



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

### **REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Wednesday 22 May 2024**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Wednesday 22 May 2024**

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

## **ABSENCE OF MINISTERS**

### **Minister Street and Minister Duigan**

[10.01 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I inform the House that minister Duigan remains absent today due to illness and I will be taking any questions relating to his portfolios of Energy and Renewables and Parks and Environment, as well as minister Street's questions on Sport and Events.

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS**

**Madam SPEAKER** - Before I call for questions, I call the Leader of the House on an answer from yesterday.

### ***Spirits of Tasmania* - Contract Penalty Clauses**

[10.02 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Speaker, in answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question yesterday to the Premier in relation to the *Spirits of Tasmania* penalty clauses and the alleged cost to Tasmanian taxpayers, I can answer as follows: to be very clear, Tasmania's investment in the new vessels continues to be protected by full refund guarantees.

As previously discussed in this place, the TT-Line Board made the decision to pay additional funds for the vessels during the caretaker period. As part of the commercial negotiations between TT-Line and Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC) in agreeing on an adjusted contract price, the TT-Line Board approved the removal of the financial penalty clauses relating to adjusted delivery dates. The decision was a commercial matter for the board, not for ministers. As previously said, the board considered this the only viable option as the alternative was to potentially go back to market for a new ship build. This would have cost more than what we are now paying and resulted in a significant additional delay.

It is important to note that given the increase in materials, the vessels are now worth more. The board also made its decision on the basis that the Finnish government had agreed to underwrite the future financial viability of RMC. All other TT-Line rights in relation to delivery and vessel performance were attained in full.

## **Commission of Inquiry - Investigation of Criminal Referrals**

[10.04 a.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, with respect to the question asked yesterday by the member for Lyons, Ms Badger, with respect to the commission of inquiry and investigation of criminal referrals, I sought an update on information for the House. I note that during the commission of inquiry hearings last year, a response to a question on notice was provided to that committee that contained information relevant to the answer. I am advised that the information contained in that answer is current and relevant, and I am happy to table the response again now. For the benefit of the House, with respect to the 34A referrals, the response states:

Tasmania Police received 43 Section 34A referrals during the Commission of Inquiry. They include referrals of sexual assault, grooming, sexual offences, inappropriate behaviour, child exploitation material, criminal code conduct amongst others. A large number of the referrals did not disclose victim or complainant details or the victim did not consent to their details being known to police. One of those matters remains under investigation, one is before the court and one is a coronial matter.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Madam SPEAKER** - I acknowledge in the gallery the University of the Third Age Hobart students, led by former senator Margaret Reynolds AC. We hope you enjoy the excellent behaviour that this House has been showing for the last few days, and, if not, we will see how you rate my teaching capacity.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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### **QUESTIONS**

#### **TT-Line - Decision to Pay Rauma Marine Constructions \$80 Million**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.05 a.m.]

Last night your Treasurer made the extraordinary admission that TT-Line's decision to give more than \$80 million of taxpayer money to Finnish shipbuilder Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC) outside the terms of reference of the fixed-price contract was made on 21 March, two days before the election. He claimed the decision was made exclusively by TT-Line without you, the company's shareholder minister or anyone in the government being advised until 5 April, when the Finnish government agreed to the terms of the joint bailout package. How is it that the government of Finland knew more about a secret \$80 million payment than you did? Have you and your minority coalition government lost control of TT-Line and its board?

## ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. As the Treasurer has said previously and detailed in a number of answers, the board's decision was made on 21 March 2024. This decision was advised to the government in writing on 5 April 2024, as we have previously indicated, following the agreement of the Finnish government. The decision to pay the additional funds was a commercial matter for the board itself under the existing contractual arrangements, and the board considered this the only viable option as the alternative was to potentially go back to market for a new ship build.

I have outlined my clear expectations to the TT-Line Board. I take these matters very seriously. This is a very large infrastructure project that will deliver significant benefits for Tasmania, including our tourism and hospitality industry, with a 40 per cent increase in passenger capacity and freight capacity as well. This will enable our farmers to grow and export their crucial products. It is a challenging global environment, manufacturing wise, as you well -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Members on my left, if you wish me to hold the Premier to account for answers, I will need you to obey the rules as well.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have very clear expectations of the TT-Line Board in terms of the delivery of the two new vessels. Yes, there have been challenges, but I reject the premise of the question. This is a project that will be delivered, and it is my expectation that it is delivered -

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. I asked the Premier how it is that the Finnish government knew more about this deal than he did. I ask you to draw him back to the question.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The Premier has addressed the question around the board but has not yet addressed the question around the Finnish government's knowledge. I will ask the Premier to answer that.

**Mr Abetz** - They were a party to it.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am sorry, I did not hear you, Mr Abetz. Did you want to seek the call? Thank you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I said, this is a matter for the TT-Line Board. I have met with both the chair and the CEO of TT-Line on a number of occasions since the re-election of the government and we have outlined very clear expectations in terms of the ships and their delivery and associated infrastructure.

## Supplementary Question

**Mr WINTER** - In the answer, the Premier said the TT-Line Board considered it the only viable option. As a supplementary to that, does that mean the Premier has full confidence in the TT-Line Board?

**Madam SPEAKER** - I will take the supplementary as it is related to the answer the Premier gave.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There has been extraordinary growth in terms of the TT-Line passenger numbers over the course of the last 10 years, if memory serves me correctly. We will be diligent in working through these matters with the TT-Line Board. The TT-Line Board has delivered in terms of expectations around visitor numbers and the like over the course of the last number of years and I look forward to continuing engaging with the board and set very clear expectations. The Treasury -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not going to get into the nastiness of your politics.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Through the Chair, Premier. We do not want interjections. Let us not invite them.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Through you, Madam Speaker, I am not going to get involved with Mr Winters' politics of the matter.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired.

### **TT-Line - Contractual Obligations and Payment to Rauma Marine Constructions**

#### **Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.09 a.m.]

Madam Speaker, my question is again to the Premier, who just refused to say he had confidence in the TT-Line Board.

TT-Line entered negotiations with a foreign government and ended up agreeing to a secret \$80 million bailout funded by Tasmanian taxpayers, which you, your government and TT-Line never told Tasmanians. We would not know about this unless Labor asked questions. This was, as we were told yesterday, because there were serious concerns about the potential financial collapse of RMC, who are building the ships. The payment was outside the terms of TT-Line's existing contract, was certain to attract substantial public interest, involved a significant amount of Tasmanian taxpayer money and would bind an incoming government. They apparently told no-one in the government about this, despite briefing both parties about potential delays just weeks earlier. Do you agree that TT-Line has blatantly breached caretaker conventions. If so, is this not another example of your coalition losing control over this critical project?

**Madam SPEAKER** - The time has expired for the question. I call the Premier.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I reject the member's characterisation of this. This is a challenging and difficult project. The secretary of Treasury provided caretaker briefings on 29 February 2024 to the government, and the opposition represented by the former leader of -



**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, members on both sides.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - the opposition, Ms White, and the former shadow treasurer, Dr Broad. The secretary of Treasury advised that he had taken the decision to provide confidential briefings rather than include these matters publicly in the pre-election fiscal outlook to avoid the risk of precipitating the financial collapse of RMC, I am advised again. The minister remained in contact with the chairman during this time as management of this commercial matter progressed.

### **Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Safety**

**Dr WOODRUFF** question to **PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.13 a.m.]

Were you briefed about the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Leanne McLean's, comments on ABC radio this morning? She said the number of children in Ashley Youth Detention Centre has been on a sustained rise and is at the highest levels for over a decade, with 26 children and young people there this week. She called the situation for children intolerable, with basic rights still being violated. She has blasted your competing policy agendas like Strike Force, saying there are resources free flowing into tough-on-crime measures, but diversionary approaches remain largely unfunded. Under your approach, she said we will see a rise in the children in detention with the higher numbers of children in Ashley Youth Detention Centre, making it an even less safe place.

Do you admit your approach to youth crime utterly contradicts the commission of inquiry's findings and is making children at Ashley Youth Detention Centre less safe? Will you abandon your harmful approach and adopt the call from the commissioner to set up an urgent task force to reduce the number of children in detention?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member, Dr Woodruff, for what is a very important question, and I will come to the substance of the question in just a moment.

We will always be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We can do both, Dr Woodruff. The minister received Ms McLean's letter late yesterday, I understand. As always, we welcome the commissioner's input and as Ms McLean would be aware, we are doing a considerably large amount of work in this area. It is a major focus for me, for the minister and the entire government.

We are currently scoping the measure Ms McLean is advocating for. The government holds constant briefings with the commissioner. I am advised that we will ensure Ms McLean is up to date on the work being undertaken in this area. I reiterate my very clear intention to close Ashley as soon as possible for which you have been advocating. I understand the minister has spoken to the commissioner as well in the last 12 to 15 hours - or last night and we will continue to engage with the commissioner and key stakeholders, including the Tasmanian

Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) as we progress our youth justice reform, which includes identifying capacity within the sector to deliver on community-based solutions.

We will also shortly be convening our community engagement group, which I believe was the other part of your question, Dr Woodruff, which will operate as a forum of representatives from those key community service organisations to provide input into youth justice reform within Tasmania.

### **Supplementary Question**

[10.16 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You mentioned TasCOSS. TasCOSS has just put out a media release. Your engagements with the Commissioner for Children and Young People TasCOSS seem to have not been listening to what they are calling for.

**Members** interjecting.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Will you take up TasCOSS call and the commissioners to have an urgent response and involve them in that?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Leader of the Greens, supplementary questions are allowed on the basis that they are short and brief. The Premier did talk about his consultative group. If the Premier has something to add, then I will take it, but the supplementary questions need to be very quick - about the composition of that grouping of the consultation.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. We were always engaged with key stakeholders in this very important area when it comes youth justice reform or when it comes to the commission of inquiry and the recommendations. The stakeholders that you have mentioned, including TasCOSS, are very important stakeholders in this engagement process and that is exactly what we will be doing and will continue doing.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **Metro Tasmania - Pay Conditions**

**Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ**

[10.17 a.m.]

Metro Tasmania's hard-working mechanics and apprentices have been seeking a fair industry rate of pay for over a year now, but even after several months of negotiations with no outcome, the recruitment and retention issues have only worsened.

These mechanics are still paid up to \$10 less per hour than the industry rate, which has led to a 50 per cent turnover of workshop staff over the last two years. These workers keep our buses on the road, but I understand that around one third of mechanic positions are still vacant as a result of Metro's disrespectful wages strategy.

The unions representing these workers have had to resort to continued industrial action and yet your government still will not listen. Minister, why are these negotiations not finalised

and why is it proving so difficult for your government to just pay them a fair wage that will make a massive difference to Metro's workforce retention and recruitment issues?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question and the invitation to meet with Jacob Batt, the union official representing the mechanics. As the member for Franklin spied the other day, I sat at Daci and Daci having a cup of coffee with him. That is on the record, and the member for Franklin knows that I have discussed this matter with the union representative and also, it will not surprise, with the Metro CEO. These are matters of concern, but we have these government business enterprises designed to run these shows for and on behalf of government and the public.

Whilst those negotiations are underway, I am keen to learn from both the union side and the employer side what all the issues are, but I do not feel that it is appropriate to seek to inject myself into those negotiations. We have a workplace relations framework in this state and in this country, which ensures that we have an independent umpire determining the matters in the event that -

**Mr O'Byrne** - The previous minister intervened for the bus drivers.

**Mr ABETZ** - You teach me some history there, member for Franklin, of which I will avail myself. I understand the issue. It is a matter of concern to Metro as well that there are not enough mechanics, and as a result the serviceability of buses has become an issue as well. We also have the bus operators, as they are now called - the drivers of buses - similarly being challenged and Metro at the moment has a challenge with the Australian Services Union for the clerical workers, the Rail Transport Bus Union for the drivers, and of course Australian Manufacturing Workers Union for the mechanics. I am aware of those three lots of negotiations currently being undertaken by Metro, and I am keeping myself as up to date as possible.

I encourage both sides to remind themselves of the wonderful opportunities they have in coming to a resolution to ensure that the public of Tasmania have the opportunity of Metro services which so many people in our community rely on. I know you champion that because you will be discussing that later on today.

## **TT-Line - Funding for Rauma Marine Constructions**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.21 am]

In relation to TT-Line's \$80 million bailout of a Finnish shipbuilder RMC, can you explain why both parties were consulted earlier in the campaign about potential delays in the arrival of the new ships, but not regarding an \$80 million bailout payment to a struggling Finnish shipbuilder?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I believe that we have put these matters on the record before and you are repeating your question. As I have said before, briefings were provided to Ms White, Dr Broad, and the government during the caretaker period on these sensitive commercial negotiations.

It is a very large project of state significance, when it comes to not only the investment but what the investment will deliver in turn. Mr Winter, who constantly talks about jobs, clearly wants to talk Tasmania down and talk jobs down at every single opportunity.

**Dr Broad** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, Standing Order 45. The question was -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Would you seek the call first, Dr Broad, so the Premier can know that you are calling?

**Dr BROAD** - Madam Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question was quite simple: why were we not briefed on the bailout? We were briefed on the delay, but not the bailout. I ask the Premier to be relevant to the question.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Premier, unusually it did not have a long lead-in with information, so the question was quite specific. I can draw you to it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Madam Speaker, these matters are already on record in terms of the decisions, and the commercial decisions are a matter for the board of TT-Line.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - In relation to the Premier's response, I would like to know from the Premier whether he was aware that TT-Line was negotiating to make an \$80 million payment during the election period, during caretaker mode?

**Madam SPEAKER** - For members who are interjecting, I busily write down your questions. If you could slow down that would be great. The original question was why both parties were consulted about the delay but not the bailout. I think that probably stands in the additional information if there was a decision not to provide that information. I will call the Premier on the supplementary.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Madam Speaker, I was not the shareholder minister. I was not in the briefings at the time.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. Both sides will listen to the Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I became aware of the substance of these matters following the election.

## **St John's Park Dialysis Unit**

### **Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[10.24 a.m.]

Last week was Kidney Week and a great opportunity to recognise the prevalence of kidney disease in Tasmania, with over 67,000 people living with kidney disease. Those who require lifesaving dialysis attend the dialysis unit at St John's Park on average three times a week for approximately four to five hours each time.

I have members of the Kidney Advisory Group here with me in the Chamber today. They tell me the facility at St. John's Park is in a state of disrepair and not fit for purpose. It is so cold that they are forced to bring their own blankets. There is no privacy. It is not accessible. The facilities and staff are under huge amounts of pressure trying to deliver this crucial lifesaving treatment to patients now and into the future.

Will you meet with the Kidney Advisory Group on site at St John's Park as a matter of urgency, listen to their concerns and work with them to ensure that dialysis patients get the standard of care that they need and deserve?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I acknowledge members of the Kidney Advisory Group in the Chamber today. Thank you very much for your presence and the advocacy for your community and for the many tens of thousands of Tasmanians with kidney disease. It is a very important issue. I take these matters very seriously and I appreciate you raising that with me.

As a government we have already made massive, multi-million-dollar investments in our infrastructure, but likewise record funding in terms of healthcare services. We aim to deliver exceptional healthcare. I say on the record again, thank you to our awesome healthcare workers for what they do, wherever they are, including at St John's Park and elsewhere. I thank those involved in providing those services.

With respect to the specific question around, 'Will I meet with the group?', absolutely. I am more than happy to meet with them at a time convenient, at a venue to be mutually agreed. I am always interested in trying to make a difference for people with conditions that require better healthcare services. I want to be part of a government that is building better healthcare services and a better healthcare system. We are delivering that, but the answer is yes, I would be delighted to meet with them.

In terms of the detail around some of the questions you asked about the infrastructure arrangements at St John's Park, I will take that on notice. I will provide an update to the House and to the member as soon as possible.

## **Macquarie Point Stadium**

### **Mr BAYLEY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.27 a.m.]

In the face of skyrocketing construction costs, you spent months telling Tasmanians the stadium at Macquarie Point could be built for \$715 million, and very few believed you. Your announcement of a so-called cap on state funding for the project revealed you clearly no longer believed it yourself, and that it could be built on budget. It was the issue that dominated voters' conversations during the state and upper house elections.

Most Tasmanians did not believe for a second that your promised cap was really the full cost they would bear as taxpayers. Their scepticism has been vindicated with the release of your funding agreement with the federal government. This agreement does not even mention the word 'stadium' once, and it imposes a range of other conditions that will see additions to the taxpayer balance sheet, not reductions.

Given the federal government's \$240 million investment is not solely for the stadium itself, will you now admit Tasmanians will be, in effect, stumping up much more of the stadium cost than you promised? How much are they on the hook for?

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Can we not interject before the Premier has started his answers? In fact, let us not interject at all.

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in this matter. Respectfully, I disagree with everything you say and your position on the stadium. You do not like it. You hate the stadium. That is your position. It is not mine.

This will be a game-changer for Tasmania. It will deliver 4000 jobs in construction. It will create a vibrant economy around the precinct and further afield and provide many hundreds of jobs right across Tasmania, just like the Bridgewater bridge is doing with contracts elsewhere around including the north west coast where people are gainfully employed on that significant infrastructure project.

We have capped at \$375 million. Not a red cent more, if that is the right terminology, will be spent and invested into the stadium. We made that very clear at the beginning of the election campaign. The \$240 million from the federal government will be spent and invested in the stadium.

**Dr Woodruff** - No, it will not. That is untrue. Do not be dishonest.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Excuse me, Premier. Leader of the Greens, if you wish to make a substantive motion about the Premier misleading, you may, but please do not interject on it.

**Dr Woodruff** - All Right. Thank you. We will do that.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Absolutely, you have every right.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The agreement is supported by the Australian Government's most recent Budget which saw \$240 million allocated to the project over three years, commencing in 2025-26, I respectfully disagree with the opposition. You might want to familiarise yourself with the comments of Cox Architecture, a week or two ago, in terms of their involvement in the project and their expectations around the project as well. I look forward to this project coming to fruition. I respect that you do not agree, but on this side of the House, we are here for jobs.

### *Spirit of Tasmania IV - Delivery of New Vessel*

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.31 a.m.]

When will *Spirit IV* be in service, sailing across the Bass Strait with both passengers and freight?

**Madam SPEAKER** - I call the Premier.

**Mr Winter** - He is finding out.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The Premier has the call.

**ANSWER**

What are you mumbling about over there?

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am not mumbling. Given that every comment you make is through the Chair, I assure you I was not mumbling.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Every time I get up, he is mumbling, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am more than happy to draw them to account if you want to raise a point of order, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you for the question, Mr Winter. The safest route for the delivery voyage from Finland to Tasmania is still under assessment, including how to ensure the required fuel is available in the safest ports. We are on record talking about delivery of the ship in quarter 3. That is taking possession of the ship. As I have said publicly before, there is a commissioning process, a training process and other matters as well. The optimal timing to undertake the voyage to reduce overall risk to the delivery crew and vessels, is under assessment.

As members would know, the global shipping environment has become increasingly complex, and the navigational routes are constantly changing as safety advice is updated. Given these variables, I am not going to be committed to a particular date for the ships to commence service, other than to reiterate the government's commitment to ensure the new ships begin their sailings as soon as possible.

We want the vessels to arrive safely and in proper working order to service the needs of Tasmanians and visitors alike. This is an exciting project. It is a great project and I look forward to them sailing up the river, Madam Speaker - at the same time, one after the other, but I look forward to both of them sailing up the river and that 40 per cent extra capacity when it comes to passengers, 40 per cent extra capacity when it comes to freight, delivering our very high-quality premium products grown by hard-working people in Tasmania and selling in markets interstate. This a positive, Madam Speaker, -

**Mr Winter** - How do you know so little about it then?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Madam Speaker, this is a key infrastructure project. It is complex. There is complexity globally around manufacturing, as I have said before, but ultimately these ships will sail up the Mersey River and it will be a very proud moment indeed for Tasmanians.

### *Spirit of Tasmania* - Replacement Cost

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.34 a.m.]

You have completely lost control of this project. There are massive delays, and you cannot even tell us when the ships will actually be here in service, taking passengers and freight.

TT-Line has been caught making a secret \$80 million payment outside its fixed price contract during caretaker mode. The wharf project has been postponed with no clarity on what this means for the arrival of the new ships. You have done nothing to progress your commitment to refuel the ships locally. This morning, we have heard penalty clauses may have been waived, but you are still refusing to say what the cost of the decision is.

What is the cost of this second secret bailout around the changes to the contract on the penalty clauses? Do we need to ask the Finnish government, Premier, who seem to know more about this project than you do?

**ANSWER**

The member is up the creek with no paddle, Madam Speaker, when it comes to these matters. I am not sure where you are going with that question.

I am happy to take part of that question on notice to get some clear clarity about that but there is a lot that we have put on the record during last week and more. Again, I look forward to some positivity from those opposite.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Premier, can I just confirm, before you resume your seat, which bit you are taking on notice for my little note -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not sure that -

**Mr Winter** - What the cost of the penalty clause is, Premier.



**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will review -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Sorry, I am asking the Premier. Thank you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will review the question to ensure that we provide an accurate answer to the honourable member.

### **Macquarie Point Stadium - GST Contribution**

**Mr BAYLEY question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.36 a.m.]

When you were negotiating with the federal government over funding for Macquarie Point, you somehow missed a critical component: the upfront commitment from the federal Treasurer that he would exempt his \$240 million contribution from GST calculations.

Somehow you only realised that you should request an exemption when the Labor opposition asked if you had, obviously when they still opposed the stadium. Your failure to get this agreement as part of the federal funding deal looks set to cost Tasmania dearly.

The deal the Premier signed with the AFL was a clanger, but the GST muck-up is something else. When it comes to the stadium, it is dud deal after dud deal for Tasmania.

Will you take responsibility for creating a huge extra hit to the Tasmanian budget? Does your failure not show once again that the so-called cap on stadium costs is nothing more than fantasy? Will you today detail to the House what your Treasury advisers have told you about the Macquarie Point stadium's projected full costs to Tasmanians?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Greens for his question. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about it. The Greens Party continues to try to point-score on job creation and enabling infrastructure to allow us to secure the decades-long dream for the Tasmania Football Club and its 200,000 plus membership to be achieved and realised for our state. You continue to attempt to undermine that. I will pay you only one compliment, and that is at least you are consistent. I welcome the change of heart from the opposition on this matter, who took it to the election and promised the voters that they would oppose it, and after the election have instead decided to urge the government to build it. I welcome that.

I also have to correct the member in respect of one part. You said incorrectly that we only raised this issue with the Australian Government after the Labor Party raised questions about the GST treatment. That is not correct. In fact, I was on the phone to the federal treasurer on the very day of the announcement by the Prime Minister in Launceston -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. It is the first time I have had to say order. You are actually slipping now. I cannot hear the Treasurer, so I am not sure anyone else or Hansard can. Thank you, Treasurer.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Madam Speaker, with all respect to Mr Bayley, he might just have not known that, but that is a fact.

Finally, I am advised that it is only a decision that can be made by Dr Chalmers. I am advised that Mr Albanese cannot make the decision. I am advised that the federal finance minister cannot make the decision. I understand that the only person who can lawfully make the decision, whatever advocacy we put forward, is Dr Chalmers.

I invite the Greens, and indeed every member of this House, regardless of their position on the stadium, to will us on for success in Canberra. Rather than trying to attack ourselves in Tasmania, why are not we playing the Tasmania card? Why are we not playing the Tasmanian agenda to Canberra?

Liberal, Labor, Green, JLN, Independent: we should all be urging Dr Chalmers to make the right decision. I say that in the context of the Prime Minister incorrectly saying publicly that they had not given a GST exemption for Brisbane's Olympic infrastructure and, therefore, it is only fair that Tasmania be treated the same.

The Prime Minister is wrong about that. I am advised that Dr Chalmers has provided a GST exemption for Brisbane's Olympic infrastructure and I, therefore, say - and I ask you to join me in this, Mr Bayley - that Tasmania should have the same treatment. We look forward to that, and I refer you, Mr Bayley, to my public evidence given to the Public Accounts Committee, where I and the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance answered questions in detail about potential impacts and why we are fighting for that exemption.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr BAYLEY** - The question was also clearly as to whether the Treasurer would, in this House today, detail the advice that he is getting from his Treasury department in relation to this.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. That is an appropriate supplementary. Treasurer?

**Mr FERGUSON** - I am not going to commit to take that on notice, but I have just commended you because the Deputy Secretary gave extensive advice to the Public Accounts Committee on public evidence and, in my earlier answer, I commended that to you.

**Dr Woodruff** - Interesting that the Greens are not on that committee.

**Mr FERGUSON** - That is the answer to that question. I am reminded that Dr Chalmers is a Queenslander, and I would like to see Dr Chalmers and the Australian Labor Government in Canberra do the right thing by Tasmania and do the right thing by our state. We have advocated for it; we have waited patiently. It is not too late for a positive decision, and I urge them to make it.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I cannot hear you. Is that a point of order, Dr Woodruff?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. The minister deliberately did not answer the supplementary question because he did not answer the first question.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I think the minister's answer is that that information is publicly available on the PAC website. If you wanted to ask another question after reviewing that, because it does not give you that information, I am more than happy to take that.

### **Budget Management**

#### **Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.42 a.m.]

Respected independent economist, Saul Eslake, has lashed your budget mismanagement, explaining that 'Victoria is a basket case but on two metrics commonly used by the rating agencies ... Tasmania is worse than Victoria.'

Now it seems that members of your Cabinet agree. Yesterday, minister Abetz told this House, 'Debt to pay for our regular expenditure is both unsustainable and ultimately immoral.' Given you are currently running the largest operating deficit in Tasmania's history, accumulating debt to pay for regular expenditure, do you agree your budget management is unsustainable and ultimately immoral?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable -

**Mr Winter** - You must have enjoyed that speech yesterday.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have enjoyed all the first speeches, thank you, Mr Winter. Very informative, as I said yesterday, as is the Labor plan for budget despair. I wonder if Mr Willie had any input into these matters at all. Dr Broad is no longer the shadow treasurer I see, but I have added up \$173.5 million of cuts to health, if I read that correctly. That is a matter for -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Members on both sides will allow the Premier to be heard in silence.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - To your question, Mr Willie, I note Mr Eslake's comments. The important thing to consider is that he is comparing our debt position when you include the unfunded superannuation liability. We mentioned that a few times in this place because Labor, when they were in government, spent it, and now it is costing us hundreds of millions of dollars.

**Dr Broad** - It was a provision in the budget; it was not actual money.

**Madam SPEAKER** - This is Question Time and a question has been -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, both sides. I do not want to warn people, but I will, and the subsequent behaviour for that is that you will leave the Chamber. Premier, if you can address the question, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Madam Speaker, we were very clear at the election in terms of our fiscal strategy moving forward, which did include, speaking of the superannuation liability, to invest any additional funds from the GST to pay down that liability, which, if my memory serves me correctly, is costing Tasmanian taxpayers around \$400 million, which is significant. We recognise that framing budgets across the globe and indeed, across the nation, is very difficult, and this will be a challenging budget. We will not walk away from that.

This will be a challenging budget to deliver, both in ensuring we are servicing our debt position moving forward and ensuring we maintain those essential services that Tasmanians care about, but it will be a challenge, as there are challenges across the nation and indeed the national budget position itself. We will work through methodically when it comes to our budget management. The budget will be delivered on 12 September, and I look forward to that engagement, and perhaps seeing an alternative budget for the first time. I am looking forward to it.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The time for the answer has expired. The Premier will resume his seat. I call on the next question if anybody would like to jump. I will take the member for Bass, Mrs Pentland. Remember that when you jump, if you call my name, I will see you faster under the Standing Orders.

### **Homelessness - Support for Youth**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS**

[10.47 a.m.]

The number of young people sleeping rough is on the rise, with lack of affordable accommodation and increasing rent prices worsening the state's homelessness problem. With immediate access to social housing almost non-existent and with Youth Allowance payments unable to cover even half of a week's worth of rent, how does the government plan on alleviating the stress of homelessness on the state's youth?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for her question and note her considerable interest in this matter.

On indulgence, Madam Speaker, I wish everyone a happy Wear Orange Wednesday supporting our State Emergency Service and note Mrs Beswick is a current serving member of our SES. Thank you for your service and anyone else in this Chamber as well.

Providing safe accommodation for our young people, particularly those in crisis, has been a big focus of this government and is a big task for our state. We need to be ensuring that we are delivering for these people, and it is a key focus of our 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy.

The vast majority of children who are homeless are accompanied by a parent, and young people can access 10 of the 20 homeless shelters in Tasmania unaccompanied by an adult, and additional dispersed homelessness properties around our state when accompanied by a parent or a guardian.

The Tasmanian government's election commitments include additional funding for Jireh House and McCombe House, which are shelters for women and children, and for 100 more Rapid Rehousing homes for women and children escaping family and domestic violence.

I note the national commitment that we all have - the federal government, the state governments and even local governments - to be really focusing on these important issues, because family and domestic violence can be a key cause of child and youth homelessness. Ultimately, our goal as we continue to invest in the system is to provide safe, appropriate and affordable housing for all Tasmanians, and most importantly, this includes our young people.

Our Tasmanian Housing strategy focuses on ensuring the safety of Tasmanian children and young people by developing housing models that address young people's specific needs with a focus on those exiting out-of-home care and institutional settings, which is an important time of transition; supporting young people to remain living safely with their families by continuing to provide eligible social housing tenants with backyard units; continuing to assist Tasmanians escaping family violence through tailored housing policies and programs including our Rapid Rehousing program; and continuing to deliver our Youth2Independence supported accommodation for 16 to 24-year-olds.

I visited an important facility in Devonport which is providing amazing opportunities for those young people in what is a difficult transition time, providing secure homes for up to two years for young people who had previously been homeless, along with support to engage in education and training and employment, empowering them to live with independence, and I note the co-location with the Devonport TAFE.

We want to be providing young people with a roof over their head, but also opportunities to continue to learn and grow and be well and providing pathways for young people interested in education and training -

**Madam SPEAKER** - The minister's time to answer the question has expired.

### **Budget - Potential Job Cuts**

**Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.50 a.m.]

Yesterday minister Abetz said:

We have a responsibility to ensure we do not leave debt legacies for future generations because we are too selfish to tighten our belts. Maintaining our lifestyle today at the expense of the next generation is intergenerational theft and selfishness writ large.

He went on to describe the current debt levels as 'distressing'. With minister Abetz serving in your Cabinet, how savage will the job cuts be in your upcoming Budget? Will you rule out making cuts above and beyond the \$300 million you have already announced?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for his question and interest in Mr Abetz's speech yesterday. I hope he took as much interest in what Mr Abetz was saying as others in the Chamber, as they thoroughly deserve.

We have invested a considerable sum since 2020 to keep Tasmanians alive, well, and in work through the pandemic. If you can point to any investment we should not have made through the pandemic, please let me know. If I could just add to my answer previously, we are taking this as Labor's alternative budget -

**Madam SPEAKER** - You may quote from it but not use it as a prop, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - until it is not. It might not be there, because I have been advised I cannot find it on the website, Madam Speaker. It is gone and it is probably -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Premier, unless you are about to quote from the document, it is a prop and as much as you love it, you might have to put it down.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will quote from the document. The first page says, 'Labor's plan for budget repair', and they go on to spend \$4 billion, Madam Speaker.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, members on both sides, so I can hear the Premier. I cannot tell if the Premier is answering the question if everyone keeps interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - When I talk about debt, you have no leg to stand on, Mr Willie or those opposite. We will manage our debt position and our budget position responsibly and sustainably. Our fiscal strategy ensures prosperity and resilience of the state by supporting sustainable public services, fostering economic growth and promoting a business-friendly investment environment, and that includes carefully assessing the impact of major government infrastructure initiatives -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Mr Willie on a point of order.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. My question was specifically whether the Premier could rule out further job cuts than the \$300 million already announced.

**Madam SPEAKER** - There was an intro. There were two questions about savage job cuts and about anything above the \$300 million already announced. Whilst not many other people might be watching parliament, public servants are, so perhaps the Premier can come to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, I appreciate your guidance in these matters. The Labor alternative budget as it currently stands has \$2 billion worth of cuts to the public service, so I am not sure how many jobs you have accounted for there. We will work through the budget process methodically, in a measured approach and to ensure we do not have crippling austerity measures, but we are investing in the right service -

**Madam SPEAKER** - The time for the answer has expired.

### **Macquarie Point Stadium - Private Investment**

**Mr BAYLEY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.54 a.m.]

Your back-of-a-napkin guess at the cost of the stadium is looking sillier by the day. This ridiculous notion has been followed with the dud deal signed with the AFL and another dud deal signed with the federal government. As all this was happening, your government rewrote the ministerial statement of expectations of the stadium proponent, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, to remove key commercial requirements such as that the project will be, 'appropriately costed and carefully managed,' and that it will comply with government's, 'competitive neutrality principles'. This is shameless, Premier. To have any hope of actually building this project, you now need the private sector to step in with hundreds of millions of dollars of investment.

What we have is a government with a terrible track record of negotiations, the removal of essential commercial requirements for the stadium proponent and the need for a private investor to be guaranteed a tidy profit to get involved. Can you not see that your attempt at a private-public partnership is just going to result in another dud deal? Why were important elements of the ministerial statement of expectations removed?

**Madam SPEAKER** - The time for the question has expired.

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his lengthy question. There was a fair bit contained in that question. We are committed -

**Dr Woodruff** - So much to say about your dodgy, stinky deals around the state.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you for the interjection. The Premier will -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I reject that. I utterly reject that. That is really unfortunate.

**Madam SPEAKER** - We are so nearly done. Could the Premier please address the question?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is such unfortunate interjection, Dr Woodruff. I respect the fact you do not agree with the stadium, but can we just play above board when it comes to those personal attacks?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Can the Premier address the question and ignore the interjections?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The deal is good for Tasmania. It secured \$240 million from the federal government and \$360 million from the AFL. It is great to see those junior academies around the state and young people actively engaged in sport, which is fantastic. It is an investment in their future as well as our economy more broadly. I pointed to the other side. I said the backdown would come, in and around October last year. I said it, I looked at Mr Winter, and it has arrived. Someday, I believe, the Greens will get on board, because this is an important project that is too good to lose through the politics of the day.

This is a long-term investment for the future of Tasmania. We talk about the jobs in construction; we talk about the ongoing jobs and the investment and economic activity around that, but it is bigger than that. This is a huge investment that not only the Tasmanian Government is making, at \$375 million, for the stadium, there is the federal government's contribution of \$240 million. Of course we will work through this in a very measured, prudent and sensible way. That is what Tasmanian taxpayers would expect their government to do - appropriate stewardship of this project.

This is a huge opportunity. I recognise the politics for you. It has been a difficult conversation, but it is one that we are going to stay the course.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am absolutely sure there will be a supplementary.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr BAYLEY** - The Premier talked about appropriate stewardship, and my question was very explicitly to the statement of ministerial expectations. Let me just say, what the government has actually dropped out of the statement of ministerial expectations is that -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Sorry. The supplementary question has to be specific to the answer. I do not think you get to prosecute the case.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Please answer the question. Why was the statement of ministerial expectations doctored to drop out these important probity issues?

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is an appropriate supplementary. I call the Premier on the statement of ministerial expectations part of the original question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This project will be scrutinised with the laying of every single brick, I am sure. We are at the point that we are now, and I welcome that scrutiny. However, my statement applies, Mr Bayley. We will do this in a methodical, sustainable way to ensure that we deliver this project. We will dot every i and cross every t to ensure the fruition of this project to deliver huge economic benefit and jobs, not only in construction but economically as well. I believe I have addressed the question.

**Dr Woodruff** - Why did you drop them out?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I believe I have addressed the question and today I am reiterating the importance of financial prudence and diligence when it comes to this project.



## **East Devonport Neighbourhood House**

**Mrs BESWICK question to MINISTER for COMMUNITY SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH**

[11.00 a.m.]

Last week, Mrs Petrusma discussed Neighbourhood House Week and the government's promise of \$6 million towards improvements of these properties. The East Devonport Neighbourhood House is highly active in the community, and for several years now parts of the property have been deemed condemned. The services they provide are incredibly hindered due to this property not being suitable for use as is.

Please confirm whether any of these funds have been earmarked or allocated to the East Devonport Neighbourhood House and, if so, how much and when we can expect this to be finalised.

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We all love East Devonport Neighbourhood House. They do a fantastic job, as do all of our houses around the state. You are quite right. At the recent election we recognised our neighbourhood houses again as key pillars of healthy, supportive and inclusive communities around Tasmania, especially as the cost of living rises.

Over the past decade, our government has been the biggest of supporters of neighbourhood houses. That is why at the election we committed to boost funding to all neighbourhood houses by \$50,000 a year for each house for the next three years so that the 34 houses can continue delivering for Tasmanians in their communities. This is in addition to the \$50,000 per house provided by our government in the 2023-24 budget in recognition of the rising cost of living.

We will continue the place-based Community Connector Program for neighbourhood houses by providing ongoing employment for the existing 11 community connectors and begin a staged expansion to deliver more community connectors each year. We will provide \$6 million in new capital funding over the next three years to ensure all houses are fit for purpose and contemporary, including an investigation and modelling of the specific needs of the East Devonport Neighbourhood House, in recognition that the facilities that they have need some love. We need to work with them on a plan to do that, and they will be able to draw down from amongst the \$6 million for that.

## **Robbins Passage Wetland - Potential for Ramsar Listing**

**Mr GARLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.03 a.m.]

The single biggest threat to endangered and threatened species is loss of, and degradation of habitat. Robbins Passage has quite a few of those species that satisfy those criteria. The Convention on Wetlands 1971, commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, is an international agreement that recognised wetland areas that have international significance.

Tasmania currently has 10 of these internationally recognised wetlands, which are often referred to as Ramsar sites.

There are nine protected migratory shorebird sites in Tasmania. Robbins Passage has double the number of birds of the other nine sites combined. Will the minister please detail which criteria, if any, that Robbins Passage meets for Ramsar listing? If it meets any required criteria, will the minister also commit to working with the Cradle Coast Authority, the NRM, the community and the federal government to nominate Robbins Passage and Boullanger Bay for Ramsar listing?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his considerable interest in this matter, not just in the last week but for a very long time. I reinforce and reiterate my comments I made yesterday in terms of the importance of the project. It has been a couple of decades-long in terms of the proponents of various iterations for the project and very strict environmental approvals at both the state and federal level, which is probably a reason why the project is not yet through and why it is where it is at the moment and has taken such a long time. Nonetheless, our government supports the project.

When it comes to the Ramsar listings, I will take that question on notice. There is some detail that I do not have with me. I will consult with the minister responsible, Mr Duigan, and provide an answer at a later time. I thank you for the question.

#### **Rauma Marine Constructions - Financial Risk Mitigation**

#### **Mr WINTER question to DEPUTY PREMIER, Mr FERGUSON**

[11.05 a.m.]

Last night you admitted that you were advised by the TT-Line chairman in December that there were serious potential risks around RMC, its financial viability and its ability to deliver two new ships. Following that briefing, what actions did you take to ensure Tasmania's interests were being protected?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. That is actually a fair question, and a good one at last, on TT-Line. In all cases and at all times in my role, whether it is as Treasurer or as a shareholder minister for any of our state-owned companies or government business enterprises. I take the state's interest, the Premier takes the state's interest and the Liberal government at all times takes the state's interest.

I will point out for the benefit of the record that I provided an extensive statement last evening in response to a question I took on notice yesterday morning. I spent considerable time researching it, checking with my team and ensuring that every i was dotted and every t was crossed to ensure that this House had the greatest visibility I was able to offer in terms of the risks being identified.

I made the point that I went even further beyond the material risks that were brought to my attention, and indeed to the Labor Party's attention during the caretaker period. I even went as far back as I could to identify any opportunity where the early concerns were raised, and I provided those on the record as well in my dealings, despite the fact that it was during caretaker. Second, that it was a matter for the company board as a state-owned company, not for ministers to approve or not approve. In my dealings with the chair, I have always maintained a high level of interest that this state's interest is being carefully managed by the company to get the best possible outcome.

In the circumstances, I would say that if you, Mr Winter, were in my shoes, I hope that you would do the same and insist that the chairman, in their dealings with the counterparties, in this case RMC, would get not just the best outcome financially, but also the product we need, the two new *Spirits of Tasmania* not two old ships that have been painted red and brought to Tasmania, but our two new ships, which are going to be fantastic, good for our economy, good for our state and good for freight.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, Standing Order 45. I did not provide much preamble, I simply asked, following that briefing in December, what specific actions did the Treasurer take to ensure Tasmania's interests were being protected? He has not answered the question.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The Premier says he always takes Tasmania's interest, but it was specific action, so I will draw the Treasurer to that.

**Mr FERGUSON** - In regard to specific actions, I will repeat what I said last evening. I think that will directly answer Mr Winter's question and point of order.

In that conversation, which was informal and verbal on 21 December, I stated last night:

I stress that in this conversation TT-Line did not provide formal advice or any specific details and appeared to base their concerns on marine industry intelligence. I emphasise there was no financial or other request at this time or even any suggestion of the need for TT-Line to take any action.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The Treasurer's time for the answer has expired.

**Time expired.**

## CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

### Scottsdale Early Childhood Family Learning Centre

**Mr WOOD to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER**

[11.09 a.m.]

Residents in the north-east have been seeking information on the proposed Early Childhood Family Learning Centre that the government has announced and will be built in Scottsdale. They are excited about the new space this will create to support local families across

the entire region and are asking when the project will proceed and when and how decisions will be made with its location.

### **West Hobart - Bus Reliability**

**Ms BURNET to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ**

My question is on behalf of Gaye from West Hobart. Gay is a 90-year-old former teacher and peace activist who survived the Blitz in London in 1940-41. She writes:

I have been an avid user of public transport. I now find it impossible to use the bus service in West Hobart due to the reduction in the actual routes taken combined with the fact that scheduled services seem to be less than dependable. I'm faced with the uncertainty of the service ever arriving at my local bus stop at the scheduled time, so now I'm unable to plan my trips to town for medical and social appointments by bus. The issue of social isolation and mobility become increasingly important as I age. Can the minister please explain why, as a senior member of society, I am left behind? Surely, the reason public transport exists is to provide a service to people such as me?

### **Beauty Point Divo' Reinstallation**

**Ms FINLAY to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN**

Jenna from the West Tamar would like to ask the government when they intend to start work on the Beauty Point Divo' [diving board] to ensure it is available this coming summer for the local community to enjoy. She wants to know that if you are not doing that, what are you intending to do so that they have something to do over summer?

### **Bicheno - New Ambulance Station Site**

**Mr SHELTON to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

Last year after community consultation you announced 60A Burgess St in Bicheno for a new purpose-built ambulance station, but I understand from the community there are still concerns over this site. Is this site still planned to be the location for the new ambulance station, or is there an alternative site under consideration?

### **Kidney Advisory Group - Premier's Visit**

**Ms HADDAD to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr BARNETT**

Michael from Lenah Valley is involved in the Kidney Advisory Group, which has invited you three times since October last year to attend the dialysis unit at St John's Park and you have

not yet. He welcomes your answer today. Minister, can you promise Michael that you will visit the facility and meet with the Kidney Advisory Group within a month?

### **King Wharf Road - Support for Homeless**

**Mrs PENTLAND to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

I would like to raise concern about the homeless individuals, including young families with young children, living along the Tamar River foreshore at King Wharf Road. The lack of amenities and poor living conditions pose significant health risks to these vulnerable individuals. What steps is the government taking to address this situation to ensure that these families have access to safe and suitable living conditions?

### **Scotts Road Recycling Facility - Illegal Waste Dumping**

**Mr WINTER to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN**

Residents of Risdon Vale are concerned about the lack of action over the past decade regarding potentially illegal waste dumping at a recycling facility on Scotts Road in Risdon Vale. What is the government and the EPA doing to assure local residents their neighbourhood is safe from harmful pollution?

### **Allambi Building Services - Relocation**

**Ms FINLAY to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[11.13 a.m.]

Lynne from Launceston would like to know what progress has been made to relocate the current services operating out of the Allambi building so the hospice project can commence.

**Time expired.**

## **MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **Committee Appointments**

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of messages from the Legislative Council which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read. Settle in; it may take a while.

The Legislative Council has made the following appointments to committees:

Mr Harriss and Ms Rattray to serve on the Public Works Committee in accordance with the provisions of section 3 of the *Public Works Act 1914*; and

Mr Edmunds, Ms Forrest and Ms Thomas to serve on the Public Accounts Committee in accordance with provisions of section 2 of the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1971*.

C.M. Farrell,  
President, Legislative Council,  
21 May 2024

### **Committee Appointments**

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a further message from the Legislative Council which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read.

The Legislative Council has made the following appointments to committees:

Mr Harriss, Mrs Hiscutt and Ms Rattray to serve on the Subordinate Legislation Committee in accordance with the provisions of section 3 of the *Subordinate Legislation Committee Act 1969*.

Ms Armitage, Ms O'Connor and Ms Webb to serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity in accordance with section 23 of the *Integrity Commission Act 2009*.

Mr Farrell, Ms Forrest and Mrs Hiscutt to serve on the Joint House Committee of this parliament the same; and

Ms Armitage, Mr Farrell, Ms Forrest, Mrs Hiscutt, Ms Rattray and Mr Vincent to serve on the Joint Committee of both Houses to manage the Parliamentary Library.

C.M. Farrell,  
President, Legislative Council,  
21 May 2024.

### **Joint Sessional Workplace Culture Oversight Committee**

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a further message from the Legislative Council which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read.

The Legislative Council has resolved:

- (1) That a Joint Sessional Workplace Culture Oversight Committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers and with leave to report from time to time, to oversee the implementation of any recommendations, by the relevant employer, contained in the report Motion for Respect - Report into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, (August 2022).

- (2) That the number of Members to be appointed to serve on the said Committee on the part of the Legislative Council be 4.

C.M. Farrell,  
President, Legislative Council,  
21 May 2024.

### **Joint Sessional Gender and Equality Committee**

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a further message from the Legislative Council which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read.

Madam Speaker,

The Legislative Council has resolved -

That a Joint Sessional Gender and Equality Committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of either House and with leave to adjourn from place to place to inquire into and report upon -

- (1)(a) Any Bill referred to it by either House in order to examine gender and equality impacts and any such Bill so referred shall be reported upon within 10 sitting days of its referral;
- (b) Any matter related to gender and equality referred to it by either House; and
- (c) Any matter related to gender and equality, initiated by its own motion; and
- (2) That Notice of any Motion Inquiry shall be reported to both Houses within two (2) sitting days of the Committee's Resolution; and
- (3) That the number of Members to serve on the said Committee on the part of the Legislative Council be four.

C.M. Farrell,  
Legislative Council  
21 May 2024.

**Mr ABETZ** - (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Speaker, if I may, with your indulgence, quickly seek some advice from the Clerk.

Madam Speaker, I move -

That the last two mentioned messages be taken into consideration tomorrow.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **SURVEYORS AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 12)**

### **First Reading**

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

### **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

#### **Protecting lutruwita/Tasmania's Forests**

[11.17 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: protecting lutruwita/Tasmania's forests.

It is World Biodiversity Day today, and what a wonderful celebration of the wonder of nature. People around the planet would understand, if they look around them, if they walk outside, the beauty and the value of the natural world that is the basis of all life on Earth and it sustains us.

In Tasmania, we have some of the most incredible biodiversity on the planet. In our world heritage wilderness areas, the best wild places on the planet are protected. We know that on World Biodiversity Day today we also have a call to action to protect the vanishing wildlife and forest communities in lutruwita/Tasmania, in Australia and across the planet, so it is not a happy message.

We have lost the greatest majority of the world's forests in only a couple of hundred years. We have done a very good job of that, but we have people in Tasmania who understand and who every day care about and want to protect and look after our beautiful wild places for us today, for future generations, for their intrinsic value and with, and on behalf of, and standing next to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the palawa/pakana, who have cared for this place, this island, for tens of thousands of years.

The Greens have been very disturbed to see the shift to the right in the Liberal Party during the election campaign. The language, the anti-science language, the anti-environment language has stepped up further now that we have the Honourable Eric Abetz as the Minister for Forests. It is concerning and I know that Mr Abetz bristled at being called a climate denier, but just this week on WIN News, in response to questions from journalists, we heard him say:

I heard every year there was 10 years until some non-return tipping point.  
Well after you have heard that for 28 years in a row, I think you are entitled to ask a few questions about the robustness of the science.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - What is so concerning about that is it shows that Mr Abetz and many other people in the chamber who have just heard that do not have their eyes open and are not looking and listening to the scientists and the changes in the world around us. We have



permafrost thawing. We have the collapse of ice sheets. We have mass deaths in northern European forests. We have extreme bushfires, tornadoes, rainfall. I do not actually know what more of a tipping point you would want to look at, but these are all being described as tipping points for the planet. We are in 2024, and by 2030 scientists are saying an increase of 1.5 degrees.

We have a race on, and here we are. The Liberal and Labor Parties are championing big business; they are continuing with the ongoing extraction mortality for lutruwita/Tasmania, while the science tells us that we have to protect our forests, protect them for their carbon rich values, for their mass carbon stores, instead of logging and burning them as this government does, and the Labor Party supports. Millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide are going into the emissions every year and we need to be protecting them.

We stand with the communities around Tasmania who are mobilising, who are peacefully protesting, who are looking after forests like Quamby Bluff in takayna, ancient areas of forest there on the lower reaches of the Franklin River, the North Tarkine, the confluence of Arthur River. At these places, roads are being pushed in: continued destruction for beautiful animals and birds that can be found nowhere else on earth; the masked owl, the spotted-tailed quoll, the Tasmanian devil, the azure kingfisher, eagles, sea eagles. These all exist in these forests that are being destroyed apace with the Liberals and the Labor Party both supporting going into 40 000 extra hectares of carbon rich forests. The Greens are with the community, and we will be standing there protecting those natural values, protecting the forest for future generations and we know we have Tasmanians behind us.

**Members** interjecting.

**Time expired.**

[11.22 a.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this Matter of Public Importance. It was my intention, however, following the heckling just then from the Leader of the Greens, which I do not appreciate, to speak following the government, because I am always interested in learning from and hearing about the government's position on such matters.

There is nothing deeper or ingrained in the bodies of all Tasmanians than the love that we have for this island, the love that we have for the places, the love that we have and the access that we have. How extraordinary that in Tasmania, as a mum and someone who grew up on this island, that we get to explore and enjoy these incredible places that are loved across the world.

I find it curious that in this place - and I sidestep just for a minute, because it happened again this morning - that the government when challenged on things and is a little uncomfortable, goes, 'Oh don't be so negative', but it is in those moments when people are challenged and uncomfortable that you know there is something to it. I find it difficult to accept that the Greens Party in Tasmania can think of nothing more than to undermine and diminish the incredible international reputation that we have and the things that we share with the rest of the world about why it is so extraordinary.

I cannot exactly remember the comments of Brand Tasmania: 'Come down for the quiet pursuit of the extraordinary.' We invite people here to explore and experience our wild places

because it is something that most of us are really proud of and want to speak about positively, that we want to share with others. When people come from other parts of the country to visit us, they come and stay with you as family, you take them out to places to enjoy the forests of Tasmania. It is not only for enjoyment, but it can also be for wonderful other ways of sharing what is Tasmania.

I did not share in my reply, but in my first speech I shared that I am a furniture designer by trade. I have grown up making things with my hands from the beautiful timbers of Tasmania. I have a special connection with the forests of Tasmania in that way. I moved to Sydney to set up my studio. I had a business making furniture in Sydney to share works from Tasmania with the rest of the country and the world, so it is not much more embedded than it is in my life and my world that we should care for the forests of Tasmania.

I want to base my comments in this place in fact, because it is really important, and I have set the mark yesterday during my first speech in the reply. I want to read into the *Hansard* a few facts about the forests of Tasmania and what we have done in the past to protect the forests of Tasmania. For those listening or whoever is reading *Hansard*, Tasmania has a total land mass of approximately 6.8 million hectares, of which nearly half, 3.33 million hectares or 49 per cent, is forested. Native forests make up 91 per cent of this and plantations 9 per cent. What is interesting is that 59 per cent of Tasmania's native forests, 1.79 million hectares, are protected in reserves, which includes well over 80 per cent of Tasmanian's old growth forests.

In this place there are always these comments: 'Why do you want to cut it down? Why do you want to do this? Why do you want to do that?' The reality is that Tasmania went through an extraordinary process to come to an agreement to say how do we want to care for, look after and manage, productively and for experience and enjoyment, the forests of Tasmania. There is much done by many. I do not just stand here as shadow minister for environment or as shadow minister for parks. I also stand here as shadow minister for primary industries, and there are a lot of private forests on farming land across Tasmania.

I do not know anyone in Tasmania who does not love, care for or is not proud of those great natural assets that we have in Tasmania. We came to an agreement many years ago about how those wild places would be looked after and managed, and how they would be divided, to ensure that we could have a sustainable industry going forward where we continue to do incredible things like use Tasmanian timbers to build things. I know that it was commented about yesterday. People forget that if we do not have a productive and sustainable timber industry in Tasmania, where will timber come from for the things that we need it for, such as our places and our buildings in Tasmania?

I know that there is a shift in construction in Tasmania at the moment to using timber because of the benefits to Tasmania. However, if we are not using Tasmanian timbers appropriately, respectfully and responsibly, then where do those timbers come from? I stand proudly today to support the Tasmanian forests and to say that we look after them well. The many people of Tasmania who are tasked with that responsibility care passionately, as do all members of this Chamber.

**Time expired.**

[11.27 a.m.]

**Mr WOOD** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, the Tasmanian Government remains firmly committed to caring for our public lands and supports the appropriate protection of these lands with the Tasmanian Reserve Estate, which continues to be well protected with over 3,621,000 hectares as of 30 June 2021 being reserved public land, private land and marine protected areas.

Protections exist and are managed in accordance with strong legislation upheld by the government for reserves declared under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*, which sets out the values and purposes of each reserve class managed under the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002*, according to management objectives for each class of reserve.

The idea that our forests are not appropriately protected is just spin from the Greens. Without appropriate facts and figures, our natural assets offer locals and visitors opportunities to explore and enjoy a range of recreational and tourism activities within Tasmania's significant Reserve Estate. Our government will continue to invest in our parks and reserves to keep our competitive advantage and protect all that we hold precious.

This government is committed to continuing sustainable growth and investment in our world-renowned parks and reserves as we promote our state as one of the one of the country's premier tourist destinations. We will continue to encourage locals and visitors to head out into our parks and reserves to experience all that our state has to offer.

We will continue to recognise the competitive strength of Tasmania, which forms the basis of our 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy. We recognise the incredible value of tourism to our state, which is why we are also investing an additional \$12 million through the Visitor Economy Strategy and have more than \$90 million of investment underway to manage our incredible parks and reserves.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we will continue to support appropriate tourism developments that play a pivotal role in facilitating access to Tasmania's unique parks and reserves. We continue to value and uphold transparency in public consultation in relation to activities on reserve land, which is why we are investing \$6.49 million in reforming the current Reserve Activity Assessment Process. While the process has worked well to assess use and development in reserves since 2005, we recognise our role in reviewing current processes to ensure opportunities for continued improvement.

A consultation paper outlining our approach to this important reform was released in January 2024 for public feedback. To encourage involvement, we have extended the public consultation period twice. This shows our understanding of the importance of ensuring interested parties have the opportunity to provide their input into the process by providing a submission. I am advised that a significant number of submissions have been received and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania will be preparing a submission report that will also be made publicly available.

This continues to show our commitment to ensuring the transparency of lease and licence agreements issued under the *National Parks and Reserve Management Act 2002*. I am advised all active leases and licences over reserve land will be published. I am advised these relate to over 2000 active agreements that will be released in a phased approach for publication on the department's website.

To further deliver on our action plan, in February 2024 we provided a \$600,000 grants program with Private Forests Tasmania to support landholders to reduce emissions by growing trees on farms.

This government remains committed to appropriately managing our significant and vast reserve estate, ensuring that these lands are valued for current and future generations.

**Time expired.**

[11.33 a.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Leader of the Greens stated, it is International Biodiversity Day, so what an appropriate topic. This year's theme is encouraging everyone to further their commitment to the pledges made at COP 15 in 2022: to halt and reverse the destruction of biodiversity and the natural world. Australia has signed up to be part of this commitment. Tasmania has a significant role to play.

I wanted to talk about two specific forest areas of extraordinary biodiversity that are currently and consistently under threat. The first one is a part of kooparoona niara/Great Western Tiers. At Quamby Bluff, we have seen 20 hectares logged just over 12 months ago, with much community opposition, with a further 110 to 115 hectares still to come. This has significantly impacted the scenic values of the area and it has obliterated the biodiversity. That whole area of kooparoona niara is a missed opportunity of a future opportunity to have a new national park declared: Tasmania's first national park under Aboriginal management.

In takayna, as Dr Woodruff mentioned, the Franklin River coupe is under threat right now. It is an incredible biodiversity hotspot. There are three eagle's nests within one kilometre of the coupe. In the coupe itself there are endangered quolls and Tasmanian devils. This is an abundant habitat for the Tasmanian azure kingfisher, and the coupe is its last refuge on the lower reaches of the Franklin River.

Both kooparoona niara and takayna could be new national parks for our state. Tasmania has not had a new national park in over 30 years. It can help protect our forests, and safeguard globally important biodiversity and our carbon banks, which are our greatest sequestering tools.

An investment in parks is an investment in our carbon bank. It will help expand the state's tourism offerings, and it will help to greater disperse the regional tourism dollar across the new national parks.

Private land investment has also been mentioned, and I want to pay tribute to the huge role that it is playing in conserving biodiversity in Tasmania's forests, particularly from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, who have done a tremendous job off their own back to make sure we are protecting some of the ecosystems that are absolutely critical to not only Tasmania but the planet.

The Australian Government's Tasmanian Forest Tourism Initiative states that Tasmania's ancient forests and other natural features are some of the core reasons and the state's greatest attractions for tourists. That is absolutely correct. That is why people want to come here. We need to make sure that we are continuing investment into the infrastructure that allows people to come to our currently protected forests. That includes the Styx River Road, which we spoke about last week in this House as well. We have to improve the road so that people

can access these World Heritage-valued trees that are protected and extraordinary and are easy to access for a wide variety of tourists.

There are other places, particularly in the north-east of the state, which we so often forget has magnificent forests as well, places such as the Blue Tier. Tall tree tourism is a fantastic initiative that we can have in Tasmania that is a low to no-impact option that helps celebrate the beautiful forests we have here.

**Matter noted.**

## **MOTION**

### **Metro Tasmania Services**

[11.37 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be requiring a vote on this matter. I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes that -
  - (a) Metro cancelled approximately 900 weekly bus services in August 2023 under the guise of temporary service reductions; and
  - (b) cancelled Metro bus services still have not been reinstated nine months later.
- (2) Recognises that thousands of Tasmanians rely almost exclusively on public transport as their sole means of transportation.
- (3) Acknowledges that widespread Metro bus service cuts continue to negatively impact the lives and livelihoods of Tasmanians, including those with disabilities and those unable to afford private transport.
- (4) Concedes that a policy of half-price Metro bus fares, although welcomed, does not help Tasmanians who have lost access to reliable bus services.
- (5) Calls on the Minister for Transport, the Honourable Eric Abetz MP, to intervene and restore full Metro services as a matter of urgency.

I want to make it clear that this motion relates to the service cancellations or 'temporary pause', as was announced by Metro and the minister last year. It talks about those services, and I am not talking about the services where there are some genuine public safety and bus operator safety issues in certain suburbs. Whilst we think those suburbs deserve to have public transport

services to them, we understand there are some legitimate safety issues, and we urge Metro and the government to work together to resolve those issues. The point of this motion relates to the hundreds of services that were cancelled when the white flag was flown up the mast (by Metro).

In relation to point (5), I do understand the role of a shareholder minister in a GBE/state-owned company environment, and if the minister, as in his answer today to a question around the mechanics issue, basically refers to Metro as an entity in its own right and makes its own decisions. That is true to a point, but the minister and the government is not without influence and a level of power in this relationship. Being a shareholder minister, being the minister responsible for a public service, there is an obligation on the minister to do whatever they are able within reason to effect change, and we have seen that not only in GBEs and state-owned companies across decades in Tasmania, we have seen it more recently with the previous minister in relation to a package regarding the bus operators' wages and conditions outcome.

**Mr Abetz** - The \$8.1 million?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - If that is the figure that was landed on, I acknowledge that, but at the end of the day paying bus operators is a cost of business and to ensure you have bus operators you need to pay them appropriately.

I am making it clear at the outset of those two points that this motion specifically relates to the mass cancellations of last year and acknowledges that the minister is not without influence and power to resolve these very important issues.

We know there has been a build-up under the new management and new leadership at Metro to where we find ourselves today, but it is a clear fact - particularly in my state electorate of Franklin, but we hear stories across the south - that Metro is regularly failing even to deliver the pared-back services it has committed to delivering.

Metro and public transport play a fundamentally important role in a society that values all members of our community. We know public transport in cities across the world is the lynchpin to ensuring that those without capacity to transport themselves privately can move around their community to get to very important health and medical appointments or job interviews so that they are able to build a career and have employment that could lead them to gaining a wage to gain more options.

It is important for the economy, and it is important for the community, but also any mark of any city, state or country having a functioning public transport system is something that should be aimed for and delivered. In all the major cities in the world for tourists and for local communities, a functioning and effective public transport system is crucially important to their cities, to their communities, effectively allowing people to live a just and fair life and having options to move around communities.

I will go to some examples of what has happened in a few moments in terms of some of the stories I have heard from constituents and that we have seen. We knew during 2022 there were some significant challenges and mass bus cancellations by Metro, which had a massive impact on our community, for work, school, all of those services that are required to move people around our city and to reduce congestion. The irony is not lost particularly on people who live in the capital and the Greater Hobart area. When you see a lack of infrastructure

investment in roads and infrastructure to deal with traffic congestion, the government's answer is to look at public transport, yet with a stroke of a pen, they cancelled 900 weekly bus services, so it is almost like they have given up on both. Traffic congestion in the capital is an intense issue for many people who rely on our roads to work, play and get to school.

The rot really started to set in in early February 2023. At the beginning of the school term Metro was cancelling upwards of 70 bus services per day, leaving hundreds of schoolkids stranded and unable to get to school. We had stories of parents having to ring home and organise Ubers to get kids to school because of the cancellations with no notice. Even when the notices started to appear on the Metro Facebook page, we knew that that was only the tip of the iceberg of the level of cancellations and the disruption it caused. The government at that stage in February 2023 said the cancellations were temporary, which they clearly were not. At the time Metro bus operators had been repeatedly raising concerns about short-staffing and their own safety, but at that time, the minister of the day ignored those concerns.

In late February of last year, bus drivers' safety concerns around antisocial behaviour were still ignored and cancellations worsened. Bus operators and the travelling public were warning the minister over the last previous years that there were problems with drivers quitting due to low morale and safety concerns. The cancellations worsened and there were over 1000 cancellations during the month of February 2023 alone. In response to a question time question from me, the Transport minister made a very small apology to those affected by worsening cancellations and announced that he would put together a working group to start to address some of the safety issues and concerns from drivers that had been raised for the previous 12 months. This was in February 2023 and again, announcing a committee is not necessarily a solution, particularly when you have been aware of these issues for a number of years.

In early March 2023 the then Transport minister revealed that his only solution to fix the long-standing problems plaguing Metro was to set up this new working group, 12 months after a similar working group's recommendations were ignored. An intensive workshop was convened at that time with Metro, Tasmania Police, the Department of State Growth 12 months earlier to look into the solutions to the anti-social behaviour which was causing Metro operators to leave in droves but after a year, not one solution had been implemented.

In early March 2023 there was another blow to commuters with the ticketing project, much vaunted by this government, beset by more delays. In fact, former premier Will Hodgman announced the single ticketing project five years ago. The common ticketing scheme was to replace the antiquated GreenCard. After five years, there had been no major progress on that. At that stage, in March 2023, the Department of State Growth advertised for a strategic marketing manager position for the common ticketing project. I am not sure if that was a person to explain why it had not been delayed, I do not know, but perhaps to help the minister explain.

In late March 2023, after 12 months of community and political pressure, the government finally committed to a transit officer trial. We were hearing stories of anti-social behaviour on a number of routes in Hobart across the network, and commuters and bus operators were calling out for support. After a long period of time the government finally committed use of transit officers - which have been successful in other states - but only committed to a trial of transit officers on some Metro routes.

In the year it took the government to listen to the bus operators and commit to that trial, at least 108 Metro bus drivers had resigned. I had many experienced bus operators come and

meet with me to talk about their frustrations with management and the lack of respect that they felt that Metro was showing them, which was one of the biggest reasons why people were leaving Metro.

I know Metro and the minister have said that there is a recruitment issue. It is hard to recruit bus operators. I would argue they have had no problem in recruiting bus operators. They have a problem with keeping bus operators. It is a retention issue. When you are losing experienced bus operators who have been there for years and years and decades, that is because of the lack of value and respect that they have been shown. That is a key part of the problem.

If it was an issue of a labour shortage in that area, why do private operators have little or no problem in recruiting bus operators for their services? I would argue it is not necessarily a labour shortage, there are retention, wages and conditions, respect and dignity and safety issues that Metro needs to address as opposed to, 'It's just a labour shortage'. That is a cop out, in my view.

Again, when talking about how Metro has engaged in their workforce, in July last year Metro was called out trying to pull an industrial relations trick that would leave their already low-paid apprentices up to \$15,000 worse off over the course of their apprenticeships, moving them from labour hire to directly employed. That is a good decision. You bring people in, you do not use a labour hire company to build the workforce of the future externally, you employ them directly, but by doing so, short-changing them \$15,000 is not a way to value your workers who are predominantly young apprentices. There are some adult apprentices, but young workers predominantly would feel the brunt of that little industrial relations trick and you cannot tell me that was not meant.

In late July the cancellations worsened and when schools returned from their break in July there were upwards of 147 cancellations per day. Once again, students and families were left stranded. Again, there was public outrage and from public calls in early August, 580 metro services were cancelled in the first five days of schools returning. Again, the transport minister blamed labour shortage and clearly, whilst that is a context to any recruitment, that was not the major issue in relation to the bus operators.

It was revealed in mid-August that hundreds of daily Metro service cancellations were targeting routes servicing lower socioeconomic areas on Hobart's Eastern Shore, which adversely affected many Tasmanians who primarily rely on Metro to get around. Now that was very cynical. These are working class suburbs, where the proportion of people that rely on public transport is higher for essentials. Not a choice to take public transport, they had no other choice. They have to take public transport to get to work, to get to appointments and we saw these suburbs unfairly being targeted. At that time there were at least five senior management vacancies at Metro and the chair of the Metro board, and the key director had announced that they were set to depart soon.

In late August, instead of actually responding to the challenge in front of Metro and the government, they essentially announced 1000 weekly services would be cancelled indefinitely. That was wreaking havoc across the public transport network and leaving communities incredibly frustrated. In response to a question at the time from myself, the minister did not offer any sort of solution, but instead took considerable time complimenting private bus operators, implying that we should not be too concerned about these massive Metro cancellations because people can travel from Hobart to Launceston for \$16 with a private bus



company. I am sure those people travelling from Hobart to Launceston or Launceston to Hobart on that company are happy with that. We acknowledge that, but that is not the issue that was confronting the government at that time. The transport minister also tried to claim that these massive indefinite cancellations are somehow better for commuters as they at least provided certainty. I do not accept that. The lack of consultation and the consequences for many people of those mass cancellations were significant.

For example, I met with a number of supported employees at Oakdale Industries on the eastern shore in Mornington and some people who had been taking the same bus from as far as Margate and as far as the northern suburbs of Hobart, had taken two buses, regular buses, to get to and from their workplace for up to 15 or 16 years. These workers relied on those bus services. Unilaterally, Metro cut the services that would get them from their Warrane/Mornington TAFE facility, which was where the bus left from, to get them to the Eastlands Bus Mall interchange to get a bus home. They unilaterally cancelled that bus service.

These supported employees, who are so proud of the work that they do at Oakdale, were left high and dry and stranded with no consultation, with no work with the disability industries that supported those workers. Sitting down and talking to those workers in their tea room and the tears streaming down their face about the shock and the confusion, they thought they would have to quit their jobs because of a lack of that service. When we raised that, there was an acknowledgement that that had an impact on those workers, but there was no acknowledgement from Metro that they had not consulted particularly with vulnerable users.

There was no acknowledgement that in terms of the hierarchy of need for people relying on public transport services, that they may not want to impact on people who are significantly impacted by cancellations. To say that these 900 services were temporary, and they were forensic and strategic in terms of the network, you would have to say that the outcome was significantly different. The impact on those people was profound and I acknowledge their employer, Oakdale Industries, in helping those workers through that, but Metro should hang their head in shame in terms of not appreciating the significant impact it had on those supported employment workers.

Story after story from constituents came into my office about the impact. For a woman in Risdon Vale, it took her two hours to be able to get a bus at a time to get to a medical appointment in Bellerive/Rosny from Risdon Vale. She had to go via the city to do that. When on her way home - and this happened on a number of occasions because of the nature of the bus services to Risdon Vale - they were hourly - and this constituent is not on social media. She is not on Facebook. She is an elderly woman who has health issues - she arrived at the bus mall in time for what she thought was her bus home, only to find that it did not turn up because it was cancelled. So, on a cold winter's day, she had to sit in the bus mall for close to two hours or an hour and a half until the next bus came along. That is just completely unacceptable.

I had a constituent from Seven Mile Beach who, to get to work on time, had to catch a bus into the city to catch a bus to the Eastlands bus mall to catch another bus to work, so they caught a bus that went past the area where they needed to go because of the nature of the services that were provided to Seven Mile Beach. Imagine that kind of consequence. The reason we have a bus mall is so that buses can interchange, and people can either travel from the city to the eastern shore at the bus mall and get another bus to another suburb or another service. With the extra time it has taken, no wonder sometimes people become so disengaged with

employment or a career when barriers are put in their way by virtue of a failing bus service, when they should be able to get access to their workplace in an efficient way.

There has been an exodus of skilled mechanics. We talked about that in question time today, but it was really telling that in 2021 there was a leaked presentation from Metro which showed some of the thinking and some of the pressures. It was a leaked internal presentation produced by a Metro executive which demonstrated that the company knew it was limited by investment and vulnerable to competition from private operators as far back as 2021. It showed Metro conceded that the state government would not be there to help the company when they needed it most, which turned out to be true. In this report, Metro identified that private bus operators are now a competition to their services and given this government's apparent preference for contracting private companies for public transport, questions were asked.

We know it is a state-owned company. We know that through the 1990s a whole range of key government services were contracted out or pushed out through a government business enterprise. Some of them made sense at the time, some of them still make sense, some of them do not, but at the end of the day it is the state government's responsibility to run a public transport system for Tasmania.

It needs to be efficient. It needs to move people around our cities and our communities efficiently and appropriately. I think people would love to have a rolled-gold service. In larger cities you have trams, subways and metros et cetera and they connect with buses and ferries, and Tasmanians should be able to demand a great service, but at the moment this government has delusions of mediocrity for their public transport service.

When you cannot get across Hobart city in a reasonable time and you have to zigzag in and out over the bridge to get to a bus that gets you to work, or a health service or a medical appointment, or where you stand by a bus stop and nothing happens for an extended period of time and there is a lack of information on social media about where that service is, that is unacceptable. At some stage somebody needs to take responsibility for intervening in Metro because what is happening now is not working; it is not getting better. All we hear are excuses and there is a continued failure to deliver on what is an essential service for a modern functioning city.

I know the government parades its economic credentials at every opportunity. Governments need to be able to tell a story about the economy, but a functioning public transport system is good for the economy. It builds opportunity. It creates a reduction in potential for road congestion, which means our freight and logistics industry has a far better journey getting product from A to B and moving services around our community.

Hobart is regularly gridlocked with traffic. If something happens on the bridge, or on the outlet or on either Macquarie or Davey streets, a single event will clog up the entire capital city. The government says that our answer is public transport, so could you provide the answer? Could you actually fix public transport so that it is a viable option for people? Metro is a fundamental and important service for Tasmanians. It is valued, but people have lost faith in Metro and their ability to get them to and from where they need to go.

This government cannot say it is a state-owned company and we will work with them and ultimately it is a matter for them. It is a matter for government and by way of this motion we are seeking for the minister to intervene and restore those services as a matter of urgency.

and give hope to people who want to choose public transport, get out of their cars and reduce the congestion on our roads, who want to get on the bus to get to work or a medical appointment in decent time. I know most Tasmanians, if they are able to take some form of public transport that is reliable, regular and affordable, they will choose it and that is good for all Tasmanians.

I acknowledge we have a new minister. I know that he takes this issue seriously as we have had a conversation around public transport and I seek his goodwill in ensuring that these issues and challenges facing Metro can be resolved and then together, this House can celebrate his work in resolving what is a wicked problem for Tasmania.

[12.04 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Minister for Transport) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish I had the power to click my fingers and resolve all the issues that confront Metro and public transport providers right around this country. It may be interesting for members to learn that there is a driver shortage in the transport industry around this nation of 25,000 drivers. It would be great if Minister Abetz could click his fingers and make the problem disappear in Tasmania. I am looking at the motion, member for Franklin, and calling on myself to intervene and restore. We will not be dividing on the motion, but I wish I could call on myself to intervene on this issue. I know that in south-east Queensland, for example, they are 500 drivers short for the public transport system just in south-east Queensland, so the numbers are a problem.

Further, there is a problem of a good economy or a relatively good economy. When you have unemployment at historically low levels, trying to recruit drivers becomes exceptionally difficult. In Tasmania we have a similar issue as the former premier in Queensland had, Anastasia Palaszczuk, where the public transport drivers refused to go into areas of her electorate because they feared for their own safety and that of their passengers, so we have the added problem of antisocial behaviour which has led to some drivers, as I understand, leaving and some drivers refusing to undertake certain routes. This is something I understand the Rail Tram and Bus Union supports as well.

Metro management has concluded that certain routes simply cannot be undertaken after 5 p.m. Indeed, just the other evening I spoke with one of the drivers who had a rock come through the front window. He was traumatised, concerned and on leave because of the stress that had occasioned to him. Unfortunately, there is a whole range of issues confronting public transport, not only in Tasmania but all-round Australia. I wish I had the solution to it all but regrettably I do not. I do enjoy the fact that the member for Franklin has confidence in me that I could just do it like that, but I have got to disillusion him and say that, whilst he might have a high opinion of me, I am not sure that I can actually do that which he seeks.

Having said that, I fully agree with the member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, that the reliability of public transport is fundamentally important for the users. Metro tells me that they have done their very best in putting up the notices on the online service and the stickers at bus stops for people to understand when the provision of services alters on various routes. Sometimes with absenteeism, illness, et cetera, decisions need to be made very quickly and it is a genuine difficulty for Metro management to try to juggle these matters. I believe that Metro is doing their very best in all the circumstances.

As somebody who, I would like to think, has had a genuine interest in supporting the disability sector, I listened to the member for Franklin's contribution in relation to Oakdale. That is something that Metro could learn from, to seek to ascertain if there are particularly

vulnerable elements of their clientele with whom they might be able to liaise in a more fulsome manner to ensure that those difficulties that the member for Franklin outlined can be avoided. That is a very valid point. I am sure my staff are listening, and they will put it on the agenda for when I talk with Metro management again, which I will do on a regular basis to ensure that these things are monitored.

As I understand it, with the issues that we have had with Metro bus services - and I have just said that I think they might have been able to do a better job with the disability sector - I understand that in relation to getting our young ones or youngsters to school and back, they have prioritised that and there has not been a disruption to those services. In that area at least they have done that, which I think the member for Franklin and myself would expect.

Even if they do a good job, they can always do a better job. That is what I always try to tell myself and my staff: even if we do a good job, have a look, see if you can do it even better. Whilst I think they have handled the issue of schools exceptionally well. I take the point in relation to disability and will raise that with them.

The member engaged in some terminology that I think is a bit unfair on Metro when he talked about unilateral cuts. They were disappointed in having to make the cuts to services. Unilateral? Yes, they are the only ones that can make the decision to cut services. In all the circumstances they would like to be able to provide as full a service as possible and cover all the routes to the very best of their ability when they have a driver shortage.

I stress again, this is not just a Tasmanian situation, and I suspect that my colleagues in opposition in the states of New South Wales and Queensland will undoubtedly be giving similar speeches as the member for Franklin, getting stuck into the Labor governments in those states because, unfortunately, it is an Australia-wide problem.

In relation to Metro services - the member for Franklin will be pleased to know that the other morning I availed myself of the Park and Ride from Huntingfield into the city - great service: very quick, comfortable, and the driver was exceptionally good. I did not have a GreenCard so I had to pay him with cash. Remember that - cash? I was surprised, I must say, that I got change from a \$5 note for the fare into the city. It was a great service, and I encourage people to use it. Metro is doing their best and I was the beneficiary of some of that.

In relation to Trip planner and tracking, we are working with Metro on that to ensure it is a service people can tap into and understand exactly where their bus is on a particular route. I am not sure it is necessarily going to be of assistance to Ms Burnet's constituent from West Hobart - I do not know how internet savvy she is - but that is something we are seeking to provide for the benefit of Metro users.

In relation to recruiting bus drivers, I am told Metro are doing their very best seeking to recruit new staff via online ads and targeted recruitment campaigns, as well as through partnerships, including the Glenorchy Jobs Hub and not-for-profit employment organisations such as Best Employment. In addition to recruitment, Metro is also focusing on developing retention strategies, including dedicated and targeted driver assessments, coaching and mentoring.

Further to this piece of work, Metro is working with providers on health and wellbeing strategies. I have already referred to some of the antisocial behaviour to which Metro drivers have been subjected, and that is part and parcel of Metro trying to assist drivers.

Metro is also working with Tasmania Police, but I would seek the support of the community at large in identifying those that are deliberately seeking to disrupt - or the consequence of their behaviour is the disruption of - those services out of Bridgewater and Gagebrook. We have transit officers randomly on buses to try to cut out antisocial behaviour, but when you need to do that, it adds to the cost of the provision of public transport, which then is ultimately born by the taxpayers of Tasmania. That is why it should not just be the duty of the transit officers or Tasmania Police, but we should all be invested in this task to try to assist Metro to stamp out this antisocial behaviour, which makes public transport more expensive and in particular, less attractive for users.

In relation to support packages that the honourable member referred to, there was an \$8.1 million support package that was designed to make a real difference. We listened to the drivers; we listened to the union; we listened to the Metro management; and we took action to support Metro in dealing with its driver shortage. That \$8.1 million package included \$2 million for a driver wage increase this financial year and \$2.1 million to introduce security screens for drivers. That gives you an example of the actual cost that the few antisocial individuals in our society occasion to the community at large: \$2.1 million just to keep our drivers safe from those few ugly individuals. That, unfortunately, is the cost and the burden that is placed on taxpayers.

There is \$2 million to extend the deployment of transit officers statewide. That is an extra \$2 million to deal with the ugly behaviour of the antisocial element. That is \$4.1 million that our fellow Tasmanians are now bearing the burden of simply to deal with this antisocial behaviour. It has to be stopped. I call on all Tasmanians to do whatever they can to help identify those individuals. Two million dollars is also being spent to fund a new IT system for Metro Tasmania to introduce more flexible and attractive rosters. We are trying to assist drivers who have various home and other commitments to be able to roster on when it suits them. That is something that Metro is working on as well. Flexibility in the workplace is something I think we would all support if it can be provided and Metro is seeking to do their bit in relation to that.

The Tasmanian government invests more than \$110 million each year in general access and school bus services, with nearly 3000 general access bus services contracted each weekday during school terms and under 22 contracts with eight operators. It is a big component of the state budget. It is a huge commitment of taxpayer money that is being stewarded to the very best of their ability by the Metro board and Metro management. When you have the issues I have outlined, it makes it difficult to provide the sort of service that one would hope for our community. These issues are not, unfortunately, able to be dealt with a click of the fingers. We need to look at these things with strategic considerations and ask how we can get more drivers.

In the past, I think Tasmania was able to say it is a great, safe, friendly place to be a bus driver. Everybody can chat to the bus driver. I still remember as a schoolkid catching the bus to and from Taroona High School. Everybody knew the local bus drivers, and everything was, if I might say, safe. The worst thing that could happen to you on the bus - and it happened to me on occasions - was when the bus stopped and you got kicked off for certain minimal

antisocial behaviour, might I add. You had better not interject, member for Franklin. You want to know the details and I will not be sharing.

What I am trying to say is that it was a different era. Unfortunately, we are now confronted with substantial antisocial behaviour, which makes it difficult for us to recruit drivers. There is a driver shortage right around the country of 25,000, and somebody can do the maths for me, but if in Tasmania we have 2 per cent to 3 per cent of our population as part of that 25,000 then you understand the shortage issues that we unfortunately face. Sorry?

**Mr Willie** - The other bus operators do not seem to have the same challenges.

**Mr ABETZ** - It is an interesting question that you raise. They deal in providing transport services to some other areas and I will leave it at that, but I think you understand that they do not go into the Bridgewater and Herdsmans Cove areas. Tassielink provides a great service and I compliment Mr Dewsbury and the people at Tassielink for the wonderful work they do.

Madam Speaker, I will leave it at that. On behalf of the government and me, I will be voting for a motion to call upon me to do certain things that I wish I actually could do. That said, I have had discussions with the union representatives - and might I add, Mr Batt struck me as a good individual. When the member for Franklin recommended him to me, I must say I had doubts because I was not sure about how robust your recommendation would be, but I have to confess, it was a good one and we had a most enjoyable cup of coffee, but more importantly, a genuine discussion. We have been exchanging text messages in recent times and he has told me about the recent vote in relation to the mechanics where the proposal put by Metro management failed. It got a 'no' vote, so it will be back to discussions.

These are matters that ultimately are for management. I do not want to micromanage these issues in government business enterprises. They are best left to those who are the experts. That said, I will provide the odd bit of guidance, gratuitous advice and suggestions as and when I can, if need be, to both the union worker side and to the management side because I think it is in the best interests of management and workers to have a stable workforce and for management to make it attractive for workers to stay. There is no doubt about that.

I know from my own time in private practice, staff turnover was an absolute nightmare and you never wanted staff to leave because of the recruitment and all the rest, and the same in the electorate office. Thankfully I did not have a high turnover; I must have been far too easy as a boss, I imagine.

**Mr O'Byrne** - You produced a few people who have contributed to the cause, so to speak.

**Mr ABETZ** - I have, including the member for Clark. I was wondering who was laughing behind me. I now know. Thank you for pointing that out.

It is a serious, genuine problem that the member for Franklin has raised, something the government is engaged in. I wish we had a magic wand. That said, I do not sidestep the responsibility and look forward to continuing to work with Metro to resolve these issues for the benefit not only of the workers of Metro, but the customer clientele of the Metro. I look forward to finding solutions to ensure we can restore these services as quickly as possible for the benefit of all Tasmanians.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I remind members that the debate concludes at 12.36 p.m. if you wish to give some time to someone else. That is optional.

[12.23 p.m.]

**Ms BROWN** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I am excited to stand here and talk on this motion around Metro. I would like to cast back to my experience around my school buses. When I was at the end of primary school, at high school and college, I used to take up to four buses per day and back then they were run quite well, but if you missed one you would miss your connecting one and so forth, so if I missed one of my connecting buses in the morning it would often make me late to school for home room and as we know, home room sets us up for the day and it really muddles you up at the start of the day.

I have had some students from Guilford Young College write to me and say that they too have been experiencing this on a grander scale. For me it was missing one every now and then, but for them it is a constant battle with buses not turning up. For them it is missed learning opportunities, it is missing social interactions with their friends prior to their learning, and it is just a generally poor start to the day. We can agree that students are suffering from these missed bus services, and this is something that is crucial for their learning and modern lifestyles.

I would like to reference a report by the McKell Institute which speaks of a better deal. It talks about fixing Tasmania's public transport system and states that accessible public transport is a crucial part of modern life. It facilitates access to employment opportunities, education, essential services and community participation.

I have already spoken about education, and I want to quickly touch on some constituents in Risdon Vale - and I dare say that we have spoken to similar constituents there - who have told me that they have been left for hours in the cold because they have missed a bus or two. The frequency of the buses from Risdon Vale is once every hour, so if they get caught chatting to somebody and they miss that bus service - and we all get caught chatting from time to time - then they will have to wait that extra hour to make it home or to their medical appointment, which is just not good time management.

I would also like to refer back to that report, which talks about the poor retention of staff. Low wages are a key factor of that, as well as the congestion on the roads. Low wages have been a major focus for the drivers with whom I have spoken. All they are wanting is a fair wage for a job well done, and we can all agree that our drivers do a fantastic job.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Ms BROWN** - Metro Tasmania's questionable treatment of those drivers makes me wonder what the government is doing to support those workers when they are in unsafe situations. I would like to know when they are planning to have transit officers on the ground and on buses, actually protecting the community and our bus drivers when those antisocial situations arise.

I have spoken to a lot of people in our community, and this is a situation that is constantly raised: missing buses and buses not turning up. The community is calling for this service to be restored, and we will be supporting the motion.

[12.28 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I rise to support this important motion. Our public transport system is important for the social functioning of Tasmanians. I note the advocacy of the member for Franklin in this space for a very long time and thank him for it.

I would like to go to a couple of points that were raised by the minister. First, he talked about antisocial behaviour as a problem for buses. We all know that that is affecting some of the bus services, but it is not the major problem. It should be pointed out that antisocial behaviour is a symptom of a broken, unloved, underfunded system, and I will go to that point in a moment.

Second, minister Abetz talked about catching a bus. That is very admirable. It is very good to see the Transport minister catching a bus. We need to increase those people catching the bus services. Again, if it is unloved and underfunded, that will not be the case. I might point out to minister Abetz - and I hope he is listening from outside this Chamber - that the Menzies Centre is doing a bus service in conjunction with Metro. It is called the Get BusActive Study, and it is encouraging people by giving them money to catch buses. I enrolled in that the other day - I am usually riding, but if the bus service is there and available and there are incentives to do that and to get some incidental exercise by walking to the bus, which we know is a factor, then I think it is a very good thing. I urge the minister to enrol in that study.

Third, it is also very good to hear the minister talking about some lateral thinking around rostering and trying to find solutions to the bus shortages, which has been brought up when speaking to this notice of motion. You have already heard constituent concerns about impacts the reduced bus services are having on members of the community. My example this morning was of Gay from West Hobart, but the impact is felt right across Tasmania and even more so in regional and remote parts of our state with other bus services.

We have also had people in Kingston raise concerns through the Greens office that the reduced services mean that there are windows during peak work travel time where the only services available from Kingston travel via Hobart College, with the direct-to-city services among those axed, making journeys much longer. They are crowded and they are more uncomfortable for commuters.

There are massive knock-on effects when you consider a failing Metro service. There are congestion issues, and there is that lack of incidental exercise from this disruption to services and also the disruption to people's lives. The member for Franklin talked about the school services and the impacts on students, and while no school services were cut, many of the connecting services relied upon by students, particularly younger students, have been cut, making their journey more complicated, longer, and frankly, less safe.

Buses are also taking longer to complete journeys, with commuters normally spread over a wide range of services being forced to adjust their travel to services that are becoming more crowded, are taking longer to complete and are arriving at unpredictable intervals. I attest to that example of the woman waiting one and a half hours in the bus mall. It is just not suitable.

Public transport is important to reduce social isolation, to allow people to access medical appointments and social and sporting events, and to get to and from school. Without it, we have heard of reports of increased rates of non-attendance at schools, and an inability for students to arrive on time because of inadequate bus services. Indeed, the member for Lyons, Jen Butler,



raised the matter of a lack of bus services for those with three-wheeled mobility scooters that cannot access Metro bus services from Brighton, which is a real problem in isolation.

The 'A Better Deal' report into the state of public transport in Tasmania noted that Tasmania spends just \$115.06 per commuter. If you compare that to Queensland, which spends \$702.25; the ACT, which spends \$492.29 per commuter; and Victoria, which spends \$610.77 per commuter, you can see what the problem is. It is a chronic lack of funding vital services.

Tasmania spends the least per commuter on public transport in the country. Even in terms of proportion of the budget spent on public transport, Tasmania is second last in the country, with only 0.94 per cent of the budget spent on public transport. We have to do better. Again, Victoria spends 4.69 per cent, Queensland 5.13 per cent and the ACT 2.98 per cent.

During the election, the Greens talked about free public transport and reliable public transport to expand services, the light rail to the Northern suburbs in Hobart and support for the expansion of ferry services. It is a blight on this government if they fail to address this most basic of needs on service delivery, on restoring routes that have been cancelled, and ensuring that the people of all ages have an affordable and reliable way of getting from point A to point B and undertaking their daily tasks and business. I understand the minister has unfortunately walked into a mess and I know that he will work hard to get good results.

Commuters need real time travel information, it is standard wherever else you go, it is standard to have a good bus service, ferry service in other jurisdictions and it is a sign of a mature society when there is a good public transport system.

**Time expired.**

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Key Industries - Support**

[12.36 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I move Notice of Motion No. 7. A vote will be required.

I move -

That the House expresses its unequivocal support for key industries, including -

- (a) Tasmania's aquaculture industry, including operations in Macquarie Harbour;
- (b) Tasmania's timber industry;

- (c) Renewable energy developments including the Robbins Island windfarm and
- (d) Tasmania's mining industry.

Madam Speaker, we raise and bring this notice of motion today because Tasmanians have given us a challenging parliament. There is no doubt about that. Tasmanians have elected a parliament which is very different from ones seen in recent times, and one that is going to be challenging for the government to manage. For all of us to ensure we are balancing the need to hold the government accountable while ensuring that there is confidence in our business and in the workforce community, that this parliament does support jobs and investment and wants to see Tasmania's economy going forward, in spite of this parliament's inherent instability. That is why we are bringing this motion today. I could not pre-empt what the government will do, but we have drafted this motion in such a way that I do not believe poses any problem for members of the Liberal Party today. Like Labor, they have expressed these views before.

The Labor Party unequivocally supports these industries because they support regional Tasmanian jobs. Tasmanian Labor stands for jobs. We stand for good, well paid, safe, secure jobs in Tasmania. We always have and always will. That is what we want to achieve in government, but what we also support in opposition. We sometimes joke, 'Is anybody watching this parliament?' but one of the biggest things that surprised me in this parliament since I arrived is how many people actually do, how many people talk to me about things they have heard members say, votes that we have had, or even text me during proceedings to say, 'I am actually watching'.

**Madam SPEAKER** - It is often very entertaining.

**Mr WINTER** - They are particularly from the business community and from the public service. The reason they are watching is because what we say here matters. I expect that, given the make-up of this new parliament, more and more people are going to be watching to see exactly how this parliament functions, what this parliament believes and the outcome of divisions or votes like we might have on this particular motion.

Tasmanians overwhelmingly do support jobs, industry and having a Tasmania which gives every young person the best chance in life, that makes Tasmania the best place to grow up, the best place to work and retire. They want Tasmania to be an easy place to do business and that sentiment should be expressed in this House. The point of this motion and the reason we bring it today is because the business community and the workers are wanting to see confidence and certainty in spite of the parliament they have elected, which as I said is challenging. They want to see certainty, and there is no doubt that many people would prefer a majority government. In fact, the Liberals have been on the record for many years now talking about the dangers of minority governments, and in particular, of the JLN. I will read some of the statements that I found when I was researching this.

The Deputy Premier said, 'We know the last thing Tasmania needs is a paralysis a coalition of chaos would cause. That was on 17 February. He said, 'Tasmania cannot risk the instability of a coalition of chaos,' that was on 22 February. He said, 'It is becoming increasingly clear that independents and Lambie would take a wrecking ball to our economy, a real coalition of chaos.' He said that the Pre-election Financial Outlook 'confirms that Tasmania cannot afford another coalition of chaos.' He said the Jacqui Lambie Party, 'Has confirmed they are a willing player in a coalition of chaos.' He said all those things before the election.

He said, 'Labor is getting desperate, the only path to power is doing a deal to form a coalition of chaos.' As we know, it was the Liberals who did a deal to form a coalition. He said Rebecca White was 'continuing her desperate attempt to try to trick Tasmanians about a plan for a coalition of chaos.' These were things said by the Deputy Premier. He said, 'Tasmanians simply do not know what they will get with a coalition of chaos.' These are all things from the now Deputy Premier of a government that is in coalition with the JLN.

What I am keen to see today, and the point of this is to make sure that members of this place are here supporting jobs. I am really keen to hear from the JLN today. I am really keen to hear what they believe, particularly around those really important industries that impact all of our electorates. The forest industry is a really critical industry right across Tasmania across every electorate. There are timber mills, there are people working, contractors, who rely on a sustainable native forestry industry that allows them to work to feed their family. They are an important part of our economy.

I am really keen to hear what they have to say about our most successful industry in Tasmania over the last 30 years, our salmon industry, our aquaculture industry, which is doing a fantastic job employing thousands of Tasmanians and has been doing so for decades and continue to support particularly regional communities. I can speak best about my electorate at Franklin where I know towns like Strathblane, Dover and Southport are so reliant on the aquaculture industry. They need and require that industry to be there to support them and their families.

We know, over on the West Coast, that towns like Strahan and Queenstown are now so heavily reliant on those industries and they want to know that this place has their back. It is really important, and I am looking forward to hearing what the JLN has to say about that, the coalition partner of the Liberals. Are they going to support jobs today? Are they going to support the activities of those workers in places like Macquarie Harbour, which is in Braddon? Are they going to support those workers out at Mowbray, the timber mill there in the electorate of Bass? Are they going to support working people? Are they going to support jobs in this state? It is a really important moment that we understand exactly where this coalition stands, whether they stand for jobs or whether they stand with the Greens, who I suspect will probably oppose this motion, though we will never know.

I am really enthusiastic that Tasmania goes ahead with the most exciting opportunity for us economically over the course of the next few decades, which is renewable energy. The motion talks about renewable energy and how important it is that we get more power into the grid. It is critical for this state. Unfortunately, Tasmania is in a situation where we simply do not have enough power for major new industry to get started here. We have seen that through the loss of FFIs proposal, Woodside's proposal and also Origin Energy. All three wanted to set up in the electorate of Bass, up at Bell Bay and start their hydrogen plans there. All three have suspended or left the state because there simply is not enough power. There is not enough renewable energy in Tasmania, if you can believe it. There is not enough power for those industries or for those particular proposals to go ahead and they gave up and left.

In the case of Origin Energy, they have actually left and started setting up a very similar project in New South Wales. These are jobs that could have been in Tasmania, but the opportunity was lost. It was lost because we do not have enough power and the simple solution to that is we need to get more power into the grid. We need to build more wind farms and we

need to build more solar farms. We need to make sure there is the certainty and confidence to invest in Tasmania. I have said before that I have never seen the amount of capital wanting to come to Tasmania as there is now. It is logjammed, waiting to come to Tasmania, waiting to invest and wanting to spend money in Tasmania because they want what we have. Our natural advantages, particularly in our hydro resource and our wind resource, are phenomenal. We have an incredible resource in Tasmania that others want to access. They want to provide their capital and they want to make sure that Tasmania can continue to be, as it has historically been, at the forefront of renewable energy. We have the expertise here, we have the industry, and we have the natural resources here to do something really special.

It has been Labor governments in the past that have taken up these opportunities with our hydro dams decades ago and more recently with the first wind farms in Australia which were built in Tasmania in partnership with Hydro Tasmania and the private sector. Not enough has happened over the last 10 years. It has been too hard, and this government has made Tasmania the hardest place in Australia to build a wind farm. That is pretty obvious from the lack of investment and activity. There are no wind farms currently being constructed and there have not been for about 1200 days, last time I counted. It has simply been made too difficult to build.

That brings us to Robbins Island. I know this is a controversial topic for some, but it is such a critical investment and such a critical development for our state. We need this project. If we are going to unleash and unlock the sort of investment and jobs that Tasmania needs, we need that project. We need that power, because we have ABEL Energy up at Bell Bay which wants to produce green methanol, but they need power to be able to do that which they cannot currently access. The most likely, most logical place that that will come from is from Robbins Island.

HIF in Hampshire on the north-west coast want to start making e-fuels in Tasmania. They want to use residue from Tasmanian forests and use Tasmanian clean, green electricity to make e-fuels here and at the moment they cannot do it because there simply is not enough power. We need to make sure we can get power into the grid, which is again what this motion is about. They need to know that this parliament supports those developments, those industries, those jobs, those Tasmanians, whether you are on the north-west coast, up at Bell Bay, whether you are working in renewable energy down south, or whether you are one of those consultants with expertise that we have in Tasmania, who have been providing for decades the sort of expertise that we export all around the world. They want to know that this parliament has their back, and that this parliament supports jobs. I hope today that they will see that.

Our mining sector in Tasmania is again a huge exporter to the rest of Australia and the rest of the world. We have a long and historic association with the mining industry in Tasmania and we want to make sure that the workers on the north-west coast and the west coast understand that this parliament has their backs and want to see them succeed. We want to see their jobs continue long into the future.

We have seen the instability around the Avebury mine over the course of the last 12 months and at Rosebery as well, which continues to have uncertainty around its tailings dams. That is a really difficult situation for those workers, and I sincerely hope we get a decision in the future which cements their place on the north-west or the west coast to make sure we can continue to operate that mine. I am looking forward to visiting Rosebery in the next few weeks to express state Labor's support for that industry, as we did with aquaculture on the west coast.

These are really important industries for our state. The timber industry has for too long been used in this place as a political tool, rather than something that we should all get behind. It is an industry that in this state has been the lifeblood of many communities. We need to make sure that when it comes to timber, every log is milled in Tasmania, and we are downstream processing the timber that comes out of our forests. There are places like Southwood at Lonnavele in my electorate, where they are continuing to operate sustainably using local resources, the vast majority of which comes from regrowth.

When I discuss forest policy with workers, particularly with contractors, they describe what it is like out in the coupes in places that have already been logged. In one case there are tram tracks going through the coupe where their father or grandfather had logged in the past. They understand the environment down there very well and they want to make sure we have a sustainable timber industry, which is why they continue to manage it in the way they do so that we can continue to produce outstanding timber.

As I said in my speech last week, I do not agree with decisions that have been made in other jurisdictions, particularly in Victoria and Western Australia. They are matters for them, but if they want to shut down sustainable timber industries there, they should not expect that they can come to Tasmania and take our resource. This is a resource that should be processed in the state by Tasmanian businesses and Tasmanian workers who have been doing this for decades and decades. Their jobs are critically important, and we need to make sure we set up policy settings which support them.

The position of the government around local benefits testing for Sustainable Timber Tasmania (STT) and the Tasmanian government was disappointing last year when TP Bennett & Sons, a local logging contractor, lost its work to a Victorian contractor and there was not the level of protection that should have been there for them to make sure that the local benefits to their workforce and their family business was appropriately recognised in the tender process.

I understand that has been changed since, but it does not help them. They lost that contract and I know they are still hurting from that. They are still disappointed. The loyalty they have shown to the industry for decades was lost on STT and the government at the time and it should not have been. It should have been acknowledged that they are locals, they know the area and the reason they tendered in the way that they did was because they knew exactly what they were doing. I am concerned that they lost that contract and I do not want to see that go any further.

This place is the most important decision-making body for this state. It is important that all of us take our responsibility extremely seriously. These industries have a significant financial benefit for the state. The agriculture, forestry and mining industries in Tasmania make up about 5 per cent of our economy or 5 per cent of the jobs in Tasmania come from that area, with mining at around 3 per cent, manufacturing 7 per cent - all these are coming out of this motion - and transport, postal and warehousing at 4.6 per cent. These are industries that have been supporting not just the economy but in particular the regional economies in which they are mostly based, and it is important that those people know that we have their back.

I am really interested in the JLN's views on these matters. It is important for the stability of this place that the coalition between the JLN and the Liberals is together in supporting jobs, and it is important for all of us that we demonstrate our support for regional Tasmania and

regional jobs. I hope that the House will strongly support this motion today and speak in favour of it. I support these jobs, Labor supports these jobs and I commend the motion to the House.

[12.54 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, I indicate from the outset that the government will be supporting the motion and that is no surprise to anybody. Everybody in Tasmania knows that this side of the House is the strongest backer of our productive industries like aquaculture, mining, forestry and energy. Everybody knows that and that is why Mr Winter felt the need to bring on this motion, because sadly, not everyone believes him when he says that Labor supports those industries.

There is a significant opportunity in this state to grow all of those industries and that is what we have been pushing for years and years. That is what we have been steadfast on throughout the course of this Liberal government, and that includes when the going gets tough. That includes when the Greens are engaging in lawfare; when they are trying to block important legislation that would protect workers in those industries, we continue to fight for them and back them. Sadly, the Labor opposition in the case of workplace protection for workers in traditional industries rolled over to the Greens time and time again. It is something that we took to three elections and were only able to get it through over the 'no' votes of the Labor Party.

It shows our commitment to all of these industries. Indeed, there is clear division within the Labor ranks because all of those threats to those industries Mr Winter named are coming from the federal Labor Government. Minister Tanya Plibersek is the biggest threat to each one of those industries of any person in Australia. It is no longer Bob Brown or his foundation. It is no longer the Greens in this place. Minister Plibersek has sitting on her desk decisions regarding shutting down aquaculture completely in Macquarie Harbour. That is a Labor minister. She has on her desk, since she came to government two years ago, the decision to approve progress at the Rosebery mine, a project that will secure the future of those jobs for decades to come. How long is too long? We want to see for the benefit of those workers for the west coast, for the north-west and right across Tasmania, the certainty that would come with a decision. It has been sitting on a Labor minister's desk.

The reason we are debating this motion is because the Labor Party is riven with division when it comes to doing the hard things to back in productive industries. Everybody knows that this side of the House is a friend of foresters, miners, fish farmers and others, because we do it time and time again, even when the going gets tough, when we are in government, not just opposition.

Sadly, the record of Labor when they are in government is rolling over to the Greens. They did that when they did a deal with the Greens to shut down our forestry industry when they were last in government. They described the Tarkine as basically everything between the Arthur River, the Pieman and the Murchison Highway and were looking to shut down all of the productive industries in that space. Now that Labor is in power at a federal level, Minister Plibersek is threatening hundreds of jobs at Macquarie Harbour on the west coast and all of the flow-on impacts right around Tasmania.

She is threatening hundreds of jobs when it comes to miners at the beautiful community of Rosebery and make no mistake, when we see Labor's record in government when it comes to forestry around the country, at the moment we are very concerned and everybody in the

industry is concerned, because you do not even need to vote for a Labor-Greens government anymore for native forestry to be shut down. Just look at Victoria and Western Australia.

This House needs to send a very strong message to the federal Labor government through this motion that Mr Winter has quite kindly put up that we need to be backing in those industries. The divisions in the Labor Party are not good enough. Workers demand better certainty. Workers demand governments that support them not just when it is easy, but also when it is hard, and that is what we have done time and time again.

If I can turn to some of the specific matters, this government is the strongest supporter of aquaculture in this place and Tasmania punches well and truly above its weight. We are the nation leader when it comes to aquaculture. Indeed, something like a third of all Australia's aquaculture produce comes from Tasmania and the leader in that is the salmon industry but it is also other parts of the industry as well. It is oysters and land-based abalone and there is a whole range of important wild-catch industries that are associated with the strength of our aquaculture industry as well.

**Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.**

## **MOTION**

### **Key Industries - Support**

**Resumed from above.**

[2.30 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, this side of the House are the strongest supporters of jobs in Tasmania, particularly the critical industries of aquaculture, mining, forestry, and energy. Everybody knows it.

I was speaking about agriculture and the importance of that industry for the future of our state. The trends are clear: 50 per cent of all seafood produced and consumed around the world now comes from aquaculture. That is important, because as the world's population grows, we need to ensure that we have sustainable food production. Aquaculture absolutely fits the bill. Not only does it have one of the highest conversion rates for feed that you will find anywhere, and it has some of the lowest carbon emissions. It takes pressure off our oceans and our fisheries around the globe where we are able to do it sustainably, just as we are in Tasmania.

Those Tasmanians who are working in our aquaculture industry, day in and day out, particularly on beautiful Macquarie Harbour, are helping to feed the world in a sustainable manner. There are over 2500 of those people: everyday Tasmanians like the people who I represent on the west coast and around Tasmania. In the north-west, you only need to look at processing facilities like Huon Aquaculture's Parramatta Creek facility, which is exporting their product to the mainland and to the world and BioMar's fish feed factory in Wesley Vale, set up under this government because it has given them the confidence to know that there is a strong aquaculture future for Tasmania.

They have been able to transform an old industrial site that was shut down and derelict into a modern manufacturing facility, producing sustainable fish feed so that we can continue

to grow our industry and to feed the world. There are also trucking companies like De Bruyns, who have made a major investment in a new warehouse facility at Wesley Vale near East Devonport. That operation is full of bags of fish feed, and they are able to be part of the aquaculture supply chain that extends right across this beautiful state. There are plenty of farmers who are providing the raw materials for that feed as well.

It is an industry that we should be incredibly proud of, and we do it in Tasmania. We do it sustainably at a wonderful scale that is world leading in so many ways, together with all the other important parts of our agriculture industry that probably get a little bit less political attention but are certainly doing amazing things as well. Our oysters, including at beautiful Smithton and at facilities right around our state, abalone at places like the Stanley Peninsula and the broader seafood sector too.

The other day I was in Smithton, and I acknowledge my colleagues who were there too, minister Jaensch and Mr Garland. We went to the Circular Head Aboriginal community, which has an incredible partnership with local kelpers to bring that product to market through Aboriginal enterprise: a premium kelp feed for indoor plants. That is going to be rolled out on Bunnings shelves right around the country in an extraordinary story of community enterprise: living off the land, living off the bounty of our oceans in Tasmania and providing a sustainable product that will attract a premium in every market around the country. Big kudos to Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation and Bunnings for the work that they have been doing to bring that to market.

There are other companies as well, well known in this place and around Tasmania now, like Sea Forest, which is working with *Asparagopsis* seaweed to ensure that we are able to lower the carbon emissions intensity of agriculture. There are massive opportunities of all kinds that come with aquaculture in this state. Our leader, the salmon industry, is a big part of that. It underpins the training capacity for facilities like Seafood and Maritime Training in Hobart that are then able to offer a full suite of training packages that apply right across the seafood and aquaculture industry, benefiting people in the oyster industry, in the mussel industry, people doing innovative things with different marine-based plants.

The salmon industry, in so many ways with the capability that they develop in Tasmania, underpins our broader aquaculture sector. It underpins parts of our manufacturing sector's capability too because there are a lot of high-tech factories that utilise the skills in the hands of technicians in Tasmania that apply in a whole range of other agricultural manufacturing facilities. That is a real strength of what we do in our beautiful state. It is pleasing that there is at least strong bipartisan support for the aquaculture industry in Tasmania as I mentioned before.

We are very concerned, however, about the risk that comes from the federal Labor minister, Tanya Plibersek, and the decision-making and the delays she is inflicting on the community of the west coast and all of those people I spoke about before in associated industries and enterprises in Tasmania. She has absolutely upended the assumptions that everybody had been investing, operating, training and living by, and that there would be a strong and viable future for aquaculture in Macquarie Harbour.

If anything, from today's debate, minister Plibersek needs to pay attention to what is happening here. She is alone and isolated. As a state government, we have not supported her decision and now the state Labor opposition is clearly going to war with her. The Leader of the



Opposition even signed a letter that her decision-making process has simply been unacceptable. That is heartening to see but it is much too late. We should never have been in this place, and we know that the decision-making process she is engaging in could undermine a whole range of investments in productive industries right around this country. We are very wary and cautious of what she is doing to good people who do not deserve to be treated like that.

Moving on to another key part of the motion, the forest industry. This side of the House is always the strongest backer of the forest and timber industries in Tasmania. There is no doubt about that. We are the side of politics that rebuilt the timber industry in this state after it was devastated by the catastrophe of the Labor-Greens government that destroyed two out of every three jobs in the forest industry in this state. That put countless thousands of people out of work and destroyed regional communities around Tasmania, from Triabunna through to Smithton and down the Huon. Some of the decision-making that happened at that time was nothing short of disgraceful, and the impacts were felt far and wide. Every second-hand truck that was on the market was a log truck. The effect of that decision-making of decline, decay and anti-industry approach in government has meant that the timber industry, quite rightly, has rejected the Labor-Greens coalition and their attempts to win their way back into government. There is no doubt about that.

This is a hugely important industry. It is \$700 million with a greater flow-on value of \$1.2 billion for our state's economy. It is about 6500 jobs, and it is the most exciting industry of the 21st century. In a carbon-constrained century, the ability to produce a renewable building product that captures carbon naturally, that provides the fibre for a plastic-free future, this is an industry that should be celebrated by every part of our state, by every part of our politics. What we do in Tasmania is simply world-leading and there is no better product than timber. It is a material that is so good that if it did not exist, we would have to invent it. By supporting the industry to grow here, that represents one of the great economic opportunities of this state.

We have been very strong in our approach to increasing on-island processing. Our on-island processing grants have continued to be rolled out to operations around our state so that we can increase the value that we are getting from timber in Tasmania, increase the processing level, increase the value-add and ensure that what we do in Tasmania continues to grow the value from our rich forest that grows such beautiful timber. Our government remains steadfast and committed to ensuring that the policy we have continued to adopt, that Sustainable Timber Tasmania sells their timber only to mills in Tasmania, be continued because we know that is where so much of the value is captured.

We understand there is some confusion in the general public about log exports. Those are private logs. We have a lot of private growers in Tasmania and what they choose to do with their product at places like Burnie, Hobart and other locations, is broadly a matter for them. What we want to do as part of our on-island processing grants is give Tasmanian businesses the opportunity to invest in new technology that will enable them to continue to value-add and put in strong offers and bids for that timber because ultimately, that will be the best outcome for Tasmania. The more we can process here the better. Those investments are extremely important.

We have been partnering with the federal government in this area and I can give credit to both sides of federal politics who have been very supportive of what was known as the Launceston Hub of the National Institute of Forest Product Innovation, now called Australian Forest and Wood Innovations. This is a national centre that will enable us to innovate with this

incredible product, timber, this ancient material that has been with us since the Stone Age and that has such an incredibly bright future in so many ways. Engineered timber beams, the solvent Cyrene and a whole range of other products are only just beginning to be thought about but are being driven by our community and our society's focus on the importance of combating climate change and finding a renewable product that is able to be grown naturally in a way that supports our landscape and that can be turned into such a vast and wonderful array of products.

There are concerns with the federal government as well. The federal Labor government has taken every opportunity to remove incentives for native forestry, whether that is with their modern manufacturing fund, removing native forestry being eligible for that funding, or whether it is removing native forestry when it comes to biomass energy. We remain watchful and vigilant to the threat posed nationally and certainly the threat posed by the Labor Party in other states where they have unilaterally made decisions to shut down the forest industry and complete the work that Labor tried to start in Tasmania.

We do not want to go down that path because this is a critical industry for our future and our government's policy is to grow the industry and to grow so many of the flow-on benefits of forestry. I mentioned before about the incredible nature of timber, but it is also more than that. It is what forestry enables as a business model. It is the business model that pays for firefighting on hundreds of thousands of hectares of fire-prone bush; eucalypt forest that needs people to be managing it just as they have done for thousands of years. Firefighters on the ground. Seventy per cent of Sustainable Timber Tasmania's staff are trained firefighters and even more among their contractor base. We proposed that they would be able to manage more land as part of the election, 40,000 more hectares, a key part of that in areas which are not forest, where the thousands of hectares in future potential production forests that are not designed solely for timber production, that will be useful for us to be able to manage in a fire context and that will protect other stands of timber: areas that are button grass plains and indeed major opportunities when it comes to carbon capture projects.

Part of the 40,000 hectares that we propose to unlock would be an outstanding opportunity for carbon-capture projects in this state and with a business that has a model and an incentive structure set up so that it can do some of that landscape restoration. This is not all high value forest: much of it is regrowth forests. Much of it is cut over from previous generations and the opportunity that comes from forestry is that we can do landscape restoration and we can capture carbon and receive payment for doing such things.

It is a huge mistake that Labor and others would walk away from those kinds of opportunities because they have an ideological approach to future potential production forests. It was a mistake to do what you did with the Greens. We should not continue to echo that mistake through history. It was interesting when Labor said that opening up more opportunities for forestry was reigniting the forest wars. What other plan for jobs growth is an act of war? Is opening up more salmon farming opportunities restarting the salmon wars? Is opening up more opportunities for mining restarting the mining wars?

Ultimately, Labor showed that they are still too close to the Greens by accepting the Greens' narrative. This is a party that is looking to shut down all three of those industries and more, and who seem to claim that fighting to throw thousands of people out of work is an act of peace, whereas responsible industry growth is an act of war. The truth is that our side of politics will always be on the side of jobs and Labor cannot even get their story straight, so yes,

we unequivocally support the timber industry and the growth opportunities that we think come from this most extraordinary industry.

If the opportunities that come from a growing forestry industry were not enough, our mining sector is also brimming with opportunities too. Mining and minerals processing is a key pillar of economic growth in Tasmania. We are proudly pro-mining, always have been, and recognise the important role that mining plays for the Tasmanian community. This industry employs about 6400 Tasmanians, produces 65 per cent of our exports and pays a heck of a lot of tax, more than \$54 million in mineral royalties in 2022-23, as well as millions in other rentals and fees.

We are seeing huge opportunities for Tasmania when it comes to critical minerals as well. This state is Australia's largest producer of tungsten, the world's most critical mineral, vital for defence manufacturing. King Island has played a huge role because it has the largest high-grade deposit of tungsten anywhere in the western world. Our government has backed in the development of that mine that was mothballed and shut, a lake in the open cut, for more than 30 years. It is now back in production and going well. It is going strongly. We have invested in terms of finance and infrastructure in supporting that mine to get back up and running. That story has been echoed in mines around Tasmania.

Hellyer closed for decades, has now reopened and is producing important minerals. We have noticed massive investment at places like Renison and Rosebery. Avebury was very disappointing. It was closed under a Labor government and an opportunity to reopen came up. Sadly, the crash in global nickel prices that has mothballed mines around this country has had a significant impact, but we still think there is future opportunity there. There is also the huge Mount Lyell deposit under new owners and doing significant work on that site. We are looking forward to continuing to work with the proponents there because it is one of the major job-creating opportunities for Tasmania.

I am aware that there are others who probably want to speak, so I will wrap up. This government is the strongest supporter of mining, forestry, fish farming and aquaculture generally, and the energy industry. We are glad that state Labor is making what is frankly a courageous decision to go to war with their federal Labor colleagues. We are concerned about the decision-making in Canberra. I spoke before about the thousands of jobs and opportunities that sit on Tanya Plibersek's desk that need a resolution, particularly in a timely way. We will continue to back in these industries, these workers, these businesses and these regions because we believe in them and the opportunities they hold for the future of Tasmania.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I remind members to refer to members of other parliaments by their titles. That would be appropriate for the longevity of the debate.

[2.50 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, the Greens are happy to have this opportunity on World Biodiversity Day to talk about how precious nature is for us, how she supports us all and how we are nothing without a functioning environment and the ecosystems that provide us with clean air, clean food, soil to grow food in, water and the intrinsic value of all the species that live with us human beings on planet Earth.

That is why we cannot, in any good faith, stand here and support an unequivocal, full-throated support for industries. These four industries have presently, under successive decades

of Labor and Liberal governments, been allowed to continue in an extractive form of removing nature without having any sustainability in that process, in the true meaning of the word. Instead, we now have some enormous industries on steroids, supercharged by the changing landscape internationally, with the congealing of large, powerful multinational corporations. Together, they have more bargaining power, more heft it seems, than our pathetically inadequate Tasmanian government's environmental regulations as they stand at the moment.

We have a situation in Tasmania where, if we are all serious in this Chamber of wanting to have a future that is habitable, life supporting and bring along the other creatures that live with us in lutruwita/Tasmania, we have to stop continuing with this blind support for industries and look at the reality of what is happening around us.

The Greens are a party that listens to scientists. We listen to the community; we listen to our workers, and we listen to people working in the government. All the evidence is incredibly clear that the rapid pace of change in the heating climate is driving more and more species to the brink of extinction, but what is really pushing them much faster is the loss of their habitat. It is lost through developments, and it is especially lost in Tasmania through large-scale industrial extractive industries.

With the absolute lockstep collusion now of the Labor and Liberal parties, there is no interest in looking at how we can keep industries that are sustainable for us and for the people who currently work in them and for generations to come. That is what the Greens are seriously working on, trying to find sustainable options for workers who are working in an industry that is on a pathway to failure and a pathway to leaving regional communities, in particular in Tasmania, without any opportunities for gainful employment.

When we have the world landscape changing so rapidly, we know that the pressure is increasingly on to keep all the forests that we have on the planet. They are life-giving, they have carbon stored in them that they continue to draw down, and we desperately need to do everything we can to reduce the heating that is happening in the atmosphere. We have to do everything we can to reduce the carbon emissions that are going into the atmosphere, which is why the Greens do not support the native forest logging industry in Tasmania. We do not support it because every year millions of tonnes of carbon emissions go up into heating the planet even further, and it is created by clear-fell logging and burning that happens after that, along with the destruction of the habitat of species already on the brink of extinction.

We do not understand why the Labor and Liberal parties do not seem to mind that there are species that are unique to Tasmania such as the swift parrot, the masked owl, the giant blue lobster, the azure kingfisher, the Maugean skate, the Tasmanian devil and the spotted-tail quoll. They are all being pushed so close to extinction and yet it seems as though the Liberal and Labor parties still consider them grist to the mill of big business as usual. That is why we do not support this and why we know we have the backing of the majority of Tasmanians who want us to look for another way to do business. There is definitely another way of doing business.

We can stand up to Chinese state-owned company, MMG, and say, 'No, you cannot just do the convenient thing and put a tailings dam in one of the last remaining rainforests on the planet, in the north-west, in takayna, because you do not have to. There are alternatives that you, as a company, have used in other states of Australia, as well as overseas. The reason you are not doing it in Tasmania is because we will just let you do whatever you want and we have

no environmental regulations to stop you and you know it, which is why you are treating us like gumbies and you are continuing down the path'.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The member will be heard in silence. I will take a point of order.

**Mr ELLIS** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The member just misled the House. There are environmental regulations in Tasmania.

**Madam SPEAKER** - If you wish to allege the member has misled the House, there are other mechanisms to do so. The point of order does not stand. I call the member.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is not a point of order and he should know it.

I thank the peaceful protesters, the people from the north-west, the north, the south and the north-east of Tasmania who have been going up for years camping peacefully in that rainforest and who are doing everything to stop the destruction that is occurring.

Even though, after successfully stopping destruction that is happening in the north-west, a road is being pushed as we speak into the Franklin River, and even though there is still the continued push to build that toxic tailings dam in takayna for MMG, these people will stay. They will stay because they understand there are choices. The Liberal and Labor Party dinosaurs are just going with big industry, and they have been wooed into a cosy relationship with the big end of town.

It is down to the donations that flow to both of these parties: \$1 million to the Labor Party, \$2 million to the Liberal Party, or so it was in rough terms in the last reporting period. What did we hear about where they came from? We heard it was about 4 per cent for the Labor Party declaration, and we heard - from memory, I might be rough on this - it was about 30 per cent of where the Liberal Party's donations came from.

They keep it secret for a reason. They do not want us to know that when they have the cozy dinners with the salmon companies, and when they do the sweet deals with whoever from MMG, that they get money that comes into their coffers. It is buying a result here in parliament, and that is why we need to reform our electoral laws.

We need to know where the money is flowing from to buy the decisions of the Liberal and Labor Party members, because the Greens cannot understand why you would continue to make the decisions you do otherwise. It makes no sense that you would want to continue driving the Maugean skate to extinction when there are alternatives.

There are alternatives. According to the industry's own figure, there are 60 jobs from the salmon farming industry in Strahan. Do you know how hard it is to find a solution that will protect those jobs and protect the Maugean skate, an ancient species that has been here since well before the time of dinosaurs? It has been here for such a long time, and we could choose to protect it if the government used a modicum of intelligence and produced a workforce plan for Strahan. That is what the Greens did. We have done that. We have done it, and we are going to sit down with the West Coast Council and have a conversation about it.

**Mr Winter** - You are going to, are you?

**Madam SPEAKER** - The member will be heard in silence.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, we do not pretend that we know the answers, but we do know that it starts with a conversation about how to do things differently.

**Mr Winter** - I will pass it onto the mayor and I will let you know the feedback.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I know you are on really good terms with the salmon industry, Mr Winter. That is about the only thing that you seem to care about these days. It is not enough to have a sustainable jobs industry by just doing whatever the companies want. That is the failure of the Liberal and Labor parties. We want wind energy and renewable energy. Time and again we supported windfarms. Time and again we supported renewable energy solar farms, but we cannot support the Robbins Island proposal. It is a blight on the planet to take away a beautiful island.

It is a critical part of the north-south flyway. Mr Garland would know this well: every single year, birds fly from the Arctic and Siberia, and they come to Robbins Island. If Robbins Island has windfarms on it, they will not come. It is also part of the longitudinal east-west flyway: there is another whole set of birds that fly around through south-east Asian countries and land at Robbins Island.

Robbins Island is home to the largest population in Tasmania of critically endangered Tasmanian devils. All of the school children in Tasmania have been having raffles and lamington drives and all manner of other creative fundraising to make sure that the Tassie devil is there with them into the future, and so that, when they grow up, their kids can have the joy of seeing a Tasmanian devil. Why would we allow an industrial-scale development to be in the place where there is the single largest disease-free population of Tasmanian devils in the state? It is because the Liberal and Labor parties are utterly shackled to the desires of an international corporation based in Singapore that just wanted to be there.

Even worse, we now have both parties jumping in together, excited about trashing our coastal policy, one of the most critical planning instruments that has kept Tasmanian landscapes and coastlines as beautiful as they are. The East Coast Drive around Tasmania, all of the other drives around coastal Tasmania - tourists flock to our coasts for a reason, and it is because they have not been developed in the way they have in other states. They do not have jetties and bridges and all manner of other developments thoughtlessly put there without consideration of the impacts on the coastline and the coastal ecology that is around developments. The coastal policy is a beautiful thing. It is something to cherish and protect. Yet on the whim of an international company who demands that it has that spot on Robbins Island, the Liberal and Labor parties are lining up to junk it, and with that will go protections for other coastlines down the line in Tasmania into the future.

During the election campaign we heard the Liberal Party's distressing announcement of plans to go into another 40,000 hectares of what should be already protected reserve forests in Tasmania. These are forests that have been scientifically verified by independent assessors in 2013 as containing habitat for devils, quolls and swifts, that are important water catchments for domestic sources as well as for agriculture, that are critical stores of carbon dioxide, and that

have incredible value to local communities who love those forests and who love to see them and to spend time in the natural world in those forests.

The forests also stitch together the landscape and prevent the fragmentation that the Liberals have no problem with. Exploration mining licences, which - if you look at the map of them, are sprinkled all across the north-east and the north-west of Tasmania - would, if the Liberals let international corporations have their way and go hell for leather with mining would fragment the landscape. Nothing is able to be protected in Tasmania under the Liberals' environmental regulations. These 40 000 hectares, the Liberals have said, will be in the north-west and the north-east. We want to understand exactly where they are talking about going because these are critical habitats. It received, rightly, public outrage when it was announced and there was deep public concern and distress at the idea that this was in addition to the forests the Liberals are already logging.

As to the loss-making industry that is native forest logging in Tasmania, we subsidise it for large amounts. In 2014 it hooked \$30 million out of subsidies from the government, in the same year, mind you, that the Liberals came into government in the first year promising to end the subsidies. \$30 million went to Forestry Tasmania then, and it seems another \$60 million went to Forestry Tasmania in 2007, so it is loss making. Hundreds of millions of dollars over decades have been funded into Forestry Tasmania to prop it up. The idea of going into extra reserves fills people who are concerned about the rapid loss of Tasmanian wildlife and critical habitat with a great deal of fear.

We do not support the call by the Labor Party for unequivocal support of industries. We think that Tasmania's timber industry, energy developments, mining industry and aquaculture industry should be subjected to a proper assessment and an independent regulator that looks at our environment. Our environmental laws are meant to be about assuring ecological sustainability. This obviously is not happening when you have a destructive native forest logging industry which is removing habitat on a daily basis from nesting swift parrot fledglings, that is removing habitat from masked owls, even while there are audible recordings that we hear of baby masked owls in the nests as trees are being chopped down around them.

These things are happening in Tasmania, and I want to thank all the people who continue to bear witness to this and go into our forests as peaceful protesters, despite the government's anti-protest legislation. Despite these draconian laws, more Tasmanians are prepared to go in and stand up and protect not just the forests and the animals in them, but our collective future. They are doing that knowing that the loss of these forests also means the loss of carbon and with that, the increasing heating of the planet.

We need industries that are not emitting carbon dioxide and do not make species extinct. We need industries that keep communities safe, and the forestry industry in Tasmania does not keep communities safe. It puts them at risk when they live in regional communities from the drying landscape, the loss of moisture from clear-felled lands where there were rainforest communities. After being clear-felled, those coupes dry out and become a risk for local communities through regrowth. We saw that in Geeveston with the fires in 2019. It was the regrowth of Forestry Tasmania lands, and it was the plantation lands that burnt hotter and created more fire risk than the moist intact forest community.

The Greens support sustainable jobs and sustainable industries, and we will continue to work with communities and industries. We implore the government to do the same and to

produce a transition plan for workers in Strahan, and by all means go to town with the ones we provided, absolutely. We would like to have some input because somebody has to be generating the conversations about what our collective future can be like.

We want to have jobs that are sustainable. We want regional towns like Geeveston, Huonville and Scottsdale which are dependent on native forest logging to be supported in the transition to plantation forests. The end of native forest logging is coming. The quotas drop off the line in 2025-26 and that is exactly why the government needs to be there supporting the transition that has always been planned since the forest agreement into the plantation sector, because that has the potential to become a sustainable industry for the long term.

Finally, I want to also give a plug to big tree tourism. That is something which has been completely ignored. It is sitting there on the shelf, proposed as a fantastic tourism idea. It celebrates the beauty of places like the Grove of Giants and the other tall tree areas in Tasmania in the Styx and the Florentine. Tourists are desperate to see more big tree forests. We have so few left on the planet. People get excited about seeing big trees in Victoria, but when they come to Tasmania, they just cannot believe it. It is a life-transforming experience. I have walked through those forests with tourists, people who have never been in a giant eucalypt forest, and it is transformative. When the US Ambassador to Australia went to the Grove of Giants and went up the big tree, she was transformed. We know that because Senator Nick McKim and Cassy O'Connor were there, and they reported her wonder and awe at being up in those incredible trees.

We will continue to work with regional communities because in this place it is only the Greens who are speaking up for them and doing the work of trying to find sustainable industries for the future.

[3.13 p.m.]

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, before I begin the JLN response to the motion put forward, I want to correct the misconception of the Leader of the Opposition as to the standing my colleagues and I have in this House. The JLN are not in coalition with the Liberals. Our agreement, which is open, public, and transparent, clearly states we are free to vote however we like.

Mr Winter has been very negative towards his new colleagues over the past few days, bestowing us with immense power and privilege and expanding our heads to the point we might not even be able to walk into the room next time. This afternoon I have observed him using pressuring tactics and trying to make us respond in this debate.

**Mr Abetz** - He's a bully.

**Mrs BESWICK** - I would like it noted that we are already planning to participate in this motion and that, until yesterday, none of us were in a position to participate in substantive debates as we had not delivered our inaugural speeches.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am going to draw you to the debate at hand. It is important that speeches address the content of the speech. You have had a bit of latitude.



I will also remind the Leader of the House that we are trying to have better language, even by interjection. Given Tasmania has recorded the highest rates of bullying in Tasmanian schools, we might be very cautious with how we use that language in this place.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Madam Speaker, no-one in the House is going to sit here and deny the importance of jobs this key industry provides. They are jobs that prop up the Tasmanian economy and they are the lifeblood of so many communities and towns across our state, particularly in my electorate of Braddon. To stand up here and argue otherwise would be foolish, which is why I support the sentiment of the motion on the basis that the industries are made to be unequivocally sustainable.

Tasmanians need a parliament that understands the importance of business confidence and the importance of jobs for our economy. It is our job as politicians to ensure that these industries are operating in a way that is sustainable, not for only for our environment but for the industries themselves.

The opposition acknowledges that these industries are essential to our economy and for providing jobs. We need to ensure that they are operating in a way that allows them to provide jobs for many years to come. Sustainability in these industries is not just essential in preserving the natural beauty of Tasmania, but preserving the jobs that Tasmania's natural resources provide. It is true the Tasmanian salmon industry contributes quite heavily to the Tasmanian economy, bringing in around \$1.36 billion, I am told, last year alone and providing 1100 to 1700 jobs. It is also true that the salmon industry is having a detrimental effect on Tasmania's waterways and on the native animals that inhabit them.

More than 10 years ago, the decision to approve the expansion of marine farming operations in Macquarie Harbour was made under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, as long as the operation did not significantly impact the Maugean skate. Here we are, 10 years later, with the skate still in decline, allowing salmon farms to operate largely the same way as they did then.

With our estuaries and coastal waterways at such risk, how long are the salmon farms going to be able to continue to operate before it starts heavily impacting on the health of the salmon and as such, impacting on its own industry and jobs? Studies have shown there are far more environmentally sustainable alternative ways to farm salmon. We need to look at these alternatives now, so that this industry that contributes so much to our economy can continue to do so without impacting our environment.

The same can be said about Tasmania's timber industry, which is arguably taking far more action to ensure it is sustainable. The industry understands the importance of being sustainable, not only because of its importance to the consumers but also for ensuring the longevity of the industry.

Mr Garland and I represent approximately 20 per cent of the vote in the Braddon region. A large part of our respective campaigns was in listening to the community and standing against Robbins Island as the location for a proposed windfarm. I acknowledge that windfarms are an essential component to reach our renewable energy targets. However, Robbins Island is not the place to build it. The community that surrounds Robbins Island has been very clear they do not want a windfarm. There is a great project at Whaleback Ridge that has full community support. If we can get behind this more environmentally-sound project with clear social support, we can

start to make a difference in the power supply shortages which Tasmania needs to bring further opportunity and development.

Robbins Island is a crucial habitat for many Tasmanian species, including the critically endangered orange bellied parrot, Tasmanian devil and the wedge-tailed eagle. More than 10,000 birds are killed by wind turbines in Australia each year. It does not make sense to build a windfarm in a place that is home to critically endangered birds. While Robbins Island windfarm would provide a number of jobs to Tasmanians, the environmental impact outweighs the job prospects and many residents in the north-west, where the jobs would most likely be, would agree. In fact, all Aboriginal voices are actually in opposition to the Robbins Island windfarm, and they are consistent in that.

I have spoken with Craig Garland. He is also not able to speak today because he has not done his inaugural speech.

**Madam SPEAKER** - If you could refer to him by his title, if possible, thank you.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Oh, sorry, Mr Garland.

**Madam SPEAKER** - No, it is the member for Braddon. Mr Garland just distinguishes him from other ones. If I am calling out minister Ellis on referring to people by name, I will try to be consistent.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Madam Speaker, although I understand the importance of jobs these key industries provide, they need to all end in activities that will not be detrimental and have too much of an environmental impact. On that note, and please forgive me if I am doing this incorrectly, I have an amendment. Based on what I have just said, I move the following amendment to the motion:

- (1) Leave out paragraph (a)
- (2) In paragraph (c) leave out 'including the Robbins Island windfarm'.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Have you circulated the amendment to other members? Government has one, opposition and the Clerk needs one as well, if that is possible.

**Mrs BESWICK** - I have, yes.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. If we can just confirm: you are leaving out all of (a)?

**Mrs BESWICK** - Not all of paragraph(a).

**Madam Speaker** - No? Can I get you to read in the amendment again so we are clear on what the amendment is?

**Mrs BESWICK** - Leave out paragraph (a).

**Madam SPEAKER** - Clause (a).

**Mrs BESWICK** - New paragraph (c) -

**Madam SPEAKER** - So (a) disappears.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Paragraph (b) remains. In paragraph (c) leaving out 'including Robbins Island windfarm'.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Just full stop after 'developments'?

**Mrs BESWICK** - Yes. That is all.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Okay. Now you may speak to that amendment if you wish. If not, I will call the Leader of the Opposition on the amendment.

[3.20 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I have an expectation that political parties, whether they are new political parties in this place - though not the new political party in the Tasmanian context; the JLN has been around for a while, and they do have positions on things - that they do stand for things and they let their communities know what they actually believe in.

The expectation that the JLN would express what they actually believe should not be offensive or be troublesome to anyone. I think it should be an expectation that when we stand up in this place, we make it very clear what we stand for. I have said today, and I have been repeating that the Labor Party stands for jobs. We stand for jobs on the north-west coast, north-east and in the Central Highlands. We stand for them down south where I am from. We stand for jobs, and we stand for industries that provide that level of support. and so, asking the JLN to be clear what they stand for is not an unusual thing. That is why I cannot support the amendment, because I do not think you can pick and choose like the JLN is trying to do here, whether they support industry and jobs in particular forms. The amendment, as they put it, wants to say they support renewable energy, but at the same time do not want to support the biggest, most prospective wind farm in Tasmania.

You cannot have your cake and eat it too. That is what the Greens have been doing for their entire history. They have been talking about renewable energy and climate change. Yet, every time there is a proposal for a new wind farm, they oppose it. The Leader of the Greens wants to say they support renewable energy. This is a political party that built itself on opposition to renewable energy. This is a political party that wanted to start mining coal out of the Fingal Valley and build a coal power plant in Tasmania. This is a political party that continues to oppose renewable energy in the heart of renewable energy in Tasmania. That is what the JLN, by opposing the Robbins Island windfarm, wants to do as well. You cannot say you support renewable energy, and then say you oppose the only one that is likely to happen in the next three or four years. Everywhere that a windfarm is proposed, there will be opposition to it.

I am very pleased that the Liberals have finally made their position clear on Whaleback Ridge, by the way. They have finally said that they support Whaleback Ridge, and they are going to support it through Major Projects. It took them four years of thinking about it, four years of waiting for minister Guy Barnett to make his decision about that. Finally, it took the Deputy Premier to announce in an election campaign that they would support it.

I heard the JLN say they support that windfarm and had, I think the words were 'almost unanimous community support' or 'community support'. I am sorry if I have mis-paraphrased you there, but I can tell you that I suspect very strongly that the Greens will oppose that too. That is what they do. Every single windfarm that is proposed will have that.

You cannot say that you support jobs and industry in the electorate that you are from and then cut out aquaculture, the most successful industry in Tasmania over the last 30 years: the industry that has been world-leading, that is sustainable and is supporting jobs and families all over Tasmania, particularly in regional Tasmania, on the west coast. I do not think the JLN can simply cut that out of this motion and then stand there and say they support jobs in regional communities. The aquaculture industry has been a fundamentally positive thing for this state. It has been a leader in sustainability.

I did not enjoy a lot of what Mr Ellis said in his contribution, but I did agree when he talked about the comparatively low carbon emissions of salmon when you compare it to, for example, beef or other farming. This is an industry which is sustainable, which can feed the world and is doing a great job of that.

We will not be supporting this amendment. The House should not support the amendment. I believe that Tasmanians expected the JLN in particular to be supporting regional jobs. I am not sure why they feel it is appropriate to simply pick and choose which industries they support.

I wholeheartedly oppose this amendment and we will be opposing on the vote.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Leader of the Greens, I note we have limited time and the government may wish to comment.

**Dr Woodruff** - How much longer do we have?

**Madam SPEAKER** - The time for the debate expires at 3.36 p.m.

[3.25 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I think other people might want to have a say. Thank you, member for Braddon, Mrs Beswick, for this amendment. I have to say how absolutely refreshing it was to hear other voices speaking about the value of an intact environment and the importance of that for people in regional communities and all Tasmanians.

I concur 100 per cent with the comments she made about Macquarie Harbour and the fact that the Maugean skate is expected to go extinct very soon unless salmon farming leaves the harbour. Also, I concur with her manifestly correct, rich statements about the importance of the Robbins Island space for the Aboriginal community, as well as it being home to countless thousands of migratory and endemic Tasmanian birds.

We will not be supporting this amendment for a different reason to Mr Winter, the member for Franklin, because we are not unequivocally supporting any industrial-scale industries in Tasmania, and we do not pick and choose. For us, it comes down to having a sustainable environment and protecting natural values, and there are no industries that are more or less immune to destroying the environment unless they are properly checked. The Labor

Party's motion, as it is, offers unequivocal support and we know what that means in Tasmania. It means that aquaculture, timber, energy or mining can continue to go ahead without any brakes on whatsoever. We utterly respect where the member for Braddon is coming from, but we do not support this motion.

**Madam SPEAKER** - On the amendment, Leader of the House.

[3.27 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Speaker, the government opposes the amendment as well. The term 'unequivocal support' means unambiguous support. That does not mean that you do not have controls and regulations over those sectors and industries. I have unequivocal support for the right of people to use the roads in Tasmania, but that does not mean that I oppose speed limits and rules and regulations for the use of roads; similarly, with these industries that have been outlined.

It is welcome to see the Labor Party finally jumping on board with the Liberal Party on some of these issues. I welcome this development. It is a bit like the Leader of the Greens saying that she welcomes another voice joining the Greens, but on this occasion, it is the Liberal government enjoying the voice of the Labor Party coming on board.

The aquaculture sector is a vital sector for our community, regional communities and jobs, and it is not only the jobs in the fish farms themselves. At Strahan Primary School, half the kids who go to that school have a mum or dad employed at Macquarie Harbour. There are the spin-off benefits throughout the community of these sectors, something that we ought to consider and celebrate.

The Leader of the Greens referred to the skate in Macquarie Harbour. Regrettably, it appears to no longer be in existence in another part of the waterways completely away from human activity: no fish farming, no tourism, no nothing.

**Dr Woodruff** - It was never there, if you're talking about Bathurst Harbour.

**Mr ABETZ** - It was never there in the first place? Isn't that convenient?

**Dr Woodruff** - It was never there in quantities. You should talk to the scientists, Mr Abetz.

**Mr ABETZ** - If we want to have budgets for public transport, health, education, et cetera, we need some of these productive sectors to be able to create the jobs and the taxation base for us to be able to provide the services Tasmanians need.

I invite members, in considering this amendment, to consider what the implications are if we were to take the attitude suggested by the Jacqui Lambie Network. I think a lot of people who voted for them would be disappointed with this amendment, but I understand their approach to this. I also understand that there are Liberal voters who are not necessarily supportive of fish farming, and that is one of the things that we have in different constituencies. I am sure it would be the same for the Labor Party. From the Liberal Party government point of view, we will be opposing the amendment for the reasons stated.

**Amendment negatived.**

[3.31 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I thank members for the debate. It is important that we are clear about what we stand for and what we believe in.

This motion appears to have split the coalition between the JLN and the Liberals. That appears to be what has happened so far, but we will see what happens in a few minutes' time. This is an important motion, irrespective of what happens between the JLN and the Liberal Party. I will leave that for them to decide how they manage that through the agreement they have made in the coalition arrangement they are in.

Irrespective of that, there is support being demonstrated by members of the government and members of the opposition for these important industries and it is important that Tasmanians know that we support aquaculture, forestry, mining and renewable energy. All of those things are really important.

As I said, you cannot pick and choose and say you support renewable energy but oppose every windfarm you have ever seen. You cannot say you support renewable energy but then want to pick off Robbins Island and say you do not support that. You cannot say that you are the strongest supporter of the aquaculture industry when only three years ago your government put a moratorium on that industry.

When it comes to business confidence, it is very important that industries know their government has their back. When this government decided overnight to put a moratorium on the aquaculture industry, the salmon industry, that sent shock waves throughout that industry. When Frances Bender received a phone call to say, 'Tomorrow morning we will be putting a moratorium on your industry', that does not help business confidence. When Tassal gets the call saying, 'We're about to slap a moratorium on your industry', that does not help confidence. When they decide to announce in the budget that they are going to put a massive new salmon tax on the industry with no consultation, that does not send confidence. When Mr Ellis says that the strongest supporter of the aquaculture industry is the Liberal Party, I do not know what he is talking about because there is no evidence of that.

We continue to support all these industries for all the reasons I have outlined because they are important. The point I had actually written down to make, but Mr Abetz made it quite well, is that if you want a functioning and well-funded health and education system, you need industries like this to make it happen. You need an economy that is operating well and supporting regional communities That is what we support.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The question is -

That the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 20**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis (Teller)

**NOES 9**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Mrs Beswick

Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Ms White  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter  
Mr Wood

Ms Burnet  
Mr Garland  
Ms Johnston  
Mrs Pentland  
Ms Rosol (Teller)  
Dr Woodruff

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Macquarie Point Stadium - Transparency**

[3.41 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Agrees the proposed Macquarie Point stadium is a matter of significant public interest and concern across lutruwita/Tasmania.
- (2) Recognises a primary public concern is the massive expenditure of public funds on a new stadium - especially given the critical need to build more homes, invest in better hospitals, and deliver cost of living relief.
- (3) Notes significant uncertainty about the exact scale of public expenditure on the stadium given:
  - (a) the Rockliff Government's apparent failure to negotiate a Commonwealth Grants Commission exemption for the \$240 million Federal contribution;
  - (b) Tasmania's sole liability for all development and construction cost overruns;
  - (c) serious challenges associated with construction at the Macquarie Point site;

- (d) uncertainty over the public/private partnership model; and
  - (e) the rapidly rising costs in the construction industry.
- (4) Orders the Government to table the Independent Review into the State's Finances - including the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Precinct component of that review - on the first sitting day of the House following the review's completion.
  - (5) Orders the Government to table, prior to 19 June 2024, all correspondence on the Macquarie Point stadium and precinct between the State and Federal Treasurers.

Madam Speaker, fundamentally this motion is about transparency. It is a motion about the costs associated with the stadium. With transparency, whether you are a supporter or an opponent of this stadium, you really should have nothing to fear. There should be nothing to fear about transparency because it ultimately underpins good decision-making, and it also underpins community support and bringing the community along.

This is a key concern for the Tasmanian people. We have all just been through an election campaign. We have all just knocked on a myriad of doors and we know that this is the issue that is on everybody's lips. This was acknowledged by the Premier himself on 15 February when he announced a so-called cap on the state government's contribution to the Macquarie Point Stadium. In a media release he said:

I recognise that this project is not everyone's cup of tea and that some Tasmanians would prefer that this money was spent in different areas. I also understand that there are concerns in the community that the final cost of the stadium could significantly increase, leaving Tasmanian taxpayers with a large unbudgeted bill.

Hear, hear, Premier. That is absolutely true. We completely concur with you and your conclusions when it came to an analysis about what the Tasmanian public think. Unfortunately, we on this side of the House. Certainly, the Greens do not accept that a so-called cap - this figment of a cap - is some kind of solution when it comes to those community concerns.

When the Premier acknowledges that many Tasmanians would prefer that this money be spent in different areas: again, that is 100 per cent correct. We know that Tasmanians are crying out for public investment in housing to get people off the 80-week-plus waiting list. We know that we need significant investment in the public health system. We know we need significant investment in the public education system. There are so many things that can deliver for the Tasmanian people and indeed for the economy with that kind of investment.

We have ourselves seen in this Parliament - certainly those of us who were here in the 50th Parliament - exactly what it takes to tyre lever transparency out of this government. It was sorely lacking in the last parliament because it was not until two of the Liberal backbenchers defected to the crossbench that finally there was some power and potency in this place to insist on a level of transparency from the government over its AFL deal and AFL stadium investment.



Just for the avoidance of any doubt, I want to make sure that it is abundantly clear that the Tasmanian Greens are strong supporters of an AFL and AFLW team. We were signatories to tripartisan support for that deal going back a few years, and that was when the Premier was telling us that it was not contingent upon a new stadium. In fact, he was completely clear with the former Greens leader, Cassy O'Connor, that tripartisan support for a footy team did not include a stadium. Do not take that from the Leader of the Greens and what she passes on, because there is still a story on the AFL's website from August 2022 with the headline saying that the premier confirms the new stadium will not be part of Tasmania's AFL bid. It says:

Tasmanian Premier Jeremy Rockliff has revealed it will not form part of the formal proposal to be put before the club presidents. 'The stadium is not part of our bid but of course the stadium is there to support AFL content in the future'.

It is possible to have support for an AFL and an AFLW team without supporting this stadium? We know why and how that can happen. It is because we have two stadiums in this state that are already home to AFL, where AFL games have long been played. It is our contention that York Park, with an extra \$130 million upgrade that we support, with the best playing surface in the country, is clearly the best place to home AFL in this state. To clear up any doubt, we need to make sure that it is abundantly clear that we support a footy team. I am one of the 200,000 inaugural members of the Tasmanian Devils, and I believe Dr Woodruff is too.

Let me talk about the costs of this stadium. The costs are not just the hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, the probably \$1 billion plus financial cost of the stadium itself and actually building it. It also includes the dollars we have burned in getting to this point and the goodwill from the community we have burned in getting this point. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) has been through a long process of working out what to do on the site of Macquarie Point. It is probably the premiere brownfields development site in the country, virtually waterfront, an incredible heritage precinct, just there ready for development.

Macquarie Point is a saga. It took a long time and cost a lot of money, but ultimately it was successful. The MPDC talked to the community, to MONA, to the palawa people and they ultimately finalised a plan that was comprehensive and supported. It was the original Mac Point Precinct Plan, the original development plan, and it included the escarpment, the precinct, the gateway, the promenade, the goods shed, the underground, with the Truth and Reconciliation Park being a central feature of that vision for the Macquarie Point site way back when. It was an agreed plan that was delivered at significant cost to the taxpayer. In fact, aspects of it were trumpeted by members of the government when elements of it were contracted out. The escarpment, for example, was literally contracted out to a Melbourne-based developer before the AFL deal.

What has happened since? Another cost that needs to be factored into the construction of this stadium is the compensation. How ludicrous is it that the Tasmanian taxpayer paid out some corporate developer to not do a development on the Macquarie Point site? This just goes from fast to ludicrous really, but that is exactly what happened because absolutely everything changed with the AFL deal. There was no reference, as we understand it, to Cabinet and Cabinet colleagues and no Treasury modelling to underpin the decision. It was simply an AFL deal, and we were bullied, cajoled and ultimately steamrolled by the AFL into agreeing to a stadium on this particular site - and not just any stadium - a 23 000-seat stadium with a roof.

When it comes to stadiums, we are talking about the primo version of stadiums that can be delivered.

We deserve a team in our own right. Every single Tasmanian knows that we have such a long footy history and legacy here. We have delivered legend after legend into the national competition, and we deserve a team in our own right, because there is no national competition, there is no Australian Football League, without a Tasmanian team. We deserve a team in our own right and the AFL has overcooked things. It is an absolute overreach from the AFL to insist that the poorest state uses one of its prime brownfield sites that has an agreed development plan to plonk a massive and expensive stadium on it.

As it stands at the moment, the stadium condition in the AFL deal presents the greatest risk to the footy team. Putting aside the politics of this place, the Premier alone cannot deliver that stadium. There is a planning process to go through. There is a funding process to go through. There is the engineering to see whether it is even possible and, of course, there are some incredibly important stakeholders, and I will get to them in a minute.

I will quote someone who put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into the Macquarie Point site over many years and developed the original development master plan, Mary Massina. She spent a lot of time as head of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, and she said:

In my opinion, with the decision to ditch the agreed masterplan and instead seek to place an AFL stadium on this site, the government has squandered an opportunity at Macquarie Point to develop a superb futureproof site that is a place for all, acknowledges its bloody past, its present and firmly and proudly faces the future.

Let me be very clear for members here this afternoon that this motion is entirely about the money. It is not about the politics. It is not about the other concerns associated with this stadium, because we know that there are significant concerns. There are stakeholders with massive concerns, whether it be the RSL, the Regatta Association, obviously now the Heritage Council with the heritage-listed Goods Shed and neighbours such as the IXL Jam Factory, the TSO and so forth. There is also obviously the opportunity cost when it comes to the loss of this brownfield site and there are significant concerns around traffic congestion and what this does to the rail corridor that enters Hobart's surrounds, but the dollars are really critical.

I want to turn to this motion, because it speaks for itself in regarding the actual money that is associated here. During the election and the Legislative Council election, it was the issue that was on everybody's list. Everyone was asking how much this is going to cost us. For example, running through the actual money components of this motion, there is the Rockliff government's apparent failure to negotiate the Commonwealth Grants Commission exemption for the \$240 million federal contribution. We have been debating that a bit in this House over a few months now, but it is abundantly clear that there are two things associated with the federal government's contribution. One, it is not all allocated to the stadium. It has to be spent on the wharf and housing upgrades around that site. Two, it is going to cost us \$240 million anyway. It is going to come at the expense of housing, health care and hospitals because the government has failed to negotiate a GST exemption of that. We also have the sole liability for all development and construction cost overruns and that is abundantly clear in the AFL agreement.

Let me just take a moment to read into *Hansard* exactly what kind of deal the Premier signed us up to when it comes to the overall funding responsibility. Paragraph 21.4 says:

Subject to clause 19.2 (Construction Commitments), and provided that the conditions of all components of the funding commitments referred to in clause 21.2 ... are met, the Tasmanian Government agrees that it is solely responsible for the costs to develop and construct the Stadium, including any costs which exceed the Estimated Stadium Build Cost.

The AFL had it all over us. They absolutely had it all over us. And, if that was not enough, if 21.4 and Tasmania putting its hand up actively for all of the cost overruns is not enough, have a look at 21.6, Cost overruns:

If the Tasmanian Government determines that additional funds in excess of the Estimated Stadium Build Cost are required to complete the development and construction of the Stadium consistent with clause 21.4 ... the AFL will have no further financial contributions towards the development and construction of the Stadium other than the AFL Stadium Development Contribution.

From memory that is a paltry \$15 million. Again, the AFL had it all over Premier Rockliff and has utterly delivered a rolled gold deal for its organisation at the expense of the Tasmanian taxpayer. That is abundantly clear.

Then there are also additional costs to the Tasmanian taxpayer. Putting aside the conflict and another situation of imposing this stadium on a site that many Tasmanians had already agreed, and thought was going to be delivered to something else, we have significant conflict now. We have significant conflict over this and indeed, on the other side of the river. Almost exactly the same location on the other side of the river, we have a High-Performance Centre, proposed for parkland much-loved by many people in the Rosny and Eastern Shore communities and creating significant concern. Again, a community campaign now mounting. A community campaign growing to push back and to protect their place. Tasmanians are very good at protecting place. They love their place, they love the places they look at, they walk their dog, they take their kids, they skate, and this is another situation of Tasmanians actually stepping up to protect what they like and what they love.

How does the Premier propose to get around the clear responsibility for cost blowouts as flagged in that original media release? It is through some kind of public-private partnership. We have had media reports and confirmed interest from a group called Plenary Group, but to whom else are they talking? Who else are they talking to behind closed doors? What does the private sector actually get out of this? What is the government trading away? We do not know. This is a development that on the government's own economic modelling will lose \$300 million over 20 years and yet somehow the private sector is going to come in and fund it, stump up hundreds of millions of dollars to build this thing which begs the question, what else are we trading away?

If that does not alarm you enough, have a little think and have a listen to what the government has done over recent years in relation to its expectations of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. Every year, the relevant minister has to deliver his statement of ministerial expectations for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. It is a manifesto

on how it expects it to behave, how it expects it to conduct its business. In 2022, prior to the stadium, the statement of ministerial expectations drafted by minister Barnett as the relevant minister at the time, had a very clear section in it. It was 3.3, Commercial Activities and it reads like this:

The minister expects the corporation to only carry out commercial activities that are, (1) consistent with the corporation's principal objectives and functions; (2) appropriately costed and carefully managed, with the objective that in the absence of a higher priority, the activities deliver a commercial return acceptable to the board and, (3) compliant with the government's competitive neutrality principles.

After minister Barnett, as the relevant minister, wrote to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation telling them to junk the long agreed worked-up development plan for Macquarie Point that included a truth and reconciliation park and so forth, he wrote to them; told them to junk that; to do another one; make sure it has got a stadium in it; and he wrote a subsequent statement of ministerial expectations where that commercial activities section - the responsibility to be consistent with principal objectives and functions of the corporation, to appropriately cost and carefully manage finances and to be compliant with the government's competitive neutrality principles, completely missing.

Completely missing from the new statement of ministerial expectations which begs the question: why? Why on earth would a government that is prudent when it comes to finances, that expects its organisations and its statutory bodies to behave in a way that is consistent with the government's policies, and indeed consistent with the corporation's own principle objectives and functions, why would it do away with that section?

It clearly just points towards the fact that there is likely to need to be shonky deals and dodgy dealings being done behind the scenes to actually get the stadium project up. If that is not enough, think about who is in charge of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. In the statement of ministerial expectations of 2022, the minister's expectations were:

The Chief Executive Officer is subject to the direction of and accountable to the Board and undertakes the functions and duties in the best interests of the corporation.

In 2023, in the new statement of ministerial expectations, suddenly the appointment of the Chief, and I quote, this is the new expectation,

The appointment of the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation is referenced in section 15 of the Act and is appointed by the Premier under the provisions of the State Service Act.

Then this is the kicker:

The Chief Executive Officer is subject to the direction of and accountable to the Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing, the Board and the head of the State Service.

Whereas previously there was a level of autonomy in decision making, financial accountability and the like and it was the Board that was ultimately responsible, in 2023, minister Barnett, as the relevant minister, inserted himself and indeed the head of the State Service as being able to now direct the CEO of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. This is absolutely scandalous because this is the government rewriting its fundamental expectations of how this entity behaves and how it is going to spend taxpayers' money and whether we can expect to get value for money.

The substance of this motion is completely about transparency. There are serious challenges associated with the construction at the Macquarie Point site. It is a very tight site, there is reclaimed land and so forth. There is uncertainty over the public-private partnership model and there are rapidly rising costs in the construction industry. Nobody at all can deny that. To have a price of \$715 million mentioned several years ago and think it is still some envelope that we can work within is quite ludicrous.

People want to know. The taxpayers want to know, the RSL wants to know, the Regatta Association wants to know, the Aboriginal community wants to know, and a lot of neighbours want to know. We are not asking for a whole lot here. Four and five of this motion are two fundamental things. One is just to table here, at the earliest possible opportunity, some work that is already being done subject to the or at the behest of the agreement between government and the Jacqui Lambie Network. It is about putting that on the table of this parliament at the first possible opportunity. The other thing that this motion is asking for is correspondence between treasurers. Exactly what is the correspondence between treasurers around the \$240 million, the GST exemption, whether or not it is eligible.

That is the substance of this motion and I commend it to the House. Whether or not you support the stadium, there is no reason to vote against transparency. If the government is not going to be transparent about its dealings when it comes to this stadium, then as we saw in the last half of last year, it is up to this parliament to force it to do so. We owe it to people. We owe it to kids in our state schools. We owe it to the people waiting in our emergency departments. We owe it to homeless people who are looking for a house, because they are the people that can be helped by the diversion of this level of investment. Whether you think it is \$375 million, whether you think it is \$715 million, whether you think it is \$1 billion or whether you think it is \$1.5 billion, it is all about transparency. Irrespective, that is a hell of a lot of money.

Transparency is important. Whether you support or oppose the stadium, it is a critical element. At the end of the day, we have seen over and over again with big developments in Tasmania that if there is not transparency around the government's actions, and if there is not transparency around what it is doing - whether it is through the assessment, funding or other elements of assistance that the government can give to big business - then ultimately it is usually to the detriment of that project. We have seen big projects repeatedly fail in this state because government is not transparent.

I say again that the condition in the AFL deal for this stadium currently presents the biggest risk to the AFL and AFLW teams in Tasmania. We do deserve one. Tasmania has demonstrated an inherent right to that team for many years and this stadium is currently the biggest risk, amplified over and over again by a lack of transparency.

[4.07 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for bringing forward the notice of motion. The government does not support the motion as it has been presented. I can explain why in just a moment, but it is a classic wedge on a Wednesday. On the one hand, I think the first parts - parts one, two and three - are about wedging the Labor Party. Part four is about wedging the JLN members and part five is about wedging Dr Chalmers. That is how I see it.

It is a fairly well constructed wedgie there by the Greens party. I have to make that observation and that would help, I hope, explain why the government does not support the motion as it is worded.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Madam Speaker, I do want to listen to what other members have to say, noting that Dr Chalmers is not here to speak for himself, but the Labor Party and the opposition and the JLN's are. Should the motion have in-principle, broad support from the House, I will be seeking to move an amendment that changes parts four and five - that language of ordering the government to do this and ordering the government to do that - and changes those words to 'calls on'. I do that pre-emptively and let members know that I will be moving that way, and I will be able to explain why in a short while. That gives members time to think about those matters.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion and talk about the significant opportunities that the Macquarie Point Urban Renewal Project will deliver for our state and its people. I respect and understand there are very different points of view on this, and they are reflected in this Chamber. Some people support it strongly; others support it on balance; other people are dead against it. We understand that those views have been reflected.

Under our plan, we are about delivering on this project. We are about acting, not just on infrastructure and sporting infrastructure but on all of those areas that are so important to Tasmanians: their health system, their housing availability and the cost-of-living pressures that are very real for every state and territory.

A part of our plan that we took to the election was about investing in this game-changing infrastructure that will deliver not just significant economic benefits to our state - which again, I respect others will have their own views on - but will benefit Tasmanians for generations to come. Importantly, it is a game changer from the point of view that it is the enabler to allow not just thousands of jobs and economic activity for decades to come, but importantly, for the precondition to be met for the Tasmania football club, the Devils, to be a real force in Australian sporting life.

We are not alone in thinking this. The Australian Government - a Labor government - has backed this project with a \$240 million contribution to the precinct. That is because they know it creates jobs and drives economic growth. To quote the Prime Minister - a Labor prime minister:

One of the things a sporting precinct does is it brings economic activity, which generates revenue, which generates taxpayer dollars that then can be put back into other services.

Madam Speaker, the Macquarie Point Urban Renewal Project, which includes the multipurpose stadium, is our opportunity to build something truly iconic, uniquely Tasmanian and world class.

It is an opportunity to feature Tasmanian materials and our renewable credentials, and to create something that Tasmanians everywhere can be very proud of - north, south or north-west. We are getting on with the job of delivering this project and we have already achieved some significant milestones. We have concluded negotiations with the AFL, securing the much sought-after 19th licence for Tasmania.

Governments and oppositions have been talking about that for a very long time, and no other government has been able to deliver the AFL team for the state, despite it being talked about and dreamed about by youngsters in every region of our state, both in the city and the country, particularly younger Tasmanians kicking footballs in the park and in their grassroots clubs. The players and volunteers have all been dreaming about this and now it is coming to fruition.

Footy is very important to many people. It is central to the way they want to live their lives in Tasmania, the way that they meet as communities, and the way in which they are able to stay healthy and to keep a healthy community with close social interactions. Tasmania has a unique story and is a unique part of the story of Aussie Rules. After all these years, and thanks to the tireless work of so many people in the community, but in particular our Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, we now have our own team and our own colours, and we will be singing our own song. It will be great when we can all be there to cheer them on.

This is something that we should be very proud of. More than 200,000 members have signed up since the club's launch in March. I hope everyone here is a member. I am. I thought I was a bit late to the party on the day that the club launched that evening - I think I was member number 38,000, or something like that. I would have liked to have been in the first 2000, 3000 or 4000, but I must have hesitated for an hour or something before we got to it. It was not just me but also my lovely wife, Julie, who has zero interest in Aussie Rules but insisted on being a foundation member. Our three kids have all joined. That says something about the way Tasmanians are feeling about the progress that has been made. I am sure everyone here is a member and good on you for doing that. This is our time, and no one can take this away from us. We just have to keep working together.

In terms of the project, last week Cox Architecture, a leading Australian architectural firm with a track record including Optus Stadium in Perth, the Adelaide Oval redevelopment, which no one could disagree has been a runaway success, and the Rod Laver Arena redevelopment in Melbourne, was announced as Tasmania's lead design consultant. One only has to look at that Adelaide story to see how it has transformed not just the CBD, but also sporting life in South Australia. We can start to get some insights about what this could mean, and what a truly Tasmanian stadium can deliver not just for Hobart, and certainly not just for the South, but for our state. Again, I say that respecting there are different views on this project in this Chamber and in the Tasmanian community.

Last week the Federation Funding Agreement with the Australian government was signed. That bilateral was worked through between officials and is now being signed. It marks a significant milestone that underlines the Australian Government's commitment to this project.

Both of our governments are investing in it because of the sporting outcomes and the health and wellbeing outcomes, but importantly, too, the economic benefit that it unlocks for our state.

The team also includes Tasmanian architectural firm Cumulus Studio, a great firm that is winning awards all over the state and all over the country doing amazing work, and one of our proud Tasmanian success stories. There are also specialist engineers and technicians including AECOM, local experts COVA, Aldanmark and pitt&sherry, as well as international partner SBP, which brings experience in world-leading designs such as the stadium in California.

The team will work on a concept design for the stadium that will be nothing like the renders presented in the past. The concept design will deliver a stadium of a size and scale that is sensitive to the surrounding area, including our precious Cenotaph. The architects themselves have already made this point clear, and I thought it was a very genuine and passionate response to those questions in the media. We will be engaging closely with all stakeholders, including our ex-service organisations, to ensure that the siting of the stadium complements and accentuates the Cenotaph.

We want this project to be one that everyone can be proud of, a project that stands the test of time and an asset that will take our state to a new level over the coming generations. We want this project to be significant to all Tasmanians, and because of that, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) is currently preparing a submission through the Tasmanian Planning Commission process, the Project of State Significance process, as the proponent. The design for the Mac Point multipurpose stadium will be informed by user requirements, the design and functional brief, the Planning Commission's own guidelines and the Macquarie Point Precinct Plan. I understand that the concept design will be finalised in June, after which time MPDC will provide its submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Let us all be reassured about one thing. The Tasmanian Planning Commission has been sent a job by this House, the Legislative Council and by Her Excellency the Governor to independently and objectively - away from the Liberal Party, the Liberal government and the parliament - form judgments and make firm decisions about, firstly, whether it should go ahead and secondly on what basis and with what special conditions it may choose to impose. I personally find that reassuring as a minister. I hope that members of any colour in this House would have confidence in the objective and independent TPC to do that work. The commission will then commence that assessment and we will all abide by the judgments it will make.

Importantly, the Australian Government has made the funding commitment it has with the understanding that the anchor project for the precinct is in fact the multipurpose stadium. As part of accepting our side of the funding commitment, the Tasmanian government has committed to developing a refreshed precinct plan, including a focus on transport connections while prioritising Hobart port access and of course housing. Under the agreement the Australian Government funding will flow from the 2025-26 financial year. That is in line with the project milestones for the delivery of the stadium and renewal of the precinct, a point I made to Mr Jenner's question last week. Importantly, this funding agreement meets another condition of the Tasmanian Club Funding and Development Agreement with the Australian Football League.

To deal with some of the comments that were made by Mr Bayley earlier and in Question Time, our government is certainly considering opportunities for private sector investment in



the precinct, and so we should. We know there is strong interest from the private sector in this transformational urban renewal project. It is, after all, a golden opportunity to deliver something very significant for our state and it would be no surprise to me, and hopefully others, that the private sector wants to be part of that and to invest in our state. To show their own confidence in the project and the broader environment, the ecosystem of commerce and lifestyle that will emerge from the project is something that we intend to welcome, encourage and indeed leverage over coming months.

I want to say, and with zero sarcasm, I am glad that the Labor Party have changed their position on the stadium. It has been for many people a project they have struggled to come to terms with or support. I must admit, and I am a northern member, I am more than aware of the number of people who have expressed to me and members of other parties that they are not supportive or see it as a lower priority than other things.

I will not name them, but I have been interested in some of the people in my life who I absolutely thought would be avowedly against a stadium. They have said to me, 'Michael, we need to do this'. I said I would not name them, but a member of my family said, 'Well, we need development'. Those three words really surprised me from that family member and from another member of the community, which I will not go into detail about. I do not need to, but the point was made about how important this is for the state's psyche. We need to have the capacity to look over the horizon and aspire to something bigger for our state. It really surprised me, knowing the person as well as I did, that they said that, but I must admit it has given me a lot of reflection as well.

I will conclude in a moment. I do not support the motion. The government does not support the motion broadly, but should it be supported by the House, I and the government would wish to move this amendment, so I will present that to the Clerk. I move -

That in paragraphs (4) and (5), delete the word 'Orders' and replace with 'Calls on'.

Madam Speaker, in speaking to that amendment, I want to make clear a couple of things. First of all, I am completely comfortable -

**Dr Woodruff** - You never like being told what to do, first and foremost. What is wrong with making information public if you have nothing to hide?

**Mr FERGUSON** - If you would be good enough to listen, Dr Woodruff, I am quite comfortable tabling letters between myself and Dr Chalmers, but I am not prepared to do so because of this particular wording on the basis that that is not an appropriate or professional way for me to treat my counterpart in the Australian Government.

**Dr Woodruff** - Come off it, we're talking over a billion dollars' worth of Tasmanians' money.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Dr Woodruff, I have just said I am comfortable doing so, except for the discourtesy that it represents. You have not been a minister. It is important that ministers at different levels of government are able to confidently communicate with each other with direct and clear positions, without believing that their letter is going to be read more widely.

**Dr Woodruff** - Not on a matter like this. Transparency is paramount.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It would be a form of entrapment. It is a cruel and rude way to treat somebody that you would do that. I want Dr Chalmers to be able to write to me from time to time and clearly communicate ideas, options, good news, or even bad news without his belief that as soon as I get that, it is going to be released more broadly. Ministers need to be able to do that.

**Dr Woodruff** - We're not talking about birthday cards.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I am sure that you and your deputy leader would want to be able to communicate with each other without the House ordering you to table that correspondence. I undertake today to speak to Dr Chalmers and ask him if he would be agreeable for me to do that, and should that be forthcoming, I am quite comfortable doing so. I give that undertaking in the House, but I write letters to Catherine King and Catherine King writes letters to me on Infrastructure. I do not want to damage those important relationships. Although we are of a different political colour we have a good working relationship, and I intend to respect that into the future.

With respect to the independent review into the state's finances, there is every expectation that that will be publicly released. This is, however, not the government's independent review. The JLN fought and argued for that. They negotiated that, not you, Mr Bayley, and it is a matter of public interest. The way you have written that there, again ordering the government, is not appropriate in the circumstances, but I can tell you that from our point of view, we have full expectation that the review currently underway by Mr Eslake will be made public and to the extent that the House would like it tabled here in this House, I have no difficulty with that, but it will probably be publicly released more broadly anyway.

However, I am most concerned about the general intention there with orders. I did notice earlier that the House has already resolved a different motion moved by Mr O'Byrne that called on the Minister for Transport, the Honourable Eric Abetz, to intervene and restore full Metro services as a matter of urgency, and I see that as the right way to go. The motion passed, did it not? The House's intention was quite clear. Minister Abetz is quite clear that the House expects him to do everything possible to achieve that outcome, but it did not set him up in a directive way such as would inevitably be political at a later stage.

For my own part, the main thing I would be called on to do is to ensure that I table correspondence between me and Treasurer Chalmers, subject only to his agreement. I give that undertaking here in the House today. I commend the amendment, but again hope that my representations on behalf of the government are understood. We respect different points of view on the project, and I move that amendment in order to make it workable for the House and courteous to all concerned.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Speakers on the amendment, as moved by the minister. Just a little thing, just for the longevity of Hansard, if we can refer to federal ministers by their title, otherwise Catherine King makes no sense. For the longevity of *Hansard*.

[4.25 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I know I am on the amendment, but I would like to contribute. I will try to stick to the amendment as much as I can.

**Madam SPEAKER** - You can then get the call again potentially on the substantive motion, but on the amendment before us now.

**Mr WINTER** - Let us do it that way. On the amendment, I am not convinced by the arguments that the Tasmanian Treasurer has made. I am just reading through the motion. The motion, as described, orders the government to table an independent review into the state's finances on the first sitting day of the House following the reviews' completion.

The amendment would delete that. I am looking forward to reading this independent review of the state finances. It is a document that I do not think I am going to be very surprised by. I do not think this side of the House is going to be very surprised by it, but we have Saul Eslake, a very well-respected economist and a Tasmanian who has a lot of expertise in this area, doing it. I believe a motion that requires the government to table it as soon as possible is good.

Having said that, I would not be averse to them releasing that report before that next day. It is a good stopgap measure and I appreciate, Mr Bayley, the member for Clark, for bringing that to us.

On the other point, paragraph (5), that all correspondence between the Macquarie Point Stadium between the state and federal treasurers - this sort of correspondence, I imagine we would be able to RTI. Perhaps the Greens have tried that. I do not have an issue, and I would take the same approach if it was a coalition government in Canberra or a Labor government in Canberra, in terms of us making sure that we are dealing with everybody fairly. It is important that we understand what conversations - had I heard this morning an exchange where Mr Bayley made the point that the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, had not asked for the GST exemption until after Labor asked about it in Question Time. I heard the response, I think by interjection, by the Treasurer to say that was not correct. There is a good way to find out whether that is correct or not, and that is through the tabling of this paper.

I recall that that document has come to light. There is a document in exchange between the Treasurer and the request that he made, that either came through the tabling of documents here or through an RTI, and I cannot recall which one. There has been some public understanding of those exchanges already, particularly about the date in which this Treasurer did write to his federal counterpart, and it did happen on the afternoon, straight after we asked the question in Question Time.

There is a precedent for this exchange already being made public. I cannot recall if it was tabling through the House or an RTI, but we have seen correspondence like that. For that reason, I am not opposed to the motion, and we would not be supporting the proposed amendment.

[4.29 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I will refer to the amendment and if I am able to under the Standing Orders, refer to the substantive motion as well.

**Madam SPEAKER** - We have 40 minutes left, but it would be good to get the amendment dealt with and then go back.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I will just do my contribution in both if that is okay. I will try to keep to the -

**Madam SPEAKER** - As long as you are as concise as possible.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Yes, I will do my best, Madam Speaker.

This motion and the amendments reflect two things. It reflects that the government has really struggled to provide enough detail to satisfy the community about the work that they are doing in support of an AFL team and the proposed stadium. It absolutely reflects the vacuum of information and the politics that are able to be played and the questions that are able to be asked. It is because this government - and I have made this point before - has struggled to explain the process it is going through. I know we have the Project of State Significance process, but this motion in part reflects that the government is struggling to explain its position on not only the finances, but the structure and the process in relation to the stadium and the team and the other element. It confirms that the Greens are against the stadium and even if the numbers come back and they add up, you will just find something else to argue against it. The irony of the Greens -

**Mr Bayley** - Maybe the RSL. Maybe stakeholders, Mr O'Byrne.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I did not yell when you were talking, mate.

The irony of the Greens quoting Mary Massina in support of their position on something like this is not lost on people. I understand how it works. I understand if you have a quote that fits your argument at the time, go for your life. At least be consistent in terms of this.

The argument put forward by the Greens that there is a binary choice that you cannot do one thing when there is a problem somewhere else in public policy. I have always been absolutely consistent with this. Good governments' delivery on health, education, housing, public transport, and opportunities such as getting a team and building a facility that could create thousands of jobs and inspire not only the next generation of athletes but inspire a community in terms of being proud of their state and being involved with something which could be so positive.

Whilst the motion and the initial arguments from Mr Bayley were saying this is not about the stadium, this is about the finances, it morphed very quickly into an anti-stadium position. I just want to be very clear about this, and I am sure there will be other debates in this House on the team and the stadium and the location of the team. The position of the Greens to say that you could position an AFL team out of York Park shows how absolutely disconnected they are from the football community, and they cannot have seriously spoken to anyone in football to say that.

**Dr Woodruff** - That is not true.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Well, the task force report is clear. Player retention issue is clear. AFL games, VFL games, AFLW games, VFLW games will be played out of York Park, but in

terms of underpinning an AFL club, you will need a facility not only for training, but also for playing that has revenue models, that has the ability to provide an environment where players want to play, to have a fan experience and a user experience which actually generates revenue for the facility and therefore for the club. For anyone who says that you can have a Tasmanian AFL team based out of York Park, the only way you can explain that will be that you will kill the team. The AFL has made it clear.

To say, 'I am a member of the club and we have got this view and we support footy,' you have to come to terms with the reality that if you support the AFL team and club and if you support footy, you have to accept the position that the AFL has signed a deal which says you need a modern facility, where you can actually generate revenue for the club and the teams. Yes, we have AFL games played in Tasmania because we are spending a lot of money paying Victorian clubs to come down here. The revenue model for Hawthorn and North Melbourne is completely different from the revenue model of a club that would be based out of Tasmania. I mean, look at the task force report, talk to people who are serious people in the AFL industry and understand what that means.

I will leave that there. Just be very clear. When you say York Park, you mean you are killing the team and accept that. In terms of the finances and the facility around the stadium and the GST exemption, yes, that is something that is of deep concern to Tasmanian taxpayers. The Grants Commission has a fair bit to say about whether that will be a genuine exemption in terms of the decision made by the federal Treasurer. Again, we are in a federated system, and I have been at the table negotiating with federal ministers around GST carve ups. It is very difficult and other states become very critical of other states when they do carve outs.

Having a consistent decision-making framework from the Grants Commission and from federal and state treasurers in terms of the federated system that we are in, you have to be very mindful of that. I would appreciate and want a GST carve out of this but it is not as simple as asking it and giving it. There are a whole range of complications in turn with that. Whilst this is about finances, I do think there is an argument for the minister and his amendments. I will go to those in a minute.

The member who moved the motion talked about the MONA plan for Macquarie Point. I have a particular interest in Macquarie Point because I was the minister who got the money from the then federal minister for infrastructure, Mr Albanese: the \$50 million back in 2012-13. I remember the conversation I had in the old 10 Murray Street building when we managed to secure that \$50 million. I am very passionate about this site. Like many others, I was also very passionate about the announcement around the MONA plan because it filled the void the government was struggling to fill. Let us be clear. That could never have been built because of the nature of a working port.

The concept was good, but it was left two to three years ago in this House. There was a debate about it and then minister Gutwein moved through a different masterplan. Leigh Carmichael himself said that the MONA plan had essentially been abandoned by this government and also, if you want to deliver even a quarter of the MONA plan, you will need arguably over a billion dollars of government money to pay for the institutions to be built there. No-one is talking about that money. You can say you like that plan, but if you have that plan, that is more money and if your argument is consistent, you take that away from health services and housing services.

You cannot say that the MONA plan is the panacea without understanding the economics and the money and the arguments you use against the stadium are arguments that could be very well used against the MONA plan, so being consistent is very important.

It is important that as much can be in the public domain as appropriate and at the right possible time. The reason these motions are being moved is because your government is fumbling to explain the budget and the money and how it is going to stack up. There are legitimate questions across the community. Even people who are supportive of the Macquarie Point stadium have legitimate questions about the finances and it is important that the state government comes out and explains that.

No industry, no project, no idea should be getting a blank cheque from this parliament and if the numbers do not stack up and there is a significant risk to the state Budget and the economics of the stadium do not stack up, I will have significant questions to ask about that because ultimately it is the government's responsibility to deliver the team and the facilities required.

Madam Speaker, I believe the first amendment in paragraph (4) is appropriate. Given it is a document that was negotiated by the Jacqui Lambie Network, I am sure at some stage it will be in the public domain. It is not about if, it is about when. Out of respect for my new parliamentary colleagues, I believe that would be an appropriate amendment to be made.

In terms of the correspondence between the state and federal treasurers, I will take you at face value, minister, that you will in good faith have a conversation with the federal Treasurer and if he is okay with releasing that correspondence you will do so in in good time so there is transparency. Hopefully, it is not a matter of if but when. If there is a stalling of that, I would support a motion back in this House that will potentially direct the minister to do such a thing, but I will take you in good faith in this new environment we are in that you will undertake best endeavours. I do not think I will be betraying the conversation that we had but you gave me an indication that that is something you would want to do but go through a process.

Again, having been a state minister dealing with federal ministers, you do want to be able to communicate openly but also you do write correspondence knowing that at some stage it may very well be out in the public domain, so hopefully, minister, it will be a matter of when not if. I would support the amendments and I broadly support the substantive motion, because transparency is important about this and the reason we are here is because the government is struggling to explain that.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I call the member for Clark. If we can return to the substantive motion again that would be good.

**Ms Johnston** - How much time do we have left, Madam Speaker?

**Madam SPEAKER** - We have half an hour.

[4.42 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I will be brief because I am sure other members want to return to the substantive issue and contribute there.

I will not be supporting the amendment proposed by the Deputy Premier on the basis that it waters down the call to action from this particular motion, which I will support. This government has an issue when it comes to transparency; we have seen that time and time again. It was Mr Jenner, the member for Lyons, who yesterday questioned the actions around right to information and the situation where it is appalling that it is so hard to get information out of this government. When the spirit of the law around right to information is that information ought to be released in the first instance and it is not, then we have an issue.

We had the tabling of the Integrity Commission report today relating to right to information which again recognised just how hard it is to get information from this government, so I cannot in good conscience support an amendment to a motion which waters down what we want the government to do.

Quite clearly, this motion in its substantive form is about transparency. There are significant concerns about the level of expenditure on the stadium. You cannot go out in the street or anywhere without the level of public discourse about this being great and significant. People are deeply concerned about the lack of information this government is providing about who is paying for what and how much it is going to cost.

They are deeply concerned that the \$240 million from the federal government is coming out of our GST distribution. It begs the question, where would that money have been spent if it had not? They want to know what it is going to cost us when it comes to housing, education, health, all those things. They are deeply cynical about the \$375 million cap the government suggests when, quite clearly in black and white, the deal says the government, the Tasmanian people, will be liable for all cost overruns. I simply do not believe the government on this. The people want transparency. They want to be able to see these documents in particular.

In relation to paragraph (4), with regard to the independent review of the state's finances including the Mac Point multipurpose precinct component of that review, I fully acknowledge and thank members of Jacqui Lambie Network for negotiating that. That is an important document. As the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Winter, said, it is important that we see that document, but I am deeply uncomfortable with the thought that that document will only be shared with some members of this House. It is information that is vital to each and every one of us to do our jobs. More importantly, it is information that is vital that the community have when they are entering into this debate.

Paragraph (5) orders the government to table, prior to 19 June, all correspondence on the Macquarie Point Stadium precinct between state and federal treasurers. This is an important matter to the public that they understand the discussions between the state and federal government and the negotiations that have taken place, because at the end of the day, it is the Tasmanian people who will be paying. They will be paying for all overruns. They will be paying for the stadium in its entirety. That is the reality, and they want to know what negotiations have taken place. It is important that we get that information. Given the government's history around lack of transparency, I am deeply uncomfortable with the amendment proposed to only call on the government, because we know that they are not very good when it comes to track records about providing these kinds of documents in a timely manner or at all. I will not be supporting the amendment to the motion.

I express my deep concerns about the stadium. It is no secret that I have opposed this from day one, because hand on heart, when Tasmanians come to me and tell me they are

worried about their healthcare, their education, their housing situation, I cannot stand there and honestly say that I support a stadium that is a dud deal that will cost Tasmanians for generations to come over and above those important needs.

I spoke this morning about the Kidney Advisory Group's desperate need for a better dialysis unit. They are currently seeking treatment in rooms that are riddled with black mould and leaking water; they are so cold they had to bring their own blankets. We cannot find money in our Health budget to fix their infrastructure but apparently, we can write out a blank cheque for a stadium with the most dubious business case I have ever seen.

Tasmanians deserve transparency around this. They deserve that this House orders the government to produce these documents because they deserve to know what this government has got themselves into.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Madam SPEAKER** - We will have a speaker on the amendment and then we will return to the substantive, potentially.

[4.47 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. We will not support the amendment. As far as we are concerned, the motion stands as presented. For new members and indeed older members of this House, it is important to understand how this government treats the difference between 'calls on' and 'orders'. 'Calls on' basically delivers no action whatsoever. We have called on the government to do many things over many years and we simply do not get those things.

We saw the potency of 'order' last year when we ordered the Minister for Energy to table documents in relation to Marinus Link, and it took a little bit of tyre levering to get him out. It took a few days to get there, but ultimately documents did flow. The potency of the notion of 'order' is incredibly important, and I do not accept the comparison of calling on Minister Abetz to intervene when it comes to buses as some kind of equal to calling on the release of the documents. Obviously, it is appropriate. We are not going to order that minister to get involved in those kinds of actions, and I think 'calls on' in that context is absolutely appropriate. When it comes to the release of documents, then ordering is the only thing that appears to work here.

When it comes to RTIs, I did want to make the same point that Ms Johnston made that there is an Integrity Commission report that has literally been released in the last 24 hours that demonstrates how painfully difficult it is to get any kind of information out of this government through the RTI process. I utterly reject that that is an appropriate mechanism.

When it comes to Dr Chalmers, Treasurer, I remind you that Dr Chalmers is equally a public figure. He is equally accountable to us as Tasmanian taxpayers, because we pay his wage, and we pay the money that he is divvying out and dishing out back to Tasmanians. If for some reason Dr Chalmers did not want to release his correspondence with you, then I would be equally alarmed and equally concerned with the level of transparency that the Australian Government is demonstrating when it comes to this project.

From our perspective, ordering the government to table these documents is utterly appropriate. I do not think the notion that ordering the tabling of the independent review does



anything in relation to the Jacqui Lambie Network's capacity. If they wanted to pre-empt the ability to table those documents by releasing that publicly, that would be very welcome and that would make the tabling process incredibly easy. It does not necessarily disrespect or bind or do anything - it is purely about a backstop so that this Parliament gets the information it needs. At the end of the day, I would anticipate it is the Tasmanian taxpayers who are paying the two experts to do those reviews, so to have them tabled here in this House at the earliest possible opportunity is entirely appropriate. As a result, we do not support the amendment.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I note that the Treasurer would like to speak on the amendment again.

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, I promise to be brief. I obviously respect that the House wants to get back to the substantive question. I would like to respond to a couple of those comments.

I want to respect the relationship between levels of government. I have clearly made that point, and subject only to Dr Chalmers having a difficulty with having correspondence between us released, I will release it. I will bring it back to this House and present it as called on to do so. I have already articulated the point on the independent review. That point has been made.

I want to raise the point that Mr Winter has walked into some incorrect statements. I said in Question Time this morning that I spoke by phone to Dr Chalmers on the day of the announcement when the Prime Minister had attended York Park. I made that point.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I apologise. You actually do not get a right of reply on an amendment. My absolute apologies. I should not have given you the call.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Oh, I thought that was okay.

**Madam SPEAKER** - No, sorry. My apologies for reading that one wrong.

The question is - That the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 16**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis  
Mrs Beswick  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Garland  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie

**NOES 13**

Ms Badger (Teller)  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Brown  
Ms Burnet  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Ms Rosol  
Ms White  
Mr Willie

Mrs Pentland (Teller)  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Wood

Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

## PAIRS

Mr Fairs  
Mr Street

Ms Finlay  
Dr Broad

### **Amendment agreed to.**

[4.59 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, on the substantive motion. This is my first opportunity to put Labor's response, although I did put in the response to the Governor's address.

Labor supports building a stadium in Hobart. We have taken that position because of our strong view that Tasmania needs its next big infrastructure project, particularly following on from the Bridgewater Bridge completion, which we understand from the latest information from the government will be at some stage next year. We understand from talking to workers on that bridge, as we did a couple of weeks ago, that they are looking for certainty in their work. Speaking to the construction companies as well, they want to make sure they have a strong pipeline of work right across the state. A project like this gives them the opportunity to plan, to keep as many local workers here as we possibly can and have a certain and strong pipeline of work.

The point we made about whether it is this stadium or that project, is that we need to make sure we have a strong plan for local content. The government is talking about 80 per cent of workers on the project being Tasmanians. I would like to see even higher than that. The industry is looking to make sure it has local capacity. That is something we can work on further into the future.

Labor is a passionate supporter of having our own AFL team. I cannot wait to see the transformation that will happen in this state once we get an AFL team. As amazing as the JackJumpers have been, this will be even bigger for the state. The moves that have already happened to form the new club, in terms of appointing Brendan Gale, the appointment of a fantastic team around them, is already demonstrating that this is going to be a team for the whole state, not just for Hobart. I cannot wait to see it.

The Deputy Premier said he felt 'a wedgie coming on', to quote him accurately, I think. I do not feel wedged by this motion at all, actually. It was designed -

**Mr Bayley** - A straight up-and-down motion.

**Mr WINTER** - It is a straight up-and-down motion. It does not wedge us at all. If you wanted to wedge, there is a whole bunch of things you could have done to wedge us.

My read of this motion is that it is designed to try and hold the government to account for the promises it has made. The Premier went to the election saying he was going to cap the cost of building the stadium at \$375 million and we are going to hold him to that. We support building a stadium in Hobart, but that does not mean we are not going to do our job and hold the government to account. That is what we will do. He stood up today and repeated the promise of a \$375 million cap on the expenditure on this project. That is going to be really difficult for him to do. I am going to hold him to account.

I hope, for the sake of taxpayers, that he can find private investors in the project to come on board and make sure that the Tasmanian taxpayers are protected. What does not protect them is the agreement he signed. As Mr Bayley, the member for Clark, rightly pointed out, the agreement puts all the liability, all the risk onto Tasmanian taxpayers. If we are able to offload the risk with a private sector partner, that is a really good thing. We will hold him to account for that.

We will be scrutinising the delivery because infrastructure delivery in this state has, unfortunately, not been delivered well, not delivered on budget. We do not want this project to be another fifth lane on the Southern Outlet, another underground bus mall, a fourth lane on the Midland Highway, another northern suburbs light rail, another Tamar Bridge. These are projects that are spoken about for years, described glowingly by the government, but never delivered. This government has had a lot of problems with delivery of infrastructure projects over time. We need to make sure we are actually delivering.

I do not think it is quite the intent of the motion, but the motion talks about the uncertainty around the delivery. Whilst opponents of the stadium might be uncertain about it, supporters of the stadium also want to make sure that the government's plan can actually be delivered. Having sold almost 200,000 memberships to people who are passionate about getting a team, the last thing we want to do is let them down.

This season I have been very lucky to be involved in junior football for the first time since I was a kid. Watching the enthusiasm of young people for this team is extraordinary. They are already queuing up to tell their parents that, in spite of their parents' best efforts, they are not going to support their parents' favourite team.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I find that outrageous.

**Mr WINTER** - I do too, Madam Speaker. I passionately and strategically spoke to both my children about what team they should support. I managed to get them over the line to support the Geelong Cats for many years. It was a bit of a competition within the family. I have already accepted, though I did not initially, that they will not be supporting Geelong like I do. I do not think I will be either. It is getting infectious. I cannot help but be excited about all of those things.

The motion agrees that the proposed Macquarie Point Stadium is a matter of significant public interest and concern. Who would dispute that? It says it 'recognises that primary public concern is massive expenditure of public funds on a new stadium, especially the critical need to build more homes.'

People understand that we need to build more homes, invest in better hospitals and deliver cost-of-living relief. I agree also, though, along with other speakers, to say that those things are

not mutually exclusive. Building hospitals and homes should and can be done by a government that is doing a good job.

Paragraph (3): 'Notes significant uncertainty about the exact scale of public expenditure on the stadium.' The Premier's comments, in particular during the election, about a \$375 million cost cap. The reason he said that was because he was accepting that the total cost of the bill was going to be much more than \$715 million. I have heard the construction industry saying on the public record that it is going to cost a lot more than that. The biggest supporters of the stadium understand it is going to cost more than that. The Premier indirectly, through his commitment on \$375 million, is effectively accepting it is going to cost more than that.

There are serious challenges associated with building at the Macquarie Point site. There are engineering risks associated with this site. There is uncertainty over the public-private partnership model. There have been good strides, though. Unlike the Deputy Leader of the Greens, I was impressed by that private announcement. I thought that was a really significant announcement. I was surprised that no one from the government wanted to show up to announce it. It was left to the CEO of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. That is what they chose to do.

I agree there are rapidly rising costs in the construction industry. Who would disagree with that statement?

Paragraph (4) orders the government to table those documents, now amended to be simply - whatever the words were.

This is a motion I do not feel wedged by. This is a motion, whether you support a stadium or not, if you are keen on holding this government to account you are happy to support this stadium. I am. I reiterate that we do support the stadium. The stadium is going to be a good thing for jobs and a good thing for an AFL team. That is why we are supporting the stadium today, but also supporting this motion, which is reasonable in asking for transparency around a very significant amount of public funds.

**Madam SPEAKER** - If there are no further speakers to the motion, Mr Bayley is summing up, if no one is jumping.

**Mr Ferguson** - I am aware that somebody was going to jump but they have not jumped.

**Madam SPEAKER** - They have not jumped, I am sorry. I did call.

[5.08 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I will be very quick. While we are disappointed that this motion has been watered down, nonetheless, it does put the government on notice. We noted the Premier's commitments to seek to table those documents. We also note the expectation from the government side that the independent review will be made public. We certainly look forward to that.

On a couple of issues within the debate, the government itself was making the point about the previous Macquarie Point Development Plan proposal - that it was going to deliver almost \$1 billion of estimated worth and 10,000 jobs. We have to remember that there was a genuine effort on the table when it came to development of this site and genuine urban renewal.

Regarding the member for Franklin's contribution, it is a little surprising to see a Launnie boy talking down Launceston and its capacity to host the footy. If Tasmanians genuinely support this team, I think they will get behind it no matter where it is.

I agree that this was not a wedge. However, I disagree with the Leader of the Opposition in that I think it is mutually exclusive. It is not just the \$1 billion the taxpayer is going to spend on doing this. I do not think that money will go to homes, hospitals and so forth. This project is going to soak up the energy, attention and capacity of the public service to manage construction on behalf of the public for years to come. That will undoubtedly impact on our capacity to build the 10,000 homes, to deliver the hospital upgrades and deliver the services that people in Tasmania expect and need. Therefore, we on the Greens side do think it is mutually exclusive. It should not be, but it is. We do not have a magic pudding when it comes to a budget. We cannot magic-up a billion dollars to invest in other things. We have record debt already in this state, and the public service has limited capacity to manage the projects that we have on the go and that we need to have on the go to meet the needs of the Tasmanian people.

We will support the motion, even watered down as it is. It has been a valuable debate. We have had some valuable commitments out of the Treasurer. That is very welcome, and we will continue on this side to scrutinise government incredibly hard when it comes to this project, because that is what the voters have asked us to do. That is what we heard consistently across the election campaign.

**Time expired.**

**Motion, as amended, agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Cost of Living**

[5.13 p.m.]

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I move –

That the House -

- (1) Notes the impact of economic drivers over the past four years, which have caused -
  - (a) significant inflation across day-to-day family expenses; and
  - (b) the reduction in real wages due to the inability of employers to meet increased costs through wage increases.
- (2) Further notes how families are sacrificing their healthy choices and caring for themselves in order not to increase their debt.
- (3) Recognises how financial stress creates tension within the family unit which can be a catalyst for mental health issues, domestic violence and family dysfunction.

I am sure most of us have felt this burden over the past few years. I know I have. As a single-income family, it has been increasingly difficult to make ends meet, even on a wage which is approximately average for the country and with a fixed home loan. CPI has come down from its peak of 7.8 per cent over the year to December quarter of 2022 to 3.6 per cent over the year to the March quarter of 2024, but it is still above the RBA's target band of 2 per cent to 3 per cent. In particular, inflation in Hobart reached a peak of 8.3 per cent over the year to December quarter 2022, which was higher than that for any other capital city except for Adelaide.

Since the June quarter of 2022, the average price of essential items has risen by 18 per cent. This means that for every \$100 spent on groceries two years ago, we are now paying \$120. Compared with the December quarter in 2020, real wages in Tasmania are down by 4.6 per cent. With the extra costs and reduced income to meet this, many Tasmanians have been under significant financial strain for some time.

It is not all bad, with wages reported to have risen by 4.1 per cent over the year to the March quarter, down slightly over 4.2 per cent over the year to December however, otherwise the fastest growth since 2009.

Wages growth has been the fastest in healthcare and the social assistance sector, largely reflecting the large increases awarded by the Fair Work Commission to employees in this sector last year, whereas wage increases have been much smaller in the arts and recreations services or the wholesale and trade. Wages have grown faster in Tasmania over the year to March than in any other state. Wages in the public sector rose by 5 per cent and the private sector 4.8 per cent, both well above the corresponding averages. This is deflated by the CPI for Hobart. Real wages rose 1 per cent over the year to March quarter. Compared with the December quarter of 2020, real wages in Tasmania are down by 4.6 per cent.

An example of how this is felt is an article published by *The Examiner* in February 2024. This article depicts the struggles that parents are facing every day in this cost-of-living crisis. Parents are having to make the tough choices about whether they go hungry so they can feed their children or fund other essential everyday items. This report comes directly from the critical support services that are available for in those in need and that are the ones supporting these families to get through the next day.

I am sure that everyone in this House can agree that no family should have to make these decisions, yet the Door of Hope chaplain, Jo Kemp, in Launceston said it was not unusual to receive up to six calls per day for their critical services such as the emergency food relief program, and from families who were struggling and unable to afford the simple everyday human right of food.

I am sure the House would agree with me that the simple fact that our fellow community members are having to make these decisions is extremely distressing. Shekinah House has also reiterated the previous statement and furthered these comments with the addition of how the high cost at the supermarket checkout was not helping their customers save dollars, but instead leading to the increased hunger risk within their own communities. This is not just limited to those who are unemployed or underemployed, but those who are working or seeking assistance.

Tasmanian researchers found almost half of all Tasmanian households are experiencing food insecurity. This can include, but is not limited to, worrying about how they are going to

be paying for their groceries, choosing between eating less and eating fewer food groups, and choosing between a healthy and sustainable diet or two-minute noodles in order to have something in their stomachs. Both the City Mission and Salvation Army have long been aware of the ongoing and rising need for relief, but it is the smaller support services that are also being kept busy by community needs. This does not include the stresses that arise from unexpected bills or minimal income and rising costs, depleted or no savings, which also add compounding pressures to family budgets.

These budgets are being blown out due to the family car breaking down or needing repairs, to businesses going under and the family having no money and having to apply to Centrelink for assistance, children's or family medical needs having to be prioritised over the family being able to eat or choosing between healthy and non-healthy choices. This can lead to a feeling of shame around seeking assistance for what can be seen as hand-out services and deter or defer a struggling community member into taking the first step into these services for assistance.

The Tasmanian Cost of Living Quarterly Report, April to June 2023, highlighted that a staggering 66 per cent of respondents reported being worse off financially than they were the prior year. This was a 41 per cent increase on 2021-22 and an indicator of the worsening conditions to come as the impact of the day-to-day living expenses in Tasmania. When the respondents were asked their thoughts or expectations of the next 12 months coming up to June this year, 66 responded that they viewed it as a bad time to buy major purchases and 49 per cent were expecting to be further worse off by 2024.

Respondents brought attention to three major key areas of concern: cost of living, affordability of housing, and healthcare. Additional statistics provide further insight into a range of issues connected with the above statements, such as:

- A significantly higher proportion of Tasmanians are living with long-term mental health issues.
- The number of Tasmanians experiencing homelessness is at an all-time high.

The Supporting Tasmanians in a Worsening Cost of Living Crisis Budget Priorities Statement of 2024-25 document states that the Energy Affordability Section stated the key facts below:

- Regulated electricity prices in Tasmania have increased by 22.5% in 18 months.
- The number of Tasmanian households with an energy debt has increased by 28% in the past year.
- The number of Tasmanian households accessing the Energy Hardship Fund payments has increased by 42% in the past year.
- One-in-five-households can't afford to heat or cool their home to a comfortable level, and this is four times higher for those in financial stress.

How is anyone in Tasmania expected to survive these conditions, and why are Tasmanians expected to be okay with the current conditions? Within the same document but under section 4, Food Insecurity, it is reported that 120,000 Tasmanians, including children, skipped a meal or went without eating for several days in the past year.

Under section 5, it states the following:

- 7% of people deferred seeing a General Practitioner (GP) due to the cost and
- 36.3% of people could not see their preferred GP on at least one occasion.
- 19.3% of people deferred seeing a mental health professional due to cost.
- 7.6% of people deferred prescription medication when needed due to cost.
- People living in areas of most socio-economic disadvantage were up to 4.5 times more likely to delay or not to use health services when needed due to cost ...

Again, this just proves how dire the cost-of-living crisis is when basic human needs of medical services are being avoided due to the costs.

Under section 6, transport disadvantage is also a critical measure that is suffering, with evidence as per the statistics:

- More than 177 weekday Metro services have been suspended since August 2023:
- Metro Tasmania passenger journeys have only recovered to 81% of pre-pandemic levels.
- Only 13% of dwellings in Hobart and 5% in Launceston have access to public transport.

With this service having been significantly impacted, it disadvantages all community members, especially those who have chosen to cut the costs of fuel, parking and ongoing running costs for a personal vehicle by catching public transport, or to support those in our community who may not be able to drive or no longer able to drive. This is a vital service for those community members to stay connected to their community and their access to critical services that otherwise would be significantly impacted if this service did not exist nor improve for the future.

Another significant issue that needs to be addressed urgently is that of domestic violence and family violence. This is not just an issue of its current time, but instead an ongoing crisis that has failed to be addressed. In a letter to the editor in *The Examiner* newspaper, Diane Burton, state manager for Family Violence Tasmania for Salvation Army, writes that Tasmania



is no exception, despite this significant issue needing to be addressed nationally. Diane writes that 32 per cent of Tasmanian women have experienced violence by a cohabiting partner since they were 15, and about 17 per cent of women have experienced abuse before the age of 15.

The Salvation Army, alongside its peers, is seeing an insufficient cost crisis, long-term accommodation options and major service gaps for these women and children fleeing violence in Tasmania. This then impacts significantly on frontline services which in turn can end up trapping the women, risking it all by leaving this violent situation. These victim/survivors deserve better and this needs to be actioned. This can include further supports for therapy and specialist services addressing the trauma the women have, but that faced by their children as well. At the end of the day, cost of living crisis and struggling services and resources must not be the reason that women or children are stuck in a violent situation.

[5.25 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Notice of Motion No 6. I thank the member for Braddon, Mrs Beswick, for bringing on this motion for debate in the Jacqui Lambie Network's private members' time.

The matters that you have raised are valid and are important. However, I do consider that the JLN may have really wasted an opportunity here. This is your private members' time. It is a time for you to live up to that expectation that you put out there in the general public with the JLN: tell it like it is. Instead, to me, it appears that the government may have manipulated or starstruck the JLN into acquiescence.

Your time would be better spent actively pursuing the government to ask them whether their decision-making, economic management direction over the last decade has made the Tasmania that we live in today, and indeed it has. I am perplexed as to why you are not pursuing this opportunity to drill down into why so many of our families are having to make difficult choices in order to keep their heads above water. Why our mental health services are the worst in the country? Why there is next to no adolescent psychiatric services in Tasmania? Why the waiting lists in the public and private systems are so long when it comes to mental health treatment, also when it comes to public health treatment? Why the Launceston General Hospital is the worst hospital in Australia? It is the worst hospital in Australia, let us not forget that.

They are culpable, this government. They are liable for the current economic and social problems of our state. Their lack of transparency, wasteful spending and lack of vision or integrity is why we are having this debate today. It is why we are not meeting our state's potential.

That said, we do support your motion. We want you to find your feet. Though it does appear that this government has manipulated the JLN into acquiescence.

Have you asked the government why Tasmania's year-12 attainment is 53 per cent, compared to the national average of 76 per cent? Have you asked the government why, over the last ten years, they have stood back and watched Tasmanians struggle to afford to buy vegetables and have a healthy diet?

Food insecurity increased from 28 per cent to 36 per cent between 2022 and 2023. A UTAS study found one in two Tasmanians are now experiencing food insecurity. One-in-five Tasmanians are regularly skipping meals and going hungry - three times more than in

2021. Keep in mind, only 10 per cent of households experiencing food insecurity will actively seek help.

Our veterans, some 17,000 living in Tasmania, who are dear to the heart of your leader, Jacqui Lambie, are some of the most vulnerable people in our community. They are at high risk of self-harm and experiencing poor mental health. This government - and I am glad the minister has walked in the room as I am saying this - is not even considering funding the RSL's Homelessness Project. This is a project that provides wraparound services for veterans, and it should be dear to the heart of the JLN. For some reason, it seems that you have been manipulated into acquiescence. It really does.

In June last year, under this government, the St Helens Hospital - a private hospital in Hobart - closed, leaving the state with 31 fewer mental health beds. It was a huge loss. One of the services provided by St Helens Hospital was for veterans and frontline workers - police officers and so forth - who had experienced PTSD. There was an amazing program that was run through St Helens Hospital, and this has not been replaced. Now, these are the people that you have made deals with. They have not replaced that service for Tasmanian veterans.

I met with a group of Vietnam Veterans in my office on Monday. They and their associated people are now having to travel to the mainland in order to get that specialised psychiatric assistance for mental health services, because there is nothing here for them.

It is really important as you find your feet, to be able to not rely on or be starstruck by the government, because they have been in charge for ten years. Most of what we are talking about today - yes, there are national pressures, I understand that. Yes, inflation is a national issue. However, in Tasmania it is far worse than anywhere else in the country. You have to ask yourself why we have lost 5000 jobs since this government came into a minority government.

You have to ask yourself why Tasmania has some of the worst outcomes for young people in the country; why we have some of the highest numbers of people who are homeless; why our housing waiting list is so long; why we have a huge difference in life expectancy from people who live in Mount Nelson, whose life expectancy is 86 years, compared to Bridgewater where it is 68 years.

This government has been in charge for 10 years, and it is looking very much like you are being manipulated, as I have stated four times now, into acquiescence.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I will draw the member to the motion.

**Mrs Beswick** - Acquiescence, it is the new favourite word.

**Ms BUTLER** - It is quite a good term for what is going on here.

I would also like to quickly cover some more of the motions, and everything I am raising does go back to the amount of poverty that we are noticing in our community. It is far worse than it ever has been, after ten years of this government. We also understand the financial stresses and what that can create in our families. Financial abuse is a form of violence towards women. Violence towards women in our families is more about control than it is about poverty, and you will find that many of the households in more of our affluent suburbs or places in Tasmania would also still have significant amounts of violence towards women and children.

Over the 10 years of this government, we know that 32 per cent of Tasmanian women - and I note that you stated this - have experienced violence perpetrated by a cohabitating partner, and we know that poverty in itself can also be viewed as a form of violence. We also know that of all the women who applied to be housed in shelters in Tasmania last year, only 20 per cent were able to be housed. That is the fault of a government that you are in cahoots with. Whether you like the situation you are in at the moment or not, publicly that is how you are viewed.

We will support this motion because they are valid points. However, do not be starstruck. Do not be cajoled and manipulated into acquiescence by this government. They have been here for 10 years. They have done a pretty lousy job overall. The state is not in a good shape compared to other places in Australia and we are not reaching our potential. I suggest owning your own private members' time. Do not buy into the government and do not let them manipulate you.

[5.32 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon, the JLN representative, for speaking on this matter so eloquently and comprehensively with well-argued points in her first motion on behalf of JLN. I congratulate her on her inaugural speech, and others on theirs. We look forward to a few more to come in coming sittings.

She made some very powerful observations and remarks and backed it up with research that was well considered. Quite frankly, the honourable member for Lyons, the Labor Party representative Ms Butler, made unfounded criticisms of the JLN. The allegations were unfair, and to accuse the honourable member and the JLN of being manipulated into acquiescence is offensive. You do not have to do that. Just address the issues and address the arguments. Play the ball, not the person. It is uncalled for, and we all need to do better. The public want that, and there is a lot of goodwill in the community. I draw that to your attention.

In terms of the allegations made against our government, I do not accept them. They are also unfounded. We have created more than 50,000 jobs in the last 10 years since we have been in government. When we came to government, we had to rebuild the economy because it had just come out of a recession. We had just lost 10,000 jobs under the Labor-Greens government. We have come a long way, but there is more to do. We are totally committed to that. There will be a lot of collaboration in this parliament around doing better.

Today we have been able to highlight and point to cost-of-living issues, which have been well put forward by the honourable member for Braddon from the JLN. It is looking over the past four years and it talks about inflation and budgetary pressures. We have just had a federal budget and Tasmania was left off the map. Our Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, made that very clear in terms of the budget pressures, the impact of the GST revenues to Tasmania, the detrimental impact of inflation on the federal budget, and interest rates being higher for longer as a result of the federal budget. All of these issues lean into the cost-of-living pressures that the honourable member has so well espoused in her remarks to this Chamber.

In one brilliant example, we have had the federal Treasurer in Launceston this morning saying that Tasmania got more than its fair share for health. The federal Minister for Health said the same thing yesterday: 'Tasmania got more than its fair share for health.' Put your hand up if you think we got more than our fair share. There are not too many hands up in this Chamber.

This should be Team Tasmania, where we are all fighting for the best outcome for Tasmanians and for the community. We do not accept federal Labor's efforts when they come to Tasmania and treat us as second-class citizens. As the Health minister, I am not happy. We will have more to say on that in the next motion that is put forward by the member for Clark, which I am looking forward to supporting. It specifically relates to health and the lack of urgent care clinics, and a lack of effort on the part of federal Labor when it comes to GP practices.

Why do we step in, time and again, as we have done today with respect to the Lauderdale GP practice? We stepped in and we saved another GP practice. I made that announcement today. It was very encouraging standing there with local doctors, supported by the local community, delivering results. That is what this government is about. There are no cat calls there. It is Team Tasmania at work.

In terms of this motion, there are some good arguments that have been put. We will be supporting this motion 100 per cent, because we know what is important to our fellow Tasmanians, and that is cost-of-living pressures. Every dollar counts.

There are a few points I would like to make, first of all with respect to power prices. We have the Renewable Energy Dividend that will be delivered prior to 30 June this year. This was a promise and a commitment we made during the election campaign, and we are going to deliver on that. Congratulations to Nick Duigan for his advocacy and for delivering so well in that regard. Tasmanians are going to see \$250. Every eligible household will have \$250 come off their electricity bill, and that is absolutely good news. Business will have \$300 off their bill. How many are there of those? There are more than 35,000 small businesses. They are the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our rural and regional communities. We are so proud of them, and we are backing them in 100 per cent with that \$300 off through the Renewable Energy Dividend. Every household - 254,000 households - will get that reduction or a \$250 credit prior to 30 June.

We are changing Hydro's charter, and the Premier made that clear, as did the Treasurer, during the campaign. It was a charter written by the former Labor-Greens government, and it is going to change with a new directive to ensure that Tasmanians continue to pay amongst the lowest possible power prices in Australia. We are already paying the lowest regulated electricity prices in Australia for our residential customers. We are already providing more than \$120 million in concessions to help with things like council rates, water bills and things like that. I could go through each one of those.

Over the next four years we will provide \$460 million in government support. That is pretty good. We have \$88.9 million for council rates remissions; \$40.6 million for water and sewerage concessions; and \$268 million for electricity concessions - our contribution, as I said earlier, to the National Energy Bill Relief Rebate - with \$74 million of it this year for the Renewable Energy Dividend.

There are 90 different types of concessions. You heard from the honourable member who talked about the impact on a whole range of classes of Tasmanians. We have heard about the veterans and their role, and the challenges that that they have. There are 90 different types of concessions, and we are backing people in with those concessions. We are supporting those in need. We are cutting bus fares and ferry fares. This is a commitment we made during the election campaign, and we are delivering it in the years ahead. The typical Metro fare will halve from \$3.50 to \$1.75 and concession fares from \$2.40 to \$1.20. Regional Tasmanian fares - and

I represent the Lyons electorate, I am very pleased with this one because it will be bigger savings - such as Hobart to Bicheno from \$24 to \$12, Smithton to Burnie from \$16 to \$8, and Launceston to Hobart from \$33.60 down to \$16.80.

You have a whole range of initiatives. We have the No Interest Loan Scheme. That is a ripper scheme, and we are backing it in. It is absolutely a ripper scheme because it is household items like refrigerators, washing machines, all those. In terms of buying a second-hand car, household products, back to school costs, all of those are provided support with the No Interest Loan Scheme. It is a ripper scheme and I thank those involved in that. Some 5000 Tasmanians have benefited from that scheme over the period. Spending has flowed through to 960 different Tasmanian businesses. There is a lot to say.

The member talked about the impact on feeding your family, on the impact of food, the cost of food, and that is so important, and I could not agree more with the member. I thank City Mission, Salvation Army, the community service organisations. I was on the board of City Mission for a number of years prior to entering state parliament and I know they do a great job. There is a multitude of community service organisations. They do a fantastic job and in terms of the spirit of volunteerism. It is fantastic. Where would we be? I often ask this question, where would we be without our volunteers? I pay tribute to them during National Volunteer Week, which is this week. Exactly.

We are so pleased and proud of our volunteers. Thank you for what you do. Foodbank Australia, I have visited there, I have packed boxes with them and helped them on a number of occasions. They have delivered that Hunger Report the member talked about, outlined the impact of being able to afford food to feed the family. That is why we support those energy food relief measures.

Loaves & Fishes: what a wonderful job they do up on the north west coast, for example, and around the northern part of Tasmania.

Gran's Van, Loui's Van, Missionbeat: I have been involved and spent a bit of time in the vans from time to time. They do a fantastic job. St Vincent de Paul is another one, with their support. There is lots of food relief. We have a Food Relief and Food Resilience Action Plan 2023-2025.

There was mention about eating healthy foods. As the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, I am rapt to hear those observations. I totally agree. We support Eat Well Tasmania, and we give them \$100 000 a year for the development of nutritional resources, for the delivery to Neighbourhood Houses.

I pay tribute to our Neighbourhood Houses, and I know the Deputy Speaker is one of the biggest fans and advocates for our Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania, not just in the electorate of Franklin, but across the state. What a wonderful advocate you were as the relevant minister. I have been to a host of Neighbourhood Houses in my electorate. They do such a great job, and they support the Community Garden grants as well. We have funding support for that.

I agree with the member and her remarks about that, and the importance of getting healthy food to provide healthy, active lifestyles, so that children and our fellow Tasmanians can be the best that they can be, and that is what we want for our community. I commend the member on that motion. Thank you for it.

I want to make mention of a couple of other areas that the member referred to and one was mental health and the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our fellow Tasmanians. As the relevant minister, I thank you for bringing that forward. It is a real, live issue and all of us need to do more to support our fellow Tasmanians to advance the cause for improved mental health and wellbeing.

The other area you referred to was family violence, domestic violence, and that is why I know, and I pay credit to the former premier, Will Hodgman, who really led the way years ago now with nation-leading measures to strengthen our laws, increase the penalties. He also provided a family violence action plan, which started under Will Hodgman - and I thank Will Hodgman for his leadership - to deliver that for the years to come. It is such an important area, and it has a flow-on effect for all of us in this community. We cannot hide from that. I appreciate the observations made.

Our government will be supporting this motion. I applaud the member for bringing it forward, doing the research and laying it on the table. It is an excellent result.

[5.46 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank Mrs Beswick for bringing this motion forward. We will certainly be supporting it.

I will take a different approach from the member for Lyons in relation to this. As part of my contribution, I will call on government to take some actions. I make no judgment on the wisdom or otherwise of the motion. I welcome the fact that it is put on the table here and gives us an opportunity to talk about these important issues. It is lamentable that we are in a situation where inflation is going through the roof and wages are stagnant or falling in real terms. This is putting incredible pressure on everyday people. Let us face it, not everybody is feeling it. Some people are doing very well out of this cost-of-living crisis. However, most people are not.

The key reasons for this are global, some completely out of our hands, some not. Some we desperately need to act on. The war in Ukraine obviously increased pressure on a range of different products, fuel in particular. That had flow-on effects when it came to cost of living not only in Europe but across the entire world.

Climate change is having a profound impact on economies globally. This is the price of a lack of action. The price of a lack of action is increased and more serious flooding events; increased and more serious fire events, droughts impacting on our farmers; marine heat waves bleaching our tourist destinations, and other things. This is having a profound economic impact on many players around the economy.

There is also pure and simple profiteering. Profiteering, particularly in the wake of COVID, has had a massive impact on the cost of living. We have caught many businesses in the corporate sector rort the public assistance given to business. Harvey Norman, for one, was a beneficiary of millions of dollars of taxpayer support; it increased profits during the COVID period and never gave it back.

The other issue is price gouging. We are having a national conversation, thanks to our colleagues in the federal parliament, with Senator Nick McKim leading the supermarket inquiry. That is exposing the fact that Coles and Woolworths, amongst others, but

predominantly Coles and Woolies, are gouging us on the groceries we buy. Every day we walk through those doors, they are gouging us for our money, making obscene profits, and paying their executives obscene amounts of money. At the end of the day, it is us, the consumer, who bears the brunt of that. There is no excuse in this world - I do not care how good a CEO is, how talented they are, no CEO is worth tens of millions of dollars every single year plus bonuses. The only people who pay for that is us, the consumer. It is an utterly obscene situation, and it demonstrates the flaws built into the perpetual-growth economic model that we seem to live and die by in this country.

My colleague, Ms Rosol, the member for Bass, spoke eloquently about the failures of our economic system in her inaugural speech and highlighted how the economic model is failing people. It is particularly failing the poor people in this world.

Traditionally, inflation has been managed at the federal level by the Reserve Bank of Australia. It has largely been managed with an incredibly blunt tool; the sledgehammer that is interest rate rises. That has hit families, mortgage holders and business owners very hard over many years. Interest rates form but one mechanism an economy has in its hands to help manage inflation. However, in the political dynamic we have at the moment with the federal government, the federal treasurer and the system we have in place, it is the only tool it pulls out of the cupboard. It uses that to bash us, the people, over the head to try to beat down inflation. People are absolutely doing it tough.

To go to the motion itself, we know that the financial pressures on a household deliver incredible pressures on families. We know families are sacrificing food, they are not paying for food so that they can pay their energy bills, their school bills or their petrol bills. We know that financial stress causes significant problems in relationships.

There is no excuse for domestic violence, for male-dominated violence perpetrated against women. We know that financial stress can be a trigger and it causes family dysfunction and break-up. We recognise that in this motion. This is why the Greens are here and the Greens continually put people-focused propositions that will help on the table in this place. Ms Badger has tabled a bill to repeal the crime of begging. How ridiculous is it that in 21st century Tasmania to still have a Great Depression law on the statute books that bans the crime of begging? More and more people are needing to take the steps of asking for help on the streets because they are in this incredible bind where they have lost their home, lost their job, lost just about everything they have. The only thing they have left is the generosity of us as a community to help them out and make things a little easier.

It was positive to hear the minister talk through some of the government's propositions for helping people. We welcome many of them. Many of those propositions are things the Greens have been talking about for many years. It is great to see the government slowly coming on board, at least some of the way, with some of those initiatives. Half-price public transport for a year is great. That will help a little bit. However, the Greens are advocates for free public transport forever.

The Greens put a range of other initiatives on the table in the election campaign. We need to deal with our rental crisis. Rents are driving a world of pain in our community, in this city, in households across Tasmania and across Australia. We need to control unreasonable rents. We need to make sure that no-cause evictions are banned for good. We need to help tenants with the cost of living in their rental properties by introducing minimum standards. This

includes making sure energy-efficiency measures are built into the residential system to bring down power bills, not by subsidies, not by giving a handout to households, but because they use less energy, or have solar panels on the roof and use their own energy. The sunshine is free. If we can get solar panels on public and affordable housing, we are going to help residents in those houses.

We have put a proposition on the table to halve the cost of car registration for concession card holders. It is a pretty simple thing we can do. Concession card holders who own a car have to register it. It should be halved. It could be halved.

We need to make public schools genuinely free by abolishing public school levies. This is a system with inequity built into the public school system and for a minimal amount of money to the Tasmanian Budget we could make every public-school student get an education for free. That is real cost-of-living relief for families.

I have talked about minimum standards. We have proposed to provide funding to assist every public school to deliver a breakfast program. We would like to see TasTAFE free.

Introduce means-based fines: if you get a fine and you do not have the capacity to pay it, what happens? You get another fine. Then you get another fine and you get another fine. It is just a perpetual spiral of increased cost, increased stress, and then all of those effects that flow.

We need to help low-income households bring down their power bills by subsidising rooftop solar, double glazing and insulation. Deliver more emergency food relief for struggling Tasmanians. We could help people get on bikes, on electric bicycles and on pedal bicycles. We could absolutely help people get on those bikes and get out of their cars. The double-whammy benefit of that is that they would save money and they would stop contributing to the climate crisis.

I know the question is, 'How do you pay for this? How do you pay for this kind of support?' We would make big corporations pay both at the state and the federal level. We have woefully inadequate royalty and other measures when it comes to big corporations. To think that HECS students are paying more and owe more to the federal government than fossil fuel companies pay in tax is an absolute indictment on our system. We would end the subsidies to some of the most destructive industries of all. One of the issues that has been a topic of discussion over the last week is the 15 per cent increase in the surcharge by TasNetworks. That is going to hit Tasmanians' hip pockets and that is a real problem.

There is a range of challenges built into that but let us remember that it is not that long ago, less than 10 years ago, that we made TasNetworks transfer \$30 million from their books to Forestry Tasmania to prop up and subsidise native forest logging. There are choices. Let us remember, poverty, pain and some of the sacrifices that are mentioned in this motion are political choices. They are made by governments. They are endorsed by parliaments, and they are things that we absolutely need to get on with the job of dealing with.

We acknowledge the renewable energy dividend, Mr Barnett, we acknowledge that \$250 going to every household, but not every household needs it. You could do more with less with that initiative. There are households - probably most of our households, given the wage that we get in this place - that can actually afford their power bill. Why do we not give it to the people



who need it most? We will be able to make a bigger contribution to those people by giving it to fewer people because the reality is some of us simply do not need it.

In terms of a call on government, it is welcome, and I echo the minister's support of volunteers. Volunteers are truly stalwarts of our community. I completely agree with that. Let us face it, volunteerism gives people something as well. It gives people meaning, social interaction and engagement, and people derive a positive sense from their volunteerism. We should not allow government to use volunteerism, the generosity, and the gift that people give in their communities as an excuse for not acting, an excuse for not properly funding community organisations, an excuse for not properly paying people who do work on behalf of the government.

To that end, I really do call on government to listen to the community services sector. They have been crying out for an increase in funding. They have been crying out for indexation that means that their income from the government is indexed more than inflation. This motion is aimed at families and at individuals and there is nothing wrong with that. I get that and that is completely acceptable. However, community service organisations are suffering the same cost of operation pressures, the same staffing and waiting pressures, the same petrol price increases, and yet the help that this government gives to that sector is utterly stagnant.

There is another issue that has been raised with me, the Treasurer, if he is listening, should take heed. There are organisations funded to deliver incredibly important services within our community. Engagement with school students, supporting programs against violence and the like, who, because the budget is delayed by six months or so, have no comfort for the period until September. They do not know whether they are going to get funded until September and they are left in limbo. They still do not have a letter of comfort from this government or any assurance that they are going to get paid, going to get funded to continue to deliver the services that they have been delivering, in some cases over many years.

There are actions the government can take here and now to give comfort to those parts of our community, those organisations within our community actively working on relieving the cost-of-living impacts, trying to address the social dysfunction, the family dysfunction, the domestic violence, the mental health issues and the like. I call on the government to heed that message and to do what it can to make sure those organisations get both the indexation they have been pleading for over many years and also get some comfort in this period when we are between budgets. We had a supply bill last week that extended some money for parts of government, but there are bits of the community service sector that are still hanging out there waiting to hear whether they have operational funds for the next few months. I do implore the Treasurer to get onto that.

To conclude, we support this motion. This has been a valuable debate. The economic drivers over the past four years and COVID have been a massive influence there, but I do not think anyone expects them to go away soon. Looking back, we can see the effects. We can see the drivers of those effects, and so forth. We need to have a profound shift in the way we as a global economy do our business, how we deal with climate and take it seriously, how we introduce compassion and some level of comfort. When I say comfort, I mean corporations. Why is it that corporations need to get bigger and bigger? I am reminded of *The Lorax*, that fantastic kids' book, where the business just had to keep 'biggering and biggering' until every single tree was cut down and they had to move out. I thank the member for bringing this forward and we will certainly be supporting it.

[6.05 p.m.]

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the House, and in particular the members for Lyons and the member for Clark, for their contributions to this debate and the seriousness that has been taken on this debate. I note some of the points made by each of these members, the details and research they have done and the concern they have given for their community.

In particular, sometimes we talk about 'concession card holders', and we talk about 'low income', and sometimes we forget those middle-income people who go from the base payment as you jump off Centrelink, and suddenly everything costs you triple and quadruple what you were paying before, and you do not have \$500 more than you had last week.

I appreciate that with the economic gift of the \$250 per family, even though it goes to everybody and not everyone will need it, it does give those who do not need it the opportunity to pass that on, and I am sure that many people will. It definitely does help those who do not get those concessions and do not get that help.

Thank you everyone for your support of this motion.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME**

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I advise that, in accordance with Standing Order 42, the remainder of private members' time for this day's sitting for the Jacqui Lambie Network will be waived.

## **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The member having waived the remainder of their time for Private Members' Business, I call on the minister to advise whether the House wishes to proceed to Government Business?

This is not the government members' Private Members' Business. Under the new Standing Orders, you can go back to a different order.

**Mr Barnett** - Madam Deputy Speaker, we will go directly to Notice of Motion No. 4 for government members to the member for Clark.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - I ask the House if it is content to proceed to the next item of Private Members' Business?

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Primary Health Sector**

[6.06 p.m.]

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes the failures of the Federal Labor Government to adequately invest in Tasmania's primary health sector, resulting in General Practices being forced to close.
- (2) In light of these failures, calls on the Federal Labor Government to provide adequate funding to incentivise bulk-billing by General Practitioners and reduce the likelihood of further closures.
- (3) Calls on the State Labor Opposition to lobby their Federal colleagues for more urgent care clinics in Tasmania in areas of most need.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Is a vote required today?

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Yes, please.

Madam Deputy Speaker, an important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is about acting right now on the issues affecting Tasmanians, especially health.

Our government understands the importance of GPs who are the front line of health care in our state.

Together with other members of the Select Committee on Transfer of Care Delays - and I note Ms Dow, the member for Braddon, was also on that - I heard about the pressures on our health system, and in particular those being faced by emergency departments. This Government is taking action to address these pressures. We also heard about the importance of our GPs in caring for Tasmanians, treating Tasmanians every day from colds and flu to chronic illnesses, a vitally important role in keeping people out of hospital and reducing the pressure on EDs. That is why it is so concerning to see the continued closure of GP practices in Tasmania.

As everyone in this place would be aware, GPs are the responsibility of the federal government, and it is crystal clear that they are failing that responsibility. We are seeing GP practices across the state being forced to close as Medicare has not kept pace and the federal government is barely lifting a finger to help. In fact, almost 40 per cent of ED presentations are from Tasmanians who need to see a GP, not the lifesaving care of an emergency department. It is simply not good enough. It not only increases the pressure on our EDs and hospitals but leaves Tasmanians without the healthcare they need and deserve.

Our government has stepped in to save GP clinics such as Bridgewater's Greenpoint Medical Centre, the East Devonport GP Clinic, the after-hours service at Derwent Park and the

clinic at St Marys, as well as Lauderdale. We are stepping up and doing our part as a state because we do not want to stand by and let Tasmanians go without access to GPs.

That is why we went to the election promising to do more, to further step in where the federal government is failing because it is the right thing to do for Tasmanians and what they need.

As part of our GP Guarantee under our 2030 Strong Plan, we will be standing up a team of 10 GPs as part of a new GP NOW Rapid Response Team that will ensure Tasmanians always have a local GP on hand. These GPs will be employed by the state government and will be deployed to local general practices when and where they are needed, and quickly. That means should a GP practice close down on short notice, our GP NOW Team will be ready to fill the gap and ensure locals can still see a doctor.

We will also pick up the HECS debt - up to \$100,000 - for 40 new GPs as part of an incentive to attract doctors to work in Tasmania's rural and regional areas for five years. That is a huge cash bonus that will help to attract more GPs to Tasmania or give locally trained doctors that extra reason to work in their home state.

Additionally, we will partner with GPs in outer urban, regional and rural Tasmania to strengthen and sustain their practices with multi-year funding of up to \$250,000 a year. These flexible grants can help GPs offer extended hours of service, embed nurse practitioners, attract new doctors or expand their practice with capital upgrades. We have our priorities right and with our strong plan, we are committed to making our health system better because it really is the most important thing we can do for Tasmanians. These actions will enhance our existing reforms, which are already making a difference.

The single employer model for GP registrars, including rural generalist trainees, is making training in rural general practice more attractive and will go a long way to improving recruitment and retention of GPs in rural communities. We have seen 17 GP registrars recruited to this program with one completing training and applications open for the next cohort of SEM registrars.

We also have a Community Rapid Response Service, a GP after-hours support initiative, a new rural medical workforce centre that was officially opened in October last year, and our work to provide more care in the home such as community paramedics and mental health hospital in the home services. Let us not forget that the state should not need to step into this space. The federal government is failing to invest in our primary health sector and this House must recognise this.

In light of these failures, we call on the federal government to provide adequate funding to incentivise bulk billing and reduce the likelihood of further closures. We know it is having an impact on Tasmanians who are delaying seeing a GP. We know the outcome that is happening. A recent report on government services confirmed that in 2022-23, nearly one in 10 Tasmanians delayed or avoided seeing a GP due to affordability compared to 7 per cent nationally in the same year.

In terms of bulk billing, in 2022-23 just over a third of appointments were bulk billed compared to over half nationally. This simply is not good enough and the federal government must do more, and we will call on them to do just that. That includes in the areas of urgent care.

As a government, we do support the urgent care clinics and have invested in them, including the one in Newstead in Launceston that has been solely funded by the Tasmanian Liberal government. Tasmania deserves more and once again the federal government is failing.

Our government has already written to the federal Labor government seeking centres in growing areas like Sorell, Kingston, Bridgewater as well as Burnie and Launceston to get more urgent care centres as Tasmanians deserve. We have been putting the case to federal Labor for months that there should be funding for at least five new locations to support Tasmania's needs. Instead, we got funding for one.

Despite their ongoing failures across primary care, despite the state government continually stepping in to save clinics across the state, the best the federal Labor government could offer was one additional urgent care clinic out of 29. It is grossly inadequate, and it is clear that Tasmania is being short-changed.

It is completely insufficient to meet the challenges of increasing demand on GP services and will only put more pressure on our emergency departments. Part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future states our government's commitment to delivering more bulk-billed urgent care clinics for Tasmanians, so this was incredibly disappointing to see in last week's budget. I note the comments from federal minister, Mark Butler, who tried to justify this by claiming we are receiving more than our fair share. After seeing the ongoing failures that I have spoken about, does anyone here think Tasmania is getting more than its fair share? Does Ms Haddad think that we are getting more than our fair share?

Tasmania was left off the map in the recent federal Labor budget, but we are not letting them off the hook. Neither should state Labor, and neither should this House. We will continue to make the case for the federal government to adequately invest in our primary care sector. We call on the Tasmania Labor opposition to join us. Pick up their phone. Talk to their federal counterparts. Lobby them for adequate funding, especially for more urgent care centres in the areas that need them.

[6.14 pm]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Clark, Mr Behrakis, for bringing on this important issue. I could not agree more with him around the critical need for GPs and primary care in this state.

How interesting that he would bring this motion on today and encourage the Labor Party to talk to our federal counterparts. Of course we talk to our federal counterparts. We lobby our federal counterparts on behalf of Tasmanians and the need that we see every day in our communities: the Tasmanians suffering in the housing system, in the health system, in every area of critical need. Of course we talk to our federal counterparts. What is the Liberal Party doing? They are in government, if they had not noticed. They won the election. They have cobbled together a government with the JLN. You have the Treasury benches. Governments talk to governments, and you need to be talking to the federal government about this. We are doing that as the Labor Party but what were you doing for 10 years of the Morrison government and the predecessors in the federal Liberal Party? Ten years of federal Liberal Party neglect. What were they doing then?

We did not hear this kind of motion when Scott Morrison was prime minister. We did not hear this kind of motion when Greg Hunt was health minister. Everything was tickety boo

back then: no criticisms of the federal government then. The state government needs to be lobbying the federal government and we will do the same. We know that there is more need for Tasmanians here. We know the health system is in crisis.

This relentless buck-passing, particularly in the health portfolio, but across all portfolios, as soon as the flavour of government changes in Canberra, it is such an old way to do politics. People see right through it. Scott Morrison is up there in Canberra, and we are all best friends because the Liberal Party is in power down here. As soon as the Labor Party has prime ministership and the government in Canberra, we start to see motions like this. It is not how people want to see politics done anymore. It is not the way to play politics with the health system in Tasmania, where we know how badly people are suffering and needing primary care as well as other forms of healthcare. You have to recognise it is a shared responsibility. We recognise that. The government recognises that.

There is a role for the federal government and there is a role for the state government. It is actually beneath them to play politics around an issue like this. This government has been in control of the health system for 10 years. Ten years of state Liberal neglect, 10 years of Liberal Party neglect that the federal Labor government is now having to mop up thanks to the likes of Scott Morrison, and 10 years of Liberal Party government down here. What do we see after that time? We see the worst health outcomes in the country. On every list that you want to be top of, we are the bottom. On every list that you want to be the bottom of, we are at the top.

Poor health literacy, terrible rates of chronic disease, terrible rates of smoking - these things are heartbreaking, and we all care about them in this place, but it is not right to play politics with them. We have some of the worst wait times for healthcare, some of the worst bed block and access and flow for patients through our primary health system and our acute health system: the worst ambulance wait times and the longest wait times for specialist care for all sorts of care right across the system.

The Liberal Party wants to hang the blame on the federal Labor government. What have they been doing for 10 years? Where is their plan for preventative health care? You cannot turn off the tap to the need for the acute health care spend because people are in desperate need. Until you start addressing prevention, until you start investing in preventative health care, you are not going to see that level of acute need diminish. Where is the government's plan for that?

They have cut the funding for public health from the minute they got into government, and I know because I saw it. I worked alongside those public health public servants when I was in another part of that department and I saw \$750 million come out of the Health and Human Services department in the first year, \$450 million in the next year, and it has continued. Where is this government's plan for allied health care? Where is their plan to increase nurse practitioner-led care? Where is their plan to committing to increasing pharmacy scope of practice? All of these things are part of the solution in making sure that people get the health care they need when they need it, so that when they do end up in the GPs rooms, they are going to have received some of that primary health care and preventative health care from allied health professionals who this government fails to respect. They fail to respect their critical role in the health system every day.

If you provide adequate allied health care, nurse practitioner-led care, pharmacy-led care and also preventative health care, you are actually going to be reducing the demand on the acute health system and on primary care and GP practices.

Where is their plan for the THS? There is a desperate need for more staff across the acute health care system in Tasmania. There are vacancies more numerous than you can easily count, and a desperate need for more staff across our primary health care settings. It is crumbling. We know that staff morale is at the lowest. People went into those jobs because they want to care for people. Every patient you talk to who has had a terrible experience in the Tasmania health system has nothing but praise for the health care professionals who are responsible for their care. They can see the systemic issues when they are in those beds in the hospital. They can see the systemic issues that are leading to poor patient outcomes.

This government wants to put their head in the sand about it and blame it all on Mark Butler, blame it all on Anthony Albanese. It is not about politics. It is about working constructively. While we are talking about the role of Mark Butler and the role of Anthony Albanese, it is very interesting timing that the member for Clark would bring on this motion today. Just yesterday, the federal Health Minister was in my electorate of Clark, in Tasmania, announcing a raft of different health commitments for Tasmania.

Not only did Mr Behrakis refer to a new urgent care clinic that will be open in the electorate of Lyons in Bridgewater, which this government has identified a need for, but he also talked about a range of different investments that they are putting into Tasmania. He told the press at that press conference that the budget last year saw record investment in strengthening Medicare in Tasmania. They tripled the bulk billing incentive, which lifted bulk billing rates in Tasmania in five months by 5 per cent. That is the biggest increase across all of the states and territories.

They opened four urgent care clinics in Tasmania: two in Hobart, one in Devonport, and one in Launceston. Those urgent care clinics have seen 25,000 Tasmanians in that short time. They are open seven days a week. Anyone who has accessed them would appreciate the fact that that health care is there when needed. They are fully bulk billed, and they are taking pressure off the hospital system. He was at one of the ones in the Hobart CBD when he made this announcement about the new Bridgewater clinic yesterday. That clinic is run by Ochre Health. They have surveyed their patients and estimated that 80 per cent of the people who have been cared for in an urgent care clinic would have been in the emergency department if it had not been for the urgent care clinic being available. It is taking pressure off the acute care system.

Of course, he announced that there will be a new centre Urgent Care Clinic opened in Bridgewater. Of course we want more. Every state and territory want more. No one is going to be arguing for less. What is this government doing to make sure that Tasmania continues to get, as the federal Health Minister has expressed it, more than our fair share when you look at population?

Maybe the member for Clark should have had a chat to the Premier before he brought in this motion because I know that that minister Barnett likes to hang a lot of blame on the federal government and criticise minister Butler whenever he is here, making commitments to Tasmania in our health system. Maybe Mr Behrakis should have had a chat to the Premier because Mark Butler had nice things to say about Jeremy Rockliff in his press conference yesterday. He described them as really constructive discussions with Premier Rockliff and his colleagues. He said, 'The Prime Minister was committed to strengthening Medicare and that the Tasmanian Premier had brought innovative ideas to the federal government,' and part of the result of that is the package of health spending that minister Butler talked about yesterday.

The new urgent care clinic that will open in Bridgewater is not the only thing that he has committed to Tasmania. It is part of a \$28 million package for Tasmania from the federal government. That includes almost \$10 million for hospital outreach services in the community, delivering virtual care, which will avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, again taking pressure off the acute healthcare system; up to \$9.2 million to expand and extend the successful acute-to-residential care transition program to support people with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia; \$1.2 million to help older people recover from a hospital stay with short-term care through the extended transition care program; and up to \$450,000 to extend comprehensive palliative care in aged care program to support new and advanced ways of delivering end-of life-care.

I note that it is Palliative Care Week this week. There was no mention from the member for Clark about increased funding to assist the palliative care sector to provide new ways of working when it comes to delivering that critical end-of-life care, which is such an important part of our healthcare system.

I believe Tasmanians would see this motion for exactly what it is. It is Mr Behrakis playing politics with the critical issue of health care in this state, wanting to lay the blame on the federal Labor government when they did not say but a whisper when Greg Hunt was health minister. When the Liberal Party was in power in Canberra, we did not hear criticisms of the federal government then. It is about having a constructive working relationship. It is a partnership. Health will always be a partnership between federal and state governments.

Mr Behrakis calls on us to talk to our Labor colleagues. Of course we will do that, but he needs to be doing the same. He needs to be representing our community, just like we are to our federal colleagues. As we speak, we see more GP clinics closing down. This government needs to be doing more to attract and retain health professionals, particularly GPs and other specialists working across the health care system. It is Tasmanians who are failing to get the health care they need and suffering when they fail to do that.

That is why we have some of the worst health outcomes in the country. It is not about playing politics. It is about putting the effective policy decisions on the people who need it front and centre of our minds when we come into this place.

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the Greens welcome further investment in the Primary Health sector and have long called for increased investment in this area. Our colleagues in the federal government have long called for an increase to Medicare funding and they have strongly campaigned for an expansion to make health care free and accessible for all people. We have particularly called for Medicare to include dental and mental health. The Greens are fundamentally committed to all Tasmanians having easy accessibility to free medical care at both the primary health care level as well as in our hospitals.

We are deeply concerned at the lack of GPs in Tasmania. The shortages mean that people are having to wait a very long time to see a GP. They are having to wait weeks to get in. When they cannot get in, they need to access our hospitals for care. That is not a healthy situation for us as a state.

We welcome action by either the Liberal government or Labor opposition to advocate on behalf of Tasmanians to the federal government for further funding of primary health care in Tasmania.



It has been very interesting listening to Mr Behrakis and Ms Haddad speak and blame each other for the situation that we are in regarding health care. I would say, looking back over the last decades, we are in this situation because of successive Liberal and Labor governments not taking enough action to invest fully in our healthcare system.

We find ourselves where we are today because of decades of neglect of our health system and the health system is in crisis. Labor has taken insufficient action. They have not agreed to a 50/50 funding model for health. That is leaving Tasmania short changed to the order of tens of millions of dollars. That is millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars, that could be invested in our health care in Tasmania and could boost services and ensure people have access to the health care that they need.

Labor has failed to invest enough in GPs and primary health care over long periods. It is pleasing to see more investment now, but the lack of GP availability impacts on our hospitals. People cannot access the care that they need from GPs, so they end up in our hospitals. Also, if people are attending GPs with minor ailments but are not able to access their GP, that means that over time, their health situation may deteriorate. Minor symptoms can become major symptoms and can indicate a significant health issue that ends up requiring more treatment and placing more burden on our health system, not to mention the pain and suffering that they go through waiting for the care that they need.

We also have issues with our aged care system not being sufficiently funded. I note that there are calls for a co-funded establishment of a multidisciplinary mobile aged care team from the AMA, which would include geriatricians, nurse practitioners, Allied Health staff and administrators being accessible for nursing home residents, reducing the frequency and the need for hospital admissions and readmissions.

There are actions that could be being taken by the Labor government that would be assisting our healthcare system in Tasmania. However, it is a bit rich of the Liberals to stand up and demand that the Labor opposition do more to fix aspects of our healthcare system when it is the Liberals who are in government. They are the ones with the responsibility for acting on our healthcare system and ensuring that the people of Tasmania have access to the care that they need. The government should be advocating and lobbying the federal government themselves and doing their job in speaking up for Tasmanians, calling for more action and funding on their part, rather than telling others to do that. That is surely the purpose and the responsibility of being in government.

As well as advocating for Tasmanians, the Liberal government must take action to address our health crisis more broadly. We are focusing on one aspect of health care here, but better funding of the primary health sector in Tasmania is only one piece of what needs to be done to fix our health system. We need to look at the whole picture of our health system, from preventative health care to discharge, all the way through that process of people getting the health care that they need.

We need to do more in primary health care. We need to act on ambulances. We need to create better flows through the emergency department and act across hospitals to help patient flow from admission to discharge, ensuring that systems are in place for patients to receive good post-discharge care as well, meaning that they do not need to return to hospital for further treatment because their post-discharge care is good.

The Greens took a health action plan to the recent election which included 50 actions that we believe would go a long way to addressing the healthcare crisis in Tasmania. I draw your attention to some of those aspects and actions in our plan. We have a plan and a policy of investing in measures to recruit and retain new staff in areas of skill shortage. We know that we have huge skill shortages across the healthcare system, and that it is difficult to recruit and retain staff. We have measures in place that we believe would be helpful to address this, including paying off the university debts of 800 new staff across the next four years in areas of skilled shortage. If we did that in Tasmania, we could go a long way to being able to recruit people and retain them.

In question time the other day, I talked about the situation with ambulance officers working in single-staffed ambulances. If we established a compensation payment for staff who are working in difficult conditions, we could help take some of the pressure off and help our staff to cope with the conditions they are working in, in turn helping them stay longer.

We could train new enrolled nurses and support the existing workforce by funding the ANMF to build a health education and research centre in Launceston. They have been called for this for a long time; they have the land and the plans in place. If we funded that, that would help us to recruit and retain more staff because that would also provide education to existing staff members. If we funded clinical coaches on our wards, nurses would feel better supported and more likely to stay in those situations.

As I mentioned, we could expand Hospital in the Home and evaluation of geriatric patients, and that would help take the pressure off our hospitals as well. Within the emergency department, we could create emergency department navigator positions that help to coordinate patient journeys through the emergency department, making them more efficient and taking pressure off our emergency departments.

We could expand discharge nurse positions so that discharge planning commenced as soon as a patient entered the hospital, and so that nurses were in communication with patients' families and community services right from the moment a person comes into hospital. This would mean patients are able to leave when they are ready to leave and are not stuck in hospital waiting for things to be put in place for their discharge.

There are many things in the Greens' plan for health. We could commit to a seven-day week hospital discharge model. We could ensure that the transit lounges that are in place at the moment are functioning and being used fully. I note last week I attended a briefing with the acting secretary of the health department, Dale Webster, and he indicated that there are steps being taken in these areas that are really encouraging. However, we need to continue to monitor this and ensure that the actions that are being taken work, to take more action as required and to continue investing.

I mentioned preventative health. We could do more in preventative health in funding policies to fund a healthy Tasmania - initiatives that will help people become less likely to become unwell and need our health service.

In summary, the Greens support this motion because it may open doors to positive action by the federal government to boost funding and to support primary health services and urgent care clinics. This will help patients receive quality health care outside of our hospitals, taking pressure off ambulance staff, emergency departments and hospital wards - and ensuring

appropriate health care is available for Tasmanians when they need it. However, we call on the government to stop abrogating its responsibility and shifting blame, and to take its duty to fix our health system seriously, with more broad action across the full spectrum of our health system. This is what Tasmanians deserve.

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank Simon Behrakis, the member for Clark, for bringing forward this motion, and for putting forward such an erudite, carefully crafted and well-researched presentation to the Chamber. They were very powerful arguments, and I agree with all of the points that the honourable member made. I thank members for their contributions during the debate and thank them for their encouragement and support for delivering a better healthcare system.

It is disappointing to hear the shadow minister on behalf of the Labor opposition make very strong accusations against our government, which I believe are unfounded and are not supported. There were two key points that the member made - that we will lobby the federal government and that we have lobbied the federal government. Well, I would like to know which it is, whether we have or we will - or is it both?

I think that is an easy answer to provide because -

**Ms Haddad** - You are the minister, Mr Barnett. With respect, you are a minister of the Crown, and you could be speaking to your federal counterparts.

**Mr BARNETT** - I speak with them regularly, and I thank the federal minister for the relationship that we have. I appreciate the constructive relationship we have; we have a very good working relationship. My point that I have made very clearly, and which has been made in the motion, is that the support from the federal government is grossly inadequate. I made that point in recent days and I have made it in writing to the federal minister. Likewise, the Premier and I have written to the Prime Minister about health in Tasmania and getting a better outcome because we do not want to be treated like second-class citizens.

I support this motion. I start my contribution by saying I am very pleased and proud to be minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, and I have enjoyed meeting so many doctors, nurses, orderlies, cleaners, paramedics and healthcare workers across the state. I acknowledge the volunteers as well, and I thank them for their wonderful support. Where would we be without our volunteers? I acknowledge National Volunteer Week this week. It is very good. I pay tribute to them. I pay tribute to all of our hardworking healthcare workers; they deliver 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I am incredibly grateful as the health minister on behalf of all of us.

The main point is that we cannot do it alone. We have been doing the heavy lifting in Tasmania as a state government. There are reflections on the Morrison government. Come on, let us move on. We are here where we are now. We have a federal Labor government. They have been there for some years and of course they are looking at an election soon, so there may be further sweeteners, we do not know, for Tasmania. I certainly hope so because I think we deserve it. We have not got more than our fair share, as the federal minister said yesterday. The federal Labor Treasurer was in Launceston this morning. The contribution to Tasmania, in terms of our fair share, has not been delivered. That is a grossly inadequate contribution.

The federal Labor government needs to do more. It needs to step up and step in, as we have done. We have proved this during the election campaign. We are delivering on our election campaign. The example I can give you, of course, is that we have stepped in at the St Marys GP clinic, which was a market failure and due to close, and we said 'no, we will come in'. I went to that public meeting with others. It was a very strongly felt meeting with hundreds in the room and we responded, and we said yes, they deserve those important healthcare services and now we have delivered on that. Likewise, we followed up at Bridgewater and at East Devonport and I was there with the mayor, Alison Jarman. I thank Alison for her advocacy for our local community and, of course, our Braddon Liberal members are so strongly supportive, Leonie Hiscutt MLC, likewise.

Just today I was at Lauderdale with Dr Zan Chen and Dr Hailey Woolveridge, and they are supported by Dr Jerome Muir Wilson, who was not there. They are partners in the revitalised Lauderdale Medical Centre at 444 South Arm Rd. It was a special day to be with them, to stand shoulder to shoulder with those local doctors to say they will reopen that Lauderdale GP practice, thanks to the support of our government. They said in their media release:

... the collaboration has been made possible through the support of minister Guy Barnett, whose leadership in the State Government has facilitated this crucial initiative.

**Mr Jaensch** - Hear, hear.

**Mr BARNETT** - That is their quote.

**Mr Jaensch** - It is.

**Mr BARNETT** - It is a nice quote.

**Mr Jaensch** - It is.

**Mr BARNETT** - I appreciate it.

**Mr Jaensch** - That is why I'm recognising it.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you very much, member for Braddon.

Years of neglect from federal Medicare investment have rendered general practice vulnerable, but with this partnership, Lauderdale General Practice is set to reclaim its role as a cornerstone of local health care.

That is not my quote. It is the quote from these three local doctors. I say thank you for that. That recognises that federal Labor's support for those local GP practices is inadequate. It is not enough; it is not providing the support that is needed. That is why the motion put by the member for Clark is so cogent and spot on and I congratulate him yet again. So yes, it has been noted, we have four urgent care clinics in Tassie, two in Hobart, one in Launceston, one in Devonport and, of course, our State Government has been providing support for an urgent care clinic in Newstead in Launceston. We are going the extra mile again and again.

I put on the public record that I wrote to and communicated with the federal minister for health. Based on advice and evidence, not just from my department but from others, we deserve five urgent care clinics in Tasmania. There is a desperate need in other places as well, but this was based on advice. Bridgewater, so we have a tick there, we have Bridgewater, Sorell, Kingston, likewise, another one in Launceston and indeed Burnie. That is what we put to the federal government, and we felt, based on the current needs of the local community, and it is, as I say, we always need to do more, but we have delivered and that is the submission and we got, unfortunately, just the one with a top up for Launceston.

We welcome that and we thank them for that, but it is not enough, and it is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the Tasmanian people, the health care that they deserve as it is simple as that and the member for Clark made that point time and again during his presentation. It was just last week that I was out at Glenorchy with Dr Mark Baldock, and we were so pleased and proud to be standing there, shoulder to shoulder on the corner adjacent to the Amiens Clinic at Glenorchy in the northern suburbs and it is very well received. We were able to step in, provide the support necessary for that new GP practice to transition from the one that will close in coming weeks, and then it will transition seamlessly through to the northern suburbs community.

The feedback I have had has been really positive and I was pleased to be able to speak with Bec Thomas, the new independent member for Elwick. Absolutely delighted. Very pleased for the local community. I spoke to Sue Hickey, I spoke to many others, and they are very pleased to have that GP practice continuing well into the future. I spoke to David O'Byrne, the member for Franklin, earlier today about the Lauderdale GP practice. I spoke to the Clarence mayor, Brendan Blomeley, and yes, he is also very pleased.

We have stepped in, we have stepped up, we are delivering. Surely, this is a team Tasmania approach and all of us should do everything we can. Of course, it is appropriate for state Labor to talk to, communicate with and advocate to their federal Labor colleagues to get the job done and deliver better healthcare services in Tasmania. I am very keen to advance the cause for a better healthcare system in Tasmania. If you think about it, what is going on at the moment is there is a breakdown, there is a market failure for our GP practices. They are private businesses or private operations, but they are supported by the federal government through Medicare. We all know that. What has happened as a result of that failure, that market failure, the lack of support? You end up with four out of 10 Tasmanians presenting at our emergency department that are not emergencies. Many of those, indeed most of those four out of 10, can be cared for and supported by their local GP. Come on.

Now the federal government has a role to play. I meet my state and territory colleagues regularly and I will tell you this is consistent around Australia, and they all say the federal government has got to step up and do more but in Tasmania, these are the figures: four out of 10 people, when they present to the emergency department, are not in an emergency. Surely, we can take the pressure off. The finger is pointed at the emergency departments.

I want to say thank you again to our healthcare workers. What a job they are doing. It is brilliant. Absolutely awesome. I am really pleased with the ED review that has landed. It is a lot of hard work, a lot of recommendations and now that is coming forward and we are implementing it. We have not waited; we started implementing last year and those reforms are now rolling out. If you look at the dashboard that went up today, made public today, you will see incremental improvements since this came into force many weeks ago. Very good progress.

There is a lot more to go, of course there is, and that is why I am saying thank you to all our healthcare workers. The systems are improving; the reforms are taking place.

I appreciate the round table I had with the unions and my department and the AMA last month, with the ANMF with HACSU, with the AMA, with my department. Excellent collaboration. Now we do not all agree on everything, of course not, but there is an objective there to get the job done and deliver better healthcare systems and we have received positive feedback. I will be having another round table next week and I am looking forward to it. I want to work together, shoulder to shoulder to get the job done to deliver better healthcare outcomes for the Tasmanian people. I do not mind who we work with across the board, but this is it, surely, it is team Tasmania at work here and that is what this motion is about, to make a difference.

Team Tasmania. I highlight one statistic from the ED review that came out that is really interesting. They say that on average we have 146 Tasmanians or patients in our hospitals who cannot get out. They deserve to be discharged today. On average 146. Why is that? There are two main reasons. There is nowhere for them to go to an aged care facility. There is nowhere for them to go to get disability support in the community. There are 146 people in our hospitals at any one time on average - that is a couple of wards full of people - who cannot be discharged. They have nowhere to go. The federal government has to step up and take some responsibility. I do not care what colour or persuasion. It is a federal Labor government. That is where they are. They need to deliver. They need to support Tasmania. It is true it is happening all around Australia, but they are the stats for Tasmania.

We need a Team Tasmania approach in the Tasmanian parliament to send a message, to advocate to your local federal member, wherever they are, your local federal senator and say, 'Come on, Tassie needs a good result.' That is what we are on about. We will not give up advocating and fighting for a good result.

Yes, we have stepped in at St Marys, we have stepped in at Bridgewater, we have stepped in at East Devonport. Last week we stepped in at Glenorchy and now, just today, I have stepped in at the Lauderdale GP practice. We will not stop, but it is a federal responsibility to provide that support for the GP practices. I will read that quote again from our local doctors, Dr Chen, Dr Woolveridge and Dr Muir Wilson:

Years of neglect from federal Medicare investment have rendered general practice vulnerable but, with this partnership, Lauderdale General Practice is set to reclaim its role as a cornerstone of local health care.

Hooray, congratulations, that is good news. Notwithstanding the trials and tribulations, they have fought through, we worked behind the scenes with my department, I talked directly with the local doctors. We achieved a deal, signed today. I am over the moon for the people of the eastern shore. When I spoke to the mayor, Brendan Blomeley, he was over the moon. He was really rapt for his local community on the eastern shore. David O'Byrne has raised this in the parliament and raised it directly with me. I spoke to him earlier today and he is very pleased with the results.

Of course, there is always more to do. There are no issues there. We will get on with the job, but surely, it is Team Tasmania. Let us do it.

We have a raft of policies in place to deliver better health care outcomes. I was here when the federal Labor Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, was here last year and said:

When you are talking about health care, you are not talking about party politics. You shouldn't be. You are talking about solutions, what patients need. That's what I'm concerned about.

Thank you, I totally agree. Let us get on with the job, Team Tasmania: work together so Tasmanians get the right health care in the right place at the right time.

We have delivered our GP Guarantee, we have the Rapid Response Team under our policies, 10 GPs. They will be employed by the state government where there is a market failure. We want 40 new GPs, particularly in our rural and regional areas. We are paying off their HECS debts. There is also, of course, \$250,000 a year for the GP practices, whether it be upgrading those practices or providing nurse practitioner support. They do a wonderful job. Look at the Cygnet nurse practitioner, Kerrie Duggan and her team. Congratulations, thank you for what you are doing, Kerrie. I admire you greatly.

We have to be more innovative, and we are doing this. Thank you to the former health minister, Premier Jeremy Rockliff, for providing an innovative approach with the single-employer model. We are collaborating with the federal government to deliver that. It started in Deloraine in July last year, then in various towns and medical practices all around Tasmania. It is a really good result, where GP registrars can be employed in a single-employer model. That will help recruitment and retention of our GPs in those rural and regional communities.

I have mentioned the support we are providing for GP after-hours support, the Rural Medical Workforce Centre at Latrobe, which I have visited a number of times in the last 12 months, the Community Rapid Response Service. I have not talked about the ambulance service, but yes, another 78 ambos over the coming forward Estimates, 21 of those community paramedics caring for people in their own home. I have not talked about the Hospital in the Home service, which has been expanded. It is going much better, looking after people in their own home. It is an excellent initiative and, again, it is working together to get the job done. It is an absolute ripper result, but there is a lot more work to do. We are not saying we have it all right; we have not. However, we are trying to be more open and transparent. You will see it on the health dashboard released today in terms of updating those statistics with the transfer-of-care delay. You will see that is moving to really up-to-date information, rather than just a monthly report, so please take that into account.

We all have our own personal experience of the healthcare system. I have type 1 diabetes, which I have had since 15 January 1997. I remember that day very well. Others have their own experience with the health system. We all live in Tasmania, and we want a better result and want to build a better healthcare system. That is what we are doing in Tasmania under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

I was up in New Norfolk with the Premier and we launched and provided more support for the mobile GP clinic up there. They go to New Norfolk, Bridgewater, Lauderdale and other communities. We have expanded that. They are bulk-billed appointments. Again, that is for vulnerable Tasmanians. They might be homeless Tasmanians. It is for vulnerable Tasmanians

who need that bulk-billed support. It is a ripper program; I am really rapt with it. It is going well. I look forward to getting further updates on that program as it rolls out.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to support this motion, and I hope the Chamber supports it. We all want to get on with it together to deliver and build a better health system for Tasmania. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms BROWN** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will echo Ms Haddad's comments and say that, of course, we want to be working with our federal government on this. Health for everybody in our communities is so important.

You are talking about GPs in our communities: what about Risdon Vale? Risdon Valians work very hard. They deserve a GP who is close to them, who they do not have to take a bus to, because some people cannot actually use the bus facility. I have spoken to a constituent who cannot ride on a bus because of her spine, and she does not have the funds to be getting an Uber or a taxi to the nearest facility. We need to make sure we are taking care of all of our community, not just some of our community.

I will also touch on Labor's policy, which would have had a massive impact in this area, which was free degrees for all local doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. That would have been amazing. It would have really impacted the crisis we are seeing at the moment. However, we are not the government of the day - they are. It is also up to them to speak to the federal Labor party. Therefore, I would like to move an amendment.

In paragraph (3) following the word 'Opposition'

*Insert the words 'and Liberal government'.*

**Ms BROWN** - It is important to acknowledge that you also have a responsibility here, that you also need to be partnering with the federal government to make sure we are impacting our community and making good decisions here for all of our community, not just some.

**Amendment agreed to.**

[7.05 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for bringing this motion, but I am concerned with what we have before us. We have, unfortunately, an ailing health system on so many fronts. It is not just GPs that are being propped up. I am concerned that there is a domino effect. There is one GP clinic after another after another failing. Why are we getting to that point? Why is that occurring?

There are major concerns around various parts of the health system. Emergency departments across our major hospitals are in a constant state of turmoil, so there is still much more work to be done there. Our waiting lists are unfortunately getting longer and longer, which has an impact on GP services. GPs are getting to the end of their working lives, and we are not getting as many through as possible. There is a chronic underspend of an estimated \$2 billion in the health system. That is from health economist Martin Goddard, who suggests that we need to look seriously at how we are spending and how we are building infrastructure.



There is significant concern that cannot be fixed just by looking at GP services. Our state has the poorest population and requires substantially more expenditure on public hospital services than the average. We need more investment; this cannot continue. Whilst The Greens will be supporting this motion tonight, I think we need to think about the real victims in this situation, people like the woman I doorknocked in West Moonah during the election whose husband was so unwell, had tried to get into a GP, got turned away, went to the ED, waited and waited for care, and unfortunately did not survive.

We have real situations. This is affecting Tasmanians, and often in the poorest areas. I really welcome a cooperative approach from both the federal government and the state government to fix this health crisis.

**Motion, as amended, agreed to.**

### **WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME**

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I advise that, in accordance with Standing Order 42, the remainder of private members' time for this day's sitting will be waived.

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

#### **St John's Park - Dialysis Unit**

[7.04 p.m.]

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The member having waived the remaining time for private members' business and the debate having concluded, I call on the minister to advise whether the House wishes to proceed to government business.

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - No, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to speak on indulgence to update the House with respect to an answer I provided to the honourable member for Clark, Ms Kristie Johnston, this morning in relation to the renal unit at St John's Park.

I acknowledge the concerns raised today and have sought advice from my department. I am advised the building was constructed in 1962, and while it is considered to be in a reasonable condition, there is no doubt it is showing its age.

I am advised by my department that a program of regular maintenance is undertaken to ensure the building remains suitable for the ongoing delivery of services. The St John's Park Health and Wellbeing Precinct Draft Master Plan was released in May 2023, including the vision for the development of the St John's Park site. The final master plan is under development, and I am advised that renal services are being considered as part of this process.

As indicated in Question Time, I am looking forward to meeting with the Kidney Advisory Group to discuss their concerns, and I will seek further advice following that meeting. I will also be visiting the building in coming weeks.

## **Robbins Passage Wetlands - Potential for Ramsar Listing**

[7.05 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I have two further answers from this morning's Question Time.

The first one is in response to the member for Braddon, Mr Garland, who asked the Premier a question in his capacity representing the minister for the Environment, and the answer is as follows.

The listing of wetlands under the International Ramsar Convention is an Australian Government responsibility. While a nomination can be made by an NGO, community group, individual or other entity, the Australian Government requires the nomination to meet a number of strict criteria relating to environmental and social matters and include comprehensive formal consultation. These include the state government as land manager reviewing and endorsing the ecological character descriptions, boundary descriptions and maps, proposed management plans, Ramsar Information Sheet and a summary of consultative outcomes. A full assessment of Robbins Passage under the Ramsar listing process has not occurred.

## ***Spirits of Tasmania - Penalty Clauses***

[7.06 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Deputy Speaker in answer to a question from the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier in relation to penalty clauses in the TT-Line contract, I add the following information.

The government has sought advice from TT-Line regarding the penalty clauses and is awaiting a response, noting commercial-in-confidence provisions may limit the amount of information able to be released.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

## **National Volunteer Week**

[7.07 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Community Services) - Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my heartfelt thanks to the 300,000 or so volunteers who are the lifeblood of hundreds of community organisations across Tasmania. National Volunteer Week, which takes place from 20 to 27 May, is our opportunity to officially recognise volunteers who contribute to many diverse areas, from sport and the arts through to the health and community services, aged care, emergency management, education and conservation, to name a few.

As the Minister for Community Services, it was my pleasure this morning to visit the state office of Meals on Wheels in Glenorchy with my colleague and member for Clark Mr Simon Behrakis to meet some of the volunteers who contribute together 21,000 hours of service to that organisation's work every year. Meals on Wheels has supported the health and wellbeing of thousands of older Tasmanians for almost 70 years in Tasmania.

Its workforce does much more than provide nutritious meals. Delivery volunteers conduct wellbeing checks and provide a connection to community for some of our most vulnerable people. Meals on Wheels allows many to continue to enjoy the independence of living in their own homes when that might not otherwise be possible. This service comes from volunteers' hearts and their will to look after people in their own communities, which is what Tasmanians do so very well.

Our Tasmanian Men's Shed Network is another outstanding success story of community volunteering that has delivered life-changing outcomes. There are now 71 sheds across the state that give men and many women a welcoming place to gather, share information and stay connected while working on valuable community projects. Shed members are always ready to lend a hand in their communities, from creating benches for public spaces or crafting handmade trophies to delivering firewood for disadvantaged members of their own communities.

Neighbourhood houses have become the glue that bind many communities across Tasmania, and I thank the many volunteers for the vital services they provide in their local neighbourhood and community houses. In recent years, our houses have risen to the challenge of helping families cope with cost-of-living pressures, in addition to the many outreach services they host.

There are countless ways volunteers see a need and fill it. They give us a vibrant arts community and help in aged care settings, schools and hospitals. Grassroots sports could not survive without the coaches, umpires, canteen workers and fundraising committees. Our environment and public spaces show the benefit of volunteers who pick up litter, maintain walking tracks, protect penguins, and eradicate weeds.

This government understands and appreciates the immense gift of time and compassion all of our volunteer organisations bring every year. To help the community services sector make best use of these resources and plan ahead with confidence, we will work with the peak body, Volunteering Tasmania, to develop the state's first volunteering strategy. Our \$150,000 commitment to the strategy development will culminate in a five-year action plan to build a stronger and more resilient volunteer network for Tasmania. We will also give Volunteering Tasmania \$520,000 per year for two years, including funding for the annual Volunteer Awards, which are an important way for contributions to be publicly acknowledged and celebrated.

Our Liberal Government recognises that the community sector wants to see certainty for their sector, the organisations it supports and the Tasmanians who those organisations assist each and every day. That is why, at the recent election, we committed to provide guaranteed indexation at a level above that of Treasury CPI forecasts over the next four years. This increase of 12.5 per cent across four years is a commitment we made in our Supporting Stronger Communities policy as part of the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania. It will give government-funded community service providers the certainty they need for long-term planning and to support delivery.

We will also work with providers to streamline the way we purchase services and run our grants programs to minimise red tape and administrative costs to them wherever possible. This will free up more resources to be of direct material benefit to community members in need. Volunteer organisations will also benefit from our commitment to shift the focus from emergency food relief to food resilience and will provide an extra \$1 million so emergency food relief can be maintained while we work on our Food Relief to Food Resilience strategy with key players in the sector. We will also provide \$200,000 to develop the long-term food resilience strategy to reduce the demand for emergency relief and the stress on households that can sometimes struggle to put food on their tables.

The work of our volunteers inspires others and can be life-changing for both a volunteer and the people they help. We want to support them and to celebrate them. We also need more of them, with organisations reporting a decline in volunteer hours since the arrival of COVID in 2020. I urge everyone to show their gratitude to a volunteer in person with a handshake, a note or a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. This recognition can fill their cup and energise them to continue making a difference in the communities they generously serve. To all of our volunteers, I again offer my deep gratitude for all that you do for our community. Thank you.

### **Great Western Tiers Tourism Association Award Winners**

[7.18 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to congratulate two friends of the Meander Valley community for taking the stage at last week's Great Western Tiers Tourism Association Award. Proud members of the Hands Off Quamby Bluff Community Group, Katie MacLaren and Jules Campbell, won awards for their photographs highlighting the ongoing logging at Quamby Bluff and its remaining high conservation value forests.

The Visual Arts competition was to celebrate the unique beauty of the Great Western Tiers, kooparoona niara. Quamby Bluff is towering above Jackeys Marsh and is the dominant dolerite icon in the landscape of the Great Western Tiers. This is the range that provides the scenic backdrop to the Meander Valley. In 2022, when a swathe of this forest on the slopes of Quamby Bluff was clear-felled and burnt, it left a mark of destruction on the spectacular landscape. This logging took place against the community wishes, and the community rallied and founded the Hands off Quamby Bluff Group to take a stand against the further 110 hectares of forests that were planned to be logged. Kudos goes to Katie, who is committed to donating her prize money to the Quamby Community Group.

Award-winning creativity has become a bit of a unique cornerstone for the Hands Off Quamby group. In late November last year, locals, Lucinda, Tyler and Stuart spent 15 hours making a cake that was a replica of Quamby, complete with a logging scar. The cake was entered into the Deloraine Show and won second prize. I had the privilege in March to walk through the towering forests that are under threat. I joined more than 50 concerned and caring people to explore and admire the ecosystem with a noteworthy diversity of bird life. We saw the geological values of the region and heard about its immense cultural significance. We were captivated and many were motivated to join the Hands Off Quamby Group in pushing for an end to logging on the bluff, as well as the wider Great Western Tiers.

The Quamby Group has been utilising citizen science to monitor the species that call the coupes home, and just a few weeks back they captured footage of a Tasmanian devil in a coupe that is destined for destruction. Proper protection of the high conservation value forests of kooparoona niara, including Quamby Bluff, are a necessity. These forests have the same values as those formerly recognised with outstanding universal value, just a few hundred metres away in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. We are in a climate and biodiversity crisis and our forests stand as a safeguard against further environmental decline.

There remains a strong case for the kooparoona niara National Park to perpetually protect not only the forests but the unique geology and cultural values. This can and should be Tasmania's first Aboriginal-managed national park. Thank you to the Hands Off Quamby Group for taking a brave stand, but mostly for doing so with creative style.

### **Let Them Be Kids Campaign**

[7.16 p.m.]

**Mrs PETRUSMA** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, over the past week, News Corp has been running a campaign titled 'Let Them Be Kids' with the *Mercury* newspaper supporting this campaign with daily double-page spreads highlighting the harm that social media addiction is having on Australia's children. The *Mercury's* articles have been accompanied by expert opinion supporting the push to increase the age of access. Tragically, in the newspaper there are devastating stories of parents who have lost a child, as well as mental illness caused by addiction to social media.

While social media can be a tool for good, there are several reasons as to why social media is regarded as harmful to children and young people. First, social media platforms often present a distorted reality, fostering unrealistic expectations about body image, success and lifestyles. This constant exposure can lead to diminished self-esteem and body dissatisfaction amongst young users, contributing to anxiety, depression and eating disorders. The curated perfection young people see online makes them question their own worth, often leading to harmful comparisons and a perpetual sense of inadequacy.

Second, the issue of cyberbullying cannot be overlooked. Social media provides a breeding ground for anonymous bullying and harassment, and unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can be relentless, including occurring in the sanctity of a child's own home and affecting them 24/7. This persistent harassment can have severe emotional and psychological consequences, sometimes tragically leading to self-harm or suicide.

Social media can also be a significant distraction, affecting academic performance and sleep patterns.

The addictive nature of these platforms often results in children spending countless hours online, neglecting their studies and losing precious sleep. This not only hampers their academic achievements, but also their overall physical health. Additionally, social media often exposes children to inappropriate content and dangerous influences. Without proper supervision, children can easily encounter explicit material or be targeted by predators. The lack of maturity to navigate these dangers makes them particularly vulnerable.

Social media also adversely affects social skills. Excessive social media use can hinder face-to-face interactions, leading to underdeveloped social skills and a preference for virtual interactions over real-life relationships. This can result in isolation and difficulty in building meaningful connections.

In Australia, we are seeing the aforementioned harms of social media manifesting in children at an epidemic rate. Mental illness and youth suicide rates are skyrocketing, and the number of children being diagnosed with eating disorders has increased 200 per cent. Education outcomes are declining, with teachers saying that students are unable to engage in the classroom due to sleep deprivation caused by excessive social media use keeping children awake until the early hours of the morning.

There is also no shortage of expert opinion stating that the utter explosion of social media use over the past decade has had an immense, negative impact on the lives of children. The contemporary opinion of adolescent psychologists, child health professionals and digital wellbeing experts is that social media needs to be viewed as an addictive, harmful vice that children should be restricted from accessing the same way that they are restricted from accessing other addictive harmful vices such as pornography, tobacco products and alcohol.

Madam Speaker, parents who are aware of the harms of social media do their best to try to regulate its use by children. However, many feel powerless to protect their children from predators, addictive behaviour and age inappropriate or harmful content, especially as children who are desperate to access social media usually, sadly, will find a way. We need to give parents whatever supports we can in dealing with these challenges, particularly in the face of the profit imperatives of huge international companies that are reluctant to self-regulate as they know that implementing measures to adequately protect children will require significant investment and ultimately harm their profits.

This is why there have been increasing calls for bans on young people being able to access social media. Some are calling for a ban for under 14-year-olds, some for under-16s. This government is approaching this with an open mind and, at the same time, believes we do need to try new ways to nurture and support our children. We need to give parents the support they need to help regulate behaviour and minimise harm. Importantly, we need to listen to the experts and look at a coordinated response.

The recent step by the federal government for an age verification trial is a step in the right direction. This government supports a national approach to what is a danger that exists in every home, no matter what street, no matter which state you live in. One thing is certain: the time for action is now. This is why this government backs the national discussion that is now under way, and we thank those seeking to elevate this issue.

The health, happiness and well-being of our children is at risk, and we must endeavour to chart a safe passage to protect them. Let us let kids be kids and protect them from the social media scourge.

### **Paul Watson Foundation**

[7.22 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, recently, the Paul Watson Foundation ship, *Northern Horizon*, was berthed in the Port of Hobart for repairs, for decking out their ship to

prepare their trip south to protect the southern oceans from Japan's whaling fleet, which is set to return to the carnage of times past, cruelly hunting whales, the most beautiful giant sentient beings of our oceans.

I will give a bit of background on what the Paul Watson Foundation does.

The Paul Watson Foundation has many functions. It is essentially there to protect marine ecosystems. They also work with the United Nations and international organisations to find solutions to stop poaching in areas beyond national borders and they also work to protect the United Nations World Charter for Nature. They also look for solutions to protect coral reef systems and find solutions to address the unlawful killing of marine mammals.

On Sunday, 5 May, I toured the ship, the *Northern Horizon* with Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, former Sea Shepherd crew members, Glenorchy City Councillor, Molly Kendall and her husband, Andrew, and Oscar on the invitation of Captain Lachie McLean. The ship was berthed at Princess Wharf. Ironically, it is an ex-Japanese coast guard ship which has been decked out under the colours of the Paul Watson Foundation. I met with crew and heard plans to fit out the ship using the skills of local companies such as Taylor Marine, potentially buying equipment such as dinghies, engines and having the ship in dry dock for cleaning and repairs.

Earlier, on 3 May, I wrote to TasPorts CEO, Mr Anthony Donald on behalf of the Paul Watson Foundation to request the reconsideration of the berthing fee that TasPorts was charging. I said in my letter:

It is of significant concern that one of the defenders of the southern oceans and subantarctic and Antarctic waters, Paul Watson and the Paul Watson Foundation, will not be able to dock for three months at Hobart's Constitution Dock because of significant berthing fees. The *Northern Horizon* was en route to do more vital work in protecting the southern oceans, intending to berth in Hobart for 90 days. Proposed commercial fees of \$1200 per day for the first fortnight then price on approval are prohibitive for a not-for-profit organisation.

This plea, unfortunately, fell on deaf ears. I received a letter in response on 6 May from TasPorts. I have since discovered that instead of the *Northern Horizon* staying in port to undertake repairs, supporting local Hobart and Tasmanian businesses, the crew eating in local restaurants, providing education to locals, which is always very popular as to their work in the southern oceans, the ship has set sail and taken their business elsewhere.

Effectively, the Paul Watson Foundation was being charged a ridiculous amount per day and have left the Port of Hobart for an affordable berth. The Port of Hobart was not bustling with ships at the time and there were certainly various spare berths for ships in the Port of Hobart.

You have to ask, what are the implications of this obstinate position by TasPorts despite the request to reduce their berthing fee? Unfortunately, this monopoly on the Port of Hobart has had a detrimental impact on Hobart's reputation as a gateway city to the Antarctic, a city that wishes to welcome defenders of the southern oceans. What are the implications for Hobart as an Antarctic gateway city to shun the good work of defenders of the southern seas and the

environment, the gateway city that does not welcome the not-for-profit Paul Watson Foundation? What are the implications for Tasmanian businesses that miss out on tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars of business?

Hobart is proud to be a gateway to the Antarctic with many scientists, businesses, ships of visiting countries embarking on the journey south from our well-appointed port. A report released in November 2023 identified that the Antarctic economy generated \$183 million per annum. Yet TasPorts could not see fit to charge anything but what can only be described as an exorbitant daily fee of \$1200 for this defender of our oceans and waters around Antarctica.

When I wrote to TasPorts on 3 May, asking for a reduction to a more reasonable fee, given the port had few ships in port, and given there had been other situations where Sea Shepherd and other not-for-profit organisations had berthed for much more affordable rates, I was utterly shocked to be stonewalled with this reply from TasPorts.

### **Hydrotherapy Pool - North West Regional Hospital**

[7.28 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight on the adjournment to speak about an issue that I feel like I have been speaking about for a very long time. That is the reopening of the hydrotherapy pool at the North West Regional Hospital, which has been closed since 2020.

We have been calling on the government for years to reopen this important community facility. Whether that be for perioperative care for people before they have a joint replacement done, for their aftercare after surgery, for all those living across our community where we have very high levels of chronic disease burden, the ability to have exercise, the socialisation that comes with that as well, and the great benefits that can come from utilising regular hydrotherapy pools for those with a disability living across our community as well.

The excuse to date that I have always been provided with is that this facility was closed because of COVID. COVID, in my mind, was quite some time ago when we had to close public facilities because of the risk of the spread of COVID across our community. To me, that does not stack up anymore. I need a better reason than that from this government for why this facility is not open for our community.

I have been working closely with members across the community, mainly local physiotherapists who know how beneficial the pool was for their patients in times gone by. I have also been working with the community of the local support school in Burnie, whose students have benefited in the past from being able to access these hydrotherapy facilities. They are very important for their therapeutic care. Right now, they do not have an option to access that therapeutic care and hydrotherapy facilities in the local community.

The community has had enough. Quite frankly, I have had enough. At the last state election, we committed to reopening that facility at the North West Regional Hospital. It is high time the government provided an answer as to why the facility is not available to the community. I am really pleased to say that I will be working with the community and, over the course of the next week, launching a community petition to once and for all get it on the public record. Let people have their say in a proper way, put forward their thoughts on why



this facility needs to be reopened, and the benefits that it has brought broadly to our community over many years. They want to see it opened. I want to see it opened. I want the government to do something about it.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Are there any further speakers on the adjournment?

The House stands adjourned.

**The House adjourned at 7.31 p.m.**