

Tuesday 25 September 2018

The President, **Mr Wilkinson**, took the Chair at 11 a.m. and read Prayers.

TABLED PAPERS

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation - Reports

[11.03 a.m.]

Ms Rattray presented the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation annual report 2017-18 and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation report on the Public Health (Infringement Notices) Amendment Regulations 2017 (Statutory Rules No. 108).

Reports received and report on the Public Health (Infringement Notices) Amendment Regulations 2017 printed.

RECOGNITION OF VISITOR

Galia Bastoni

Mr PRESIDENT - Galia Bastoni, an intern from the Department of Premier and Cabinet intern, is visiting parliament for the morning session and we welcome her.

Members - Hear, hear.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Oakdale Industries

[11.05 a.m.]

Ms SIEJKA (Pembroke) - Mr President, Oakdale Industries is a social enterprise located in my electorate of Pembroke. Operating since 1964, Oakdale trains and employs more than 30 people living with a disability.

Oakdale Industries employees are trained and supported to manufacture a range of high-quality timber products such as flooring, external cladding, lattice, garden stakes, cheese boards and drink coasters. They specialise in using Tasmanian timbers, including Tasmanian oak and blackwood to create these products.

Supported employees have the opportunity to identify their own goals and build their skills and confidence in the workplace through certified training opportunities delivered in-house. This includes training in areas of quality assurance and safety.

I am pleased to let members know several guests from Oakdale Industries are present here today, and I would like to introduce them in more detail.

Daniel Lucas has been with Oakdale for six years and enjoys working in joinery with his supervisor. Daniel's work includes making jewellery boxes and beehives, and sanding, sawing and staining.

Ms Rattray - I have an order in for one already. A jewellery box.

Ms SIEJKA - Daniel loves being at Oakdale because people are treated nicely and they are working with their friends. He is a keen Richmond supporter and I have no doubt he would have been cheering his team on over the weekend.

Chris Bowerman has been at Oakdale for over 40 years and also loves the friendship and how everyone is treated. He enjoys making parquetry, ladders and pegs among other things. He is very loyal to Oakdale and says he would not work anywhere else. Chris is also a massive country and western music fan.

Jason Reid has been employed at Oakdale for 10 years, including time at the Tahune Fields Nursery and then recently coming to Oakdale. Jason's work includes docking, packing and overlay. Jason loves swimming and represented Tasmania at the Special Olympics. He recently participated in a carnival where he won nine gold medals. Jason loves the teamwork and friendship and how everyone is treated at Oakdale.

Steven Wakeling has been at Oakdale for close to 40 years. He had a break for a few years ago and came back to Oakdale 17 years ago, as he loves working there, the supervisors and his friends. Steven is confident in his skills across most areas, but he mainly works as a packer, fixing sawdust bins, cleaning up the machines and stacking and packing. Steven enjoys watching his beloved North Melbourne team play.

Finally Mark McKeon is Operations Manager at Oakdale. Prior to this role Mark spent 20 years in the Army, retiring as a major; he has experience serving in Army operations in Somalia. Mark has a sister living with a disability, so he has an acute understanding of his team's needs and wants. He believes he has the best job in the world and would love it if other employers really understood the true and untapped potential of people living with disabilities.

I warmly welcome you all to the Legislative Council and thank you for visiting us today.

I am pleased members of the Oakdale team could attend today because I am extremely impressed with the range of high-quality products you produce, which I saw firsthand on my visit.

Oakdale Industries has a number of professional supervisors and long-term supported employees. It was wonderful to visit the team and inspiring to see the enthusiasm you all have for your work.

As reflected in my introductions to our guests present today, they really enjoy their work and working for Oakdale. You can also see from my introductions of each worker, much of which was provided by Mark, that a great deal of care and interest is shown in the activities of each team member, which creates a wonderful work atmosphere at Oakdale.

While they may have different interests or barrack for different teams, they all share a love of their workplace and take pride in their work. At Oakdale they are determined to deliver personal

customer service and have customers based locally, nationally and internationally. People all over the world are having the opportunity to enjoy products manufactured in the electorate of Pembroke.

Oakdale Industries is a fantastic example of how people of different skills and abilities contribute to our economy and community. I was very grateful to the team for hosting me and my Labor colleagues on a tour of the premises recently because I also became aware of the ways in which workplaces can be more inclusive for people living with disabilities.

During the tour Mark spoke about how he introduced blue warning lights on forklifts to help supported employees understand how far away they need to be from a forklift while it is in operation. Mark's idea was inspired by his sister who has worked in an Australian disability enterprise for 35 years. He saw what could be put in place to improve and support comprehension of safety requirements in the workplace. Forklifts already use sound and flashing lights to warn staff that they are in operation. This is an additional signal for staff to ensure they maintain a safe distance between themselves and the forklift. These signals can be difficult for supported employees to comprehend as they understand visually based cues much more easily.

Working in a factory is very loud and busy, which can also make these signals less effective. For example, staff need to wear personal protective equipment that may make it difficult to hear warning sounds. The blue warning lights on forklifts operate by projecting a blue splotch of light onto the floor at the distance staff are required to be away from the forklift while it is in motion. This provides a clear visual cue to supported staff about how far away they need to be rather than having to estimate this distance themselves.

The colour of the light is important because it is easier for most people with colour blindness to perceive. This simple device makes it easier to comprehend areas not to go into or potential dangers in the workplace. These devices are not compulsory for forklifts, but are a simple and effective solution to improving safety for all workers. Mark wants to improve safety for all people where there is plant and people interaction.

I think we can all agree that improving the safety of people while at work is important. We have the opportunity to do this by supporting Mark in his efforts to have blue warning lights available in workplaces across the state. I encourage members to learn more about ways workplaces can be more inclusive for people living with disabilities, and to familiarise themselves with the fantastic products being made in Tasmania by the team at Oakdale.

Once again, I thank my guests here today. It is amazing to see the passion you have for your work and the wonderful products you produce.

Chantal Byrne - Tribute

[11.12 a.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Prosser) - Mr President, it is wonderful to see young people who are passionate about making a positive difference in their community. I take this opportunity today to talk about a very inspiring individual I met earlier this year.

Chantal Byrne is a young lady from Oatlands who is a part-time manager at the local bottle shop. She and her husband Chris have two young children: Chloe, eight, and Emily, six. Chantal is passionate about contributing to the Oatlands District High School community and the Oatlands

community as a whole. Each year she dedicates a large amount of her personal time to volunteering at the school to assist the students with their learning. She also volunteers at the Midlands Multi-purpose Centre and organises various fundraisers for the community.

Three years ago, Chantal began hosting a now annual event that raises funds for the Oatlands District High School - a ladies' event, which is a night filled with fun just for ladies, to raise money for the Oatlands District High School. Last month I had the opportunity to attend the event and I must say, member for McIntyre, you were very much missed. Everywhere I go around my communities, everyone asks me to please pass on their regards to you - I know I have very big athletic shoes to fill. I will certainly give it my best shot.

More than 80 people attended this event at the Oatlands RSL. The evening was a great deal of fun for everyone who came along, and we raised \$6000. Last year \$3000 was raised. It was great and really worthwhile, and the funds are so well used by the school.

Chantal's next community project is helping to plan the school fair, which is on 24 November. I am looking forward to heading to Oatlands for what I am sure will be a very enjoyable event. I encourage all honourable members to come along with their families and friends and participate in the great activities that will be there.

Chantal is not only a volunteer and a working mum. She and her husband Chris are entrepreneurs; they have started a small business. Chris is a full-time farmhand who works on his father's garlic farm, Dundee Farm, in Whitefoord. Since 2015 Chantal and Chris have devoted the very little spare time they have between their work, parental responsibilities and volunteering to establish a new product line. Fresh Tasmanian garlic is their passion. It is in high demand. Tasmanian garlic cannot be available all year round because of our growing conditions. Chantal and Chris began experimenting and playing with some ideas of how they could make Tasmanian garlic available all year round.

They eventually developed a range of garlic-based condiments, which are grown and manufactured at Dundee Farm. Dundee Garlic currently has two products available: a garlic granule jar and a garlic sea salt grinder jar. I can personally attest that both products are delicious. I feel incredibly sorry for the member for Hobart for having to sit next to me as I am totally addicted and overuse these products on a daily basis.

Mr Valentine - I will just change seats.

Ms HOWLETT - Just adjust the seat. Chantal and Chris, as much as they can, source all their products locally. The jars are supplied by Tasmanians and the salt is a Tasmanian product. The product labels are also printed in Tasmania. Chantal says that establishing Dundee Garlic has been hard work; however, it is starting to pay off. Currently the range is sold at 15 retailers across the state. Chantal says that Dundee Garlic has the potential to keep growing. She is hoping the outlets stocking it will increase to over 30 by early next year.

Chantal and Chris are also intending to expand their product range. They recently experimented producing a limited batch of preservative-free garlic puree. This product sold out so fast that it outstripped their supply, which is a great position to be in. They intend to expand their current dehydrated condiment range and are currently also experimenting with a range of garlic-based spice condiments.

Chantal is hopeful that Dundee Garlic will be adding two more products to its current range in the not too distant future. I thank Chantal and Chris for all the work they do in the Oatlands community. I thank them for their entrepreneurial spirit and for investing in regional Tasmania.

Tasmanian Little Athletics

[11.26 a.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, as usual the Chamber empties when I start to speak. We are often told that young people these days are too sedentary - watching too much television, playing too many games on their mobile phones and what have you.

Ms Rattray - Some.

Mr FINCH - Some, yes - I am going to get to that. This lifestyle, though, is a growing problem along with the growing obesity among children, which is often referred to these days. It is not like the good old days when we were pretty active. The good old days, remember those? Some good things are happening that are bucking that trend, and I am going to talk about one of those today: Little Athletics. It is a uniquely Australian activity program, mainly for children from five to 16 years.

As the name suggests, it is based on the sport of track and field athletics and includes a wide range of events from running, jumping and throwing to walking. They are all very enthusiastically pursued. The program creates opportunities for kids to find their niche, to develop their individual talent, whether it is endurance, speed, power or school-based events. This builds up their confidence and knowledge. It leads to their maturity at a young age. It is a great foundation, too, for any sport where all the components of fitness are developed through participation in events every weekend for about five months of the year.

Little Athletics evolved in 1963, through the mind and the conscience of a Victorian, Trevor Billingham. He recognised the need and then introduced this concept to meet that need. He noted that many young people wanted to compete in athletics but they were thought to be too young. He started Saturday morning competitions in Geelong on the first Saturday of October 1964. Three years later the Victorian Little Athletics Association was formed. That concept was introduced to Tasmania in Launceston in 1973. There are now more than 2500 registered members in Tasmania, competing at 21 centres.

Our family did 10 years at Little Athletics. I am still the patron of the Launceston Little Athletics Centre. Every year I give six prizes called the Endeavour Award. They do not necessarily go to good athletes, but to those who have matured and are good citizens.

Ms Rattray - Doing PBs?

Mr FINCH - Doing PBs. The clubs assess children for Endeavour Awards based on the way they attend training and deal with younger people and older people and how they conduct themselves with their parents, other people's parents and also themselves onsite. It is not just about being good at athletics.

Apart from giving young people the chance to be more physically fit, there are other benefits, and not just for competitors. There are opportunities for community bonding, which is also important for parents. Competitors and their parents can interact with others they might not

normally meet. Parents can develop as administrators, or as judges or coaches. There is something in it for everybody.

Children meet students from a wide range of backgrounds and from all over Tasmania when they compete in regional and state events. If they are lucky they get to travel interstate to represent Tasmania. There are coaching camps for under-12s and under-13s in January each year. They are so popular that next year's camps are already sold out. All Little Athletics athletes of the appropriate age are welcome to attend regardless of ability. The camps are fully catered for - all meals and accommodation are included - with 36 boys and 36 girls attending each camp. It is a tremendous opportunity for social interaction. Many bonds are formed in Little Athletics that last a lifetime.

Our community is littered with sports people who have become successful having started in Little Athletics. Sam Lonergan went on to Exeter High School to Essendon then to Richmond, then back here; now he is coaching and playing for the Launceston Football Club. Another example is Milly Clark, or Amelia as we knew her when she was competing. She was the fastest Australian female marathon runner at the Rio Olympics in 2016. She believes that Little Athletics had a great impact on her running career. She still keeps in touch with many of her Little Athletics colleagues from South Launceston. Some of them continue to be active. As we speak, she is training on my exercise bike at Greens Beach this morning.

Ms Rattray - Look out when you get back.

Mr FINCH - It is not worn out. She is training for the Tokyo Olympics. Little Athletics Tasmania attracts a wide range of sponsors. The state Government has a hand in this, as does the RACT. If Little Athletics were not already such a strong part of our community, we would have to urgently invent it.

Margaret McIntyre - Tribute

[11.24 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) ' Mr President, I have had a strong connection with Little Athletics for many years and I support what the member for Rosevears has said.

Mr Finch - The east coast produces some great athletes.

Ms RATTRAY - And the north-east and right across.

Mr Finch - And McIntyre.

Ms RATTRAY - I am going to speak about Margaret McIntyre. Last week during his Special Interest contribution, the member for Rosevears shared with the House his view of women in parliament and gender equality in Australian parliaments. He spoke of Margaret McIntyre, the first woman elected to the Tasmanian Parliament in 1948. I omitted to interject, so I was chastised when the member sat back down - hence my speech today - which generated some discussion following that reference to Margaret. As I shared with the member, I have the privilege of representing the electorate named after the very same Margaret McIntyre. The member for Rosevears agreed it is worthy we know more about Margaret McIntyre.

McIntyre was chosen by the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Redistribution Tribunal in honour of Margaret, who represented this House in the division of Cornwall and whose boundaries fell largely within the new proposed division.

Born Margaret Edgeworth David on 28 November 1886 and passing away on 2 September 1948, she was the first woman elected to the Parliament of Tasmania, representing the seat of Cornwall in the Legislative Council.

Margaret was born in Maitland, New South Wales. Her parents, Sir Tannatt William Edgeworth David, a renowned geologist and Antarctic explorer, and her mother, Lady Caroline Martha David, a teacher, moved to Australia in 1882. Margaret was encouraged to become educated and study for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney, graduating in 1907. She married Dr William Keveral McIntyre at St. John's Ashfield in 1908, and they moved to Tasmania where they set up a medical practice and had four children.

Margaret was widely involved in the community and for these services was appointed an OBE in 1948. Her activities included serving as the State Commissioner for Girl Guides and serving on the board of the Queen Victoria Hospital and the ABC State Advisory Committee. She was also a vice-president of the Young Women's Christian Association and was involved in the establishment of the Brooks Community School in Launceston; she also ran a youth drama group.

In 1948 she was elected as an independent candidate for the seat of Cornwall, becoming the first woman in the Tasmanian Legislative Council. Six months after her election, while returning from a National Council of Women of Australia conference in Brisbane, she was killed in an aeroplane crash near Quirindi in New South Wales on 2 September 1948. She was aged 61 and only managed to sit for three days in the Legislative Council, a very sad situation.

When the member for Rosevears quoted from a speech in Launceston Margaret made following her election to the parliament, we are assuming it was not in the parliament. She said -

As the world has been run by men for so long and they do not appear to have made a very good job of it, isn't it time we women tried to use more influence in national affairs.

Certainly a bold statement in 1948. Fortunately, in a very short time Margaret left her mark in Tasmanian politics and had she served longer, her legacy would have been even more significant.

I thank you, Margaret McIntyre, for giving your name to the electorate of McIntyre for 2017 and beyond.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People Report 2018

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, I move -

That the Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People Report dated August 2018 be considered and noted.

Mr President, it is my pleasure to put before the Council the Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People Report 2018. Children and young people are our future, so it is important we stop and reflect on their wellbeing. This is an important document for decision-makers in this place, professionals, community members, individuals, children and young people. This initiative from the former commissioner for children and young people, Mark Morrissey, has been continued this year by interim commissioner, David Clements. I thank his office for all the work they do as advocates for children and young people. Tasmanian young people need to be heard. There are some excellent people working in that office every day with that front of mind.

This report is about how Tasmania's children are doing across a range of indicators. I tabled last year's report. Members who participated in that debate and consumed the report know that there are many numbers, but the numbers tell a story. I table it again to promote a discussion and some reflection.

In my role as shadow minister for youth and child safety, I also find this snapshot useful to understand gaps in public policy or where government interventions have worked. It is important to understand how Tasmanian children are doing in comparison to national figures. The report comprises data exclusively available to the public, current 23 April 2018, with four exceptions: there is additional data in this report after 23 April from *Youth Justice in Australia 2016-17*, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 25 May; the Rental Affordability Index Key Findings; and data on universal access to preschool released by the Productivity Commission.

Although there are some caveats on the collection and compiling of data for the report, multiple years of data were sourced to ensure there were adequate comparisons across time. If appropriate national data were not available, no comparisons were provided. As the commissioner says, the purpose of releasing data in annual editions is to incrementally improve the amount and range of data that exists on the health and wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people, and to present longitudinal data.

The report follows an ecological framework for human development. The ecological framework model recognises that different risks and protective factors are most influential at different stages in a child's life, so different data are used to describe the course of development. The report covers four parts. The first part covers the demographics of Tasmania's children and young people, providing a range of data at a population level. The second part provides key data related to early childhood and the transition to school. The third part focuses on middle childhood and adolescence. The final part focuses on the services and systems in place to support children and young people.

The first part, demographics, considers a range of things. Almost a quarter of Tasmanians are under the age of 18. There are 112 646 young people in Tasmania. Tasmania's children and young people are distributed across the state and can be divided roughly into four quarters, south-east, south-west, north and north-west. Children and young people aged zero to 19 years who identify as Aboriginal are second to the Northern Territory, with the Northern Territory at 36.4 per cent and Tasmania at 8.4 per cent.

Tasmanian children grow up in a range of family situations. The proportions of one-parent, step- and blended families in Tasmania are higher than the national average. Some kids are doing it tough in Tasmania. Tasmania has the highest proportion of people living in the most disadvantaged areas of any state or territory. It is well known that this is a historical issue for Tasmania, and it will take generational change. But there are policy responses. I acknowledge that

comes from both colours of government. I am a big advocate for child and family centres. That is not a surprise to anyone in this Chamber. That is a social policy response to break the cycle of disadvantage. We know from the Legislative Council inquiry that there is a body of evidence to suggest this is taking place. It will be interesting to see the impact of that over time.

I included a quote in my foreword for that inquiry's report that I would like to read here because it sums up the sorts of policy responses that can address some of these issues. It was from Ms Suellen Robinson, who said -

The Chigwell Family Centre offers me the village I don't have at home. My children feel a sense of belonging, community and importance. I feel less isolated and lonely, more confident in my parenting and the knowledge if I reach out there is always a solution to anything.

That is a great quote about a policy objective from a person who has experienced that in a positive way, explaining what it meant to her.

We also know that along with social policy responses to some of these key statistics, it is important to have employment and an economy that is doing well. These elements also support our communities.

Despite the economic times, I was particularly shocked to learn in the inquiry that nearly 18 per cent of Tasmanians would not be able to raise \$2000 in an emergency within two days; and that 7.3 per cent of Tasmanians ran out of food and could not afford to buy more within the last 12 months. That is a particularly damning statistic. That is direct evidence of poverty - where, if you are in a desperate situation, you cannot ask your family members or friends for assistance, and you probably cannot ask lenders for assistance. That 18 per cent of Tasmanians cannot raise \$2000 in an emergency is quite a shocking statistic.

Worryingly, the numbers of births every year in Tasmania are generally decreasing. In 2016 5968 births were recorded in Tasmania. That is a concerning statistic when you consider the ageing profile of Tasmania's population. The next generation are our future and they are going to be leaders and employment drivers. They will also be the people who look after the ageing population.

Ms Rattray - Glad to see you doing your bit. Good on you!

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and I have another one on the way.

Part 2 of the report concerns early childhood and the transition to school.

Mothers giving birth in Tasmania are slightly younger than the national median and a higher proportion of mothers are from low socio-economic areas.

Almost all babies see a child health and parenting nurse. Ninety per cent of families were engaged with CHaPS for an eight-week assessment of growth and development. That is one of the highlights of the report. Our child health nurses are amazing professionals in our communities, working out of a range of facilities. To have that reach into the community for that eight-week check really helps a lot of families to be confident their child is being nurtured and is developmentally on track after birth.

The child health nurses also have an association that does wonderful work in the community. Only a couple of weeks ago we had them here on the parliamentary lawn with the new food truck they take around the state to promote nutrition and healthy eating.

On Sunday my wife and son went to Government House to the family fun day and had a tremendous time. There was a range of promotional material at the family fun day and different enjoyable activities for the kids.

That is an incredibly good statistic in this report and it highlights their fantastic work.

Despite that, the percentage of children of low birth weight is higher in Tasmania than nationally. That is a concern because low birth weight can be a risk factor in the healthy development of infants and children, with extremely low birth weight directly linked to development of chronic diseases later in life. Factors linked with low birth weight include poor maternal nutrition; poor physical and mental health, including obesity; alcohol and drug use, including smoking; inadequate antenatal care; and maternal experience of illness, trauma or injury through pregnancy.

Ms Forrest - Poor dental.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and poor dental.

Ms Forrest - Dental health and poor dental care.

Mr WILLIE - Poor dental health and poor dental care. I highlighted that in last year's report. It is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Ms Forrest - When we changed maternity services on the north-west, I insisted on a trial for all women up there. It has been quite successful.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. It would be good to have that rolled out across more of the state.

Ms Forrest - That is why I suggested they start there.

Mr WILLIE - Smoking rates among pregnant women have decreased since 2010. That is a good sign, but at close to 15 per cent, it is still far too high. It is very hard to understand.

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy in Tasmania has started to increase, which is concerning. This change reflects the trend in private patients rather than public patients. I am interested in why that may be the case.

In past years there have been strong campaigns on alcohol consumption during pregnancy. I have not seen a lot of that of late, but that is just my anecdotal evidence.

Breastfeeding on hospital discharge has increased in recent years. That is a good thing because we know it is not only beneficial to babies but also mothers and the bond they share with their young. I have witnessed that with my own wife and son.

Mrs Hiscutt - You are on the outer.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it is hard to get between that sometimes as a dad. I think my time will come when he is a bit older.

Ms Rattray - It will come fairly soon, when you have the next one. You hang with daddy. It will be lovely.

Mr WILLIE - Tasmanian kids are good at eating their fruit in the early ages, but that changes over time. In my time as a schoolteacher there was a proliferation of community gardens within primary schools. We have seen the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation and MONA's 24 Carrot Gardens project. That has been a wonderful development in the northern suburbs in my electorate. A lot of primary schools now have these amazing programs. I am interested in the impact of that on the fruit and vegetable consumption of young people and their parents. That is the sort of generational change that could occur from those programs.

The other night I went with the Speaker and the member for Denison from the other place to Moonah Primary School, which put on a fundraising night in the kitchen. The children cooked nutritious food for their guests with staff from Government House. It was a wonderful showcase of the program in their school. Congratulations to that school for that night. It was very impressive. The future is bright.

More than half of Tasmanian children under five years of age attend child care. We rigorously debated that statistic in this place during the Education Act and the Government's intention to extend preschool to different cohorts across Tasmania. Play-based learning is advantageous to children's development, particularly for their social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning helps make children ready to access the curriculum when they get to school. Development in that environment accelerates kids. I have seen it with my own son coming home from day care with new words and understanding new concepts. Our educators do a marvellous job in centres right across Tasmania. Getting to school ready to access the curriculum is really important. It is great to know 50 per cent of Tasmanian children are accessing child care. There is more work to be done to ensure it is extended to more of the population.

On school readiness, approximately 80 per cent of Tasmania's children are developmentally on track. The Australian Early Development Census provides a snapshot of a child's development as they enter school and measures five different areas of early childhood development. Physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge.

In 2015, 11 per cent of Tasmanian children were developmentally vulnerable on two or more of those domains. However, from 2009 to 2015 at-risk children decreased in all areas except for emotional maturity. The KDC is an assessment administered on two occasions, in term 1 and term 4, and is a logistical nightmare in schools. Teachers have to get a relief for their class and work through the whole class list. Almost three-quarters of children in government schools are achieving all development markers in kindergarten.

Some of these statistics highlight the importance of things like Launching into Learning, which has been a great initiative. The improvement from 2009 to 2015 means this is possibly having an impact on those KDC checks.

Performance Indicators in Primary Schools assessment occurs in preparatory schooling and indicates that literacy and numeracy standards are remaining steady, which is good considering some of the other statistics from NAPLAN data in older grades.

Part 3 concerns the middle childhood and adolescence section. The proportion of children and young people in Tasmania and nationally who are reaching the recommended daily serves of vegetables is very low, and fruit consumption, while appropriate for most children and young people, declines with age. Thirty per cent of Tasmanian children aged between 12 and 15 are overweight, and it is deeply concerning that nearly 10 per cent of this age cohort is obese. This is not an issue prevalent only in Tasmania. The World Health Organization cites childhood obesity as one of the most serious public health challenges of the twenty-first century, so it is an issue across the Western world. People live demanding lifestyles and may not have time to prepare food. A lot of pre-packaged prepared food -

Ms Forrest - It does not take long to eat a raw carrot.

Mr WILLIE - That is true.

Ms Forrest - Or prepare it.

Mr WILLIE - That is very true. Where I was getting to, member for Murchison, is that people are eating a lot of pre-packaged food that contains many additives we might not know are there. This is certainly having an impact on obesity rates, not only in childhood, but across the broader population.

Physical activity is an issue, with only one-third of Tasmanian children and young people reaching the recommended physical activity requirements per day. Disadvantage could be an issue as this can be a barrier to sport. Sport can be very expensive with registration fees, equipment and travel so perhaps we need to do more to engage Tasmanians in sport and in an environment where social supports and networking can occur. A range of sporting clubs do amazing things in our communities. If there are barriers to participation, perhaps we need to look at those as a preventative health measure. There are no surprises there.

Around a third of young people in Tasmania exceed their recommended number of hours using electronic media - most people in this Chamber would probably do also through their jobs -which is only two hours per day, and includes television, mobile phones and a range of things. Not only are we not doing the physical activity, but we are also sitting in front of screens for longer and longer.

Rates of disability are higher in Tasmania than in Australia as a whole, with 1412 Tasmanian children and young people having transitioned to the NDIS as of 31 December 2017. The NDIS is one of the biggest social reforms since Medicare. Some of the issues with its implementation have been well publicised. I believe that in 10 years or 20 years time the NDIS will be viewed in a very similar way. It has been life-changing for a number of families.

Tasmania boasts one of the highest NDIS satisfaction rates in the surveys across the country. Having said that, I acknowledge there have been issues with its implementation, but with a scheme that big, this is almost inevitable. Generally, it has been positive for many families, particularly, I imagine, to have that extra support at home to nurture the children.

Overall rates of children and young people between 12 and 17 smoking, drinking alcohol and using illicit substances have declined substantially in Tasmania over the past couple of decades, which is encouraging. However, in respect of smoking and drinking alcohol, the proportion of Tasmanian children and young people engaging in these behaviours is higher than the national percentage. We in this place know more should be done on smoking rates, not only with children and young people, but also with the broader population, because of the impact smoking has on our acute health system. I know the member for Windermere is very passionate about that issue.

Tasmania's age-specific fertility rate for women aged between 15 and 19 years is higher than the national rate, but has been declining over recent years. The fertility rate for women aged 15 to 19 in Tasmania who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is higher than for all Tasmanian women in this age group.

Poor mental health is an issue right across our population. There have been a number of stories in the past couple of weeks about child and adolescent mental health and some of the issues Tasmanians are facing.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics - ABS - reports that 4.8 per cent of Tasmania's young people aged zero to 24 years have mood problems.

Mr Valentine - Mood problems?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and 11.9 per cent have anxiety-related problems.

Mr Gaffney - How old was that?

Mr WILLIE - It depends who you are talking about. It says zero to 24 here: do you want to extend that? Anxiety is a huge issue among young people. From my time as a primary schoolteacher, I know young people are anxious about a number of things. They go home and watch the news at night and there are terrible things happening all around the world that probably were not 20 or 30 years ago, such as terrorism and other related violence.

Ms Rattray - We are so connected now.

Mr Valentine - And the news is farther reaching.

Mr WILLIE - That is right. It is a huge issue. From my nearly a decade of teaching and anecdotally, it became more of an issue. It was an issue for parents, too, and because sometimes apples do not fall far from the tree, you have anxious families.

Mr Valentine - That was in the grades 5 and 6?

Mr WILLIE - Yes. Mental health is certainly a challenge for a government of any persuasion, which has been debated quite heavily in the other place in recent times. There are capacity issues, but we also know that there will be child and adolescent mental health beds coming on line in the LGH and Royal Hobart Hospital in the future. What that looks like is yet to be determined.

This is a shocking statistic: from 2012 to 2016 Tasmania's rate of deaths due to intentional self-harm for children and young people aged five to 17 was the second highest rate for all states

and territories, and was higher than the national rate for the same group. It is a damning statistic - that young Tasmanians are taking their lives in such high numbers.

To move onto attendance rates at government schools -

Mr Valentine - Is that per capita?

Mr WILLIE - Yes. It is 3.1 per 100 000. It was higher than the national rate of 2.3 per 100 000. Being well connected to the community, members would also hear tragic stories. My heart goes out to the parents and families and school communities where this occurs. We certainly need to think about how we can care for people who are doing it tough.

The attendance rates at government schools are static at around 92 per cent and consistent with the national rates, which is good. NAPLAN data demonstrates Tasmanian students are currently at a comparable standard for reading and writing to their national counterparts, but a trend of relative lower achievement is noted among older students. Looking at Kindergarten Development Checks - KDCs - and Performance Indicators in Primary Schools - PIPS - testing of the NAPLAN data, kids are well placed when starting school. It is when they get to the year 9 to year 12 data that things start to slip away.

NAPLAN can be a useful tool for assessment, but it also has a lot to answer for. Standardised testing has been used across the Western world. Millions of dollars have been spent and we have seen no improvement in literacy and numeracy. At a national level, it will potentially be looked at some time. Teachers absolutely loathe it. They are professionals; they are trained in formative and summative assessment. They collaborate and moderate with their colleagues. There are really rigorous processes around assessment. Teaching to the test occurs, which narrows the curriculum and focuses on pre-twenty-first century skills. Our curriculum does not reflect important but hard-to-measure skills in the workplace such as collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving.

Kids are disengaged from school in Tasmania in the year 9 to year 12 bracket, but this starts earlier, in the later years of primary school. You can see kids being suspended and you know the trajectory that occurs later on. We keep talking about structural changes, and if the curriculum is truly engaging and school a wonderful place to be, kids will stay. We have not intensively looked at the model of schooling. There are great examples on the mainland, where schools have completely turned around not only their culture, but also their outcomes.

There is a school called Templestowe College, which I have talked about in this Chamber before. I have met Peter Hutton, the principal, an inspirational principal.

Mr Valentine - Where is it?

Mr WILLIE - It is in Victoria. He has dyslexia himself and had a pretty ordinary experience - a tough experience - at school with his learning disability. He took over Templestowe College, a school designed for about 1000 kids. It had about 100 students; there were bullying and reputational issues. He put all the kids on individualised learning plans so they were exempt from the Australian Curriculum. He removed the industrial models of schooling, like grades, and based the curriculum and timetable around kids' interests. There might be a kid in grade 8 studying physics with a kid in grade 12, because they want to fast-track themselves, are really interested in the subject and are capable. There is a lot of personal responsibility for the kids. There is a real entrepreneurial push in the school and many kids have ABNs. About 50 per cent of the school population have their

own ABN. The school went from about 100 kids to nearly 1000. There is now a waiting list to get in. The principal works with families around timetabling. If the kids want to study something and they come to the principal with a solution, he will make it happen.

Instead of forcing kids to study things they do not like, the curriculum is geared around their individual interests. They are the models of schooling we should be looking at. Forcing kids to stay longer and study the same old things is not working. It is a brave government that looks at those things, but there are schools in Tasmania that could adopt that approach. Cosgrove High School in my electorate, built for about 1000 kids or just under, is similar to what Templestowe would have been like before Peter took over.

Mr President, Tasmania has the second-lowest student retention rate from years 10 to 12 of all Australian states and territories. The retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Tasmanian schools are trending upwards, which is a good sign.

The proportion of students attaining a TCE in Tasmania is the second-lowest compared to year 12 attainment rates of all Australian states and territories.

Five per cent of students were suspended from government schools in 2017. Comparable suspension data is not publicly available for non-government schools. There is no data on the number of incidents of suspensions or exclusions rather than the percentage of students suspended.

Comparable data across national jurisdictions is not available.

Demographic information for suspended students is not available to compare the experiences of children and young people living in out-of-home care or from particular cultural groups. Mr President, that is inadequate and needs to be addressed. We need evidence-based policies. Disengagement from school is a clear indicator of a young person's trajectory. If that data were publicly available across the country, across sectors including the independent and Catholic sector and the state system, it would make those sectors more accountable and start addressing some of the causes for disengagement rather than trying to keep those statistics hidden from the public.

If children are starting to disengage from school and we can help them address some of their issues, that is good social and economic policy because some of these kids end up in the justice system. They also have poorer health outcomes. We need to look at that.

Mr President, the number of youth offenders in Tasmania declined between 2008-09 and 2016-17; however, matters lodged at the Youth Justice Division of the Magistrates Court in 2016-17 increased from 2015-16. Let us hope that is an aberration because the police do a magnificent job at diverting young offenders. The Youth Justice Act 1997 is very good. Chief Magistrate Rheinberger and her colleagues do amazing work in the Youth Justice Court ensuring kids are not set up for a life of crime and recidivism. That collaboration is a good thing because our youth justice facility is outdated. Kids end up there and the outcomes are not very good. I will not get political; I will just leave it at that.

Part 4, targeted supports for children and young people - in 2016-17, government expenditure on child protection services in Tasmania increased in real terms. The majority of additional expenditure was incurred in out-of-home care. There are many fantastic foster carers across Tasmania, but there are not enough of them. Unfortunately, the Government has to engage service

providers to provide that care for children who cannot be at home because it is unsafe. It is costly and it is not always necessarily a better outcome.

Mrs Hiscutt - And it is sad.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it is very sad. That said, Leader, some amazing kids have come from the out-of-home care system. There are some amazing kids in Hobart who are ambassadors for different service providers. There is one in particular I know quite well who is in their last year of studying law. It is a tremendous example of a good outcome from out-of-home care when the care and support is there for children to reach their potential.

There are 1205 children in out-of-home care as of the report's publication date. While that sounds like a lot, it is not much bigger than a big school population. Tasmania is uniquely placed to probably be a world leader when it comes to out-of-home-care; with such a small number, we can improve things pretty quickly.

Having an active care plan is important, and those statistics are showing signs of improvement. I have raised that in various formats because I have been tracking it over a number of years. There was a decline from 71 per cent in 2014 to 68.2 per cent in 2015, and to 55.4 per cent in 2016; then last year it went back up to 60.2 per cent. Having an active care plan is important because that means people are sitting down and discussing appropriate levels of support and needs with the young person. Without that plan in place, those conversations are more than likely not happening and the young person is not being heard in a lot of instances.

The number of investigations of notifications has decreased from a peak of 2019 in 2012-13 to 1390 in 2016-17, a reduction of 31.2 per cent over four years. I find it interesting that those notifications have come down. We know that the societal factors are still there and that the number of children entering care is increasing, so it is interesting that there are fewer notifications and those trends are still going the other way.

In Tasmania, 22.7 per cent of notifications regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were investigated in 2016-17 compared to 16.3 per cent relating to non-Indigenous children, so much work is still to be done in closing the gap.

A quite shocking statistic that I have highlighted in various forums is that in 2016-17, 51 per cent of investigations were completed in more than 90 days, and that rate has trended upwards from 11.7 per cent in 2012-13. It demonstrates the immense pressure the Child Safety Service is under that those notifications can be made and it is more than 90 days before they are investigated.

At 74.1 per cent the proportion of finalised substantiated child protection investigations was higher in Tasmania than the national percentage of 41.6 per cent, and the highest of all Australian jurisdictions. In the context of investigations of 90-plus days, it is quite shocking to have a 74.1 per cent substantiation rate and to have that period of time pass. I think we can all acknowledge that much work remains to be done in the Child Safety Service in Tasmania. Many good staff work there, doing the best they can, but those statistics are not acceptable.

The majority of substantiated child protection notifications relate to emotional abuse, followed by neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. The percentage of children who were the subject of investigation during the year and were then the subject of subsequent investigation within three months and 12 months is a measure used to determine the effectiveness of the work of child

protection services. In 2015-16 Tasmania's rate for within three months was 8.1 per cent and for within 12 months was 23.5 per cent.

In 2016-17, 41.3 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Tasmania were placed according to the Aboriginal placement principle, which is 26.3 per cent lower than the national percentage of 67.6 per cent, so we still have a lot of work to do in the Aboriginal placement principle.

In recent years reported family violence incidents in Tasmania have increased from 2283 in 2012-13 to 3098 in 2016-17. Children and young people were present at over half the family violence incidents attended by Tasmania Police in 2016-17. We know from previous Commissioner for Children reports that they have their own unique experiences. They are not bystanders to the violence and that trauma can be inflicted in many ways. We had that debate when the member for Murchison tabled that report.

The proportion of children and young people assisted by specialist homelessness services is higher in Tasmania than nationally. The rate of young people aged 15 to 24 years presenting alone is also higher than the national rate.

Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre has been doing a lot of work on that. It produced a good report last year called *Too Hard?* about young people who were not part of the child protection system, were unaccompanied, were presenting at youth homelessness services and were particularly vulnerable. Anglicare is keen to see policy responses in that area. I look forward to that being included in the next action plan for housing with facilities that can help address that need.

The next action plan must have a strong focus on youth. They are disproportionately affected by housing cost increases. They are on very low incomes. If we start to implement some policies in relation to unaccompanied children, we also need to increase the transitional properties and the independent properties for young people or we will end up with a bottleneck. It is the right thing to do. A high proportion of young people are on the public housing waiting list.

Mr Valentine - Are they generally in foster care or in family situations that are not tenable? Do you know?

Mr WILLIE - They are all individual cases so a young person could present at a youth homelessness service who has fled from a foster care arrangement, or they might have fled from their own home arrangement, or they might be known to child protection.

Mr Valentine - I was wondering if there is a split as to what percentage are in certain circumstances. You might not be able to do that.

Mr WILLIE - Anglicare talk about 120 unaccompanied children each night. It is a large number, anyway. It is a large number of unaccompanied children, and states across Australia are starting to look at how to address that.

Ms Siejka - I believe it was a higher number.

Mr WILLIE - Higher was it? Do you know the number?

Ms Siejka - No.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it was particularly high. I will clarify that when the member for Pembroke tells me the number. Almost half the unmet need for homelessness responses by specialist homeless services in Tasmania relates to children and young people aged from zero to 17 years.

In summary, the snapshot of the health and wellbeing of Tasmania's children highlights that many improvements have been made over successive governments. Mothers are attending antenatal classes in higher numbers and there are decreases in mothers' smoking rates during pregnancy. The early years are showing improvements in health and education. There has been significant investment from Labor governments. Liberal governments have also focused on the early years. The minister for Education has rolled out new initiatives such as LIFT. Hopefully when we look back in 10 or 20 years time, those programs will have had a huge impact on our young people as they move into adulthood.

There is still room for improvement. Our youth suicide rate is unacceptable. We still suspend and exclude too many kids from school. The number of students attaining a TCE in Tasmania is the second lowest of all Australian states. Investing in young people is investing in our future so we need to turn that around quickly. Governments and community leaders must work with determination to see things improve. Most importantly, we must listen to young people's needs and walk alongside them. Member for Pembroke, do you have that number?

Ms Siejka - I think it was a higher number.

Mr WILLIE - We will say it is a very large number.

Mrs Hiscutt - You can do it in your summing up.

Mr WILLIE - I thank the Commissioner for Children and Young People for putting together this report. I look forward to other members' contributions.

[12.17 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I thank the member for Elwick for bringing on this motion, which brought this very important report to our attention and encouraged us to dig into the huge and well-researched statistics, trends and analysis pertaining to the Tasmanian adults of tomorrow.

The commissioner's functions as described in the report are -

- advocating for all children and young people in the State generally;
- researching, investigating and influencing policy development into matters relating to children and young people generally;
- promoting, monitoring and reviewing the wellbeing of children and young people generally; and
- assisting in ensuring that the State satisfies its national and international obligations in respect of children and young people generally.

The 2016 Commissioner for Children and Young People Act requires that the commissioner not only works in accordance with the principle that the wellbeing and best interests of children and young people are paramount, but also that relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are observed.

The duty statement asks of the commissioner as at 30 June 2017 to regard 112 646 individuals under the age of 18 in this state, almost a quarter of our population. That is a huge job involving a significant number of young people. I am grateful to Mr Clements for his efforts in the role as interim commissioner.

The parts of the report I was instantly drawn to pertain to wellness and education - once a teacher always a teacher. Members would be all too aware of regular media assertions and statistical data that identify our state as having the highest proportion of people living in the most disadvantaged areas of any state and territory. We know we have an ageing population, we know our wages are lower, we know our unemployment is higher, and so it follows that the figures in relation to disadvantage reflect these social and demographic factors.

It is not all doom and gloom. Tasmania's immunisation rates are consistent with and, in fact, slightly higher than those of other states. Our new mothers are statistically more quickly engaged with staff from the Child Health and Parenting Service for checks eight weeks after birth. The rate of breastfeeding on discharge from hospital is increasing. When children commence their first year of school, the teacher completes the Early Development Instrument, a snapshot of the child's development. The data are captured by the Australian Early Development Census - AEDC. The results of the assessment, which looks at physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge, are used to categorise children as either developmentally on track, developmentally at risk or developmentally vulnerable.

Approximately 80 per cent of Tasmanian children were identified as developmentally on track. While this is not ideal, it compares favourably with the national average. I believe the assessment is useful in creating supportive environments to help at-risk children reach their potential.

I was pleased to read that attendance rates have improved, as in my experience there is a direct correlation between ensuring that students remain engaged and their likely success in academic achievement.

I note that smoking, drug use and alcohol consumption have decreased, which is great news, but we perhaps need to focus more concurrently, not instead of, on promoting regular physical activity both within schools and in students' free time.

As the member for Elwick highlighted, only 33.5 per cent of Tasmanian children and young people are meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines. Not surprisingly, at least one-third of them are exceeding the recommended number of hours using electronic media. I do not know what the answer is. The use of social media in communicating electronically seems to be on the increase while playing sport or going for a walk seems a poor cousin to online games. If we think about the online game *Fortnite*, where we see kids socially interacting from their bedroom with headphones on with people across the state and of other nationalities around the world, that is engaging. These are not only kids who do not like physical activity, these are kids involved in sporting activities. They are spending their time in that engagement.

I suppose that when we were younger we did not have the opportunity to be socially interactive - we sought social interaction on the sporting field or at places we could meet. It is not the same anymore. With type 1 diabetes at the highest rate in the nation and 10 per cent of children between the ages of 12 and 15 being considered obese, we need to do something.

With regard to school results, in 2017 Tasmanian students performed at a level close to, or not statistically different from, Australian reading and writing at all year levels. However, in spelling, Tasmanian students were below Australia for all year levels. For grammar and punctuation, Tasmania was below and statistically significantly different from Australia at the year 9 level. For numeracy, Tasmanian was below and statistically significantly different from Australia at the years 7 and 9 levels.

Regrettably, our retention rates from years 10 to 12 are still a concern. In 2016, the apparent retention rate of full-time students from years 10 to 12 in Tasmania was 70.8 per cent, the second lowest of all Australian states and territories after the Northern Territory. The Australian apparent retention rate was 82.9 per cent, indicating that Tasmania was below the national rate.

As members are aware, I still have concerns about the extension of high schools to year 12 across all communities. However, I concur with the Government that retention of students or their active transition to the TAFE system or meaningful work needs significant attention in financial and policy analysis and development. I will continue to watch with interest to see what the statistics over the next few years tell us about the success or otherwise of the extension groups in some isolated areas in Tasmania.

Once again, I thank the member for Elwick for bringing on this motion. I appreciate the work of the interim Commissioner for Children and Young People, Mr David Clements, and his staff in generating this report.

[12.24 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I, too, thank the member for Elwick for bringing on this report. The recently released Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People Report 2018 provides a valuable resource for individuals, professionals, government and non-government agencies. We have come a long way, but there is still much more work left to do in regard to the health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

There are over 112 646 young people in Tasmania aged between zero and 17 years, representing a quarter of the state's population. It is also interesting to note that half these young people reside in five local government areas, including Launceston.

A number of key findings are detailed within the report, both positive and negative. For example, our young Tasmanians start school with lots of strength, with almost six out of 10 having highly developed strengths, and almost nine out of 10 with good literacy and numeracy skills when they first enter school.

In regard to NAPLAN data, Tasmanian students are at comparable standard for reading and writing to their national counterparts. It is also heartening to note there has been a reduction in alcohol consumption, smoking and illicit drug use among our young people. Also, the number of youth offenders in Tasmania aged 10 to 17 fell from above 2500 in 2008-09 to just over 1000 in 2016-17.

The school attendance rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders children is above the national rate for Indigenous children, although the report also documents that Aboriginal children in Tasmania are over-represented in the child protection system.

The rate of young people aged 15 to 24 years presenting alone to specialist homelessness services was higher than the rate for Australia, which is a disappointing and worrying figure.

Family violence incidents continue to be significant in Tasmania, with children present in over half the family violence incidents attended by police. It must have quite an impact on young people witnessing family violence incidents and, in some cases, being involved in them.

In conclusion, it is imperative we provide safe and caring environments and opportunities for our children and young people. It is clear more work needs to be done through the primary school-age years and in adolescence. I commend the report and the detailed findings it presents.

[12.27 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I thank the member for Elwick for drawing the report to our attention. Thank goodness for the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People in this state. It is an office that advocates for young people and we hope that leads to an improvement in the health and wellbeing of our young folk.

It paints a real picture of the Tasmania of tomorrow unless we provide interventions to steer us along a better path to improve the overall social wellbeing of people in our state. Many of those statistics the member cited from this report paint a serious picture of the work we have to do to improve the circumstances of many people in this state: over 30 per cent of people are in social disadvantage - somewhere in that range.

It is interesting to see, when you look at the tables provided, where that disadvantage is. On page 21 of the report, in the right-hand column, is the 'Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage', which makes for some very interesting reading. They are not isolated; they are significant within our population, and every one of us has reason to be concerned for the level of socio-economic disadvantage that exists around us. I think the statistics the member raised highlight most definitely that work has to be done.

I congratulate the office of the commissioner, and the previous commissioner, for the work they have done to bring this to our attention. It is all very well for those of us who may be well off - that issue the member raised about people being unable to get \$2000 in a couple of days to get themselves out of strife is very real. Imagine yourself in a family in that circumstance. Imagine the stress levels when people cannot pay a bill or cannot afford to feed or clothe their children.

For various reasons their children are becoming detached from the family environment. It behoves us to study this report further and make sure our minds are on the things that are important to the Tasmanian community.

We are a small state with a significant level of disadvantage. We want to go forward together as a community, not see the divide grow to the point where the disadvantaged are far from the experiences of the upper end of our community. We want to make sure we are not leaving people behind in the decisions we make in this Chamber, but to care for those who really need it.

I commend the member for Elwick for bringing this report forward and congratulate the Commissioner for Children and Young People for putting such important statistics before us.

[12.32 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, the Tasmanian Government welcomes this report. I thank the interim commissioner for delivering the report. I thank the member for Elwick for putting it on the Notice Paper and for bringing it forward.

Nothing is more important than the health and wellbeing of our children. The Tasmanian Government is committed to the wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people. I have a very comprehensive response to deliver, including comments on the report, what is being done and how much money is being invested where.

In June 2018 the Government released the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework, which commits all parts of Tasmania's service system to a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of children and young people. Wellbeing means that children and students feel loved and safe, that they are healthy and have access to material basics, are learning and participating, and have a positive sense of culture and identity.

Being happy, healthy and resilient is essential for our children if they are to reach their potential in life. Children and young people are the most vulnerable people in our community and we can all do better to support their wellbeing. This is everyone's responsibility. It relies on everyone in contact with children working together to improve their wellbeing and support. It aims to strengthen families, to prevent problems and to act decisively when problems do escalate.

This framework is one of the initiatives of the Tasmanian Government's Strong Families - Safe Kids strategy, which is redesigning the child safety system. The redesign is deliberately bringing service providers together to work more effectively with children and young people. The holistic approach of the wellbeing framework acknowledges the many factors that contribute to the wellbeing of our children and young people, which is reflected in the range of data reported in the interim commissioner's report.

The report is an important data source to inform our policy response and strengthen our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The report outlines that Tasmania continues to perform well in a number of areas. At a population level, the report indicates that generally the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people is good. The immunisation rates exceed the national rate across all age groups. Children entering school are performing above the national rate in physical, social and communication development. An increasing number of families are remaining engaged with the Child Health and Parenting Service - CHaPS. Overall rates of children and young people aged 12 to 17 years smoking, drinking alcohol and using illicit substances have declined over the past couple of decades. Attendance rates at government schools and standards for reading and writing are comparable to national data. The number of youth offenders has declined and the average daily number of young people in youth justice detention has decreased, but we know there is more work to be done.

The report identifies some areas where there is room for improvement, and the Hodgman Liberal Government is working to address these. Ongoing work in relation to a range of initiatives demonstrates the Government's commitment to building capacity and strengthening Tasmania's families and communities to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

In 2016, the Tasmania Government committed to a comprehensive reform of services to children called Strong Families - Safe Kids through the creation of a collaborative service system that can respond swiftly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. Our investment of \$20.5 million into Strong Families - Safe Kids will better support families before they get into crisis and close the gap for these children, young people and their families to give them the positive future they deserve. This figure includes \$1.15 million for a 12-month trial of intensive family engagement services designed to work with families with complex needs to prevent them from entering the statutory service system.

The Government recently extended this trial with an additional investment of \$7.5 million over three years. The interim commissioner's report confirms this focus of spending more time with families is working, with a decrease in the rate of subsequent substantiations at 12 months. It is an early but promising indication the Strong Families - Safe Kids redesign is on the right track. We expect this to improve further with the Children's Advice and Referral Service due to come online later this year. This service will bring together government and non-government child safety intake into a single statewide service that can respond to the broader wellbeing needs of children, young people and their families. It is expected to make a significant difference to the outcomes for children in the way in which we allocate and manage child safety matters.

This Government's election commitments include a range of actions aimed at supporting and improving outcomes for children in out-of-home care through a number of additional supports for children, young people and families, with a focus on strengthening permanency arrangements.

We are also investing an additional \$24 million in funding to support the redesign, employing more child safety officers and other frontline staff, and assisting vulnerable children with very complex needs in out-of-home care.

The Youth at Risk Strategy released in June 2017 provides a long-term, whole-of-government strategic direction for responding to the safety and rehabilitative needs of young people aged 10 to 17 years who are at risk. It aims to improve outcomes for youth at risk through improved information sharing and the coordination and realignment of existing services, along with increased investment where an unmet need has been identified.

The Government committed \$16.4 million in the 2017-18 Budget to further priorities identified in the Youth at Risk Strategy; this includes \$2.4 million over four years to continue to provide ongoing support for young people on bail and youth transitioning from juvenile detention. There is \$2.4 million over three years to staff the Youth at Risk response centre, or Colville Place, in Moonah; \$5.275 million over three years to continue a range of youth-focused jobs initiatives through the Department of State Growth; \$5 million over four years to build on, strengthen and evaluate existing student re-engagement programs and education; and \$141 000 to provide a lead support coordination service to vulnerable young people.

Under Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan 2015-2019, new initiatives have been introduced to increase the capacity of services to assist children and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including the new Hobart Women's Shelter, which provides an additional capacity of 16 beds for women and children in the south; six new Youth Castles assisting young people at risk of homelessness to establish independence while maintaining links with their families; opening the Eveline House in Devonport, providing 25 supported youth accommodation units to assist young people aged between 16 and 24 years; and the opening of Colville Place in Moonah, providing nine units for young people aged between 12 and 15 years. Planning and

consultation has also commenced for stage 2 of the Affordable Housing Action Plan to improve access to affordable, safe and appropriate homes for all Tasmanians.

The Government takes the health of our community seriously and has a strong plan to build a better health system. Over six years, the \$757 million plan includes some key service boosts for Tasmanian children, including brand-new specialist child and adolescent mental health facilities for the first time ever. These facilities have been needed for decades, but are being built as we speak and will be completed next year.

More broadly, the Government is implementing the Rethink Mental Health plan and the Youth Suicide Prevention Plan, which chart the path for a better mental health system and improved mental wellbeing. We want to see a reduction in both the suicide rate and in suicidal behaviour, particularly and especially for Tasmania's vulnerable young people. These plans have achieved the rare feat of unanimous agreement on the way forward.

With respect to preventative health, the Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan is the Government's comprehensive plan targeting a range of health factors that affect children and young people, such as healthy eating and physical activities. More specifically, these include the development of the Healthy Kids Toolkit, a parenting-based website with Tasmanian information to support communities and families to eat well and be active. Further, the Move Well Eat Well program, a joint department of Health and Department of Education award recognition program supports the healthy development of children and young people in primary schools and early childhood settings by promoting physical activity and healthy eating. Additionally, the Smoke Free Young People project is aimed at preventing young people from taking up smoking and helping those who have already started smoking to quit.

Mr Dean - Is the Government going to support the Tobacco Free Generation then?

Mrs HISCUTT - That is not for me to say. We know that children's health and wellbeing is critical to ensuring Tasmanian children and young people are successful learners.

Mr Dean - Don't miss an opportunity.

Mrs HISCUTT - Evidence shows that students who have greater health and wellbeing are more likely to have better educational outcomes and are likely to have wellbeing throughout their lives and reach their full potential.

The Government has invested an original commitment of \$17.8 million over four years to address student wellbeing within government schools, with total expenditure in 2017-18 being \$4.1 million, increasing to \$4.6 million in 2018-19. The Child and Student Wellbeing Unit was established from our budget commitment in 2017, and is responsible for developing and implementing the Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy for government schools. The strategy, launched in June this year, aims to achieve improved child and student wellbeing and an understanding of the link to improved learning outcomes. Our schools, colleges, child and family Centres and libraries work in partnership with families and community services to support the wellbeing of Tasmanian children. This is a collaborative effort and shared responsibility.

We want Tasmanian children to feel loved and safe, healthy, have access to material basics, to learn and participate and to have a positive sense of culture and identity. I find it terrible that not all children can access those things.

It is critical the Government can measure our efforts to improve child and student wellbeing. Therefore a key action under the strategy is the development of valid and reliable measures of wellbeing to inform future efforts and planning. The Department of Education will work with key stakeholders, including students, schools, families and communities, to develop action plans for each year of the strategy, with mental health being the key focus area in 2019. The strategy puts the child at the centre of our efforts to improve wellbeing and will deliver better outcomes for children and students alongside the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework.

Some of the initiatives funded to support government school student wellbeing are -

- (i) \$4 million over four years to extend school health nurses to district schools -

It is a very good program -

- (ii) Additional \$250 000 per year over four years to the Speak Up! Stay ChatTY school program;
- (iii) \$5 million over four years for engagement and re-engagement programs such as RADAR, SACE, EdZONE and EZOL; and
- (iv) \$6.9 million over four years to increase professional support staff.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to ensuring children and students are safe, feel supported and are able to flourish so that they can engage in learning. Together these initiatives will increase the capacity and effectiveness of the system, strengthen our responses and contribute to better outcomes for children and young people in Tasmania.

We would like to add more to some things mentioned in contributions. We have reduced the waiting list for general dental care by 30 per cent and provided more than 60 000 occasions of service to children each year through Oral Health Services. Children, emergency and urgent dental cases are always prioritised. I think the member for Murchison brought that up by way of interjection. The Government is working to improve Tasmania's suicide prevention responses. We have supported the Mental Health Council of Tasmania in developing and implementing the Tasmanian Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Communications Charter, launched earlier this month. Tasmania is the first state in the nation to adopt the National Communications Charter and adapt it for Tasmania. This important initiative under the Government's Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016 is to focus on helping prevent suicide and reducing its effect in the community.

There was mention of sport and the obesity rates - how to get the kids off the couch. In relation to sports participation for children, the new Department of Communities Tasmania is perfectly placed to address sports participation with our young people. This includes the Government's election commitment on Ticket to Play, the first sports voucher system for young Tasmanians. Vouchers worth up to \$100 will be available to eligible Tasmanians aged from five to 17 and will go towards sporting club memberships as part of this pilot program.

In conclusion I thank the interim commissioner for his hard work in compiling this report. I thank the member for Elwick for bringing it on for discussion. It was a very good report. The Government notes the report.

[12.49 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, I will get a chance now that the Leader has finished patting herself on the back for all the Government's initiatives. I did not hear a lot about the report in the Leader's contribution; that is up to her. A number of those indicators have gone backwards under the Government. There was a lot of back-patting, but much that addressed the report. I thank all members for their contributions.

It is a statistically heavy report. It is dry reading but it is a valuable process to table it here, to read and encourage other members to do so and to have a debate each year on this snapshot.

Clearly, while some things are going well and the report has good statistics, other areas are concerning and require policy responses. It is beneficial members in this place are aware of those issues so that when governments, regardless of their persuasion, bring bills to this House, members can address some of those issues.

I hope members found this a valuable process and I thank them for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

UTAS Theatre and Performance Course, Inveresk - Impacts

[12.51 p.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, I move the Legislative Council notes:

- (1) The strong community concern surrounding the restructuring of the UTAS Theatre and Performance course at Inveresk;
- (2) The impact of the restructuring of the course on the Inveresk Campus's ability to attract students to the new course; and
- (3) The impact on the local creative arts community.

I will gather all my accoutrements to work from one motion to the other. I am a bit discombobulated in respect of my notes because things moved fast once the member for Windermere brought it to the northern members' attention that there was 'trouble at mill' in respect of the performing arts in the north of the state. We had to drill down to find out what the concern was from the creative arts community in northern Tasmania. I thank the member for Windermere for being diligent and expressing that concern, and I agreed it was a matter of public importance to put this matter on the Notice Paper as a notice of motion. We did not have much information about what was actually occurring and we needed to deal with it straightaway. If things are left, they will spread through the community like wildfire, with everybody discombobulated and like chooks with their heads chopped off - then we will get rumours rather than facts.

The member for Windermere was after the facts of the matter. It has been a good process. The matter of parliamentary importance was withdrawn because it was considered word was spreading about what was actually going on. Hence the notice of motion to actually give us an opportunity to bring facts together, to find out what was actually occurring and then to have the community made aware of the facts of the matter. Hence, the motion talks about strong concern from the community

about the course at UTAS, the impact of restructuring on the Inveresk campus and the ability to attract new students to the course. Talking of having 10 000 students coming to Inveresk in Launceston - this is good and we want to remain optimistic.

How many students might this course bring to Launceston? How many locals might there be? What will be the impact on the local creative arts community, if there is any impact at all at this time or will there be an impact in the future?

What we are discussing is the change in the University of Tasmania's 2019 Theatre and Performance program to be offered in Launceston within its Bachelor of Arts rather than in its Bachelor of Contemporary Arts.

These terminologies might get a little bit clouded as we go through it, but I hope I use the correct titles to what is occurring here. Perhaps people viewing this or reading *Hansard* could give me some latitude because I might not get the titles right - we are flying by the seat of our pants in developing an understanding of this. We are drilling down, but we may not have our facts entirely correct.

This move is seen by some in the northern community as a downgrading of the degree, and there is some evidence this is the case. We must see this change in the context of a long-running fight to preserve the strength of the University of Tasmania's presence in northern Tasmania. We can go back over the history with Don Wing and Coleman O'Flaherty and others in the community who have -

Mr Valentine - Here they come, yes.

Mr FINCH - Did I get the pronunciation right? It was Coleman O'Flaherty and others, whose names do not readily spring to mind, who have fought since our change from the TSIT to the university. That is the history of it. We are precious about the presence of the university in the north.

Mr Dean - Brian Hartnett was another one.

Mr FINCH - Yes, thank you - Brian Hartnett. We have been given by one hand and we do not want it to be taken away by the other. That is what we northern members are here for. We have to make sure that if things are going on and changes are taking place in the north of the state that we look after our tribe, our bailiwick. That is our job.

For decades the north has had to fight a trend, or at least a fear, of UTAS moving south. I believe this trend was arrested under previous vice-chancellor, Peter Rathjen. He had a policy of strengthening the north and north-west campuses. I am pleased to say this has been reinforced by Rufus Black, the present vice-chancellor.

Peter Rathjen and Rufus Black have been strongly backed by the Chancellor, Michael Field, who has north-west origins. Is it Railton that Michael Field is from?

Mr Dean - No, Sheffield or up that way.

Mr FINCH - North-west origins will cover it. He is very keen to maintain those three UTAS campuses in Tasmania.

It is interesting that Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black spent the first day of his new position at the UTAS campus in Burnie, then he came down to Launceston in early March to speak to the staff there. Perhaps the most memorable part of his speech, which I will paraphrase for *Hansard's* sake, was that he said something like, 'It is not the University of Tasmania but the university for all of Tasmania'.

I believe the insecurities of those fighting for a strong presence of the university outside Hobart have been addressed by the two vice-chancellors. Nevertheless, we must be vigilant. We must hold the management of our university to account when situations like this arise. That is why there is concern about changes to the Theatre and Performance program in Launceston.

Member for Windermere, will I read that letter from Cheyne Mitchell? Cheyne Mitchell is a lecturer, a former student of West Launceston Primary School, and a fellow performer, I might say. Cheyne sent me an email; I do not know whether he sent it to everybody -

Mr Dean - No, I don't think so.

Mr FINCH - I received it and I quote -

I have been alarmed to recently find on the UTAS website that the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts was no longer going to be offered in 2019.

Cheyne develops the Launceston College's musicals and is a terrific lecturer. He is a member of the Launceston community and a wonderful performer as well. He came through that course at the university. To continue -

The course has now been replaced by a Bachelor of Arts (Theatre and Performance Major). Not only is this of a concern in the sense that it means the end of a fully dedicated Theatre course in Tasmania, but also students who I have been course counselling for the past two years have overnight had the 'goal posts moved'. Students who intended studying a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts were preparing for a theatre/technical theatre specific degree that's entry requirements involved an audition and also presenting a folio of work.

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

QUESTION

Rental Tenancy Reforms

Mr FINCH question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.57 p.m.]

- (1) Given that Victoria last week passed legislation to give Victorian renters the strongest protection in Australia, what plans does the Tasmanian Government have to introduce rental reforms?

- (2) Among numerous reforms, Victorian renters will have rent increases limited to one a year and tenants must be informed of their right to dispute an increase. Will the Tasmanian Government be looking at similar provisions?

ANSWER

- (1) Many of the matters in the Victorian legislation are already covered under the Tasmanian legislation, the Residential Tenancy Act 1997; for example, the minimum standards to rental properties that have been adopted by Victoria as part of their reforms replicate standards established in Tasmanian legislation in 2013 and again in 2015. Tasmania was the first jurisdiction to introduce minimum standards for residential tenancy in a clear and accessible form, which have been used as a benchmark for other jurisdictions, including Victoria.

These amendments provide protection for victims of family violence by enabling a court to terminate a residential tenancy agreement without penalty when making a family violence order and enable payment of security deposits by instalments. It expands the organisations that can accept security deposits by instalments and sets out requirements for lodging them with the authority. It clarifies that any change to a social housing tenant's rent contribution is not classified as a rent increase, meaning when the tenant's circumstances change and therefore the amount the tenant can contribute increases, it is not considered to be a rent increase.

It gives effect to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and implements NDIS accommodation requirements, enabling participants housed at single premises to have exclusive access to bedrooms and shared access to common areas such as kitchens and living areas.

Further review of the act is anticipated; however, the extent and details of amendments are not yet known. This work is currently being progressed for intended introduction in 2019.

- (2) The matter of limiting rent increases to only once in a 12-month period is already provided for under current Tasmanian legislative requirements. The act provides that rent increases cannot occur within 12 months of the lease being signed, extended or renewed or since its last increase. Tenants must be notified of any rent increases by written notice of the increase, which must be allowed for in the lease agreement and give the tenant at least 60 days notice of the date the increase rent starts, including for social housing.

Further, if a tenant believes their rent increase is unreasonable in either social or private housing, they can apply to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner for a review of the increase. The act allows the commissioner to consider the general level of rents for comparable properties in the same or similar locality, and other relevant matters such as the amount of the increase, any improvements or relevant issues of condition of the property and previous increase history. If the commissioner issues an order concerning the rent increase, the order can support, deny or vary the increase. Orders may be appealed by either party to the Magistrates Court.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[3.01 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells.

This is for a briefing update on the north-east line.

Sitting suspended from 3.01 p.m. to 3.54 p.m.

MOTION

UTAS Theatre and Performance Course, Inveresk - Impacts

Resumed from above.

[3.54 p.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, I had made my way probably halfway through a letter from Cheyne Mitchell, who is a lecturer at Launceston College who is involved in the local theatre community. He is a director of the musicals, the recent one certainly with Launceston College, and very heavily involved in, not only in the development of the theatre, but also the development of the students.

I will go back to the beginning so this is all in context of what he actually said. This is from Cheyne Mitchell -

I have been alarmed to recently find on the UTAS website that the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts was no longer going to be offered in 2019. The course has now been replaced by a Bachelor of Arts (Theatre and Performance Major). Not only is this of a concern in the sense that it means the end of a fully dedicated Theatre course in Tasmania, but also students who I have been course counselling for the past two years have overnight had the 'goal posts moved'. Students who intended studying a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts were preparing for a theatre/technical theatre specific degree that's entry requirements involved an audition and folio of work. The new Bachelor of Arts (Theatre and Performance Major) requires students to have an ATAR of 65 or higher, this is a major concern for students who have been told otherwise and will not have studied the necessary courses to receive an ATAR. Meaning they will be left with the options of either moving state to pursue their education, changing their intended pathway, or if approved, returning to study a third year in college in an attempt to receive an ATAR.

This sudden decision made by the University of Tasmania has severe educational impacts for current year 12 students and I am shocked that this was done without any consultation with stake holders.

That is one of Cheyne Mitchell's concerns, and I am sure some of those issues may be fleshed out with contributions from other members. I certainly have some information here about aspects of what Cheyne is actually saying.

UTAS has responded quickly to concerns like these. I will quote one of the first official responses. I do not at this stage have a person to link this to, but I will read it into *Hansard* anyway -

In Launceston we have been clear in our intent to have the Inveresk Precinct as a vibrant, cultural community space and that theatre and the creative and performing arts are central to this, as is our support for the QVMAG as an iconic community space.

The response went on to say that in that context people could be assured that the university remained committed to a community- and industry-led theatre program in Launceston, one that provided local opportunities for students to develop their skills and networks, and prepared them for future careers in the creative and performing arts. The response continued by saying that that working in partnership with the local theatre and creative arts scene was fundamental to that because the university could not achieve those outcomes alone.

That statement from UTAS in respect of what is developing there sounds nice and fuzzy and warm, but at this stage, I will go over the history of this course in the north of the state to give other members an idea of we are talking about.

Martin Croft is a name that might resonate with some - a wonderful man. He established an English speech and drama course in 1973. He was subsequently joined by Professor John Lohrey, and the performing arts then really flourished - that was Professor Lohrey's raison d'etre, as well as going to cricket around the world - but it was all about theatre and theory. Michael Edgar then came in 1985, and what a fabulous actor. I am sure the member for Launceston would agree with me. She would have seen Michael Edgar. He was so skilled, I have a sense he might have appeared in the West End. He was very good, but also a wonderful lecturer and, as such, a great resource to have on board. They then established the Bachelor of Performing Arts with Peter Hammond at the helm. Peter recently retired to his model train set. About 1991 CentreStage was established as a bijou theatre company. People from the university held productions with the community in whatever relationship that might be like, such as swapping talent. The directors usually came from the university, such as Peter Hammond, Michael Edgar or Professor Lohrey. Ray Sangston, Jacqueline Horne and other actors from the community took part in those productions.

It was called bijou theatre because it was small theatre - one-, two- or three-handed productions. I was on the board at the time CentreStage was established. Don Wing was the chair of that committee.

After 22 years it was dissolved, perhaps due to the lack of an artistic director; there might have been a bit of burnout. The member for Launceston might enlighten us when she makes a presentation on how she felt. The university was not of a mind to keep supporting CentreStage. Are you waiting to say something now?

Ms Armitage - I am wondering whether I will or not. It changed.

Mr FINCH - It certainly did.

Ms Armitage - It changed from CentreStage to Next Stage because there were not enough students in the course, and some other issues were going on.

Mr FINCH - You might progress that -

Ms Armitage - No, it is not relevant to this.

Mr FINCH - Journalist Mary Machen, who is heavily involved in the arts, called it cultural vandalism when that operation was discontinued.

Helen Trenos was involved, followed by Robert Lewis. There was postgraduate teaching in 2017, seemingly ad hoc.

The operatives and the community resisted closure because that would open the way for Hobart to secure the performance and technical theatre units. That concern runs through northern Tasmania. It may be unfounded; however, we need to protect our patch and make sure we hold on to any advantages we have and make them work.

To some, this new approach with theatre as part of a major is questionable. I think it is eight units of the 16 over three years. There have been mentions of consultation. You will probably go into this, member for Launceston. Why have we heard from so many theatre operatives and from the theatre community that they know nothing about consultation? Had there been consultation, you would have some idea it was going to occur and you would be asking questions about it.

This new arrangement was devised by Will Deally. It was an informal assessment that did not get to the approval stage. The program was unsustainable because of diminishing numbers, as the member for Launceston has suggested. Without the income from other strands, it was uneconomical so this new program was devised. It will give students a theatre and performance major. This course has been developed by Dr Jane Woollard and Dr Asher Warren. I unfortunately missed the meeting to hear what they had to say. Basically the hope is to stop the leadership churn with those people I have mentioned, spend less - it is an economic decision - and enrol more students. We hope this has appeal for those students we would like to see come here.

Mr Dean - You are right about the changeover of staff because both Dr Woollard and Dr Warren have only recently taken over those positions; I think 12 months ago. Then Kate Darian-Smith was involved in this in a very senior position; she had only recently taken on her position, so that is right through it -

Ms Armitage - Kate took over 12 months ago and she employed Asher and Jane.

Mr Dean - They have all been there recently.

Mr FINCH - We are talking about the new dean of the College of Arts, Law and Education, Professor Kate Darian-Smith. She is very keen to continue to work very closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the Launceston-based offerings in 2019 and beyond reflect the needs of local industry and draw potential students not just from northern Tasmania but also from throughout Tasmania, and from interstate and internationally.

While talking to her, I made a note about what she was saying. She said that while it is still in the planning stages, the aspiration is to rebuild the Bachelor of Arts program at the redeveloped Inveresk Precinct to over 250 students within the next five years. She said she hopes a good proportion of these students would have theatre and performance as a major.

The long-running concerns about the strength of the UTAS courses outside Hobart continue. We in the north must monitor things carefully. To be fair, though, we must listen to the arguments and presentations from all sides so we understand what is being driven at by the university. In this sense we are also supporting our local creative arts community and what has developed through

that course at the university over those 22 years. We had a career opportunity whereby each year a student was selected as the CentreStage apprentice or trainee of the year. They were paid a salary to work at the university and devise projects or programs, and to direct, write or use whatever their major skills were to put into productions for CentreStage.

Ms Armitage - But the money came from a business in the community, not the university.

Mr FINCH - That is right.

Ms Armitage - And they withdrew it; they stopped the sponsorship.

Mr FINCH - But the point is that there would have been an opportunity to look for further sponsorship of that program.

Ms Armitage - It was a lot of money

Mr FINCH - Yes, but I arranged it in the first place, and if you can arrange it once, you can arrange it twice.

Ms Armitage - If they did look at it, I don't think they could repeat it.

Mr FINCH - No, I did not look because I was not on the board at the time and I was not asked to look. I did talk with Brian Ritchie at MONA about sowing a seed, but not officially, with David Walsh. However, that money came from the community, from Federal Hotels, which supported it over 22 years. My point is that the students who received that award went on to terrific opportunities, and many of them have stayed in our community and helped build our creative arts community. It was very important to our creative arts community in northern Tasmania in that respect. The residual effect of their study kept them in our community while others went away. Remind me, member for McIntyre - Paige Rattray was one of our recipients: where is she now?

Ms Rattray - Sydney.

Mr FINCH - She is in Sydney doing?

Ms Rattray - She is running a theatre company.

Mr FINCH - That is one example - there are many - of the success of that particular program. It is in the past and has gone.

Ms Rattray - She is head of the theatre company, not running the theatre company.

Mr FINCH - She is head of the theatre company. The point is that we are very keen to hold this program at the highest possible level the university can achieve with what comes through into it. Those funds drawn from 250 students coming through the course make it economical to continue to be offered in the north of the state. I will be interested to hear what other members have to say and will probably comment on anything that might be left out.

[4.11 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, we have a wonderful creative arts community in Launceston. I know because I have been involved with the School of Visual and Performing

Arts and was the chair of CentreStage Dance Company for many years after Don Wing; the member for Rosevears, Mr Finch, might have been chair of CentreStage before Don.

It was unfortunate CentreStage was disbanded, but it was not the choice of the board. We appreciate changes occur and there was little we could do about it. They went from CentreStage to what they called Next Stage. As the member for Rosevears said, we had some wonderful people in CentreStage. From my time there, I remember Paige Rattray. I acted with Paige in a performance at the railyards called *Death in the Railyards*. It was one of Paige's first acting positions as a student at the School of Visual and Performing Arts with Travis Hennessy, Liz Bennett, Troy Ruffels and Cheyne Mitchell.

Ms Rattray - She has certainly done very well, and all the family are very proud of her.

Ms ARMITAGE - Absolutely. I catch up with her from time to time; she tends to frequent the Royal Oak. Ivan Dean and I had a meeting last week with the Executive Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Arts, Law and Education, Professor Kate Darian-Smith. She was forthright and forthcoming with information and said they had decided to discontinue the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts with theatre sitting within that particular degree.

When she took up the role in 2017, they looked at how they could grow theatre numbers. Two new staff were put into continuing positions in theatre and the course was looked at in more detail. It was then proposed to move the course from one they considered made sense in the 1990s by making it into a contemporary course that would enable graduates to find work and pursue their passion.

We were told numbers were down to around 40 students across three years and to make the course truly viable, they needed over 100 students. Professor Darian-Smith stated the curriculum needed to be reformed to try to reset it to attract more students, including, hopefully, some from the mainland and internationally. That was mentioned by the member for Rosevears.

It needs to be stressed that Professor Darian-Smith guaranteed us that theatre will definitely remain in Launceston and will only be offered in Hobart if course numbers increase largely, and not instead of.

Mr Finch - This has to be the first step.

Mr Dean - Same as nursing.

Ms ARMITAGE - Same as nursing, but you have to bear in mind we kept nursing because we kept on top of it. We did keep nursing and we will keep theatre.

Ms Rattray - Will it still be based in Launceston?

Ms ARMITAGE - Absolutely. The theatre program has been moved from a stream in the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts into a major that is a stream in the Bachelor of Arts. The decision was made that in this larger degree, students choosing theatre would not only have more choice in electives, but it would also open up theatre to more students. We were told this was the plan and were advised there had been discussions with a number of high schools and colleges. The transition will be phased in so it does not disadvantage students in years 10, 11 or 12 wanting to go into theatre.

We were also advised that by having it in the Bachelor of Arts, students will have more choice when it comes to employment. With an enlarged major they can do more - they can have other subjects where they can do work placement with theatre groups and festivals. This has been done around curriculum renewal, giving students contemporary and up-to-date experience and training them more broadly for future careers in theatre and arts.

The member for Rosevears mentioned the students who used to take on 12 months paid work within the theatre, within CentreStage and the School of Visual and Performing Arts. It was a considerable amount of money, and efforts were made to find another sponsor when the sponsor we had for 22 years felt it could not do it anymore. Unfortunately that was not possible and that fell by the wayside.

We were further told that in 2013, Monash had a similar Bachelor of Performing Arts, and with similar change it is now substantially larger and has grown in that bigger context. Professor Darian-Smith said this was one stimulus for review in the curriculum and this gave information for their change.

Professor Darian-Smith said they want more students to do theatre and they want to open up theatre to students who are doing other degrees, such as business, so they can do subjects in theatre as well.

In the Inveresk development they see theatre as being very important and interaction with the campus through the theatre campus as being very important.

The question was asked whether 12 hours face-to-face time is reduced to three hours. We were advised that while there will be some decrease in face-to-face time, it has been made up with other electives that enable students to do industry placements. It has been worked out in a different pattern. Professor Darian-Smith is strongly of the opinion that this will give students a better grounding experience in theatre.

The question of economics was raised. We were advised there are financial reasons, but they are not the prime reasons. It would be disingenuous to say they are not a consideration.

We were told the consideration was much more about the experience for the students and the way an updated curriculum can be taught. They want the theatre program to grow as they could employ more staff in a couple of years.

I will read from an article in the *Examiner* of Wednesday, 12 September 2018 -

UTAS allays theatre course fix concerns

Concern over theatre programs at the University of Tasmania in Launceston is growing among the city's art community, despite continued assurances from the tertiary education provider.

Reports were made on Monday UTAS had axed theatre programs from Launceston after it revealed the Bachelor of Contemporary Art would no longer be offered in the state from next year. Instead, theatre will now be offered as a major under the broader Bachelor of Arts degree, which the university says would make it available to more students.

However, concern has been growing in Launceston's theatre community, with Three Rivers Theatre president Cameron Hindrum penning an open letter to UTAS.

Theatre units are offered currently under the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts as a specialisation, but not a major, and theatre is not offered as a bachelor degree in its own right.

UTAS Theatre head, Jane Woollard and lecturer Asher Warren said the changes would put the theatre model on a sustainable footing.

'We have been working to improve the program we offer, to grow our student numbers and to open up theatre to many more people,' Dr Woollard said.

'Our students will learn technical skills and will have exciting opportunities to work with festivals and create new work.'

Dr Woollard and Dr Warren said it was crucial the community understood theatre would still be offered and based in Launceston.

Mr Hindrum said he was 'appalled' at the decision, which was one of several that had led to the 'disintegration of the Theatre School' in Launceston.

'I am appalled at the highly opaque manner in which UTAS management have overseen the gradual disintegration of the Theatre School. It is impossible to accurately fathom the benefit, the richness, the value or the impact this program has had on the lives and careers of generations of theatre practitioners,' Mr Hindrum said.

Professor Darian-Smith told us she agreed that consultation and information had not been put out there as well as it could have been. They took it on board in our meeting.

She was asked whether this change affects the students in Launceston. We were told the new Bachelor of Arts structure gives greater opportunity because students can pick another elective alongside theatre. They can choose from a range of electives that have more choice, including subjects such as psychology, with greater opportunities to have accredited work placements as well.

We were advised the theatre stream will be a broader Bachelor of Contemporary Arts with more pathways to employment. That was one of the issues. I am sure the member for Windermere remembers that Professor Darian-Smith mentioned that it gives them more of a basis for employment in the future and certainly gives them a wider scope.

We questioned whether this was the thin end of the wedge with development next to the Theatre Royal, but again we were told that theatre is not offered in Hobart and will not be offered in Hobart unless Launceston gets to the stage that it is offered in both places, but that Launceston would remain the head of theatre. Theatre will not move to Hobart instead of Launceston. Theatre is a flagship major. If it moved to Hobart, it would be as well as Launceston. Professor Darian-Smith said they are currently looking at Inveresk and the possibility of upgrading the theatre spaces. She said there is a plan to upgrade theatre in Launceston with discussions about improving the Annexe Theatre and other areas at Inveresk.

Professor Darian-Smith said that the new vice-chancellor also sees theatre as a flagship in the north, and that theatre is important as the core. Her understanding was that consultation had occurred with the colleges and with students coming into the course. There had been discussions

as well with some of the arts groups in the north but, as we have discovered, perhaps with not as many as there should have been, and that they had also spoken to council people about the changes.

It is important to note the new course is a major in Theatre and Performance within the Bachelor of Arts. We were advised that students can have an ATAR score entry or there is still an alternative entry, exactly the same as previously, so there should be no fear for students worrying about an ATAR score.

The member for Windermere and I also met with two teachers from the course in Launceston. I have mentioned their names previously: UTAS Theatre head Dr Jane Woollard and lecturer Dr Asher Warren. We met with them on Friday and they gave a similar picture to that of Professor Darian-Smith and were supportive of the restructure.

As the member for Rosevears said, we often have cause for concern about university courses being taken away or downgraded in the north, so I believe we need to be ever-vigilant. There was a time when it looked like we could have lost the nursing faculty. I am sure the south was very keen to have nursing, particularly with the Menzies Institute and our medical students being down here, but it did not happen and we have retained it. It is a given that we need to work hard to make sure we do not lose any further courses; we have lost many.

It is hoped that numbers for this new course will continue to grow. I for one will keep a watchful eye on its progress and remain ever-vigilant that our university remains as good as it can be and that we do not lose any further courses, but pick up courses.

[4.23 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, the members for Rosevears and Launceston have covered this matter reasonably well. I just want to recap on some of those points. I refer to some documentation provided to us by Mr Hindrum. I think he gave us the right to use his name here, so I will do that.

There is no doubt this matter has created a lot of angst and concern, particularly among those theatre and dance groups that rely on the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts course's old theatre major to provide actors and participants in their theatrical performances.

In Launceston we have nine performing arts companies, two of which are dance companies with a strong interest in this UTAS course. It is clear from what the other members have said that consultation was a problem. I would go probably a bit further than that and say that consultation at this stage has been quite lousy. I think that is the reason behind these matters being brought to our attention.

Right now I am still not 100 per cent convinced one way or the other because very reputable people on one side are saying there will be issues. There will be changes that are not to the benefit of the Launceston area and the people undertaking these courses. Some people are saying that while the university side is saying it will be better. At this stage, I am not sure where I should be going, but that is not to say I do not accept the evidence of both parties. That puts me in a pretty difficult situation.

Some people in the theatre groups found out this change was going to occur when they looked at the university website. Others found out by word of mouth through general discussions as to what was going on. No doubt this put them on the backfoot right from the word go. Had they found

out through the proper methods, through discussions with them a long time before any of this happened, this could have probably been progressed in a better and stronger way.

It is clear, in Launceston, we are precious on retaining the courses and degrees we already have and there is no shame in that. In fact, we are passionate, not parochial.

The new vice-chancellor and the member for Rosevears referred to it as being an 'all of Tasmania university'. It is not a campus at Launceston and a campus at Burnie that supports the University of Tasmania in Hobart - it is the university for all of Tasmania, and Launceston and Burnie play an important role and part.

Members would recall we were told on many occasions by former vice-chancellor Rathjen they would strongly support the current courses in Launceston and, if anything, would build on them. We have currently these graduate certificates with the changes occurring in Launceston; as the member for Rosevears said, 'I suppose we are going to attract an extra 10 000 students.' I might say 10 000 students at one stage were referred to as 5000 students, and 7000 students was also mentioned, but the latest figure is still around 10 000.

One of the concerns worrying people is the development at the Theatre Royal. We were taken to the Theatre Royal and viewed the site. Most members were with the university; although I am not sure where it is up to at present, a lot of work is going to take place on the corner block between the Theatre Royal and the next street down, Collins Street.

Mr Valentine - Collins Street - The Hedberg development.

Mr DEAN - That is right, there will be a big development that will connect to the Theatre Royal. People will start thinking about what really is this going to be all about. It is right next to the Theatre Royal.

Mr Valentine - Conservatorium.

Mr DEAN - There is also the view that Launceston could lose the course eventually and it will come to Hobart, but we are told it will not happen. As the member for Launceston said, that would not happen unless, of course, the course at Launceston becomes extremely big and they need to move a part of it to another area.

It is not surprising people have seen this as creating significant issues for them. I will quote from the letter received by these people. It was written by Dr Jane Woollard and Dr Asher Warren. The opening paragraph reads -

We are writing to inform you of the new Theatre and Performance program at the University of Tasmania. We are excited about these changes, but recognise the new program departs from the current Bachelor of Contemporary Arts, and as such it is important to make clear what these changes mean for prospective students.

For some people, that was the first they had heard of these changes. This is not a consultation phase; this was to tell them that as of 2019 these changes are occurring. It is not surprising some of these people were concerned.

The meeting we had with Professor Kate Darian-Smith last Thursday was great. The professor was clear on what will happen. She said it is not a downsizing of the course, although I have been told from a person within the university that it is. We were told that face-to-face contact in one area will change from 12 hours to three hours face-to-face contact and that other contact will change as well.

We were also told it is being done for economic reasons. When changes are made for economic reasons, you wonder whether it is downgrading or a downsizing.

The professor said it needs updating, which is another reason for change. We all agree that what was in place 10 or 20 years ago is probably not suitable now. We need to accept change and embrace it.

I received a letter from Cameron, from Three Rivers Theatre. He is a hardworking person who has put his life into theatre. In the letter he raises some points that I will quote -

- There is very little, if any, evidence of sector-wide consultation for these changes.
- The announcement of the changes is poorly timed, coming as it does too late in the year for current Year 12 to alter their pathway to tertiary education, especially if those plans were not geared towards getting an ATAR score of 65 or higher.

He says the timing is bad because it does not allow the students to make changes necessary to set themselves up for next year -

- These changes come after years of instability with the Theatre Course: high staff turnover, deletion of units, changes to course structure, and in many cases a generally poor student experience has been the result. This can be traced back to the loss of CentreStage some years ago, a decision largely made secretly and also without any significant consultation.
- The first that many Year 11 and 12 Drama/Theatre teachers, who must be construed as key stakeholders in this discussion, [knew about the changes] was last Friday September 7th at a moderation meeting when the attached letter from Jane Woollard and Asher Warren was read out

I read the first paragraph of that letter a moment ago, which told them what was going to happen, not what might happen. I quote again from the dot points provided by Cameron -

- The immediate reaction by those present at the meeting to this letter was shock - primarily that such drastic restructuring was being announced with little if any prior knowledge that it may have been forthcoming.
- One reading of the manner in which this change as announced is that it demonstrates little more than contempt for Launceston's Year 11/12 Drama students and our wider theatre community.

- Further evidence is attached which indicates that changes to the Theatre Course have been planned for at least the last eighteen months or so - and that initial changes proposed were not nearly as radical as the dumping of the stand-alone theatre qualification (the BCA).

I could quote from the rest but Cameron raises a number of important points and issues of concern. It is concerning that it happened. Really, when you think about it, we have a university that is responsible for teaching and for ensuring our students meet the high levels and standards the workforce needs. One would have thought the bare consultation processes would have been beyond criticism, but it is not the case.

Ms Forrest - It is like the Government.

Mr DEAN - You are probably right. I think the Government is changing, to give it credit. When I first came to this place, the consultation lacked a lot, but I have seen significant changes in the past few years; even towards the end of the previous Labor governments I saw changes occurring in relation to the consultation phases and processes. I think much of that is to the credit of the previous leader in this place, the member for Derwent, who was very careful to ensure the consultation process was undertaken. Things have changed. The university really is an area where it ought to have been done properly, in my view. They concede that it was not done as well as it could have been done.

I have received another letter. I will make only a couple of quotes from it; I do not have the word of the person to identify her by name, but she is well known in the Launceston area and in the area of theatre and theatre productions. She writes -

- We support the Bachelor of Arts having a theatre major - great idea for a lot of students but not at the expense of a full time theatre/creative industries course.
- There has not been enough consultation by the university and they are not responding to us - it feels like the agenda is to let the course die out and this is being enacted. We have anecdotal evidence of this from the past four years.
- That problems with the current course and how it has been run, especially recently, are not a reason to shut down the course.
- This is not an attack on the current staff - we really believe they came into the job expecting the course to run and are doing what they are told to do - but they should respect our community's right to be upset now that the changes have been announced.

Having said that, there is grave concern, but I am right in the middle. I have had a number of meetings with both sides, and I thank the university and Drs Woollard and Warren for their meeting with us on Friday in Launceston. That was a great meeting. They were up-front. They did not appear as though they were on the backfoot or hiding anything at all. They wanted to tell us what was going on and their views about it. They are the teachers who will be engaged in this course in Launceston. I thank them very much for that.

I do not know whether either of the previous members referred to the one-page document we received with the comparison of the two courses.

Ms Armitage - I didn't.

Mr Finch - I have not referred to it.

Mr DEAN - It might be worth reading in the differences because it is reasonably short. The Bachelor of Contemporary Arts old Theatre major is the current course being run, and the new one is the Bachelor of Arts new Theatre and Performance major, so there is a difference in the terminology. The current course, the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts will be discontinued from 2019. The teach-out of this degree will be completed in 2020.

Now looking at a new course and comparing it with that comment, the new Theatre and Performance major will be offered from 2019 as part of the Bachelor of Arts.

Old BCA Theatre

8 unit Theatre major

4 unit Theatre and History minor (theory)

4 degree elective units

6 student electives (free choice) -

opportunity to complete a 2nd minor

2 breadth units

BA (Theatre & Performance major)

8 unit Theatre major (revised to reflect contemporary practice)

4 unit minor in Creative Arts or other area

2 degree elective units (industry placement)

8 student electives (free choice) -

opportunity to complete a 2nd major (or 2 minors)

2 breadth units

That is a worry when I read this document. When we get a comment made, when they are comparing the two, or they do not have the resources - it does not enthuse me that this has been done for all the right reasons, which is a concern.

Comparing the two courses, there are some differences. I am not an expert in this area of theatre, so I am relying on the information provided to me. The member for Rosevears has quite an in-depth knowledge, as has the member for Launceston. I certainly do not; I must rely on what I am told and the information I have imparted here.

It is not too late now for the university to get its act together and communicate to theatre groups - talk, listen and explain why this is changing and why it will be a better course that will provide better opportunities for the students. It is not too late. The stable door has opened and the horse is on the way out, but at this stage, it has not absolutely bolted.

I urge the university to go out now and do what it should have done in the first place, which is talk to all of these groups. Go to the nine groups in Launceston, or call a meeting and ask they be present and explain the situation.

It is of concern. People have brought these matters to our attention and we have had to bring it forward here. As the member for Rosevears quite rightly said, it is our responsibility to bring these matters into the open, to discuss them and give people an opportunity to have a say on them. This is what we are doing.

One member said we should not qualify points by repeating them three or four times, but I reiterate my comment: UTAS should get out there now and talk to these people, which will allay a lot of fears and concerns about this matter.

[4.44 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I support the motion. I have listened to the three previous speakers - the member for Rosevears, the mover of the motion, and the members for Launceston and Windermere who have intimate knowledge around this issue. I was not available to attend the briefing last Thursday due to a committee commitment so I am not completely across the issue but I have certainly been listening to members in regard to the concerns raised by community theatre groups and the lack of communication articulating why the changes have been made and what benefits will follow. It is an opportunity for members to support the northern theatre community, which does a great job. We do not want to lose the opportunities. I am sure the southern theatre community groups do a great job as well. There is enough space in Tasmania for the groups to be spread right across the state.

I appreciate the opportunity to support the community. We want to make sure the university has a good understanding of the value the community sees in these theatre groups, but also that the theatre groups understand the benefits of any changes made by the university to their craft. I support the motion.

[4.47 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I support the motion because people need to understand the value of theatre in the community and the way it helps provide community cohesion. Many other benefits arise from theatre.

Theatre is seen as an extra that communities might engage in. Certainly that has been my experience. People have not always assigned proper value to the performing arts and, indeed, the arts in general terms.

I understand why members get upset when they think something is likely to be taken from their communities, especially when it provides such significant benefits. I support the annual Tasmanian Theatre Awards. Many groups from northern Tasmania and the north-west win awards. You do not win awards if you do not have support.

We always have to weigh up anything we do in this Chamber as to how resources can be applied. That is what the University of Tasmania is doing in this course restructure. It needs to be placed on the record that these courses, which are very focused on the community, provide definite benefits.

I support the motion, but with the understanding that tough decisions need to be made sometimes. I am not suggesting for one minute that the north of the state has to suffer detriment in every case. I think moving the agricultural course to the north-west was, to my mind, a very sensible move given the sheer amount of industry in the agricultural scene that exists across the state. This agricultural course is at the university campus in the north-west, is it not?

Ms Forrest - The Cradle Coast campus.

Mr VALENTINE - Cradle Coast, yes. I think that has the agricultural course, if I am not mistaken. It is quite clear that -

Ms Forrest - We have the Institute for Regional Development up there, too.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. Quite clearly, there is a benefit in placing certain aspects of the university in the areas of concentration. That is a sensible thing to do. As I say, sometimes tough decisions have to be made, but in this instance the value of having these sorts of courses in regional locations has benefit for the general community, as I outlined. I support the motion. I understand the passion people have for their area. I say that, but we are here to look at the whole state, and sometimes tough decisions have to be made. In this case, it looks like it has worked out.

[4.52 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, first, I thank the member for Rosevears for bringing this motion on. This is a good forum for airing these kinds of concerns. I thank the other members for their contributions.

At the outset, it is important to note, as I am sure that members are aware, that the Government has no jurisdiction over UTAS and decisions on curriculum are a matter for each college and the university, and ultimately, the University Council.

We do, however, understand that every area of the university is considering its curriculum and research in terms of what can be delivered in every part of the state to ensure they are well advanced in implementation by the time the new campuses in the north and north-west are operational.

UTAS advises that the new theatre and performance program is the outcome of a formal consultation process conducted with the northern arts community over the past 18 months and includes an industry placement that will prepare students for a theatre industry pathway.

In Launceston, it appears as if UTAS has been clear in its intent to see the Inveresk Precinct as a vibrant cultural community space, and that theatre and the creative and performing arts are central to that agenda, as is its support for the QVMAG as an iconic community space.

We are also aware that the university remains committed to a theatre program in Launceston that is community- and industry-led, provides local opportunities for students to develop their skills and networks and prepares them for their future careers in the creative and performing arts.

UTAS has indicated the new theatre and performance academic team in Launceston, which has reviewed all aspects of the old program, and has created a more contemporary curriculum that combines targeted development of technical and performance skills with the opportunity to access related disciplinary knowledge and work-integrated learning.

We note a key advancement in the new program is that students will be able to undertake a second disciplinary major via their eight electives, whereas previously students were able to complete only one minor in a second area of study. The benefits of studying eight electives include exposing students to broader interdisciplinary perspectives to better inform their practice, providing greater career flexibility and expanding international student exchange opportunities.

In addition, UTAS suggest students will have the opportunity to undertake a supervised work placement with local festival and performance groups as part of their accredited study, gaining important on-the-ground skills in theatre and positioning themselves for a career in the arts. UTAS has indicated these curriculum changes are driven by best practice approaches in theatre and performance curriculum, and a stronger focus on the student experience and graduate outcomes,

including employment and attention to attracting more students to the study of theatre so the program grows.

While we recognise the concerns of some members of the arts community, it appears as if the decision made by UTAS was founded on a consultative process that will see increased opportunities for students and improved educational outcomes for Tasmania. The significant commitment and investment by UTAS in performing arts right across Tasmania, including an ongoing commitment to partnerships with arts groups in the north and north-west, will no doubt see continued representational growth of the sector nationally and internationally. We note the motion.

[4.56 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I will not reiterate what other members have said, but want to focus on a number of these issues. Before I do so, I make a declaration that my eldest daughter is a graduate of the program being scrapped; she is also the chair of Mudlark Theatre Incorporated, one of the very few professional theatre groups in Tasmania, and I am on the boards of Junction Arts and The Unconformity.

Members know of my passion for arts, especially the performing arts. From a personal perspective I fully understand the absolute health and wellbeing benefits in engaging with the arts and am so pleased my children have actually learnt this and receive massive benefits from engaging with the arts.

While there are people in our community who see the arts as an add-on, or something nice to do or when you have money left over, this is a gross misunderstanding of the benefit the arts bring broadly to our health and wellbeing.

I also received the same communications from members of the theatre community in Launceston about the changes. This university offering is the course for the whole of the state, which includes Hobart and the north-west coast. There are many significant and very active theatre groups all around the state. While not many are professional - mostly amateur theatre groups - they rely on a course such as this, even if these graduates only want to use it as a hobby or an activity outside their professional life.

Engagement and involvement with the arts, particularly theatre, in terms of health and wellbeing creates enormous benefits for people in terms of building their self-confidence, resilience and developing a set of skills useful in many other places. Young people involved in theatre will almost always perform better at interviews. When they are being interviewed for a job, they know how to speak, to present themselves and how to dress. All those things are important, so we must not underestimate the value of this course and its statewide impact.

In my electorate, most of the high schools have very active drama departments and put on regular musical productions and theatre every two years, while in between they might do other plays and creative works. It is important because these students go from these activities to university. When this matter was raised as a concern, I contacted the relevant staff at UTAS and I have had a number of discussions and conversations with them and with people in the professional and amateur theatre space.

Dr Jane Woollard, the Head of Theatre, School of Creative Arts in Launceston forwarded me some information that was sent out on 6 August 2018 to all colleges and local theatre groups; it also gave me a list of the organisations this information was sent to - the Launceston Players Society,

Encore Theatre Company, Three River Theatre, Mudlark Theatre Inc., The Unconformity, Ten Days on the Island, Mofo, Insite Arts, Junction Arts Festival and Theatre North.

These groups were sent information, but we have to remember many of them are small volunteer groups and may not necessarily have received the information in a way they were able to discuss and disseminate among the people involved in their organisations.

When I spoke to Dr Woollard about this, she was happy to accept that they could have done better in the consultation process and it was likely to go a bit pear-shaped because of the nature of the change.

When I spoke more broadly to people, not the university people but people involved professionally or otherwise in the arts, there has been real concern over a number of years about what they would call the 'hollowing out' of the Bachelor of Contemporary Art in Theatre at Inveresk, and this was basically confirmed by UTAS staff. This is one reason why change was needed and promoted, but change is difficult if you are not part of the process of change. You are not engaged in the process, so it makes it difficult for people who have a very direct interest to be able to accept and understand the change. UTAS accept it could have and probably should have done better, but there is genuine concern about what this will actually mean.

I accept having a Bachelor of Art with a major in contemporary theatre and performance is one way of achieving a better outcome, but we have seen over the years that this course has been eroded by having fewer staff and declining numbers. Declining numbers is a challenge to deal with because if you do not have the numbers, you cannot afford the extra tutors and it becomes a vicious cycle.

One of the explanations given for the change to put it into a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Theatre and Performance was to make it more accessible to a greater range of students. Students who enrol in a Bachelor of Arts, maybe doing other areas like political science or other areas of arts, could also engage in theatre or do a major in theatre and performance. The reality is this course has never been one that would prepare a young person for a professional career in performance and theatre. It has not been that. If you want to do that, you really have to go to NIDA, WAAPA or a number of other universities.

I have spoken to the staff and asked UTAS to ensure particularly that what we end up with is a nationally recognised degree and program that enables young people or mature age students to start on a legitimate, recognised pathway that will lead them to a professional career in performance and theatre, if that is where they want to go.

Mr Valentine - Rather than having to go to the VCA.

Ms FORREST - Or WAAPA or NIDA or wherever. A number of universities around the country offer courses similar to what has been happening in Tasmania. An important aspect is it needs to assist those local theatre groups but it also needs to be broader than that. I spoke to Professor Darian-Smith at length and she has also sent me some more information, some of which I will read to the Chamber. It is important for the university to explain how it is going to do that, because it is claiming people will come from the mainland to do this course. They may come internationally to do this course and that is good if they do because it will increase the opportunity for more numbers and thus more tutors because it has been eroded. There have been staff cuts and fewer sessional tutors, which undermines the opportunities for students taking this course.

A couple of other members raised the reduction in the contact hours. This is a real concern.

I want to read some of the comments provided to me. I will read a section of this email from Professor Darian-Smith. We are talking about examples such as the design, performance and event making pathway; English and performance pathway; and community cultural development pathway -

There are other pathways, that these give a sense of the focus on industry and community engagement during the course and in preparing students for multiple careers in the arts when they are graduates.

As I said previously, it prepares them for a broader range of employment opportunities.

I will quote the dot points in this email and explain why I think the theatre groups are still anxious about this -

- The University is going through a process of deep consideration of how our offerings meet the needs of our communities in both the North and North West of the State.

I suggest they should also focus on the south, because that is also where the students will come from -

- Every area of the University is considering its curriculum and research to ensure we are well advanced in implementation by the time the new campuses in the North and North West are operational.
- In Launceston, we have been clear in our intent to have the Inveresk Precinct as a vibrant cultural community space and that theatre and the creative and performing arts are central to this, as is our support for the QVMAG as an iconic community space.

Mr President, I have spent as much time as any member in this place in the Annexe Theatre. When my daughter was going through the program, I went to every performance, usually more than once.

Mrs Hiscutt - You are a good mother.

Ms FORREST - I am an addict. I am not actually a good mother; I am just an addict. I love it.

My daughter prided herself that in one of the performances she got the whole audience to cry. It was a really sad story. I wanted to beat up the guy who was doing the bad thing to her! She had the whole audience crying. Don Wing will vouch for this because he was there and he had a little tear himself. She was very convincing.

Professor Darian-Smith said there are moves to upgrade it further. The Inveresk Precinct and the Annexe Theatre are getting a little aged. That is a positive thing -

- The University remains committed to a theatre program in Launceston that is community and industry-led and that provides local opportunities for students to develop their skills and networks and provides them for a future career in the creative and performing arts.

That is really important. The claims I am hearing from within and without the theatre world is that the current program has not been doing that because it has been eroded -

- The new Theatre and Performance program is an outcome of a formal consultation process that we concluded with the Northern arts community over the past 18 months and includes an industry placement that will prepare students well for a theatre industry pathway.

When they talk about a formal consultation process, I am not sure how much they have directly engaged with some of these theatre groups. Had they done so, they would not have had the pushback they have had. I do not understand the formal consultation process.

I talked about the reduction in the hours, and the member for Windermere referred to it; however, I understand there will be additional opportunities for industry placements. These students will then be engaging with things like Junction and Mofo.

Mr Finch - The Unconformity?

Ms FORREST - Yes, they are engaging with The Unconformity this year. They will be in Queenstown doing some work there. All those opportunities will exist. They are doing it now, but as I understand it, it is going to be more as part of their elective program. It is really important they get that real-life experience. All these festivals and productions are special in their own right -

- On their arrival at the beginning of 2018, the new Theatre and Performance academic team in Launceston reviewed all aspects of the old program and have created a more contemporary curriculum that combines targeted development of technical and performance skills with the opportunity to access related disciplinary knowledge, and work-integrated learning.

I have spoken a little on that. The next one says -

- A key advancement in the new program is that students will be able to undertake a second disciplinary major via their 8 electives - whereas previously students were only able to complete one minor in a second area of study.

I hope that will give these students a broader opportunity to engage in a variety of opportunities that will improve their employment opportunities in the arts or a slightly different area, depending on what other subjects they do -

- The benefits of studying 8 electives include exposing students to broader interdisciplinary perspectives to better inform their practice, providing greater career flexibility and expanding international student exchange opportunities.

That relates to the point I just made. The last one is -

- Moreover, they have the opportunity to undertake a supervised work placement with local festival and performance groups as part of their accredited study, gaining important on-the-ground skills in Theatre and positioning themselves for careers in the Arts.

That is what we have just mentioned about engaging with The Unconformity, for example, and other festivals and theatre groups.

Mr President, I can see why theatre groups have been anxious about this. I think many of the theatre groups have been anxious for a while that their course is being eroded because they rely on it. I guess it will remain to be seen how this plays out. I think UTAS, now that we have raised this in parliament, and after communication by a number of members to UTAS on this matter, will know that it needs to engage more fully to ensure the broader theatre community is on board and understands this.

It is important UTAS does not lose sight of the fact that it needs to deliver a nationally recognised qualification that attracts students from around Tasmania, mainland Australia and potentially internationally. If those opportunities for international exchange occur, what a great opportunity that will be.

Most of us agree that it is not all bad - in fact, it may not be that bad at all - but when you have not been fully engaged in a change that directly impacts what you do, whether it is your business or your hobby - but a hobby with important health and wellbeing impacts - those things should have been done better.

If UTAS can ensure that it provides such a recognised course, we will all be winners. By that I mean all of us, not just the theatre groups.

In noting the terms of the motion, there has been strong community concern surrounding the restructuring of the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts, and there needs to be more collaboration with those engaged directly in that area. They will have to sell the impact of the restructuring of the course on the university campus and its ability to attract students to the new course. They will have to make sure students understand what it is they are being offered and how they can maximise the opportunities, particularly if they are looking for a career in performance and theatre. Some of them will be; others will be looking at it as a sideline to enhance their skills and opportunities.

Mr Finch - And of course the opportunity to come to Launceston, to Tasmania, to do what should be a highly credentialled course, to soak up some of the lifestyle and have the opportunity to really get into what they want to study and what they want to do.

Ms FORREST - I am pretty sure it was Jane Woollard who told me that currently a Hobart-based student is enrolled who will be travelling up once a week as part of the Bachelor of Arts to undertake this major. That is happening - allegedly - and is a positive thing. Point (3), 'The impact on the local creative arts community', remains to be seen. That could be positive. Let us hope it is, but it will only be positive if the course delivers those outcomes, and the theatre companies and the people engaged in performance and theatre across the state can actually see and witness the benefits.

I support the motion - the wording is innocuous in many respects - but I call on UTAS to make it a nationally recognised qualification that students are gaining. Overall I support the motion. I think UTAS has more consultative work to do and more engagement with the schools as well as the theatre groups.

[5.16 p.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, the points of this motion have been well and truly covered. Point (3) is about the impact on the local creative arts community, which relates to how the course developed and grew with the people who came through the course, who were part of the community or stayed in the community and developed their theatre skills, and how we are feeling the benefit now. Let us hope that does not diminish and in fact grows with this new course.

I thank and suggest we offer our support to Dr Asher Warren and Dr Jane Woollard, for the work they have done in developing this course. We wish them every success for the future, and for this course. We want to see it become a success in our community. We will be offering them our support. Hopefully, with the work they have done, they have been able to nail down what is needed for our young people in Tasmania. If this is what they want to do, it will offer them a better pathway to the job creation suggested.

This course has been refashioned and given curriculum renewal as the numbers were down to 40 over three years, which was not enough. Hopefully we will see growth. I do not know where I got that figure of 250 from. I have been through the notes of the discussion we had with Professor Kate Darian-Smith and the 250 is not there. I hope it is somewhere in one of the many conversations I had.

Of course, the other concern expressed by Cheyne Mitchell is that he has developed students at the Launceston College, and they are fearful and concerned about the fact they now require an ATAR and might have to do a third year at the Launceston College. Professor Kate said it will not disadvantage any year 10s now. Hopefully, that will remain the case and we will not see students concerned, because they will be given the opportunity to continue what they thought they were going to do. Hopefully, this will be taken into account in that transition period.

Professor Kate mentioned that this as a 'flagship major' for the university. Let us hope we can keep this as a heading when we think of this course, that it is a flagship major for the university. Not a downgrading, but in fact an expansion. She reiterated that there were no plans to move it to Hobart - no plans in the future - but if it did, it would be as well at Launceston, which was a point of concern.

She stated the new campus has to be connected to the community. Yes, all well and good, let us achieve that. Let us have communication and consultation in a more fulsome way. That connection to the community was highlighted and an exemplar for connection from community to university when we had the CentreStage operation. The professor said it was unfortunate the entire theatre community did not feel informed. We would like the university to take on the message that its consultation was not sufficient to make people feel comfortable about what should be a very exciting development for our young people. That idea was not sold, and it still has to be sold to others to come to Tassie and to be part of this course.

I appreciate the work Dr Asher Warren and Dr Jane Woollard have done in getting the course to where it is. We are in good hands with Professor Darian-Smith because she has a liking for

theatre. I think that is her background. She appointed the two people to come north and she expressed a strong desire for it to grow.

Mr Dean - Before you sit down, what did you make of the change in which two of the elective units from the old degree have been cut because they are outdated and/or they do not have the resources?

Ms Forrest - That is getting rid of those sessional lecturers I mentioned.

Mr FINCH - Say that again, member for Murchison.

Ms Forrest - Part of it has been because they have cut costs on sessional lecturers. If they grow enrolment numbers, they can employ them again. It is a bit of a catch-22.

Mr FINCH - These courses you are talking about, member for Windermere, were developed using examples from Monash and Deakin. They are successful courses and I think they have taken the lead from those courses to develop the one for Launceston. I trust this has been a constructive debate for the development of theatre for all of Tasmania. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Consideration and Noting - Select Committee on Firearms Law Reforms - Report

[5:22 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I move -

That the report of the Legislative Council Select Committee on Firearms Law Reforms be considered and noted.

I have moved that this matter be considered and noted for several reasons. First, the interest in the select committee inquiry from within the state and from the mainland. Second, to provide a forum for members to have a say on firearms law reforms and what happened here. Third, because of the actions taken that caused this inquiry to be aborted.

It is important members have the opportunity to have a say here. This matter - support for a select committee - came into this Chamber and members made statements in relation to the setting up of that committee. It reasonable that members be afforded the opportunity to comment on the cessation of the select committee.

My information is that members of the public who provided submissions to the select committee inquiry feel let down because of its cessation. One person sought to withdraw their submission totally and others have requested their submissions now be treated as confidential. People generally have more confidence in a hearing presided over by Legislative Council members than by a committee involving government members and being led by a government member. A number of people have made that statement to me since this event arose; they said they had confidence in a select committee of the upper House with a number of independent members on it

conducting the inquiry. They were not backward in coming forward. I suspect other members of the committee might have heard that also; I do not know, I do not speak on their behalf.

As several members of the public who had made a submission told me, the perception was held that the Government might favour a position that supports its policy document, handed out publicly two days prior to the election earlier this year. I do not support that perception. Suffice it to say, the Legislative Council select committee would not have been questioned in a similar way. Whether that perception is right or wrong, to me it is disappointing that the select committee could not continue and do its job as supported by this House.

I will say a little more on that in a moment. Mine will not be a long speech but in saying this, the machinery around the select committee and firearms law reform has caught the attention of the national media, with the ABC's *Four Corners* program in this place earlier today. The ABC will be airing quite a lengthy program in relation to this matter in October. I know that the ABC has been here for the last several days.

Mr Willie - Were you interviewed?

Mr DEAN - Yes, I was. Cause of the inquiry: as we know, two days before the March 2018 election, the Liberal Party publicly released a policy document on its position on firearms law reform, that, should it be returned to government, it was going to advance. We know the policy document was released to other stakeholders on 9 February 2018.

What I find intriguing in this action is that the public was not at that time seen as a stakeholder in firearms law reform. With the greatest of respect to the Liberal Party, I see the public, in Tasmania's case, as being a prime stakeholder. It was through a mammoth tragedy we would like to forget but will never be able to forget - our generation certainly will not be able to forget it - and a public outcry that saw the genesis of the National Firearms Agreement and the handing in or destruction of thousands of firearms. I do not know how many thousands of firearms were destroyed through this process - huge numbers. In fact, three of those firearms were mine, and one of them was a very prized possession. It hurt me tremendously to have to hand it in, but I supported what was happening - and I still support it - and was able to do that.

The Labor Party also came out with a document not too dissimilar to the position articulated by the Liberal Party on firearms law reform. If you look at the two documents, there are similarities across some areas but there are also differences between the two documents as well.

Mr Willie - Some key differences.

Mr DEAN - There are, but there are some similarities as well. We need to at least refer to that.

Many people were angry with what had happened two days before the election. I had personal contact from some public figures voicing their disappointment at this release only a day or so before the election. Suffice it to say I formed a position fairly early thereafter that an inquiry into the firearms reform was required.

Following the election result, I made it reasonably clear I would seek an inquiry into the matter, albeit not at first articulating who should do it. I was torn between two or three approaches. One was a sessional committee inquiry, another was a select committee inquiry and yet another was a joint House committee inquiry, but I was talking about it.

During the time of these discussions and identifying that I was going to at least move for an inquiry, yes, I was contacted by a government member who said that the Government - this is obviously after the election - would support any inquiry undertaken.

The terms of reference for the select committee were drawn up in accordance with the Government's policy document of 9 February 2018, and that document was specifically referred to in the terms of reference. The terms of reference are -

To inquire into and report upon the impact of the Government's proposed firearms law reforms as outlined in the policy document of 9 February 2018 with the following Terms of Reference -

- (1) Current and future firearms licencing regimes, including training and testing, licence renewal, licence infringements and licence categories;
- (2) Compliance with the provisions of the National Firearms Agreement;
- (3) The roles of Tasmania Police, Firearms Services (FAS) and the proposed Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council (TFOC);
- (4) The role of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Government, Tasmania Police and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA);
- (5) The ownership and use of sound suppressors by Category C licence holders; and
- (6) Any other matters incidental thereto.

The terms of reference were endorsed by this House. A lot of work went into getting those terms of reference in place. I appreciate the support I was given through this place and the Clerks, and the advice received in putting all of this together.

Mr Willie - Out of interest, did you discuss the terms of reference with the Government member who contacted you?

Mr DEAN - No. They were not drawn up at that stage. The terms of reference were then advertised in the three newspapers as generally published in Tasmania, as we always do - the *Mercury*, *The Examiner* and *The Advocate*. That notice was in accordance with the terms of reference and we extended the period for submissions by rather a long time. We did that because of the importance of this matter. Of course, all matters are important, but we believed we should give some extra time here. I think a period of almost eight weeks was given, or close to it.

It was made clear that submissions were to address the terms of reference, as we always do. The committee comprised Robert Armstrong, Deputy Chair and member for Huon; Michael Gaffney, member for Mersey; Leonie Hiscutt, Leader and member for Montgomery; Tania Rattray, member for McIntyre; Jo Siejka, member for Pembroke; and myself as Chair.

We met on two occasions; in the first instance, to set a plan in place, and then we met to go through submissions and determine the list of witnesses to receive further evidence from. At this

stage I thank members of that committee for their input and support. Even though it did not go for that long in the end, a lot of work was still put into it.

Ms Rattray - There were 111 submissions to be read in their entirety.

Mr DEAN - Yes, that is right. One submission was 194 pages long, from memory. It was an enormous amount of reading.

That last day going through our witnesses was a long one. We had 108 submissions to go through and an extension beyond the closing date was given to the Government at the time of that referred meeting. We were still waiting for it. We did not receive it until the Friday. The Government's submission was more of a statement than a submission. It was one and three-quarter pages.

We worked through the list. We selected witnesses to take further evidence from. Informal contact was made with these people by our hardworking secretary, Natasha Exel, who was wonderful in getting everything together for us. It made it so much easier.

Then, when the decision was made not to proceed, the secretary, with some embarrassment, had to call these potential witnesses to cancel the arrangements that had been made.

The Government submission was short, but I will read it into *Hansard*.

Tasmanian Government Submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Firearms Law Reform

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission [sic] this inquiry. Prior to the State Election in March 2018 the former Police Minister developed a Firearms Policy after much consultation through the Tasmanian Firearms Consultative Committee. The Firearms Policy reflected strong input from farmers and other primary producers, as well as sporting shooters, hunters and collectors. Firearms are legal. They are tools of the trade for farmers and hunters and equipment for sporting shooters like those that competed this year at the Commonwealth Games.

Our Firearms election policy was about practical improvements to the law to support the work of legitimate firearms users, including farmers who produce the food we eat. The changes are intended to strike a contemporary middle-ground that balances public safety and the changing needs of firearms users.

This intent, I note, was the same as the Australian Labor Party which committed to take immediate action to consult with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and other stakeholders regarding regulatory issues encountered by farmers and others, committing to address the legitimate concerns that have been highlighted. Labor also committed to a range of other changes that were the same as, or similar to, elements of the Government's policy.

Whilst we believe the policy we took to the election would provide practical changes for firearms users while having no impact on the safety of Tasmanians, we accept that there are deeply held concerns about making any change to firearm laws and we respect the views of Tasmanians on this issue.

It is for that reason the Government will not progress the previously announced firearms law proposals and will review firearms policy after consideration of recommendations from the Committee. We are aware that extensive consultation is already underway informing the Committee's analysis of these issues.

I am hopeful the Committee will explore each individual element of the policy we released earlier this year as well as the policies of other political parties and other groups. Inquiring into these issues and providing considered analysis will only serve to better inform public discussion and guide future policy.

We remain committed to making practical improvements to firearm laws, as has occurred more than a dozen times since 1996, but we agree there needs to be widespread community understanding and support for any change. The Government's overriding principle in relation to any proposed changes continues to be that we will not do anything to undermine the National Firearms Agreement.

I recognised this is an important issue which is why the Government supported Mr Dean's motion to establish this Inquiry. The Government looks forward to working constructively with the Legislative Council and assisting as needed during the Inquiry.

That is signed by the minister, Mr Ferguson.

This is when we learned the Government was not going to progress the policy. That arrived on the Friday, two days after our meeting to identify the witnesses we would be calling. That weekend I was scarcely off the phone. Calls were coming in from left, right and centre. I was taking phone calls from a couple of members of the committee. I appreciated those calls and the advice and statements made by members. A good committee is about becoming involved and having a view and giving advice.

I appreciate the contact, information and advice I was being given by you, Mr President, and also by the Clerks in this House.

It became clear we were dealing with a unique situation. The Government submission made it clear that the document referred to in our terms of reference, and on which our terms of reference had been drawn up, no longer existed. The Clerks advised me they had not had to deal with a similar situation previously, nor did they know of any case information on which to rely on in determining a way forward.

The advice ultimately provided was that the committee no longer had a valid document supporting the terms of reference. While it was a committee decision to determine its future, there was no basis on which the committee could proceed.

I do not believe the Government addressed its position closely enough or considered what the ramifications and impact on the committee through its decision not to progress the previously announced firearm law proposals might be. If they did, well, I am not too sure why we received it the way we did.

I do not suggest the Government deliberately derailed the committee. It was put to me by some people that is the reason it occurred. I did not accept that. I am satisfied the Government did not look at it as closely as it should have done.

The committee met several times to sort the matter out. While some discussions might be determined as having been robust, all members acted with restraint and professionalism. It was clear members were disappointed at being confronted with a position not of their choosing. I certainly was disappointed.

I was acutely disappointed, particularly following the work put in and the many discussions with potential witnesses - those who had provided submissions - and then having read the 111 submissions at the end, one of which was 194 pages long. I spent literally hours on this inquiry, with many phone calls received from one firearm owner and a farmer, and one who was a manufacturer of firearms in this state. I thank Don Jones for his assistance and advice and his desire to work with the committee. He was very passionate about the situation and wanted to see the inquiry continue.

The committee decided in the circumstances that it could not proceed on the terms of reference before it and agreed to abandon the inquiry. As the report tabled in this place identifies, as the inquiry's terms of reference were specifically drafted to address the Government's proposed reforms, the committee was placed in an unenviable position of not having valid terms of reference. After taking considered advice, the committee determined the inquiry would not progress.

The report is short and sets out in chronological order the setting up of the inquiry and the events taking place up to and including the circumstances around the decision not to proceed.

The impact of the report - following the tabling of the report and publicity given, my phone, email and text messages were all media used by disgruntled people and the organisations that had provided submissions. Not all contacted me, but quite a few did, and I suspect other members because I would not have been the only one -

Ms Rattray - I redirected them straight to you.

Mr DEAN - Some withdrew or wanted to withdraw their submissions. Some voiced their anger of what had happened; unfortunately our staff, particularly Natasha Exel, had to handle some of that. That is extremely disappointing and I am not sure how we get over that because the committee secretaries' names are on all the correspondence and they are the contact points given. It does become an issue for them. They are very professional and hardworking people. I have no doubt Nat would have been very professional in her responses and what she did in this situation. I took my fair share and I was able to handle it okay. I expect other members were able to as well.

All submissions, with the exception of those marked confidential and those withdrawn because of the cessation of the committee, have been published. They are on the website. It is regrettable this has happened because it is fair to say those providing submissions, and maybe others, probably would have had more confidence in a Legislative Council committee than perhaps in a House of Assembly committee to conduct an open, transparent and fair inquiry. I do not agree with those people; I agree it will be done well. In fact I look forward to the inquiry and the findings of the inquiry.

Much of the work done by us and the public, with the provision of their submissions, will not be lost. That was a point I had to make to the people who contacted me - 'Your submission will not be lost.' This was after the Government came out identifying it was moving ahead with it.

The House of Assembly terms of reference in four points are the same as, or very similar to, our terms of reference endorsed in this place.

One of its terms picks up the submissions provided to us. That is, it provides for the committee to consider those public submissions. To me, this will rule out access to the confidential submissions provided to us and in any event we could not provide them to the House of Assembly committee without the express consent of the authors of those confidential documents. They would not have been made available to the current committee that has been set up.

I note the Government has left out of its terms of reference anything to do with suppressors. Why? I am not sure, because there has been much discussion around suppressors. Any member who looked at the submissions we received would have seen that. Many submissions covered suppressors. I would have thought any committee looking at firearms law reform should not stick its head in the sand and pretend that suppressors are not an important point to at least consider in such an inquiry.

I think the decision not to proceed with the term of reference on suppressors was not a good one. There is much public talk about them - much support for them and much opposition. For goodness sake, address the situation and make a determination. Those supporting suppressors would be justified, in my opinion, in challenging the Government on that decision. Our committee was not going to ignore this part of firearms law reform, but at least address it as suppressors are not referred to in the National Firearms Agreement.

Do they weaken the National Firearms Agreement? If they are not in it and they are not a part of it, I do not think it would. However, I do not have to make that decision now.

I must say, had the Government not gone down the path it did in setting up this inquiry, I was going to. I was taking advice on how I should go about that and come back into this place with changed terms of reference. I was given advice on what I would need to do to do that. I certainly would have brought a motion into this House in the hope it would be supported and that all the good work done would not be lost. That was my position on that. I have been lobbied from the sidelines as well to consider something else that could move this matter forward.

In conclusion, I will follow the new inquiry with some interest and look forward to considering the report in due course. I am satisfied the committee's position here was soundly based. Again, I thank the committee members, the secretary - the hardworking Natasha Exel - and Allison Waddington for keeping us on track and the Clerks and the President for their support and advice.

Albeit this inquiry was cut short, it was taxing. It caused some grief and to some extent may go down in history in this place because of the unique circumstances that arose causing it to be abandoned.

Once again, I extend a thank you to members of the public who provided submissions. Your time has not been wasted and, where possible, will assist in guiding and informing the House of Assembly committee that has been set up.

I commend the motion to the House.

[5.53 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for chairing us through this process. I have a few comments to make, but I hope they will be reasonably brief.

I especially thank the individuals and groups who forwarded submissions to the Legislative Council Select Committee on Firearms Law Reforms. Regardless of the length of the submission, be it from 1 to 200 pages, all of the 111 submissions were very important to me as a committee member. I am aware that other members also spent many hours reading and highlighting sections of those submissions of particular interest.

A number of submissions also provided links to websites and information, which I must admit while appreciated makes it near impossible when those sites contain exceptionally large documents. We all tried our best to glean important information from those sites, but I admit to having only the time to read the executive summaries of a number of those large reports and documents.

One of the interesting outcomes of the submissions was that some highlighted certain aspects of firearms law reform not covered by the terms of reference. As we know, the committee passed six terms of reference that primarily reflected an investigation into the policy position of the Government. I note that none of the six terms of reference mentioned will cover the policies of either the Labor or Greens parties. The only parties mentioned explicitly are the Hodgman Government, term of reference (4); Tasmania Police, terms of reference (3) and (4); Firearms Service, terms of reference (3); the proposed Tasmanian Firearms Owners Council, term of reference (3); Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, term of reference (4); and category C licence holders, term of reference (5).

The stated purpose of the inquiry was to inquire into and report upon the impact of the Government's proposed firearms law reforms. In an article in *The Examiner*, the member for Windermere and chair of the committee stated in reference to the Government's proposed reforms that -

I have said before I don't think the government should say they have a mandate on this because they brought it out two days before the election.

The member continued -

That doesn't give people enough time to consider it and make up their minds ... It's one of the first things people ask me about, but until we know more about the changes, I can't give them any answers.

The member's words were welcomed by the Government. The Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management responded by saying in a press release -

The Hodgman Liberal Government understands firearms laws are a very emotive issue for all Tasmanians and we are committed to engaging in extensive consultation before any legislation is tabled. Accordingly we are supportive of Ivan Dean's call for an Upper House inquiry into the proposed changes. We have made it very clear we will not do anything that puts Tasmanians at risk or is inconsistent with the National Firearms Agreement, and the inquiry will be a chance for everyone concerned to have their say on these proposals.

The press release goes on to say -

We now look forward to working constructively with the Legislative Council and assisting as needed during the inquiry.

As with any Legislative Council select committee inquiry, the chairman is able to approach various members from the Legislative Council to be part of the committee. Some listeners, or readers, may be unaware that the formation of the committee and the terms of reference are proposed in this Chamber and are discussed and debated. The inquiry, with its terms of reference, is then accepted, amended or defeated.

However, once the terms of reference of the committee are endorsed by the House, it is understood that the inquiry process is underway. At its first meeting the committee elects a chair, a deputy chair, and discusses the media release to inform the public, which includes a date for submissions to be received. In this case, as mentioned by the member for Windermere, it was 3 August.

Mr President, I also believe the public need to be aware of how seriously this place takes the formation of an inquiry committee. Committee inquiries are important for all stakeholders to have an opportunity to participate and express their viewpoints. However, committees are also time-consuming and a financial cost to the Tasmanian people. Once submissions are received and evaluated, some individuals and community groups would have been invited to present to the committee as part of the hearing process.

I refer to some of the extracts from *Hansard* of the debate held in the Chamber on 22 May about the possible formation of the firearms inquiry committee. The member for Murchison stated -

I start with the same questions I asked during debate on the motion previously put by the member for Launceston. Is this an area of significant concern? Absolutely, yes it is. One reason there is so much concern is the way the policy was released during the recent election period. The letter sent out by the Liberal Party was dated 9 February - in their planning for the election. It was sent out to a number of stakeholders, but not all. If it had been sent to all stakeholders, it would have been sent to every Tasmanian because every Tasmanian is a stakeholder in this issue. The letter was not even sent to every stakeholder with an interest in firearms. A number of people contacted me who did not receive it, including firearms owners and retailers. So the manner in which the policy was released created the most community interest and concern. Does it need review?

The member for Murchison continued -

Is this our role or is this the role of government? The member for Windermere posed that question, and he said no doubt someone will mention it. And too right because I do not believe it is our role to be scrutinising the whole of the areas of firearms and gun laws basically in the state when the Government probably only has a number of defined areas that it actually really needs to consider and consult on. The Government should be doing that. It should have done it.

We do not know what the Government is actually going to bring in now in terms of the legislation. We do not know what regulatory change it is going to propose. There is a process for that and I believe that the Government should be doing that.

Ms Forrest - I said some good stuff.

Mr GAFFNEY - I cut most of the other stuff out, sorry.

The member for Murchison voted against the inquiry process. The member for Derwent voted for the inquiry -

We are not actually sure - apart from what has been released in what is basically a policy letter - and we do not have any detailed understanding of what the legislation will be like.

He continued -

Maybe this has been proposed a little early. Maybe we should have our committee structure worked out to see who sits where and how we can best do that. That will be the right way to structure, because with an issue as sensitive as the gun issue, it is very important it is beyond any question about frequency of ideas or people's opinions on firearms.

The member for Hobart voted against the inquiry stating -

I am inclined to not see this House be the policymaker for the Government. When a bill comes before us, we are constrained by the Government's willingness to move left or right of whatever the policy position might be as we propose amendments to bills. This is defining the boundaries and that gives me a little bit of concern.

The member for McIntyre voted for the committee -

I do not see it as telling the government what the policy is. I see it as giving them enough information that they do not bring a bill to this House that could not possibly pass and yes, you might say we are doing the work of the Government, but are we not doing the work of the parliament? We are working for the parliament which is to make sure that the community gets the best possible outcome. That is how I see it.

The member continued -

I have also been challenged in regard to the fact that we are doing the work of the government. Again, I do not believe we are. I believe we are doing the work of the parliament. We are providing a forum for people who have an interest in this issue. It is quite a big issue. I have already started receiving representations to my office and I suggested to one gentleman that he make some dot points for me.

The member for Launceston voted yes, saying -

We need to provide all sectors of the community the opportunity to have input into this important issue if we are to make informed decisions over legislative change. I believe the Legislative Council would probably do a better job of such independent inquiries than the other place does.

It was no surprise that the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council voted in favour of the inquiry. The Leader was one of the members approached by the member for Windermere to

be part of the inquiry along with the members for McIntyre, Huon, Pembroke, Windermere and yours truly.

The Leader stated -

The policy we took to the election likes to reflect strong input from farmers and other primary producers as well as sporting shooters, hunters and collectors, so like it or not, firearms are legal. They are tools of the trade for farmers and hunters and equipment for sporting shooters, like those who competed recently at the Commonwealth Games.

Our policy is about practical improvements to the law to support the work of legitimate firearm users including farmers who produce the food we eat. Our proposals were never secret, as claimed. They were circulated to key stakeholders more than three weeks before the election and were the response to issues they had raised with clear instructions they could share them as they wished, and they did.

The member for Rumney also agreed with the committee process. She did, however, point out, as did other members -

We support a committee, but we believe this should be a sessional committee. It should not be conducted in this manner. To make the point, if the consultations had been done appropriately in the first place and the work that will be done by this committee had been done by the government, we most likely would not be in this position. While we will not be supporting this motion, we do support a review of the legislation, and as I have said, we do support some of the changes.

Even though I accepted a position on the committee, I actually voted against the legislative committee process going ahead. I believed this inquiry was so important for Tasmania, it should have been a joint House select inquiry with three members from the House of Assembly and three members from the upper House.

The member for Windermere in his summary said -

As I said, it was a matter I was involved in myself. I have real concerns about the position put forward by some members as to why this inquiry should not proceed. It would be a fairly short inquiry -

It was a short inquiry -

and identify very clearly to the Government how the public - the people who are out there - are seeing this moving forward. They would be very naive and very silly if they did not accept the findings and any recommendations that might come out of this committee in relation to the matters which have been raised.

I will refer to that point later on. As you can gather by the diverse variety of members' comments, the adoption of any inquiry in this place does undertake a serious assessment, and so it should.

As stated previously, I thank the many members of the public who gave up their time to provide a submission. As one individual highlighted when he heard the inquiry had been abandoned by the committee, in fact we should be apologising for our decision to close down the inquiry. While I appreciate the sentiment expressed by one disgruntled stakeholder, this point needs further clarification. Perhaps it is not the Legislative Council firearms committee apologising, but as commented by others, including the member for Murchison, it is the Government that should apologise.

As a member of that committee, I was of the very firm opinion that the upper House inquiry could not or should not continue once we had received the Government's submission. I know the member for Windermere has read it in, but there is a section I will reread, because that is the one I was referring to.

The member for Windermere mentioned the Government failed to provide its submission by 3 August, which was the closing date. It was the Government that was supportive of the inquiry in the first place - an inquiry that was formed to research, investigate and clarify its firearms policy position. It was very strange there was no substantive submission from the Government to actually support its firearms reform policy. We gave it an extra 14 days to do that.

Ms Forrest - Particularly when it said it supported the inquiry.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes. However, I was not overly surprised by the Government's decision not to provide a submission because the policy position it released just prior to the election drew the ire of many Tasmanians, and even Tasmanians and individuals further afield. Indeed, the community dissatisfaction with the firearms issue was quite significant. I think even the Government would acknowledge, probably not publicly, that the firearms reform debates could have been handled better.

To put a policy position forward and highlight it just prior to an election and knowing that, by all accords, the Liberals should win the 2018 election was also not a surprise. No doubt that type of planning then gives them a chance to say they have a mandate. While the Liberals did retain government, they lost two seats and five new faces were elected to the major opposing party, giving Labor 10 and the Greens two in the House.

However, it is unfortunate that the firearms reform agenda was somewhat sensationalised by 'on the eve of an election'. At first glance, some of the policy positions mentioned by the Government received support from a number of people and community groups, and they appear sound.

However, I now cut to the chase. In the Government's submission to us, the committee was informed by the minister -

I am hopeful the Committee will explore each individual element of the policy we released earlier this year, as well as the policies of other political parties and other groups. Inquiring into these issues, and providing considered analysis, will only serve to better inform the public discussion and guide future policy.

This clearly would concern every member of this place. The minister has actually asked that the unknown policy positions of the Labor Party and the Greens also be investigated by this committee and they would then base the Government's policies on the recommendations from this

committee - an interesting position. The terms of reference for this firearms law reform inquiry were based on the policy position of the Government. The terms of reference, as decided by the committee, did not take and could not take into consideration the unknown policy positions of the other political parties. Thus the committee was placed in an untenable position. Therefore, it was an appropriate decision to withdraw the Legislative Council inquiry into the Government's firearms policy.

I would like to spend just a few moments, with your indulgence, Mr President, on the member for Windermere's comment that when the formation of the committee was being debated, the Government would be very naïve and silly if it did not accept the findings and recommendations that might come out of this inquiry committee. Now, I will explain from my recent experience why this is not necessarily the case. It is an area of concern for this place and, indeed, the whole committee process.

I imagine there are members of this place who also know of examples of questionable practices within the committee processes. These types of inquiries cost time and money. It is my contention that when such an inquiry moves forward, it should only do so on the proviso that its findings and recommendations be legitimately considered by the Government.

However, as an example, I do not believe the Future Gaming Markets committee's final report, recommendations and findings received the consideration they should have. The Government still has not reported back to this place, and what it has provided has been very disappointing. The gaming inquiry report was tabled at the end of September 2017, and the committee worked diligently to meet the deadline commitment. I shall outline briefly what has transpired since.

I expressed concerns about the Government's response to the committee report when I spoke to a newspaper reporter in October last year. In the beginning, it was the Government's initiative to undertake the select committee and community consultation process. In the public hearings, available in the *Hansard*, both the Premier and Treasurer highlighted they wanted to consult with and receive feedback from the wider community, including industry, social advocacy groups and individuals about the future gaming markets. Both leaders reiterated that the inquiry report was a starting place and that recommendations from the report would assist them with their policy positions post-2023. This is not dissimilar to what they presented in the newspaper when they started this committee process.

Inquiries are an important tool for the community to have a say on issues. In the last year's committees we looked into greyhounds, feral deer, King Island freight services, acute health services, blueberry rust, the dairy industry, child and family centres, and TasWater ownership. These enable people to provide feedback for the parliament -

Ms Rattray - Do not forget Tasmanian Irrigation.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, was that last year or this year?

Ms Rattray - Tomorrow.

Mr GAFFNEY - I was presenting last year's committees. As for the firearm reform inquiry the community wanted a chance to express their concerns regarding the Government's position.

Another issue arising from both Ms Courtney who was on that committee and the Treasurer in his Government press release suggested that the report recommended that we close pubs and clubs. This is an area of concern for me. The Committee on Future Gaming Markets presented 73 findings and made 23 recommendations. Not one of the recommendations mentioned closing hotels and clubs. The Government has not provided us, as is usual practice, a response to the gaming committee's inquiry report. I acknowledge that 2018 was an election year. That has its own challenges. The first opportunity I had to ask for the report was during the Estimates process. I am not going to read in the transcript, although I would like to, but I am stretching it.

The thing that concerns me is that we did not get a response back during the process. We sent a letter to the Treasurer asking for an approach about all of the 23 recommendations that they said they had investigated. They sent back six dot points and said all the recommendations were investigated under these six dot points. Only 14 of the 23 recommendations were covered under those six dot points. Nine recommendations were not covered.

I wanted the Government to come back to me. I did not care if they said, 'No, we do not agree with that, we have done this, we have had this meeting and met with these stakeholders and this is what we have decided'.

I then asked a question on notice and four months later received the same response as the one I received to the Estimates question I asked. The only word they changed was the word 'recommendations' to 'findings'. On the first one it said, 'We have covered all of the recommendations under these six points.' You missed out nine. 'We have covered 70-plus findings under these six dot points.' How many have you missed out there?

If the committee process in this place is to be treated with the integrity it is supposed to be then we cannot be played around with. The government of the day must provide a submission to an inquiry that they supported. What a nonsense.

We are asked to come back with the recommendations so they can pick and choose the recommendations that fulfil and support their policy position, which is what they have done with the gaming inquiry. They have not changed that at all. That, to me, is a real concern.

A good example, it is only small, is recommendation 4 from the gaming report -

The Government work actively with communities that are concerned with the density of EGMs in their local area to enable voluntary mechanisms to reduce the number of EGMs.

We know that Glenorchy has 270 machines in their area. They lose \$20 million in a year. What has the Government done to go back to that community and say, 'Yes, we are going to help you reduce the number of machines here'. Do not tell us you have put in legislation so there are no new machines and there has to be a community of interest, because we know there are no more new machines going into it anyway. That is what we want to hear.

If they are going to take on our committee reports with integrity and with the work that we put into it, and that people in the community put into it, they want this to be fed back into the process. They do not want to be pushed aside and that is why I was annoyed with what happened with this. As a group we need to think, with any inquiry we are going to have with the Government, and any

government support of the day, are they not going to be serious and only pick and choose the recommendations they want?

We are not saying they should take on all recommendations. They should at least have the right, the decency to come back and say we do not accept this and have considered it and this is who has considered this. That is what annoys me.

In conclusion I read with interest the Leader's article in yesterday's *Advocate* and thought it was very good. A couple of things I will talk to you about, but most of it. The last couple of paragraphs are quite interesting -

It's incumbent on both the Government and the Legislative Council to work together to fulfil their respective obligations and duties in an atmosphere of mutual respect between the Houses. This is essential for the community to have confidence and faith in the democratic system, and trust that decisions are being made with the community's best interests at heart. With good will on all sides, I am confident we will move forward in a constructive way with a clear understanding of, and respect for, the roles and responsibilities of each House.

I would like to think that sentiment is carried through to every process we undertake in this place, either dealing with legislation or in the committee process, as a parliament representing this state deciding a good way to go forward.

I worry if this continues as it has done with the firearms committee - we may as well not take on board the committee process anymore. If the government of the day is not serious in what we are trying to achieve, then do not waste our time, do not waste the state's money and, more importantly, do not waste the time of all those people out there who felt they would sit down and prepare a committee report or a submission for the committee with those terms of reference.

I thank the member for his chairing of a quite difficult situation. I appreciate the advice we receive from not only the President, but the Clerks and also the work of fellow members and Natasha Exel. I note the report

[6.17 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I would like to make a contribution to the notice of motion put forward by the member for Windermere and the Chair of the firearms committee inquiry. The member for Mersey has raised some very relevant matters in regard to committee processes. In light of the time, the Leader has asked that I move the debate stand adjourned and I am prepared to do that. I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

HEALTH COMPLAINTS AMENDMENT (CODE OF CONDUCT) BILL 2018 (No. 26)

LAND TITLES AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 22)

Third Reading

Bills read the third time.

ANZAC DAY OBSERVANCE AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 23)

Consideration of Amendments made in the Committee of the Whole Council

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That the bill as amended in Committee of the Whole Council be now taken into consideration.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

CRIME (CONFISCATION OF PROFITS) AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 34)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 25)

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council adjourn until 12 noon on Wednesday 26 September 2018.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 6.23 p.m.