be slippery with language. It cannot be the case that a ward which may have - now the

minister is talking about units within units. A dedicated adolescent mental health unit but within that it is actually going to be a ward and within the ward there will be a unit.

We really need some clarity about what is going on here because I do not understand. The minister is not being clear how many beds there will be. Now he is referring to the comments made by Dr Groves in the Legislative Council during the Estimates process last week. He quoted Dr Groves saying that there is an average need of 6.8, 6.5 beds for such a facility in Tasmania. I asked Dr Groves questions in health Estimates last week and I had from him what I understood to be quite a different sense. This is quoting from *Hansard* from Estimates last week. He said -

The staffing model is still in the process of being developed so it will be able to cater for a flexible number of inpatients. I would expect that at any point in time we will always have adolescent mental health inpatients in that unit because the demand numbers for our state recognise that we would need to have that.

That was precisely on the basis of 16 beds, minister. That was the context. That was the question. He was talking in the paragraph beforehand about a 16-bed adolescent unit. Then he also said:

Not all beds are for mental health.

Then he went on to say that he would expect that at any point in time that the adolescent mental health inpatients would require all the beds so what is going on?

Minister, I am reading from *Hansard* and I have just read it into *Hansard* again.

Mr Ferguson - You are verballing.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am not, minister. Are you disagreeing with the way *Hansard* is recorded? The conversation from last week. Dr Groves said -

I would expect that at any point in time we will always have adolescent mental health inpatients in that unit because the demand number -

For that unit being, the 16 beds of the unit that I was asking him about -

because the demand numbers for our state recognise that we would need to have that.

My point is we have a situation where there is slippery language from this minister. How can we, how can parents and young people in distress, possibly trust this minister's ability to be able to deliver this really key service that is required? The minister refused to answer the question: what will happen between now and when that service is built?

We have a situation at the moment where there is nothing. All these promises and slippery language about whether it will be six beds or 16 beds and whether they will be dedicated or whether young people who have other issues, who are inpatients, whether they will also be accessing the ward? It seems they will be. What will happen between now and then? They are still without support.

Time expired.

[12.48 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, as a local member I believe that we have an obligation to raise issues where the safety of our community is compromised. The lack of mental ill health services in our state is shocking.

Labor is active in applying pressure on the Government to face up to the problem. I believe you are not facing up to the problem. You are not doing the work to consult and liaise with key stakeholders either. The Labor mental health discussion paper, which we released earlier this year, provided us even more insight into the significant deficiency in mental health services in Tasmania. The compelling evidence is that mental health support has to start in the early years and a future Labor government will appoint mental health workers in every single state primary and high school. How is that being lazy? How is that not finding solutions, minister? This is a solution. It is one solution. We need a lot more than one, but this is one solution.

The minister states that they are focused on solutions. I find that to be an absolutely rubbish statement.

I have raised this issue repeatedly with examples of how the inadequate provision of mental health services has personally affected community members, constituents; people who have spoken to me about their experiences. I have raised it before. A lady missed her daughter's wedding because her medication was out of whack. She called an ambulance and was taken to the Royal Hobart Hospital. She sat there for over 24 hours. She became agitated. She was then arrested and sent across the road to police headquarters and was put in an outside cage, of sorts. This is a person whose medication was not right: a person with long-term mental health problems since she was a young person. This person was then put into a position where the police called her husband to say, 'Come and get your wife.' The husband said:

I will come and get my wife after you walk her across the road to get the help that she needs. I can come and do it for you if you like. I can drive the hour-and-a-half to take her hand and walk her back across the road to get the help that she wants.

She then spent three weeks in hospital getting her levels back to normal and missed her daughter's wedding. That is just one example. I have raised it before.

Another example is the 18- or 19-year-old who was brought by ambulance to the Royal Hobart Hospital after a third suicide attempt. After she was dealt with, her stomach was pumped and there was no bed for her she was asked, 'Can someone from home come and get you?' No one at home had a car, so they could not. Then that person was asked whether she was right to get home on her own. She did not have a choice. They put her on the first bus at six o'clock in the morning and no one even called to see if she got home properly. That is not the staff's fault. That is the system's fault. That was her third attempt. You cannot tell me that you have any understanding of what is really going on out there, minister.

I have the letter here from the ANMF dated 6 June and it says -

Patients under mental health orders cannot leave the hospital. Some wait up to six days for a bed. Psychologically unwell patients have hung themselves in the department.

Have you as the Health minister met with any of the families of those people who have hanged themselves in the department? Have you spoken to the mothers, the brothers, sisters or fathers of those people who took their own lives when they turned up at the Royal Hobart Hospital to get help and they could not get the help because the services were not there? How many years, minister, will you need to get this right? You have been sitting there for five years and still we have people hanging themselves in our emergency department.

They go on to quote -

Others have given up waiting only to be found hours later scaling the Tasman Bridge.

Have you met with any of those families? Have you spoken to any of the poor police officers who are trying to talk those people down because the service was not available for them in the emergency section? This is real life. This is actually what your job is: to represent those people. You are the Health minister. It is your responsibility.

Patients are literally dying waiting for care at the Royal Hobart Hospital. We are also advised by our community mental health teams that patients are not turning up to the RHH as they know they will not get the attention they need.

Does that not tell you that there is a really big problem? Does that not tell you that you have been there for five years and this is still the same problem? Five years is a very long time for a Health minister to not have fixed this.

In 2016 experts warned the Government that the lack of mental health beds could lead to a crisis. There were only three days wait then and this is what they said. Not six or seven days like we have now, because nothing has improved. They said -

The welfare of patients at the Royal has become a major cause for concern in recent weeks with many forced to spend up to 72 hours in emergency department beds with no natural light or fresh air.

Now the average is 183 hours and you will still stand there with your spin and no substance and say everything is fine, everything is perfect. It is certainly not.

Neroli Ellis, when she was at the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Association, a lady of great substance, said this in 2016 -

The capacity is not even there now before we start reducing those beds.

This is before you started reducing beds back in 2016.

The patients who are waiting now in emergency -

Time expired.

[12.55 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to the very important issue of adolescent ill health. I cannot start into my notes without pushing back at some of the statements that were just made.

The reality is that for 16 years there were no dedicated facilities for adolescent mental health while Labor was in power. I am on the public works department and I have visited Launceston hospital where it is in construction now. If the Royal had been started when it was meant to be started then there would have been a dedicated facility operating now. I applaud the minister for getting on with the job and doing what he is doing. You cannot click your fingers and create a new hospital overnight to cope with these situations. It does take time.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to building a better mental health system for Tasmania, in line with the Rethink Mental Health plan and by working closely with frontline staff, customers, community organisations and key stakeholders. We are getting on with the job of rolling out our \$104 million plan to deliver more beds, more community support, acute child and adolescent facilities for the first time ever, all within a more integrated mental health system.

We want Tasmanians to get the care they need when they need it, so our plan includes 27 new beds, a greenfield 12-bed facility a rebuilt Peacock Centre and a mental-health-in-the-home service that will commence this month.

The Government is making the investments, reforms and service improvements that our mental health sector has been crying for, for too long. We know and acknowledge that there are still Tasmanians who are waiting too long for care and who have trouble accessing the care they need. This is why the beds are being built. This is why the beds we are building will improve patient flow and most importantly keep more Tasmania's living with mental health out of hospitals in the first place.

The new hospital-in-the-home service has been set up so that patients can get the care they need sooner while we build a new 12-bed dedicated mental health facility on a greenfield site at St. John's Park in New Town.

This innovative and safe service model is used in other states around Australia and allows patients to receive hospital-level care while being accommodated in their own home where they can feel safe and be close to family. This service will reduce the current pressure on the ED, ensuring more Tasmanians living with mental ill health can receive the care they need in the right place at the right time.

The immediate benefits will be felt by the Royal Hobart Hospital as additional bed options means reduced pressure on our staff and patients. Our plan builds on improvements we have already delivered: six new step-up mental health beds at Tolosa Street, millions of dollars for individual packages of care and ensuring the future of mental health facilities through purchasing them. We want to help Tasmanians to stay well in their communities and stay out of hospital so we will continue to listen and work closely with customers, carers and mental health professionals.

The Tasmanian Government is also making significant improvements with respect to suicide prevention across a range of initiatives. Adoption of the Connecting With People training program for suicide and response represents an estimated investment of more than \$350 000 in the Tasmanian suicide prevention workforce over the last year.

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

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mental Health

Resumed from above.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, in concluding my comments, I was talking about the achievements that this Government has made and the significant improvements in suicide prevention across a range of initiatives. I mention the connection with the people training program that has invested \$350 000 on workforce training over the last year. Also, the establishment of the Tasmanian Suicide Register in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Tasmanian Coroner's Office.

The register has been operational since December 2017 and it enables suicide data to be coded against 180 variables, providing a more detailed understanding of trends and patterns. To develop a better approach to people at risk of suicide, support is provided to the Mental Health Council of Tasmania to develop and drive interest in Tasmanian mental health and a suicide prevention communication charter.

Further work is underway, including the development of a Safely Talking framework designed to provide guidance to people with lived experience to deliver suicide prevention talks to a community audience.

More than \$600 000 has been provided to Anglicare for the Attempted Suicide After Program which provides intensive support to Tasmanians aged 15 to 65+ for three to six months following an attempted suicide. Record levels of support has been provided to Rural Alive and Well, right across Tasmania.

Madam Speaker, we want all Tasmanians to have a better health system for us all.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2019 (No. 22)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

Mr Shelton presented the reports of the Estimates Committee A of the Premier; Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Minister for Trade; Minister for Parks; Minister for Heritage; Treasurer; Minister for Local Government; Minister for State Growth; Minister for Human

Services; Minister for Housing; Minister for Planning; Attorney-General; Minister For Justice; Minister for Corrections; Minister for the Environment; Minister for the Arts; Minister for Racing; together with the minutes of the proceedings, the transcript of evidence and additional information presented to the Committee.

Mrs Rylah presented the reports of the Estimates Committee B of the Minister for Health; Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Minister for Science and Technology; Minister for Education and Training; Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries; Minister for Infrastructure; Minister for Building and Construction; Minister for Resources; Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Minister for Women; Minister for Sport and Recreation; Minister for Disability Services and Community Development; Minister for Energy; Minister for Primary Industries and Water; Minister for Veterans' Affairs; together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the Committee.

DIVISIONS 1, 2, 7 9, 10, 11 and 12 -

(Premier; Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events; Minister for Trade; Minister for Parks and Minister for Heritage)

[2.36 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - It was a very revealing Estimates examination of the Premier's output groups covering a number of areas, but primarily his responsibility for providing leadership across the state sector. We are still no clearer about where the \$450 million in cuts will be made to the Tasmanian state Budget. We do know that the Government has plunged the Budget into \$1.1 billion in debt, breaking a specific election promise that they took to the people of Tasmania that they would not go into net debt.

The Premier should have been able to explain where those \$450 million in savings would be made. I should make the point that the only thing the Premier was able to confirm was that the Tourism marketing budget would be quarantined.

At the time when the health system will have to find efficiency dividends making up their contribution of the \$450 million in cuts, despite it being in crisis, Child Safety is going to have to find their share of the \$450 million in cuts. The education system is going to have to find its share of the \$450 million in cuts, but the Tourism marketing budget is quarantined.

Like most Tasmanians, I appreciate it is very important for us to create jobs in this state. However, providing no change in funding to the Tourism marketing budget at the same time they are slashing funding and having to find \$450 million of savings across other essential services provided by the Government, does speak to very strange priorities from this Premier.

We have people who are homeless in this state, sleeping under bridges, unable to find adequate shelter in the middle of winter and the Premier prioritises advertising the state as a visitor destination over putting a roof over these people's heads. I think that was one of the most damning revelations that came out of the output group for the Premier.

We know there is a \$1.1 billion debt. We know the Premier cannot explain the \$450 million in cuts and where they will be made. We also found out the largesse and the hypocrisy of this Government when it comes to spending on ministerial staff and the bloated spin media unit that

they have created in the last three years, going from five to 10 staff in the media unit in just three years. Travel expenses racked up on the credit cards of ministerial chiefs of staff have blown out by a massive 27 per cent. The Premier's own chief of staff clocked up about \$5000 on the credit card when his former chief of staff barely spent a cent on the credit card, I think \$113 in the whole time he was in the role, yet the Premier confirmed the role had not changed.

Mr Guy Barnett's chief of staff racked up \$14 000 on the taxpayer's credit card in one year - no, that is the total budget - \$14 000. It was \$42 000: the total budget spent on credit cards by chiefs of staff to ministers in one year. That is a massive jump from the year prior. At a time when we have the Government plunging the state into \$1.1 billion in debt their chiefs of staff are racking up the good times on the credit card. They have \$450 million in cuts to find and they have expanded their own ministerial staffing, expanded the Government spin unit and expanded their own electorate office allocation. The Premier explained his own increase in electorate staff by the fact that he is busy. We are all busy, Mr Chairman. Electorate officers do an enormous amount of work, but if it is good enough for the Premier it should be good enough for everybody else.

I note that the member for Prosser has two electorate officers, and is the only one who does. All our electorate officers do an extraordinary amount of work. Each of us appreciates the work of our electorate officers who deal every day with people in need.

We also found during this time of budget restraint, \$450 million in cuts, plunging the state into \$1.1 billion in debt, that there had been a golden handshake for Brad Nowland when he left his job.

One thing I am frustrated with is the lack of transparency from this Government. We put questions on notice last week. The convention is that those answers be provided by Friday. We have not had answers to any questions that were put on notice for Committee A. The Treasurer provided some for State Growth.

Committee B has not had any answers provided on notice. We have had no answers provided by the Premier to the questions that were placed on notice with him. One of the important questions asked goes to the transparency of this Government and the honesty of this Government, and that was when was the position of deputy chief of staff was created in the Treasurer's office so that Mr Brad Nowland could take that up for about six months before he walked away with \$50 000? It was reported in the media at the time that he resigned from that position. The Premier says he was terminated. If he was terminated he would not get a benefit. Our question placed on notice was, when was that position created? Was it at the time that Mr Nowland needed to be moved into it so then he could be moved out of it and receive a \$50 000 handshake? At the same time, we have \$450 million in cuts across agencies that the Premier still cannot explain.

The Premier tried to blame the changes in the budget situation on a reduction in GST and changes to state taxation. Those things were not present when the revised estimates report was handed down in January this year. The federal Budget was not delivered until much later than that.

In January this year this Government was exposed. It was exposed for its inability to comprehensively manage this Budget. It was exposed because the state minority Liberal Government has driven this state into debt and has been unable to manage its own spending. You need no further proof than the Government's own chiefs of staff being unable control their use of credit cards. At the same time they are looking to everybody else to make savings.

We also examined in this output, the Premier's hypocrisy when it comes to a united front for an AFL team. This has become more topical in recent times because we did all stand together on Friday and talk about the need for us to present a united front. The Labor Party does what it says it will do in this regard. We have always supported a Tassie AFL team, but the Premier only supports one when it suits him politically. That was examined in this output when talking about the money promised by the federal Labor Party to support the establishment of a Tasmanian AFL team and the campaign waged by the Liberal Party against that.

Parochialism, deep division of this state, was conjured up by the Liberal Party claiming it was a team for the south, a team for Hobart. 'Stop them, don't let them give money to an AFL team for Hobart', the Liberals said. The Premier stood next to the Prime Minister and those messages were repeated day after day in the north and the north-west.

For what purpose? It was not to advance our cause as a state to achieve an AFL team, a dream that many of us in this place genuinely have. It was not to advance the cause for us to be able to put forward a united front, politics aside, which is what the AFL has asked of us to make sure we can put forward the best case for Tasmania. No, the Premier did not show any leadership when those statements were being made by the Liberal Party. He stood next to the people who were making those statements and he backed them because he thought there was political opportunity in it. That sums up the man, the Premier of our state. If there is a political opportunity, if there is an ability to win a vote, irrespective of whether it is good public policy, he is all for it.

His hypocrisy was exposed when it comes to support for one of the most iconic institutions in the state, and that is MONA. Members would remember the way MONA was used as a political football during the last federal campaign: the iconic tourism drawcard that has changed the way we feel about ourselves and about the way other people see Tasmania. We are celebrating Dark Mofo right now. People are coming to Tasmania from all around the country to experience what it is to be a part of Tasmanian culture and music, the arts, the food, the festivities.

When his Liberal colleagues started to bash MONA, saying that is just another promise for the south and MONA provides no benefit to anybody outside of Hobart, which is of course false, he stood alongside them. What was revealed during budget Estimates is that the Premier had asked the Treasurer to write to MONA and encourage them to apply for funding from both parties in the lead-up to the federal election. The Treasurer penned a letter to MONA suggesting it gets in touch with the Liberal Party and the Labor Party and ask them to support MONA's vision to create the second stage of MONA, to continue to drive opportunities for construction jobs and this cultural precinct that provides a convention centre and public spaces. That is a sensible idea. In the lead-up to the election anybody who is ambitious and had a good plan could forward a good case and seek some public funding for that. MONA did that. It took the advice of the Premier and the Treasurer and wrote to the federal Liberal and Labor parties.

The Labor Party supported the vision that MONA set forward. They supported the agenda they had to drive economic activity in the state and to continue to support that institution. What did the Premier do? He back flipped because of political opportunity. The man does not stand by his word. He takes every opportunity he can to win a vote. It does not matter that he told MONA to make a submission for funding because as soon as it secured support from a political party, the Labor Party, for that funding he stood next to Scott Morrison and other Liberal candidates in the north of the state and howled it down as a terrible idea.

What does the Premier stand for? How can anybody ever trust his word ever again? How could MONA ever expect to work with this Government again when that is how it is treated, when it tries to operate in good faith?

Chair, the Premier demonstrated his complete lack of engagement with one of the state's biggest infrastructure projects, the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment. I asked repeated questions of the Premier regarding progress on the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment. Did he think there would be a delay? Did he know there would be delay? Had he been briefed on the progress of that project? It is, as we are reminded, one of the state's most important infrastructure projects. The Premier was unable to give any update at all. I was looking back through the notes from *Hansard*. He was unable to give an update on the progress of that project until half an hour later because at the same time the Minister for Health was being scrutinised in an adjoining committee. He revealed that the project had been delayed potentially until the end of this year and patients would not be taken in that new facility until February. We know there is no funding in the Budget for any of those beds until the middle of next year. A year before any new beds will be funded at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Why did the Premier not know that? Why could he not answer those very straightforward questions? They were very straightforward questions about the progress of that project and whether there would be a delay. Either he is completely hands-off, has absolutely no idea about what is happening to the biggest infrastructure project the state has ever funded, or he did not want to answer the question. He did not want to tell the committee the truth. It was not till he was exposed that he had to do that.

It beggar's belief that the Minister for Health would brief an Estimates committee on the progress of the Royal Hobart Hospital project before he briefed the Premier. There is a complete breakdown in the relationship between the Minister for Health and the Premier if that is the case. If the Minister for Health is updating a committee before he is updating the Premier on a delay to the state's biggest infrastructure project then that speaks volumes about the dysfunction in their relationship.

It also speaks volumes about the lack of engagement by this Premier to ensure that he is across the detail of a project that is vitally important to so many Tasmanians but it was not just that project that he did not have any detail of. In discussion with the Treasurer regarding the TT-Line, again, another committee that was occurring at the same time, the Treasurer was asked questions about why the Budget showed that money for the TT-Line had been pushed back two years. He explained to the committee that it could be because the vessels might be delayed by two years so we asked the Premier about that. My colleague, the honourable David O'Byrne, member for Franklin, asked specific questions about that and the Premier was unable to provide an update on the progress of the TT-Line replacement vessels. This was despite the fact that he is not only the Premier but the Minister for Tourism. This is an important asset for tourists to visit our state on, which is another demonstration of his complete disregard for the detail.

The Premier is all show and no substance. You cannot believe what he says because as MONA has learnt, he goes back on his word. MONA could not have a better enemy than the Premier who claims to be their friend. He certainly did them over there.

We talked about other important matters that are before the Premier. The fact that your former colleague, Mr Brooks, still owes money to the people of Tasmania to pay for his legal fees. He is paying that back but it is still owing. Mr Brooks charged the Tasmanian taxpayer nearly \$60 000

for the honour of representing him when the Integrity Commission was investigating him. A report showed that he repeatedly lied to the Premier and he is still repaying the \$60 000 that he charged to the taxpayer during that very torrid time, which again exposed the Government for their lack of honesty.

We talked about what is happening in the cruise ship market. This is very important to many Tasmanians. I am skipping around here because the Premier has a few different outputs and I will just get an update on time if I can. There are many Tasmanians concerned about the cruise ships that are visiting our state and I need an assurance that we are targeting high value customers who are going to increase yield for our state and they are going to be dispersed around our state. We want to ensure that the north and the north-west of the state benefit as much as the south does from cruise ship visitation.

The Premier talked about a visitation strategy that will soon be released but it is taking a very long time to come to fruition. I also raised some very serious concerns about what is happening at Port Arthur with cruise ship visits there. Staff are routinely laid off at the last minute when a cruise ship is due to come in but is then not able to because of bad weather. They have set up for the day, they have been told to come in, and in the morning, they get a call and are told not to come in. They are public servants. We should be able to treat our workforce with more dignity than that and provide a little bit more certainty for them about whether they are due at work that day. I brought that to the Premier's attention so that he could follow-up on what is going on there.

We also talked about the development of the new RTOs and progress on that, which is very important particularly to the north-west given they have had some disruption in the recent past with the Cradle Coast Authority previously providing that service. That is looking to change to a new model and it is important for the people on the north-west coast to know that they have equal representation and an equal share of the funding to support that visitation to the north-west coast.

We also spoke about the Great Chefs Series. This was raised with us because it had been provided in Launceston. It had been offered in the winter months to provide opportunities for chefs to visit the state and increase visitation engagement in the region at that time of year. It was being offered by the Josef Chromy Group. They proceeded to engage chefs for August this year to run the program again. It has been pulled and the program will be run by Drysdale instead. I asked the Premier a number of questions about that. Again, they were questions that were on notice and, again, we do not have the answers to that. Even though we are doing the report back, we should be able to have all the information before us before we get up and have a conversation about Estimates. There were a number of questions put on notice that have not been answered. These are important to the constituents we represent and it is a big disappointment because it is not the first time it has happened.

Time expired.

Ms O'CONNOR - What was that you were muttering, Attorney-General?

Ms Archer - I was noticing that some questions were different from what were asked in the committee.

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, I rise to make a 10-minute contribution on the Premier's Estimates. Again, the Estimates' experience this year, as it has been ever since the Liberals took office in 2014,

was frustrating, limiting and, by design, not intended to provide information to opposition members who are asking the questions.

For each minister that Dr Woodruff and I sat down in front of those frustrations were still there, and it made the process less of a benefit to the people of Tasmania and the taxpayers who pay our wages, than they would otherwise have been.

We asked the Premier about a range of issues. We asked him about the Tasmanian Council of Social Services' report card which makes it very clear that on numerous, critical, social metrics, Tasmania has gone backwards since the Liberals came into Government and declared Tasmania open for business. They have let short-stay accommodation listings expand unchecked, underinvested in the increase in the supply of social and affordable housing, and underinvested in the health system. You can see through the metrics that we detailed in Estimates that, socially, Tasmania is in a much more difficult place than it was when the Liberals took office.

We also asked a question that was central to the concern of both Dr Woodruff and me, on behalf of those tens of thousands of Tasmanians and young people who are concerned to ensure that this Government takes climate change seriously. On the issue of global heating, the Premier seems to think that we have everything under control here as a state when, what we know from the budget papers, is that there has been an underinvestment in bushfire management in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and an underinvestment in Tasmania Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and the Climate Change Office.

The underinvestment points to a wilful denial of the reality of the climate emergency that is hurtling towards us at an alarming rate. For anyone who has not seen most recent images of the jet stream in the northern hemisphere, if you want to frighten yourself terribly, have a look at what is happening to the jet stream. It is no longer on a predictable, looping path; the jet stream is waving like a maniac. We are in a time of utter climate emergency and we need to be sure, as a state, that we have every single good policy in place that not only keeps all the carbon in the ground that is in the ground, but is taking our communities with them on an adaptation journey.

When I asked the Premier, and then his secretary and the Climate Change Office what kind of comprehensive strategic adaptation plan was in place to deal with climate, what we got from him - and the *Hansard* tells the story - was an extended period of silence, the sound of crickets, and then my heart sinking. I realised that we do not have good adaptation planning in place in Tasmania. That is no reflection on the Climate Change Office; it is about leadership and the lack of it and the fact that the Climate Change Office does not have its own dedicated minister to drive forward the necessary action.

Ms Archer - Why did you ask questions of me then?

Ms O'CONNOR - We had no other option, Ms Archer, but to ask questions of you in the Environment portfolio, but you are not the minister for climate change. You administer a weak piece of legislation; you administer the failure of your Government to take climate seriously; and you have to deal with the legacy of your predecessor who abolished the Tasmanian Climate Action Council.

I want to raise a question with the Premier today that we asked the Treasurer and other ministers, and we did not get an answer. We have just had back some answers in writing.

The question was; who was on the expenditure review committee in Cabinet? Who is that select group of people who are making decisions about what services to underfund and what roads to build? When I asked the Treasurer this question what we got was what we usually get from the Treasurer - an attempt to conceal and not to tell the truth. Why should the membership of a subcommittee of Cabinet be secret? We understand Cabinet confidentiality, but what we do not accept is that you will not be honest enough to name who is on your expenditure review committee.

We have an answer back from the Treasurer. The question was: which ministers are represented on the strategic growth subcommittee of Cabinet? That committee consists of the Premier, the Treasurer, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Human Services, all blokes for starters. We have one subcommittee of Cabinet. I do not know if this is the expenditure review committee of Cabinet. Does the Premier truly believe that the women in his Cabinet do not have something to contribute to the strategic future of Tasmania? Is this the reason the Treasurer would not tell us who is on the razor gang? Is this the expenditure review committee, Premier? That is the question. If this is not the expenditure review committee, made up as it is of four blokes, then who is on the expenditure review committee?

Mr Bacon - That is the State Growth answers, I think.

Ms O'CONNOR - This is the Treasurer and State Growth's answers, that is right. We are trying to thread it together, Mr Bacon, and thank you for your timely intervention as always.

We also have a question that was asked of the Premier in the Parks output. The question was; what is the total cost of the 2014 election pledge to reopen the Arthur-Pieman tracks, including legal costs, consultancies and all other associated costs? What we now know from the response that came back to us a very short time ago by email is that DPIPWE advised that it spent \$97 104 in relation to the 2014 election commitments to reopen the tracks, with consultancy costs of \$15 620 included in that. Federal Court costs incurred were \$440 200, primarily funded through the Tasmanian Risk Management Fund with DPIPWE paying an excess amount of \$20 000. That could have gone to good use in our parks. 'The excess costs are included in the total costs provided above'. We have \$440 000 that went to the Federal Court to reopen the Arthur-Pieman tracks and we have confirmed through the Premier that it cost the state \$355 000 in the High Court to try to salvage something out of the workplace protection from democracy bill.

Since the Liberals have been in Government they have spent at least three-quarters of a million dollars on legal costs and stupid election promises like the Workplace (Protection from Protesters) Bill, which is rearing its ugly head again after the questions we asked in Estimates last week. What a disgrace. Nearly three-quarters of a million dollars. In fact, more than three-quarters of a billion dollars, pardon my maths, almost \$800 000 this Government has spent defending its own lousy policies, like reopening the Arthur-Pieman tracks. It should be ashamed, because as we know in question time this morning the Premier and the Housing Minister would not rule out using more public funds to appeal against the full bench of the Supreme Court's decision in relation to Mr Gregory Parsons, a Housing Tasmania tenant. That is the most disgraceful waste of money. Nearly \$1 million on legal fees, consultancies, for two deeply, deeply flawed pieces of public policy: the Workplace (Protection from Protesters) Bill and the bid to reopen the Arthur-Pieman tracks.

It would be funny if it was not public money. Can you imagine what nearly \$800 000 could deliver? It is true I have added it up wrong. It is the most disgraceful waste of public money that we have seen.

The other question we asked the Premier that he said he would get back to us on is whether there are Aboriginal relics in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery? The Premier said he would come back to us. We need to hear whether the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery holds Aboriginal relics. Premier, I hope you take the opportunity to answer that question because you did say that you would come back.

My question to the Premier, when he does respond, is, who is on the razor gang of Cabinet? Are there any Aboriginal relics still being held in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery against the wishes of the Aboriginal community of Tasmania? How does he justify such a massive waste of money, nearly a million dollars of public money, defending lousy policies?

Time expired.

[3.05 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - I rise to respond to this. We saw it writ large from the Premier himself, a lack of a strategy that would give Tasmanians confidence that we are heading out of debt and that there is a pathway, strategy and a view. In Estimates, in a number of portfolio areas, including the Premier, there was almost a denial that the state was going into over \$1 billion of debt. You cannot deny it; it is there in the numbers. The Liberals had openly criticised previous governments when they looked like potentially going into net debt. It was something they were very strong on.

In terms of the narrative and answering questions, it did not seem like it was the threat to the Tasmanian books it presents. In my time in front of the Premier, when he was asked about what savings strategies were going to be put in place, what things were off the record or on the record, or in or out in terms of that consideration, it was of great concern that there was no detail on how close to half a billion dollars of savings would be made by this Government.

Twelve months ago the budget narrative was that we were heading into the golden age. Now we are heading into over a billion dollars of net debt across the forward Estimates. There is a lack of a strategy to get out of that, to even meet the savings requirement of a little under half a billion dollars, let alone get out of net debt.

The Estimates showed there is one rule for some and a different rule for others in efficiency dividends and belt-tightening processes. There has been a massive blow-out in ministerial advisory staff of well over 27 per cent to 28 per cent over the last three years. That is a massive increase, particularly with a public sector wages negotiation position which is all about saving money and doing the right thing and being responsible.

It is all right to call on other people to be responsible but you have an obligation yourself: not a massive increase in ministerial staffing of over 27 per cent, close to 30 per cent. Then there was a doubling of the media unit. Bloated ministerial offices and an expansion of media advisers to try to spin your way out of the problem that you have got yourselves into.

When I asked the Premier and the head of Department of Premier and Cabinet whether a project or initiative was going to be quarantined or protected from the efficiency dividend or the potential savings, the secretary of DPaC, Ms Gale, eventually corrected herself. It was clear over a number of questions that initiatives were seen as election commitments and would not be touched. Other things will be touched.

To us, that shows that instead of good policy and good management of both the budget and your policy initiatives it is just all about the spin in terms of ticking boxes and saying, 'We said this and whilst the circumstances have changed we are going to follow through with it'.

Again, there was a flimsy explanation and there was a lot of scrambling going on on the other side about the payout of Mr Nowland from the Premier's office. He was a long-term staffer of the Premier. This was not a case where, at the end of the election, there were only so many roles and positions, start and finish, and there are contracts and people get payouts. It was clear that it was not a part of the election campaign. He had moved on from that but he had moved on from the Premier's office because whether there was a disagreement or an issue between the new broom coming into the Premier's office and the old furniture, and the furniture had to be brushed out. All of a sudden, he appeared in the Treasurer's office as deputy chief of staff. That was a role that was specifically created for him, apparently picked up on the street. It was clear that there was a new position created for him because he was not welcome in the Premier's office, five months after the election; nothing to do with the staffing arrangements and entitlements of staff who finish after election campaigns. We know that happens from time to time. It happens across both government and opposition. Here is a long-term employee who had been shuffled out of the Premier's office, shoved into the Treasurer's office and all of a sudden, the position was terminated.

In the Estimates there was a figure identified of over \$50 000 over and above his entitlements, so this is not his annual leave or long service leave or his base entitlements. This is \$50 000 over and above his existing entitlements because he had been terminated. We had known clearly that the messaging from the Government around the time of that departure was he had resigned. We asked, is it a resignation, is it a termination or is it a genuine redundancy? None of those questions could be answered with clarity apart from the fact he is terminated and he has gone and the taxpayer has been asked to foot \$50 000 for the pleasure. To me, that does not indicate a Government that is concerned about the interests of the Tasmanian people, first and foremost. It is about looking after their mates and about making sure that if you have a problem of your own making that is a bit awkward, you can throw out \$50 000 large and it is clear that that is the stock in trade.

We saw that last year with the payout to Ms Haley, who effectively had been publicly terminated by her employer for poor behaviour and arguably you would say on the construct of misconduct, but she had been paid out like everyone else for a job well done to help the Government get re-elected.

Mr Bacon - The only person who had the role proved the role was not necessary, but he has done a great job.

Mr O'BYRNE - He has done a great job, that is right. Exactly right.

The Government's position on public sector wages is a major issue that has been confronting the state. The Premier is the employer. The Premier has ticked off on a strategy of essentially dysfunction in terms of dealing with your staff, the thousands of public servants across Tasmania who do the work that we ask them to do as a Government to provide the services in health, in education, in parks, the firefighters, the paramedics and a whole range of public servants.

As a part of that, it is the obligation of the Government, from time to time, to reach wages and conditions agreement with their staff. This negotiation of all the public sector unions has dragged on for 12 months with no end in sight and no capacity by this Government to comprehend what is required in a negotiation to resolve this dispute. Whilst the Budget has been framed around a certain

outcome for wages and conditions - it is 2 per cent effectively, isn't it? - already even though it has not been agreed to, you have already started to crab walk away from that.

The lack of a public wages agreement with your staff - tens of thousands of public servants across the state - creates a real threat to your already wafer-thin fiscal strategy and Budget strategy. I have been involved in public sector wages negotiations in Tasmania since the mid-1990s and I do not think I have seen a more dysfunctional negotiation. Even the Rundle -

Time expired.

[3.15 p.m.]

Mr BACON - I rise to speak on the Budget Estimates examination of the Premier, make a few comments and ask a few questions.

The biggest thing when it comes to this Budget is the broken promise from the Liberal Party. You have one of those classic shiny brochures with the Premier's head on the front and rolled up sleeves. Point 5 of that document effectively says, 'We will keep Tasmania out of net debt'.

Now we know from the Budget that was brought down a few weeks ago that the legacy of Will Hodgman, the Premier of Tasmania, to the people of Tasmania is going to be at least \$1.1 billion in net debt. This is something that the state has not been in for 15 years. It was the Labor Party that paid off the last Liberal government's net debt. We have not been in net debt for 15 years. The Premier went to the election saying that he would not take Tasmania back into net debt and now he is going to do it to the tune of \$1.1 billion. One thing that is for sure, this time next year we will be in here talking about an even bigger figure and each year, on and on it will go, because this Government has no pathway out of debt.

Will Hodgman's legacy to Tasmania is billions and billions of dollars of net debt. We know there is no pathway out. We know that is the case because when the Premier was asked about this last week in Budget Estimates he said, rather bizarrely, that of course it is the extra infrastructure spending that has us in this situation where we are going into net debt. The pathway out - if there is one, which has not been explained - but he pointed to increasing cash surpluses over the forward Estimates as the way out of net debt. The problem is we never get to cash surplus when it comes to this mob. They predict them in the future and then we never get there.

Mrs Rylah - Rubbish.

Mr BACON - When did you bring down a cash surplus?

Mrs Rylah - We get into surplus.

Ms O'Connor - When was that?

Mrs Rylah - Surplus.

Mr BACON - Surplus. That is a one word answer now. Surplus. So, when you are under pressure just say the word 'surplus'.

They have never brought down a cash surplus and they never will. This is a mob who cannot tell the truth when it comes to the state, the Tasmanian budget. Their deceit and their mistruths over the past five years have come home in the \$1.1 billion worth of debt.

The path out apparently is increasing cash surpluses over the forward Estimates but they will not tell the truth about how we came here. It is from running cash deficits. They all know that but they will not admit it.

We know that the Premier belled the cat when he said that the pathway out will be from increasing cash surpluses. They will never get to that point but that is how they put us here by running cash deficits, year after year.

We know that they talk about a writedown in Government revenue. The truth is they are going to receive \$189 million more in revenue. We are talking about relatively good economic times and somehow this Premier and this Treasurer have doomed the state to \$1.1 billion worth of net debt. It is the Premier's legacy. He should be ashamed of it. If he could even come clean and admit that it would be a step forward.

We know there was talk about the revised Estimates report, exactly when the Premier knew that the state was in the dire fiscal situation that it is in. There was no real explanation from the Treasurer around that. There was talk that he regularly gets briefed by Treasury. You would have to wonder, if he is regularly getting briefed by Treasury and paying attention, why has he not pulled the Treasurer up? He has allowed the state to get into this parlous situation.

We know that there is \$450 million in budget cuts in this Budget. We know that it was brought in at the very last minute because the phrase 'efficiency dividend' does not appear in the Budget papers; it only appears in the Treasurer's speech. It lets us know, as clear as can be, that this was a last-minute decision to try to somehow concoct paper surpluses that the Government can point to to say they are good fiscal managers. It is a joke, but it is future Tasmanians who will have to pay for that joke.

Did we have any detail from the Premier about where the \$450 million in Budget cuts will come across the public service. Which departments is it going to come from? No, we did not. Did we have any detail about where it is going to come from in his own department? No, we did not. Did he tell us which jobs would go? Did he even give a definition of what is, in his opinion frontline, or not frontline when it comes to cutting government jobs? No, he did not.

When examining the DPaC Estimates we were told one program was not going to be cut, because it was a Government initiative. Then it was said that contracts were in place. It appears that if it is an election promise it is off limits. We have not heard that said out aloud by the Government yet. On page 2 of the Budget the Government claims it has kept all its promises in this Budget. They do not talk about the billion-dollar broken promise, the biggest promise of all that has been broken. When the Premier gets to his feet he can clear up whether that promise about not cutting election promises still stands.

We had a conversation about parochialism, particularly around the federal campaign. The federal Liberal Party ran an anti-southern Tasmania campaign. Good luck. You are trying to win seats in the north. It is bizarre to see the Premier of the state supporting that campaign. The promise of funding for MONA and the promise for a Tasmanian AFL side somehow became a southern side down at Font PR, or wherever that decision was made to run that campaign.

It is not fitting for the Premier of Tasmania to attack half the state. He was the secret weapon in the election campaign. He stood next to his colleagues while they ran this anti-southern Tasmania campaign. Then, bizarrely, last week he talks about bringing the state together on football and bringing the state together on MONA, by taking MOFO to the north. This is on the back of the Treasurer writing to MONA saying it they should seek federal government funding for its next development.

This is disgraceful behaviour from the Tasmanian Government. It ought to be ashamed of itself. It will be difficult to get the truth from them. The Treasurer said he would table that letter. We have not seen that yet. It will be interesting to see if he is true to his word and we see the letter the Treasurer sent to MONA urging it to seek funding for the new development.

We saw ministerial officers gloating under this Premier. This Government has been at war with the public sector since it came into Government in 2014. It is one thing for the public service - hardworking teachers, nurses, park rangers and other public servants - to have to deal with a Government that does not respect them, refuses to negotiate in good faith and give a proper wage increase. It is a different kettle of fish the way the Premier treats his ministerial staff.

The Government media unit has doubled in size. There has been a \$50 000 payout to the Treasurer's deputy chief of staff. This position was created for this individual to go into. The Treasurer then said there was a review. Then the Premier made a decision to abolish that position and terminate Mr Nowland with \$50 000 to walk away with. This is way too cute. This position did not exist before the election. The Government gets back in, creates this position because of a falling out between the Premier's chief of staff and Mr Nowland. Then there was a review into the position. We are not told how long this review took or what the nature of this review was. The Premier has an opportunity when he gets to his feet to sum up these Estimates to tell us the nature of that review into that position, how long that review took and exactly why the decision was made. It all looks far too cute.

It looks to have been designed to give a friend of the Liberal Party \$50 000 in public funds. The story around this did change. Initially we were told that Mr Nowland resigned. Now it appears that there is a question about whether he was terminated or made redundant.

Time expired.

Mr HODGMAN - I welcome the opportunity to speak to the report of the Estimates Committee A following scrutiny hearings on Monday, 3 June, during which there was not a hell of a lot of scrutiny on the Budget. On Tuesday, 4 June, I was able to get far more incisive scrutiny by members from the other place. That is par for the course.

I welcome the opportunity to reflect on the Hodgman Liberal Government's 2019-20 Budget which builds on our strong economic foundations. It has the core objective to ensure our state's economy continues to be the best performing in the country, as the latest ABS statistics state we are. It is our mission to ensure that all Tasmanians, wherever they live, in all our regions, have the opportunity to share in the value of and participate in a stronger economy. It is pleasing that this Budget not only projects economic growth and strong economic conditions despite national economic head winds, it is also estimated that it will create in the vicinity 10 000 jobs, and 13 000 more than when we came into Government. The unemployment rate is lower than when we came into Government. There is more that we intend to do and it is captured within this Budget.

Ms O'Connor - How many of those jobs will go to the locals? You say you are going to create 10 000 jobs and you have a projected skilled visa intake of 6000. You are importing workers.

Mr HODGMAN - We want Tasmanians to have the opportunity to get a job. They have better prospects of getting a job now through a strengthened and improved education system that better engages them at both ends of the compulsory education spectrum. We welcome to our state more people seeking job opportunities here, including a lot of expat Tasmanians who now come back with greater opportunities. We also welcome people from other states and other countries to our strong and growing economy.

As I said earlier today, a lot has been done to ensure that our economy is strong to support Tasmanian businesses, so they continue to be the most confident in the country, to ensure that we do all we can to invest in our competitive strengths, keep cost of business pressures down and supply Tasmanian business with the best opportunity to compete. That includes not only domestically, but internationally. A large portion of our Government's efforts economically go to those competitive strengths and our trade capabilities. There was some discussion on our new trade strategy during these Estimates' hearings.

In those areas for which I am fortunate enough to have portfolio responsibility we are making significant investments. That includes in our tourism sector. Our economy captures our wonderful industries such as agriculture, seafood, renewable energy, a revitalised forest industry and an important mining sector as well. We are proud supporters of those pillars of our economy as well as the emerging opportunities, whether it be in defence, advanced manufacturing, the expansion of our energy capability and our status as the nation's gateway to Antarctica.

A lot was spoken by the Government about what we are doing to fuel this economic growth and prosperity, whether it be through our new Regional Loan Attraction Scheme, \$20 million for low-interest loans up to \$1 million for businesses to undertake projects to grow their local visitor economy and a new Events Tasmania Attraction Fund to bring major national and international business events to Tasmania. They are very high yielding. Their participants usually spend more and are very likely to become repeat visitors.

We have a record \$12.6 million investment into marketing to give our state that competitive edge and attract visitors from new markets. I will speak a little more about the savings measures that are expected of all government agencies, and that does include Tourism Tasmania.

We need to ensure that we continue to stay ahead of the pack in our visitor economy. Extraordinary investments are planned at Cradle Mountain; to support Freycinet Peninsula; to make sure that the roads that service our visitors and Tasmanians who love exploring our state, are in good standard as well so they can do so safely. They can also get off the beaten track and into our regions and support local businesses.

There are a lot of positive things to speak about in relation to our economic foundations, but also ensuring that our community is well-supported by this Budget. Needless to say, for me and my colleagues in Government, education, health investments, investments into more affordable housing and into other essential services were a significant piece of the debate, the discussion that we have had around our budget and the long-term plan that it lays out for our state.

It is only possible because our budget is in very sound shape and our economy being so strong. I will get to our savings measures in a minute.

I can assure members opposite that it is important that our Government keeps our budget in surplus, which we are doing. It ensures that we are able to invest a record expenditure of \$8.1 billion over the forward Estimates, which is actually an increase of \$554 million on the level of funding included in the 2018-19 budget and puts lie to the claim that we are not investing more into health and similarly in education. An increase of \$349 million on the level of funding included in the 2018-19 budget, with expenditure of \$7.1 billion forecast across this budget. Funding of \$3.6 billion for social and economic infrastructure for the community -

Ms O'Connor - Who is on the ERC? Who is on the razor gang?

Mr HODGMAN - I dispute very strongly the claims of the member who constantly interjects that this Budget does not invest in social infrastructure when you consider \$240 million has poured into our health service, into Ambulance Tasmania; \$27.6 million to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Disability Services; \$20.1 million into more police officers into our communities; \$16.9 million for out-of-home care -

Ms O'Connor - Your out-of-home care money runs out next year.

Mr HODGMAN - There is \$14.3 million to support our courts, our legal services including Legal Aid, legal assistance services and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as a number of new strategies to ensure that our economy can remain strong. We want to get more people into a home of their own, more houses built to provide greater housing security for Tasmanians and that is all contained within this Budget.

We continue to deliver on our election commitments to fund demand pressures in vital service areas, to implement the new initiatives in our plan, ensure that our budget is sustainable and to drive economic growth while meeting all of our fiscal strategic actions. Remaining in surplus, which is very important, is an insurance policy for our state.

We are also determined to ensure that we continue to responsibly manage the state's finances and given the writedown of \$535 million through reduction in the GST and also conveyance duties, we will have a modest efficiency dividend. It will ensure that we are doing all we can for the State Service to be as efficient and as effective as it can be. We have a modest 0.75 per cent of Government expenditure planned and this is less than efficiency dividends of other jurisdictions, which are up around 2 per cent. Treasury will work with agencies to identify savings and work through this systematically. We won't jump to your tune but we will do so in a way that ensures we are not impacting on frontline essential services.

We are going to review returns from Government Business Enterprises. They are there to provide services to Tasmanians, to keep our economy strong, but when they can provide a return to government, Tasmanians would expect that is why we have these government businesses.

There will be a strong focus on minimising the impact on service delivery and looking to things like consultants, travel and advertising. I have said that does not include the marketing budget for Tourism Tasmania but a large proportion of Tourism Tasmania's marketing budget is already forward committed against a heavy program of activity. This includes a new brand launch for later this year, contractual arrangements with creative agencies, and significant research contracts which generate information that provides insight into the value of the return on our investment.

Let me be very clear and say again, that it is not the same thing as the advertising that savings will make through our efficiency dividend, that is Tourism Tasmania marketing, but Tourism Tasmania will be required to meet its share of our savings strategy, as will all agencies. They will report to the Government and the decision will be made by Cabinet and supported by our colleagues as to those savings measures. We will all accept responsibility for that. We will update the House on the savings measures in quarter two of the new financial year. We had to make these difficult decisions. We need to ensure that we can keep our Budget in good shape.

Also, we want to provide our public servants with an affordable pay increase and ensure that we are able to employ more state servants to deliver the services that we need and to support the massive investments into our health, education, police service and other essential services for Tasmanians.

It is dishonest for Labor to say that we have blown expenses on supplies and consumables. I have some information to repudiate that claim because I know that when Mr Bacon was finance minister back in 2013-14, \$28 million was spent on consultants which is \$4 million more than we spent last year. In fact, over the first term of this Government 30 per cent less was spent on consultants than in the last government's term, of which Mr Bacon was finance minister. Over the same period, the total spend in this area only increased by 2.9 per cent, which is a lot lower than inflation as well. We have previously been able to achieve a reduction in supplies and consumables and we will be able to do so again.

We have also done so while increasing services to Tasmanians. Between 2014-15 and the 2018-19 budget, spending on frontline services has gone up. Police, public order and safety, 35.8 per cent; education 19.5 per cent; health 19.6 per cent.

Moving to some of the matters of concern raised throughout the Estimates proceedings, I take the opportunity to restate the commitment of this Government to tackling climate change through our action plan. Plenty has been said about that and a number of initiatives are contained within Climate Action 21. As we have said, it is this Government that introduced the plan and we look forward to revisiting the plan at the conclusion of the term of its life, which was always quite explicitly 2021. By its nature, an action plan 2017 to 2021 will conclude.

No doubt future governments will set their own objectives and priorities under this but our record stands for itself, as indeed does our record of achievement. The state being zero net emissions in 2016 and totally renewable energy self-sufficient by 2022 is a significant advancement and something that we should be prouder of and speak more about than constantly trying to scare people.

I acknowledge the Minister for Environment who is the minister responsible for climate change as well. I note her significant announcement about the implementation of a container refund scheme to complement that which occurs in other mainland jurisdictions. The work that was undertaken during this term of Government to implement a scheme here is a significant reform under the leadership of Ms Archer. That should also be acknowledged as a very positive initiative out of this Budget.

The homelessness issue is an important issue, as is providing more affordable homes for Tasmanians and greater access for Tasmanians to get into their home, whether to purchase and build or to rent. We appreciate and recognise the fact that there is stress in our housing sector. We are conscious of not only doing all we can in the longer term to build more supply to address this but

also to accelerate the program, as we are doing, and to provide more secure, safe accommodation options for Tasmanians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is part of our \$125 million Affordable Housing Action Plan, part two.

We will commit to working very closely with all key stakeholders who want to contribute to positive solutions and who understand that we are doing all we can to address this issue, which has significant further investments in this Budget and across the forward Estimates. We want to expedite this, as we have done, by bringing forward funding but also approaching this in a more innovative way.

There were a number of matters raised in my Budget scrutiny hearing about Aboriginal matters. They are still an important piece of this Government's policy agenda that is to not only reset our relationship with Tasmanian Aboriginals but to advance their interests and work very closely with them. Our dual naming policy, which was also recently released, is important because it connects Aboriginal Tasmanians to country, to land, to sea. It broadens our understanding of Aboriginal history and culture. This policy, which was released under a former government - we acknowledge that - is being continued under ours -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Chair. Now, that we are on matters that are important to Tasmania's First People perhaps the Premier could direct his mind to the question he said he would get back to the House on about whether there are relics in TMAG.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order. It is not a point of order.

Ms O'Connor - It has not been answered and the community wants to know.

Mr HODGMAN - We will provide answers to any questions taken on notice as soon as we are able. This is a really significant piece of our policy agenda that has been well received by Tasmanian Aboriginals. For the first time, the new policy provides for the establishment of a reference group of experts in Aboriginal languages by the Nomenclature Board of Tasmania. It has received strong support from Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, including TRACA, the Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance, and I quote:

The revised policy ensures all Aboriginal communities can have a say about place nomination in their areas.

This is true self-determination that we have been calling on for many years.

Co-chair Patsy Cameron, an esteemed Tasmanian, and Rodney Dillon said:

We are thrilled that this policy will at least ensure each of us feels empowered to be able to name features and places that reflect and respect local community groups and that there was never one Aboriginal language. As custodians, we are reviving our own languages in our own regions.

This is another very important step and it puts the lie to the claim that this Government is not continuing to do more to advance reconciliation and to reset that relationship with the Tasmanian Aboriginals.

We spoke at length about our increased investments into our parks. They are precious places that all Tasmanians greatly respect, as do our visitors, many hundreds of thousands who come to visit them. That is why we are committing \$7 million to increase rangers and frontline staff in the Parks and Wildlife Service by an additional 15 positions. Recruitment is underway for all 15 positions, with 13 roles commencing prior to the peak tourism season commencing. They will be positioned right across the state to benefit local economies and, most importantly, to allow those people to do their good work in places such as Lake St Clair, the west coast, the Great Western Tiers, St Helens, Seven Mile Beach and Bruny Island. An extraordinary number, visitation to our national parks and reserves is up by 5 per cent to 1.46 million visits.

We need to ensure that these visitors - and that includes local Tasmanians - are able to see these places in a safe, comfortable way that allows them access to enjoy them, to ensure that we are not suffering from over-tourism and that we are ensuring that there is now a significant increased investment. Under the former government, our parks were suffering from underinvestment.

There are a number of important infrastructure projects contained within this Budget that go to protecting these special places. There was some discussion about the Cradle Mountain master plan and the progress being made. That will transform an already iconic destination into a truly world-class experience and make it the MONA of the north and the north-west. It will be a real magnet for more visitors but also to ensure that other places such as Freycinet and Bruny Island have infrastructure upgrades and supports to keep these places special and to ensure that they are able to meet this increased visitation.

The Freycinet Peninsula Master Plan, which has been through some considerable consultation, is an important master plan that requires good local support. There will be a number who will never support it, but we need to map out what needs to happen in this special part of the state and to start planning major infrastructure upgrades for the longer-term, but also to deal with the very significant demands that come through it being one of our most visited parts of the state.

Similarly, cruise ships, and there is a lot of reporting on this. We need to manage how we welcome cruise ships that bring a lot into our economy. They are an important segment of our visitor economy but we must manage their visitation, and that includes into special places like Wineglass Bay. We acted to engage with the Australian Cruise Association to limit cruise ships entering Wineglass Bay and to make sure that the scenic amenity and the consequential impact on the visitor experience is not negative. We have had a commitment -

Ms O'Connor - You have only written to them. You have not actually told them to stay away from Wineglass Bay.

Mr HODGMAN - We have had a commitment from cruise companies for no additional bookings and we have been able to manage an arrangement by working collaboratively and in partnership with the cruise ship industry to ensure that these places are properly protected.

Heritage is also very important and as a Government we believe that the integrity of our Tasmanian Heritage Register and those properties that are on it, must be sound. Having commenced a process which allowed us to understand the value and the integrity of the register and the properties, we are on it now. We remain committed to ensuring that the process and the systems in place are sound as well, and to ensure that each of the existing entries are valid, subject to heritage works, approvals, and processes under the act. We want to make sure that our heritage register,

which is a very important tool, not only for Government but for the broader community, appropriately recognises all valid entries on that register.

As I have outlined, we accept that there are inaccuracies and we are correcting them. That work is being undertaken very quickly. We have worked hard on the amendment and the replacement of existing entries on the register that warrant it. As I said to the committee, the Tasmanian Heritage Council is developing a registration plan to guide the ongoing work to improve the quality, accuracy and currency of the register. It will facilitate greater access to the information it contains, as well. This important work is underway and, notwithstanding some issues recently exposed, we will keep on with that important work and will do so under this Budget.

Our trade and the trade strategy that we have recently released has a significant investment and it is purely designed to support Tasmanian business. It will allow our businesses that are exporters, or those who want to be, greater access to markets abroad. That will fuel many great Tasmanian businesses for the long-term future.

Ms O'Connor - You did not answer either of the questions. Who is on the razor gang, and -

Mr HODGMAN - The whole Cabinet. I explained, if you were listening. We all accept responsibility for decisions made by Cabinet.

Ms O'Connor - Rubbish. Why could your Treasurer not say that last week? I do not believe you.

[3.48 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN - I rise, as shadow minister for Parks and Heritage, to contribute to the Premier's Estimates responses. Since the Premier has just been talking about heritage, we might start there.

There have been significant issues raised in relation to the integrity of the heritage register and I pursued a line of questioning regarding the certificates of affected places which can be issued by the Tasmanian Heritage Council under the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995. If the Heritage Council believes there are errors, the Premier took on notice the question specifically about that. I will be interested to have a look at that.

I am led to believe that at the time when the Government under former minister, Mr Groom, undertook a review of the heritage register in 2013-14, serious concerns were expressed by staff within Heritage Tasmania about the process, about the lack of documentation surrounding that process, the lack of reporting to the Heritage Council, and whether the act was followed in the process.

It took an RTI released by the media some weeks ago to identify that there were 850 listings with potential errors. It would appear that serious concerns, particularly of the mapping staff, were true. I asked the Premier what he was going to do about that in terms of resourcing and what did he think was the liability to the state? In particular, how many of those entries were open to legal challenge? The response from the departmental secretary was unsatisfactory. He said that all entries on the register are deemed valid under the act. This fails to recognise that we are talking about properties owned by private owners but also some of our iconic properties.

There was a question over the accuracy of the Heritage Register for Parliament House, the Launceston Cataract Gorge, Duck Reach, the former power station, and the Hobart GPO. We have hundreds of heritage properties and it shows the importance of heritage to this state. It would only take a challenge by one of those property owners or other interests and there could be significant legal liability on the part of the state. I urge the Premier to look further into that matter as it could be a significant issue. The review of the register was rushed. I am not laying any aspersions on the staff who undertook the review, but additional resources are required to ensure the accuracy of that register and further action is necessary.

I asked questions about a long-running investigation into misconduct on the part of a Heritage Tasmania officer and whether the costs would accumulate to the department or fall to the Integrity Commission. I understand there was a long-running investigation undertaken over a period of six months or more resulting in a 500-page report and that the cost would have accumulated to the department. I never got to the bottom of that. I urge the Premier to take particular note. Although I am not going to go further in this place in outlining the concerns, the Premier and his departmental secretary ought to know the details. They are serious and significant.

Finally, in the Heritage area, I raised concerns about the National Trust. Although the state Government provides \$312 000 for the current operating cost to the National Trust, it is a very large employer of volunteers, some 400 managing 10 properties state-wide, some of our most beautiful iconic properties. The National Trust requested \$3.26 million from the state Government through this budget process to address serious safety and maintenance issues of some properties. Although he identified that \$350 000 was committed in the 2018-19 Budget, that is a long way short of the \$3.26 million sought. Knowing the importance of these heritage properties to Tasmanians, it warrants further investigation into what can be done to assist the Trust to ensure those properties remain open.

In my meetings with National Trust, I was led to believe that if no further funding could be found, either through fund-raising or from the state Government, then some of those properties might be closed to the public.

In relation to the Parks area of the portfolio, I asked a number of questions specifically about the bushfire response. I understand there are 35 staff, 18 of whom are permanent, with 19 seasonal staff. The Premier said there are 1.3 million visitors to the state per annum, 50 per cent of whom visit national parks. The visitation figures are projected to increase 15 per cent over the forward Estimates. If the Government's view is to open up our national parks for visitation, which is not an entirely bad thing, given the bushfire season that has just past, then this seems like a good opportunity to use those seasonal staff to work on track maintenance. Many of those staff are drawn into cleaning toilets and rubbish, and supporting visitors throughout the high season and I am concerned that track maintenance is falling further and further behind, particularly against the backdrop of a season of high bushfires. I am concerned that the 15 additional park rangers, which was a budget measure last year, disappear in the forward Estimates. The Premier was unable to provide any reassurance in that regard.

There were questions asked about the relocation of a 100 DIPIPWE staff. Only 44 had been relocated to date but \$1.8 million is sitting lazily against the balance sheet unexpended in order to facilitate that process.

In relation to reserve activity assessments, I am concerned that in last year's Estimates the Premier provided a clear commitment to further consultation and to finalise the RAA review process

by the end of last year. A number of community sector organisations have called the Premier out on that. The review was instigated for very good reason. The community has complained that they have not been consulted and provided all the appropriate information about developments. It is time that the Government came through on that promise.

I was very concerned to note that there are 24 submissions currently open under round two of the EOI process managed through the Co-ordinator General. I was alarmed to hear that process is open ended, a rolling process. There was no information about when the list was last updated or when the last project was added. I implore the Premier to understand that not only is development looked upon with some suspicion by areas of the community but transparency and trust is really very important.

There is no information about the time frame for the Cradle Mountain cable car nor the Freycinet Peninsula Master Plan.

Time expired.

[3.59 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON - As the Chair of last week's Estimates let me thank everybody for their participation and the way that the week went. It is a big week for everybody, particularly the Premier, when you come in front of the committee from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. It is a huge job and the committee is all there. I thank them and put on record that there is always debate around the questioning. I would like to take a minute to talk about the allocation of questions, which is always very subjective for the Chair. It is difficult to manage. Sometimes there are multiple questions in one question. Other times there are interjections and questions. For those people who are reading *Hansard* and want to get a bit of a handle on the process and are watching or listening, in the 10-hour debate, first of all we started off with DPAC. There were 100 questions by Labor, 57 questions put by the Greens and 11 questions put by the Liberals. That was a four-hour session.

In the next session we talked about Parks for two-and-a-half hours. There were 43 questions from Labor, 31 from the Greens and five from the Liberals. Tourism, Hospitality and Events was next: 36 questions were put by Labor, 21 by the Greens and five by the Liberals. Trade came next with 26 questions from Labor, nine from the Greens and two from the Liberals. Heritage was the last area that came under scrutiny: 15 questions from Labor, eight questions from the Greens and two from the Liberals.

I wanted to put that on record, simply to say thank you. It is a very subjective piece of work when you are trying to allocate the time. If it is not on time, the Standing Orders state that there is a ratio of three questions for Labor, one to -

Quorum formed.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I was on to the questions, the ratio for those people who are reading, three questions to Labor, one to the Greens and one to the Liberals. As Chair we need to uphold Standing Orders and that is what we attempt to do whenever we are in the chair.

We were meant to be talking to the dot points and, of course, the Budget cuts are down as a dot point. I aim my contribution at the positive side and not so much the Budget cuts because there was a whole heap of negativity around the Budget cuts as far as the Greens and Labor go.

There were some really positive things that came out of whole process of the Budget. Over the four-year period, this Budget had \$8.1 billion going into Health, the largest spend on health in a four-year period ever. As far as Budget cuts go I would like to talk about the positives that came out of that. A lot of the investment, \$30 million, was going to women and children areas. In the LGH, for instance, when you drive up Howick Street and turn on to Charles you can see the work that is happening with the new building at the Launceston General Hospital. It is a fantastic opportunity going forward to improve the services in the north.

We are always talking about the Royal rebuild down here and the amount of money that is being spent on the Royal. When that is finished it will be a fantastic achievement for the whole state. There is about \$31 million for improvements and upgrades to the Mersey. While there is a dot point here of Budget cuts there is a significant spend, particularly in the infrastructure area on the hospitals. That is notwithstanding what has happened with the \$12 million rebuild of the St Helens Hospital in the south.

We have talked a lot about the other infrastructure upgrades. This is an infrastructure budget based around improving the economy and building the infrastructure for today's and future generations that are coming our way.

Another dot point: Brand Tasmania and the brand we have in the state, the work that is going into the brand and the revised process in bringing Brand Tasmania as a separate entity. There is money in the budget to accommodate that. To sell Tasmania to the world is critical to our future growth and we need to make the most of this opportunity.

Along with Brand, we have to talk about tourism. The tourism numbers are up, as the Premier indicated. We have always talked about the word-of-mouth and the advertising that needs to go into selling Tasmania. We have always known we have a unique lifestyle and unique opportunities for any tourist coming our way. Tourism is one of the pillars of our economy.

There are significant upgrades in that tourism space. The larger ones are around the Parks and Wildlife area with the Cradle Mountain upgrade in the budget. Freycinet gets an upgrade because of the wonderful numbers that are heading the East Coast way nowadays, because of the initiatives of the Great Eastern Drive and so on. I will be on the east coast at the weekend at the East Coast Tourism Awards at Freycinet. It is a fantastic opportunity for the east coast to promote what they do well and it is great to see the east coast doing really well.

The Three Capes Walk has been fantastic. It was started by the previous Labor government; I am never shy to offer some assistance there. What was talked about is where the next iconic walk will be as far as Tasmanians go. That will be a critical piece of infrastructure to enhance more areas of Tasmania and provide the opportunity for people to see more.

There is plenty more to talk about. The TT-Line was talked about. What a fantastic thing has happened since the redevelopment of both TT-Line ships. The numbers now coming over the Strait have grown and we are almost another step closer to having two brand new ships coming our way. That will be iconic for Tasmania.

Bushfires in parks and wildlife areas: it is critical that we maintain the world heritage area to prevent bushfires. That will include an increasing number of burn-offs. I congratulate the minister.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Premier, Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Minister for Trade, Minister for Parks and Minister for Heritage agreed to.

DIVISIONS 4, 6, 11 and 13

Treasurer, Minister for Local Government and Minister for State Growth.

Mr BACON - It is always a difficult time dealing with the Treasurer but it got to a point this year where he would be asked a question and would say 'I am not answering that', with no reason given, which is appalling behaviour. This is supposed to be scrutiny around the State Budget so not only the Opposition and other members of parliament can get detail around the budget but also that the Tasmanian people can be informed about the true state of the Tasmanian finances. The way the Government has conducted itself in the past 12 months and to get to a point where you point-blank refuse to answer questions and say it is because you are not going to answer, to my mind, is the worst performance I have seen, even for one of the Premier's ministers over the past four or five years in the Estimates process.

This is supposed to be about scrutiny, about the Government being transparent and open with the Tasmanian people, about a range of matters and not just what is in the Budget, but what has been going on in different portfolios over the past 12 months. That was particularly frustrating, but I will get over it. The key when it came to the Treasurer's performance on Tuesday of last week was a failure to - I think he said in his own words that he is not going to apologise, he has made choices when he is talking about the \$1.1 billion worth of debt; he has made choices and he is not going to apologise.

That is despite the fact that the Government was at pains to say before the election that they would not be taking the state back into net debt. The Revised Estimates Report brought down in January this year did say before the revenue writedowns that we were headed back to net debt. The Government has gone above and beyond that to plunge us into \$1.1 billion worth of net debt.

The state has not been in net debt for 15 years. We know that it took a Labor government to come in and pay off the previous Liberal government's net debt. That was done 15 years ago. Now we have the Treasurer running cash deficit after cash deficit year after year, always spending more than he says he is going to. That has led to this situation where we are going to be \$1.1 billion in debt. That is a debt that is going to have to be paid off by future generations of Tasmanians. At the very least the Treasurer should have apologised for breaking that promise and laid out in full the reasons. We know it is not just about infrastructure as the Treasurer claims. Last week he said that it is around \$200 million in additional infrastructure spending. Somehow that has got us into \$1.1 billion worth of debt when last year's Budget said that we would not be going into net debt.

We know that the Treasurer does not have a pathway out of that net debt. He could have explained, even if it was beyond the forward Estimates period, what the pathway is but he would not outline a pathway out. The best he could come up with, if you can believe it, to get us out of \$1.1 billion worth of debt was to monitor things and make decisions at the time. That is not really a plan. I would argue that that is the perfect definition of not having a plan. No truthful explanation of how we got into this \$1.1 billion worth of debt. The Treasurer has not been truthful about that with the Tasmanian people. He does not have a plan to get us out of that debt. You only have to read his own words. He says that he is going to monitor things and make decisions as he goes along. This is an ad hoc way to treat this.

This is a very serious issue for the state to be headed to \$1.1 billion worth of debt. For the Treasurer to say he is going to monitor things and make decisions as he goes along is not good enough. He will have an opportunity in summing up to give a better explanation about what the Government's plan is to see us out of that debt. We know that he has not been truthful in how he got into that debt. There are a couple of things he should do. First, he should apologise for breaking that billion-dollar promise to the Tasmanian people. He should be truthful about how he got into that debt rather than talking about infrastructure and government revenue writedowns. He should talk about the cash deficits he has been running ever since he took the position of Treasurer of Tasmania. He should lay out a plan to get us out of that debt in the medium to long term. It is not going to happen in the short term with the way the Treasurer has behaved with his first five budgets.

There was discussion regarding the efficiency dividend. We know that this was a last-minute attempt by the Treasurer to try to paper over his very poor fiscal management over the past five years. We know that because the efficiency dividend is not mentioned in the budget papers; it is only in the Treasurer's speech. He was asked through the Estimates period exactly when that decision was made but he would not give any detail about that. He was asked directly whether that was the last decision that was made in putting the Budget together. He would not say yes or no.

What was clear from the Treasurer's performance and from his answers was it was the last decision that was made. The Government was going to be in deficit even in the net operating balance, which it had been in pains to say would be in surplus, unless you put this \$450 million efficiency dividend in. We know when it comes to that \$450 million the Treasurer has been at pains to say that is only a 0.75 per cent efficiency dividend. It is all well and good to say that in the first year but that doubles next year and then there is another \$50 million on top of that in the third year and the fourth year. We are talking about 1.5 per cent in the second year and 2.25 per cent in the third and fourth years. On top of that you have the Treasurer, who has already negotiated pay agreements above the 2 per cent that is funded in the Budget but the unions have to come back and tell him where those savings are going to be made above that 2 per cent. You are talking about a minimum efficiency dividend in the final two years of the Budget of 2.25 per cent, not the 0.75 per cent that the Treasurer talks about.

What makes it worse is the Treasurer will not say which departments are going to make those cuts. He will not say which jobs are going to go with those cuts. He has provided no detail at all. It beggars belief that someone could put \$450 million worth of cuts to the public service into the Budget at the last minute, so much so that it is not even mentioned in terms of an efficiency dividend in the Budget papers. The savings are in Finance-General so there is no detail about which department. This is not good enough from the Treasurer. It is incumbent on him to provide some detail around those cuts.

We hear that it is tourism marketing that has been quarantined and the other one, it has just slipped my mind for the moment, but we could not get a direct answer from the Treasurer about what is a frontline job. They say they are going to protect the front line when they will not even give a definition for what the front line is. It is impossible to believe them.

We had discussions through the Estimates period around wage agreements. There are many negotiations going on at the moment. We have heard talk that if agreements are not reached by the end of this month, by the end of the financial year, that it will not be possible for back pay for public servants. This is an outrageous tactic by the Government to try to threaten people's back pay. It goes back to December of last year where people have not had a pay increase, but to threaten that back pay is an outrage. We could not get the Treasurer to answer exactly what the size of that back

pay was, what the windfall to the Budget would be if they did punish public servants for standing up for themselves, like the bully boys they are. I am sure the Treasurer has already worked out how much that is going to save the Budget. We urge the Government to finally sit down in good faith, negotiate with their workforce, get an agreement that both sides are happy with and move on, especially at a time when the Treasurer and the Premier are saying that they want to sit down with the public service and work on a review into the public service so that they can find efficiencies. It is going to be very difficult to do that if they do not settle this war they have been having with the public service for years now.

There was talk about the position of Deputy Chief of Staff in the Treasurer's office. A very interesting change of story has gone on with this position. When Mr Nowland left the Treasurer's employ it was initially reported as a resignation. Then we heard it was a redundancy. Now it seems that it is a termination. The Treasurer refused, in his arrogant way, to give any detail around this. This is a position that was in his own office, created after the election, then a review was held into that position and the Premier decided, I think the Treasurer said, that that position was not necessary even though Mr Nowland had been doing a fantastic job in the Treasurer's own words. You would have to wonder why a job was created. How long did the review go for? How long was Mr Nowland in the job? It seems like the review went on for as long as Mr Nowland was in the job. You create a job, do a review, find that that position is not necessary, and send Mr Nowland on his way with \$50 000 of Tasmanian public money.

It is a disgrace the way this has occurred. The truth should come out. The Treasurer should have answered these questions last week. Of course, he has an opportunity to do it today and I urge him to do so.

We also talked about the TT-Line. The Government has taken dividends from the TT-Line to make their own bottom line look better over a period of time. Now it appears they have either got advice to say that the ships will be delayed two years, or the Treasurer decided to put the payment for the ships two years after the expected delivery date to make his own budget look better. Of course, you cannot get an answer. The Treasurer just said over and over again that he had no formal advice about any delay to the ships. But when Treasury puts the budget together, they do not put things in years when they are not expecting them, so it does appear that the ships will be delayed around two years.

If that is the case, if there is an issue going on with the shipbuilders, then the Treasurer should be upfront about that. He should tell, first of all, the Premier, who did not seem to know anything about the matter when his Estimates were on. He should inform the Premier first of all, but then inform the Tasmanian people. These are very important assets for the Tasmanian people not only for our tourism industry, but also our fresh produce industry in getting our freight to market. People need to know the truth about what is going on here. There is no reason the Treasurer could not be truthful about this. Inform the Tasmanian people about exactly what is going on.

We discussed changes to the Tascorp dividend policy, which seemed to flow from a letter the Treasurer sent to Tascorp in December of last year, and then a range of special dividends, which is this Treasurer's modus operandi when it comes to public finances, to squeeze as much as you can possibly get from our government business enterprises. If you needed any further proof of that, which I will argue you have not needed since they plunged the state into an energy crisis trying to rip \$75 million out of Hydro Tasmania in their first budget, it is the fact that there is now going to be a review into the returns they get from GBEs. We know the Government has a 90 per cent

dividend policy but now they can go a little higher. You think it is 95 per cent but is it 99 per cent. We talk about going to 150 per cent.

This is a Government addicted to raiding GBEs for dividends and special dividends to prop up their own budget. We know that if you look at the total government sector, in terms of cash deficits, they are huge across the forward Estimates. There is around an average of \$530 million across the forward Estimates of the revised Estimates report. This is how we are headed for \$1.1 billion of net debt. You will not hear that from the Treasurer because he is addicted to misleading the Tasmanian people when it comes to our finances.

If you want to see a real highlight of the Treasurer's hypocrisy, and his willingness to mislead Tasmanians, you only have to look at the fact that during the federal election campaign we had the federal Liberal Party saying that the money for MONA should not come forward. Campaigning in the north of the state, which we know the Treasurer did, he handed out how-to-vote cards. At the very least that is as far as he has admitted to. I think he has claimed that not one person raised the Labor promise to provide funding for public areas at the new MONA development. No-one raised that with him through the whole election campaign. It would be a joke if it was not so serious. But when you look at the fact that, in secret, the Treasurer, before all of this came about, sent a letter to MONA urging them to seek federal funding for the development. This is the hypocrisy of the Treasurer. It is as clear as the nose on your face. He urged MONA to seek federal funding and then his own colleagues campaigned against that promise once it was made.

It is the Premier who said that he has sought to bring the state together when it comes to football and MONA. That must have been at five past six on election night that he switched into that mode.

The way the Treasurer has behaved is deceitful. He said he would table the letter he sent to MONA, but we have not seen that published yet. I am not sure if that has moved along at all. They will no doubt come after 11 o'clock on Thursday. We have not seen any answers come back on the Treasurer's output yet but I expect we will see them Thursday afternoon, or some time like that.

We did see the Treasurer finally admit that it is not a loss of revenue really that has led to the \$1.1 billion worth of net debt. Of course, we have \$189 million more revenue. That is revenue growth. So it is not a revenue problem. It is an expenditure problem. This Treasurer has had it since he first began, but he cannot be honest about it, which is a shame.

We have seen cash deficit after cash deficit. We have seen fiscal deficit after fiscal deficit. You only have to look at the fiscal balance to see that it is in deficit again. There is a delay to surplus when it comes to the fiscal balance. This has been highlighted by Moody's - it is a credit negative in the eyes of Moody's. That pushing out of the fiscal return to surplus is a credit negative. When it came to talking about the credit rating through the Estimates process we could get no guarantee from the Treasurer that he would not see a further credit rating downgrade. He has had one in the past so he knows what it is all about. In his typical belligerent manner, he did talk about the metrics that the rating agencies look at. He has looked at those metrics and from his point of view that has given him some confidence. He would not discuss whether those metrics had deteriorated over the past 12 months. That was another question that he just refuses to answer. He has an opportunity today to provide that detail about what exactly has happened to those metrics over the past 12 months.

If you want to look at how farcical the situation got, it was around questions on the budget subcommittee and which members of Cabinet are on that committee. We have had in the past

former minister, Mr Hidding, talk about an infrastructure subcommittee. He outlined who was on that committee. Minister Petrusma talked about another subcommittee of Cabinet; she had been happy enough to talk about who was on that committee. We have an answer to a question, which I think comes through the State Growth output from the Treasurer where he is happy to say who is on that committee, but when it comes to the budget subcommittee, when it comes to who is going to make the decisions around this \$450 million we get a Treasurer who refuses to answer the question about exactly who is on that committee.

Why the secrecy? Why not come out honestly like Mrs Petrusma? She said she is not on it. Well and good, that is fine. We are allowed to know which members of Cabinet are not on it. Why does the Treasurer not get up today and tell us the full list of members of Cabinet who are not on the budget subcommittee? We will work out the rest.

The way this Treasurer treats the Estimates process is a joke. He gets worse from year to year. We have reached this farcical position now where he refuses to answer the question. It is not good enough.

We know that he is at pains to say that this is an infrastructure Budget. There is not one single new infrastructure project in the Budget. The Treasurer says it is around \$200 million more in spending when it comes to infrastructure and then he points to the \$1.1 billion worth of debt and tries to make a connection.

There was talk on the foreign investor land tax. It appears clear that the Treasurer has no detail on that. That is another thought bubble. I doubt it will ever come in.

Time expired.

[4.28 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Chairman, again, this year the most mind-numbingly frustrating and dishonest Estimates session from my point of view was with the Treasurer. If you want one example of how this Treasurer holds the public's right to know in contempt it is what Mr Bacon was saying about the expenditure review committee of Cabinet. The breathtaking arrogance of a Treasurer who thinks he can sit at a parliamentary committee table scrutinising the Budget and not tell members who is on the razor gang of Cabinet is unprecedented in this place. It is just one example of this Treasurer's complete disdain for transparency, accountability and the public's right to know.

We got into a patch of unpleasantness towards the end of that subcommittee session where I said that I found what Mr Gutwein was doing to this island depressing and bordering on corrupt. Now I am going to elaborate on why I used the word 'corrupt'. I go now to the *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* from the Harvard School of Ethics. It talks about institutional corruption defined by Lawrence Lessig. Here is the definition:

Institutional corruption is manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal or even currently ethical that undermines the institution's effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including to the extent relevant to its purpose, weakening either the public's trust in that institution or the institution's inherent trustworthiness.

I would argue that over the past five years, the public's faith in institutions in this state has been eroded by the Government. From a Greens point of view, there is no clearer and sadder an example

than what the Government is doing to the Parks and Wildlife Service. The Parks and Wildlife Service has gone from its core objective, which is to protect and manage Tasmania's reserve estate, that is, to protect those attributes that made those places so special, the parliament decided to set them aside in the first place.

What we know about the Parks and Wildlife Service and what we saw at the Estimates table last week in the Premier and Minister for Parks' Estimates and in the Minister for State Growth's Estimates, is that the Parks and Wildlife Service has become a sad shadow of its former self as its core objective now apparently is to facilitate the exploitation of Tasmania's reserve estate and protected areas.

The institutional corruption goes deeper than that. It is ingrained in this Government and in this Treasurer. In last year's Estimates we had to put up with the Treasurer, when answering a question, saying 'I don't believe' or 'I do believe'. We had three different answers to one question about whether the Treasurer was active in the seeking of Solicitor-General's advice on the Lake Malbena appeal. The first answer was 'I don't believe'. The second was 'I don't recall' and the third answer, after some back and forth between him and his advisers, was 'I didn't'. We had three separate answers. We still don't know which one of them is true, so we have that.

We have the dishonesty over the expenditure review committee. We have the complete opacity over the expressions of interest process for development in protected areas. What we found out at the table last week, is that a process which is already opaque, which already provides almost zero opportunity for public input, has been made more opaque. There was stage 1 of the expressions of interest process where the developers lined up, were given the red-carpet treatment to the Office of the Coordinator-General, have their proposals approved by the former minister for state growth, Mr Groom, and then three years later the public finds out about it. Then we have the Lake Malbena appeal.

Now it is worse. At least then you could have a look at the Department of State Growth website and work out what proponents wanted to exploit what parts of our reserve estate. Now it has been confirmed by this Treasurer. That process will not even happen anymore. Stage 2 of what we now know is an open-ended expressions of interest process has been made more secretive. It is scandalous. It is a classic example of institutional corruption. That is what I accuse this Treasurer of, standing here today, just as I did at the Estimates table last week. He has, through the expressions of interest process, along with the Minister for Parks, corrupted the purpose of the Parks and Wildlife Service. He has made them a tool of the Department of State Growth.

We ask the Minister for Parks about the expressions of interest process. He says, 'Talk to the Minister for State Growth'. We ask the Minister for State Growth about the expressions of interest process and he says, 'Commercial-in-confidence and you should have raised this with the Minister for Parks'. Around and around we go.

Anyone would think that these reserved lands were the Liberals to hawk. They are not. They belong to the people of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is the only World Heritage Property with the word 'wilderness' in its name. It belongs to the people of Tasmania. It was never ceded by the palawa pakana. It certainly was never ceded to commercial developers. Again, the decent processes of government have been corrupted by the Treasurer and by this Government. We have developers actually calling the shots for the expressions of interest process.

When I asked the Coordinator-General why there would be no transparency on stage 2, he said that the proponents had said to him that the process before was a bit too bureaucratic and unwieldy. What happened? Immediately the Government, through the Office of the Coordinator-General, then makes that process less transparent. Institutional corruption.

Then we have the lingering stench of the amount of money that poured into the Liberals' election campaign from the gambling industry. The foul and overpowering smell of money that has been pulled out of the pockets of some of our poorest people and funnelled into any one of Federal Group's 3500 poker machines in this state: money that was used to fund an election win; money which was repaid in full after the election when the Tasmanian Hospitality Association is gifted an extra \$4.8 million. The THA gets its \$6.8 million after the election. When we put to the Treasurer during the campaign, or the journalists put it to him on our behalf, that the donations law might need some reform he said, 'We think the current system is working well'. Yes, of course, he does because he is the beneficiary of a corrupted system where dirty money, blood money, money that comes from misery, is being funnelled into a Liberal election win. I will never retract the statement that I made at the Estimates table last Tuesday night because it is true.

Anywhere you look at definitions of institutional corruption, this Government and this Treasurer come to mind. I went back earlier to my submission to the Joint Select Committee on Ethical Conduct which I made in August 2008, about a month after I was elected, but it was through the prism of the campaign to save Ralphs Bay. Academic Max Philp has a definition of political corruption which I opened the submission with. It is -

The sense of a thing being changed from its naturally sound condition into something unsound, impure, debased, infected.

What has happened to decent government in the last five years is, I believe, political corruption. This Government has taken money from the gambling industry. This Government rolls over every time a developer walks in and says, 'I want this'. They say, 'Yes'. We now have a Treasurer going to an election, not having told the people of Tasmania that he wanted to flog the Treasury building, coming back in here three weeks after the election and announcing that it is his plan to sell the Treasury building. That building, like the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, belongs to the people of Tasmania. It is not Mr Gutwein's to sell. Even if it were, even if he had the power, truly the power, he should talk to the owners of that building. It is very clear to me that the Liberal establishment has got through to Mr Gutwein because his language most certainly has changed in relation to the sale of the Treasury building. It went from last year, saying, 'We are going to sell this place', to this year, 'Divestment comes in many forms. We may even keep part of the building'.

I certainly hope, Mr Gutwein, that those good old Liberals got in your ear and told you how corrupt they thought that decision was to sell the Treasury building without reference to the people of Tasmania, who own it.

Again, we get the answers back from the questions on notice. Again, complete dishonesty on every page. Does not answer questions. It is typical of this Treasurer.

Time expired.

Ms O'BYRNE - I am a little confused because it would appear that Ms O'Connor has some answers back from the Estimates process.

Ms O'Connor - From State Growth.

Ms O'BYRNE - I do not have answers back from my questions from State Growth. I am not sure whether they are still on their way, Treasurer? Have you submitted those answers yet? They will not come deliberately to me but they come to us? The only State Growth one that I have seen so far was a local government one.

Mr Gutwein - We have been working through them so they will come when they are ready.

Ms O'BYRNE - This is my point.

CHAIR - Sorry, Ms O'Byrne. Some answers have been given to Committee A and members from Committee A should have those from State Growth.

Ms O'BYRNE - It goes to my overall question about the worth of this week of parliament. This is the week of parliament where we follow up on what we learnt in the Estimates committees, from a Government that is probably the least transparent and sharing we have ever experienced. It is also an opportunity to then look at those questions that were genuinely taken on notice to be able to explore whether we have the answers that are relevant to those questions. I have selected these questions coming in the last bit of time but last I checked we did not have answers to these questions. They were around the Laughs of Launnie festival - the final report, the contract, the original deed; Macquarie Point - significant questions around Macquarie Point, staffing increase and the turnover of staff. How many people were there at the beginning of the year? How many people were there at the end of the year? How many people rotated through and how many redundancies if they were paid?; the cost of consultancies - the percentage of any of those consultancies to Tasmanian businesses and, particularly, a breakdown of expenditure. I will touch on that in a minute. We were looking for the regional breakdown of payroll incentives. We were looking at a number of things around the Coordinator-General, which I will also touch on. We are still waiting for answers on the conferences: the actual conferences he attended because apparently that was a secret; the state Government meetings because they were secret and what appears to be a number of trips to the footy, which were clearly a secret as well.

We have another question on notice around the Dutch Mill full production - when they will reach full production and when they will reach the 112 FTEs. Thomas Cook was interesting. We were trying to get a definition of extended jobs given the changed nature of the Thomas Cook arrangement. It is at 40 employees for whom the Government were going to extend an opportunity for payroll tax relief. There were changes. There were five employees and 40 extended employees. It will be interesting whether at any stage there were 40 employees on the books who would have attracted payroll tax exemption. Particularly, that definition of what an extended job is, was something I have not seen before.

We had some questions and we are waiting for some answers on the retention of skilled migrants. We understand that much of that is optional information but we are under the impression they were going to get an answer to that question. TDR expenditure - it strikes me that it is not a particularly difficult thing to put together. I imagine the TDR board would have at each one of its meetings an analysis of the value of loans that are currently out, and the number of people who have draw downs. That should have been reasonably easy to achieve but we do not have those answers, as far as I am aware. I am happy to apologise to the Treasurer if they have come and I have not seen them. They were all questions I put on notice.

The lack of answers makes this part of the scrutiny of Estimates quite challenging but it does fit with the narrative that we have of this Government around not giving information and the secrecy we have seen from this Government. I have sat in a few Estimates committees on both sides of the table but I have sat in federal Estimates as well and I am quite surprised at the way this Government chooses to not answer questions. You almost get to the point of wondering if this is a genuine scrutiny.

It should be a genuine scrutiny because the Government should be able to defend its budget. It should be able to defend the decisions that it has made, how it has formed its budgetary decisions around that. It should also be able to explain some of the key features of the Budget, so it is particularly interesting that this Government has identified a \$450 million savings target but made sure that that would not be subject to any Budget scrutiny. Yes, we have to find nearly half a billion dollars but we do not have to tell you about that because we have not made any decisions.

There was a decision made. There was clearly a decision made and that is the decision not to enact any of that or to frame any of that until after the Budget passes this parliament in the hope that some of these things will go through secretly; in the hope that nobody will see the impact of the cuts that have been made across government. The Government can do it's whole, 'you know it is only 0.75 cents out of every ...' - this minimal sort of impact. The reality is that \$450 million out of the Budget is quite substantial.

The reality is that there are some agencies for whom finding part of those savings will be impossible. There will be agencies that will have a larger load of heavy lifting to do so there are going to be significant impacts in our larger agencies. Our smaller ones will feel them quite deeply because it does not take very much cutting to make that impact. Our larger ones are already significantly overstretched. The only information we could gain out of Estimates that I understood about areas that would be quarantined, the Premier said that he would be quarantining tourism and the minister for Education and Training said that he would be quarantining TAFE.

We did not see a quarantining in child protection. We did not see a quarantining in Health; we did not see a quarantining in any of those areas. The Government says that it will focus on frontline areas but cannot define a frontline area.

The Government cannot define what level of back line would be able to be removed without impacting on front line so this has been a deliberate obfuscation by this Government to make sure that the actual pain that is going to be felt across government services is not explored through this process. That is a deliberate thing and the Treasurer is part of this secrecy around who the razor gang is. I truly do not understand why you cannot tell people who is on an economic review committee. The Treasurer did make this commitment on page 54 of the *Hansard*:

I will test with my Cabinet colleagues their views in terms of the release of who is on that committee and will be happy to get back to you.

Does the Treasurer really think that members of his Cabinet are so frightened of being named that they would not have given him permission to come into the House today and advise us of who is on that committee? It almost would not matter except that the Government wants to keep it a secret. Why is it necessary to not tell us who is on a committee?

The Greens hypothesise it is because it is lacking gender balance, that there is no woman. A bit like the Liberal Party broadly, I guess. I wonder if there is something else going on. Is the

expenditure review committee purely the Treasurer? Is that what is going on? Does the Premier not want to be targeted and tainted with any decision that he might make as a member of that committee? Is it a protection racket for someone like the Minister for Health that he will have to sit on a committee that authorises cuts to health? Why would you not tell us if the process was as good, open and transparent as you claim it is? There is something quite suspicious in the decision to hide that information.

As the Treasurer did commit in the committee to test with his Cabinet colleagues their views, I look forward to when the Treasurer stands up saying, 'I did test my colleagues' views on whether or not I could say who is in the committee and it would be a very foolish and needless thing for us to hide their identity - like anti-heroes or something - so I am happy to tell you who is on that committee now'. That is what we expect to happen today if the Treasurer has any commitment to any kind of transparency.

We raised a number of issues. I wanted to touch on Macquarie Point quite a bit. I am very concerned about the expenditure on Macquarie Point. We had the original \$50 million; \$5 million of that, we understand, was the Brooke Street \$5 million, which should mean that there is \$45 million left. The only thing that we can then work out is that there has been \$6.3 million on capital expenditure and \$4.4 million in remediation. What we cannot work out is where the rest of the money is: \$17 million has been spent, other than the \$5 million on Brooke Street. What we are really interested in is what have you spent it on?

If you head down there it is really hard to identify what you might have actually got for that significant amount of money. This is a project that you have had the whole time you are in Government and you have not been able to move on at all. It is concerning that you have been unable to do that.

The Coordinator-General's diary - I do not know why everything he does has to be secret either. We did get an interesting RTI published just prior to the Estimates process which said, 'meeting, event, conference, meeting, event, conference'. I do not know why the conferences he attends have to be secret. I do not know why the events he attends has to be secret. There must be other people at these conferences and at these events. Clearly, he does not turn up in a mask and we do not know that he is going there.

The Government is very cautious about who he is meeting with and very unhappy for us to know who he is meeting with. It was also unclear what you needed to do to if you want to call something a meeting. If you have a coffee in the building downstairs, is that a meeting? Is it that he does not spend a lot of time doing those type of things? What is it that is so secret about the Coordinator-General's diary - a Coordinator-General whose contract is, we confirmed, up very soon? He has to identify whether he wants to take up the opportunity to extend the contract, as I understand. He has six months' notice to do that. It is a lucrative contract. He gets paid a very large amount of taxpayers' money. The fact that that is a secret once again is one of those things that makes you go, 'I'm not so sure'.

You could at least have identified some of the meetings, because they cannot all be secret people who are just hypothesising an idea and then scurrying away again. They cannot all be secret. You could have reasonably produced an RTI that identified quite a number of those and then said there were meetings that you do not have the consent of the people to pursue those, or that they are sensitive. That would have been a different conversation again. Pages and pages and pages of

meeting, event, meeting, event, meeting, event, conference, meeting, event, conference, does not give us any kind of comfort.

Time expired.

[4.49 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN - I am happy to hear everyone's contribution when they come.

I am pleased to offer my comments on the Estimates committee last week.

Mr Chairman, I thank you for a very good job of chairing under, at times, difficult circumstances.

In terms of the economy, it is a good time to be a Tasmanian. Our economy is going gangbusters. As I outlined this morning, the Tasmanian economy is now the fastest growing in the nation. Tasmanians and their businesses are confident about the future under this Government. We have seen the creation of nearly 13 000 jobs and our population is growing at its fastest rate in nearly a decade. The 2019-20 Budget looks to maintain this extraordinary momentum and is about investing for even more growth.

The heart of the 2019-20 Budget is about delivering the Hodgman Liberal Government's long-term plan for the future of Tasmania. It sets out what we will do for the next four years and beyond and details how we will pay for it. It demonstrates that we are continuing to deliver on the election commitments that returned us to office in 2018. It shows that we are maintaining that momentum and that we are investing for growth.

We are investing a record \$8.1 billion into health and hospitals to improve the health of Tasmanians and address demand pressures. We are putting a record \$7.1 billion into education and skills to ensure that the next generation of Tasmanians can lead productive and rewarding lives.

Comments from members last week that we are not funding essential services are simply incorrect. We are spending a record \$3.6 billion on infrastructure, more hospital beds, new and upgraded schools, new irrigation schemes to value add to our agricultural industries. If ever there was an example of truly intergenerational infrastructure it is our irrigation. In 100 years' time, the investment that we make today into our dams and irrigation schemes, will still be enabling water to be utilised by farmers to produce the food, the crops and the stock that will service not only our economy, but through exports, the national and international economy as well.

These investments also include more affordable housing, better water and sewerage infrastructure, roads and bridges that make it safer and easier to get from home to work and back again and tourism and parks infrastructure for locals and visitors alike to enjoy. These investments provide employment growth opportunities in construction and they stimulate ever increasing economic activity that will underpin Tasmania's future. They support the creation of another 10 000 jobs.

We are building the public services and infrastructure that Tasmanians want. We make no apology for making that commitment to deliver on that plan. During Estimates what was clearly apparent was that, apart from the Government, nobody else has a plan. The Greens brought down an alternative budget and I acknowledge the work that goes into that. I brought down a number of those myself. They take considerable effort and, importantly, what they provide is a platform for a

political party to argue from, to argue for those things that are important, and importantly indicate how you would pay for things.

Unfortunately, Labor has not yet decided that they are advanced enough to provide that level of clarify for Tasmanians.

Quorum formed.

Mr GUTWEIN - We put forward our blueprint for the next four years. It has been well received by the community, with positive comments across the board from business, agriculture, tourism, peak bodies and the general community.

There is little to nothing that those opposite would change. They had the opportunity to argue what they would take out and they have taken nothing out. They had the opportunity to reprioritise and to explain what their priorities would be in terms of the spending that is included. They whinged about the infrastructure spend but have not put forward one single additional or new project.

While I am not surprised that those opposite are not as positive about our Budget as we are, you would think they could put forward an alternative work but they have failed to do even that.

This is an infrastructure budget. The Government has faced a massive \$535 million write-down in GST and stamp duty revenue. The Government has chosen that rather than changing down a gear we have changed up a gear. As Tasmanians would expect, the Budget demonstrates we have sensibly worked through the revenue write-downs to craft a sensible Budget that maintains the momentum and invests for growth.

The Budget delivers a record \$3.6 billion in infrastructure, with new spending of around \$700 million, with the vast majority of this new spending being funded by the state. We have chosen to invest record amounts into infrastructure to build more affordable housing, new roads and bridges, schools and hospitals, as well as 100-year assets like dams and irrigation schemes. These investments will underpin our economy to ensure it continues to grow and generate the revenues we need to invest record amounts into health and education. The infrastructure program includes \$170 million into Tasmanian Irrigation to grow our agricultural sector, \$256 million into TasRail and \$158 million into TT-Line, to get more freight on rail and boats and to get our resources and products to market.

Our part-ownership of TasWater will see another \$180 million over four years invested to accelerate our water and sewerage infrastructure right around the state, including ensuring that major projects like the removal of the waste water treatment plant at Mac Point, the Launceston waste water and sewerage combined system improvements and the Freycinet Peninsula waste water system are moved forward.

The Budget includes \$56 million towards the delivery of the first stage approvals of Project Marinus. This is the first step towards a period of investment into energy projects that will be as important to the state as hydro industrialisation was last century. These are game-changing visionary projects for Tasmania and this forward-looking Budget continues the work to bring them to fruition.

I will drill down a little bit into the infrastructure program. Whole-of-government infrastructure funding is \$3.6 billion, or nearly \$700 million more than last year's budget. Of the

\$3.6 billion in infrastructure investment in this year's Budget, the State Government is contributing 71.2 per cent of the funding, up from 68.9 per cent in last year's budget. In the 2019-20 Budget, the State Government is contributing more than \$2.5 billion and the Commonwealth is contributing approximately \$1 billion.

To argue that it is not the state doing the heavy lifting is farcical. To be frank, it demonstrates that people have not taken the time to understand the Budget papers, or have chosen not to understand the Budget papers. The state Government's total investment has increased by nearly \$550 million. The Commonwealth's commitment has increased by \$131.2 million compared to last year's budget.

Some of the erroneous statements that were made shortly after the Budget about what our investment was and what we were doing were extraordinary. We are investing \$352 million into health and hospital infrastructure, including the new commitment of \$90.6 million to fully fund Stage 2 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment. There is \$194 million in new schools, school rebuilds, upgrades, early learning centres, redeveloped school farms and improvements to TasTAFE facilities.

Since I have been Treasurer, we have effectively doubled the investment into our schools. I am very proud of that. When we came to government there had been the initial program that was run back in 2009-10 under the emergency measures of the Commonwealth where primary schools were invested in. A lot of primary schools received brand new halls and sports facilities, but there was no spending on our high schools through that program. I am pleased and proud that we have been able to increase our investment and ensure that we bring our high school stock up to standard as well.

We have allocated \$125 million for stage two of our Affordable Housing Action plan and have brought funding forward to address the issue as a priority. In total, nearly \$68 million will be spent in 2019-20 with \$40.5 million allocated out of the new action plan stage two to fund new homes and apartments for people.

We are investing \$1.6 billion into roads and bridges, including \$294 million over the next four years to commence construction of the Bridgewater Bridge. Just over \$71 million, nearly \$72 million, will go to the Greater Hobart traffic vision. There is \$84.7 million for the urban congestion fund.

I am proud that this Budget will build the infrastructure that Tasmanians need, the infrastructure that will service the growing number - Australian leading - of international tourists that we are seeing.

When framing this Budget the Government had a choice. On one hand, due to loss of revenue, the Government could have slowed down and decided to do less and not invest more. We chose to invest more. I am proud of that. This will stand our economy in good stead because there are headwinds in the national economy. You only have to look at the budgets of Queensland, which was brought down this week, the Victorian budget when that was brought down or the Northern Territory budget. This is largely as a result of the slow down in the Melbourne and Sydney property markets; in fact the crash in those two markets. That has sapped the confidence of people. We are seeing less spending therefore lower GST returns. That is impacting all states and territories. All states are having to take measures to address this. With this Budget we have demonstrated that what we are doing is an important step forward for the Tasmanian economy. Rather than stepping

back from it at a time when we are seeing record economic growth, record visitation, we have decided to step up and do even more.

I have been upfront about net debt. I raised it when I brought the Budget down. We have chosen to invest into intergenerational infrastructure for our growing state. As a result we will go into a modest amount of net debt at a time when our balance sheet is very strong and when the cost of borrowing is very low. We will have the lowest forecast net debt in the country and the lowest per capita net debt in the country. As we are seeing with other states, as they bring down their budgets, they are increasingly investing more into infrastructure. The level of net debt, which all of them carry, is increasing.

Our infrastructure investments will underpin our economy. They will drive future economic growth, greater productivity, higher employment and underpin our state revenues. We have a transaction-based tax system. We need people to be making decisions to spend, to buy properties, to invest and to employ people. Keeping our economy strong will ensure that our state revenues remain strong. Across the forward Estimates the Government will generate operational cash surpluses increasing every year. This means that the Government does have a clear pathway out of net debt, but it is a choice that the Government can make. Depending on the economic circumstances and the fiscal conditions at the time, we can assess on a year by year basis whether we continue to invest more or we decide to pay down debt. They are choices that the Government can make in the future because we have strong cash flows and the people of Tasmania will expect a responsible government to manage its finances in that way. We have laid out, over the next four years, a plan to keep our economy strong, to make use of borrowings when the cost of those borrowings is low and to ensure that we have a pathway and a choice to make in the coming budgets as to what path we take over the medium to longer term. That is sensible financial management.

The other side has asked what our plan is to get rid of the debt. How would we go about that? I would rhetorically suggest to the other side, what is yours? You have no alternative budget. Will you sell assets? We are determined that we will not. We will ensure we keep our economy strong and our revenue strong and then, based on the economic circumstances at the time, we will make decisions that are in the best interests of Tasmania.

The Budget sees the continuation of our strong investment into health, \$8.1 billion over the next four years. Compared to the last Labor-Greens budget we are spending nearly \$2.3 billion more over the coming four years. It is a massive increase.

A decade ago health expenditure comprised around 25 per cent of the budget. Now it represents nearly 32 per cent of total budget expenditures. Over the Budget and forward Estimates \$544 million more will be spent in health than forecast in last year's budget. This includes \$240 million to relieve demand pressure in the THS and Ambulance Tasmania, including \$40 million of additional funding that has been provided as a contingency within finance general to meet health demand.

The Government will work with the Department of Health and clinical leaders including through the Access Solution meetings on the best way to use this funding to address the pressure on our hospitals and health system. There is \$352.6 million in infrastructure investment in health across four years. Since coming to Government we have hired hundreds of health and hospital staff and we will continue to hire more to meet demand.

Since the 2014 election in total we have hired more than 1000 FTE for our health system and opened more than 130 new beds. This includes more than 550 nurses, more than 160 doctors, more than 90 paramedics and more than 110 allied health professionals.

Our plan will see us continue to hire hundreds more hospital and health staff over the next five years. The 2019-20 Budget provides record investment in Tasmania's education and training system, committing \$7.1 billion over four years to support and engage Tasmanian students to create a job-ready generation.

To support our schools of the future, the Government is investing in total around \$194 million into educational infrastructure over the Budget and forward Estimates. This will include new schools in Legana and Brighton as well as significant rebuilds occurring at Penguin District School, Sorell school and Devonport High.

Time expired.

[5.08 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - I rise to make some comments on the Budget scrutiny I undertook on behalf of the Greens in relation to local government. As Ms O'Connor mentioned it was a dispiriting process trying to seek clarification from the Treasurer and Local Government minister because he spent a lot of his time pointing the finger elsewhere and trying to deflect the responsibility he has, to take account of the implications of the Lake Malbena LUPAA appeal that his government is taking part in at the RMPAT tribunal and the implications for all local government councils, should that appeal prove successful.

This is the appeal which is occurring on the back of the developers Simone and Daniel Hackett losing the development application proposal they had lodged for a private development in Lake Malbena, one of the most beautiful islands in the world heritage area, where they would seek to make some private profit from the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Good minded people in the community fought long and hard to make an appeal to the Central Highlands Council. The Central Highlands Council courageously made the right decision despite the fact that they had an enormously difficult and quite high profile and controversial decision to make. It was a courageous decision, one based on good process and a good understanding of their community and the strength of concerns that were raised by so many different conservation and angling groups and people concerned about retaining the wildness of the wilderness area in Tasmania; retaining the integrity of the United Nations stamp of wilderness that only Tasmania has the responsibility for upholding in the whole world with our beautiful wilderness world heritage area.

The Central Highlands Council made that decision. The Premier has been consistently on record saying, 'The Government will let due process take its course'. Due process did take its course. We find out that this private development was knocked back. They lost. The community and the wilderness won the day and did prevail. Into that space, the Attorney-General sought advice from the Solicitor-General and now an appeal has been lodged at the RMPAT which the Government has entered into as a party.

I simply asked the question of the Local Government minister: what are the implications and has he sought advice on the potential implications for the role of local councils as planning authorities with development applications all around Tasmania, should that appeal ultimately be

proved successful? What are the implications should it be found that the Land Use Planning Approvals Act does not have jurisdiction over the world heritage area and over reserve areas with the management plan?

The minister refused to go there, refused to take responsibility for something which raises so many questions which people who care about developments everywhere in Tasmania in reserve areas and people who care particularly about wilderness areas, have a right to have answered.

It seems as though, on the one hand the Premier says, 'We will let due process take its course' but when due process does not give the answer that he and the Government want, they are then more than happy to jump in and put the support and the resources of the Government into essentially fighting a rearguard appeal against not only that development application which was thrown out by the Central Highlands Council but against the rights of local councils everywhere in Tasmania to have jurisdiction over publicly-owned reserve lands, with or without a management plan. That is not yet clear to me.

This raises questions that the minister refuses to answer. He pointed me to the Planning minister as the appropriate place to get the answers. I can tell you, minister, that the Planning minister was equally unforthcoming. What a surprise. I knew that would be the answer.

This Government shunts us from one Estimates minister to another to waste time asking questions that will never be answered. I am not dispirited because that is my job, this is the work. The work is to come in here and to speak the truth about what is going on. Despite the fact that we get false statements from ministers, we get deceptive statements, we get prevarication, we get fob-offs; despite that we will continue to ask the questions.

People have a right to know what the implications are for the Rosny Hill Conservation Recreation area. What are the implications for the massive development, which is still parked in the wings, waiting to come back and have another go? The developers have signalled that they intend to resubmit a development application for the top of Rosny Hill. The last time it went to the Clarence City Council it was a massive development, which essentially would have scalped the top of Rosny Hill and replaced it with a huge conference area, two restaurants, bars and all manner of other facilities, including accommodation. This is a sanctuary for the people of Clarence and for visitors who come to look at our city, and for people who come to get reflection, beauty and some peace amongst a wildlife which exists in very few other places, including threatened orchids.

We want to know the implications of this appeal being mounted by the Government. We want to know the implications for other local government areas. We want to know whether this is fundamentally a stalking horse for the cable car. This is obviously another development that the Government is working as hard as possible to get up. The Hobart City Council has made it abundantly clear that they do not support a cable car. The wild beauty of kunanyi, right in the middle of Hobart, must be protected. Were it to be the case that the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act is found not to have jurisdiction in parks or reserved areas with management plans then that would clearly open a question about the ability of the Hobart City Council to sit as a planning authority and make a decision about any cable car proposal for the top of kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

The minister can duck and hide, but we will be back on these questions. The community will never give up on these places and the Greens will never stop asking questions and raising them on issues like wilderness areas.

Time expired.

[5.18 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - Madam Deputy Chair, I rise tonight to talk about the Treasurer and his Estimates foray. I asked a series of questions, but, unfortunately, I did not get any clear answers. What I am most concerned about is this idea from the Treasurer to try to scratch back some of his \$1.1 billion through slugging international investment in primary production land. It seems like international investors are a fairly soft target for this minister. I have just been doing some calculations to highlight how much this could potentially hit rural and regional Tasmania and how it could impact primary production.

In the time that I spent listening to the Treasurer at Estimates we heard time and time again that there was no pathway out of this \$1.1 billion of debt that the Treasurer finds himself promoting as a good idea. He talked about investments in infrastructure, but was unable to account for where the \$1.1 billion in infrastructure is going to be. Most importantly, there is no pathway out, no plan. He is just going to sit and see and adjust the timings sometime down the track. That is no pathway out by any means.

I asked a series of questions about this international tax grab on investors and received no answers. This is due to start from 1 July 2020, so there is some time for him to change his mind.

I asked why there were no figures. It is because they had not done any. I then asked questions about Dutch Mill, which has been doing research here. Dutch Mill owns 38 titles, most of those dairy properties in Circular Head. Will Dutch Mill be subject to this investor tax and what impact could it have on the restart of Edith Creek milk factory? This is a legitimate question. Dutch Mill is an international investor and has come to Tasmania. It has bought up a number of dairy farms in Circular Head and is proposing to restart Edith Creek. What impact would it have? I looked at one of its properties. It is about 300 hectares and the Land Titles Office says that property is worth about \$2.5 million. That is the land value. That is not what they paid for it. Plugging those numbers into the land tax calculator, which Treasury helpfully has online, they would be up for \$34 000 for a 300-hectare dairy farm, if that land tax calculator is correct. What does that mean? That means one FTE, or at least part of an FTE, maybe a relief milker, who will not have a job. This is only one of their many properties, so this could impact a number of positions across Circular Head. Who knows what impact this could have on the potential restart of Edith Creek which, hopefully, if it got going again, would employ up to 100 people.

I looked at other properties. In my hometown of Ulverstone is Botanical Resources Australia, which has now been bought out by Sumitomo, a Japanese company. Would it be subject to this investor tax? The Treasurer would not commit. Botanical Resources Australia owns about 29 titles, a number of different farms. Its biggest property is at Forth. It paid about \$10 million for this collection of properties at Forth. Let us just be generous and assume this farm at Forth is worth about \$8 million. How much will BRA be hit? Plug it into the land tax calculator that Treasury kindly puts online: \$117 000 for just one property. So, \$117 000 taken off the bottom line could be one job, it could be two jobs, who knows?

Let us talk about other properties. Clovelly Farms has a significant Danish investment so no doubt it would be hit with this investor tax. The Treasurer would not commit. Clovelly Farms has about 20 or more titles, with five or six properties around the north-east and Symmons Plains. I had a look at Symmons Plains, worth about \$4.6 million or thereabouts. The land tax calculator

said Clovelly Farms would be paying around about \$65 000. There is a job gone at Symmons Plains. And so on.

Kreglinger, which own Pipers Brook, has a number of vineyards around the north-east. Let's say they are worth \$2 million. Kreglinger would be charged \$65 000, so there is at least one FTE, maybe more gone.

Who else will be impacted by this investor tax? I asked, will farmers who have relocated from countries like the Netherlands, England or New Zealand be subject to the investor tax? We might have an agreement with New Zealand on tax treatment so maybe New Zealanders are not going to be hit, but who knows because the Treasurer will not give any details. Will English people be hit? We would not get comment on the definition of a 'foreigner' that he is working on. Somebody from England is from a long way away, and it could be argued that they are foreign. I know an English family in Circular Head who own a number of dairy properties. I had a look at a couple of them and plugged the figures into the tax calculator. One of the properties would be taxed \$13 800 for this English family who are doing the right thing. They have come from England and invested heavily. One of their other properties would be taxed \$21 400. Real jobs will go. These might not be full-time jobs at every property but it could be a part-time milker.

S D Reid has international partners. Do they reach the threshold? What is the threshold? What percentage of international investment do you need? The Treasurer flagged a figure of 20 per cent. I am not sure how the sliding scale would work if an international investor only made up 20 per cent, but S D Reid has international partners. Are they 20 per cent of its holdings? If they are how much would they be charged? We do not know. S D Reid wants to sell its collection of cherry farms. What is the likelihood of an international investor in the next 12 months buying the property not knowing how much they are going to be slugged with this investor tax? This is the problem. Who is going to stump up that sort of money?

What about big employers in the plantation industry like Norske Skog and Forico? Forico paid a couple of hundred million dollars for the forest assets it purchased, mainly from Gunns. Let us be generous and say they are worth \$100 million. Put \$100 million into the tax calculator and it comes out with \$1.497 million. That is what they would owe year on year on year, according to the land tax calculator. How many jobs would \$1.5 million off the bottom line equal? Fifteen jobs or 20 jobs.

We know that many of these properties are significantly under valued. Maybe there has not been a revaluation for a while, but the purchase price was significantly lower than the land value as calculated by the land tax office. What happens with revaluations? That would mean that even more money got slugged off the bottom line because land tax is a blunt instrument. There are no details in this Budget about how much they are going to hit these international investors. There are international investors in agriculture everywhere. The Bushy Park hop farms are owned by the Dutch. Laguna Bay dairy farms has international investors. That is in all in Circular Head too. How much would VDL be up for? What did that cost pay - \$270 million? If its aggregation cost was \$200 million then that would be \$3 million a year. How many jobs would go from VDL if that was the case? That is just the cream off the top. We need more certainty.

Time expired.

[5.28 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to report on the exchange I had with the Minister for Local Government during Estimates. The topics we discussed were the Greater Hobart Act, local government funding,

the efficiency dividend, TasWater and trade waste, LGAT state election priorities, charitable rates remissions, the review of the Local Government Act, planning, rates evaluation and local government reform.

Compared to some other interactions it was quite a cordial interaction and offered the opportunity for me to glean some information. Some things I was surprised by, but overall, I was able to learn more about the minister's intentions, particularly around a number of reforms or reviews that have been proposed through his.

The first point I want to touch on is the questions asked. We talked about the efficiency dividend and whether that would be found within the Local Government division. That was probably the only area where we did not get a very straight answer.

We talked about the line item and the activities that are to be undertaken and they were predominantly around the review of the Local Government Act. I asked the minister what he hoped to achieve through the process of the review of the Local Government Act and whether he had any concerns about the short time frame. He concluded that he thought it was a reasonable time frame and that there had been a large number of submissions received. I too, have noted those submissions with interest, as has the minister.

I talked about the importance of it being a more holistic review around council amalgamations or changes to municipal boundaries, the role of councils as planning authorities, which is quite topical at present and has had a lot of media coverage around a number of controversial and new developments for the state in recent times. I also talked about the importance of the roles and function of state government and local government and a very important part of the review process was around the roles of mayors, deputy mayors and councillors.

What was a surprise to me when I probed the minister more about the intent of the reform process, was that I began to understand that it is much more than a review simply of legislation, as it has been presented. I am interested in the other work the committee is doing looking at some of those other issues around the role of councils as planning authorities and any other new things that sit outside the rather broad definition of what that review will be undertaking.

I asked for a commitment from the minister to make available any additional recommendations from the committee that sat outside of the simple review of the legislation. We will be holding him to account on that and calling for that information to be made public at the conclusion of the committee's work.

When I spoke with the Planning minister about the role of councils as planning authorities, he seemed quite committed to their role continuing as is. He did not seem to be aware of the work of the review of the Local Government Act and the conversations that were being had by that committee around the roles of councils into the future as planning authorities. There is more information for him to find out there. We talked about the Government's initial local government reform attempt when it first came to government and a number of the projects, 25 from memory out of 29 councils that undertook feasibility studies. About \$600 000 of Government money has been expended on those to date. Up until now, there is very little to show for each of those feasibility reports.

I asked the minister if he had the opportunity again - and with the benefit of hindsight - would he look differently at that process and take a different approach? He made mention of the fact that

local government had been provided with funding to undertake the feasibility studies and it was now their responsibility to start implementing some of those changes which, in some instances, would lead to significant savings for local government and for ratepayers across communities across Tasmania.

I put the position that each council has its own competing financial constraints and that I was aware there were councils that had made an approach to the Government for some additional funding to try to start chipping away and working towards some of those recommendations in those feasibility studies. I was told there would not be money, going forward, to work in partnership with local government to start implementing some of those recommendations and for local communities to start experiencing some of those savings.

That is a great shame because, through my discussions with local government, I know that there is a will from some local government areas to start working constructively with Government around some of those recommendations. I encourage the minister to give a second thought about how he might be able to work more collaboratively with local government around the implementation of those recommendations.

The one outcome of those feasibility studies has been the Greater Hobart Act which is a strategic piece of legislation aimed at those local government areas working collaboratively together. It is largely a symbolic legislative change that, no doubt, will bring great opportunities for planning for infrastructure and services across those communities. It also underpins the Hobart City Deal, so in fact it is required to start the work being undertaken on the city deal as well. It was an initiative of the councils, which then has grown into something more through the city deal. A number of the recommendations that were made in that original feasibility study that there are great opportunities for the state and local government to work together around finding efficiencies within each local government area. Also, there is the opportunity to think differently about the services that are provided across local government.

Following on from that, we have had George Town and West Tamar and their approach to joining together through shared services. Amalgamation was not supported in the end by the community and neither was Tasman and Sorell. I guess there is not a lot of direction from the state Government about where to from here, particularly around those two failed amalgamation proposals.

We talked a bit about the data being collected in the local government data report and what that might be used for in the future. As part of the state Government's original failed local government reform there was a lot of talk about data collection and using that data to underpin change within the sector. I would not be surprised at all if that data was somehow used as part of the review of the legislation to try to encourage more collaboration and efficiency in local government. I am watching that with interest.

From that we moved on to TasWater, a really interesting issue. Not long ago it was such a moment in time where there was a significant crisis in Tasmania around TasWater, local government's involvement in it as owner representatives and the great need for the state Government to step in and take over TasWater. It seems to me - and I am quite bemused by this - that as time has gone on there seems to be less of a sense of urgency about the importance of some of these projects.

I acknowledge that each of the key projects outlined in the budget speech this year around improved infrastructure for Launceston, changes at Macquarie Point and also some of the issues that are being experienced at Freycinet are painted as being progressed and funded adequately as part of the first year of the Budget. When you take the time to speak with the minister about that and the stages of each of the proposals, there is not as much detail or a sense of urgency about that program of works. I was surprised by that.

The same can be said for grease traps and some of the issues being experienced where I come from in Braddon. I have had a number of local small businesses, family businesses, contact me and I know my colleague, Shane Broad, has also been contacted by our local chambers as well who are concerned about the impact of this cost of changes to grease trap infrastructure. This certainly puts incredible pressure on some of those smaller businesses having to make those changes.

I am quite surprised when the Treasurer -

Time expired.

[5.38 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON - I rise to make my contribution to the Estimates Committee for the Treasurer, Local Government and State Growth. I would like to indicate to people reading and listening where the numbers went as far as questions asked. Through the whole day there were 236 questions put to the Treasurer by Labor, 155 by the Greens, and 12 by the Liberals. The Greens achieved well in excess of more than half.

There were many questions on the day and for the Treasurer a long day. Congratulations to the Treasurer not only for that day, but for the Budget and the commitment to invest in Tasmania's future.

The debt has been mentioned and it was a very courageous decision by the Treasurer to want to drive Tasmania's economy forward, to stick to the guns and, as he said, put it up a gear instead of going back a gear when faced with some significant revenue shortfalls.

Sticking to the dot points and two of the main ones - and dot points are always very open - health funding and infrastructure funding. That covers everything that we could talk about anyway. To quickly mention some of the things, although I did mention a couple of them in my previous contribution. It is critical, particularly in this day and age and at this time, that the 2019-20 Budget is invested into the health system for all Tasmanians. It is necessary to provide intergenerational infrastructure to boost the economy so that the infrastructure is there, intergenerational as the terms says, for the next 100 years. As the Treasurer mentioned, I will talk a little bit more about irrigation and hospital builds.

This Budget invested fantastically into the health system. There has been lots of conversation around the health system, but as I mentioned before, \$8.1 billion for the health services over the next four years, the largest spend on health ever. The Treasurer has to be complimented for bringing that forward, and so does the Health minister.

Within Lyons there is specific funding. As I mentioned in a previous contribution, there is \$87 million for the LGH redevelopment, which will continue the specific service it provided in the women's and children's precinct. The Mersey Community Hospital will get \$31.58 million for

upgrades, as well as the Royal and the huge amount of funding being spent there. Northern families struggling with drug addiction will benefit from the -

Ms BUTLER - Madam Deputy Chair, I draw your attention to the House.

Mr SHELTON - You did this to me last time.

Ms BUTLER - It was not me.

Quorum formed.

Mr SHELTON - I need to make the point that the Budget scrutiny is the Opposition's chance to scrutinise and to listen. We have one member on the Opposition benches, including the Greens I might add.

As I was saying, the northern families struggling with drug addiction will benefit from 10 new drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds at Missiondale, not far from Longford where my office and Ms Butler's second office is. It is fantastic at Missiondale, which is part of the \$4 million funding for rehab beds across the state.

The Hodgman Government is unapologetic about investing in infrastructure that will support our strong economy and job growth, and provide for vital infrastructure for the current and future generations. This includes: \$80 million for the Cradle Mountain Master Plan and Visitor Experience; \$4.2 million for the new Longford Police Station; \$2.8 million for the Campbell Town Ambulance Station; \$1.5 million for the Campbell Town pedestrian underpass; and the continuing widening of the Esk Main Road.

The new three-year deal to secure the supercars at Symmons Plains is great for those supercar followers. There is more money for Highland Lakes Road safety upgrades, and also money for safety upgrades on the Bass Highway between Deloraine and Latrobe. If you have driven past lately the \$92 million upgrade with the Perth Link changes every day. The work being done there by VEC Civil Engineering and Shaw Contracting is fantastic. All that is happening in our community is marvellous and it is helping drive our economy.

As the Treasurer said, that is not the only thing that is helping drive the economy because our gross state product is up and is the highest in the nation at the moment. I am going to have to throw out here to our agricultural areas and irrigation schemes. We have just been through autumn, which is the harvest season of the agricultural industry. There are hundreds and thousands of tonnes-worth of product that has just been harvested and sent off. The farmers are well and truly contributing to the state economy and its growth and a lot of work and effort has gone into that.

The irrigation schemes are fundamental to that and the tranche 3 irrigation scheme has recently been announced; fantastic funding there. The Prime Minister is there with the thumbs up. Mr Barnett and the federal colleagues have put \$100 million into that investment. Brilliant.

We all support education but the point is that there is \$194 million being spent on schools, school farms and TAFE. We know that investment in education facilities for our young children is vital and today's modern children want contemporary buildings and equipment. It is critical. There is the Sorell upgrade, which is perfect for that situation. It not only benefits the children and their education, but we know that the traffic congestion around Hobart and across from Sorell to Hobart

disappears in school holiday time. The idea is to put some facilities in Sorell that will encourage those children to stay at school in their local area, getting them off the road, less risk, less safety issues, and beneficial for everybody.

As well as that, when we talk about the upgrades to the Midlands Highway, it is about safety and efficiency of transport for our product.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Treasurer, Minister for Local Government and Minister for State Growth agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2 and 6 -

(Minister for Human Services, Minister for Housing and Minister for Planning)

[5.49 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN - I provide my comments to the Minister for Human Services and the Minister for Housing. I will make some brief comments in relation to Human Services. I was present for the line of questioning, though not at the table for some of it, and other colleagues will perhaps focus on that. My comments will be more so on the Housing portfolio.

In relation to child protection though, I was concerned to hear the minister outline the process in relation to serious events review. In particular, he outlined the difference between the Serious Events Review Team and the Serious Events Review Committee.

From what I could see from the list of some 10 or 12 members of that Serious Events Review Committee, there did not appear to be any independence from the department. In an area so serious and sensitive as Child Protection, it struck me as a failing of governance in relation to the oversight of that particular area. There were some sensitivities around the issues raised in Estimates last week and I urge the minister to review this area under his oversight with urgency, in order to restore and ensure community confidence in this particularly sensitive area.

Briefly, in relation to Ashley Youth Detention Centre, I supported my colleague, Jennifer Houston, as she was undertaking a number of questions in relation to detainees at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and in particular around the number of strip-searches, which I understand are undertaken when those detainees have visitors. This could explain why the minister said there were some 204 strip-searches undertaken, initially those not being fully clothed. He talked about some of them being partially clothed, not necessarily unclothed. In any case, these are some of our youngest and most vulnerable members of the community. I am not expert in this space but I understand that there are on average 10 or 12 detainees only at any one time at Ashley. Given there were 204 partially clothed searches in the period 1 July to 31 March, quick maths indicates that there are some 20 or more strip-searches undertaken on any one detainee throughout the course of the year.

I feel that is a particularly challenging figure. I understand the need for some of these procedures but I urge the minister, once again, to reflect after this Estimates Committee process on the necessity for these procedures and the impact, psychological as well as physical, on these children.

The matter of the affordable housing strategy and affordable action plan stages 1 and 2 so-called: we spent a considerable amount of time revisiting commitments that have been made by the former minister, the Premier, this minister, through media releases and on *Hansard* in this place, where clear commitments and targets have been provided to achieve 900 new social housing dwellings. The minister will be sitting in his seat, rolling his eyes once again, as I revisit this issue. I understand because he provided some explanation as to the pipeline of development that leads to a new home. Yet it is very clear in those previous plans, in media releases, in statements to the parliament that 900 new homes are what has been promised. It is now clear that some 316 new homes will have been delivered at the end of May. That is some 35 per cent only of the target. He has a target now of some 20-plus homes per day to deliver through to the end of the financial year when the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 1 will expire.

I do not want to spend any more time than he does on the semantics or the language and so on. I want the minister to take this opportunity to put a line in the sand. We are not only talking about the last 12 months. This is the first five years of a 10-year strategy. He has an opportunity now that the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 1 is coming to an end at the end June to provide an independent review of the plan, to provide assurance to the community through the parliament, what it is that he has delivered and what it is that he is going to deliver in this next four-year stage.

Madam Chair, he has promised to bring forward some \$10 million in next year's budget to \$40.5 million in 2019-20 for the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage two. In Estimates he completely failed to outline a workplan or targets. He would not commit. He would not say if not 900 then how many. He said 316 by the end of May; he did not say how many would be at the end of June. He would not say when he would achieve that 900. Today, he has released an indicative program of tenders but that is in a different format again to his quarterly reports and to his plans.

The Minister for Building and Construction today, in relation to the first home owners grant announced some 1500 new homes. The Premier in his state of the state address and in Budget address talked about 1500 new homes in the new stage two plan. I urge the minister to ensure that not only he is clear on his own language but that those within his own Cabinet are likewise clear. The point was made loud and clear that a lot of land, whether it is serviced or not, a bare patch of earth is not a home, a roof over somebody's head. For once, I would like to hear the minister clear this up as to why he changed his language around June or July of last year when clearly he realised that he was not going to reach that target of 900. He has since been ducking and weaving to try to hide the figures.

In Estimates, we heard about the private rental scheme delivering \$10 000 to \$13 000 per property for subsidised rental for affordable rentals with 111 properties let out to 29 May. Quick maths once again indicates that this is at a cost to the public purse of some \$1.4 million. These are properties that have potentially been wrestled back from the short stay accommodation market. I have to say that this is an incredibly high cost to the public purse for 110 rentals when against a target of 120 he has failed on that count too. The Government would not act on short stay accommodation earlier and yet this initiative was brought in and really, it is a blip on the landscape of the broader issues of housing and homelessness. He should admit that.

I was pleased to hear that the deferred maintenance liability has reduced down from the Estimates figure provided last year of some \$73 million. Still it is a staggering \$60 million shared across public and community housing of which \$25 million sits against public housing. That is an enormous liability. It goes some way of explaining to me why, when I am talking with tenants in

these houses, that they are still concerned about energy efficiency, about draughts, about basic maintenance.

The public and social housing stock has declined on figures that the minister provided last year of 12 587 down to 12 485 this year. That is a terrible indictment against a housing and homelessness crisis within this state. To hear that the total number of affordable houses has reduced in this state is a terrible state of affairs. The public housing debt of \$156.7 million continues to be a significant noose around the neck of Housing Tasmania that continues to pay back some \$15 million every year which will see that debt continue out to, by my calculation, 2042. Something must be done to relieve Housing Tasmania of this debt.

Ms O'Connor - Absorb it into the public account.

Ms STANDEN - The interjection from the Leader of the Greens provides a useful suggestion to absorb this debt into the public account. I would like to see some consideration of that. We are going around and around. I know that this is not just a Liberal government concern. It is something that has been of concern in Tasmania for some years and it is time that debt was relieved.

One thousand six hundred homeless people on any given night is way too many. I cannot see any new dollars in this Budget to relieve the homelessness situation within Tasmania. The minister was given an opportunity to outline how it is that he is going to spend \$40.5 million in the coming year and he provided no detail - zero, zip. Despite the fact that there is a huge outcry in relation to not only affordable housing, but homelessness in this state, he missed a vital opportunity to inform the people of Tasmania, particularly in the south of the state where the homelessness situation is so acute. I have heard of situations of people living in cars, tents, garages and shipping containers in the Meander Valley, across to St. Helens, up in Burnie, right across this state. It is time that the minister provided some information on what he is going to do in terms of new funding to relieve this increased demand.

I understand that last year he allowed some money, an underspend of \$800 000 to be rolled into emergency homelessness outreach services through one of the providers. This was last year and some \$500 000 is being considered for this financial year. Let that be so, but let the record also show that that will be \$300 000 less than last year. How is he going to plug that gap? What more is he going to provide, given that demand has only increased in that 12 months?

There is the expiry of the National Rental Affordable Ability Scheme, the so-called NRAS, coming to an end. We urgently need to know what the state Government's plan is to assist households with the transition of properties to market rent. We would like to know what money has been allocated in the Budget to assist households with this transition. I am not sure precisely how many households are at risk at the moment as that scheme winds up, but as NRAS incentives expire and the properties return to market rent, we need to know if there is money allocated within that \$40.5 million within the Budget to replace them and maintain the supply of much needed affordable rental properties. It is another gap in this Budget in this portfolio.

We talked about fast-tracked rezoned land. I think three packages of land have now been approved through the parliament for release under that initiative. It is six months or so since that process began and no sods are turned. I have said, and I have been on the public record a number of times saying the Affordable Housing Strategy and the Affordable Housing Action Plan Stage 1 are good documents, although they were set some five years ago where the demand for social

housing and other services was lower than they are now. If only this Government would meet those targets that would be a start.

There is no doubt the fast-tracked rezoned land is an initiative and a step in the right direction, but fast tracked it ain't. Fast tracked against other processes perhaps, but we are still talking about a lag of probably some 18 months or so. Speaking of which, in the building and construction sector I have been advised that it takes some 18 months or so to engage building contractors in order to build some of these affordable homes. In the five years that this Government has had to address Tasmania's affordable housing issues, it could have trained its workforce through the TAFE. If only it had the foresight to project accurately the demand within the building and construction industry. Amongst other factors I have always acknowledged that there are a number of levers, but if the Government had had the foresight to work across government to invest in education and training, skills development for some of our young people as well as older workers we would be in a better stage today where we are not reliant on itinerant workers from interstate. We can build good secure jobs within this sector within this state.

There is an initiative within Affordable Housing Action Plan Stage 2 for a new women's shelter of eight units. I did not get the time to explore that but from what I understand, it is not a new women's shelter that is being proposed. Eight new units perhaps, but not a new women's shelter.

Even today, within question time, the minister spoke about new shelters in his response to a Dorothy Dixier. I urge him to be careful in his language. If these are new shelters, then that is a good thing but let us hear the detail of that. Let us know what it is that the people of Tasmania are expecting.

Within the Affordable Housing Action plan stage 2, the final area of concern is buried at the back of the document. It is action 19.3 that says -

Review the housing dashboard measures used by Department of Communities Tasmania to ensure we are measuring meaningful progress and are consistent with national performance indicators under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

What that says to me is a change of reporting. It says a change to longitudinal data and a change of accountability. Over the course of the year, I have been tracking very carefully the range of targets within the minister's own quarterly reports and, although I have been hammering this figure of 900, because it is at least understandable, embedded within these quarterly reports there are other targets that have been shifted down or revised up.

I urge this minister, halfway through the affordable housing strategy, to undertake a proper independent review of the strategy in order to set sensible targets with consistent language and not keep changing the goalposts. People within Tasmania, the media, the providers and the average Joe-blow are sick to death of the goalposts being shifted and smoke and mirror tactics used to fudge the figures, to confuse people as to what exactly it is that this minister has promised.

Unfortunately, it was a disappointing budget Estimates process. Half the time we were squabbling over figures where the minister knew if he had fessed-up to changing the figures to suit his purposes because he knew he was not going to be able to achieve that target of 900, then it would have been a far less frustrating process.

I hope the select committee that has been established on affordable housing, that will report by mid-October of this year, will be an opportunity to assist the minister with this line in the sand. I have offered a bipartisan approach in this regard. Labor has requested a briefing from Housing Tasmania through the minister and that request has been denied.

Will you now commit to providing that briefing?

Time expired.

[6.08 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - I thank Ms Standen for her contribution. It was, as ever, well considered and very informative.

I rise to speak on Mr Jaensch's Estimates. Dr Woodruff and I both had the dubious pleasure of sitting across the Estimates table from the minister for various parts of the day. I was there early and we were talking about the child safety budget, the out-of-home-care budget and the fact that the Premier during Estimates had made it very clear that the tourism marketing budget would be quarantined or inoculated from the efficiency dividend that is embedded in the Budget and why was the child safety budget not also inoculated from those efficiencies?

The minister did not have a straight answer for that. If he was organised, what he would have said is, 'I understand that it is vital that every cent that is allocated to child protection in Tasmania remains and I will continue to fight for more money. I will fight to make sure that the child safety budget is not impacted by the efficiency dividend'. He could not do that. That is a matter of great regret.

Because of the reform process that this Government has been involved in for five years, there is a surge in the budget allocation that runs out next year for child safety services. The answer we got from the Treasurer and from the Minister for Human Services is that there is a reform process underway.

The question regarding the \$17 million that has been allocated to the reform process, I asked the Treasurer whether he was seriously saying that the review and reform process will come back and say extra resources are not needed and that explains the flatline Budget allocation. Again we have dodgy language from the Treasurer.

Mr Jaensch is not quite so clever with his attempts to conceal information. Mr Jaensch's response to that was not satisfying because it is clear that any sound strategic considered reform process in child protection will say there are obvious systemic issues in the child protection system. There is obviously a growing need for a good child protection system in Tasmania. We will recommend that more money goes into the child safety budget. That is what any good review process will do. We cannot do a proper root and branch reform of child safety within the same funding envelope. We expect to see a stronger allocation against child safety next year.

Serendipitously Mr Jaensch was at the Estimates table the day after the full bench of the Supreme Court found against Housing Tasmania for evicting a tenant with an intellectual disability, Mr Gregory Parsons. Mr Parsons had lived in his Housing Tasmania unit for nearly 12 years and had never missed his rent. In about October last year, Housing Tasmania served Mr Parsons with an eviction notice. When he asked why he was being evicted from his home of 12 years the only response he could get was that his lease was expiring. I understand it was

Mr Bacon who helped guide Mr Parsons to see the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, which took on his case. The full bench of the Supreme Court found that Housing Tasmania must be a model landlord, that it must afford its tenants natural justice, give them reasons and a right of review and, importantly, it upheld that critical section of the Homes Act of 1935 which makes it clear what the role of the director of housing is in relation to Housing Tasmania tenants. That is to enable people to reside in residential accommodation that is safe, secure, appropriate and affordable. That is Housing Tasmanian's job. The full bench of the Supreme Court has upheld that. The Premier and the Minister for Housing should just accept the umpire's decision, stop wasting public money on legal appeals, and invest that money into building new homes.

What we heard from the minister this morning is that of the target of 900 new homes by three weeks from now this Government has built 316. Ms Standen is right about raising expectations, through your language, that can only get broken.

We have had it from the Minister for Health who said he was going to fix the health system. It is in a worse state than when he arrived in the job. The Minister for Housing, the new minister, said he would build 900 homes by 1 July 2019. Of course he cannot. What he did was raise expectation in the community that those houses would all be delivered.

What we know from other answers from Estimates is that this Government spent \$440 000 of public funds trying to reopen tracks through priceless Aboriginal heritage in the Tarkine. They are still at it; an election promise from 2014 that they have broken. We are delighted that they have broken it and continue to break it. It is a concern that nearly half a million dollars was spent on that effort. Then \$355 000 was spent defending the Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Act 2014, one of the most draconian and undemocratic pieces of legislation that has gone through this place. That is nearly \$800 000.

The Government, through a manipulative and I think subversive process, is joining the appeal against the Central Highlands Councils decision in relation to Lake Malbena. That will cost tens of thousands of dollars, presumably, in legal counsel. Now the Premier and the Housing minister are seeking to uphold what they believe is Housing Tasmania's right to evict through an expensive appeal to the High Court. Here we are in the middle of a housing and homelessness crisis. We have people sleeping on the rivulet, in the streets of Hobart; we have people sleeping on the Domain. They have been banished from the lawns of parliament because it was inconvenient for some members of this place to see them sleeping there, but that does not mean they found a home.

We know that the statistics, the most recent Census says 1600 Tasmanians on any given night are sleeping rough or in unstable, insecure accommodation. I believe those figures are worse. I believe they are getting worse every day because of a chronic neglect of the Housing portfolio for the first term of the Hodgman Government. We had the federal government hooking money out of housing and then the state government underinvesting in housing while they let short-stay accommodation listings go through the roof. This is a time when, instead of engaging in an expensive appeal to the High Court, this minister should just put that money into building new homes.

One of the other issues that has come up in this House a couple of times because the Greens have brought it on - and it relates specifically to the homelessness issue - is that we have twice tried to have the Police Offences Act fixed so that people are not punished for being poor. There is a crime of begging in Tasmania with penalties of up to \$700 or six months in jail. In 2016, we sought to have that law fixed, and then late last year, we brought our amendment bill back into this place.

The minister at the time, the Police minister, made it very clear that he would be reporting - and this is what he said in October last year after voting down our very straightforward amendment bill to decriminalise poverty. He said he would be reporting in the first half of 2019. He has two days to come into this House and tell the House what he is doing to deal with people who are so poor that they feel they have no other choice but to ask others for money. We live in an evolved, reasonably wealthy society relative to other parts of the world but you have a law on the statutes here that punishes people for poverty at the same time as you have a homelessness crisis. This is simply wrong, and we need to see Mr Ferguson come into this place sometime this week and explain to the House what this Government will do to decriminalise poverty. That is, remove the crime of poverty from section 8 of the Police Offences Act.

The other issue I want to briefly touch on is the Commonwealth/state housing debt. We demonstrated in our alternative budget that it is possible to prioritise absorbing that debt into the public account. Pay that \$15 million a year to the Commonwealth out of the public account as part of general government sector debt, unburden Housing Tasmania of the Commonwealth state housing debt and let it just get on with building homes. This call has been reinforced in recent times by Shelter Tasmania and the Tasmanian Council of Social Services. If this Government can spend \$1.6 billion on infrastructure, it can relieve Housing Tasmania of the burden of its debt.

Time expired.

[6.18 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - I am pleased to contribute in the report back session on Mr Jaensch's portfolios. I will touch briefly on Housing then I will go to the matters that I was raising.

Under this Government since they came to power, 3200 on the waiting list and nine months longer to wait. The targets move all the time as to what the Government would achieve on every single measure. They have failed.

I have a constituent at the moment that we are dealing with - and we will be writing to the minister tonight - who has fled a violent relationship, who has children, who is not listed as priority one because she has managed to scrape together enough money for two of her three children and her to fit in a place the size of a shoe box. She is not the priority one because she has somewhere safe. The fact that her children are separated, the fact that she cannot go home does not seem to matter. She rings the women's shelter regularly to try to find any kind of support from them and they have no space. This is a case from today.

We have these cases every single day: people who cannot get housing support. When this minister stands up and gloats in Estimates committees and in this Chamber today about what a wonderful job he is doing, I feel sick to my stomach.

The other issue is the matter I raised in the Estimates Committee that I do want to touch on was my first question to the minister which was to ask him to take me through the terms of the Intensive Family Engagement Service. Mr Jaensch's answer said:

Yes, I am happy to do that. As I said in my overview, a key component in the mission for Strong Families - Safe Kids redesign is to better support families before they get in crisis, before harm occurs. By giving early support the idea is that children are less likely to be in harm's way and to be removed from their families and relationships in families are less likely to be breaking down.

Before I move to the next bit, which may have been an error or a misleading, the minister can clarify that for us when he does his contribution. That is clearly not the case. I have been the minister for children so I know when there is an incident involving children the minister is very well briefed. The reason the briefing notes are good is that these matters often end up in court. When you are dealing with a matter of child safety the briefings are good. The minister would know about them. Unless there are far, far more children dying or being hurt under this minister's watch, then the minister knew exactly who I was talking about. His inability to advise whether support was given was absolutely hideous. In his answer he said:

How have they been performing? We have had that service proving up to 20 hours per week for a period of three to five months using models that focus on improving parenting behaviour and practical supports, as well as role modelling for the family.

The minister then could not tell us whether those two families had received their 20 hours a week. The reason the minister could not is because they did not. It is very clear that they did not; this program did not provide the intensive support. We raised an issue of a child that the hospital said, 'Please do not send this child home with the parents. It is not safe'. The decision was made to send the child with them. Intensive Family Engagement Services wrapped around and the child died. It is not clear that any of that intensive family support was provided. The minister could not provide those answers. The minister sat there and said:

I cannot tell you anything because you are not allowed to identify anybody, so I cannot comment. Because we are not allowed to identify anybody I cannot comment.

The two cases we raised were vague enough to not identify the families. They were precise enough for the minister to know exactly who we were talking about. For the minister not to be able to tell us whether those children received the support was a dereliction of duty.

The second child was a child who horrifically self-harmed. It is quite clear that they did not get the Intensive Family Engagement Service support either.

You might say that is perhaps an unfortunate error, but there are a significant number of cases currently being investigated now. There are six cases currently being investigated. Of the 17 that have been investigated, the minister could not tell us how many of those were families who should have been getting Intensive Family Engagement Service. We do not know how widespread that is. What frightens me is either the minister does not know or he chose to cover it up. Neither of those are acceptable in the parliament and neither of those are acceptable in Estimates.

The minister said, and this is probably something he does need to clarify in his answer:

We have run the pilot for a year. We have added more resources to extend it. There have now been 62 families who have received support and intensive support services under the Intensive Family Engagement Service, IFES.

That is what the minister said and I can refer the minister to page 4 of his *Hansard* if he wants to check that that is what he said. That was certainly what I noted down at the time. That is what the minister said.

It then transpired that the minister was aware of a report, an investigation and report into this program. A report into the efficacy of this program. The report was tabled not in the lower House where we asked for it because, apparently, we can just be ignored in the lower House. The report was tabled in the other place in their Estimates and said that approximately 80 families have so far participated. The minister needs to clarify how many people have participated. That matters, because one of the questions we have on notice that has not been answered is the percentage of those families who are being investigated who are in receipt of that service, or nominally in receipt of that service.

The reason this matters is because this report that the minister has had for some time clearly shows that there are problems. If we are still sending children into unsafe environments by claiming that they are getting Intensive Family Support Service that is not occurring then that is not an error of a contract. That is not a mistake. That is not an oversight. That is actually dereliction of the minister's responsibility for the safety of these children.

We know that that report was very clear that there were significant challenges. The report was by the university's Institute for the Study of Social Change. It showed that service providers were confused about what to do when a notification occurred regarding an IFES family. There were concerns that delivery by service providers against contracts was not being adequately monitored. The department needed to take greater oversight of the risk inherent in IFES cases. There is a widespread view that a fee for service model is inappropriate because providers are struggling to maintain staffing. This is possibly why they are not getting their visits.

Some families who were referred, the report found, were too high risk to take part in a pilot program, that the team leader role was too diverse with too much responsibility for one person and that the department needed to undertake a risk assessment when intervention is concluding to determine whether children are safe to stay in their homes.

What we identified with the Estimates process is that there are children who have been harmed, who were supposed to have been supported by this program but who were not being supported by this program. It is a program that the minister had advice on that it was failing.

The minister could not tell us what actions he had taken since receiving those reports for the Serious Events Review Committee, SERC. The minister has designed a program, with good intention. Keeping families together and supporting families is a good intent, but if you farm it out and you do not know that it is happening, and even worse when you find out that it is not happening, to not take action is neglect. It is negligent behaviour. That is where the majority of our time focused.

The cases are horrific. The minister's apparent lack of knowledge of them was inexcusable. What is more abhorrent, though, is that we now know that not only was there a lack of knowledge, there was a lack of action. We know now that the minister could not guarantee that those children had been visited. He could not guarantee that they were safe and he had on his desk, for some time, reports that told him so: not only the report by the Institute for the Study of Social Change but also the reports from SERC. If the minister finds out the kids are at risk and does nothing, then the minister is responsible.

Further aspects of the report found the minister said he was heading up the SERC with some kind of independent body, an election commitment. The Serious Events Review Committee does not comprise anyone who is independent of government: the Deputy Police Commissioner, the

Assistant Commissioner of Police, the Chief Medical Officer from DHHS, the Nursing Director of Child Health Planning Service, the Director of Child Student Wellbeing at Education, the Deputy Secretary for Children, the Department of Communities Tasmania, director of strategic services and the Department of Communities director of programs support, the director of Child Safety at Communities Tasmania and the manager of government and risk from Communities Tasmania and the principal legal officer of Communities Tasmania. These are all government staff.

This is not an independent committee. This is a cross-government committee that looks at itself and reports directly to the minister. This is not a committee that could, by the very nature of its independence, have come out and said, 'There is a serious problem with this program and we need to act'. The minister has been referring cases, not to an independent body, but to a body that the minister owns.

The minister has referred these cases to the program for review at the university and he sat on the findings. The minister stands condemned for his behaviour.

Time expired.

[6.28 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Chairman, at the outset I thank you for chairing our committee. I also thank the secretary to the committee, the Hansard staff and other attendants who were able to conduct and support the committee process. I thank also the department secretaries and their teams for the extensive preparation that goes into Estimates week, as well as their assistance on the day and preparing answers to questions taken on notice which are 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.

Unfortunately, as happens most years, this noble purpose is quickly overtaken by the Opposition's more cynical pursuit of one or two political gotcha moments to feed their narrative, which is largely written before they come to the table. This was nowhere more blatant than in the examination, if we can call it that, of my Housing portfolio.

As you know the Hodgman Liberal Government's Affordable Housing Strategy is helping more people into homes across Tasmania at a time when we most need them. It is disappointing that Labor is wilfully ignorant of the targets that were set at the start of the first action plan in 2015 and would rather play silly political games and burn up the committee's time on its charade of moving targets.

The Government takes the needs of Tasmanians facing homelessness very seriously. Labor is more interested in games. The first question in our Estimates hearing regarding emergency support for Tasmanians experiencing homelessness came from our newest MP, John Tucker. I thank him for asking questions about a matter that is important to all Tasmanians. Labor asked not one question on homelessness.

The Government continues to report against targets that were established in our first action plan as we achieve them. The targets always included the supply of land to build houses on as well as houses that we build and deliver, or work with third parties to deliver. This is all about supplying more houses for Tasmania at a time of housing shortage. This is named in the first action plan, which clearly shows the location of a potential new supply of 941 affordable homes, social housing, supported accommodation and land release. You cannot build houses without land. The quarterly

housing report has always reported on land release as part of our supply targets. This has not changed.

We are getting on with the job of building more homes, which is why we have invested an additional \$125 million into stage two of our Affordable Housing Strategy, taking our total investment into affordable housing to almost \$200 million over eight years. That is the largest ever state investment in affordable housing in Tasmania's history. As at the end of May 2019 we had delivered 316 of our 372 social housing target. We currently have more than 100 homes in advanced stages of construction due to be delivered within coming weeks. This includes homes at stages such as final fit-out, landscaping and completion of driveway works.

Thankfully we have had a long, relatively dry lead-in to the winter, which has meant that our building season has been longer and more productive than we might have even hoped for. As at the end of May 2019 we had assisted 1438 new households of the 1600 target set out in 2015. This includes 347 households assisted into affordable homeownership and 291 affordable land lots that have been released: land to build houses on because you cannot build a house without land and 316 new social housing dwellings constructed for those who need social housing support. There have been 269 households assisted into affordable private rentals and 111 new units of homeless accommodation have been provided.

We have allocated almost \$68 million in the 2019-20 financial year to boost the supply of new social and affordable homes. This is in addition to the \$30 million housing investment done under the Hobart City Deal, where we secured the Morrison Government's contribution to build about 100 additional social housing dwellings over two years, at a time when we most need them.

We are confident that our major investment and our Affordable Housing Action plan will boost housing supply and get more Tasmanians into homes. Our Affordable Housing Strategy addresses the full spectrum of need, from crisis accommodation to social housing and affordable home ownership. It is not one size fits all.

We are getting on with delivering our action plan 1 targets and we are already preparing to deliver on our targets from action plan two.

Our new action plan represents stage two of the strategy and builds on the work we are doing to increase the supply of houses right across the spectrum. It is about meeting the immediate demand for social and affordable housing and that is why the supply of new homes remains our focus. Our new plan builds on action plan one and will deliver an extra 1500 new affordable homes to Tasmanians, creating an estimated 900 jobs in the building and construction industry and boosting our economy.

We have consulted widely in the development of the plan and incorporated key themes that were discussed at the housing summit and at roundtables held in each region towards the end of last year. Over the next four years, the plan will deliver more land including supply of around 380 new lots for new affordable homes, more social housing, at least 607 new homes in areas of high demand.

Ms O'Connor - Are you going to be able to meet these targets?

Mr JAENSCH - Definitely will. Every one of them as we have met our targets from AHAP 1. More homeless accommodation with 88 more units for those in crisis, better planning to make it

easier to build new homes and increase supply, more people in home ownership with around 287 low income households helped to buy their own home. We are supporting people into private rental with 200 tenancies to assist low income households and new support for vulnerable Tasmanians, with 418 people or families helped into supported accommodation.

In my portfolio area of Human Services and particularly the safety of our children, I was pleased to provide an update to the committee on our continued investment to help and protect Tasmania's vulnerable children and young people; to better support families before they get into crisis. This includes delivery of the biggest service delivery change for child safety services in Tasmania with the Strong Families - Safe Kids advice and referral line which commenced at the beginning of December 2018.

The advice and referral line as a new single entry point is a centrepiece of a more collaborative service network that can identify the needs of families early and respond appropriately. At the heart of the Strong Families - Safe Kids advice and referral line, is a more collaborative way of working; a shared responsibility for the welfare of every child because we all want children to be safe and we all have a part to play.

Child safety now works alongside qualified government and community-based providers - Mission Australia and Baptcare - who together link Tasmanians with a range of government and non-government services and programs. Importantly, every call is triaged to determine the most appropriate response, including a recommendation for an urgent safety assessment if warranted. By giving families and carers the support they need earlier, children are less likely to be removed from their families, also easing pressure on capacity to manage those at high risk of abuse and neglect.

Early data indicates that the new service is already seeing a reduction in the overall notifications because it concentrates on providing more support to families at the beginning. The question was raised before about whether the costs of providing child safety services adequately were not just going to continue to rise exponentially. We believe that there are too many kids in out-of-home care for our population. We need to be reducing that number and with that reduces the cost.

Another initiative discussed and mentioned recently in contributions is the Intensive Family Engagement Service, the pilot of which seeks to provide a supportive community around a family so that the family can become more self-sufficient beyond the life of the service. The primary aim of IFES is to prevent the imminent separation of children from their primary care givers.

As also discussed with the committee, the pilot program has been evaluated and the department is taking steps to improve on the model, including looking at international best practice. The fact is, stakeholders have widely praised the program. Families consistently cite positive changes in regard to the wellbeing of their children and their family life. The independent review of the program, the evaluation undertaken by the University of Tasmania, again was overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the Government's efforts to introduce this new way rather than the bad old days where child protection used to turn up and take the kids away almost as a preventative measure. I do think that in some of the commentary I have heard from those opposite, they prefer that cut and dried way; early intervention, statutory intervention and take the kids away.

We believe that we are working with best practice these days, looking at what is happening around the world and implementing it here. It is difficult, but it is worth it and it is going to result in fewer kids being removed from their families, which in itself is a trauma that they do not need to

have if we can help those families do the job of parenting better earlier and keep those families together, and keep those kids safe.

While I was hoping to discuss this important mission of keeping our kids safe and keeping families together in more detail, again Labor instead used the time to be opportunistic and go for points politicising our vulnerable families in the process, which is deeply unfortunate on something so important.

I also took the opportunity to update the committee on delivery of some of our election commitments, which is important that we are also accountable for. We have released our out-of-age home care extension to age 21 model, a step-down approach, which provides support for young people in family-based care as they transition to independent living. This decreases as the young person takes increasing responsibility for managing their own wellbeing and financial affairs.

We have also now commenced consultation on a framework to put better processes and systems in place for transfer of guardianship to strengthen the permanency of placement processes. This will help to ensure that there is earlier decision making in the lives of children to limit them being bounced from one placement to another. Further work will be delivered to streamline the adoption process to make it easier in cases where permanency is the best outcome for a child.

The Ashley Youth Detention Centre was also discussed and we remain of the view that Tasmania will always need to have a facility of this kind, in line with community expectations. We have committed to keeping the Ashley Youth Detention Centre open on its current site and have committed \$7.28 million for a major redesign and upgrade of the centre. The redesign will ensure that Ashley is fit for purpose and enables an improved model of care as part of a modern, integrated, statewide and therapeutic youth justice model. The Department of Communities Tasmania has engaged an architect and a youth justice planner to review the existing Ashley facilities and is currently considering a number of options aimed at making Ashley a more therapeutic environment.

This is on top of what we have already delivered this year for young people and youth at risk: continued implementation of our Youth at Risk strategy; release of the Government's discussion paper, a Future Program for Family Based Care; the incentive payments of \$2500 now paid to both the foster carer and the young person to support completion of their Tasmanian Certificate of Education in year 12 or its equivalent.

We have released an Outcomes framework for children and young people in out-of-home care and we have delivered a Child Health and Wellbeing framework.

I also took the opportunity to explain our budget investments into child safety and the continuation of Strong Families - Safe Kids, including outlining additional funding of \$16.9 million to meet the growth in demand for out-of-home care services, including children in placement with foster carers, kinship carers or organisations that provide a level of specialised service for children living with complex needs.

Ms O'Connor has left now, but we anticipate a substantial change in the cost structure of providing those more complex services due to the work that we are undertaking. That is why we have undertaken to come back to Treasury with a new model and cost profile for delivering those services next year.

Some out-of-home care children present with very complex needs and require extensive periods of time receiving specialised care with highly intensive wraparound services to be provided while safe, appropriate and stable options are pursued to address their future needs.

There were questions on the role of the Serious Events Review Team, although again it was disappointing that instead of questioning the work that this team completed, or to understand the role it plays to help achieve structural change, Labor instead questioned their integrity and again confirm that they will continue to be a policy-free Opposition on this, as in many other areas.

The Government has a clear plan for tackling issues and reforming the child safety system, which started in our last term of Government and I am proud to continue it. I call on all sides of this parliament and politics to support this plan.

We are delivering on our commitments to improve the lives of children and young people, to better support families and children at risk, and we remain committed to fixing the system to move to an evidence-based way of thinking to protect children and prevent them from being abused in the first place.

Finally, in the Planning portfolio, there was not a lot of planning discussed. Instead, a series of irrelevant questions needed to be referred to relevant ministers, or to the independent statutory assessment processes currently underway for certain matters. There was more of the same hypocrisy, including from the Greens. They want planning systems that only approve the things that they like. They demand that we intervene to stop the things that they do not like. It is predictable, it is comical, but it is a waste of the resources of the parliament.

There were also questions from Labor and the Greens that they ought to have been asking themselves. I point to the issue of demolition of a locally listed heritage house in Mount Stuart and the assertion that this Government removed the ability to ban future development in such instances, in 2015, when it was a Labor-Greens government in 2013 that changed the enforcement provisions under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act. The changes came into effect in 2015. To those who know some background to this, there were some lighter moments as well as we smiled to ourselves that Labor was trying to give us a whack for something they introduced.

Whilst their focus was to ask somewhat irrelevant questions, thanks to questions from Mr Tucker, I was able to outline some of the Government's progress in delivering planning reforms and the next steps of the reform agenda.

As the finalisation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme remains our highest priority, I set about assisting councils to finalise their components, the local provisions schedules. In late 2018, I wrote to all councils expressing my preference for all of the local provisions schedules to be submitted to the Tasmanian Planning Commission for statutory assessment by the middle of this year. To assist in meeting the target, we mounted an acceleration program where a special project team, drawn from both the Planning Policy Unit and the Tasmanian Planning Commission, has been working directly with council planners across the state. I am pleased to confirm again, as I was to the Committee, that many councils have now met the target. There are firm arrangements in place for the remainders to deliver their LPSs. As at the end of June, it is expected that we will have 12 LPSs formally lodged, and a further seven already completed and endorsed by their council and soon to be submitted. The remainder are due for endorsement by their councillors during July, which is a fantastic achievement. I thank local government for rising to that challenge and getting that work done.

A number of councils have now progressed to the public exhibition stage following preliminary review by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. Like many in the local government sector, I am very keen now to move beyond this part of the planning reform agenda and to commence much needed work on strategic policies to guide the development and prosperity of our communities and subsequent reviews of the regional land use strategies. To this end, you would be aware that we also developed and passed through the parliament, amendments to LUPAA -

Time expired.

[6.48 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, they were very instructive comments from the Minister for Planning just then. Speaking of hypocrisy, his one hour in the budget Estimates week, one hour that we get to scrutinise the planning minister about planning issues in Tasmania, the first 10 minutes were taken up by an incredibly long introductory statement from the minister, probably the first 10 minutes of one hour, and numerous Dorothy Dixers from the promotion machine of Mr Tucker who was sitting there on behalf of the Government, doing everything possible to deflect this Planning minister from having to answer any reasonable questions at all about such an important portfolio.

Not only did this Liberal Government decide to squeeze such an important portfolio into one hour, we actually only got about two questions each. As I go back and look through the *Hansard* record, it is a disgrace.

What an incredible joke of an Estimates, as I mentioned before, first of all from the Minister for Local Government, Mr Gutwein, who told me to take my questions about the LUPAA appeal for the Lake Malbena development decision that was knocked back by the Central Highlands Council to the Planning minister, because it has now gone by the developers to the RMPAT for an appeal of that decision.

The Attorney-General of this Government has joined as an interested party to consider the matter of whether this will have an impact on Local Council decisions and whether it indicates that LUPAA and the jurisdiction of LUPAA, that the laws need to be changed. Perhaps councils are getting an opportunity to give their communities a voice about what happens in wilderness areas and in reserve land, in areas that have a management plan over the top of them, publicly owned lands. The role of councils is to give people, multiple parties, a voice, and to come to a considered decision as a planning authority about whether a development application fits within the law and fits within the objects of the Resource Management and Planning Scheme. These include ecological biodiversity, social licence, providing the community and the environment with the protection that people living in their communities deserve, to uphold their living conditions and that the environment must have in order to provide us with the very many goods and services and integral beauty it provides us that we all benefit from.

That is the role of council. It is an important role of every single council in Tasmania to undertake the community consultation process and to listen to all of the representations that are made on developments in national parks, world heritage area and reserve lands that have management plans.

The Local Government minister would not answer any questions in relation to the impact on local governments and referred me to the Planning minister. The Planning minister, who has since left, would not answer any questions about this issue either and decided that I really needed to raise the issue with the minister responsible for Crown lands. This is typical.

No one will answer questions about difficult questions in this Government. Nobody wants to take responsibility for the things that matter. We never got to the bottom of the impacts this could have on previous development applications because things have been approved under LUPAA in reserved lands with management plans for decades.

I am not sure of how many but for more than three decades, this has been occurring, so what will it say about the approvals that have been granted or not granted in reserved land in management areas if this is found to have been a mistake at law and that councils don't have that jurisdiction.

No one is interested in answering that question but we can be sure that the Government is putting all its resources into doing everything they can to overturn the just process decision made by the Central Highlands Council, to reject that disgraceful application to make profit from the wilderness area.

I spent the first part of the Planning portfolio asking the minister where the State of the Environment Report was. The State of the Environment Report has been overdue, not once but twice under this Government. The last one was handed down in 2009. We were due, according to law, to have another one delivered in 2014 and yet another in 2019. Chair, neither of those State of the Environment reports have been delivered. This Government is obstructing the right of Tasmanians to understand what is happening with the state of the environment. What a surprise that this Government in particular does not want to find out where the environment is in terms of functioning, in terms of biodiversity, in terms of threatened species, in terms of changes that are causing negative impacts on different ecosystems.

What a surprise that we would not like to have a state of the environment report at a time when the whole planet is talking about the extinction crisis that is happening across millions of species worldwide. We may like to think that we are a little island a long way from everywhere else in the world. The fact is we are part of every other country on this planet. Insects, birds, even mammals move across borders and even between islands and other islands. We are affected. The climate is changing our environment, our resource extraction is affecting our environment, our settlement patterns are affecting our environment. Everything we do affects the environment. We need to understand what is happening. This minister is a case of don't ask, don't know, don't care.

Although the Tasmanian Planning Commission confirmed they have a nominal process of looking into the state of the environment report, when I questioned the appropriate person, Mr Fisher, it was clear that nothing of substance is happening. The Tasmanian Planning Commission appears to be on a scoping exercise, gathering data, I do not know why, suggesting that things are changing at the national level and we should wait and look at the methodology for undertaking a state of the environment report.

The fact is, we have a Tasmanian law. We are required to provide a state of the environment report. It has nothing to do with what is happening nationally. There have been state of the environment reports federally. Our state of the environment report in Tasmania is a Tasmanian legal requirement and this Government is doing everything it can to obstruct it, to stall and to make sure that as many roadblocks are in the way as possible.

We will continue to ask for this because we need to know what is happening in the environment and we need to know how to respond so that we can put the money into agricultural practices that are going to build soil health, regenerate farmlands, provide connectivity in the landscape, support new industries, make sure that we do not establish developments in areas that will threaten biodiversity and overly fragment the landscape which we have already fragmented since this place was colonised over 200 years ago.

Chair, I cannot leave without commenting on the intentionally false statements made by the minister in his Housing portfolio when I asked questions about the Residential Tenancy Act. They were just that and designed to smear a tenant who was not able to defend himself. They were misinformation and designed to smear a tenant who was not able to defend himself.

Time expired.

[6.59 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to speak on the Planning Estimates held last week. It is a shame that the minister has left. It would have been good to have him here to go through this with him again tonight. I was shocked by some of his comments. I thought he was a bit understated in his approach to what was undertaken at the Estimate's hearings. We asked many questions that were within our rights to do so. That is the whole purpose and intent of the Estimates hearing.

I started by asking about the role of government and whether or not he agreed that that was a whole-of-government responsibility towards the issue of planning because right now in Tasmania we are seeing the effects across many sectors and many competing pressures on our community around a lack of planning. We have a population strategy, which has been effective particularly in the south; a tourism growth strategy; and we have experienced growth in other areas. However, we still do not have those state policies to guide development and investment and the character of the Tasmania that we want to see in the future.

Our questions were centred around why we do not have those statewide planning policies and why have we moved towards Tasmanian planning policies rather than statewide planning policies? The minister gave his response to that. There is still merit in statewide policies that work alongside those Tasmanian policies that interface with the planning scheme and align with the key priorities across each of the regional land use strategies but also the local provision schedules as well.

Following on, we spoke about the role of the Tasmanian Planning Commission and whether there was an intent by this Government to water down the role of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The minister gave an undertaking that there was not. I was pleased to see that, particularly given the changing nature of developments that Tasmania is seeing across areas of our landscape that we have not seen before, which often present more challenging development application processes for local councils as well. The independent status of the TPC is just so important as we move into in uncharted waters in some ways for Tasmania around new development and offering that secondary independent assessment process.

The local provision schedules have been discussed a lot. The update provided by the minister told us that 12 were lodged, seven have been endorsed by councils and to me that says there are quite a few still outstanding. He said there were about 10 to still be lodged in July and August.

We talked a lot about councils' role as a planning authority and the minister undertook to maintain that role. We talked a lot about support for local planning authorities and there has been

a number of instances recently where perhaps more professional development, whether that be partnerships and across the portfolio areas of local government and planning, that we look to provide greater support to councils. This should be not only for those elected people who are making decisions about planning but also those who are involved in an administrative point of view, as well as greater support for those councils. This is particularly important for those in smaller areas who perhaps do not have as many resources as those in larger centres.

We also talked about the importance of having an independent person or contact that people within the community can approach to understand better what is required of them when lodging a planning development application or a planning application. Right now we get feedback from constituents about the fact that their development application is not even accepted in the first instance by a council. There is room, we believe, and that was part of our policies in the lead-up to the last state election, around the need for that independent advice line or point of contact for people to understand better what is required of them before they put forward their development application. Quite often, that unbiased source of information is not available to them and councils do not always have the ability to provide independent advice, or advice that will not then perhaps be interpreted as against or for the development application once it has been assessed by the council.

We also talked about the call by the Property Council of Tasmania around the introduction of development assessment panels for key precincts and asked the minister whether he was supportive of this. He acknowledged that this is something that has been called for but was not something that the Government was going to progress at this time.

We talked about the new major project assessment process as well and got an update on the progress of that bill. There were lots of questions asked by both sides around that. It is important as that is a significant piece of legislation that has undergone a couple of consultation processes now. There will be the need for the community to be fully informed about what those changes will mean and the opportunity for people to have their say on that legislation as well.

We talked also about the review of the residential standards and how that might be impacted upon. Also, the general changes put forward in the Treasurer's budget reply speech around in-fill and medium density, a new housing policy, which the minister clearly stated was not in line with our inclusionary zoning policy, when in actual fact, it is probably very similar. We will be having a look at that when it comes to the parliament.

It is important to acknowledge that people would want to have a good understanding of what that will mean for them as well as if it is outside of the legislative process. The legislation that enables that change has already been through the parliament. We will be watching that very closely.

With regards to the question that was put by one of our members about council powers around demolition and rights of refusal. That person was not part of the previous government when that legislation came into play and probably was not aware of that. I do not think there is anything wrong with asking that in a forum such as Estimates. We do not very often get the opportunity to ask direct questions of ministers. That is really the one and only opportunity, other than through a formal question through question time that we have that opportunity one-on-one. It is a great opportunity to ask if there is something that you would like more information about. It does not always have to be political games or a 'got you' moment. It is really an opportunity to get information that we simply do not have access to in Opposition and it enables us to be accountable and to do our job. I do not think there was anything wrong with that member asking that question.

That concludes my contribution, Chair.

[7.07 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER - Labor's reputation as a lazy, directionless, policy-free, fence-sitting Opposition was on show again in the Estimates week fizzer. They failed to land a blow. The portfolios of Housing and Human Services and Planning were no exception. While the minister detailed a strong Budget delivering numerous initiatives, it was clear the Opposition had not done its homework, did not have an alternative budget and did not seem to be across the issues or the Budget itself.

The Hodgman Liberal Government's Affordable Housing Strategy is helping more people into homes across Tasmania. It is extremely disappointing that Labor is wilfully ignorant of the targets we set at the start of the first action plan and would rather play silly political games. As a Government, we take the needs of Tasmanians facing homelessness very seriously, whereas Labor are more interested in politicking. In fact, the first question regarding emergency support for Tasmanians experiencing homelessness came from me.

Labor, on the other hand failed to ask a single question about homelessness. It was pleasing to hear the minister reiterate that we are getting on with the job of building more homes, which is why we are investing an additional \$125 million into stage 2 of our Affordable Housing Strategy. This takes our total investment into affordable housing to almost \$200 million over eight years, the largest-ever state investment into affordable housing in Tasmania's history.

As at the end of May 2019, we had delivered 316 homes of a 372 social housing target. Importantly, we currently have over 100 homes well under construction or in the final stages. Importantly, we have allocated almost \$68 million in the 2019-20 financial year to boost the supply of new social and affordable homes. This is in addition to the \$30 million housing investment under the Hobart City Deal.

Our Affordable Housing Strategy addresses the full spectrum of need from crisis accommodation to social housing and affordable home ownership. In recognition of the Government pulling all the levers we can to address the current housing shortage, I was pleased to be updated on a rapid rezoning of government land to assist in boosting the supply of affordable housing in Tasmania. The rezoning of surplus government land will play a major role in meeting an increased demand for social and affordable homes across Tasmania.

It was pleasing to hear the proposed rezoning of land at Huntingfield, the latest under our rapid rezoning process, that may yield over 450 dwellings, with a mix of open space and local business zones to serve the needs of this new community and its surrounds. The Government will continue to identify more land across the state that can be rezoned for housing supply as well as progressing our major investments in affordable housing.

I was also pleased with the minister's update to the committee on our continued investment to help and protect Tasmania's vulnerable children and young people, to better support families before they get into crisis, including the announcement of the establishment of a skills-based taskforce to identify and prioritise special care for homeless children and youth under 16 who are not out of home care.

The taskforce will be independently chaired by the CEO of Colony 47, Danny Sutton, who has a strong knowledge on the issues faced by homeless young people in Tasmania, bringing not only

his own expertise to the taskforce, but the capability to consult with all other relevant stakeholders to provide informed advice on these issues. The taskforce will examine a variety of options, including working intensively with these children and their families to keep them housed, assisting them into suitable accommodation in a family environment, with therapeutic support in improving access to special care and secure accommodation.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has continued to deliver on our commitment to help and protect Tasmania's vulnerable children and young people with additional funding allocated in the 2019-20 Budget. This year's Budget supports the continuation of Strong Families - Safe Kids by investing in more funding for Tasmania's out-of-care system, with additional funding of \$16.9 million allocated to meet the growth in demand for out-of-home-care services, to meet the costs of some of our out-of-home-care children who present with very complex needs and require extensive periods of time, receiving specialised care with highly intensive wraparound services to be provided while safe, appropriate and stable options are pursued to address the future needs of our children.

We are continuing the roll-out of the Strong Families - Safe Kids implementation plan with an additional \$2.3 million to invest in strengthening quality assurance processes, improving practice in investigation and response, delivery of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes framework and ongoing change management activity to embed the principles of the redesign within the operation of the Child Safety Service.

Additional funding for the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, an additional \$112 000 per annum for additional resources to support its work, promoting the rights and wellbeing of young people, enabling better consultation with young people so they can express their views and opinions and play an active role in decision-making processes.

As outlined in our second-year agenda, the Hodgman Liberal Government has released the out-of-care home extension to 21 model, which provides support for young people and family-based care as they transition into independent living with a step-down approach that continues to provide support during this critical time in a young person's life.

We have also now commenced consultation on a framework to put together processes and systems in place for transfer of guardianship to strengthen the permanency of placement process. These are just a number of initiatives the Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering to improve the lives of children and young people, to better support families and children at risk.

It was great to hear that the Hodgman Liberal Government remains committed to keeping our community safe and will soon be releasing the updated Tasmanian Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy. The new strategy will be supported by an additional \$850 000 in the 2019-20 Budget. This is in addition to our existing commitment to fund the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline. Key actions to be funded from the additional \$850 000 provided within the Budget include a temporary community awareness campaign, a new website to help streamline referral pathways, the development of training tools for Tasmanians who work in the sector and to commence a review into safeguards for older Tasmanians. The funding will also assist to implement the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-23, which was endorsed by the Tasmanian Government earlier this year.

Ironically, in the Planning portfolio there was a lot of planning discussed. There was more of the same hypocrisy from the Greens who want planning systems that only approve developments

they like, not one that is fair and consistent across the board. Moreover, it is clear that the Greens want an independent planning scheme, yet expect the minister to step in to stop any proposal they do not like before it is assessed. Notwithstanding, it was positive to receive an update from the minister on progress in the state-wide Tasmanian Planning Scheme and other planning initiatives, including a rapid rezoning process to speedup supply of affordable housing in a commitment to produce our first ever suite of Tasmanian planning policies. It was also great to see this year's Budget allocate \$2 million over four years to completing these important planning reforms.

[7.16 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - The minister is not in the Chamber, which is really disappointing. He only has to be here for two hours but he has fled. He should have been available to listen to the feedback from this output. It is customary for ministers to sum up, answer and respond to questions that might be raised throughout the feedback process. That is not the way the Government has proceeded today. This is an interesting change from past precedent. It is disappointing and indeed offensive that the minister is not even present in the chamber to listen to only two hours of the debate.

I note that the member for Lyons could not even sustain 10 minutes of discussion on what happened in Estimates with Mr Jaensch. Either they have completely checked out, or they are not interested, or they are just lazy. It is probably the latter.

There are some very significant matters within this minister's portfolio that deserve further scrutiny. We are still waiting for answers to come back to questions that were placed on notice. I remind the House again that it is customary for answers to be provided by Friday of last week. They still have not been provided. It is disrespectful to the members of the committee who asked those questions in good faith to not have that information before they are able to provide the reports back that we are providing right now, Chair.

The minister's portfolios, which provide care for some of Tasmania's most vulnerable people, people in housing stress, people who are homeless or seeking shelter, young people who have been removed from families and are in the custody of the state, areas that provide dedicated support to those people, will be affected by the \$450 million cut the Treasurer is requiring all agencies to deliver upon. Child protection will have to find its share of that cut. Housing will have to find its share of that cut.

This is incredibly distressing when we have a housing crisis and there are people who are sleeping rough. The agency that provides support to those people has to find its share of the \$450 million of savings that this Treasurer requires because he has plunged the state into \$1.1 billion of debt and has delivered a train wreck of a Budget that squanders the golden opportunity he had to support our state. In this supposed golden age, the Budget slashes \$450 million from areas such as child protection and housing.

At the same time, 3200 people on the housing waitlist are waiting on average 56 weeks as priority applicants to receive support from the Government. Priority applicants are people like the man who approached my office in Sorell who is living in his car because he cannot find a house. Priority applicants like the woman who fled her partner who was violent and is now living with her parents separated from her children because they do not have adequate space to be housed together, desperately waiting on the priority list for housing when the average wait is 56 weeks. She is not with her children and she cannot return because she will not be safe if she does. Her partner is violent.

There is a man sleeping under a bridge who has sought support from my office. There are multiple people who are sleeping rough on the streets tonight. Despite all this, the Treasurer still claims it is a golden age and he is requiring the Housing budget to be slashed as a part of his \$450 million in cuts. It is a disgrace and the minister should be ashamed. It is no wonder he has fled the Chamber and does not want to hear contributions from other members on this issue. Despite the fact it is only two hours of his time, I cannot imagine what is more important than being present to uphold your responsibilities as minister. Maybe he does not want to be the minister. Maybe he thinks there is something more important he should be doing with his time than being in the Chamber for two hours.

We heard some frightening stories in this output with respect to care provided to very vulnerable children. These children have not been provided the care they need or were promised by the state as part of the programs the state delivers, including the Intensive Family Engagement Service within which we heard stories of children dying. A young child had been sent home with its family, promised that this service would visit and the child died. The minister was unable to confirm whether that family had ever received the visit that was promised. Could there be anything more distressing than that? Despite this, the agency has to find its share of the \$450 million in cuts required by the Treasurer.

I cannot fathom how this Government feels it is doing a good job, when the Treasurer spoke glowingly today about the state's economy and how well things are going whilst, at the same time, kids are dying. These are young children, vulnerable babies who have been sent home with parents, who were promised intensive wraparound support by the Government but none of those visits occurred.

I found the minister's performance during Estimates woeful. He was unable to provide detail in answering questions he was asked. He constantly took up time, claiming to seek advice from his advisers and there were long periods where he was not even at the table because he had left to find information that he should have known. He should have known the answers to the questions that were put to him. He should have known the answers to those very serious cases because they are the sort of things that a minister would be briefed on. They are incredibly serious.

He could not say how the \$10 million brought forward in his Housing portfolio would be spent. He could not explain how people would be provided housing this winter, despite having been the minister for over a year. We had the same debate about what support could be provided to offer shelter to people coming into winter last year. We offered solutions. We asked the Government to work with council and private enterprise to identify vacant properties, simply to provide shelter to people to make it through winter, until more permanent housing could be provided. The Government did not do that. The minister did not do that and we find ourselves in the same situation this winter. The minister claims he has brought forward \$10 million but he could not say what for. He could not say when it would be spent or how it would be spent.

I asked specific questions of him in relation to the plan for that money and the other money in the Budget for stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Action Plan for this coming financial year. He was unable to detail how many houses would be built or how many people would be supported into accommodation. He said that he did not have that information at hand, yet he tabled this document in question time today; Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan to 2023, which provides that level of detail. You cannot tell me that he whipped this up over the weekend. He would have known this when he was asked the questions last week, yet he did not provide that information to the committee.

I do not know what this minister thinks he is doing. I do not know where this minister is. I do not know what excuse he has for not being present. He only has to give up two hours of his time to be here to examine these outputs that are in his portfolio today. He is not here. This is a disgrace. He should be ashamed. He cannot meet the targets. He has failed to meet the targets he set for himself in the first Affordable Housing Action Plan. He will not deliver the 900 houses he said he would build. He will only reach a third of the way, at a time when we have housing stress placing families in jeopardy and separating parents from their children. He has failed to meet his targets. Last week, he could not explain his plan for the coming financial year, yet we are expected to believe that he somehow whipped this document up over the weekend and he can detail how that money might be spent today.

The minister has checked out of this place. The Treasurer is requiring him to find his share of the \$450 million in budget savings because this train wreck of a budget plunges the state into \$1.1 billion of debt at a time we have people sleeping under bridges and in cars. We have children dying and ministers smirking about it. The minister is not even present, and has to find \$450 million in savings in agencies currently unable to care for people.

Chair, I was very upset at the way the minister handled Estimates in our House and the other place. He was unable to answer questions he should have known about. He should take the advice of Mr Tucker, who said, wake up, wake up, because, my goodness me, Chair, more children will die if this minister does not wake up.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Human Services, Minister for Housing and Minister for Planning agreed to.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT

Queen's Birthday Honours

Volunteering Tasmania - Awards

Ash Barty - French Open Winner

[7.30 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you for that indulgence.

I rise on the adjournment to pay tribute to those who have given to our community, those who have served for the benefit of our community as volunteers, and specifically a number of those who have received the Queen's Birthday Honours awards.

I am a big fan of Queen Elizabeth II, born on 21 April 1926, a very healthy 93-year-old and she has reigned over us since 1952.

This year, we had three AOs, five AMs and 17 OAMs recognised in Tasmania and I want to identify some of those and say thank you for their contribution and service to Tasmania as volunteers.

I put on the record my sincere thanks to Volunteering Tasmania for what they do as the representative body acting for and on behalf of our volunteers, and acknowledge our minister responsible, Jacquie Petrusma, for the wonderful leadership that she demonstrates regularly in that regard.

In terms of volunteering in Tasmania, I had that responsibility under the Hodgman Liberal Government for a time and recognise that they contribute an estimated \$4.9 billion worth of economic value to the state of Tasmania each year. It is fantastic, and they do it without fanfare, proper recognition, and generally they are undervalued and under-recognised. Tonight is the night to show that recognition, show that value, and the Queen's Birthday Honours do that.

Joan Fazackerley is a wonderful contributor to the Tasman community. She has received an award for service to local government. Joan is dedicated; she gives to her friends, family and the local community, and has done for decades.

Ian McMichael, the president of Rural Alive and Well, does a great job as a volunteer in that role and is out and about on health issues and mental health issues, particularly in rural and regional areas. I caught up with him recently at Agfest.

The former RSL Tasmanian President and a champion for our veterans, Bill Kane, has been recognised for his service to veterans. A terrific contribution to our veterans and their families. I caught up with Bill just a few weeks ago on the north-west coast, and at the RSL State Congress a few weeks ago as well.

Kim Brundle-Lawrence, of Carrick - I am a Hagley boy, so not far from Carrick - her service to the local fire brigade and emergency service roles, and David Waddle for his work with veterans, their families and the RSL South Arm branch.

In addition, I want to recognise George Merridew with thanks for his contribution and for his work in pain management and for cancer patients. George is a leading anaesthetist in Launceston.

An old friend and colleague, Rob Fahey. Rob is a world champion Real tennis player and is a fantastic contributor to Real tennis. He was a lawn tennis champion in Tasmania before he became a Real tennis champion. Some people refer to it as Royal Tennis. Rob has played in Tasmania, Melbourne, in the US, and the UK, and is a world champion. We are very proud of him and what he has done, and he has contributed to real tennis. I love playing Real tennis from time to time. Wednesday mornings, when I am in Hobart, I get out and about. It is pretty frisky and cold at the moment but it is a great game; a cross between tennis, squash and chess, and he has contributed fantastically.

Likewise, John Ramsay, who also has the odd game of Royal Tennis, for his impeccable service to Tasmania as a top public service administrator in successive governments.

The other person I would like to recognise in terms of Volunteering Tasmania and their service, was the recent awards for Volunteering Tasmania. An absolutely fantastic effort at Government House. I was there with minister Petrusma and hundreds of others, and thankful to the patron, Her Excellency, the Honourable Professor Kate Warner, for those volunteer awards.

Tania Watson won a very special award from Share the Dignity.

Edna Pennicott from the Kingborough Helping Hands and, likewise, Shelley Miller, from Athletics Tasmania. Melanoma Tasmania won the volunteer program of the year, and Di Mason of Melanoma Tasmania won the special award sponsored by Hydro Tasmania.

Kate Gillham won the Tas Fire Service award and Kate is involved at Campania. Shirley Baker, Friends of Deal Island. It is great to know that Dallas was there, Dallas Baker OAM, who is the head of Friends of Deal Island and I have had quite a bit to do with Dallas over a number of years; a wonderful family who give so much to other people.

Likewise, Jannie Fahey, Aurora Disability Service, Aurora Energy won an award for the civic volunteering contribution and Anne and Peter Booth for WildCare, a wonderful organisation that does so much good.

In conclusion, I want to just pay a hearty congratulations to Ash Barty. Ash Barty is a wonderful sportsperson who has won the French Open, the first time since 1973 Margaret Court won. We should remember that Margaret Court won five French Opens, an incredible event and has won more grand slams than any other woman in the world, including Serena Williams.

Ash Barty is humble. She is a wonderful sportswoman and a dedicated indigenous sportswoman as well. Her hero she has recognised as Yvonne Goolagong Cawley, another indigenous elite tennis player who was ranked number 1 during her reign as a tennis champion in the 1970s.

I am a tennis fan; I love my tennis and I was up late at night watching the French Open on many occasions. My son plays a lot now and was a party shield winner, so I am a bit biased in favour of tennis. Ash Barty is shining supreme with her unflappable, honest and vulnerable approach at being a human being and expressing herself in the way that she has under immense pressure to win one of those grand slams, the French Open. It said that she is actually more accomplished on grass, so we will see at Wimbledon. It will be very exciting and just a month or so in time at the end of June. It will be very, very exciting indeed.

She is very gracious, very respectful, but ruthless of course with a racquet in her hand, as she should be. Some of our talented, but sometimes spoilt brats in terms of our male tennis champions in Australia could learn a thing or two from Ash Barty. She has that obvious talent and exemplified humility as a wonderful sporting champion. I say congratulations and well done.

Elizabeth College - *Jesus Christ Superstar*

[7.37 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I wanted to share with the House my congratulations to everybody involved at Elizabeth College with their recently-produced production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It was absolutely a knockout performance. It went beyond anyone's expectations of what they would expect from a college musical. I particularly wanted to put on record acknowledgement of Justin Wagner who directed the show, Jennie MacDonald who was the musical director and Les Johnson who was the musical director of the band.

There were many others involved, but I know my time is limited. I just wanted to speak about what a beautiful night I had and what really struck me about the production of the musical is that it was a whole of school affair. Everyone was involved with the band, with the production, with the

sets and other parts of the production for the night. Even the hospitality students, who are being taught by the amazing Kirsten Bacon, were involved with providing drinks and nibbles for the opening night and serving the nibbles and selling tickets on the night. It really did show the spirit of the school.

The performance was just incredible. In particular, three of the main roles Brad Oakman, playing Jesus, Angelica Passarelli who played Mary were outstanding in their roles and had such amazing focus and drive. Billie Rafferty really stole the show in her performance as Judas. I dare say that it is not the last that Tasmania, or any world stage, in the creative arts will hear from Billie Rafferty.

One of the nicest things that happened at the opening night was Jennie MacDonald, the music director for vocals, shared with the group who had come along to watch the opening night show an email that the students had received just the week before they commenced their performances. She did not tell us who it was from, but as she read through the email it became evident that it was from Tim Rice, who along with Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote the musical in 1978. I thought that was such a beautiful thing that he had reached out to a local Hobart school here, Elizabeth College, to congratulate them on their choice to produce a musical he wrote 41 years ago and they really did justice to the show. My 11-year-old daughter came with me that night. She has been singing the songs ever since and we all had a great night.

Wynyard RSL - Murals Dedication

[7.40 p.m.]

Mrs RYLAH (Braddon) - On Saturday, a week ago, I had the pleasure of attending the Wynyard RSL dedication of seven huge murals on the walls in Goldie Street. This outstanding presentation of thousands of tiny little pictures that create the overall big mural is something to see. The day began with the street being closed and the Army Band marching down Goldie Street, followed by the group of veterans and members following along. It was quite rousing.

These amazing artworks are comprised of thousands of tiny pictures of local service men and women from the Boer War through to Afghanistan and Iraq. This being another significant year for the military, with the 104th Anniversary of Gallipoli, the 75th Anniversary of D-Day landings and the 80th Anniversary of World War II, it was significant to have these murals dedicated by the Minister for Veteran's Affairs. Mr Guy Barnett and his wife Kay attended along with Ms Dow and the newly elected member for the House of Representatives, Gavin Pearce, who is the retiring President of the Wynyard RSL. Also attending were Senator Eric Abetz and Deputy Mayor, Mary Duniam.

The photographic panels were created by Jen Archer. Jen is an outstanding artist, who cleverly portrays Australia's military history, shining a light on the truly diverse perspectives of service. Whilst remembering courageous service, these images are very uplifting. They put a smile on your face as well as giving you a reason to reflect on the enormous number of Australians and Wynyard locals who have and are today giving service for our freedom and security.

I will describe some of the images. The panels are now an important feature of the streetscape of Goldie Street and they present military history and the RSL in a completely different light. It has revitalised the building. One of the largest murals is the very large Lest We Forget and it is done beautifully and it sets the scene for the RSL. Thousands of Aboriginal Australians served in

World War I and one of the images is of Private Miller Mack and recognises this service. This RSL is particularly involved with NAIDOC and has a strong Aboriginal connection.

Another image relates to the important role of women in military service. The image is of Sister Dora Shirley Gardam of the Australian Army Nursing Service, a tribute to nurses who served bravely and as a Prisoner of War. Sister Gardam died as a POW in Malaya in 1945. Nancy Bird Walton was a pioneer and an Australian aviator. During World War II, she set up and was commandant of the Australian Women's Air Training Corps; a wonderful image.

Mr Barnett was there and it was wonderful to have the honour to see an image of Tasmania's best-known serviceman, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean, who was born not far away from Wynyard. It has been a tremendous campaign to gain the proper recognition for Teddy Sheean over the last 16 years.

Military service means many things to families, mostly that the families must endure separations. This is portrayed in the image of Commander Michael Devine RAN, who was photographed embracing his daughter before departing for south-east Asia. Another is the image of an Australian Army soldier-musician, Steve Hickie, delivering poppies handmade by member of the Oatlands Community to the Grave of the Unknown Soldier in Villers-Bretonneux, demonstrating how local communities still remember soldiers laid to rest in distant lands.

Animals have played an important role in military history; a vast array of horses, dogs, donkeys et cetera. Today, on the wall, there is a delightful image of a dog in a sailor's hat as a reminder of the importance of animals in military service and in peacetime.

I congratulate the Wynyard RSL sub-branch and everyone involved in this project, members and non-members, retiring President, Gavin Pearce, Secretary, Trevor Duniam, Stephen Clarke, Junior VP, Beau Moses-Bassett, who was the MC for the day. For members and veterans who attended, this project has been very warmly welcomed by the whole community. Lest we forget.

Rick Tipping - Tribute

[7.46 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - I rise to pay thanks to Rick Tipping, who is soon retiring as the CEO of NILS Tasmania. He has done an enormous amount of work over many years to raise the profile of the No Interest Loans Scheme and to ensure that people in Tasmania who need support to access finance can do so in a way that is safe and supported and helps them without putting them at risk of engaging a loan shark from payday lenders and other such entities that rip people off.

Rick has been an extraordinarily kind man. In all of my engagements with him he has been very interesting. He has demonstrated his compassion for people who are less fortunate than himself. He is always happy to share with anyone the benefits of NILS and the supported office to people across Tasmania on low incomes to seek finance from the No Interest Loan Scheme, which is safe and supports them to buy products or access products that help them have a better quality of life whether this be car tyres, a new heater for their home or a new fridge to help them keep things in good order in their kitchen. Rick has always been a very strong advocate for the vulnerable in our community and he retires on 21 June. He will be incredibly missed by those in the community sector who have worked very closely with him throughout his time at NILS.

During the 16 years NILS has been operating, they have helped 20 000 Tasmanians to access a no-interest loan to help them purchase a range of support services. Many people have benefited immensely from the support the NILS provides. Rick has been a strong advocate in lobbying for extra support for NILS in the time I have known him. Funding is provided by government as well as one of the commercial banks to deliver that service. He has been very successful in securing money in his time in that role. I will miss seeing him around as well. He has been a terrific friend to me over the years and has always been available to support me when I have questions about how NILS may support people. My electorate officer has been trained to deliver their NILS program so that we are now an office that can help people with applications for NILS. It has helped a number of people in my own community with finance being delivered through NILS rather than payday lending.

I want to mention the advocacy Rick has contributed to Senate inquiries. Most recently, a Senate inquiry was investigating rent-to-own and payday loans. This inquiry handed down its findings earlier this year, which NILS made a submission to and which cited the example of a Centrelink-reliant mother of three from northern Tasmania being signed up to five concurrent rent-to-own deals that would have cost 300 per cent above the retail value. Too frequently, we hear these horror stories in which people have taken out rent to take advantage of deals or have engaged with loan sharks because they are desperate. They need to replace the goods that they have, they need to heat their home and they need to look after their children. Rick explained this very empathetically -

People who are living on very low incomes don't spend a lot of time thinking about the consequences of taking on these risky debt products because they don't have any choice about taking them on. They are managing with great difficulty on low incomes and you do what you have to do to survive. Rick understand that.

That is why he has worked so hard to expand the NILS loans program and to ensure that it can offer more services to people so that they can get NILS loans to pay for things like dental work which has helped to change many people's lives.

He has also argued very strongly for reform to legislation so that we do better regulate pay day lenders and make sure that people are aware of the products that they are using.

I wanted to take the opportunity tonight to bring the House's attention to the fact that Ricky is retiring. I am sure everyone would be happy to join with me to wish him all the very best for the future and hope that he has a very successful next phase of his life whatever it is he chooses to do. I am sure we will not see the last of him when he finishes up with NILS on 21 June. I expect to see him around at different events over the course of the next couple of years. At least I hope so.

I thank Rick very much for the work that he has done, the support he has given vulnerable Tasmanians and wish him all the best for the future.

Members - Hear, hear.

Anglican Diocese - Burial Sites Fee Increase

[7.51 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to advise the House that over the weekend I have written to the ACCC asking that an investigation for a potential breach to

the Competition and Consumer Act in relation to the proposed 2400 per cent price increase of burial sites imposed by the Anglican Diocese.

There is little justification for this move. The hike from an average of \$800 to \$15 000 to \$20 000 is outrageous. I have reason to believe that the prices that could be charged could be up to \$30 000 and because of this I am seeking there to be an investigation by the ACCC. That is an outrageous amount of money to be charging people for burials, especially in rural communities.

Many of our rural communities, especially the Anglican communities, are reeling from the sale of some of their churches and their grave sites. Now some of those people are being asked to potentially pay \$20 000 for a burial site so they can be buried with their family members. We find this disgraceful and not at all the way in which we operate as people. There is no justification for the increase. It is a simple matter of weeding and lawn mowing. There is no justification regardless of perpetuity laws which this House brought in last year for such a price hike. It is another attack on rural communities.

There is no indication from any of the other denominations that they will be undertaking the same price hike, so this is strictly very much something that the Anglican Diocese is moving towards. They have contacted their rural parishes and the service is being centralised to Hobart so each parish has a cemetery manager and they have been responsible traditionally for that particular cemetery. That is now all being centralised along with all their records to Hobart for ultimate control of that price. There are people in the community who are alleging that this is just another money-making venture.

I expect to have a response from the ACCC within the next fortnight and upon that response I will report back to the House.

The House adjourned at 7.54 p.m.