



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 28 September 2022

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 28 September 2022

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

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

Ms Archer and Mr Street

[10.02 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I inform the House that both Ms Archer and Mr Street will be absent from question time today as they are unwell.

I will be taking questions in their absence for the ministerial portfolios of Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation, Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs, and the Arts, as well as Community Services and Development, Hospitality and Events, Local Government, and Sport and Recreation.

QUESTIONS

Education Issues - Proposed Stadium Development

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.03 a.m.]

As incoming minister for Education in 2014, you promised that within six years Tasmanian students would be at or above the national minimum standard on every NAPLAN measure. Eight years on, you have failed. Our results are the worst of any state and they are going backwards. Right now our educators are engaged in stop-work action because they are overworked, underpaid and believe that you do not care. This morning on the Parliament Lawns they spoke passionately about their need to be supported to do their job but you did not even show them the respect of turning up to listen. Why are you prioritising a \$750 million stadium in Hobart over Tasmanian students and educators and our children's futures?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am very proud of this Government's achievements when it comes to investment and reform in education. Education is about the students and about supporting students and families to be the best they can and to give our young people the best opportunity of leading a healthy and productive life.

We set about reforming education in 2014. Our signature reform was the years 11 and 12 high school extension, which has been successful and has given more opportunity for young people to further their education in their own community setting.

Ms O'Byrne - And you sacked two teachers from every school that year, remember?

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Bass, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are fantastic examples around the state of great collaboration between our colleges and high schools. I look at the Hellyer Regional Collective as a good example in my electorate. Our retention and attainment rates are increasing because we are investing in key areas of years 11 and 12.

We have also made the very deliberate decision to build an education system based on equity where every single person, no matter what their circumstance or where they live around this wonderful state, has that fundamental right to a quality education. When it comes to building an education system based on equity, we are ensuring that we remove every possible barrier so young people can access a quality education, including in the early years.

We had a very deliberate approach when we signed the bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Tasmania a number of years ago where we ensured that growth funding in education. We were utterly committed to the Gonski agreement and the fairer funding model to ensure we built a system of equity to ensure that our communities and our school communities of disadvantage were resourced effectively, removing those barriers.

Ms O'Connor - In your first year you cut, and gave more to the private schools.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You know this, Ms O'Connor. For our students with disability we have nation-leading reforms and we have invested in trauma-informed practice - again, reducing all possible barriers for young people to access a quality education.

We are investing in our schools. If my memory serves me correctly, we have some 435 more teachers in our schools than we had in 2014. More recently, we are continuing to invest, as per our 2018 election commitment, in our workforce within our schools. We are building capacity within our teaching workforce. We have extra full-time equivalents within our workforce, so we give the opportunity for our teachers to be well resourced, ensuring that we give our young people the best possible opportunity of a great education.

The Government is very well aware that there is high demand for professional support staff across our schools. That is why we have increased the number of professional support staff by over 100 full-time equivalents since 2014, a total of 252.8 full-time equivalents. We put in place a professional support staff permanent relief pool in 2021 to triage, prioritise and respond to student and school need. We provided a further \$3.8 million in the 2022-23 state Budget for an additional eight psychologists and eight social workers, and increased professional support staff and school health nurses by 100 positions since 2014, which those opposite opposed.

We brought back the school nurses they took away from schools. They took away that resource in schools. They have opposed every single reform we have had in education. They have opposed more investment in the early years, creating a universal education system, extending universality of education, and the years 11 and 12 high school extensions. They have opposed every single reform which we fought for on political grounds, at the expense of providing our young people the best possible opportunity of a great education and creating a job-ready generation for our young people.

We want to provide our young people with the best possible opportunity and create a job-ready generation. We have said we will negotiate in good faith.

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - Teachers and leaders in our schools need to be supported to do their job well. Our teachers work very hard to provide the best learning outcomes for students. Many teachers work long hours to try to achieve this. Maximising the time to teach is a key focus in the development of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. Our Government is waiting at the negotiating table for the Australian Education Union to return to discuss in a very collaborative way how we can most effectively support a reduction in teaching workload.

We are ready, we are willing and we are able to sit down and negotiate in good faith to support our teachers when it comes to workload; to support our teachers when it comes to professional development; to support our teachers in building capacity and a system of education based on equity; and to support our young people and our families to engage in quality education. I am proud of the investment that we have made when it comes to our child and family learning centres in key areas around Tasmania. I am proud of our Lift Program -

Ms O'Connor - You have been asked to wind up.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have been asked a very key question on education. It is an important matter. It is a matter that I feel very passionate about. I was Education minister for seven years. We had significant reforms which you opposed every single time. We put forward reforms and investments that you opposed at every single turn.

I am proud of our education system. I am proud of the work of our teachers, our principals, and our support staff. I am proud of the way that through the biggest disruption we have had in generations we worked with our teaching workforce and our unions -

Mr SPEAKER - Premier, we need to move on.

Mr ROCKLIFF - to support the continued education of our young people.

Education Resourcing - Proposed Stadium Development

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.13 a.m.]

While your priority is building a new stadium in Hobart that hardly anyone wants, educators are right now taking stop-work action because you refuse to take seriously their concerns about support for students, workloads, staff shortages and competitive pay. Why, after 14 months, have you not committed to fund a single measure in the teachers' log of claims and plan for lifting learning? After 14 months you just said that they need to come back to the table. How much time do you need to come up with the solution?

Is building a \$750 million stadium more important to you than making sure that our schools are properly resourced, our educators are supported and our students get a great education? It sure seems like it.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, what I did not come around to mentioning in my last answer regarding NAPLAN is that we welcome scrutiny when it comes literacy and numeracy outcomes in Tasmania. We have always welcomed scrutiny and accountability in education and when it comes to NAPLAN.

Ms White - That was the last question. This question is about the log of claims. They have done nothing for 14 months.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will come to that. I will point out the irony of your first question around NAPLAN because you wanted NAPLAN abolished. You do not support NAPLAN. You do not support a national benchmark that was brought in by a former prime minister, a former Education minister, Julia Gillard. You do not accept that.

There are some bright spots and long-term gains in Tasmania in year 3 reading and writing and year 5 reading, spelling and numeracy, to name a few. I commend our teaching workforce for that.

We acknowledge the current workforce challenges resulting from the tight labour market and the impact earlier this year of COVID-19 on daily operations. We are committed to the continuous recruitment of quality teachers. This is not just a state issue but also a national issue. Education ministers from all states and territories have agreed to put together a framework - the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan - to address key issues of teacher demand, supply and retention. The workforce plan includes actions such as elevating the profession, improving teacher supply, strengthening initial teacher education, maximising the time to teach and better understanding future teacher workforce needs.

We share the objectives of the AEU as reflected in the national action plan and we want the AEU to be able to add to the state voice on key issues with respect to that plan. I highlight the 435 full-time equivalent teachers since 2014 that we have invested in and put in our schools, and 240 teachers since 2018.

I recall bringing people around the table: the university, the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, the Australian Education Union, the Principals Association, all working together to build workforce development and capacity, following our investment, our commitment in 2018 to put more teachers in our schools. We will always sit down and negotiate and work in good faith.

Ms O'Connor - It is not good faith. I do talk to people in the AEU.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know it has been a challenging few years for our teachers and I commend them for the work they do. Members of my family are teachers. We will always sit down and acknowledge the wonderful work of our teaching profession, particularly in challenging times. We will always sit down and negotiate in good faith with goodwill for our teaching workforce.

Education Resources - Proposed Stadium Development

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.17 a.m.]

Did you see that furious crowd out on the lawns earlier? They were disappointed not to see you or your Education minister. The thousands gathered there today know that instead of putting educators, support staff, and Tasmanian children first, you are prioritising a \$1 billion fantasy football stadium. Do you understand how that makes them feel?

On the lawns this morning we heard that teachers and support staff feel broken and burnt-out. Students are waiting for assessments or support from school social workers, psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. Caseloads mount and vacancies remain unfilled. That is not investing in trauma-informed practice.

Negotiations have stalled under the dithering Roger Jaensch. It is a crisis in our schools and you have allowed negotiations with the AEU to drag on for 14 months. What are you going to do about it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we will always sit down and negotiate in good faith. Ms O'Connor, my understanding is the negotiations have been going since June 2022. We will continue to sit down, negotiate in good faith, and highlight every step of the way how much we do value our educators in all settings. You cannot deny that the Government has invested more funding in schools and education than any government before us. I remember a time when your policy on education was to close 20 schools.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. The Premier has just misled the House. That was not Greens policy. It was a Greens minister who reversed a Labor decision.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I remember a time between 2010 and 2014 when - well, history is important -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order. This is not a two-way conversation. The Premier should be heard in silence. It is a serious matter. The question has been put to the Premier by the Leader of the Greens. I will ask the Premier to continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As Premier and in my seven years as Education minister, I visited many of those schools that would have been closed under your Labor-Greens government. It is clearly in the budget - the idea of closing 20 schools -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, on relevance. We asked this question on behalf of teachers and school support staff. Could the Premier just tell the House what he is doing about it?

Mr SPEAKER - Again, I must point out that when you make a point of order it is not an opportunity to make another statement to the House. I will convey the point of relevance to the Premier. I am sure he will make a connection through his answer to your question.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you. It is the school staff who want an answer.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Speaker, I will not speak any more of the history that every school community knows. What I was going to say was that I have visited a number of the schools that were earmarked for closure in the 2011 budget, where school communities rallied against that budget and they - the community - saved those schools from closure. It fills me with a great deal of pride that I go to those schools and I see them thriving.

I like that we go to schools where people appreciate the fact that we have increased the full-time equivalent of teachers by 435 since 2014, and 240 full-time equivalents since 2018. We are investing \$8.5 billion into our education system over the next four years, and \$250 million in infrastructure investments for new and upgraded schools. Yesterday, I mentioned Legana and Brighton as good examples. There is more than \$100 million to transform TasTAFE with 100 extra teachers, another key reform to align our public training provider with industry; a key reform we have fought for, we went to election on, that those opposite opposed every step of the way. Where we have invested and reformed education and training those opposite have opposed those key reforms, which are designed to support our young people and to give them the best opportunities. All the evidence is there that the longer we engage our young people in a school environment to further their education, the longer they will live, the healthier they will be, and be productive members of our community.

I will always sit down and work with and negotiate in good faith with our teaching workforce, and the Australian Education Union. I had a very good collaborative relationship with the Australian Education Union when I was Education minister, and it is my desire for that to continue.

State Service Wage Negotiations

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.24 a.m.]

Wherever you look across the public sector you have workers either taking industrial action or preparing to take industrial action. These are the people we rely on to educate our kids, clean our schools and hospitals, care for our family members, fight fires, and deliver the core services Tasmanians rely on. You made a virtue out of a recent meeting with unions regarding the diverse challenges facing our public sector workforce. You then authorised the head of the State Service to email a 'take it or leave it' wage offer late last Friday afternoon with an unreasonable deadline on the proviso that all bans are lifted and without addressing any non-wage related claims.

Yesterday, your negotiator stated they could not negotiate on the wages offer and they had no idea when or if you or Ms Gale would meet with them again. Late last night unions were informed that Ms Gale would now meet with them at a hastily scheduled meeting this afternoon. Your Government's shambolic handling of these negotiations is now bordering on farcical. It is in the interest of all Tasmanians for you to personally get back to the negotiating table to allow the workers to focus on the things they are paid to do and to avoid further disruption to the community. Why will you not commit to doing so?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Of course I valued the discussion I had with unions at the round table that I had a few weeks ago where I was able to listen to a range of concerns that they presented to me. The cost of living was one of those matters that we discussed and I listened intently.

As I say, we will always sit down and negotiate in good faith. Mr O'Byrne, you would be aware of that. What is important to me is building a capacity within our public sector, particularly on the front line - our police, our firies, our teachers, our health professionals -

Mr O'Byrne - Why are they all protesting, though? Why are they all taking action if they are so happy with what you are doing?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have recruited more than 1500 full-time equivalent health staff since July 2020, as an example of our commitment to strengthen our front line Public Service. I have mentioned our teaching workforce - some 435 full-time equivalents since 2014; some 240 since 2018 in our schools, supporting our young people to learn. The \$100 million into TasTAFE, including 100 extra teachers. Police and community safety are being prioritised; 329 additional police officers were committed to by 2026. I remember a time between 2010 and 2014 when there was a reduction of about 108 police officers sacked -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That was not strengthening the front line -

Mr O'Byrne - Who was the minister?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I think we know who that was, Mr O'Byrne.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Chatter in the Chamber should cease. The Premier has the call.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are strengthening and building capacity amongst our frontline public service. We have more teachers in our schools; we have more nurses in our hospitals; we have more police on the beat. These are key areas of priority that this Government has focused on since 2014 and will continue to focus on. We will always be willing to sit down

and negotiate in good faith with a wage offer for negotiation that recognises and values our hardworking people across the public service who I thank and value for the work they do right now and particularly the work they have done in supporting us as Tasmanians in keeping people safe through one of the biggest disruptions for generations.

Our public service stepped up to the plate like no other across the country and I support them. I recognise them at every opportunity and I say privately and publicly how outstanding our public service is, and those at the front line - our police, our health professionals and our educators, who did such a wonderful job of maintaining that learning environment even though it was at home and online. Collectively, as a state, everyone recognised them and saw enormous value in our teaching workforce and I have expressed that on many occasions. That is always reflected when it comes to good-faith negotiations and recognition of our hard working front line.

Infrastructure Program - Economy and Job Creation

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.30 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government's record-breaking infrastructure program will strengthen the economy and create jobs, and is he aware of any alternative policies?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. There will be some choice words used in my answer, including 'stadium' and 'Finlay', because infrastructure for our state creates jobs and provides the facilities that our growing state needs. Our construction blitz has been one of the singular reasons for the strength of our economy and the incredible results we have seen for employment for Tasmanians. That has put food on the table and given families confidence about the future. It has also led to people moving to Tasmania -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Those members opposite, including those interjecting now, claim that we are in a population recession. The opposite is true. When the ABS census data came out a couple of months ago, that underestimated it and caught us up 30 000 more people calling themselves Tasmanians and making their home here.

I am very pleased that our \$5.6 billion infrastructure program, outlined in our Budget earlier this year, is supporting jobs. It is building safer and more connected communities and that is what we need. The Budget and forward Estimates includes \$4.8 billion in investment in the general government sector and there is a further more than \$700 million in support investment by our GBEs and other entities.

The Government will fast-track its investment of \$385 million for the largest port developments in our state's history. We are an island state; we rely on ports and shipping. That is why we are investing for the future. Our port infrastructure right now is more or less at capacity and so are our ferries, as are the private sector ships. That is why we are all investing. We will see six new vessels on Bass Strait. Updating our ports is a key Liberal priority. An island state depends on it.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The continual chipping in on the minister is against the Standing Orders. I warn everyone from the Opposition that if you continue to do it, I will ask people to leave.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, who cannot help but notice the doublespeak from the members opposite? On one hand, they claim to want to see investment in infrastructure and yet one of their key shadow ministers is dead against substantial, significant investment in new infrastructure in Tasmania.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, I know the jack-in-the-box points of order will start up again today. You can more or less wind them up and away they go. Their hypocrisy is Labor's problem. Their record is their challenge.

The Government will also support Hydro Tasmania in the massive redevelopment of the Tarraleah Power Station. That is probably one to get my other friend going, minister Barnett, who is very excited about energy projects in our state. These investments are important. They are important for our electorates, our businesses and our families.

There is infrastructure spending in the Health portfolio of more than \$650 million and a further \$250 million, which the Premier has outlined, into school upgrades and new schools. The shadow treasurer mocked this initiative and said, 'What? Money for switchboards in schools?'. He mocked that investment, which is obviously about stronger power systems in our schools and safer power systems. I would have thought any good workplace would want to see that. It is as if he has been taking notes from Ms Finlay.

The Government's state road and bridge program will see \$2.7 billion across the next four years and just this year alone, \$770 million. Our investment in the last financial year just gone out to 30 June of \$400 million, 99 per cent delivered, is fully three times larger than the program delivered by the Labor-Greens government in its last year in office. It shows the scale of the investment.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind up, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - I am so thrilled about significant investment in new infrastructure at the Bridgewater bridge, which of course Ms Finlay would be against as well. Our economy needs it, our network needs it, and we are delivering it.

I did promise to mention the stadium and I would be happy to do so, because members opposite are not even prepared to consider a feasibility study. As to our commitment and our

vision to deliver a stadium, these mealy-mouthed questions yesterday showed they are opposed to aspiration, they are opposed to vision, they are opposed to people being able to come to Hobart to watch Robbie Williams instead of Melbourne, and they are dead against our community having up-to-date infrastructure.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Clearly now - as I wind up, Mr Speaker - is the time to see significant investments in new infrastructure because that is what our growing state needs.

Poker Machine Gambling Reforms - Cashless Gaming Card

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.37 a.m.]

The Deputy Premier's announcement earlier this month that he would introduce a statewide poker machine player card system with mandatory precommitment was welcomed by me and many others - many, but not all. There was a scathing response from the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, claiming pub owners were in shock and had been blindsided by the Government. If history is a guide, this reaction from the THA is only the start. You will recall the well-funded campaign a decade ago against the federal Gillard government's similar precommitment policy and a deal with Andrew Wilkie. The industry mobilised their employees and launched a saturation PR blitz centred on 'Love your Local' and 'Licence to Punt' scare campaigns. Gillard crumbled in 12 months and tore up her agreement with Wilkie, ditching the reforms. We saw how formidable the industry is at campaigning and influencing governments here in the 2018 state election.

Will you stand by the policy announced by the Deputy Premier no matter what the poker machine and hospitality industries throw at you? Are all members of your Government rock-solid behind the policy? Will you guarantee none will buckle under industry pressure? Have you met with industry representatives since the announcement and told them the Government is absolutely committed to these reforms and is not for turning?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. On 15 September the Treasurer announced the Government's response to the independent Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission's investigation into harm-minimisation measures. We accepted the recommendations in accordance with our commitments to the parliament, and while this has a material influence on securing the passage of our future gaming market reforms, it also demonstrates our commitment to harm minimisation and indeed a cooperative approach. The harm-reduction model follows a comprehensive investigation, public consultation process, and report to government by the independent Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission.

We will implement a statewide cashless gaming card that enables players to decide how much they want to gamble before they start playing. The new model, as the Treasurer has said, puts the power into the hands of every player. Everyone can play just as before but they will

have the power to limit their losses according to their chosen spending limit. It is expected that the new precommitment system will be implemented statewide by the end of 2024. From that point onwards, it will only be possible to play electronic gaming machines with a gaming card.

We are committed to harm reduction and minimisation measures as have been outlined by our Treasurer. Our commitment to that harm minimisation continues.

Education Resourcing - Proposed Stadium Development

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

[10.40 a.m.]

On Monday you wrote an opinion piece in a northern newspaper spruiking your government's plan for a \$750 million stadium in Hobart. This landed like a lead balloon among educators who want you to listen to the serious concerns that they have about conditions in our schools.

Why was spruiking a \$750 million stadium in Hobart the most important contribution that you could make as Education minister in a week when you knew that school staff would be taking stop-work action? Does it not show how twisted your priorities really are?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I take the opportunity to pay tribute to our remarkable teachers and TAs, the principals, and our school workforce who have, through a difficult couple of years and through my first months in the role as Minister for Education, shown how dedicated they are to their work, to the students in their care, and to their craft as teachers and the challenge of ensuring that young people have the best start in life and the best learning behind them as they go out into the world as adults.

I thank them for their work. I thank them when I visit them in our schools. I look forward to them returning to their classes and classrooms now and learning resuming this morning after the union's strike action that was held this morning.

Unions are entitled to call for industrial action. The event this morning, in my view, was unnecessary. A fortnight ago the Premier met with unions and heard the claims and issues that public sector workforce representatives had put on the table. He told them he would be back at the end of the next week with a wage offer. Before that happened the education union locked in industrial action which led to the closure of schools this morning, denying children of a couple of hours of important learning. Right now those students are returning to their classes, which is good.

We look forward to the union returning to the table to recommence discussions. We are waiting at the table with real offers addressing the concerns of teachers and teacher assistants. We look forward to the AEU returning to discussions to continue to improve conditions for our teaching workforce.

Ms White - They put forward a log of claims 14 months ago. If you had been on the lawn you would have heard from them.

Mr JAENSCH - We have done this before and we have done it recently. Earlier this year, good faith negotiations -

Ms White - You are too busy spruiking the stadium.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr JAENSCH - led to our most recent teacher wage agreement, which included a salary increase from March 2022 and new flexibility to provide for additional pay where teachers have volunteered to work above their maximum instructional load per fortnight to cover absences due to COVID-19.

We know we can do it. We have constructively worked with the union before. I have never refused a meeting with them. We are at the table waiting for them to return. We urge them to come back to the negotiation table and to act on the range of issues that they have raised, many of which have already been constructively addressed and will continue to be.

The Premier has outlined on a couple of occasions this morning that our Government has a strong track record of investment in reform and capacity and our education workforce. There are 435 FTE additional teachers, 421 FTE additional teaching assistants, and 100 more professional staff since 2014. There was \$3.8 million in the recent Budget for psychologists and social workers for our schools.

We understand that recruitment is difficult at this time. It is the same around the country. We do not want bigger, wealthier state's than ours poaching our teachers. We do not want to be trying to steal theirs. We are working with, and I am working with, all education ministers around the country to deal with a national workforce shortage.

Every percentage point increase in wages, every new resource we put in our schools, costs money. It costs Tasmanian taxpayers money. The state's revenues are driven by the performance of our economy. To grow our economy we need to invest in infrastructure. We need to invest in industries. We need to support growth and employment in Tasmania. That is why we make no apology for investing in infrastructure that grows our economy, that creates jobs for Tasmanians, that generates revenue for our state Government so we can continue to invest in our teaching workforce and in the wellbeing of our young people.

Launceston General Hospital - Responses to Child Sex Abuse Commission of Inquiry

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.46 a.m.]

Yesterday we asked what action you have taken about the shocking failures of multiple LGH managers in relation to child sex abuse. Your vague non-answer has left us and many others deeply concerned. For 18 months the Department of Premier and Cabinet website has detailed the number of state servants stood down as the result of abuse allegations, their

location, notifications made to legal and regulatory bodies, and ED5 investigations. The public needs confidence that the LGH's culture of non-accountability is being stamped out today, not avoided until sometime late next year.

Have any managerial staff at the LGH been stood down, or ED5 investigations commenced due to their recent admitted failures to notify and act on child sex abuse?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. First, I acknowledge the bravery and determination demonstrated by victims/survivors who have participated in the commission of inquiry. I understand the evidence heard during the commission of inquiry hearings has been very challenging for all of us, and for the Tasmanian community. The Government has made it very clear, both in the lead up to and throughout the hearings, that we are committed to accepting and implementing the recommendations of the commission of inquiry. We have demonstrated that we will not wait to act, by announcing the Child Safe Governance Review of the Launceston General Hospital and Human Resources in early July.

This review is driving immediate change with a priority focus on the handling of serious misconduct, such as institutional child sexual abuse. I have outlined to the House that the recently established Governance Advisory Panel is working as quickly as possible to develop recommendations on action required regarding the hospital's organisational structure, management leadership and mandatory training. Since the commission hearings, I am continuing to work closely with the secretary of the Department of Health to implement effective action to ensure that child safety is embedded within workplace culture in all our hospitals and health facilities.

In responding to the commission, it is critical that we act with sensitivity and with regard to due process -

Dr Woodruff - You said you would act urgently if information came to light. It has come to light.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - recognising the need to comply with the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1995. As this House is aware, in 2021 in preparation for the commission of inquiry, amendments were made to that act to provide protections for employees who give evidence. I note all parties supported those amendments. I must maintain confidentiality -

Dr Woodruff - They are for whistleblowers. They are not for people who failed in their duty.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and it is not appropriate for me to comment on specific cases or allegations. However, I can assure you, Dr Woodruff, and I can assure the entire House, that the Department of Health is taking proactive action in response to the commission of inquiry by implementing the Child Safe Governance Review of the Launceston General Hospital and Human Resources.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. I know there are staff of the LGH watching the Premier's answer, and they want to know about the people in place today who are still managers.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could take a seat, member for Franklin. Again, I point out to the Premier the point of relevance, but I will state that is not an opportunity to stand, make a point of order and then add to the conversation with a statement to the House. You have asked the Premier a question. He should be allowed to answer it uninterrupted.

Mr ROCKLIFF - While the governance review is under way, the department is progressing important actions through the Child Safe organisation's project to implement a new child safety and wellbeing framework to mandate and foster culture that puts child safety first.

Support and implementation of the framework child safeguarding training is already being rolled out across the department and focuses on mandatory reporting, professional boundaries, and identifying grooming behaviours. The department is continuing to internally examine and review its policies, practices, and procedures, and will implement reform where opportunities for improvement are identified. As I have said -

Dr Woodruff - They have been identified.

Member Suspended

Member for Franklin - Dr Woodruff

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff. You can leave the Chamber until after question time.

Dr Woodruff withdrew.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I have consistently said, Dr Woodruff, our Government is committed to learning from past mistakes and failures, to implement real and lasting change that safeguards our children. I again acknowledge those past failures, present governments - and indeed past governments of all colours - where we have failed children in our care. We are committed to ensuring we implement the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

As I have demonstrated, each time we have had hearings from the commission to come back to this place we produced a ministerial statement for debate and discussion amongst members on the actions that we are taking. We are not waiting for the recommendations from the commission, which we expect to be handed down towards the middle of next year. We are taking action right now.

Police Resourcing - Proposed Stadium Development

Ms O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE, and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

[10.53 a.m.]

According to your own reports, crime is out of control in Launceston. Vandalism is up 15 per cent, public place assaults have increased by 28 per cent, serious crime - which includes matters such as murder, robbery, and sexual assault - is up more than 50 per cent, with one occurring roughly every two days. In northern Tasmania, more than one in five of these serious crimes remain unsolved, which is the worst clearance rate in the state. As the minister responsible for dealing with this out-of-control crime rate in Launceston, do you agree with the Premier that building a \$750 million stadium in Hobart is the most important priority for Tasmania?

Opposition members - Hear, hear.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is interesting some of the crocodile tears that come from my honourable friends who, when they were last in government, sacked 108 cops. One in 10 police officers in Tasmania at the time were sacked under a Labor-Greens government.

This is a government that has employed 329 police officers. We are working towards the highest establishment of police officers in Tasmania's history. Since 2014 there are 35 new police officers at the Launceston station, and there are four more coming around the end of this year. We are investing \$7 million into upgrading the Launceston Police Station, so that they have better facilities. Those are the kind of investments, which we hear from those opposite, including one of the local members, that now is not the right time to be making infrastructure investments -

Members interjecting.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Speaker, we are investing in special operations groups, infrastructure in our state. We acknowledge there are serious crimes that are being committed in our community. That is exactly why we are backing Tasmania Police with the largest-ever cohort of police, with record funding, with \$106 million over the forward Estimates for new facilities for our police.

We know that whenever Labor gets challenged on what they did when they had the opportunity to keep Tasmanians safe with the reins of government, they get very touchy. Everyone remembers when you sacked 108 cops. That is your legacy. We are building. You destroy.

We are proud of the investment we have made in infrastructure in Launceston. We are proud of the new police officers who have come online since then and we will be bringing more on as well. Tasmania is a very safe place to live and I know that a lot of Tasmanians in surveys appreciate that.

As I mentioned yesterday, crimes in Tasmania are down to 25 000 offences in this last financial year. That is down from 50 000 crimes 20 years ago. As the Treasurer mentioned today, that is despite our growing population. We have more Tasmanians but we have fewer crimes. We have more police and more investment in our record infrastructure and we are very proud of that record. Those opposite can cry crocodile tears, but we will always be tough on crime and will make the necessary investments to stamp it out.

Education - Supporting Student Wellbeing

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[10.57 a.m.]

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit a couple of schools. One of the visits was with the minister. Could you update the House on the Government's efforts to support student wellbeing and engagement and how this is affecting learning?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Tasmanian Government is committed to the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people who will be returning to their classrooms as we speak. We recognise the link between wellbeing and learning outcomes. When students feel valued, safe and supported, they will be in their best position to learn.

Our approach is underpinned by the Department of Education's new 2022 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy, Wellbeing for Learning; the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey which occurs annually and commenced in 2019; and the whole-of-government priorities of the Child, Youth and Wellbeing Strategy, *It takes a Tasmanian Village*.

Over the last four weeks, 28 600 students from grade 4 to grade 12 have completed the annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey in Tasmanian Government schools. The survey ran from 29 August until 23 September. It is a critical tool to gather student voice that will determine where the next improvements in wellbeing for learning, should occur. The 2022 data will be released in November and schools will work with staff, students and the school community to analyse their results and plan for action to address any issues or opportunities arising from the survey data for their school. 'Get Going Resource' packs are also available to ensure schools participate in reviewing the data, listening to student voice and planning action.

Annual Student Voice Focus Groups, held by the department after the survey show that students want genuine involvement in decision-making, positive school culture and good relationships with teachers. Students believe these things make a difference to their learning. The voice of students is critical to our approach and their voice has informed the development of the 2022 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy, 'Wellbeing for Learning'. Wellbeing for Learning refers to a state where students feel loved, safe and valued; have access to material basics; have their physical, mental and emotional needs met; are learning and participating; and have a positive sense of culture and identity.

The new Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy continues our critical focus on Wellbeing for Learning informed by the voice of our learners, principals, and consultations with key stakeholders. The new strategy will focus on wellbeing data in the early years, safety, student voice and agency, belonging, engagement and positive school culture, resilience, wellbeing and career education.

Since the department's first Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy in 2018 we have made wellbeing and student voice a key feature of planning processes such as the department's strategic planning and school improvement planning for individual schools. We have built evidence through the annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey across all eligible Tasmanian government schools. We have established student wellbeing support teams in schools to help plan and implement wellbeing strategies with a focus on students and diverse and complex needs requiring coordinated support. We have embedded the use of the Child and Family Wellbeing Assessment Tool to guide a shared understanding of the level of additional support students require and we have developed the model for supporting students impacted by trauma. This is supported by total funding of \$24 million over 2022-23 in the forward Estimates. It supports 455 individual students in 2022.

I look forward to students and schools and their communities engaging with the 2022 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey data when it is released in November. I extend my thanks again to staff who have been administering the survey and to all the students who have provided valuable feedback that will help make our schools the best places they can be.

Proposed Stadium Development - Business Case

Dr BROAD question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[11.01 a.m.]

Yesterday it was revealed that there is no business case for your new \$750 million stadium. That means you have no idea whether it will make a loss, whether it will require an ongoing subsidy, what the annual maintenance and depreciation costs will be, or whether it is a responsible investment to be making with public money. As Treasurer, do you support spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a second stadium in Hobart without a business case?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I welcome, finally, a question from the shadow treasurer that goes anywhere near our Budget. The Government stands resolute in providing infrastructure that our growing state needs. That includes a stadium that can provide entertainment, concerts, sporting events, big events, including AFL games, and to provide people with modern infrastructure that they can enjoy in Tasmania. Just a few moments ago I made the point that in our growing state -

Ms Finlay - When people do not have a home, they do not need an entertainment stadium to go to.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, I have been asked a question but the member who wants us to not spend new money on new infrastructure keeps interjecting.

Ms Finlay - Oh, do not go there. Tell the truth. You would not know how to tell the truth if you tried.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass.

Mr FERGUSON - We have been very clear that this is good for our state. Just look at the economic benefits that the Premier has been very clear about. The point I made earlier when the shadow treasurer may have been dozing off was that I called him out for his antics yesterday talking about a business case. That is what is in the Budget. It is called a feasibility study. Wake up to yourselves.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Thank you, the House will come to order. A question has been put to the Treasurer, presumably serious enough to be asked in question time. Therefore, members from the Opposition should be interested in the answer. They will listen to it in silence.

Mr FERGUSON - I really do welcome the question but the behaviour we are seeing on display shows just how the Labor Party is conflicted on this. I only have to go back a short while when Dr Broad was chasing me around the state just after the Budget had been brought down in May. He followed me to breakfast in Hobart - it was good to see you there. He chased me to Launceston, up the Midland Highway. He was just within eyesight to keep on my tail. He came to the lunch and it was great to see him there as well. Then back to my hometown, Burnie, where I am proudly from, to dinner with the Burnie Chamber of Commerce. It was the biggest turnout they have ever had. It was a great series of events with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Dr Broad really was the shadow treasurer that day. He shadowed me. He was very good at it.

One thing that happened on that Friday was that Dr Broad had a killer line. He was trying to get it up on the news, and he did, that the Government is spending \$750 million on a stadium. He was wrong, and the journalist called him out for it. What was in the Budget was the wherewithal to take our next steps. There is \$1.25 million provided in the Budget to go through the stuff that Dr Broad was whingeing about yesterday. What the Premier has said, and what our Government stands for, is up to half of the capital cost of building a future stadium, which includes facilities for our AFL games, for Robbie Williams, Michael Bubl  , and any large mass gatherings in Tasmania.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Who is going to be the first one from the Opposition to be thrown out?

Mr FERGUSON - They are the facts. We can invest in health, and we are, we can invest in police, and we are, we can invest in education, and we are. We are not the government that tried to forcibly close 20 schools. We are not the government that closed Ward 4D at the Launceston General Hospital. We are not the government that closed the Nell Williams Unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind-up please, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - We are not the government that cut mental health funding. We are not the government that slashed elective surgery. We are not the government that sacked 108 police. We have reversed all of the Labor-Greens cuts. We have protected our schools. We have grown our economy. We have grown our population and a growing population needs and deserves better infrastructure.

The Labor Party is trying to create a false narrative that it actually stands for something when we know it stands for nothing. The shadow treasurer is a title well-deserved. He is in the shadows on this issue.

We are investing in our state. We are investing in significant new infrastructure. That is what our growing state needs.

Proposed Stadium Development - Construction Capacity Constraints

Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr BARNETT

[11.08 a.m.]

You are aware that Tasmania is in the grip of a housing crisis and you are also aware of the significant capacity constraints in our building and construction industry. The Premier has said that the stadium development will require 4000 construction workers. Do you support so many construction workers as well as materials being diverted to building a new stadium in Hobart when what Tasmanians really need is more housing?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I do not support the basis for the question, the foundation for the question. The Government wants to grow our economy. We want to provide more opportunities. We have already done so since 2014, on the back of a recession under the previous Labor-Greens government when 10 000 jobs were lost.

The Premier has made it very clear about the jobs increase in Tasmania. The Premier has just answered a question from the shadow treasurer on the importance of infrastructure, something the Opposition does not accept or agree with. Regarding the jobs in the building and construction sector, we are proud of that sector.

As minister for Construction, I am pleased that working with the building construction sector, we have plans to grow that workforce. We have now an MOU, a memorandum of understanding, signed by the former minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth, myself and the key stakeholders around the table to build the workforce for the future in the building construction sector, and that is what we are doing. We are trying to streamline the process, cut red tape and build the workforce for the future, and I know the new minister is equally or even more energetic to ensure that happens.

We are on track with regard to apprentices and trainees because this is the future - young Tasmanians. I indicate to the House that the latest National Centre for Vocational Education Research showed that at 31 December last year there were 10 760 apprentices and trainees in training in Tasmania, an increase of 11.9 per cent on the 12 months prior.

Labor has said we are not for training construction workers. That is absurd. This is the nonsensical position of the Opposition. They do not want any significant investment in new infrastructure, wherever it is across the state, whether it is the Bridgewater bridge, the schools in my electorate like Sorell or Brighton, the new hospitals, extension of the LGH, for example, and we have not even got to Marinus Link or our renewable energy future. What about Tarraleah, a \$700 million investment, jobs in the heart of the Lyons electorate in the Central Highlands? This is something the Labor Opposition need to come to terms with.

This Government is flat-out trying to build more homes faster, and the Opposition are opposing our agenda. They ought to talk to a few of the housing providers out there and some of the stakeholders in that, because they are not happy. They support our agenda and want to build the 10 000 homes by 2032, which is our agenda. It is the most ambitious agenda in history and this Opposition should be reversing its position and voting in support of that bill to make it happen. Shame on you. You should reverse your position.

Launceston General Hospital - Proposed Stadium Development

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.12 a.m.]

The Launceston General Hospital has the worst bed block in the country. Paramedics are on strike over ramping and patients are waiting an average of 600 days to see a specialist. For much less than the cost of your stadium, you could completely redevelop the Launceston General Hospital, something you promised you would do at the state election. When the LGH is in crisis, why are you instead spending money on a stadium in Hobart?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Government released the master plan for the Launceston General Hospital which sets out a roadmap for the redevelopment of the LGH precinct and is supported by a commitment of some \$580 million over 10 years. The master plan is informed by feedback from the community, staff, partner organisations and other key stakeholders and maps out the next stages of the LGH redevelopment to ensure we are well placed to meet future demand and secure Tasmania's future. It includes a number of exciting new developments that will deliver significant benefits to the community and support the delivery of contemporary care.

Our key master plan project is a new purpose-built mental health precinct which will be co-designed with consumers, carers and family members, staff and other key stakeholders. The new precinct will co-locate community and inpatient mental health services with modern contemporary facilities to support safe, therapeutic and recovery-focused care. That would have been of great interest to all who attended the launch of Mental Health Week, between 8 and 16 October, yesterday, where a number of people were able to engage with people, particularly peer workforce and people of lived experience when it comes to mental health.

Another key development will be the new tower on the current northside site to expand and modernise inpatient and outpatient services and other important facility upgrades and expansions so we can respond to current and future demand for health services.

Since the release of the master plan in October 2021, a fully staged program of works has been developed as the next step in realising the LGH redevelopment. The LGH master plan implementation program was released on 17 March this year, as I am sure the member would be aware, and outlines time frames and order of major projects. We will continue to provide opportunities for staff and stakeholders to be involved in detailed planning so we can respond to the changing needs of the community we serve and our workforce, with a constant focus on improving patient outcomes as we continue to make progress.

The 2022-23 Budget provides \$50 million to stage 2 of the LGH redevelopment project to progress our \$580 million commitment over 10 years, and an additional \$38 million to complete stage 1 of the LGH redevelopment.

Ms White - How is the support on your side going for the stadium?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know it is new infrastructure and I know Ms Finlay does not support new infrastructure -

Ms Finlay - Do not go there like you did on the radio this morning. You know that was about the stadium. You guys are really loose with the truth.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms Finlay - No standards - coming from you, Premier, you would expect better.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You spent all day yesterday counting how many times you thought - 14 times I think you counted that we highlighted that you are against new infrastructure.

Ms O'BYRNE - Mr Speaker, point of order. You hear me when I interject, but never when I take a point of order. You would be aware of the Standing Orders that are applied here and under Erskine May in our federal parliament and national parliaments. When a member makes a personal explanation because they have been misrepresented, it is not appropriate for another member to continue to make the same allegations. I ask you to draw the Premier's attention to that. I ask for a ruling.

Mr SPEAKER - There was a personal explanation given; the words were said. I cannot control what members say as far as those specific words are concerned. They were said. It was said that it was out of context but the Chamber is a robust place -

Members interjecting.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I really need to seek your clarification on this. Are you saying that if somebody says something we can take it completely out of context in this place and there are no repercussions? They know they have taken this comment out of context yet they continually repeat it despite Ms Finlay raising the point. Does that mean that if somebody says something, we can take it out of context in this place and continually repeat it without repercussions? It is a very slippery slope from here.

Mr SPEAKER - What I am saying is that I hope everybody respects what people say. I put the case that the dollars around the stadium have been bandied around at different times and have had different reasons for different numbers. When a member makes a personal explanation, that should be good enough for other members. If there are some issues within that personal explanation, I cannot control what the Opposition or the Government will do with that, unfortunately. There has been a personal explanation made and I hope the Chamber acknowledges that and works within that. However, I am not going to control, or try to control, what the Government says.

Ms O'Byrne - No, but if they say something wrong, Mr Speaker, surely you can pull them up on it?

Mr SPEAKER - Next question.

Optus Cyber Incident

Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY, Ms OGILVIE

[11.19 a.m.]

We know that some Tasmanians are being impacted by the recent Optus cyber incident. Can the minister please give the House an update on how the Tasmanian Liberal Government is supporting those impacted and the work under way to understand the extent of the cyber attack on the Tasmanian community?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Tasmanian Government is very closely monitoring the cyber attack impacting telecommunications provider, Optus, and we are taking appropriate action. There has been a lot of hard work under way over the last couple of days since that has occurred. The Tasmanian Government cyber security team is working with Optus, the Australian Cyber Security Centre and other jurisdictions to understand the full impact of the hack on Tasmanians. We understand the information which may have been compromised includes customer names, dates of birth, phone numbers, email addresses and for a subset of customers, addresses, ID document numbers, such as driver's licence or passport numbers. Those impacted by the Optus data breach can visit any Service Tasmania shop to arrange a new licence number and a replacement licence card. They are ready for that.

I am pleased to announce today that from noon today the ordinary fee of \$11.49 will be waived for those Tasmanian motor vehicle licence holders who can demonstrate that they have both the licence number and card number disclosed. Both of those have been impacted by the data breach. A new licence number will then be allocated and the client will receive a new licence card in the mail. The cancelled licence number will then no longer validate through the national document verification service, so that is the protection.

In order to receive a new licence number, Service Tasmania customers will be required to present evidence from Optus that they have been impacted by the data breach, or sign a statutory declaration to state that their personal information was breached by the Optus data leak. The Department of State Growth will contact customers who have already visited Service Tasmania for a replacement licence to arrange reimbursement of that cost.

Ms O'Connor - You could do this by media release. You are reading the whole thing.

Ms OGILVIE - I would like to thank the Treasurer, in particular and also the Premier, for acting so swiftly in supporting this initiative. The Tasmanian community should feel comfortable knowing that the Tasmanian Government is actively monitoring -

Ms O'Connor - Are you not across your brief? Everything is read.

Ms OGILVIE - and managing cyber security issues and is also working closely with the Australian government in this space.

Ms O'Connor - Turn page.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms OGILVIE - The Government is committed to protecting its information and ICT systems from malicious cyber activity and supporting Tasmanians who have been impacted by cyber attacks, such as phishing emails and ransomware and which are increasing, as we know, in frequency and scale, sophistication and severity. Cyber-security risk management activities across government are jointly funded by DPAC's digital strategy and services for whole-of-government programs and individual agencies, for agency specific initiatives.

I want to let the House know by way of a refresh that in the 2017-18 budget the Government announced an ongoing \$300 000 per annum for the formation of our really fantastic Tasmanian government's cyber security team. I wish to give them some credit today. In the 2020-21 budget, the Government allocated an additional \$4.9 million over four years for the whole-of-government cyber security program. This increased funding demonstrates our commitment to cyber security and ensuring the resilience of government services in the face of increasing cyber threats. Uplifting the Government's cyber security maturity does create opportunity also for local businesses to provide services that assist agencies in tackling the increasing range of cyber threats.

Ms O'Connor - Oh, well read.

Mr Ferguson - Stop this bullying behaviour Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor - No, it is not. You get paid more than \$200 000 a year to do your jobs; \$200 grand reading it all out, pathetic.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Cost of Living Issues - Fuel Excise

Mr TUCKER question TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[11.24 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Government is addressing the cost of living? Is the Government concerned about the increasing fuel excise? The real question is, is the shadow treasurer, Dr Broad, going to pick up the phone to his federal counterparts?

ANSWER

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, it is an important question that I wish to answer -

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the Treasurer has the call.

Mr FERGUSON - I thank the member for Lyons for his question. It is a very good question and a very fair question. I cannot answer the last part of that question, because it is known only to Dr Broad, so he can give voice to that when he is good and ready to do so, but I fear if Labor was really motivated to help Tasmanian households and businesses with their petrol prices, it is too late because, unfortunately, the very good fuel excise reduction which began in March ends today. The federal government has been very clear they will not be continuing it. Now, we have been -

Dr Broad - What did the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Dutton, say?

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The Treasurer has the call. No-one else in the Chamber should be uttering a word.

Mr FERGUSON - We are very concerned. This Government has worked very hard to deal with those increases of cost of living that we have responsibility for, and to look after Tasmanians, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, who have little ability to flex their budget to meet the increasing costs they are experiencing. That is why our Budget provides more than \$300 million of direct support for council rates, for TasWater water and sewerage bills, and for electricity rebates, to support people in our state.

One thing that we have not been able to change is the excise reduction coming to an end today. Now, that fuel excise reduction has been very good for Tasmania. It has been very good for unleaded and for diesel. It has supported at least \$20 per tank and a total saving of around \$300 in reduction on average for Tasmanian families. We called on the federal government multiple times through correspondence, through the media outlets that we try to give voice to our position and through direct communications. We tried to do it in the noisiest way we could.

We called on the federal government to extend it at least until the end of the year and if they were not prepared to do that, at least bring it down gradually to allow Tasmanian families and businesses to adjust. It is going to be a sudden increase to the cost of liquid fuels over the next few days and couple of weeks, and you will start to see the advertised price go up and up. We are very concerned about that. I would have loved to have seen the Labor Party be noisier on this. They have a lot to say for something they could have done. I am more than aware that they have tried to cover themselves with a fig leaf, saying 'well, we wrote a letter.' They have not really lobbied their federal colleagues. It has been a very poor show indeed.

We are concerned about a range of impacts. We have taken, and we will continue to take, action on the cost of living, including fuel pricing. I have to commend the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice for bringing in the very good FuelCheck Tas app. It has been very widely received.

Mr Winter - How is it going?

Mr FERGUSON - I am about to tell you how it is going. It has been very widely well received in the public. All my kids use it, they rely on it and they always check it before they fill up to get the best fuel in Launceston. I hope your kids do it as well.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - The thing is, Tasmanians have come to know that our Government will do what we can, in all circumstances, to support people, while the Opposition is mocking that really good success which we did in partnership with NSW Government. It has been really good for Tasmanians. In fact, I checked it yesterday and the differential between the cheapest and the highest price fuel in Launceston showed that I could save potentially 20 cents per litre, if I used the app. Do not mock something that is helping Tasmanians. It does again show my earlier point; these people stand for nothing. They could actually do something to help.

We have also provided additional funding for fuel grants program to the community sector. We have also provided a \$5 million cost-of-living booster package to help Tasmanian families as well. Mr Speaker, I will wind up, but I will say -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - This is important. I know Tasmanians watching the webcast might be disappointed to see the Labor Party not prepared to be serious about something that is affecting every single person. We are seeing inflation affecting the whole globe. It is not a Tasmanian issue, it is a global issue and it is affecting Tasmanians. What Tasmanians deserve is their representatives - whether Liberal, Labor, Greens or the crossbench - to be doing what we can to help people with their increasing costs of living. I will finalise my answer by asking members present to advocate the benefits of public transport in our local community. This is one of the things that could really assist if we can see -

Ms Finlay - What about public education?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I wish they would take it seriously. I do want to finish my answer with this call to action.

If we could see more people embracing public transport with the increased services that we are offering, more express routes, better designed to meet what Tasmanians have told us they want, they can save money on fuel.

Public transport is one of the most affordable ways to get around, with rides as low as \$2.80 for an adult trip, \$1.92 for a concession card holder. If you also get the Green Card, which is where you load your own money on, they can be \$1.52 for students when using a

Green Card or a transport prepaid smartcard. We want to support that. It might also assist with household budgets, as well as the congestion challenge, particularly in southern Tasmania.

I will conclude there, and thank the Government for acting in the interests of Tasmanian families and businesses while the other side are just here to have a joke.

Time expired.

STATUTORY HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 40)

Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

ANIMAL WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 42)

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Barnett and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Public Sector Wages

[11.34 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: public sector wages.

We need to make sure that our public sector workers have the conditions and pay that they deserve. This is a very important issue because not only do these essential workers work in incredibly difficult conditions in many circumstances, but they are delivering the essential services that every single Tasmanian relies upon.

I was fortunate this morning, with my colleagues on this side of the House, to join with our educators on the Parliament House lawns, to hear from teachers and support staff about what their day is like, how they passionately support our students to have the very best opportunities in Tasmania, and that they are being let down by this Government.

They were very disappointed today that not one single member from the Government took time to listen. Not one member from the Government showed up, even for five minutes, to hear what those teachers and support staff were sharing with us as part of that crowd, sharing what they face every single day when they are in their work environment, which is our children's learning environment. I had hoped that every single member of the Government cared about that. If they care about our children's learning environment, then they would want to understand how we can make that the best place possible. They did not show up and that has been unfortunate.

Ms O'Connor - The Education minister is fleeing the Chamber.

Ms WHITE - The Education minister is fleeing the Chamber: the Education minister who decided it was more important, and a greater priority, to write an article for the northern papers about his love of a stadium, than to talk about education. This, in the week that 195 schools had been shut by this Government because teachers have had to resort to taking industrial action to finally make their point known to the Government and yet they still did not show up.

The Government says it is putting an offer to public sector workers. There was a meeting between the public sector unions and the Premier about two weeks ago where unions went to that meeting in anticipation that the Premier would put forward an offer. Not just an offer that recognises their value by providing a pay increase that keeps up with the cost of living, but an offer that improves their conditions, that reflects the log of claims that has been carefully put together by those unions over a number of months - in the case of the education union 14 months ago - to detail how they can be better supported in their place of work.

At that meeting the Premier opened up by essentially saying he was there to listen. The Premier has had months to listen. They were expecting an opportunity to negotiate with the person who ultimately makes the decision - the Premier - about the wages and conditions that every public sector worker has in this state. They did not get that from the Government. Instead, late last Friday a letter was sent around by the secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet with a pretty offensive offer. It was as if the Government had reached down the back of the couch and found a bit of loose change and chucked it on the table and said, 'There you go, be happy with the scraps'. That offer of 3 per cent, 3 per cent, 2.5 per cent, 2.5 per cent, is half the rate of inflation that people are facing right now.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I just draw your attention to the fact that you, Mr Speaker, and the member for Clark do not have a mask on at the moment.

Ms O'Connor - Which makes this Chamber less safe.

Mr Ferguson - It is when you are not able to socially distance.

Ms O'Connor - Ms Ogilvie has been politely asked by Dr Woodruff to put a mask on, and has refused. You have two members of your own Cabinet who are not in here today. We do not know why. What is going on?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - On the point of order, Mr Speaker. It is not really fair to take up the MPI's time. It is appropriate for somebody to let you know if they have a concern. It is, of course, only for the Speaker to enforce his ruling about masks on.

Ms O'Connor - Oh, give us a break. It is not fair to infect others with COVID-19.

Dr Woodruff - Sorry, Ms White, I did not realise this was going to go on for so long.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, your ruling provided to us is to wear a mask when not able to socially distance.

Mr SPEAKER - First of all, I take the point. We are in an MPI. We are taking the Leader of the Opposition's time. Please continue. If you have an issue around anything, then you can see me in the Chamber.

Ms WHITE - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Late last Friday a letter was sent to those public sector unions with a pretty pathetic offer that was really insulting. It does not go anywhere near dealing with the stresses that they face in their workplace. It was only about pay. Nothing about conditions. It ignores the hard work that our State Service employees across a range of different areas have done over the past few months to put together that log of claims.

There was an event here in Parliament House where the public sector union, the CPSU, had a number of their members available for us as MPs to meet with. Again, the Government did not show up. Had they done that, they would have heard that it is not just about pay, as important as that is to make sure that we can properly remunerate people, properly value people, be competitive with mainland states who are offering much better wages than we are here in Tasmania, but it is about conditions, and it is about respect.

The lack of respect from this Government is galling, particularly when the Premier gets up here and says, 'We thank you for the work you have done over the last two years. It has been particularly tough, especially our nurses, especially our teachers, you have to go above and beyond, and essential workers who have to go to work every single day when we told everybody else to stay home. You went into danger and provided those essential services, so thank you, here's two bucks fifty basically, hope that is enough. I won't even bother coming to any of the events that you organise with your members where I might be able to learn a little bit more about what we can do to support you in your job and I won't even show up with an offer on the table that we can negotiate around', despite the fact that he is the Premier.

Public sector workers are totally fed up; they are exhausted. They are delivering the essential services that we as a community rely upon every single day and this Government does not seem to know what it is doing, is stumbling all over the place, fumbling around with different letters and unbelievably low ballpark offers that go nowhere near what is required.

Time expired.

[11.41 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - First of all, I am sorry that the member's contribution probably lost a minute in the middle. I draw your attention to that, Mr Speaker, for future opportunities. I will say that we have limited time -

Greens members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Ms White, for the opportunity to speak on this important subject. Our Government is committed to negotiating with all our unions in good faith. We have been very consistent on this point and we want to see appropriate and affordable wage increases for our workforce. We have been very consistent on that as well.

As members will be aware, the Premier held a roundtable with unions very recently on 15 September, and that was not something he had to do, he wanted to do that. He wanted to

engage, to listen and also to demonstrate listening and be able to take on board what was being said, but that is not a replacement for a properly convened wage negotiation.

There are plenty of members on the other side who have come out of the union movement and they know exactly how wage negotiations are conducted, including when they might have been organisers in a time of a Labor government. Unions meet with representatives of different departments and, by the way, some members opposite have been ministers and they would be more than aware that the appropriate and normal way this works is with representatives who are appropriately provided with guidance on what is affordable and what the envelope could be. Then they engage and there is supposed to be a process of making a claim or a lot of claims and an offer being made in the absence of an agreement. I discussed this during a private member's motion a couple months ago.

In the absence of an agreement, if the two sides - not just the Government - cannot find a treaty on this, then there is no new agreement and there can be no pay rise. There needs to be some give and take from both sides. That is how this process should work. Interference from opposition politicians does not help that process at all.

That was a meeting that demonstrated the Premier and the Government's intentions to act in good faith, to listen to unions, to show our Government is prepared to work collaboratively not just on pay issues but also on some of the workplace issues, whether it is teachers or allied health professionals or police who may want to bring them to the table and seek some resolution through an EBA, and that is reasonable. That is how the process can and should work.

I remind members opposite, who seem to want to be involved in the negotiations, of the absence of their own alternative budget. Honestly, they cannot be taken seriously at all on this. The Budget we brought down in May added indexation of 2.5 per cent for agencies. That provides an envelope for more activity. The recent wage offer that we made, again, vindicates our consistent position that indexation is not wages policy, unlike what I clearly remember when I was in opposition when we had a Labor government, with a wages policy. I think it was 2 per cent at the time; it may have 2.5 per cent. The point is, we have said, 'That is the indexation in the budget and we will now negotiate in good faith', and that is how it ought to work.

We have also been very clear that if you were to choose a number, let us say, 1 per cent above what is provided in the budget, that has an impact on the budget of \$390 million plus -

Ms O'Connor - Why don't you cancel the stadium?

Mr FERGUSON - That is a recurrent cost into the future as well, Mr Speaker, and is not provided for in the budget, as we know. Those opposite who want to get involved in a wage negotiation but are not prepared to publish an alternative budget are hypocrites.

I was at a function last week, a very good function held by the Northern Midlands Business Association, and the shadow treasurer was there. Good on him. During that presentation Dr Broad presented in the time he had, he wanted to attack the Government over our spending and wanted to discuss debt funding of initiatives. He was basically trying to tell the audience that the Government needed to get the budget in order but he did not tell that audience that the next week they would be in here demanding a lot more money being spent on wages. Mr Speaker, just have a look at that hypocrisy of the Labor Party on these matters.

Our offer increases wages by 3 per cent in each of the first two years of the agreement - that is above what was in the budget. It is similar to most other states, by the way, and 0.5 per cent above the budget allocation of 2.5 per cent. Our offer is now before those unions and it would be reasonable for me to hope that that offer could be put to members to have a look at. Some unions will not allow an offer to even be looked at by their members. Just think about that for a moment.

We also offered more. We recognised, as I did in my earlier contribution in question time, that there are pressing cost-of-living pressures on Tasmanians right now. Inflation is high and we have offered a cost of living and a retention payment of \$1500 per FTE for every single public sector worker for current agreements that are being negotiated -

Ms White - And it is taxed.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Sorry - and it is what?

Ms White - Taxed.

Mr FERGUSON - That is right, Ms White, so if you do not think it should be taxed, please discuss that with the federal government. That is a strange interjection.

Ms WHITE - So it is not really \$1500, is it?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - On top of that, we have also offered a further payment of another \$1500 for our lower-paid workers as well, those people who are earning less than \$64 000 -

Ms White - And the lower you get paid, the less you get because of pro rata - less hours, less weeks.

Mr FERGUSON - I would love to be heard, Mr Speaker.

That means that somebody earning less than \$64 000 per year would receive a first-year payment of \$3000. For public sector workers on those lower incomes, in the first year that would equate to a more than 7 per cent bump. We are going to work through this process as diligently and as professionally as we can.

In my last 30 seconds I want to say that this is not a choice between, as Labor would have you believe, a stadium, capital infrastructure for our growing state, and services. We reversed your cuts in health -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - We reversed your cuts in police. We reversed the cuts in education. We saved the schools that Labor and the Greens tried to close and we have increased our

resources in all of those portfolios. We will continue to run strong budget management, as recognised by the global credit ratings agencies. Labor is putting forward a false choice.

Time expired.

[11.48 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Speaker, what I found most disturbing about that contribution and the contribution made by the minister for Education during question time today is that they see investing in our public service, investing in our public servants and investing in the services that they provide to our community, not as an investment but as a cost. They say we cannot afford to give more money to teachers because that would cost the budget. We cannot afford to give more money to our public servants because that will cost the budget and yet, what we know and what everyone who understands economics knows, is that if you invest in quality education, if you invest in quality health care, if you invest in a quality public service, you actually get a more productive and better position for your state. It will grow our economy and grow our capacity.

I found it disturbing during this commentary that they will only talk about wages as a cost and not an investment. They absolutely refuse to talk about the significant amount of conditions that have been raised by public servants across the state because they want to work in better environments, they want to provide better services, and they want to go home safely at the end of the day. They do not want the spiralling rates of workers compensation for stress claims that we are seeing because they are working in untenable circumstances.

The minister says that this is not how negotiations go and that the Premier did not have to meet with them - he just did that because he is a really good guy. Well, I have been around a little bit too. I did wage negotiations as a union official way back in the 1990s. You know what happens? You go in and you have a fair negotiation - and I will talk about your misunderstanding of what good-faith negotiations are later - around a framework of an envelope but you both give and take. You have a genuine conversation and a genuine engagement. That has not occurred. It has not occurred for the teachers who have been trying to get some kind of discussion going for 14 months. It has not occurred for paramedics who are still at breaking point. It has not occurred for the firefighters who cannot even get people to sit down at a table with them. That has not happened.

What happens when you get an impasse? A premier does step in. Previous premiers have stepped in and they do not step in and say 'I am here to listen but I am not actually going to hear anything you say. I am still going to put the same offer on the table that was drafted up before I even bothered meeting with you, because I have not actually understood what you have said, I have no intention of resolving this. I have simply wanted a media release that says I have sat down and met with you'.

That is not what previous premiers did. You can go back and have a look at previous premiers who have gone in and actually addressed the impasse and got a negotiated agreement, because they know how to do their job. It is quite clear, looking at the front bench on the other side of this parliament, that they do not know how to do their job. They do not know how to negotiate directly with the workforce and the Government has no idea how to get themselves out of this mess, because they do not understand good faith negotiations.

They do not understand that good faith negotiations actually mean not only saying those words, but actually having a genuine understanding of what is on the table and a genuine desire to resolve the issue. It is a bit like when the Government stands in here today and says 'oh, public servants, we love you so much and we thank you so much'. They are really tired of hearing that phrase, that you thank them, because we all know that words that are not backed up by actions mean nothing. You can thank them as much as you want but if you treat them with the disdain and the disregard that you have been treating them, you are going to get what we have been watching over the last few months.

It has been unprecedented and I have been around for a little while. I am really old, I get that, I have been around for a while. I have been through industrial negotiations, I have been through protests on both sides and I have never seen the action that has taken place in the last few months.

We had all of our nurses across the state walking out, trying to maintain safe staffing ratios, walking out the door because they were so desperate to have this Government listen to their concerns. Do you know what their industrial action was with the paramedics? It was not to withdraw labour. It was to knock off on time because not one of them I spoke to could remember the last time they were able to knock off on time. They sit there on the hospital ramps for hours, watching their patients not being transitioned into the hospital; they sit there on occasion watching their patients die. That is what they deal with and that is what they are calling out for. The negotiations are about wages and those safe conditions.

When something goes wrong we actually expect firefighters not only to run in to help us, but we expect them to run into flames. We do not have their back, do we? They are the worst paid in the country and are genuinely concerned about the conditions they operate under. This Government does not care and does not want to talk wages or conditions.

Child safety workers - in the climate we have had recently with some of the most horrific stories being aired, governments for some time have neglected the most vulnerable people in our community. We are ignoring the voices of those workers who want to take care of them and want to do a good job. The people you are ignoring at the moment, who are taking industrial action, want wages that keep pace with the cost of living because they have to make ends meet. They do not do this for dedication alone. Dedication does not pay your mortgage or your power bill. They want conditions that keep them safe.

Workers' compensation claims around this state are skyrocketing as workers are being put in unsafe positions, working too hard, becoming too stressed, not being able to cope and not being on the job. Ten per cent of our police force is not on the job today for workers compensation, and that is not including those who are on other kinds of leave.

Workers want to be able to provide the best service to the public. They are in the public service because they believe in it, believe in providing healthcare and good education frameworks. That is what you missed when you did not come out on the rally today. You missed teachers talking about their inability to provide the educational systems that they know they need to do. They talked about the guilt of coming to a rally being outweighed by the guilt they feel every day because they let kids go home without the best educational outcome, because you failed them. You as a Government, failed them.

When we talk about wage negotiations and you fail to talk about conditions and fail to understand retention, you fail to understand recruitment, you are failing all of Tasmania, because public servants matter far more than you get.

Time expired.

[11.55 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, what a sight outside on the lawns of parliament. Thousands of teachers, educators, school support staff, and members of other unions. For teachers and people who work in schools to take industrial action, which leads to the closure of 195 schools, is a huge step and stop work actions are always a last resort.

I implore the Premier and the Education minister, who is so often 'out to lunch', to understand what is happening here. If you have thousands of people who dedicate their lives to our children's learning walking off the job it means that they have reached the end of their tether. The mood in that crowd this morning was one of frustration and fury; a feeling of being undervalued. We were told teachers are burnt out.

We had educators speak this morning and, overwhelmingly, what we heard is a dedication to learning, a deep frustration at feeling undervalued and, in fact, a guilt. Feeling guilty because they have been pushed to the point of stop-work action. Tasmanian educators are the lowest paid in the country. The teachers' assistants who make it possible for teachers to reach their class and make sure all are getting the education they need, are only paid for 40 weeks a year. During the holidays, they are discarded and the Government and the department of Education know that invariably those teachers' assistants and support staff will come back, through a commitment to those kids. We have educators, teachers' assistants, working in our schools on close to the minimum wage and these are the people in whom we rightly trust to teach our children.

Across the state, we have simmering rage in nearly every sector of the essential service. A deep feeling of being unheard and undervalued. If it was just school staff striking, that would be one thing. We have teachers, nurses, paramedics, firefighters, and child safety officers across the state. In core essential services we have workers who have said enough.

I know there are people in Government who like to learn things the hard way. I am telling the Treasurer, you will learn the hard way that, if you do not sit down and negotiate in genuine good faith over pay and conditions, you will lose this fight. You cannot come up against that strength of commitment from public sector workers and win, whatever your paradigm for winning is, in this situation. We just had the Treasurer tell us that the Opposition and the Greens are presenting a false choice to Government over giving essential services workers fair pay and conditions and forking \$400 million or so on a stadium.

We are not stupid. We understand the difference between capital and recurrent funding, but it is a choice this Government is making to spend around \$400 million on a stadium we do not need. What that says to the people we rely on every day, who hold the social fabric of this island together, is that this government's priorities are warped. You cannot make an argument that the state needs another stadium while you will not come to the table and negotiate in good faith.

The Australian Education Union has been seeking some sort of resolution for 14 months. The first thing they want is actual good faith, and they are not getting it. We heard this morning of a pay offer over four years: 3 per cent in the first year, 3 per cent the second year, 2.5 per cent the third year and 2.5 per cent the fourth year. That does not even match inflation, which means that what the Government is offering teachers is a pay cut.

It is on this Government that we have simmering industrial chaos. If you want to understand the world of difference in perception, the Education minister was up here this morning blaming teachers, blaming the Australian Education Union, for today's action. Those good people who go into schools and learning facilities every day across this state, underpaid and under-supported in their classrooms, are copping the blame because this Government cannot negotiate in good faith. I have no doubt at all, Mr Speaker, that they will try to tell Tasmanian parents that this is on the teachers and the union that represents them, which would be a terribly bad-faith statement, because surely the Treasurer knows that for teachers and support staff to walk off the job is a huge step. It is not one that is ever taken lightly.

The strength of that crowd this morning, the unity, was inspiring. The Treasurer needs to take some control of this.

Time expired.

[12.02 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to confirm that the Tasmanian Government is committed to negotiating with all unions in good faith and delivering wage increases for our workforce. For the Opposition to suggest that this Government is prioritising our capital projects - such as a stadium as part of a sports, entertainment and arts precinct that will be economically transformative - over essential services is just ridiculous.

To be very clear, health is being prioritised by this Government. We are investing record funding of over \$11.2 billion over four years, which is \$7.25 million per day on average spent on health, making up a third of the Budget's total operating expenditure. To compare that, previously, under the Labor-Greens government, it was only 28 per cent. This Government has recruited more than 1500 FTE Health staff since July 2020, and spent \$475 million over 10 years on digital health infrastructure. We have invested \$196.4 million over four years in elective surgery planning and provided \$370 million since elected on mental health. We also have a \$1.5 billion health infrastructure pipeline to deliver better facilities right across our state.

Education is being prioritised by this Government. We have increased teacher numbers by 435 FTEs since 2014. We have invested \$8.5 billion over four years, included \$250 million in infrastructure investment for new and upgraded schools, as well as over \$100 million to transform TasTAFE with 100 extra teachers, and I know in my electorate of Bass we cannot wait for the new school at Legana to come on line, and the upgrades to Exeter will be fantastic.

Housing is being prioritised by this Government. We are investing \$1.5 billion over 10 years, with 10 000 more social and affordable homes or units to be delivered by 2032. In fact, and this is a point that is often overlooked and not referred to by the Opposition, Tasmania has the highest expenditure of all states for housing and homelessness. Police and community safety are also being prioritised. Under this Government there are 329 additional police officers, an increase of 31 per cent by 2026, with the force having its highest ever establishment of 1368 members.

For the Opposition to even remotely suggest that this Government is not backing essential services and the people who are behind these services is not only wrong, it is ironic. Under Labor and the Greens, the economy went backwards. People left the state in droves - it is a fact - business confidence was low and 10 000 jobs were lost.

Mr Winter interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, your members were heard in silence.

Mr WOOD - Good, honest, hardworking families, small family businesses, went to the wall, we would all know of them, and it was just dreadful. As a result, investment in public services was well under the levels of government. Wards were closed, beds were locked up and they sacked a nurse a day for nine months. I remember seeing in the top floor of a very prominent building in Launceston, at the bottom of the southern outlet, a sea of hospital beds that had been removed from the LGH and goodness knows what other hospitals, all being stored, all gathering dust, no patients could use them, so we all know how dreadful Labor's track record is on health. That is the Labor-Greens record, one not to be proud of.

Our record, in contrast, speaks for itself. When it comes to negotiating in good faith, our Government is prepared to work collaboratively on the resolution to these wage negotiations.

Matter noted.

LAND USE PLANNING AND APPROVALS AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 29)

Second Reading

Continued from 27 September 2022 (page 98).

[12.08 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I would like to say a few words in support of this amendment bill and in support of our major projects assessment process. Major projects is the new comprehensive integrated assessment process that this Government developed to replace the inadequate and unused projects of regional significance process. Major projects has already been successfully used, and on 18 May it was used by the new Bridgewater Bridge project. It was granted a major project permit by the independent expert panel appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. From declaration to granting of the permit, the new, exciting Bridgewater Bridge assessment only took 17 months to complete, and this includes six months for the Department of State Growth's project team to prepare and lodge the final major project impact statement. I believe that is quicker than a subdivision application gets approved in Kingborough.

Works have now commenced on what, at \$786 million, will be the largest transport infrastructure project in our state's history. I think it is only fitting, even though I am a northerner, that the northern gateway to Hobart, the capital, is upgraded from what it is, so I am really looking forward to that coming on line.

North East Wind has been declared as the second major project. This is a proposal for a 210-turbine wind farm at two locations in my electorate of Bass within the Dorset municipality,

at Rushy Lagoon, and Waterhouse. It is just the type of large-scale, complex proposal that our major projects assessment process was developed for. If approved, the wind farm would have a generation capacity of up to 1260 megawatts and have an estimated construction value of \$2.7 billion. It would provide significant and much needed opportunities for employment in the Dorset area, generating up to 400 jobs during the peak construction, and up to 65 jobs ongoing. What an economic boost that would be to that beautiful rural community.

While the new Bridgewater bridge assessment went well and we are very pleased with the outcome, we are a government that always seeks to do better. That is why, following the assessment of the new Bridgewater bridge, feedback was sought from the project team, commissioned staff, the statutory regulators and also from the community through the submissions that were made during the public consultation process. The result is the amendment bill we have here in front of us today - a bill that proposes discreet and sensible changes to make good process even better.

This amendment bill responds to the increasing use of 'design and construct' procurement processes for large-scale infrastructure projects which can often result in adjustments to the design, or variations along the way. It acknowledges that there are often unanticipated matters that can arise once ground surveys are undertaken, regulator advice is considered, or through the public consultation process. A proposed building footprint or height may be increased or reduced, alignments can be changed, an off-ramp or access road may be reconfigured. A wind turbine or solar array may be relocated or an additional area of land may be required. These things happen as a standard matter of course, and the development proposal remains essentially the same.

This amendment bill, therefore, establishes a new middle-ground process for amending a project area or a project permit that retains all the checks and balances but does not necessarily require an assessment to begin all over again, and that is a very good thing. It provides an appropriate level of scrutiny and assessment relative to the scale of the proposed amendment and at the discretion of the panel and regulators.

This amendment bill also addresses an important issue in regard to Aboriginal heritage. This is an issue that was not picked up during three rounds of public consultation on the original Major Projects bill, or during the debate in either House. It was only recognised during the panel's preparation of the initial Bridgewater bridge assessment report. Under the current process, project documents are required to be publicly released at various stages. At any of these times, these documents could publicly identify the precise location of our valued Aboriginal heritage. This is information which, in the wrong hands, could potentially lead to the destruction of these highly valued and sensitive sites or relics. This bill proposes to align the major projects process with the standard processes of Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, and remove the requirement to publicly display sensitive information.

The other changes the bill proposes are quite straightforward and administrative. They include:

- allowing for project documents to be shared electronically, not just hard copies.
- allowing for early site investigations and surveys to be undertaken at the discretion of the relevant regulator.

- allowing additional time for the panel to prepare the assessment criteria and the initial assessment report where required.
- providing a process to rectify minor errors in process such as missing notification time frames.

The major projects process has been road tested. Its independence, rigour and effectiveness has been proven.

All we are doing today with this amendment bill is taking the informed advice from those who have used the major projects process - our Bridgewater bridge project team, commissioned staff, statutory regulators - and engaged in the community to make some small, sensible administrative improvements to the process. That is a very logical and practical way to step forward as we seek to put the systems in place to best benefit our wonderful state.

[12.16 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I appreciate the support from my colleague in Bass, Mr Wood, particularly for his comments on the North East Wind Farm which has been declared a major project to be considered through the process. I would like to say in broad terms, thank you to all the other speakers: Ms Dow, on behalf of the Labor Party; and Dr Woodruff, on behalf of the Greens. There were a few grizzles on the way through but I think what I heard is each party is supporting the bill. I am always grateful for that but typical of the Opposition, they had to find a few things to have a grizzle about. I will respond to those and demolish those arguments on the way through.

Ms Dow indicated support for the legislation and made an unusual criticism that only one major project has been approved under this new legislation, which has been in place for a very short period of time. I am delighted with the result so far of the legislation, which was taken through our House and through this parliament by the former minister, Roger Jaensch. He did an excellent job.

It dealt once and for all with the simple fact that the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 had a completely dysfunctional section in there about projects of regional significance. It was unworkable and that has been a barrier for major projects for the entirety of the time that that has been provided for in the previous version of the act. It should be celebrated.

The Bridgewater bridge, Tasmania's largest infrastructure project, is underway at last. Tasmania has been talking about that project since the 1990s. John Howard provided the funding for it in 1998 and the then Labor Government could not get around to building it. We had to start the whole thing again. That project received its entire project permit in a year of lodging through the major project declaration process. It was a phenomenal outcome. I can only speak well, not only of the legislation but of my own project team in State Growth who worked diligently and professionally through a very complex project, with a whole range of challenges that have been worked through. It has been excellent.

This bill was tabled in May this year. I want then to use that to deal with the false claim made by at least one speaker, I think it was Ms Dow, that this bill was somehow to help the windfarm or that it was to enable the windfarm proposal for the north-east. That is not right.

Ms DOW - Point of order, Mr Speaker. It had been explained to me during the briefing that this would be used to apply to large-scale projects such as windfarm developments which are technically complex. He is misrepresenting me verbally.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order. You have had an opportunity to present to the bill. The minister is winding up.

Mr FERGUSON - You need to be accountable for the things you say. We each have our opportunity to respond. I am responding to you, Ms Dow.

Ms Dow - But that was not accurate. It was not a slight on you, it was a fact.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Maybe just reflect on the comments that we make and be accountable for them.

This legislation is not project-specific at all. It is not motivated by the North East Wind Farm project either. That is why I had to look back at the date, 24 May. If any member here has been a minister before they would know that it takes some time to go through the policy work and the drafting phase to get a bill to parliament. You cannot do it overnight. I want to scotch that claim and deal with it right up front.

With any future major projects we want to see benefit from this improved set of amendments. That is why we are here. The lessons learned through the Bridgewater bridge as the first client project for the legislation, have materially led to the improvements that we have identified. The State Planning Office should be absolutely praised, not only for the policy work, but also for the public consultation that it, on behalf of the Government, has conducted, not just with local government but right around the state. The feedback, as I outlined in my second reading speech, substantially assisted us to bring forward legislation that really should be embraced and supported. We should not be seeing political points being made on something that we should agree with.

There is nothing to one speaker's comments - I am not sure if it was Dr Woodruff or Ms Dow - that the debate was deficient. In one case we have identified one amendment that nobody caught up with during well-meaning debate through both Houses. This is what happens. You do not just write legislation and then forget about it. You must monitor it. You have to see if it continues to be fit for purpose.

Dr Woodruff - Especially when you rush it through and it has not been consulted. There are no fact sheets and clause notes supplied with the first legislation.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Dr Woodruff, for your wise words. That is why we provide an ongoing monitoring role for legislation. I reject the intent of your interjection because I know what a thorough bill package came to this House in respect of major projects.

Dr Woodruff - No it did not. There were no fact sheets and clause notes. You are being dishonest.

Mr SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, order.

Mr FERGUSON - While we have no current plans to further amend the major projects process, it would be unremarkable if in the future some further lessons were learned or some refinement could be identified. It is the Government's and the parliament's role to make sure that legislation, including for LUPA, remains current and fit for purpose.

We want to ensure a smooth, efficient, and rigorous assessment process which provides fair outcomes for all parties involved. I often describe the major projects legislation - including when Mr Jaensch was promoting it - that it is a better, more streamlined process observing all of the current requirements. I think that that helps a member of the community to quickly come to terms with what is actually provided for with major projects assessments. It is about getting the job done without cutting corners on quality.

These amendments provide improvements to introduce more flexibility into the process. It does not compromise scrutiny, it does not compromise rigour, and it certainly does not compromise comprehensive, independent assessment by the TPC panel. I understand that some submissions on the draft bill refer to matters that were outside the scope of these amendments. We will always keep an open mind and if required consult further on those matters should they be required in the future, if they have merit.

I was asked about why sensitive matters were not included in the original bill. It relates to my earlier arguments about learning lessons from having gone through the brand-new process for the first time. The amendment bill addresses an important issue, which I discussed in great detail during my second reading speech. This is an issue that was not picked up during three rounds of public consultation on the original major projects bill. It also was not picked up during the debate in the House. It was only recognised during the panel's preparation of the initial assessment report for the Bridgewater bridge, which was prepared after exhibition of the major project impact statement for the bridge.

For the benefit of the House, officers from Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania raised this issue with the State Planning Office shortly after the exhibition of the major project impact statement for the bridge requesting that modification be made so that the display of Aboriginal cultural information is aligned with processes in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975, which is withholding the public display of sensitive cultural information.

A question arose asking why was the use of electronic documents not provided in the original bill? It was about making it explicit. It was not previously excluded, but the LUPA Act currently has the mechanism for the sharing of electronic documents, although this is not specifically tailored to the major projects process, and we wanted it to be. This bill simply makes it explicit that the electronic documents can be shared as part of the major projects process. As shown through the last couple of years, the use of digital technology is now common practice; more and more people are more comfortable with the use of technology and the bill reflects this.

I will make one point about the Bridgewater bridge. There was a responsibility to get information to large numbers of people of a very voluminous nature. For most people hundreds of pages of documentation is unwieldy. It is also impracticable for a proponent to be able to generate that volume of material if you cannot use electronic means. It is providing a more explicit provision for it as part of the major projects process. As I also went into some detail

in my second reading speech, for those with limited access or who are uncomfortable with digital technology, there is no problem. Hard copies of all documents can still be provided to ensure there is fair engagement with the process so that nobody is left behind.

There was a question around landowners applying for normal planning permits. The amendment bill clarifies that landowners within a declared project area who are not developing a major project can still seek other planning permits for use and development on their land from the relevant authorities. This is as opposed to not being able to develop their land at all. The intent of the bill is to clarify that once a major project has been declared, the proponent can only use the major projects assessment process to gain approval for their major project, and they cannot use other planning processes at the same time as the major project assessment process is running.

Some examples where landowners might seek normal planning permits could be a farmer seeking planning approval for a large farm shed on land that has been declared for consideration of a windfarm, or a landowner seeking approval for an addition to their home on land that has been declared for a major highway realignment, where maybe both can coexist quite comfortably, but there is an expectation that major project proponents will resolve any potential conflicts with landowners during early negotiations to make use of the land.

I was asked how the enforcement process will work. Currently under section 48AA of the LUPA Act, planning authorities are required to enforce conditions on a major project permit. Enforcement of planning permits is the normal role of councils in their quite well known role as planning authorities, and the enforcement of a major project permit is no different. Currently under the LUPA Act the assessment panel must specify on the major project permit who is responsible for the enforcement of the conditions on the major project permit.

The amendment bill recognises that some of these conditions are better managed by the commission where they relate to implementation of the major project and accordingly, provides for the commission to issue a completion certificate once they are satisfied the major project is complete. At the same time, the commission then issues an enforcement certificate to the relevant planning authority. In regard to these types of conditions, the amendment bill reduces the workload on planning authorities and makes it clearer.

These actions are about providing clarity and certainty to planning authorities about which conditions on the major project that the planning authority is required to enforce, such as conditions relating to the ongoing use of the site. The completion certificate also switches off the restriction under section 60S of the LUPA Act in relation to the proponent and any further development of the site. Also, the relevant regulators for Aboriginal Heritage and threatened species have an ongoing role to enforce any conditions on the major project permit that relate to their matters, even after the enforcement certificate has been issued.

I was asked about how the permits work for preliminary studies. When the need for preliminary studies are required, the proponent identifies them in the major project proposal document, stating the reasons why they are required. Once the major project is declared, the proponent can request the commission, the panel or a relevant regulator for a permit to then undertake preliminary investigations, where those investigations are not exempt under the LUPA Act or a project-associated act. The commission, panel or relevant regulator can issue a permit with conditions or restrictions and can also refuse to issue the permit if it is considered

it is more appropriate to wait until the assessment criteria have been determined. The bill simply allows for a permit to be granted for investigations that are only restricted by the declaration of the major project to enable that to occur.

I was asked about what a small area means, and that has been a discussion by a number of us, including the minister, in briefings on this and the best way to move forward in this area. My advice was very strongly that the area is not expressed in quantitative terms such as 5, 10 or 20 per cent of the existing declared area, because this can result in arbitrary or perverse outcomes, where more qualitative judgment by the independent assessment panel or the commission is appropriate to make that judgment in forming their views, as they do throughout the assessment and permit process.

For instance, if the additional area of land had been set at 10 per cent of the declared area but a proponent quite reasonably needed 11 per cent, the request would not be able to be considered at all, even though the impacts potentially of adding 11 per cent of the declared area would be the same. I dealt with this in detail in my second reading speech: the minister must receive this advice. When advising the minister, whether it is appropriate to amend the declared project area, the assessment panel or the commission must consider whether the additional area of land is small relative to the overall declared project area. It is sufficiently robust while having the sufficient flexibility.

The area of land to be added must be considered within the context of the broader defined project area and must also be required to achieve the objectives of the project. During the second reading speech I talked about how you might want to expand the project area in order to deal with some concerns that might have emerged, and we need the vehicle to be able to do that. The minister cannot amend the declared area without receiving that advice that I referred to from the assessment panel or the commission that it is appropriate, so there is a self-regulated protection built within the proposed amendments.

Some examples of circumstances where the declared area may need to be amended include that after the issue of the major project permit, the contractor might identify a more suitable location for an office or amenity facilities required for a project during the construction phase; or other than the erection of the temporary office and amenity facilities, no other works are required to use the land for its intended purpose; however, the land is located outside the declared area, so we need a mechanism to bring that extra land in, albeit small. It might be small but it will enable the greater good.

The other example is during the preparation of a major project impact statement for a proposed wind farm, it might become apparent that to best manage potential impacts of onsite features, it would be beneficial to make a small change to the location of one of the turbines. Only one turbine requires relocation involving some land that is outside the declared major project area. In both cases the panel or commission would likely determine that the area was small. However, the panel or commission would need to consider the opinions of notifiable persons and advice of the regulators and determine that the additional land would not be ineligible for declaration under section 60N of the act before it can recommend to the minister to amend the declaration to include the additional land.

As I wind up my summing up, I want to briefly respond to some of the more general comments about our planning system reforms made by Ms Dow in her contribution yesterday. There are now 15 councils, including some of our smallest, least resourced councils like West

Coast, Flinders and Tasman that have their local provision schedules approved and there are six more due by the end of this year. At that point there will only be a small number of stragglers and even they should all be in place by the middle of 2023. Since the state planning provisions were made in 2017, the Government has consistently supported councils with their responsibilities in the preparation of their local provisions schedules, which should basically have been a translation and mapping exercise.

Some councils have been standout performances, like Burnie City Council, Ms Dow. Burnie was very proactive and right on the job, got on with it. I think they were the first one through the gate. Other councils, like your next-door neighbour, Ms Dow, Mr Winter with Kingborough Council, are still well behind the pack. They are both big councils, quite well-resourced, with mature planning offices within them.

The difference illustrates that the Government has performed its role and now it is about supporting councils to get on with it. We issued guidelines under section 8A of LUPA to assist councils in applying the zones and codes of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. The Tasmanian Planning Commission and the State Planning Office have worked closely with a number of councils, including providing drafting assistance and guidance, as well as funding from the Government to support the preparation of GIS mapping.

Recently, the State Planning Office provided additional financial support of about \$170 000 to some of the smaller councils such as Latrobe, Kentish, Derwent Valley, Huon Valley and King Island to enable them to finalise their local provisions schedules.

Mr Winter - Do you know what is happening in the Huon Valley tonight?

Mr FERGUSON - I am not sure what you are trying to say, Mr Winter, only that I think you belong, as a former mayor, to Kingborough Council. While there are councils like Burnie and Devonport that took a really proactive and strong approach to the task and have had their LPS in effect for over two years and 18 months respectively, there are a few who, disappointingly, have made it harder for themselves than they needed to. They have a role and a choice to do that. It would be great to see them all through the gate. That is what I will continue to encourage to occur.

Even though the TPS is now in place for those more than 15 and the additional ones by the end of the year and some councils do not have the TPS in place in their local area, we are starting to see the real benefits of more consistent planning rules.

Mr Winter - Where?

Mr FERGUSON - I am glad you asked, Mr Winter. That may be your most positive contribution to this debate so far. Since we introduced PD4.1 planning directive, uniform standards for residential development in the general residential zone have been in effect in every planning scheme in our state, and single-dwellings that meet all acceptable solutions do not require a planning permit at all. They are simply signed off by private certifiers or councils. In some cases as quickly as a couple of days.

The evidence is there to be enjoyed. As we go through the building boom, with thousands of people now successfully getting on with their building projects, whether it is their new home, their dream home, or an extension to their home, they are benefiting from that. Let me give

you an illustration to Mr Winter's question. The latest data shows that in 2020-21 there were over 1800 single-dwellings signed off as no permit required. That is a very good demonstration of the progress that has been reached. The members opposite do not give enough credit to the improvements that that demonstrates clearly and objectively.

The 2020-21 data shows us that the Tasmanian planning system is among the fastest, the most efficient in the country and discretionary applications are being determined in an average of 38 days and permitted in an average of 19 days. What is impressive is that Burnie City Council, which was operating under the TPS for the entirety of that financial year that I have referred to, managed to approve discretionary applications in a better time frame - an average of 28 days and permitted applications in an average of five days. Go those councils that have been so proactive to get into the Tasmanian Planning Scheme with the LPS for their planning authority area.

I hope the House finds that useful, because that demonstrates the real benefits being experienced by builders and by home owners.

In terms of strategic planning, a suite of Tasmanian planning policies is currently on public exhibition prior to their submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission for consideration. Soon these will be in place providing the high-level strategic oversight and policies and principles that our planning system needs and which I remember discussing extensively at the Budget Estimates table.

As part of our commitment to the review of Regional Land Use Strategies, this significant work is now underway to undertake strategic planning studies, land supply and demand analysis and develop structure plans.

These are things that the previous government could barely have dreamed of. It did not do it. Over the past two years we have also made a number of amendments to the three regional land use strategies to implement improvements, facilitate sustainable growth and keep them up to date. There is a lot more to come.

The question did arise about supporting councils. We provided about \$1.2 million to councils across the three regions. This includes funding for regional coordinator positions which have been embraced in those regions to project manage the Regional Land Use Strategy reviews for their local area.

The State Planning Office is currently working with councils across the state on a further \$700 000 worth of support for projects and resources and has been working with the councils in the three regions to identify any updates necessary to their Regional Land Use Strategies while the comprehensive review takes place. I have been involved in some of those conversations and people are very supportive and very grateful for it. I will bring the House back to look at the material improvements in the approvals process and those that did not even need to get a formal planning permit.

As I conclude, it is good to see the progress that we are making in planning. It is a bit rich for members opposite to have a whinge and a complain on the way through. They have not tried to make any of this any easier, but their grizzling shows that they have not done the work. They do not have any alternative plan. The reality is, and the record shows, that Labor spent well over a decade, quote unquote, on planning reform.

Labor started with 30 different planning schemes. Guess how many they finished with? They finished with 30 again. They started with no planning policies and they finished with no planning policies. It has been shown by the bill and the debate that we have seen unfold today and yesterday, the Government is totally committed to everyday continual improvement. We are consistently delivering on our planning reform commitments, which is already delivering positive outcomes for Tasmanians.

The best example of it has to be the Bridgewater bridge. I am thrilled with the process and the way that we are able to progress that. The project of regional significance element of the old LUPA Act was totally dysfunctional. It was not fit for purpose. It has been very important for our state and the future for investor confidence to provide for a fit-for-purpose contemporary model that allows big projects, complex projects, to be carefully and properly assessed with a far more reliable planning system instrument.

It also provides for if a project has no prospect of approval, that information is received early on. This avoids unnecessary wasteful cost and wasteful time but it can deliver a great outcome for our state in as little as one year in the case of the Bridgewater bridge. This demonstrates that the Government has done a superior job. I praise Mr Jaensch for getting it through the parliament. This was made no easier by some members opposite who grizzled. It is delivering outcomes from our state.

I hope that in the future, long after I am no longer Planning minister, it will continue to deliver great outcomes with more major projects being able to get the green light with all of the necessary Aboriginal, environmental and other heritage concerns being thoroughly assessed, considered and mitigated into the future. It sets the state up for a great success.

With those words I close the debate and again thank the Labor Party, the Greens and others, and my own colleagues who support these job-producing and asset-producing major projects amendments.

Bill read the second time.

LAND USE PLANNING AND APPROVALS AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 29)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 6 -
Section 60BA inserted

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, this is an important change to the act and I would like you to talk about the consultation and processes the department went through to formalise the steps that are in here, which Aboriginal community stakeholders were involved in that process, whether they raised it with the department or whether it was another body - a regulator - that raised it. I am asking essentially for some background, because there is quite a lot of specific detail in here. Where did they come from and what community consultation was around it?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, for your patience while I took that advice. My advice is that this is a direct result from lessons learned on the Bridgewater bridge project assessment and information display process. I am advised that Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania initiated the discussion with our team at Planning and, because of the legislation as we have it presently, information was disclosed that was culturally sensitive that it would have been better and we would have preferred not to have happened, and to make our LUPA Act consistent with the Aboriginal Heritage Act, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania initiated this discussion.

Furthermore, through the public consultation process I am advised that the Aboriginal Heritage Council was provided an opportunity to consult or to be consulted on this, but for whatever reason, good or bad, they did not provide a formal response. I emphasise that the amendments make our LUPA Act consistent with the Aboriginal Heritage Act in relation to culturally sensitive information.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, I am satisfied with that. Under proposed new subsubsection 8(d) in relation to TasCAT, sensitive information must not be disclosed during proceedings of TasCAT unless the tribunal has been advised as to whether the information is culturally sensitive or were the information available to members of the public, there might be a risk of harm. Do I take it that this is preventing information about culturally sensitive material to be inadvertently required to be presented to the tribunal without a determination by the tribunal that that information should be provided in a closed court session? In the case of an appeal, I assume there still has to be the capacity to make a considered judgment. I want to clarify or have a conversation about where culturally sensitive material would sit in the matters that a tribunal was considering. I can see there would be problems if they had no capacity to look at that material and make an assessment themselves.

Mr FERGUSON - Dr Woodruff, that is a great question. I remind the House that once a major project permit has been issued it is not appellable. That is part of the process. All matters are being considered and that is not changing in the bill we are looking at today. It is used more in the enforcement process of permit or conditions. As part of the role that TasCAT has in this subsection, it would be enabled to receive and consider information that is sensitive and weigh that up in the process of enforcement considerations, but not publicly display it. It is about the outside environment not being privy to what is sensitive and should be withheld from the public, particularly, for example, the location of objects or something that is precious that might be compromised if its location was well known or the existence of the object itself, but that will not prevent or curtail TasCAT from having that information and being able to consider those matters in their processes of considering enforcement actions.

I hope that satisfies you, Dr Woodruff.

Dr Woodruff - Yes, thank you.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 and 8 agreed to.

Clause 9 -

Section 60F amended (Contents of major project proposal)

Dr WOODRUFF - This amendment relates to the contents of a major project proposal and it provides an additional possibility that a major project proposal may include a statement specifying that one or more preliminary studies specified in the statement may be required to be carried out before assessment criteria are determined and that why each of the preliminary studies is required to be carried out before assessment criteria are determined.

Looking at the act, the contents of a major project proposal are required to contain a whole lot of the following information in relation to the proponent: the proponent's financial capacity; a description of the project; a map of the land; a plan indicating the areas of the land on which development will happen; general description of the physical features of the land and the land in the vicinity; the anticipated effect, if any, on the land or in the vicinity of the project itself; the key environmental health, economic, social, and heritage effects of the project; and, if the effects may be detrimental, what measures will be taken to mitigate those; surveys and studies that are required to be proposed to be undertaken in respect to the project; the timetable of the project; and whether it is bilateral agreement. That is enough for the question I want to ask.

Subsection (a) says 'that one or more preliminary studies, specified in the statement, may be required to be carried out before assessment criteria are determined ...'. I would like to understand a little more clearly what that means in relation to preliminary studies that would need to be undertaken before assessment criteria are determined. I do not see or understand what the time frame is for that part that has been introduced. What time frames would be specified in relation to that?

Mr Ferguson - Could you crystalise that question, please?

Dr WOODRUFF - This enables an additional statement in a major project proposal which can be made by a planning authority, by the minister, or by the proponent. In the proposal there is an additional statement that may specify that one or more preliminary studies are needed to be carried out before the assessment criteria will be determined.

Is that saying that, for example, the planning authority or the minister is saying the major project proposal can only get started in the very beginning if these particular assessment studies are carried out before we can even make a decision, whether it is going to start off the blocks in the first place?

Essentially that is what I am wondering. Are there any time frames in the amendments that we have here around the time for that part of the process, which I think it is introducing a new part of the process.

Debate adjourned.

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

MOTION

Harm Minimisation Strategies for Electronic Gaming Machines

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I move that -

That the House -

- (1) Supports effective measures to minimise the harm caused by gambling, particularly Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMS).
- (2) Notes -
 - (a) the recent, comprehensive investigation of harm minimisation technologies - facial recognition and player card gaming - undertaken by the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission;
 - (b) the Tasmanian Greens called for a mandatory card-based system with pre-commitment features, global expenditure limits, financial assessment for increasing expenditure limits, inbuilt budget tools, mandated break features, eventual expansion to include other gambling products (including online gambling), and examination of gambling-related court diversion programs or other justice system interventions; and
 - (c) that, in response to the recommendations of the Liquor and Gaming Commission, the Rockliff Government has agreed to introduce a mandatory card-based system with pre-commitment features, global expenditure limits, financial assessment for increasing expenditure limits, and mandated break features.
- (3) Acknowledges that while Members may have different views on the precise details of an EGM card-based system, there is much in the new harm minimisation framework that can be agreed on.
- (4) Congratulates Government, and particularly the responsible Minister, the Treasurer, Hon Michael Ferguson MP on commitments made in response to the Liquor and Gaming Commission's report.
- (5) Calls on all Parties and Members to commit to not abolish, or in any way weaken, the harm reduction measures contained within the EGM card-based system, should they form government after the next state election.

Mr Speaker, I indicate that we will be requiring a vote.

For 50 years the gambling industry has dominated politics, society and economy on this island. For any member who has not read James Boyce's seminal book, *Losing Streak: How Tasmania was Gamed by the Gambling Industry*, the sorry history of this industry and its poisoning of our democracy is contained within that excellent book.

The latest gambling losses that have been detailed on the Treasury website show that in July of this year, across the municipalities and in pubs, clubs and casinos, total losses were more than \$17 million and pretty much the same as at August of this year. It is interesting because in the previous months those gambling losses were sitting at around \$14 million and \$15 million. Members know that these are very variable losses influenced by a whole range of factors and they have at times been, for example, up around \$20 million a month which is money which that is coming out of the pockets of disadvantaged people, quite often, and it is taking food off the table of children and families. We are very pleased that Tasmania looks set to lead the nation in harm-minimisation through the introduction of player card gaming technologies and mandatory pre-commitments.

The purpose of this motion is to try to have a unified position come from parties and members in this place that we will not play politics on harm-minimisation because it is too important and that we will stick to this on principle. I can foresee, potentially, that some members in the Opposition will say that what we are trying to do here is to bind a future parliament. No, we are not. It is very clear that what we are trying to do is to ensure that parties and members in here make a commitment about how they will conduct themselves after the next election and particularly if the Labor Opposition wins government.

Before we get on to Labor, I want to briefly touch on the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission report and their recommendations to Government. This is following a direction that was given to them by the Treasurer late last year following the passage of the Future Gaming Markets legislation which embedded in perpetuity poker machines in pubs, clubs and casinos across Tasmania. With the end of the monopoly deed, what Tasmanians have been stuck with is a poker machine and broader gambling framework that will endure for generations, so it is all the more important that we have strong harm minimisation in place.

The Liquor and Gaming Commission undertook a scoping investigation, a feasibility assessment of the technology, the risks, the regulatory impacts, a two-phase consultation process which a number of stakeholders contributed towards, including the Greens, and had a look at some of the research, particularly the research that has been done by the Social and Economic Impact Study in Tasmania over many years now. The commission recommended the implementation of a mandatory registered card for EGMs in all Tasmanian hotels, clubs and casinos. It recommended that the registered card system should operate as follows: require registration to participate for all players with a single card issued to each player with a PIN, and that guest cards can be issued with an expiry date; it needs to be cashless with funds loaded onto cards using cash or debit cards via EFTPOS, only at a cashier desk; and it needs to provide messaging about player activity such as money lost or won and time spent at EGMs.

The commission recommends that pre-commitment functionalities should be mandatory for all players, statewide, and simple to use for all gamblers, and that the system should operate as follows: to prescribe maximum concurrent default loss limits initially set at a daily limit of \$100, monthly limit of \$500, and annual limit of \$5000. These limits should be reviewed after a period of operation with any adjustment informed by the data collected. Players should also have the discretion to set lower loss limits taking effect immediately. Any subsequent increase

up to the default loss limit should take effect after a cooling-off period. Players should be able to apply for higher limits above the default loss limits where they can demonstrate the financial capacity to sustain those losses. When a loss limit is reached, gaming activity will not be allowed until the next default period. Messaging about progress towards limits will be accessible to players, and functionality should be available to implement the settings of player limits for breaks in play and maximum play periods.

The commission recommends that to support effective statewide operation the system should be administered centrally, ideally by the Licensed Monitoring Operator. Perhaps the Treasurer could give us an update on the Licensed Monitoring Operator and who it will be.

Those are the core recommendations from the Liquor and Gaming Commission after conducting some months of review and investigation and making a recommendation to Government. This recommendation is a matter of record and has been accepted by Government, by the Treasurer, and, presumably, by Cabinet.

This reform is nation leading. It is no exaggeration to say that it will save lives. It will save livelihoods. It will make sure kids have food on the table. It will prevent, or help to prevent, individuals and families slipping into poverty or experiencing a mental health crisis. These reforms are critical to the future health and wellbeing of many Tasmanians. While this is obviously a policy that the Greens have been advocating for years, what we want most of all is poker machines out of pubs and clubs.

This is evidence-based policy that, in one way, is very conservative - a very conservative policy approach that recognises that you have established a new gaming framework, but there needs to be rigour around the regulations that minimise human harm. It should not be contentious. We are elected to this place ostensibly to do the right thing and supporting this reform is the right thing to do. I am sorry if our praise of the Treasurer has caused him any discomfort, but the Treasurer knows we are not lavish with praise, but when someone does the right thing, we want to name it up.

Following the decision of the Government to accept the Gaming Commission's recommendations - and I might add, in our submission to the Gaming Commission of May this year, we recommended a mandatory card system as the only system under the terms of reference for this review that will likely provide any appreciable reduction in gambling harms caused by EGMs. That was also our core recommendation, but we saw a hissy-fit for the ages from the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, an organisation that has been used to getting its way, cajoling or coercing political parties and their representatives into doing the industry's will for the best part of 50 years. Steve Old put out a media release, the likes of which I have never seen before, and I will read some of the choice bits:

Gaming Reform

Lies, lies and more lies. The Rockliff Liberal Government and Michael Ferguson have failed Tasmanians.

Well, there is a lie, because what the Rockliff Government and Mr Ferguson have done is listen to the evidence and the independent experts and commit to a policy that will actually do better by the people of Tasmania who have been shafted by this industry for 50 years. Mr Old feels it is necessary to remind Government and anyone who read this about the THA's

role in the 2018 state election. Mr Old points to the Liberal Government's Future of Gaming in Tasmania policy and says:

One of the key objectives of this policy was to offer Tasmanians freedom of choice and better protection from harm for those that need it.

Mr Speaker, that is what is being delivered; that is exactly what this reform will deliver. No-one is taking away freedom of choice other than the freedom to lose your entire weekly income in one fell swoop at the machines. We have another quote from Mr Old:

Tasmanians entrusted the Liberal Government at the 2018 election with their vote because they supported freedom and choice. Freedom and choice have been sacrificed by the Rockliff Liberal Government at the expense of a fair go.

Give us a break. Being lectured about a fair go from the likes of Mr Old, who oversaw millions of dollars in industry donations going into both the Liberal and Labor parties for many, many years. Mr Old secretly stitched up a memorandum of understanding with the Labor Opposition and chortled about it during the 2020-21 election campaign when he slapped his back pocket and told Tasmanians that is where he had Labor. Mr Old would not know the first thing about giving battling Tasmanians a fair go.

Dr Woodruff - Neither would Labor.

Ms O'CONNOR - That remains to be seen but that is a fair point. It remains to be seen how Labor responds to this motion. In a complete distortion of the facts around problem gambling, which is a problematic definition in itself, Mr Old says about Government:

Their own statistics confirm 0.4 per cent of people have a problem with all forms of gambling. Today's Orwellian announcement confirms the Liberal Government does not trust 99.6 per cent of Tasmanians.

Mr Speaker, with respect, what a load of crap.

In James Boyce's book on page 6, when he talks about who is losing money on poker machines in pubs and clubs around Tasmania and casinos, he says:

Research commissioned by the Tasmanian Government found that the majority of people in a pokies lounge at any time are likely to be clinically defined problem gamblers, and that people experiencing negative impacts from their gambling account for about half of poker machine expenditure. In other words, pokies addicts are not just customers of Tasmania's gambling industry; they are its core business.

We know that the industry received a massive windfall gain as a result of the new arrangement. There is not a single poker machine controller in this state who is battling to pay their bills and even with this framework in place that industry will be regrettably profitable. I commend members who have not read the Government's response to the Liquor and Gaming Commission Report to do so - it is instructive and refreshingly absent of spin.

The announcement was made, I believe on 15 September, and days passed. The sector that deals with the human fallout of gambling addiction warmly endorsed the Government's approach. Many Tasmanians from all walks of life have looked at this and actually looked for the catch. I have spoken to plenty of people who heard the news and felt this uplifting of hope and then told themselves there must be something more to it, there must be a catch here, but as far as we can identify there is no catch, just a commitment to nation-leading reform.

Multiple stakeholders came out and expressed their appreciation for the work of the Liquor and Gaming Commission, an independent body, about the fact that we had a government that was prepared to do the right thing on this issue. Day after day, following that announcement, what we got from Labor was silence, ducking and weaving. The same Labor Party that during debate on that odious bill last year which, let us not forget they supported, committed as policy to card-based play and precommitment. They made all the right noises about harm minimisation.

The member for Bass, Ms Finlay, unfortunately is not in the Chamber today because she perhaps could have clarified what happened here, but on 19 September journalists thought they had better get a straight answer out of the Opposition on this issue, so the question was put to Ms Finlay whether Labor supported the card-based scheme under which poker machine users would have to set bet limits before they started gambling. The ABC reports Ms Finlay initially appeared unsure of what to say and, when pressed again, took advice before returning to answer the question. She admitted - and we like honesty from politicians - this is not a Tasmanian Labor failing at the moment, it is me - and I suspect it is a bit of both really. She went off to get some advice and came back and said:

Tasmanian Labor are really clear. We have always supported harm minimisation and in fact we were advocates for card-based play.

This is true. She continued:

We want to really understand the report, understand what is going to be implemented and make sure that the minister who has made this announcement will actually follow through.

That is a very interesting statement. You might have expected, if Labor was so keen to know that the minister would follow through, that they might ask him a question in question time this week. They do have seven questions, but no, so they were not actually that committed to making sure the minister followed through. That is part of the reason we have brought our motion forward. We want the House to be unified and resolved that it will support genuine harm minimisation.

Ms Finlay was also unable to say whether an agreement between Labor and the Tasmanian Hospitality Association on pokies remained in place. Ms White went on radio later in the day and said the party is not struggling with pokies policy. The Opposition Leader said:

We have always supported improving harm minimisation. What we have said is that we are going to take the time to read that report and to understand the detail of how it will be implemented.

The party later clarified to journalists that there was no current agreement with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and that the party would develop its position on the precommitment scheme after reading the relevant documents. Well, two weeks after the announcement, Labor has had time to read the relevant documents which, I remind the House, are not a strain to read. They could have read them on 15 September, as we did.

Mr Winter - We did.

Ms O'CONNOR - You did? Then why didn't you have a position four days later?

Mr Winter - Every day we answer questions about this.

Ms O'CONNOR - The Liquor and Gaming Commission report is 26 pages long. We have read legislation that is about that long and sometimes you are only given a few hours to digest it. The Government's response is about six pages long and it is dot points, so it is pretty digestible.

The secret memorandum of understanding between the THA and Tasmanian Labor was signed on 22 February 2021. No Tasmanian during the last election campaign when it began knew about this secret MOU. It was exposed by a journalist and by the Greens. This MOU between Steve Old, Labor Leader Rebecca White and then shadow treasurer, David O'Byrne - the one that Steve Old gloatingly told media was in his back pocket along with the entire Labor Party - includes a couple of very important clauses:

To agree to work together on the development of potential viable harm-minimisation measures for gaming products while also agreeing that any measures need to be workable for industry.

The duration of the MOU is a question that needs to be answered by the Labor leader. On the one hand you have the party - whoever that spokesperson was for the party at the time - telling the journalist there is no MOU in place. Then you have here in black and white, red and blue, an MOU that says in its final clause on duration:

This MOU starts from the day of signing and will be in place until the signing of any new agreement between both parties.

Does the Labor Opposition currently have an agreement with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association?

Mr Winter - No.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Winter says no, there is no MOU in place. It actually pleases me very much, but the MOU is really clear that it stays in place until there is another one. So, have you signed another one? Are there negotiations for another one?

Mr Winter - There is no - I will stand up in a minute and say. I am sorry to disappoint you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, that is very good. You do not understand that we do not think like you. You think that we would be unhappy that you do not have an MOU with the pokies

barons. We are actually very pleased because it means that this policy might get a fair chance and some clear air.

We have, from 21 September -

Mr Winter - You have spent more time on Labor than the Government so far.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Winter is worried because he says we are spending more time talking about the Labor Opposition than we are the Government. We are talking about the policy, and the politics around the policy, and the question mark on the politics sits over Labor's head.

From 21 September, which is six days after the Treasurer announced the policy, we have a media release from Labor which is one of the most mealy-mouthed efforts. Great news, Labor will not stand in the way of a new gaming policy. Language is very important. That is a very qualified statement from the Labor Opposition. It does not say Labor will back, Labor will support, Labor acknowledges the merit of. It does not say any of that. It just says Labor will not stand in the way. The question that came into my mind straight away was, for how long? Is it 'Labor will not stand in the way' for now? Is it 'Labor will not stand in the way' until it signs a new MOU with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association? How would we know? As Dr Woodruff said, the last one was negotiated and signed in secret.

The statement from Mr Winter, the shadow minister for finance, in this media release says:

The legislation Labor supported through the parliament last year has ultimately led to this announcement and we remain committed to the position we took at that time.

There was ambiguity about Labor's position. It was a broad statement about advocating for card-based play and a broad statement about supporting effective harm minimisation. Remember, at the time that that debate was happening it is our understanding that the MOU was still in place, which required Labor to make sure that industry gave their harm-minimisation policies the tick.

In winding up, because I want to hear from the Treasurer and Mr Winter, our motion is on the books. I will reinforce the last paragraph. Part 5:

Calls on all Parties and Members to commit to not abolish or in any way weaken the harm-reduction measures contained within the EGM card-based system should they form Government after the next state election.

We are not seeking to bind a parliament. We are seeking commitments from political parties - members of parliament. There is a very important difference here. Every time we put out an alternative budget, we are making a commitment about the things we would do if we were in government. I know it is a slightly tired statement but we never see a budget position statement from Labor. This is not about binding a parliament. All the time, political parties make commitments about their policies, their positions and their values. That has nothing to do with binding a future parliament.

I will remind the House that the monopoly deed, stitched up initially by the Liberals in 1993 and then extended by the Labor Party in 2002-03, bound successive parliaments. That locked this island into decades of misery in pubs and clubs across this state.

I will never forget the Kids Come First data set when we were in government. It was an excellent data set and it showed a very precise correlation between the location of poker machines in communities, child abuse and neglect - a very precise correlation. We know that these machines are addictive and they can be lethal. Australia has the most addictive, high-powered EGMs anywhere in the world. That makes the work of us, as legislators and policy makers, when we are looking at harm minimisation, ever so important. We have all met people who have been afflicted by poker machines. We have all watched people weep because these machines have had them in their grip.

We can accept the world the way it is sometimes, rather than the way we want it to be. We accept that there is a gaming market framework in place that will leave poker machines in pubs and clubs for generations. That is what makes effective harm minimisation so important. We are hoping very much that all parties in here will commit to maintaining these measures. It is the advice of the independent experts at the Liquor and Gaming Commission and we should be listening to it and acting on it.

I commend the motion to the House.

[2.58 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her motion. I am happy to speak to it. The Liberal Government supports the motion subject to some housekeeping and amendments that I have circulated around the Chamber. One member has asked me to include the word 'and members' which I have pen-marked on my version which deals with commitments that were made in the debate that happened in this House last October.

Being mindful of the time, I will do my best to allow plenty of time for other speakers. This is a very important crossroad that the parliament has reached. It was set down for us to reach this crossroad last October where, standing where I am right now 11 months ago, I made a very sincere commitment that we would explore as part of our future gaming market reforms a contemporary harm-reduction framework, including pre-commitment.

I and the team I am a part of were very committed at that point. We just did not have the advice about how such a scheme would best work in Tasmania, or whether it would work at all. There had been a lot of talk about dollar bet limits or other bet limits, spin speeds, opening hours - various other, if I can put it this way, tactical ideas that would deal with the very real problem of gambling harm by people who are addicted to pokies. We were very clear that those were tactical responses we did not support at that time. I have stood here for hours and talked about what really is going to help people is a genuine precommitment scheme. I laid out a path because, as part of our debate, right at the front of that second reading speech, I wanted to make it clear that our Government - under then premier Gutwein and subsequently under Premier Rockliff - wanted to make sure that we delivered faithfully the Future Gaming Market reforms we had taken to the 2018 election and that bill certainly achieved that.

In summary, it broke the federal monopoly once and for all. It moved our framework to a venue operator model. It saw a significant increase in profit share for venues, whether they were pubs and clubs. It saw an increase to the Community Support Levy to allow us to provide

even more support in the community and it allowed people to continue to have the choice. If I can put it this way, that really was the dividing line between the major parties in the 2018 election. The thing that most defined our different positions on gaming was that election. The Labor Party at that election took a view that pubs and clubs should not be allowed to have EGMs beyond the expiry of the deed on 30 June 2023. The Liberal Party took the view that it was about freedom of choice and that consumers can decide whether they would have that ability to game in pubs and clubs as well as casinos, and that is the policy we took to that election.

When it came to bringing in the legislation, I made a further commitment that we would explore facial recognition cameras and software, particularly with a view to see whether there was any advice or evidence that it could help with the enforcement of the self-exclusion scheme; the second was a move to player-card gaming, moving to cashless which, of course, industry and others were very supportive of; and the third was precommitment. It is the case that a few people did not believe me when I said we were serious about this.

Ms O'Connor - We didn't.

Mr FERGUSON - It is good of you to say, Ms O'Connor, that you did not believe me.

Ms Johnston - I didn't either.

Mr FERGUSON - Ms Johnston did not believe me. For what it is worth, the Labor Party may have believed me but did not trust me to do it and said, 'That's fine but we want to see it as an amendment to the bill, not as a direction to the commission', if you remember. Do you remember?

Mr Winter - We certainly do.

Mr FERGUSON - You said, 'We're not sure whether that's going to be binding enough', so I said I was absolutely happy to put it in as an amendment to the bill. I gave full credit for that idea to the Labor Party at the time. No problem there, and I am happy to be accountable and held to it.

Within days of the legislation passing I did make that direction to the commission which I was bound under that new legislation to do. I was faithful to what the legislation required, including the due date of 30 June 2022.

When I became Deputy Premier and Treasurer in April of this year, I was asked these questions about the future of this work. I made a commitment back in April that not only were we still as committed as ever but I hope to receive that report on time and I intend to release it in full, together with the Government response in full. I was a little surprised that nobody asked me between 30 June and 15 September if I had the report. It surprised me, but nobody did. I did get the report on time and I take this opportunity to say thank you to the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission, in particular the chair, Jenny Cranston, and members David Hudson and Andrew Walker who, together with the Liquor and Gaming Branch in my department, did the work that we told them to do and they produced for us a report.

There is no better go-to for us for independent, objective advice on the merits and implementability of those different ideas - card-based play, facial recognition and a

precommitment scheme. They have given us the evidence and their advice and have made their recommendations.

On 15 September I was pleased to announce that the Government had carefully considered this advice. I released that report and the Government's response, being that we accepted the recommendations of the commission.

I would like to emphasise, for what it is worth in this Chamber, that the commission already had the power to do this under legislation. They already had the power to impose spin speeds and a range of things that revolve around harm reduction and harm minimisation. In fact they exercised that power with Federal Group in respect of their premium player program. Did you know that? While it was Federal's concept that they came up with to implement a premium player mandatory commitment program, and it is fine for them to propose it, it was only the commission that had the power, first of all, to even consider it and, second, to impose it, not so much by negotiation but, 'Yes, that is a worthwhile idea and we will support that and in fact make you do it', and that is exactly what the commission has done.

In this particular case, and what has brought us here, is that the Government's response is to make a further direction to the commission, which is accepting the recommendations and instructing the commission to get on with it. In addition, which will not please everybody, I have made a further direction to the commission that we will lift the requirement on the 30-line limit on poker machines to allow them to more or less move to the national and Australian and New Zealand model of 50 lines, which in my view does two things. First of all, it allows venue operators to have a lot more freedom about where they buy or lease their machines from and their choice of software. The second comment I make is it is far less relevant in an environment of mandatory precommitment because the real decision we have taken is to place power in the hands of the player. The player continues to have freedom as to, first of all, whether or not they game and where they game, continue to do that in casinos or pubs and clubs, but also they will have the decision about what their loss limits ought to be.

Recently I met and spoke with Responsible Wagering Australia, a peak body for a whole range of online gambling platforms. They have a public presence. You can look them up. They have already done this with online wagering. They have already put in place certain harm mitigations like deposit limits. Even if a player looks like their gaming or wagering is a little bit unusual or out of control, they will have an intervention. Some here will say that is not good enough, and they should go further. That is fine, but they have already moved this way so that people can have more control over their losses.

The issue we see with EGMs is that we want people to have that choice but we want that choice to be exercised in a way that protects their long-term future.

I will say this on the public record: I challenged the commission to find a model that allows recreational play but you cannot lose your house. That was the challenge and it was quite a puzzle for the commission to solve. They have responded and the Government has accepted. There has been plenty of political heat and argy-bargy since 15 September and we all know where we are at on this and understand the politics.

Ms O'Connor, if you had one weakness in your contribution, it was that you spent too much time on the politics when you said you wanted this motion to bring the House together.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you for your feedback, but I also like making sure the historical record is accurate.

Mr FERGUSON - The point here is that if you want members to support your motion, rather than telling them that you should suck up to them, you ought to find words that help people to see the common ground.

Ms O'Connor - You want to erase us from this motion.

Mr FERGUSON - What I would like to do is wrap up my contribution and say that in broad terms, the motion speaks for itself. I found it interesting, and it is not about taking credit or withdrawing credit, but it is fair to say that all members and parties of this House committed themselves to harm reduction through the future gaming legislation. I have a clear recollection about the Greens, my own party and for that matter the Labor Party and I have not hesitated to remind the Labor Party of some of their own commitments on this.

Mr Winter said on 14 October, 'we know that for some individuals gambling is a huge problem for them and catastrophic for the family in their lives. We have to try to put together the best model we can to protect them from harm as best we can.' He later said that card-based play would mean an end to using cash in pokies and a move towards player commitment. It is sensible and it was fair minded and I remember it that way, which is why it surprised me that it did take that time to really lock-in again. The quote goes on: 'That is the ability for a player to nominate an amount that they want to spend in a day, a month, a year and to be held to that.' A different quote from the debate, on the same day: 'From the outside the trial across multiple venues in New South Wales is promising and hopefully one day across all venues,' is talking about using people's IDs so that if you set a limit of, say, \$100 for the day, you simply cannot go back and get more money out and go somewhere else. You are locked-in. You are unable to gamble more because you have set your limit. That is a promising aspect of harm minimisation that will assist.

My amendment reflects that element of our debate. The Leader of the Labor Party, Rebecca White, on the same day, I think it was late at night, said:

I was also very heartened to hear the contribution by the member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, when he spoke about mandatory pre-commitment. If that is Liberal policy then that is good.

A later quote:

The amendment before the House has our support ... It is very good to see the reference ... to pre-commitment which is the amount of money that is determined by players before they begin to use the cards. The minister is going to issue a directive to the commission with an expectation that the examination of pre-commitment be considered for that report to come back to the minister and that those recommendations be implemented as soon as reasonably practical.

In fact, that was a Labor amendment. They wanted to see that language around as 'soon as reasonably practical'. That is something they can take the credit for and I am okay with that.

Where I would like to close is that this amendments that I wish to move, and I do now move, but I will ask the Clerk to take a different copy concludes:

(1) in paragraph (2), leave out subparagraph (b) and insert instead:

'(b) all Parties and Members committed to harm reduction measures and technologies in the parliamentary debate on the Gaming Control Amendment (Future Gaming Market) Bill 2021.'

(2) by leaving out paragraph (5) and insert instead:

'(5) Calls on all Parties and Members to endorse in full the advice and recommendations contained within the report of the Tasmanian Liquor and gaming Commission.'

Ms O'Connor - Can you explain why you think that second amendment is necessary? If our original wording was out of order we would not have been able to move it and you know that.

Mr FERGUSON - I believe it is more appropriate that we deal with the circumstances in front of us here and now. It is an opportunity for all members and parties to lock-in behind this, or if they are not happy with it they can vote against it. I believe that is a fairer state of play. It will be a matter for parties to make their policies in the approach to the next election. That is always the case and I felt that your motion, part (5), was problematic because it started to look like you were trying to bind a future parliament.

I do not actually believe that is the issue because the commission has been directed to put this in place. They have advised, not me, that they believe it will take one to two years to implement and that there would be a 12 month review afterwards.

Ms O'Connor - So, just before the next state election.

Mr FERGUSON - Not at all. Twelve months after implementation which we expect to be in the second half of 2024. My point is that then it would be reviewed by the commission, not by the government and not by the opposition.

Ms O'Connor - The problem is that there is no commitment now in your amendment.

Mr FERGUSON - I beg to differ because our commitment has been demonstrated. I am sorry, the direction has now been issued to the commission, it is now not on the Government's desk, it is not on the parliament's desk. It is on the commission's desk to now implement this and I would like to see that amendment supported. Thank you, Ms O'Connor.

[3.15 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion. I am not sure why you think that we would not.

Ms O'Connor - I am very glad to hear that.

Mr WINTER - I will get to the amendment later. We do not have a huge amount of time. Have you moved the amendment?

Mr Ferguson - I have, yes.

Mr WINTER - Thank you to Ms O'Connor for bringing this up. It is appropriate that we debate the issue given the history of this, the change in policy position that has come through by the commission's recommendations that the Government has accepted. I will say that I was surprised that the Government took this approach, and I think *The Examiner* used the words 'flat-footed'. Fair enough. It did surprise me that the Government took the approach that it had. I thought that where the commission's recommendations were going would be slightly different, but they are an independent body and they were bound to make their own recommendations. The minister has already responded at the same time as he released the report.

Regarding the MOU, I think Ms O'Connor is surprised that there is no MOU.

Ms O'Connor - I am so glad.

Mr WINTER - Not the one that you had in front of you. Not another MOU. I am here to say that there is no MOU in place between the Labor Party and the THA.

Ms O'Connor - That is so good.

Mr WINTER - Whilst it was in place, I did not pay much attention to it and it no longer exists.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Mr WINTER - I will just make it absolutely clear that it does not exist.

Regarding the debate last year - and the minister has done a good job of quoting what I said, and I still agree with what I said during that debate about card-based play - what minister Ferguson and I had in common during that debate was our belief that technology could actually assist better than anything in reducing harm and that we have the ability through technology to do things around card-based play. For example, we talked a lot about facial recognition. I understand and note the independent commission's recommendations on facial recognition and that the minister has accepted the recommendation not to go down that path. That is the recommendation and that is what it is.

Twelve months ago, we talked about how South Australia had only recently implemented it, and we were looking for some evidence about whether it worked. There has been some more evidence now and I must admit that I have not seen any, but maybe we will find that South Australia has had some elevated success using facial recognition. Potentially, down the track, the commission or the minister may use that as another bow in trying to eliminate the ability for people with gambling issues from being able to go back and gamble. I still believe it has some potential, but I understand and accept the minister's determination or his acceptance of the independent commission's point on this.

We copped a lot of flak for supporting the legislation, but we did not blindly support the legislation, and we did not support it without amendments. One of the amendments, as the minister outlined, was around directing the commission to go ahead and investigate card-based play and facial recognition. This was really important to us, as well as a number of other things, and amendments that we secured either indirectly - because that amendment was actually moved by the minister, though we discussed it and supported it - but also amendments in the other place that we had drafted ourselves, particularly around the renewal of licences that were essentially going to continue to be never-ending in the way they were structured. Where we got to with the legislation was that they are in 20-year blocks so there will be the ability for a future parliament - and good luck to them when they have this debate again - potentially, in 19 years, they might have a different point of view to what this parliament did about the legislation.

It was important that the parliament dealt with this and that we allowed and directed the commission to make changes and investigate harm minimisation and other matters. I will say - and again on the Labor thing about how we did not respond in six days. It is a two-year implementation time frame. We asked for a briefing on the Friday; I was supposed to have it early last week. Unfortunately, it could not happen. I understand those things happen. The briefing was cancelled and we had it on Monday. I thank the minister and his staff and the commission for undertaking that.

I have questions. Some of them were unable to be answered because it is early in the implementation phase. The Optus issue has probably attuned everyone to cybersecurity and the importance of maintaining your data. Regarding licences, that is the information the new LNO was going to hold. It will hold licence information. It is important that the data is held securely and we do not have an Optus situation where we are having to provide new driver licences to Tasmanians who have had their data breached. This will also have information about how much people gamble, what their limits are, potentially -

Ms O'Connor - What their income is.

Mr WINTER - What their income is if they have asked for an increase. There is also a question about how people go about increasing their limits from \$100 to \$5000 a day, whether it is as simple as typing it in on the machine or if it is something different. Another question is what happens with people who want to expand past the \$5000 and what sort of process will be in place? The minister was talking about seeing an accountant or bookkeeper. I believe those issues are being worked through.

Mr Ferguson - By interjection, the commission will have to resolve and consult.

Mr WINTER - Those issues are being dealt with then. The member for Clark wants to speak and I am running out of time. On the amendment, I prefer the first bit because, again, the Greens are self-congratulating the way it is currently drafted,

Ms O'Connor - Just laying out the facts, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - It was the legislation that the Greens voted against that enabled all of this, so we should acknowledge that those of us who voted for the bill enabled this entire process to happen. We want to make sure that the facts are laid out historically, truthfully and

accurately, that those of us who supported the bill supported this process through to getting the outcome that you are so excited about, Ms O'Connor.

I have a lot more to say, but I accept that the time is going by. Thank you for bringing forward the motion, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor - That was a very well-reasoned argument. I feel only slightly bad for having a massive crack at you.

[3.23 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will be brief given the time limitations. It is no secret that I hate poker machines. My preference would be not to have them at all. I would love to see slower spin speeds and lower maximum bets. I will give credit where it is due and credit is due to the Deputy Premier. He is to be commended for his commitment to introducing a mandatory pre-commitment card-based scheme.

I do have a sickening sense of déjà vu because history tells just how powerful the industry is and has been. The Gillard-Wilkie deal, which I spoke about earlier today, is a clear example of just how motivated the pokie industry is to protect the rivers of gold that come from poker machines and that comes from, sadly, in large part from my community in Glenorchy.

The 2018 election clearly showed how motivated the industry is to protect its profits. That is why this particular motion is so important. We have had the leadership from the Deputy Premier to stand up against the poker machine industry and put Tasmanians first, put harm minimisation on the agenda, and to protect Tasmanians against dangerous machines.

If this motion is supported, it will send a very clear signal to the poker machine industry that its bullying tactics to protect the rivers of gold will no longer work. If it is unanimous, and my sincere hope is it is, it will send a clear signal that parties and members stand united as one to protect the community. It will tell the poker machine industry that it cannot play one party off against the other, which has clearly been its strategy time and time again. I urge every member of this Chamber to follow their conscience, as the Deputy Premier has, and support this motion unamended.

I cannot support the amendment to the amendment to part (5) that the Deputy Premier has proposed as it waters down the powerful nature of the amendment that the Leader of the Greens has proposed. I am happy and comfortable to support the amendment to part (2)(b) but the amendment to part (5) would water it down. It would give the poker machine industry hope that it can come up with some reason, some powerful lobbying, to influence and try to change, or provide evidence to the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission that the mandatory pre-commitment scheme might not work.

The Deputy Premier has clearly called on his conscience and said, 'This is not right. We want to protect Tasmanians, we want to make sure that we can minimise the harm caused by poker machines and this is the way to do it'. I commend him for that. I want to see every member of this Chamber stand with him and say, 'No more do we put the interests of the poker machine industry ahead of ordinary Tasmanians who deserve to have a life free from harm from poker machines'.

I commend the Deputy Premier and I commend the motion. I cannot support the amendment because I do think it is a watering down and I do not want to see that. I want to stand behind you, Deputy Premier, and say, 'Go all the way'.

I support the motion but not the amendment.

[3.26 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I will make a brief wrap-up contribution to thank the Treasurer and Deputy Premier, the shadow finance minister, Mr Winter, and Ms Johnston for their contributions. It is one of those situations we should always be looking for more in life and that is, where is the common ground? Quite often, particularly in politics, we end up in our corners and there is a football field full of common ground between us. Thank you everyone for making those contributions.

What I heard from the shadow finance minister is that Labor is committed to these reforms. While we seem to have an amendment, particularly to part (5) of our motion, that does weaken the intent of the motion, I at one level understand what the Treasurer is trying to do here. It is simply not true to say that part (5) as we wrote it would bind a future parliament. It says -

Calls on all Parties and Members to commit to not abolish, or in any way weaken, the harm reduction measures contained within the EGM card-based system, should they form government after the next state election.

If that was out of order, if it did seek to bind a future parliament, I am pretty certain the Clerk would have been in touch with us. It is not out of order. It is simply asking parties to commit to maintaining this reform should they win government. What we have instead is the Treasurer's amendment which calls on all parties and members to endorse in full the advice and recommendation contained within the report of the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission. That is not a commitment to the policy.

Mr Ferguson - I think it is.

Ms O'CONNOR - It is not.

Mr Ferguson - I do.

Ms O'CONNOR - I do not think it is a commitment to the policy and its ongoing implementation.

As for the proposed amendment to part (2)(b), for the record because I know that this will go down, we put this in because it is a true history. The Tasmanian Greens have been championing gambling reform in this state for the best part of 30 years. Part (2)(b) says:

the Tasmanian Greens called for a mandatory card-based system with pre-commitment features, global expenditure limits, financial assessment for increasing expenditure limits, inbuilt budget tools, mandated break features, eventual expansion to include other gambling products (including online gambling), and examination of gambling-related court diversion programs or other justice system interventions; ...

That is simply a statement of the facts. I understand that our colleagues in here do not want to be seen to be promoting the Greens in any way or acknowledging our hard work on this issue over decades.

We are not stoked about the amendments, Mr Speaker, but we want this motion to pass and we want it to pass with multi-partisan support in this place. I do not think we should be dividing on it; we can live with it.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

MOTION

Select Committee on Macquarie Point Stadium - Motion Negatived

[3.31 p.m.]

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

That -

- (1) A Select Committee be appointed with power to send for persons, papers and records, to inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Liberal Government's plan to build a new stadium at Macquarie Point, including the -
 - (a) cost of building the stadium;
 - (b) ongoing costs of maintaining and operating a stadium;
 - (c) constructability of a stadium at Macquarie Point;
 - (d) compatibility of a stadium with the endorsed Macquarie Point Site Development Plan;
 - (e) Premier, Hon Jeremy Rockliff's claim that the stadium would help pay for Tasmania's health and education systems; and
 - (f) any other matter incidental thereto.
- (2) The Committee shall consist of five members, being -
 - (a) two from the Government nominated by the Leader of the House;
 - (b) Dr Broad; and
 - (c) Ms O'Connor; and

(d) the Mover.

(3) The Committee report by 22 November 2022.

Mr Speaker, a vote will be required.

There has been much debate, both in this place and in the community, about the Government's decision to support a \$750 million stadium in Hobart at a time that the state is in a cost-of-living crisis. We are dealing with a housing crisis, a health crisis, and we have teachers and nurses literally walking off the job, alongside firefighters and child safety workers who are striking, all calling for better pay and conditions, and a government that seems ignorant to their concerns and more obsessed with building a stadium than anything else.

No consultation has been held with the Tasmanian community about the proposal by the Government to build a stadium in Hobart. It was not taken to the last election as a promise so there is no way for the community to have their voices heard. A concern the Labor Party has is that the Government is making a decision on a whim and at the behest of the AFL without consideration for what it means for the Tasmanian budget and the broader Tasmanian community.

The motion before the House today is to establish a select committee appointed with power to send for persons, papers and records, to inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Liberal Government's plan to build a new stadium at Macquarie Point. The work of the committee would involve looking at the cost of building the stadium; the ongoing costs of maintaining and operating a stadium; the constructability of a stadium at Macquarie Point; the compatibility of a stadium with the endorsed Macquarie Point Site Development Plan; the claims that have been made by the Premier that the stadium would help pay for Tasmania's health and education systems; and any other matters incidental thereto.

These are all questions we have but also the broader community has about the Government's announcement to build a stadium. First it was a floating stadium at Regatta Point announced by former premier Peter Gutwein without any information. An RTI lodged by the Labor Party was the only way the community got any more information about the costings of this proposal, which was announced as \$750 million. The RTI we lodged at that time revealed it was essentially costed on the back of an envelope: the Government was willing to write a cheque for \$750 million for something they really had no idea how much it actually was going to cost to fund.

Now we have a situation where the current Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, has made a commitment to build a stadium at Macquarie Point. Curiously, it has exactly the same price tag. It has moved from being a floating stadium in a very different location with very different geographic constraints to a completely new site but, lo and behold, it is precisely the same price. We have real questions about that. We know there is no business case. Questions were asked of the Premier to provide those this week and to table the business case to explain the evidence the Government is relying upon to arrive at the \$750 million figure, to explain to the community what the maintenance costs are likely to be each year for a \$750 million stadium, what the likely subsidies are going to be in order to continue operate the stadium, and whether it will operate at a profit or at a loss. We do not know the answers to these questions because the Government does not know the answers to these questions, yet they are willing to sign a cheque to build something that very few people want and Tasmania does not need.

We believe the community deserves to have the answers to these questions and the Government should not be so reckless with public money, particularly at a time when the budget is already under pressure and the Government are telling Tasmania's hardworking public sector workers that they cannot have a pay rise that helps keep up with the cost of living because it would put pressure on the budget. It speaks to their warped priorities. It deserves further scrutiny and it requires parliament, at the very least as elected members for our community, to come together in this place, put our heads together and get around the details of what is being proposed here.

There are serious questions about what it means for the Macquarie Point site development plan. I note that the minister responsible for Macquarie Point is in the Chamber and I can only presume that they are going to respond to this motion today. Time will tell: the suspense is so dramatic. If that is the case, perhaps the minister can explain what happens to The Escarpment.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, the contracts that have been signed with developers.

Ms WHITE - What happens to the \$100 million contract that has been signed with a developer to construct a retail and accommodation precinct at Macquarie Point? That was announced by this Government earlier this year as a signature piece in that Macquarie Point plan because let us face it, for the \$130 million that has been sunk into it so far there is very little to show for it, but that was the one thing they were hanging their hat on.

There are serious questions now about the sovereign risk associated with the decision the Government has made to ride roughshod over a developer that has been contracted by the Government and whether the Government is going to have to pay that developer to not build an accommodation and retail precinct at Macquarie Point because the Government is going to build a stadium instead.

The taxpayer deserves to know what is going on here. Not only has the Government essentially announced a reckless spending of \$750 million, but what else is the Government signing us up to? How much more is this going to cost? Will that developer need to be paid out and what about the associated infrastructure that has not been costed?

Right now we do not have public transport linkages into Macquarie Point. There is no rail network into Macquarie Point, and there is no ferry terminal at Macquarie Point for people to jump off as has been described could happen. It would cost a lot more than \$750 million for the Government to build a stadium at Macquarie Point. They need to come clean about that.

The motion before the House today is an opportunity for the Government to explain to the people of Tasmania how they are going to build the stadium, what assumptions they have relied on to arrive at the \$750 million figure, and what the ongoing operating and maintenance costs are likely to be for a stadium. How will they address the challenges of building on Macquarie Point which, in large part, is reclaimed land? How deep will those piers need to be before they find a stable surface of rock so they can build a 23 000-seat stadium with a roof in a way that is safe?

Questions were asked today about where the workforce is going to come from at a time when we have a shortage of skilled workers who are already busy trying to build the houses we need in Tasmania and build other infrastructure projects that are underway in Tasmania. Civil construction work that would be required on the site would be competing with the

Bridgewater bridge project. That is really going to take up a lot of the skills available in the south of the state to make sure that the cars can ride over that bridge by 2024, which is what the Premier has promised will happen.

This committee would be set up as a way to provide some transparency around this decision to build a \$750 million stadium at Macquarie Point. There is very little transparency around this proposal announced by the Government. We know there is a bit of a split in Cabinet about it. I am interested to hear from Mr Barnett, if he is the one to speak in response to this motion today, whether he supports the \$750 million stadium at Macquarie Point. As the minister responsible for Macquarie Point, how does he feel about the fact that the master plan has been torn up and thrown in the bin? How does he feel after \$130 million has been spent at Macquarie Point, that a big stadium is going to plonked in the middle of that site rather than what was proposed through that master plan? What obligations does he have as the minister? How is he going to share those in a transparent way with the community?

The committee would provide an opportunity for that. The reporting date would be 22 November, so we could have some answers this year. There is no doubt that the community deserves to know what is really going on here. The Government seems to be all at sea on this one. It does not have detailed answers to the questions that have been asked, not even general answers to the questions that have been asked. We are talking about \$750 million and all we have to show for it to support the Government's announcement is an estimate of the economic impacts of what is now called an arts, entertainment and sports precinct in Hobart that was released in September.

This is not a business case. This is an estimate of the economic impact, trying to spin the good news that a stadium is going to create all these new jobs in the south of the state. As the Premier has tried to imply, it will fund the health and education system with some rivers of gold that are going to suddenly arrive in the Government's coffers because it has built a new stadium in Hobart when we have a stadium just across the river at Bellerive and another one at York Park.

There are a number of disclaimers in this report. What is interesting is that it is proposing that the only way this stadium is going to generate the type of economic impacts that have been estimated is if 44 events occur every year at this stadium. That is one every eight days. I do not see York Park being used that frequently for major events, or Bellerive or the Deck or any of the other major stadiums where we have capacity to seat large crowds of people. What assumptions has the Government relied upon to arrive at the 44 events a year figure which underpins the modelling that supports all the rhetoric and guff it has come out with since it announced that it was going to build a \$750 million stadium in Hobart.

It is unrealistic but it is what the Government is relying on to defend the announcement. There is no business case. There is just an estimate which only looks at the economic impact. It does not look at the operation of a stadium. We do not know where all the money is coming from. The Premier says there will be some kind of private investment. What kind of return will those private investors want for investing in a stadium? That is not going to come back to fund health and education.

These are the questions that the community is raising through us that the Government simply has no answer for. At the same time they are obsessing about a new stadium in the south of the state when we already have two perfectly good stadiums to host AFL content in

Tasmania. There is crisis after crisis occurring across areas that are fundamental responsibilities of government - health, housing, child safety and education.

I went to the football at Bellerive earlier this year. I have spoken about this already, but it is worth repeating. I saw how many people attended that game between North Melbourne and Geelong. Geelong are the Premiers for 2022, so they are the best team in the national competition this year. They were already incredibly good when they came to play in April, so people who were keen to see top-class footy would have been keen to go along to watch Geelong play against North Melbourne at Bellerive. I had a look at the attendance figures for that event and it was about 8000 people. The weather was beautiful: you could not have asked for a more perfect day. There was no reason why everyone who wanted to see the footy that day could not have gone along to see the best team in the competition right now play here in Tasmania. Only 8000 people went.

The Government says we need a bigger stadium: Bellerive is not up to it and York Park is not up to it. We need to build a 23 000-seat stadium. When the Government started talking about this, when Peter Gutwein first announced a floating stadium in Hobart at Regatta Point, it was 27 000 seats. Now it is 23 000 seats. We have lost 4000 seats. I do not know where they have gone. Maybe the Government could explain how that has changed, or why that has changed? What logic is in that decision, and the change from 27 000 seats to 23 000 seats? A 23 000-seat stadium is only slightly more than the capacity at Bellerive now. As I just said, in April this year, on a beautiful autumn day, the top team in the competition played in Hobart in front of 8000 people.

I do not see the evidence that the Government is relying on to demonstrate that our stadiums are chock-a-block full and we desperately need another one. The evidence does not exist. There were not people spilling onto the streets disappointed they were not able to get a ticket to watch the footy that day. Every person who wanted a ticket could get one.

Do you know what we do have overflowing? Hospital emergency departments; ambulances ramped for hours, and patients dying in the back of ambulances. The Government does not seem to be in a hurry to upgrade our hospitals, which are literally overflowing, but it wants to build a new stadium when the two stadiums we already have are capable of hosting AFL content, hosting the best teams in the game, and we do not even sell out the capacity crowds there.

I know that if we have our own Tasmanian team there is most certainly going to be a resurgence in support for people who want to go to watch someone wearing our state colours, wearing the Tasmanian jumper. There is no doubt we are going to see an increase in people wanting to go along to catch a sight of their hero running around the ground, kicking the footy for the Tassie AFL team. However, if you can only turn out 8000 people to watch the grand final winner, then I reckon you could probably double that to go to watch a Tassie team. Double that fits in the stadiums we already have.

I do not understand the Government's reason for pushing on with the stadium, particularly the Premier, who inherited this thought bubble from his predecessor, Peter Gutwein, who first proposed a floating stadium at Regatta Point. Why on Earth does Jeremy Rockliff, who is also the Minister for Health, think that prioritising building a \$750 million stadium in Hobart over fully funding the LGH stage 2 development or announcing any funding at all for stage 3 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment - it makes no sense to me at all.

There are opportunities for the parliament to demonstrate to the community that we have heard their concerns about the Government's priorities here, which they overwhelmingly do not agree with. The Government, ministers and backbenchers in the Chamber today would have had that feedback. Overwhelmingly, whether through mainstream media, social media, or just at a barbeque on the weekend, people do not like the idea of spending \$750 million on a stadium that we do not need. Give the parliament the opportunity to understand where you are coming from. Support the establishment of a committee so we can look at the details, so we can understand if you even have the details that you are relying on before committing the state to fund such a thing.

We have had a lot of debate in this Chamber already over the course of the last two days where we have asked the Premier, in particular, a number of questions about his priorities for Tasmania. The Labor Party's priorities, and I would argue this side of the Chamber's priority, is not a \$750 million stadium for Hobart. We have made that very clear. There are so many other important needs across the Tasmanian community that rank one, two, three, four through to 10, probably 20, above building another stadium.

It seems to us that Premier Jeremy Rockliff is too weak to stand up to the AFL and tell them, 'We'll have our own team, thanks very much, and they will play games at York Park and Bellerive where we have hosted AFL content for more than a decade and you have been happy with that. Thanks very much but we're not going to fork out money for a stadium that we do not need, especially at this point in time', when we have people who cannot get the health care they need, people who cannot get access to the basics, who cannot put a roof over their head.

The Premier needed to stand up and show some backbone, but he has been weak and disappointing. He has done a complete backflip from where we had hoped he would go on this when he first announced that he would be a premier with compassion. Where is the compassion for our ambulance paramedics who are exhausted, burnt out and are walking away from the job because they cannot do it anymore? Where is the compassion for our teachers who are distraught about what they are seeing in their classrooms every day, the poverty, the trauma they are witnessing in their students as they are trying to provide the best education for them? Where is the compassion for people like Shelley Ford who has been couch-surfing for more than two years as a priority applicant on the Housing waiting list, trying to care for her niece at the same time as she is trying to put a roof over their heads? The Premier seems to think a higher priority is putting a roof over a stadium that no-one wants.

The Government has it completely wrong on this one but let us give them the chance to provide some details, support the select committee, and demonstrate their thinking as to why it is their priority to build a stadium. Be honest with the people of Tasmania: give us the information you are relying on to support your thinking around building a \$750 million stadium. What do you have to hide? It is not your money. It is the taxpayers' money, the people of Tasmania's money.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this motion is self-explanatory. It illustrates the questions we have and provides an opportunity for the parliament to find some answers. I hope the minister is supportive of this as he readies himself to speak. I hope he can also clearly explain, just like his colleague Roger Jaensch did in *The Advocate* when he was spruiking the stadium in the same week that teachers are going on strike - talk about warped priorities. He is also the minister for Housing. I would like to hear him tell us if he thinks a stadium is a higher priority than putting roofs over the heads of people who cannot get one right now.

Do you think the workforce that should be building houses should be under competing pressure and demand to also build a stadium when we know that we have a skills shortage in this state? I do not understand how you can but if you do support the motion so we can understand what evidence you are relying on, because right now the community is completely confused by your priorities, completely confused about how the Government can support a \$750 million stadium in the middle of cost of living, housing and health crises.

[3.54 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the Greens will be supporting this motion. We think parliament should have a look at a proposed project of this scale and expense. Another opportunity here possibly, if this motion does not succeed, is for Labor to refer it to the Public Accounts Committee where I believe it has enough numbers to get it up.

There is an episode of the comedy program *Utopia* that I suspect some Liberal members have seen. It is called 'Then we can build it', and the precis reads:

Concerned that Tasmania's infrastructure needs have been overlooked, Jim sends Tony and the team south for a series of public forums'.

This whole episode of a program called *Utopia* was about building a stadium in Tasmania. I am curious to know whether that is where this idea has come from. It is possible that whichever Liberal member or minister was watching the show did not realise it was satire. It is not a documentary, as Dr Broad said.

We support this committee inquiry on principle. We are talking here about a project which has an initial price tag of \$750 million which, in all likelihood given the experience from interstate and what we know about escalating costs, would cost much more than that to build, potentially double that much to build. To have a parliamentary committee examine it would enable the facts to be laid on the table. It would also be an opportunity for Tasmanians to present before the committee and express a view because, to date, as Ms White said, there has been no consultation or discussion.

The land at Macquarie Point does not belong to the Liberals in government. In the first place, it belongs to Aboriginal people and it was taken from them without truce or treaty. It is public land and for the past 12 or 13 years there has been an ongoing process of engagement with the community about the future of Macquarie Point and the site. Along the way, some promises have been made. We were promised a community, commercial and science precinct. Aboriginal people were certainly under the strong impression that at that site there would be a truth and reconciliation park. Developers who signed contracts to develop on The Escarpment had a view of what that site was going to look like in the future and what its public use would be.

There has been a range of discussions along the way. I am trying to be helpful here to government, but in and around nipaluna/Hobart there is a very strong desire for that space to be a broad community space where you have mixed use but it is a place that is diverse in its uses and is open to the community. Then the Saturday before last we were told there is going to be a stadium there. It is really poor engagement and disrespectful to the people who live in and around this city. That is before we get to the issues of where else you could put that capital money that the state will contribute.

How many homes could you build, for example, with half a billion dollars? What could you do in your health system to improve the facilities with half a billion dollars? Certainly, the teachers and school support staff who rallied on the lawns this morning will be looking at that promise from Government to give us a stadium and wondering about the Government's priorities.

I have been in this place long enough. I have watched the Premier in here and genuinely believe he has a big heart. I genuinely believe he thinks this is the right thing to do. In fact, there was some commentary I read somewhere in the media with quotes from the Premier about how people will look back, once this stadium is built, and they will see that it was the right thing to do. I do not want to allocate malign intent, because you do not make a promise to build a billion-dollar stadium knowing it is going to be a political hot potato, unless you genuinely believe it is the right thing to do, and I accept that.

However, we are talking about very large sums of money and I am still waiting to get an email or a written letter - which occasionally still arrive - in support of the stadium. I have not had a conversation with a single constituent or stakeholder in my community or outside of it who is happy about it. We were on the east coast over the weekend where there was nothing but condemnation of this proposal and genuine bewilderment that this could be a priority of Government at this time.

Having a committee established which has representation, at least, from the three parties is a good step forward. I know because of the numbers in here - and we will not be able to sort that out until after the next election - the membership of committees is necessarily confined, but we need to move to a space where it is not just dominated by the parties in here. We have a Clark independent in Ms Johnston. We have a notional Labor independent in Mr O'Byrne, and I am sure they would love to be invited onto a committee like this because they could feel that they could make a strong contribution. I encourage all parties in here to consider how we might make the committee process more openly inclusive at the start because I believe we will get better inquiries, better outcomes, and potentially more opportunities to collaborate and find whatever common ground there can be.

However, I do not think there would be much common ground on a stadium. I do not know what the federal Albanese Government's position will be on stumping up money for this stadium. I do not know if there have been discussions between Tasmanian Labor and the federal government about funding for this stadium because it is a very significant sum of money.

We are also, potentially, going to be asking the federal government for money to throw towards Marinus Link. Not that the question about the money has ever been answered in relation to Marinus Link as, ultimately, we believe Tasmanians will have to pay out of their pockets. The case for Marinus Link, as it is, has not been made and here too we have embarked on a process with a project where we will be expecting the federal government to pay half, or so. If the Prime Minister came down here and stood on the waterfront at the proposed site of this stadium and cast his eyes east, what he would see is a big stadium on the eastern shore. That would give him pause to reflect about whether it was a good investment of taxpayer's money to pay for an island of a bit over half a million people to have another stadium.

I have been to games at both Bellerive and York Park and they are good facilities. With some investment they could be significantly improved so that when we have our AFL and

AFLW teams they will have homes in the north and the south of the state which are perfectly fit-for-purpose. This is something that the Premier should be pitching to the AFL and Gill McLachlan. You could invest in upgrading Bellerive, improving the parking, improving the access and having free ferry rides and bus travel on game days and match days. You could have a really excellent integrated transport approach to making sure as many people as possible could go to those games without taking their cars to that facility and causing a traffic jangle in and around the stadium. That is one of the issues in the broader community's mind. They look at our two stadiums where AFL matches are played and they see facilities that they know they paid for, that have done the job and they just do not understand why Government would want to build a brand-new stadium. They are not sold on it at all.

It seems clear to me that the politics of this, because politics is how you implement policy even though politics can be a dirty word, but the politics of this are quite dangerous for the Government because this stadium proposal has not just bewildered people, it has made quite a few people angry. It is the cognitive dissonance in a Government that on the one hand has the housing waiting list at the highest level it has ever been and an elective surgery waiting list which is still untenably long, that is telling civil society that they are going to spend half a billion dollars on a stadium. It makes people angry.

I know that as a Government, and this is under all three premiers, Hodgman, Gutwein and Rockliff, there has been a very strong focus on the north of the state and maybe they have taken their eye off or deprioritised the wants and the hopes and the expectations of people who live south of Campbell Town. It should not be a north-south issue but if the people of southern Tasmania are told without any conversation they are going to have a brand new stadium on a waterfront that for many years they had a different picture of, many will find it completely unacceptable.

I do not know if this stadium idea was cooked up in order to strengthen our bid for an AFL and AFLW team. I do not know, and Tasmanians do not know, whether this is something that has been demanded by Gill McLachlan and the AFL, or whether this is something that the Premier and the Cabinet genuinely believe is the right approach. I suspected when the announcement was first made that we had been cornered by the AFL but I am not so sure anymore. I implore the Premier, if he gets some spare time, and I know he does not have much, to have a walk around and chat with people on the waterfront, talk to people in and around Hobart about their feelings about this stadium. It is not just that people are annoyed by it, people are appalled that this is a priority of government when we have people sleeping in tents.

A parliamentary committee would certainly be a good way to air some of the issues. The problem with the numbers of course is that should the committee be established in this form, the government of the day would not have the votes to balance out the other membership of the committee. Unless the Government is prepared to amend this motion or Labor is prepared to amend it around the committee membership, I cannot see that it would be supported almost on that basis alone by government. I also cannot see the Government supporting the establishment of this committee, but the questions that are asked in these terms of reference are the questions being asked in the community.

When they say that it is going to cost \$750 million, what do they really mean? What are the ongoing costs of maintaining and operating a stadium? We have no idea. Could you put it at Macquarie Point, which is incorrectly termed 'reclaimed' land, but it is very low and close to the river. I am not sure how strong the foundations are there because, as I understand it, that is

part of a whole area along the foreshore that over the years has been infilled, built out and built up. You only have to walk on the lawns of parliament after a bit of rain to know that all of the land out the front of the parliament building and the front of Salamanca was once water. It is very low lying. Having a massive stadium with tens of thousands of people in it might just not be what that place can withstand.

What has happened to the Macquarie Point Site Development Plan? It has clearly gone out the window. How does a stadium's operation help to pay for health and education? I cannot see that either, but a committee might be able to answer some of those questions.

In closing, it can be a challenge in politics sometimes, and particularly for governments, to admit you have got something wrong. On the stadium, the Premier and his PLP have it completely wrong. This will be a festering sore, certainly in the electorates of Clark and Franklin, all the way to the next election, and I do not think the resentment is confined to those two electorates. In homes where people are struggling to pay the rent and the power bills and petrol prices are about to go up, their lease is expiring, they are worried about being evicted into homelessness and they see this colosseum idea, there will be an understandable feeling of not being seen by government, that your life is not understood, and the Government is not prioritising the things that you or people you care about need to get ahead and have a good life.

Government ministers get up and say there is record spending in health, record spending in education, but every year every government makes a record spend in health and education because the costs in those two portfolios go up year on year and, at times, exponentially. It is still, in the end, a choice that this Government has made and a message it has sent to Tasmanian people that it has half a billion dollars, effectively, to spend on a colosseum on the waterfront but it will not spend that half a billion dollars, front-end it for example, to build more homes for people. We can have the Treasurer argue about capital funding and recurrent funding but out there in the community it just does not pass the sniff test because, ultimately, it is all taxpayers' money.

We are comfortable supporting the establishment of this committee but if the motion does not succeed I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to refer the stadium proposal to the Public Accounts Committee for examination.

[4.16 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Government to make it very clear that we will wholeheartedly be opposing this motion. It is simply another cheap shot and political stunt by the Labor Opposition which still has no ideas, no plans and no vision. In fact what does Labor actually stand for? We know that one of their front bench members, no doubt on behalf of the Labor Party, has stated that now is not the time for significant investment in new infrastructure. Is that what is driving them behind their policy position with respect to our plans to grow Tasmania's economy?

We are all about growing Tasmania's economy, increasing the number of jobs and delivering essential services to the Tasmanians who need it, whether it is in health, education, police and community safety, or a whole range of other areas, particularly housing, which I am very pleased to speak about shortly. A very key point is that we can walk and chew gum at the same time. Labor is suggesting, I think, putting up a straw man, straw person as it were, and trying to knock it down to suggest that you cannot.

Labor and the Greens were in office for nearly four years prior to a majority Liberal government that has been re-elected -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, and we had the Housing waiting list to its lowest level in a decade. We built 2500 new affordable homes. Are you looking to Mrs Alexander to protect you? Are you buffering?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr BARNETT - Without the interruptions continuing, Madam Deputy Speaker, the point I was making is that when Labor and the Greens were in government they took this economy into a recession. It went backwards.

Ms O'Connor - Actually, we took it out of recession!

Mr BARNETT - Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to continue without further interruption, if at all possible.

Ms O'Connor - That's a choice you made, minister.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I request that the Chamber be silent so we can listen to the minister. Thank you.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, when Labor and the Greens were in government - and Tasmanians do not forget this - the economy went into recession, 10 000 jobs were lost and productive industries were taken to their knees, specifically forestry. What happened to essential services like health, education and police? We had a question this morning from Mr O'Byrne with respect to police and the very fine response that 108 police were sacked. We know that with health and health services, there were less and that ward 4D in the Launceston General Hospital was closed. We know that 20 schools were targeted for closure. They have a track record of reducing the economy, taking it backwards. That is why Labor knows that this is just a political stunt, a cheap shot today. It will go nowhere. They know the facts and they are not willing to accept the facts.

Our Government wishes to grow the economy. As a result of growing the economy we can invest and reinvest in health, education, police, and the essential services that Tasmanians need. In particular, housing with record funding, Madam Deputy Chair, as I know you know so well. We are investing record funds in health, in education, in housing, in police, and in infrastructure that is new, infrastructure that the Labor Opposition is not willing to support. Is it the Brighton school? Is it the Legana school? Is it the Sorell school? This is all new infrastructure. If the Labor Opposition leader would like to come in and apologise for that particular statement made by the member for Bass on behalf of the Labor Party, that is absolutely fine. That has not happened.

Members interjecting.

Ms White - You are either stupid or ignorant.

Mr BARNETT - I take exception to that. That was totally inappropriate.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Can I please ask the Chamber to allow the minister to finish his response. You may choose to ignore what he is saying, but I ask you to listen to him in silence. I believe on this side there was quiet and everyone listened to the leader of the Greens and to yourself. We might not agree with what he is saying, but it is his right to be listened to in silence.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have to stand accountable for what you say in this place and outside of this place and be accountable and responsible.

With respect to housing and housing supply, we have a commitment to the largest financial investment in building new homes in Tasmanian history, 10 000 new homes between now and 2032. I am pleased and proud as it is a privilege to have that role, to work with the key stakeholders to get the job done, to implement that objective. The Opposition is essentially saying you cannot continue to put record funding investment in housing, in health, in education, in police and deliver important infrastructure, including a new arts, entertainment and sporting precinct. Labor is wrong on that.

We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We have done since 2014, and will continue to do so into the future. Labor does not want to see transformational projects like a new arts, entertainment and sporting precinct, even though, based on advice, it will inject \$300 million into the local economy during that construction period and 4200 jobs during that construction period. That is quite remarkable. It will inject \$85 million ongoing and support 950 jobs once operational. That is the advice.

Labor might question that, but that is the advice. Labor is simply not supporting future infrastructure development. This is record funding. The minister for Infrastructure is committed to that, as is the Treasurer. This is just symptomatic of the Labor Opposition being anti-everything.

This motion today is inane, it is ridiculous, and it is absurd. They know we have a Public Works Committee that reviews these matters on an ongoing basis. That is what will be done in due course, subject to an appropriate feasibility study, which I will talk about.

At the Public Works Committee, there is a monetary threshold of \$8 million for building and construction works, and \$15 million for roads and bridges. The functions of the committee include to review the value of the works and the revenue it is expected to produce.

I have mentioned the feasibility study. It was referred to earlier today. There is \$1.2 million in the Budget. The shadow treasurer is here and is now getting interested in the Budget. He asked a question of the Treasurer this morning. He is finally getting around to reviewing the budget papers, which is good. I draw his attention to that matter in the budget papers of \$1.2 million for the feasibility study into the stadium in Hobart. That needs to lead to the business case, which has been referred to by the Premier and the Treasurer. I refer to it right now.

This is Labor's opposition to further infrastructure. They seem to be the anti-everything party. Doom and gloom. Criticise, no policies, no plans and no vision. We are a government with vision and a big plan to grow our economy, create more jobs and invest in those essential services.

When I was a senator in the federal parliament -

Ms White - Oh yes, what happened to that?

Mr BARNETT - working with Prime Minister John Howard - I missed that interjection.

Ms White - I asked what happened to your Senate career?

Mr BARNETT - I was referring to when I was working with John Howard in the federal parliament and he was the prime minister. He made it clear that you need a growing economy to invest in health and education. It is essential. All we know from the track record with Labor and the Greens is that the economy went down the chute. Recession, 10 000 jobs lost, and what happened to essential services? They could not fund them. On this side, we want to grow our economy, deliver for the Tasmanian people, and increase the number of jobs. That has happened since 2014, big time. We can deliver.

That is probably why Labor is in administration in Tasmania. It does not like reference to that. Federal Labor has taken over state Labor, not only for a couple of months, but through to 2025 - three years. That is how dysfunctional and incapacitated it is in Tasmania. There is an opportunity to learn from history and to get things right.

Its opposition to the workplace protection legislation - the shadow treasurer, member for Braddon, who was strong in support of workplace protection, protecting our productive industries, forestry and mining in the Braddon electorate -

Dr Broad - Look at him go.

Mr BARNETT - Think of the quotes I could deliver this afternoon with respect to Dr Shane Broad. Come in spinner. To have the Labor Party oppose, like it has been doing, opposing infrastructure, opposing our workplace protection legislation to toughen the laws, and to increase the penalties. Labor opposed it; voted against it. You could not help yourselves. You are so tied to the Greens at the hip, at the shoulder and you betrayed the workers and businesses.

That is because you are consistently opposing. You are opposing our Homes Tasmania bill and plans to grow and build more houses faster. That is really disappointing. We have big plans and we have every expectation to deliver on that. The criticisms, the negativity towards Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation, green hydrogen, green manufacturing -

Ms White - What has that got to do with the stadium?

Mr BARNETT - You are just continually opposing.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, under standing order 142. I do not know what is really going through the minister's mind at the moment but he is digressing far from the subject matter before us. I wonder if you could draw him back to the matter that has been raised and the motion being debated.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Minister, I understand that you are addressing matters of development. However, we need to come back to the motion.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was reflecting on the doom and gloom on the other side of the House and the political stunt that this motion is. That is what it is: it is a political stunt, a cheap shot, trying to get a quick headline in the next 24 hours that is consistent with the talking down of the state at every opportunity and fearmongering and scaremongering. They have been doing it constantly and this motion is consistent with their form in recent weeks and months. It has been ongoing. They could start acting like an alternative government rather than having no policies, no plans and consistently criticising and being negative.

What we have, as a government, is a plan with a vision to grow the economy and invest in essential services, as Premier Rockliff keeps reminding the other side and the community. We have a plan to strengthen our future in Tasmania. That includes investing in significant infrastructure projects that grow our economy and create more jobs and, in turn, providing the opportunity to reinvest in essential services. That is what the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Greens have been going on about during the debate. It is directly relevant.

Activating Hobart's waterfront precinct will not just help diversify our economy, it will also grow our economy. It will transform Hobart and Tasmania's economy. We will have a cultural entertainment and sporting venue to rival any on the mainland or around the world. That is the vision. We have had an economic impact study undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers as part of the pre-feasibility work. That study has indicated that during the construction phase alone a 23 000-seat stadium with another 7000 standing, so up to 30 000, is anticipated to generate economy activity of around \$300 million with some 4200 people involved, Tasmanians no doubt. Once operational, according to this advice, the stadium will open new industries and support around 950 full-time equivalent jobs. They might be full time, there might be a mixture of part time, and there might be casuals as well, but that is 950 full-time equivalent jobs annually. That is \$2.2 billion of economic activity over a 25-year period or \$85 million per year.

As the Premier announced on Sunday 18 September, Macquarie Point had been identified as the preferred site for an arts, entertainment and sporting precinct. In the normal course of events, with due diligence, as a responsible government, it will move into the next stage of feasibility. As I have indicated, it is in the budget papers; \$1.2 million for the feasibility study, and then to work up that business case.

Ms White - Do you support the stadium?

Mr BARNETT - I am making very clear the position of the Government and mine. There is a considerable amount of work yet to do to define its scope; however, we are keen to work with all the stakeholders and developers to ensure the vision of the broader site can be achieved. I have mentioned the importance of that. We can be confident that our investment in a new stadium will only go ahead if it is proven to be feasible and has a business case that stacks up, and the Government is supporting this essential work to happen.

In terms of the arts, entertainment and sports precinct, it would be much more than a football oval or a venue to play AFL matches, which is how it is described by the Labor Opposition, of course again putting up a straw man to knock down a straw person. It would be a multipurpose entertainment venue which would provide significant economic, health, social and community benefits not just for Hobart but for the whole state.

This new facility would significantly boost Tasmania's capacity to host world-class cultural, entertainment, business and sporting events, including acting as a convention space. That is something that has not been touched on or very much considered. With a convention centre and conferences, the visitor economy would receive a massive boost.

In terms of Hobart's waterfront and the working port, this would unlock the transport corridor and the associated development opportunities with it. This includes the northern transport corridor link and a ferry network. We have been talking about ferries. The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport has recently given further advice with respect to the ongoing operation of ferries on the Derwent River - very important. We are backing it in. It is working and look what this might allow for further ferry operations and services in and around the Derwent River.

Ms O'Connor - Put people on ferries and take them to Bellerive for a game.

Mr BARNETT - They will be going both ways, of course - across the river and back again. A precinct like this in the heart of Hobart's waterfront will unlock that and as a working port that will certainly be appreciated by the productive industries, whether it is the mining industry, forest industry, agriculture or the various parts of our manufacturing sector.

Events could include anything apart watching AFL, of course, and the Tassie AFL team. We deserve that nineteenth licence and we are very keen -

Ms O'Connor - We do, 100 per cent.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the Leader of the Greens for that support. I appreciate that. We are very committed and the Premier is resolute and has made it clear that our position is not influenced in the way that has been suggested by the Opposition with respect to the AFL. We are standing on our own terms but we believe we deserve an AFL licence and this will deliver for Tasmania. In addition to that, we are certainly talking about cricket, international cricket, NRL, A-League matches, soccer, and Rugby Union. There is a whole range of sporting events and on top of that the other local events that can grow and expand our economy in this new precinct for a festival calendar. It would attract a whole range of international and national artists, bands and events on a scale never before seen.

There will be flow-on effects for grassroots sports. I am very committed to developing and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles for our students, our young kids whether it be footy, soccer, rugby, or a whole range of sports. You can see what has happened with the basketball and having a top-rated team in Tasmania. You can see the encouragement and the kids getting enthusiastic about it. I know the member for Franklin is enthusiastic about it as well - I can see him nodding. I have seen his kids and I know they are keen on a whole range of sports. Grassroots sports and getting young Tasmanians involved is what we are on about and we want to encourage that.

What has not really been discussed, and is not referred to in the motion today, is the Government's commitment to the UTAS Stadium and to the Dial Park on the north-west coast. It is in the budget. It is already there. There is a \$65 million commitment to upgrade the UTAS Stadium. That is a big investment and we are committed in that regard. I was there a couple of months ago walking around the oval with representatives of the Launceston City Council and representatives of my department. You can see the potential for further upgrades at the

UTAS Stadium. It is a critical ground for sporting matches and events in the north. We are pursuing a major upgrade to the stadium and have committed \$65 million to enhance the player facilities, the spectator experience, to develop a function centre and conference facilities to ensure Launceston receives its fair share of sports, cultural, and entertainment events.

I will touch on the Dial Regional Sports Complex. I should have mentioned that with the \$25 million development. I know that the member for Braddon, Roger Jaensch, is very committed and has spoken about it, particularly on the north-west coast, and that will help enhance spectator and participant infrastructure.

There is an assumption made by the Opposition that because you are putting money there, or you are putting money in the south, or the north, or north-west into that infrastructure, you have no more money, not one more dollar, for essential services. We are continuing -

Ms White - Where is the money coming from?

Mr BARNETT - You cannot do it unless you have a growing economy. Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have to have a growing economy. If the economy is going downhill, of course, based on the experience of the Labor-Greens four years, you cannot do it, and it will not happen. We have to walk and chew gum at the same time to grow the economy and to deliver for the Tasmanian people. That is what we are on about.

Regarding our planned infrastructure spend, that is \$5.6 billion over the forward Estimates of this last budget alone. This is fantastic. This is investment in health, education, and housing, and I want to touch on that. We are talking \$11.2 billion into our health system, spending on average \$7.2 million per day on health, accounting for 33.6 per cent or one third of the Budget's total operating expenditure. Our Budget this year includes more than \$8.5 billion for education to ensure our children are getting the right start in life.

That includes significant funding for training and skills development. What it includes, and what we do know, is that we have an extra 435 teachers since we have come to government; an extra 421 teacher assistants, and in more recent years, 100 school nurses and support. The school nurses were sacked when Labor was in government but we have put them back. We are reinvesting in education at record levels. To suggest that we are not is simply a fallacious argument by the Labor Opposition.

As a government, we are committed to transformative infrastructure that will help our economy thrive, that will help grow our economy and provide more jobs and opportunities. Investments like this are to get our economy into a strong position in order to pay for those essential services like health, education, police and housing.

I have mentioned housing, and to put it on the record again, \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years through to 2032, 10 000 new homes and we are on track for 1500 new homes by 30 June next year; \$208 million this year alone, and \$438 million over the forward Estimates. It is already in the budget. It is committed. We are very committed to more housing and more homes. We would like the Labor Opposition to get behind us and that plan. It is disappointing and I would like them to look at their position to oppose our plans to do that, and specifically our Homes Tasmania legislation.

Labor is suggesting that it is an either/or and what I am suggesting and recommending and making clear is that, as a government, we can do both. We need to grow our economy to reinvest in essential services and it will certainly give the construction industry a pipeline of certainty as the project of significance provides confidence to invest and grow. We have an MOU with the building and construction sector. We are working well with them to help streamline the process, cut the red tape, and help find the workforce for the future. It is good, it is based on confidence, based on our plans to invest in infrastructure, and the lack of vision on the other side is astounding.

We also have support for this decision that has been announced by the Premier a week or two ago, and I wanted to refer, specifically, to the investment that is strongly supported by stakeholders who understand what it will bring to our state, including the Tourism Industry Council chief executive stating that right across Australia we have seen these types of stadium infrastructure investments transform cities by inviting a whole new wave of economic activity that creates jobs and stimulates investment.

The Tasmanian Hospitality Association chief executive, Steve Old, backed these comments, saying the benefits would flow to hospitality businesses all across the state, not just Hobart. The Property Council of Tasmania executive director, Rebecca Ellston, also highlighted that the benefits from such an investment would be far reaching, driving more hotels, retail, office, and recreational spaces, stating it gives Tasmania the opportunity to become a world class destination for investment, migration, and also liveability. Who would want these benefits for Tasmania? These are the types of economic drivers that ensure we can pay for essential services and all Tasmanians can benefit, but it seems Labor does not understand that and how the economy works, but of course, we are not surprised, based on past experience.

We are committed to realising our vision to activate the Hobart waterfront and Macquarie Point. As I have said earlier, the Premier has made that announcement, and we have identified Macquarie Point as the preferred site for that arts, entertainment and sports precinct. It is still subject to further feasibility work currently under way, and that work will include the development of a business case to secure full funding, which the Premier has made very clear and is quite resolute about. We have always been transparent about the sites being considered for a potential arts and entertainment precinct, and just to take members back in that regard, this information has been available on my Department of State Growth's website since February this year.

It is nothing new that this was one of the sites, and it has been identified as the preferred site. Macquarie Point represents an exciting opportunity for Tasmania as one of the last remaining vacant urban infill locations in any of Australia's capital cities. It is a huge parcel of land - 9.3 hectares - which needs extensive, complex remediation from its history as a former industrial site in preparing for its future development.

I want to refer to the Antarctic and science precinct on the Hobart waterfront to support Hobart as the gateway to the Antarctic. This is a fantastic opportunity and I am excited about that as the newish minister. We are talking of a commitment and an investment to Tasmania of \$160 million a year, thanks to the investment in Hobart, and Tasmania as the gateway to the Antarctic. It is 950-odd plus jobs every year in support for our economy, and it can only be enhanced. We see the opportunity to enhance that Antarctic and science precinct with access through the northern corridor route and access to a convention centre.

It is quite exciting and I am pleased with the discussions I have had with my federal counterpart, Tanya Plibersek, likewise, Ed Husic, and with Catherine King, the federal minister for Infrastructure. Those discussions have been positive and collaborative with respect to progressing plans for the Antarctic and science precinct.

We are not negative like the Labor Opposition. We are positive, and it will not be long before I will be able to release the five-year strategy and the vision for Hobart as the gateway. We have the deepest seawater port in the southern hemisphere in Hobart. It is fantastic and what an opportunity. Let us create that potential, let us build on that and make it work not just for Hobart: this will deliver benefits for all of Tasmania through manufacturing, jobs and development opportunities across the state.

At Triabunna, Elphinstone Engineering was already doing terrific work that supports our investment not just in Hobart but in the Antarctic. I have been there and visited many times over the years, and thanks to Graeme Elphinstone and his team down there; they do a great job.

As the Premier has made it clear, we remain committed to the development of the park and as a key element of the Macquarie Point vision these projects will continue to progress in parallel to the feasibility work. We believe these projects can be enhanced by the opportunities of being co-located with an arts, entertainment and sports precinct and we will continue to work with stakeholders on these priorities.

I want to say something about the Macquarie Point Development Board Corporation. I put on record my thanks to the board, my thanks to the acting CEO, Anne Beech, and the staff. I visited them last week and they are committed to the work on the site and to their work and their work plan. I say thank you to them on the public record, as I have done privately, and the corporation and its staff will continue to work through the remaining remediation work required, managing interim activation on the site and work with the developers while the feasibility work is underway.

In closing, I confirm again the Government's view is that this is a political stunt by the Labor Opposition. We will not be supporting this motion in any way shape or form. This is coming from an opposition with no plan, no vision, just constant criticism and negativity. You certainly have a reputation for it and it is no wonder that federal Labor has intervened on state Labor and replaced your administration and put you into administration. There is no surprise about that and the Tasmanian people know that full well. They know that we have been re-elected as a majority government since 2014-18 and 2018-21, and they have confidence because we have confidence in them. We have confidence in Tasmania to deliver a growing economy and invest in our essential services.

We do not want to hold the state back. We are not anti-everything, not anti-jobs, anti-infrastructure, or anti-projects like this. We are for Tasmania. We are for growing our economy and delivering more opportunities.

In closing I should mention the population. Why is it that we have had an extra nearly 50 000 people in the last five years?

Ms O'Connor - Many are climate refugees.

Mr BARNETT - Why is it? We had 569 827 people at the end of 2021. In terms of who they are, obviously that assessment is still being undertaken from the ABS stats but the national average in terms of the latest census data says that the 25 to 39 year age group has increased by 25 000 people to about 20 per cent of the state's total population. Why is that? It is because they want to come to Tasmania. They know there is opportunity here. They know we have a growing economy. That group of 25- to 39-year-olds are young families. They want to have a job, they want to live in Tasmania and they have aspirations for the future. This is because they like Tasmania, because Tasmania is the best place in the world to live, with opportunities to invest, thrive and grow our economy. They want to see opportunities for their kids and their families to grow.

That is what we are on about here with our majority Liberal Government. That is why that population has grown. There is more analysis of that and I am looking forward to an updated strategy which is expected to be released mid-next year. In the coming months the community will have a chance to have their say about our population.

It was the Opposition that said we have a population recession. This is Labor again being negative. Yes, we get an interjection from the Labor member for Braddon, Dr Broad. You got it dead wrong.

Dr Broad - You do not listen. You make up what I say.

Mr BARNETT - The economy is growing and the population is growing up to 50 000 and you are suggesting that there is a population recession. You have been caught out. The ABS statistics are out.

Dr Broad - You get it completely wrong every time. There is no point.

Mr BARNETT - You deny that?

Dr Broad - It is about the quarter. Two consecutive quarters is a recession.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - There you go. Labor was talking about a population recession. The population has grown because Tasmania is a great place to live. We will not have a bar of this motion. We are going to continue to grow our economy and reinvest in essential services, in health, in education, in police and in our homes and our plans for housing across this great state of Tasmania. We will continue to do that with every ounce of our efforts.

[4.56 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, in the little time I have left, I will offer my support to this motion. Tasmanians deserve answers and deserve the opportunity to be heard - regular Tasmanians, not only people on the opposite side of this Chamber. They seem to be the only ones really supporting building a second stadium in Hobart. It is ridiculous.

The biggest argument they have been putting up is misquoting the member for Bass, Ms Finlay. The only real defence they have offered over the past couple of days is misquoting Ms Finlay. It is a disgrace. They have been called out by their own members, their own supporters. Worst of all has been Fake-news Felix on his Facebook page, where the Police

minister of this state is deliberately misquoting and spreading lies for clicks and comments. It is an absolute disgrace. He knows we are against the \$750 million -

Mr SPEAKER - Dr Broad, you cannot accuse a member of telling lies.

Dr BROAD - I said 'spreading'. Anyway, I withdraw. He knows we are against the \$750 million second stadium in Hobart but not all infrastructure. This is the Police minister for the state. He posts, 'Labor say now is not the time to build new infrastructure. What a joke'. The joke is on him and he has been called out by his own followers on Facebook. I will give you some examples. Matt says:

This brand of politics is on the nose, Felix. Frequently sticking the boot into any non-Liberal member to deflect an issue or start an argument. Listen to the people of Braddon, including your senior Liberal members around the state, as none of your colleagues treat their role as an elected member with the lack of respect you currently are. Lift your game.

What standard is being set when we have the Police minister of this state spreading such misinformation? It is not only Matt who called out Mr Ellis on his Facebook page. Shane says:

Felix Ellis MP you are missing the point. No-one objects to what you have highlighted. It is the stadium that is not warranted.

Mark says:

What a surprise, a state Liberal politician who only provides half the story to promote their own self-interest regardless of what is factual.

Megan says:

We don't need an AFL stadium at this point. Look at roads, et cetera. Safety is more important than building a stadium.

Linnell says:

I agree there is far more important things than a new stadium. Many industries and businesses are struggling post-COVID-19. Invest there. Help the backbone of Tasmania.

Brody says:

If a vote for the stadium, not a political party, was put to the vote by Tasmanian voters, the result would be interesting. I think Labor are right.

Peter says:

How about investing some of those billions in fixing our health system and paying decent wages to them and emergency services.

Clare says:

Maybe Felix Ellis should read the comments here and see why us Tasmanians really want not what this Government think we want.

Karen says:

Fix mental health, housing, hospitals, emergency services first.

Michelle says:

I don't think we need a stadium for AFL. We have two grounds that already get used. Fix them up if they are not good enough. Use the land to build more housing and get these families living in parks into safe, dry places. Think of the people who are cold at night. Even down to our medical system. Mental health facilities full, not taking on new patients. Domestic violence shelters, full. Hospitals backed up. That money should be [? 5.00.16]

You have been called out. The Liberal Party has been called out by your own supporters.

Time expired.

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

The House divided -

AYES 10

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

NOES 10

Mrs Alexander
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Tucker
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

PAIRS

Ms Dow
Mr Winter

Ms Archer
Mr Street

Mr SPEAKER - The results of the division being Ayes 10, Noes 10, in accordance with standing order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Infrastructure Program

[5.06 p.m.]

Mr YOUNG (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Recognises the importance of investing in infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and support jobs.
- (2) Acknowledges the Tasmanian Government is delivering a record \$5.6 billion infrastructure program over four years, to build thriving communities, to harness our competitive advantages and create more opportunities for Tasmanians in every corner of our State. This includes billions of dollars invested in housing, health facilities and our schools.
- (3) Welcomes the Tasmanian Government's commitment to an arts, entertainment and sporting precinct at Macquarie Point which will help diversify our economy, activate public transport, and transform Hobart into a cultural, entertainment and sporting capital to rival any on mainland Australia.
- (4) Notes -
 - (a) that a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers report shows that a new 23 000 seat stadium at Macquarie Point would create 4200 jobs during construction and maintain 950 jobs a year during operation.
 - (b) that the proposed stadium would generate \$300 million in additional economic activity during construction and a further \$85 million each year when completed, and \$162 million in consumption due to a significant spike in the visitor economy.
- (5) Supports continued investment in infrastructure to further grow Tasmania's economy, which in turn enables the Government to invest more in essential services.

I will be requiring a vote.

Mr Speaker, the Tasmanian Liberal Government understands the value of infrastructure. Investment can improve the lives of Tasmanians, stimulate our economy and create jobs. This notice of motion notes the \$5.6 billion in our state Budget and forward Estimates for infrastructure investment across every corner of the state in roads and bridges, hospitals, housing and schools. This is just the state Budget commitment.

The Tasmanian 10-Year Infrastructure Pipeline, which is now available in digital form, sets out more than \$27 billion worth of planned Tasmanian Government, local government and known private sector projects over the next decade. The value of this pipeline to jobs and the economy cannot be overstated.

It beggars belief that the Opposition member for Bass has said that now is not the right time for significant infrastructure investment in Tasmania. It is not only the Tasmanian Liberal Government that supports infrastructure; now the private sector, local government and government business enterprises agree and have committed to these projects.

Since being released in July 2018, the pipeline has now almost doubled from its original \$13 billion in listed projects. Topping the infrastructure pipeline list is the energy sector, with an estimated investment of \$8 billion. Investment captured indicates a good spread across the state, with \$5 billion in projects planned for the north, \$8 billion for the north-west, and \$10.6 billion for the south, with \$3 billion allocated to statewide projects. The East Derwent Highway duplication is just one example in my electorate of Franklin of our commitment to infrastructure.

As my good friend Mr Tucker reminds me, the Great Eastern Drive action plan was the Tasmanian Government's funding commitment of \$30 million over five years to upgrade the Tasman Highway from The Sidling near Scottsdale through to Orford. The Government has also committed \$4.5 million to extend the Great Eastern Drive along Binalong Bay Road. The primary outcomes of these works are to deliver road improvements, pull-off areas and junction upgrades along the Great Eastern Drive corridor and the Tasman Highway to enhance the visitor experience between Orford and St Helens and to make the drive safer. Although it is not in my electorate in Franklin, it is a fantastic drive.

The Tasmanian Infrastructure Pipeline maps out the longer-term plans for the provision or upgrading of important public projects, including for roads, schools, hospitals, bridges and irrigation. It also includes the planned investment in clean energy-related projects over the next decade. Importantly, this kind of investment not only delivers the infrastructure our state needs for tomorrow but it creates jobs now. It keeps business operating and provides a cash injection into our local economies.

Across the next four years, our landmark infrastructure package is estimated to create around 25 000 jobs, more than 6000 each year, meaning more income for Tasmanian families to spend in our local economies. As a Liberal Government we unequivocally support this infrastructure investment. Clearly, the proponents for these projects believe that now is the time for significant infrastructure investment in Tasmania.

One project that is not captured in the 10-year infrastructure pipeline is an arts, entertainment and sporting precinct at Macquarie Point which will stimulate economic growth, activate public transport and transform a prime area of Hobart's waterfront into a cultural, sporting and entertainment hub that will be more than equal to any in Australia. I said in my maiden speech that I would like Tasmania to have the best of everything. This is certainly an example of that.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Report has demonstrated that a stadium at the site will create 4200 jobs during construction and maintain 950 jobs during its operation. The figures contained in the PwC Report speak for themselves. I encourage those who do not

support the stadium to look at it for what it will bring to Hobart, to read the report and understand the benefits to the economic wellbeing of Hobart and Tasmania as a whole, and in particular the visitor economy.

The Opposition Leader has claimed that she wants Tasmanians to thrive with a strong economy, secure jobs, outstanding public service and unlimited opportunities for young people. That is all well and good to say but Ms White does not support this project and she falsely criticises it as a binary choice between a stadium and social housing. The Leader of the Opposition completely fails to understand the impact of the arts and entertainment on our economy, dismissing the job creation and return on investment it will provide. It seems Labor has not progressed at all from the lost years when it was in coalition with the anti-development Greens in government.

Look how far the Tasmanian economy has progressed since then. Employment is at near record levels with over 29 400 jobs created since the election of the Liberal March 2014. Unemployment is at 4.9 per cent. State final demand grew 5.8 per cent in the 2021-22 year compared to the previous financial year. This was the second-strongest growth of all states and significantly better than the 2021-22 budget forecast of 3.75 per cent. State final demand in the four quarters to June 2022 are the strongest four quarters on record, at a massive \$40.3 billion. These are fantastic results driven by solid growth in consumption and investment across both the public and private sectors. I would also argue the result of a good plan.

Private sector investment continues to grow. In June 2022 private new capital expenditure increased by 6.5 per cent compared to June 2021. That is the strongest growth of all states. Investment has been recovering strongly thanks to our plan - up 16.3 per cent since the beginning of the pandemic and a huge 65.3 per cent compared to when we were elected in 2014. In 2020-21 our economy grew by 3.8 per cent. This was the second-fastest growth rate in the country and our fastest economic growth in 13 years. I am sure no-one in the House will disagree that they are fantastic numbers and our plan is working.

In terms of building approvals, there were 3193 dwelling approvals in the 12 months to July 2022, remaining at very high levels and demonstrating the continued strength and resilience in our economy. CommSec's State of the States for July 2022 shows that Tasmania's economy continues to be one of the strongest in Australia. Tasmania's strong economic performance continues on a majority of indicators, noting that Tasmania has been the number one place getter in the previous nine quarterly reports.

Deloitte's business outlook for the June quarter recognised the strength in the Tasmanian economy, forecasting economic growth in 2021-22 at 5.8 per cent.

It might seem obvious but having a strong economy allows us to invest into more things that Tasmanians care about like health, education, housing and community infrastructure - something we are definitely doing. We will continue to harness Tasmania's competitive strengths to build on these gains and grow an even more resilient and diverse economy.

Labor may want to kid itself about a new approach, but it is still the same old Labor and all that turmoil. The member for Bass, Ms Finlay's statement confirms it. They are relentlessly negative and it must be very tiring and depressing. Despite strong employment data and very low levels of unemployment, Labor continues to talk down our economy, and now it opposes infrastructure projects that will help grow our economy. Report after report with good news

from our economic recovery is met with doom and gloom from Labor. Its pessimism is understandable in some ways. Who would want to be a Labor member right now given the hostile takeover by the federal party? It should not let that negativity spill over though by trying to talk down our state at every opportunity. It damages our economy and it damages our potential to attract an AFL licence for a true Tasmanian team.

The former Labor-Greens government oversaw an economy that contracted quarter after quarter, year after year. In 2012-13 the state was plunged into recession and the gross state product actually went backwards in 2012-13. Just because they cannot run an economy it should not mean that they stand in the way of progress under a Liberal Government.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government knows that infrastructure investment grows the economy. It creates jobs and delivers the essential services Tasmania needs. Being involved in retail over the last 10-15 years, the one thing I can tell you is that when the construction and housing industry is going, the tradies have money, and when the tradies have money they love to spend, which works for everybody in retail. It builds demand. I commend this motion to the House.

[5.17 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I am surprised that the Government, in putting forward its own matter to be discussed about the economy, and about the stadium, spoke for maybe just less than 10 minutes on a 40-minute opportunity. This Government is determined, seemingly obsessed, with building a stadium and prioritising that over the needs of Tasmanians seeking support in the health system, Tasmanians who are desperate to find housing, Tasmanian educators who are desperate for the attention of this Government and the minister to recognise the working conditions and the needs they have to support Tasmanian children, yet they can find one person to speak for less than 10 minutes on what seems to be a signature project for them right now. I am not sure what they are trying to do with this this afternoon. I am confused by what has just happened.

The member for Franklin just then suggested I was, and by association Tasmanian Labor was, tired and depressed. Anyone who knows me well, what fuelled my system in order to stand up for Tasmanians and to deliver a message on behalf of Tasmanians to this Government, anyone who knows Tasmanian Labor right now, anyone who has been working with us or are supported by us, would now describe us as tired and depressed. When someone is standing in this parliament to advocate for a Government position in under 10 minutes, and suggests that we do not know what we are talking about, they need to go back and reflect on where they are at right now. Reflect on what their priorities are and get out of their bubble and reconnect with Tasmanians in order to understand the message Tasmanians are so desperately trying to deliver to them: that it is not the right time now to build another stadium in Tasmania, another stadium in Hobart, when there are so many other pressures facing the Tasmanian community.

The motion before us reads that we welcome the Tasmanian Government for the commitment to an arts, entertainment and sporting precinct, noting the report and noting that the proposed stadium would create opportunities for Tasmania.

I have not spoken to anybody in the last 24 hours, 48 hours, in the last seven to 10 days, who welcomes this commitment, this obsession by the Government. Therefore, this afternoon, we will not be supporting this motion before the House.

I will run through the questions that have been raised with me and share them with the parliament in order that the Government might take some time to reconsider their position. That is what we have been asking the Government to do: to reconsider the burden that you are placing on Tasmanians at a time where it is not needed and it is not wanted. The Tasmanian community cannot see how you could possibly afford to prioritise this over investments in other essential needs for Tasmanians.

As someone who has been in this place for a short time, but in local government for much longer, and been involved with so many capital projects and large projects, there is a whole range of things that an organisation that is credible and actually worthy of delivering such great projects would go through to get to a point where they would make a commitment. They would go through the process of really understanding both the capital costs that they are burdening a community with, and also those operational costs.

Earlier this morning, it was suggested that we did not understand the difference between capital and operational because we were comparing some operational costs and capital costs, as though the Treasurer himself did not understand that you build this stadium and there are going to be operational costs. Perhaps he did not understand this because they have spoken today, and on previous days and in other weeks here, about the fact they are going to do a feasibility study, and that will inform a business case. Minister Barnett said earlier that if that business case stacks up, we might deliver this project.

It sounds to me as though the strength and support of this Government for this significant project is starting to fall away. It sounds to me as though there is division in the Government about this project. It sounds to me as though there are people who are not so sure this is the right thing to do. My question to the Government, to the Premier, is this: why do you remain so obsessed when there are so few people who support this?

Earlier, my colleague, Dr Broad, shared with the parliament the bizarre effort of one of the members from the north-west coast last night, seeking to somehow make a reflection on the Opposition; they just backfired so poorly. The last count that I saw was 110 comments, most of which were delivering to the Government a very clear message to say this is not the right time and not the right type of infrastructure to invest in.

Tasmanians are really clear. Tasmanians live each and every day with the pressures of the rising cost of living, the pressure of not being able to make either their rental or their mortgage payments with increasing interest rates, and the pressure of increasing power prices. This Government from time to time says to us that we stand for nothing. I will tell you right now what we stand for. We stand for supporting Tasmanians in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. We call on the Government to cap power prices, do the things that are within your control, and ensure Tasmanians can pay a Tasmanian price for Tasmanian power, because all of the things you do, that say we have no position on, are things you are failing with as a government.

Anyone who has been watching for months and months will see how strongly Tasmanian Labor was standing in the corner of regional Tasmania, and standing in the corner of local fishers, ensuring that the economies of regional Tasmania were not devastated by the decisions the Government were about to make. It is only through us, working with Tasmanians, that the Tasmanian economy and the regional economy continue to be supported in this place. It is not because of the work of the Government. The Government are seeking to undermine

Tasmanians in their effort to support regional Tasmania. It is Tasmanian Labor that are standing with the people right now and supporting the needs in this community.

With this stadium that is being proposed, where the Government has no idea how much it is going to cost, I heard our leader, Ms White, say just earlier that it is curious that there was a decision, a commitment, of this Government made one day in this place, seemingly without any prior consultation or discussion with anybody, and someone just stood up, the former premier, and announced that we would have this stadium. There was a suggestion that a stadium at Regatta Point might cost \$750 million. There was an admission, by parts, that this was really just the scratchings off the back of an envelope, and the Government did not really know how much such a proposal would cost.

When we consider these matters it is important that the Government presents figures. Maybe to build a stadium there might be a certain amount, but what about all the associated infrastructure, and all the other things that are required to be delivered to ensure that a project actually comes off?

If this Government is so good at developing capital projects, they would know and be up front with the Tasmanian community about all these other associated costs. How curious is the 'back of the envelope' scratching of \$750 million - and then a new decision to move it around the corner and down the road a bit at Macquarie Point. A different type of stadium with different qualities and different elements: again, \$750 million.

I heard someone earlier in this place say it could be at least twice that amount to realistically develop a stadium of this nature in Tasmania. Who knows how much it is going to be, but just say it is twice as much. This morning we heard the Treasurer say, not that this Government is committed to \$375 million towards this project, but up to half of the capital costs of this project. We are burdening Tasmania with an unknown amount of capital infrastructure to be delivered for a stadium that people do not need or want. It is not \$375 million that the Government has previously suspected. The Treasurer this morning said it will be up to half that amount.

Let us move away from capital costs for a while and talk about operational expenses. We are hearing that, yes, there is a feasibility study that will happen, that will lead to informing a business case. This Government has committed: in the *Hansard* earlier this week said, 'We will build a stadium at Macquarie Point'. It is determined that it will happen without any understanding of those operational costs that are going to occur in that place: without any understanding of the maintenance costs; without any understanding of the depreciation burden; without any understanding of the increasing costs of interest that will be applied across the borrowings to deliver this project; and without any knowledge of what that is going to take. It is irresponsible of this Government to make this decision and burden Tasmanians at this time when there are so many other pressures in our community.

If we move away from capital costs, from operational costs, and towards the infrastructure that already exists in Tasmania, there has been some commentary this afternoon about the incredible York Park in northern Tasmania, in the electorate that I represent in Bass. Yes, there have been commitments to develop and do some upgrades at York Park, and they would see York Park deliver to the capacity of this proposed new stadium in Hobart. It is ridiculous when you have this facility in northern Tasmania. Whenever I have been at an event and people are visiting and coming to play on that turf - the turf that I have been so proud, as

part of my time with the Launceston City Council, to know that our team actually managed and maintain and look after that turf - gets applauded as one of the best turfs in the country.

People love coming to York Park. You sit in that stadium and you can see the beautiful surrounds of the mountains. You can see the great old buildings around the place. It is a great place to come, not only for sporting events, but as one member said this morning, in this new stadium in Hobart they are hoping to have other sporting events in Hobart. Well, your park already attracts and delivers great alternate sporting events - we have great BBL, the WBBL, whether it has been soccer or rugby, there are lots of other things that happen. We also have great events. There are incredible events that happen in northern Tasmania.

There has been a commitment made to the communities of northern Tasmania - in fact, the entire Tasmanian community, particularly the people of Launceston and northern Tasmania. At the moment, we have incredible gains at York Park. We have been able to attract marque games to York Park, and there has been a commitment that there will be no fewer games at York Park in Launceston. If we are able to have four marque football events in Launceston and four other marque events - blockbuster games and blockbuster events - at York Park, then how is it that that commitment will remain, if the proposed new Hobart stadium is going to attract and deliver 44 events? To make that project viable, they want to tell Tasmanians that they are going to have and deliver and attract 44 major events - sell-out events, no less - in order to make the viability work.

If you are going to try to have a top-level event in Hobart every eight days, first, when we have mounting cost-of-living pressures, how are you expecting the Tasmanian community to have the additional funds in their budgets to be able to front up to an event every eight days, not even every eight weeks, and to do that without actually taking those events away from Launceston and northern Tasmania? There has been a commitment and I have already put it on the record, that the community of Launceston and northern Tasmania will fight this Government tooth and nail if that commitment is not maintained.

If Launceston and northern Tasmania, knowing the benefit of these types of activities that come, particularly in the winter months in northern Tasmania, have them taken away from our community to help make more viable another stadium that is not needed and not wanted in Hobart, then there will be an uprising in northern Tasmania. There is also a great stadium in the south. Bellerive is a stadium in the south and other members who have been to events there have talked about the benefits of such a stadium.

When Tasmania has great infrastructure, the member who stood and spoke earlier said he wants this new stadium to be the best of the best in the country. Sometimes you have to look at the type of infrastructure you need in the community and ask, what do we have now, what can we do to improve that, do we need to be the very best in the country right now, or are there other priorities?

Yesterday we posted a petition to stop the stadium to allow Tasmanians to directly have their voices heard and thousands of people have already signed that petition. It is clear, more than anything that has happened in my time here in a little over a year, that Tasmanians do not want this. I do not understand how this Government is so out of touch or cannot hear and cannot see the rising of the Tasmanian community to say, 'you have got this wrong'.

I have had phone calls from people who have been die-hard in the ditch life-time supporters of the Liberal Party who say 'you know we are supporters of the Liberal Party and they have got this wrong. It is not the right time and it is not the right investment now'. Even the taskforce that did the work around this project said that in the future it might be the right time for new a stadium infrastructure in Tasmania, but it is not the right time now. York Park could have improvements and Bellerive could have improvements, but the AFL and others already deliver incredible outcomes on these facilities.

I intentionally used the word 'infrastructure' in my contribution. It has been said that as the member for Bass, I made a statement to say that we do not support new infrastructure. That could not be further from the truth and the Government knows that and the Government, in intentionally misrepresenting me both online on social media and in this place, has been called out. I have called them out and said that is not what was being said at the time. Not only that, the Speaker made a ruling on that, yet people, the Premier and ministers included, and even the new backbencher now, continue to reflect on that ridiculous comment.

Earlier today, it was said that when a member makes a personal explanation, that should be good enough for members. There has been a personal explanation made and I hope the Chamber acknowledges that and works with that. Perhaps this Government is so desperate that it wants to get out of the feeling it has right now that they have got this so wrong, that they have to clutch at straws to try to make some sort of reflection on people on this side of the House in order to distract from what is going on. Support is falling away from them, there is internal division about this project, yet they remain obsessed with delivering on this project.

We will not be misrepresented in this place and we will not have our record tarnished. It has been suggested that Tasmanian Labor stands for nothing. I tell you what we stand for, we stand for Tasmanians. We stand for supporting Tasmanians who are under pressure right now. We stand for Tasmanians being able to not only pay a Tasmanian price for Tasmanian power, we stand for Tasmanians in regional Tasmania being supported for the contributions they make to their communities and when this Government seeks to undermine that, we stand with them to make sure that will not eventuate.

I have talked about our fishers, we have talked about power prices, and there are 70 farmers right now under the line of the transmission line and they have come together to deliver a message to this Government to say 'you need to respect and value us, at least equally to the energy policies of Tasmania to ensure that the contributions we can make to Tasmania, to the country and to the world, are not undermined by competing policies from this Government'. They feel like they are not being heard or respected and that is on this Government; that is not on Tasmanian Labor. Tasmanian Labor stand with Tasmanians. We stand with supporting Tasmanians to ensure that they can have a great life.

This morning on the lawns, we saw educators, support staff, people who give their life's work to educating our children, feeling disrespected and disregarded by this Government, not even having the time to go out and meet with them to hear how concerned they are right now about the circumstances in which they are living. That is what Tasmanian Labor does. We stand with people who need support to stand up to this Government to see that they can prioritise on the right things. Getting back to basics is important and it is important for Tasmanians that this Government understands what is really going on.

In the context of building this new stadium and proposing to do this in Hobart, with the contributions I have heard in question time this morning and repeatedly and on other days this week, it is clear to me that this Government has not read the 3P Advisory report, and does not understand just how much pressure the Tasmanian community is under. The Government does not understand that it is not just a small number of people who are struggling in Tasmania right now, it does not seem to even understand its own dashboard result in terms of how many Tasmanians are waiting for housing, waiting to see specialists, or on the elective surgery list. It just goes on and on and on: the number of Tasmanians who are feeling let down. They are feeling left behind, and they are feeling like this Government does not want to or does not know how to understand what is really bothering them right now and what pressures they have in their community.

If this Government took a moment and took a breath and said, 'maybe we could go out and have conversations with everyday Tasmanians,' then they would understand that pressure but they are so obsessed with developing this new stadium in Tasmania that they do not seem to want to get what is important to most Tasmanians. That is one of the things that I have not understood in my time here. I have not understood the difference between whether this Government does not understand or does not want to understand, that it does not hear or does not want to hear, that it does not get it or does not want to get it. For the many Tasmanians right now who are struggling, it is important for this Government to get back to basics and fix their priorities so that Tasmanians do not feel like they are not cared for and they are not important.

There are so many people in our community making a contribution each day, whether they be in small business, on the land or on the water, whether they be an employee in our public service, or whether they be a worker in an incredible range of industries that we have in Tasmania. It almost feels to me that in every sector that I come across, everybody I speak to, there are worries in Tasmania that the Government is just not picking up on and understanding why it is not the right time to build this infrastructure in Hobart right now.

I also want to reflect on things I have been hearing about why this is not the right time. We all know that infrastructure has the capacity to develop economic growth, however, sometimes you can build things that do not support growth, or do not deliver outcomes for a community, or do not seem to be productive or beneficial decisions and projects. If this Government focused on delivering things of quality for Tasmanian people, then they might trust that - as minister Barnett said - this Government has the capacity to walk and chew gum.

I regularly drive up and down the Midland Highway and I speak to other people on that road. They question why it is that whenever they see a new piece of road being built, that not long after it feels like the quality is just not there. What is it about this Government that is finding it so difficult to deliver basic infrastructure projects to the quality that Tasmanians expect? Why is it that when you could be delivering productive infrastructure and positive outcomes for Tasmanians, you struggle to be able to deliver on the quality that people expect.

Right now, it is not just that Tasmanians have all these other pressures, that Tasmanians have all these other worries that they are not able to live on and live with comfortably, but they do not trust that this Government can deliver. They do not trust that when the Government makes announcements it is able to follow through. We started to hear some quivers in the voices of some of the ministers this morning, saying 'well, maybe,' or we saw masses of pauses and crickets when tested and pushed on whether these ministers actually supported the stadium,

whether they could respond - at moments there was silence and crickets. When we cannot even tell whether this Government is united and backing of this stadium, why would the Tasmanian people trust this Government to deliver it?

Why would the Tasmanian people trust this Government? One of the comments on Mr Ellis' Facebook page said:

Why would we trust that if you commit to this project, you are not just going to leave all the other projects behind like, for instance, in our community in Launceston, the LGH?

How many times have there been announcements for a \$580 million masterplan development of the LGH? How many times has that promise been made to the community but not followed up on?

Yes, there are works progressing. Yes, there are things in train, but for the cost you are saying this stadium will be, you could deliver the LGH masterplan and more. You could deliver other projects in the community. Why are you prioritising a stadium in Hobart that we do not need or want over the redevelopment of the LGH that the community is crying out for? The LGH has the worst bed-block, ambulances are ramping and ambulance officers at their wits' end and close to breaking point.

We heard the part-time Health minister and part-time Premier this morning talking about statistics of new nurses. How many nurses are not in those positions because they are off, they are unwell, they are stressed, they are not able to front up to work because of the conditions that they have been in?

We know that the work required at the LGH is urgent. We know that this Government, if it had its priorities right would commit the funds to the LGH development over another stadium in Hobart. That is not what this Government is about. We know that. All of our offices on this side have people every week coming in who are struggling to secure safe and affordable housing. You can spruik all sorts of numbers about housing developments in Tasmania but how many houses are you actually delivering? The figures you have put out in your big plans for housing should see you building three houses a day. For every day you do not deliver, that is a greater burden on the expectation that you will deliver.

It is not okay for Tasmanians any more to hear minister upon minister make announcements and not follow up and deliver. Tasmanians lose faith in people when they make statements and do not or cannot deliver, whether it be on the LGH, whether it be on housing, or whether it be the people in our public sector workforce who have shared what is happening in their workplaces. We saw the educators this morning talking about their poor conditions. We have seen ambulance officers taking action. We have seen our nurses, our child safety officers and our firies all taking action because this Government is not listening.

Right now, when there are so many challenges, whether it be the workforce, whether it be health, whether it be housing, whether it be the pressures of cost of living, Tasmanians will not be fooled by this Government. Tasmanians are catching on to the fact that this Government can say all sorts of things but cannot deliver. Right now, when you are saying when you want to deliver this new stadium in Hobart, they are asking why would you do that when you are not even delivering on the basics? You are not getting the basics right now so why would we trust

that you want this big great shiny object in Hobart when we want the fundamentals to be delivered?

Tasmanians expect a government to understand where they are at, to understand what it feels like to live under pressure. This Government repeatedly says it has all these great supports delivering for people in our community who are finding it tough. What I have said repeatedly, and what they do not seem to be able to understand, is that it is not just Tasmanians in a small cohort who are struggling. There are more and more Tasmanians every day finding it tough. There are more Tasmanians living every day needing health services that they cannot get access to. There are more Tasmanians every day on the lists for housing but they have no confidence or trust that they will be able to secure housing.

There are more Tasmanians struggling every day yet this Government seems to think that a brand new big shiny object in Hobart is going to somehow fix the economy. I thought he got it wrong when he said it first but it has never been withdrawn and they keep doubling down on it, but the Premier seemed to indicate to Tasmanians that we build a big stadium and we will be able to fund health. We will be able to fund housing.

I get the economy and I get growing the economy is important, but that does not give you extra state revenue to the point where you can fund your hospitals. If it can, I would love to see the evidence. In my time at the Launceston City Council we did a lot of looking at stadium development around the country. Not one stadium did we ever find that actually had positive revenue.

When you go through your feasibility and you get to your business case and you say, 'Oops, we bugged up there, because you cannot actually do this, what we said to the Tasmanian people is not, true', what are you going to do? Where will you get the funds from to cover the operational expenses for this stadium so that it does not end up like the Silverdome, which people refer to as a white elephant?

You say that the solution to this stadium is events, and how amazing would that be? Other people have talked up the outcomes of basketball in Tasmania. They have talked up the outcomes of My State Arena. They have talked up the outcomes of the JackJumpers. There was a pretty clever and intelligent person driving all of those things who made masses of personal investment into making sure that would happen, on what is comparatively a fairly small scale. You have a stadium that needs 5000 people to see a basketball game a few times a year, and other events. That is nothing compared to a 23 000-seat stadium. That is in addition to the stadium in the north that can have that capacity and the stadium in the south. Then you want to put 44 events there?

I can remember when the PW1 project was being spruiked. There were going to be all these events, and it was going to be all so amazing. It is an incredible facility, but how many events have been delivered there? I would love this Government to put on the record how many events it has been able to attract to that venue. How many events do you seriously think that you can attract to this new stadium that will not take away from other events in Tasmania?

People have talked about Robbie Williams coming to Tasmania. Take out a few football games and let us say 35 others just like that. This Government is so out of touch that it has its priorities wrong. Tasmanians know it, they can see it, and they are trying to send you a message. It is time you stopped and listened because, if not, to quote Robbie Williams: 'You

are going to come undone. No one is ever going to forget because right now you are doing something stupid'.

[5.48 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Mr Speaker, I offer to split the remaining time. We have heard a lot of words just now from the member for Bass. Her words from last week have been quoted often in this House for very good reason because the Labor Party is compromised on significant investment in new infrastructure in Tasmania.

The member who has just resumed her seat is on the record and, not only that, it has been videoed and put on the websites of a number of newspapers - I think the *Mercury* - in a disastrous media interview, where, on the one hand, the member looked absolutely stunned and unable to respond to a legitimate question on where the Labor Party stood on gaming policy, and in the same disastrous interview is known to have said 'this is not' -

Ms Finlay - How can you go on delivering it, minister? Another announcement, no ability to deliver.

Mr FERGUSON - You had your turn. - where the member clearly documented, 'It is not the right time for significant investment in new infrastructure in Tasmania'. I find it galling, because it was the Leader of the Opposition. When I quote the Leader of the Opposition's own words from the *Mercury* newspaper, reported by James Kitto, they get very hot under the collar. The Leader of the Opposition was at an RACT forum saying that we should spend less on infrastructure. When they get their words quoted back at them, they get very triggered. What is clear is that infrastructure in Tasmania has no friend in the Labor Party.

I have been through this 100 times. At least when we do have a budget discussion, the Greens will - led by their convictions - slash infrastructure funding in their alternative budget and they explain why.

Ms O'Connor - Only the bad funding.

Mr FERGUSON - They are at least prepared to commit it to their alternative budget. Not so with this lazy Labor Party, who I again say do stand for nothing because they are in a disastrous mess at the moment.

I will deal with the stadium discussion head-on. In the lead-up to a decision to a Tasmanian AFL team - which is very exciting for Tasmania and ought to excite all members here; we should be united around that - we are doing the feasibility work, improving an exciting game-changing sports and entertainment and art precinct, the stadium at Macquarie Point, as our preferred location. Yes, we have changed our preferred location, and why is that? We have taken advice about the best credentials, and we have taken the view that Macquarie point is a superior site.

Mr Speaker, I want to argue with the member for Bass, Ms Finlay: now is the time to provide better infrastructure for our growing state. Now is the time to provide better, safer, more modern infrastructure to improve the lives of Tasmanians and give them the outlets that they want as well. That is why the Government has taken this position.

We know that is not the view of the Opposition, because in their desperate scramble to be negative - which I was about to say is the only thing they are good at - they are not even very good at that because if they wanted to be negative, they would come up with an alternative, but they are not prepared to do that.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - I remind the Opposition that the previous speaker was heard in silence.

Mr FERGUSON - It was hard work, with that wall of words, Mr Speaker, but we did - but this is at odds with the Opposition Leader and the member for Bass has said. Ms White said she wants Tasmanians to thrive with a strong economy, secure jobs, outstanding public service and unlimited opportunities for young people. Ms White then failed to back her own words with actions at the very first opportunity and we are getting this negativity from the Opposition on a Tasmanian team in the AFL. It is anti-investment and frankly it is anti-everything from the Labor Party.

I can think of somebody who would be very proud of the Labor Party at the moment and that would be Bob Brown. He would be very impressed because the Labor Party are following the same copy book.

Mr Speaker, I will surrender the floor to Ms O'Connor, who has been good enough to split the time. I will say, have a look away from the stadium, at other infrastructure. This Labor Party is no friend of new infrastructure. Have a look at what we are trying to do for housing. They play politics on housing. I noticed earlier this week they played politics on the Housing Land Supply orders, which were always intended to have a mix of uses -

Mr Winter - Have not built a home, not a single one.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. I remind Labor, please.

Mr FERGUSON - so that we would have more options for social and affordable housing. Have a look at what is going on in the other House at the moment. The Labor Party is fighting the Government right through the debate on the homes legislation which is, in fact, the vehicle that will allow us to build those 10 000 more homes by 2032. We are quite happy. We would love it if we got some more support for our other investments and infrastructure that is for a social purpose - and housing is prince among them.

I commend the motion and thank Mr Young for his work.

Mr SPEAKER - Treasurer, even though you have finished, I remind the House that we do not reflect on any discussions from the other place. As a reminder to the whole House, be careful when you are talking about the debates in the other place.

[5.54 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, this is a classic Wednesday afternoon Government notice of motion for private members' time, often given to new members to test themselves a bit, with a speech that is invariably written for them.

There are parts of this motion that you could not argue with. Who could argue that it is important that we invest in infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and support jobs? Our issue, as Greens, is the type of infrastructure that government prioritises. We have had a government that has, for years, prioritised roads funding over houses and homes for people - and for the first three state budgets, because of that mind set, we had huge sums of capital money going into roads, road construction and repairs, and we had no new money going into social and affordable housing which is part of the reason we are in the housing crisis that we are in.

As an island we are not investing enough into mass transit. We have a rail corridor in Hobart which has never been activated which is waiting for a Government to understand that in the 21st century you need to get cars off the road for the climate and for the health of people. We have heard nothing from Government on the rail corridor, and the potential for that to activate that whole area in terms of housing and businesses. It would be wonderful if we had a Government that invested in light rail.

We have another motion that talks about the economy and infrastructure and says nothing about the climate. It says nothing about the fact that we have accelerating global heating impacts on this island. We are going to have sea level rise, storm surge, increased risk of bushfires and extreme weather events, and any infrastructure we are building or upgrading needs to be climate resilient.

I remember having this conversation with Mr Hidding in the early days, in 2014-15 when he was the new minister for transport and infrastructure. We asked him what kind of analysis he was doing about the climate readiness of the infrastructure we have, and what we have to change in order to build infrastructure that lasts. He made vague noises after slightly rolling his eyes at me and here we are eight years later and that thinking has not yet permeated Government. It has to. The climate is heating. What the scientists told us would be happening in the later part of this century is happening now. The conversations we used to have about the world our grandchildren will inherit, our kids are dealing with it now. We need to sharpen up the way we think about, talk about and fund infrastructure. This minister is in a unique situation to do something about that.

Briefly, the Homes Tasmania Bill which the Greens also did not support is not the vehicle for delivering more social and affordable housing. Despite Mr Young's criticism when he described us as anti-development, during those years between 2010 and 2014, Housing Tasmania and the Housing Innovation Unit delivered more than 2000 social and affordable homes. They did not have to be a statutory authority to do that: two Common Ground facilities, Thyne House in Launceston, Trinity Hill in Hobart. You do not need to externalise your housing agency in order to build more social and affordable homes. If that was the answer, surely Government would have done it when the housing crisis first became so painfully obvious. I refute the allegation or the assertion that the Labor-Greens government drove this state into debt. I do not know how well-versed Mr Young is in the global financial crisis but all over the world economies were struggling. It was a global financial crisis.

The budget that we brought down in 2011, which took a lot of guts from then premier and treasurer Giddings and all of us who stood with her, was the budget that started to reset the economy here and the economy started turning around in 2013. We took our responsibility as economic managers very seriously and we helped to steer this state through pain and recession. We did it because it was the right thing to do. All the while we were doing our very best to

buffer the state service from the impacts, trying to spread the impacts out as we made the savings that we know needed to be made. Nonetheless we were able to build more houses in those four years than the Government has built in eight because the Government only sees hard infrastructure as a priority and not social infrastructure.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6 p.m.