



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 25 June 2020

REVISED EDITION

Thursday 25 June 2020

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

QUESTIONS

Hobart Showgrounds Renewal Project

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.03 a.m.]

COVID recovery will require an approach that considers all regions and all sectors of the economy. Labor has consulted extensively to identify existing projects and new proposals that could be fast-tracked to create jobs, promote social and economic renewal, and create a better and fairer Tasmania. Our COVID recovery package has now been submitted to your Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Council.

One of the projects we have put forward to consideration is the Hobart Showgrounds renewal project, which is the result of funding provided by your Government to produce a master plan for that site. This exciting proposal presents a great opportunity to redevelop the site to provide more than 500 new homes, including affordable housing and community areas, a new exhibition venue and improved recreational spaces. The renewal project will create hundreds of jobs and help put a roof over the head of more than 1000 people.

With this project now enjoying bipartisan support, will you commit to providing funding in the upcoming Budget to help make it a reality?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I thank the Opposition for at least taking the time to actually put something together -

Mr O'Byrne - Are you damning us with faint praise, Premier?

Mr GUTWEIN - You are spot on. In terms of the showgrounds project, I spoke with some of the people involved with that last week. You are right. It is an exciting project. I noticed in your red booklet - if I can call it that - that you submitted to PESRC that there was nothing in there in terms of how much funding would be required.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. The Premier is on his feet.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is an important project. It has been put forward as a suggestion but, again, without an understanding as to how much money might be required or what it might cost.

We have announced a significant package to support housing; \$100 million has been put into supporting social housing over the next couple of years. I have not seen the final master plan and

their proposal that can be considered as we move forward in terms of an opportunity for Glenorchy but also to put roofs over people's heads. Quite frankly, it surprises me that you would ask a question and not think it is something we would be considering, knowing that there is work going on and that we have provided money to assist them with the master plan.

What we need to understand is what level of support is required, what that level of support will deliver and, whilst it is a nice suggestion and a red brochure from Labor, the only numbers I could find providing any indication of anything numerical were the page numbers. As I have made clear on previous occasions, at some time, and I hope it might be for this budget, that you would put together an alternate budget so that people can understand how you are going to fund what you are suggesting. I take the opportunity today, as this will be our last parliamentary day before we go into recess -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - I wanted to make the point, albeit I am being interjected on, that as we started this period, I thought the very best of what we had to offer the Tasmanian people was on show. In fact, with all 25 people in this Chamber, albeit not everybody is represented here today because of social distancing, Tasmanians got to see their representatives as one, focused on getting outcomes for our community. I thank the parliament for that. Through this, and I am sure that you, like me, will have seen both the very best of people and the very worst as we have worked our way through this. I have never been prouder to be a member of parliament than I was when we started this journey.

There will be ructions and positions taken. That is the right of all of us as members of parliament and of political parties, but I thank all 25 of us in this place for the work we engaged in, the way we approached it and for the message we sent to the Tasmanian community, and that was that we were there for their best interests.

Small Business Hardship Grants Program

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.08 a.m.]

We have been inundated with businesses that have missed out on support from your Government and are struggling to survive. Many of them have written to your Government and have not received a response. Were you aware that while businesses that have missed out on support wait for news on whether their grant will be reviewed, your Finance minister and leadership rival, Michael Ferguson, has been calling successful applicants in Bass, presumably to try to claim credit for their support; the support they are receiving from the Tasmanian taxpayer? How did Mr Ferguson, who is not the minister responsible for this grant program, obtain the details of successful grant applicants? How can you justify this rank political opportunism when your Government should be contacting and assisting those businesses that missed out and are struggling to survive?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it does not surprise me that one of my ministers would be aware of who has been successful in a government program. That does not surprise me at all.

In terms of the overall program, I point out once again that more than 18 000 grants have been paid out to business. Many businesses have received significant support.

I also put on the record today that I spoke with the Energy minister overnight. A matter that was raised in the parliament yesterday, in terms of small businesses that are part of an embedded network, is one that we will have another look at. We will review that. Administratively it will be difficult, but I think there is an issue there for small business, and it is one the Government needs to do some further work on.

Mr O'Byrne - His answer yesterday was woeful.

Mr GUTWEIN - I thought his answer was spot-on, to be frank. I make the point that, as a Government, we will do our very best to be fair and even-handed in how we work our way through this.

Regarding the overall grant program, I indicated yesterday that there is a review under way and that the minister responsible will have more to say soon in that space.

There have been a significant number of applications. A significant number of grants have been paid. I can understand that some people are concerned as to why they may not have received a grant, or the level of support that they received. We will work through that process, and the minister will have more to say at a later date.

Sustainable Timbers Tasmania - Additional Coupes

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr BARNETT

[10.12 a.m.]

Your GBE, so-called Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, continued its destructive native forest logging throughout the pandemic emergency. In fact, the evidence points to a significant escalation. After their failed bid to get FSC, it has now come to light that STT is adding new coupes to their current three-year wood production plan, which expires in less than a week. We understand 19 new coupes have been added to Sustainable Timbers' current hitlist, something we have not seen before. We have received information that a coupe that was snuck in less than a month ago will be logged shortly. A number of those 19 coupes are of high conservation value. All of them are critical carbon stores.

Your officers advise that the addition of coupes can occur when there are specific environmental, social or economic reasons. In a climate and extinction crisis there is no environmental or social reason to justify the covert addition of these 19 carbon stores to be clear-felled and burned. How can you justify an economic one? Can you confirm native forest logging has escalated this year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am delighted to receive a question from the Leader of the Greens with respect to our forest industry because I am proud of it. This side of the House is proud of the industry for the wonderful work they do, particularly during this coronavirus pandemic. We have been having our regular meetings, working shoulder-to-shoulder with the industry to drive that industry further, to help rebuild. Of course, all that is on the back of the devastating Labor-Greens government, when it was brought to its knees. We have help to rebuild the forest industry. On this side of the House we are proud of it, particularly in those rural and regional areas, and what they contribute in terms of jobs.

I was asked a question right at the end, with respect to native forest harvesting. That sector of forestry in Tasmania provides 40 per cent of the thousands of jobs in the forest industry -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. We expected this response from the minister, where he obfuscates and does not get to the point, and thumps the table. What we need to know is an answer to the question about whether there has been an escalation of native logging, which we have evidence there has been. If you could just answer that up straight-up, that would be terrific.

Madam SPEAKER - It is not a point of order, but I do ask the minister to be relevant.

Mr BARNETT - As I was saying, with respect to native forest harvesting, there is only one party here - and it is the Greens - who want it extinguished altogether. They want a ban on native forest harvesting. Forty per cent of those working in the forestry industry lose their jobs on day one when you impose that. There is only one way it can be imposed and is with a Labor-Greens government, so let us be very clear about that. We stand up for the forest industry and we will not relent.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister is continuing to obfuscate, not answer the question and put out propaganda. Could you please draw his attention to the question?

Madam SPEAKER - As you know that is not a point of order, but I draw his attention to trying to answer the question.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Speaker, there are many questions I was asked. I was answering initially the last part of her question.

Madam Speaker, let me address -

Ms O'Connor - Can you confirm that native forest logging has escalated?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr BARNETT - I received a number of questions from the Leader of the Greens that I am trying to answer. The first part of the question makes it very clear with respect to the Sustainable Timber Tasmania and not the offensive words used by the Leader of the Greens with respect to that government business enterprise.

I am proud of the work Sustainable Timber Tasmania has delivered and a profitable outcome under this Government. You have been briefed and know this, and I am putting on the record for all to be aware, that there is no legislative requirement for Sustainable Timber Tasmania to notify the Forest Practices Authority if adding or subtracting a coup under the Three Year Wood Production Plan. Let us make it very clear. Additional coupes can be added to the STT's harvest plan after the production of a three-year wood production plan where there are specific economic, social, environmental reasons for doing so.

Madam Speaker, an example for all to hear: bushfires had an impact on the Three Year Production Plan for Sustainable Timber Tasmania. You know that; you have been advised of that by my office. You come in here and ask the same question and you know the answer. Of course bushfires have an impact on the Three Year Production Plan. She is standing on her soapbox, trying to create an issue for her supporters in the public.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I am back on the soapbox. Could the minister please confirm that native forest logging has escalated this year?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. I can do my best to ask the minister to answer that question, but I remind you that this is not a family dinner party where we can yell at each other across the table. We are in parliament and we -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - here are always good ones and naughty ones at the table. Please be respectful.

Ms O'Connor - No, hang on, the minister has not finished.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, you have given him an extra minute. Please, I draw your attention to the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am doing my best to answer what the Leader of the Greens has received directly from my office to say those changes can occur where there are specific examples, and I have used the example of bushfires. Of course, it is so obvious additional coupes can be provided on Sustainable Timber Tasmania's production plan over that three-year period. The Three Year Wood Production Plan will be on the website as soon as they are included and will be published in July, next month.

With respect to native forest harvesting, we are proud of the native forest industry and we hope it will continue to sustain and grow because it employs 40 per cent of those in the industry. Under the Greens plan, they want to kill off those jobs, thousands of jobs. They will be gone on the unemployment scrapheap. We are in the coronavirus pandemic and the forest industry is backing our Government's plans for building and construction. It is so important.

I am proud of what they have done and am proud of what they are doing, unlike the Greens. The only way that policy could be implemented would be under a Labor-Greens government and let us hope that never occurs.

Jobs Plan

Mrs RYLAH question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.19 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Government's plan to create more jobs for Tasmanians, both now and in the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mrs Rylah for that question and her interest in this very important matter.

COVID-19 has been the largest health, economic and societal shock to hit our state in a century, probably the largest shock we have ever had. It has challenged all of us and it has resulted in thousands of Tasmanians becoming unemployed, unfortunately.

Now we face the second arguably tougher phase of this fight to reboot our economy whilst avoiding a deadly second wave of the virus. Earlier this month I announced my Government's plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania and to generate \$3.1 billion worth of construction value over the next couple of years. Our construction blitz brings forward shovel- ready projects, stimulates private sector investments, builds thousands of homes, delivers economic and social infrastructure for the 21st century and will support the creation of around 15 000 jobs.

We have looked at shovel- ready projects that build on our past successes. Our strong housing sector is now tasked to build 2300 more homes, including social and affordable homes. We will invest over \$40 million into road safety upgrades. We are also bringing forward investment into redeveloping schools like Devonport High School and investing a further \$7 million into the Trades and Water Centre of Excellence to ensure a job- ready workforce.

While managing the pandemic and stimulating jobs now, I must admit that I remain very clear-eyed about the future challenges we face and the opportunities that are over the horizon. Many are calling on us to build back better and this is exactly what we intend to do. To manage the impacts of climate change on our farmers, our plan invests an additional \$15 million into five irrigation schemes in the north- west and the north, including the Don Irrigation Scheme. In the spring session we will introduce bushfire legislation to enhance our preparedness for the coming bushfire season and future seasons.

The Prime Minister has now, very pleasingly, identified Project Marinus as a national priority project, streamlining the bilateral approvals processes. Earlier this year we also announced a world-leading 100 per cent renewable energy target by 2040 and a commitment to export clean hydrogen by 2030. Make no mistake, these projects will support billions of dollars in investment and thousands of future- ready jobs in the years ahead. They will also generate clean and renewable energy, support Australia to meet its international commitments and reduce emissions.

This is why I am very pleased to announce that Tasmania's latest greenhouse gas emissions profile confirms the state's position as a global leader in mitigating climate change. Based on the latest available data for 2018, Tasmania has achieved its commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 for the fourth year in a row. In 2018, Tasmania emitted 2.19 megatons less of carbon dioxide equivalents. That is, Tasmania removed 2.19 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalents from the

atmosphere. Our net emissions in 2018 are 111 per cent lower than our 1990 baseline emissions of 20.1 megatons.

We were the first jurisdiction in Australia to achieve net zero emissions in 2015 and the emissions intensity of our economy is trending downward, even as we continue to grow our economy and jobs. It is a salient point to make for illustrative purposes; the reduction is equivalent of offsetting the emissions from around 470 000 cars. It is massive. This globally significant achievement reflects the carbon sink in our forests and our enviable renewable energy profile highlights our unique opportunity to lead Australia's transition to a low-emissions economy and attract more investment and create more local jobs.

A more detailed analysis of Tasmania's 2018 greenhouse gas accounts is available on the DPAC website and, given our strong emissions performance, I want to ensure that we maintain our position as a global leader in climate change action. In coming months we will be conducting a detailed analysis of future emissions to determine if we can set a more ambitious target. We will commence a review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 to strengthen our legislative framework and we will develop and consult on our next whole-of-government Climate Change Action Plan as we move forward. Our plan for recovery will stimulate even more investment and will create even more jobs for Tasmania now and for the future.

Jobs in Science and Technology

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

[10.24 a.m.]

Tasmania has been hit hard. We have lost 20 000 jobs. It is real and local for so many families, and even just now we heard a lot about shovel-ready projects, screwdriver-ready projects and paintbrush-ready work, but I believe we can do more. We can develop entire industries. I would like to add plug-and-play jobs to our recovery lexicon; remote access work, service centres, call centres, data centres, a transformation project for government services, back-office services, for any number of federal government departments.

In the arts we have film, music, writing, design and copyright management. It can all be delivered globally from here. Jobs in the technology sector run across science, engineering, CSIRO, Australian Antarctic Division, programming digital games - something my kids love doing - content, films and music: these are gender-neutral jobs at all levels, from school leavers to professionals. Digital jobs for a wired island.

I propose three immediate steps:

- (1) move forward with the Macquarie Point science precinct to maximise our Antarctic Gateway leadership.
- (2) negotiate more Australian public sector jobs for Tasmania.
- (3) land a local space agency office at Macquarie Point -perhaps even a CRC.

Minister, what say you? Can we please deliver some plug-and-play jobs for our kids?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. I applaud her and agree with her interest in this important group of sectors.

I can advise the member that I am very pleased that, on behalf of Government, we will very shortly be releasing the Tasmanian Government's digital policy framework, which we are calling Our Digital Future. It has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is a result of consulting closely with the local industry in Tasmania. In particular, it has been the subject of the summit we held in November with the organisation TasICT. We have taken a lot of feedback on this and there is much interest in it. It will deal with central- to- government IT procurement. It also deals with making sure we are supporting the industry in Tasmania, capitalising on our strengths and seizing on opportunities.

Third, it will deal with supporting the community so that it, too, can have access to digital learning and technology, and taking a particular regard for people who are on the margins of society, who are not comfortable with technology, but who we want to enable to do well and survive and, for example, do their banking and to be able to use government services online.

The Government has spent time during the global pandemic to ensure the COVID-19 disruption that has occurred in our economy is factored into our digital future. The member can look forward to reading that herself in the very near future after the Government has released it.

In specifics, you have asked me about Macquarie Point and the science precinct that we are progressing through our work with KPMG and the Australian Government. I will take on notice your question about always looking to the Australian Government for jobs placement in our state - and as for the space agency, it is a real thing. It is now a real agency of the federal government.

Members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - I am not sure what is going on over there, Madam Speaker, but if the Labor Party are not interested in supporting this sector and just want to mutter, we will just continue our efforts, if I can conclude.

Ms OGILVIE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is very hard to hear the answer. I am very interested in this and I have always been a supporter of this sector, and science and technology in particular. I am finding it very difficult to hear what I think is an actual answer for perhaps the first time in this place.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, in relation to the space agency, the Tasmanian Government has signed its MOU with the Australian Space Agency specifically so we can capitalise on jobs here in Tasmania.

There is no particular vision for a hub of the nature that you have described, but there is a real opportunity here that we are pursuing, particularly with our remote monitoring and medicine, our telemetry, the fact that the University of Tasmania is the owner of four radio telescopes - not just in Tasmania - and the capability here that we are developing.

I have to mention as well the new hyperbaric facility at the Royal Hobart Hospital, which this Government has ensured is also a hypobaric facility which provides the best opportunity in the southern hemisphere for high-altitude, low-atmospheric research to occur here in Hobart, in Tasmania.

Some of the question I will take on notice, but assure the member that we intend to deliver good things in partnership with local industry, so that we can have jobs for women and men in this exciting industry, which provides so much possibility for jobs in our state.

Wages Freeze

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.29 a.m.]

There is broad consensus among economists that confidence and consumer spending are vital to drag the economy out of recession. That is the reason why state and federal governments have rolled out initiatives to put money in people's pockets, hoping they will spend it and support jobs, but there is evidence that your razor gang is back in action and looking for cuts. You have praised public servants for their crucial work during this pandemic, and rightly so. Can you categorically rule out a wage freeze for cleaners, teachers, health workers, police and park rangers, which would further crush consumer confidence and stall economic recovery?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. To characterise it as the razor gang being in action is complete fallacy, to be frank. In relation to my role as Premier, I have the responsibility to determine whether senior executive service members, the top end of our public service, receive a pay increase on 1 July each year. I wrote to them earlier this week after discussing this with my Cabinet, to let them know that I was intending to defer the pay increase that was due on 1 July. That was a difficult decision as around 200 senior public servants we have here have done an extraordinary job throughout this pandemic. They have gone above and beyond. I said this morning that we have seen the best of people. We certainly saw the best of our leadership group across the public sector.

We cannot divorce ourselves from the fact that until the federal budget is delivered, until we get some understanding of what is going to occur in our broader economy, we are going to go through a very difficult period, both fiscally and economically. Like you, I agree with the view of most senior economists that confidence and consumer sentiment is important in ensuring that we can have spending continue to occur in our economy. The challenge we also face is trying to get the balance right in terms of a pathway out of this, both fiscally and economically, and that is why the very difficult decision has been taken to defer those senior public servants' pay increases.

In terms of the broader public sector, we will need to give consideration to the levers we utilise. Again, no decision has been made and there has been no discussion within Government concerning either a pay freeze or any other form of savings across the public sector. In coming weeks and months, we will need to sit down and look at some very difficult decisions, decisions I admit I do not look forward to but we will need to do that. At the end of the day, it is important that we have a sustainable budget position we can work towards and that we ensure we maintain confidence and, importantly, that we deliver the services we need across the state.

These decisions will be considered over coming months in the lead up to the budget. It does not surprise me that you would raise it. It was a question we could quite clearly see would be asked today. I was surprised it was not asked of me yesterday at the press conference, which is why I put the release out before the press conference, so that I could deal with the matter then. No decision has been made in relation to wages, no decision has been made in relation to any savings whatsoever from the public sector, but we will need to work through those things sensibly and responsibly in the lead up to the coming budget.

Trade Visit to China - Pulp and Paper Companies

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr BARNETT

[10.33 a.m.]

It is almost an exercise in futility, but here we go. Last December, you embarked on a trade delegation to China where you met with representatives of at least two pulp and paper companies to offer cheap, publicly-subsidised Tasmanian native forest woodchips. These buyers have no interest in Forest Stewardship Certification, which must be a relief to your GBE which cannot secure it. Can you confirm that the reason native forest logging is ramping up on your watch is to feed cheap native forest woodchips to China, where buyers do not care that the timber comes from biodiverse, carbon-rich, natural forests in Tasmania? In the interests of transparency, Mr Barnett, will you tell the House what agreements were struck with Chinese pulp and paper companies and for what volumes?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark, the Leader of the Greens, for her question with respect to forestry. On this side of the House, we do know that wood is good. We know that the native forest harvesting industry and the native forest sector in this state employs thousands of people in rural and regional areas. That is why I was proud to be representing the industry and working with Sustainable Timber Tasmania in this state and on the mainland and last year in a trade delegation to China, which is absolutely correct, representing the state with respect to agriculture, seafood, resources, mining and mineral processing and our renewable energy sector. I am very pleased to be promoting and advocating for all these sectors.

I want to refute the baseless and incorrect characterisation of the native forest sector by the Leader of the Greens in which she has indicated that it has been subsidised and we continue to subsidise it. Under this Government, Sustainable Timber Tasmania has made a profit. In fact, the first time in 10 years -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. The House is accustomed to this minister not answering questions but this was a pointed question. He needs to tell the House what agreements were struck and for how much. What were the volumes? We do not need to hear your blathering.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, excuse me. That is not a point of order but I do ask the minister to remain relevant.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I have indicated, this side of the House is strongly supportive of our native forest industry, and our forest industry generally in terms of

advanced manufacturing, value-adding and downstream-processing in Tasmania and with respect to exports. Everyone in this place, apart from the Greens, knows that exports mean jobs. What I can advise you is that we have had very productive discussions in China and, indeed, elsewhere with respect to the exports of Tasmanian timber and other products.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, this minister is inviting points of order by refusing to go anywhere near the questions; twice now. Could he simply tell the House what agreements were struck and for what volume? This is a matter of significant public interest at a time when we have had the Premier talking about the contribution forests make to climate mitigation.

Madam SPEAKER - I understand all of that but, as you would appreciate, I am not even supposed to know what is going to come out of a minister's mouth, and I do not.

Ms O'Connor - Well, that is probably a great comfort to you.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. This is our last day of question time for some time, so I would appreciate cooperation so we do not end it nastily. I ask the minister to continue.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the spirit in which you have indicated that the deliberation should proceed in this House and totally agree, particularly on this last day of the parliament.

We had very productive and cooperative discussions in China and those productive, collaborative discussions are ongoing. They are obviously between Sustainable Timber Tasmania and the relevant relationships they have with China and elsewhere. You can seek further information and advice, and I can provide that in due course -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. This is completely unacceptable. The place for parliamentarians to seek further information and advice is here. We are not interested in trying to get information out of a minister's office because that is an exercise in futility. You have directed us, Madam Speaker, to ask pointed questions. This one was. I ask you, please, to ask the minister to respect the forms of this House.

Madam SPEAKER - It is still not a point of order. I ask you, minister, to try to answer the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. With respect to the specificity of the last part of the Leader of the Greens' question, I am more than happy to respond to her as soon as convenient and advise her and this House accordingly.

With respect to the importance of the industry to this place, this state and this side of the House knows how important it is. One of the observations the Leader for the Greens referred to was the importance of the forest industry with respect to climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it clear sustainable forest management has benefits in carbon management; social and economic benefits. The Greens continue their calls for forest operations to cause more significant, hotter bush fires. A review of this work so heavily relied upon by the Greens states that -

... forests in reserves (with no logging) did not burn with less severity than multiple-use forests (with some logging).

It concludes -

Lack of management of fire-adapted ecosystems carries long-term social, economic and environmental consequences.

Working forests create jobs. Wood is good. They are good for the environment and good for the economy.

Joined Up Human Services Project

Ms STANDEN question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.41 a.m.]

In 2014, your Government embarked on the Joined Up Human Services Project which promised to simplify the process for vulnerable people accessing a range of supports from government and the community sector. In the post-election 2018 budget you announced a further \$1 million for the project, putting the total investment at over \$3 million. Former Human Services minister, Jacqui Petrusma said -

The intention is to create a better experience and improved outcomes for clients through seamless support that is easier to navigate, reduces frustration and duplication and is focused on outcomes.

The project offers significant benefits to vulnerable Tasmanians right across Tasmania and will achieve real change.

The current Human Services, minister Roger Jaensch backed up his predecessor, saying -

The Joined Up Human Services Project is a new way of thinking in Tasmania that works to shift entrenched poverty, helps people to move out of disadvantage by tackling the barriers they face and helps prevent people from falling back into poverty by encouraging resilience over reliance.

The aim he said is to make it easier for people by telling their story just once, helping them to navigate the system and ensure care is centred on the person seeking assistance.

Two years later, the project has stalled and clients have not experienced the promised benefits. Can you confirm the Joined Up Human Services Project is the first victim of new budget cuts? How do you explain the fact the first victim of post-COVID-19 austerity is a program to assist the most vulnerable in our community? Is this a sign of things to come from your Government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Standen for that question and for her interest in this matter, and also for accurately quoting the previous minister and my current minister concerning the Joined Up Human Services Project.

No, it is not a victim of budget cuts. In fact, as I have made perfectly clear in the lead-up to the coming budget, there will be some difficult decisions to make and we will need to work through

a range of matters, but no decision has been made and no consideration has been made of the Joined Up Human Services Project.

If clients have had difficulties, I ask you to bring those to my attention, noting that through this last period, Communities Tasmania along with Justice have done an enormous amount of work relating to reaching out and working with organisations and those who are in difficult circumstances.

In response to the nub of your question, the answer is no.

Rural and Regional Health Facilities - Support for Regional Employment

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.44 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on the Government's investment into rural and regional health facilities and how this funding allocation will benefit local communities by providing support for regional employment and trades.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. As has been outlined by the Premier, the Tasmanian Government is focused on rebuilding our state. The construction sector is vital for our economy and delivers thousands of jobs across our communities. This is why we are pursuing the most aggressive program in Tasmania's history with \$3.1 billion in construction spending over two years, to build our way out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An amount of \$70 million has been made available for maintenance with this funding boost and it is all about fast-tracking public building maintenance. I am very excited that our health facilities will benefit from this huge injection, thanks to \$10 million for our rural and regional hospital and ambulance stations. This is a win-win - better facilities for our hardworking staff and patients and a fantastic outcome for these communities in creating local opportunities for our tradies.

This program will deliver more than 100 individual projects across 50 sites. This is across all of Tasmania. A few of these projects, either planned or under way right now include: replacing the switchboards, improving the hot water pipes, fixing the box guttering and upgrading the flooring at Scottsdale District Hospital; replacing roofing at the Campbell Town District Hospital; upgrading the staff kitchen, refurbishing the child health and parenting area, upgrading the security system and improving the lab area upgrade of oral health services at the Devonport Community Health Centre; works on the car park at Oakrise Building in Launceston; painting at the Sorell Community Health Centre; upgrading the flooring and delivering a new storage shed at the West Coast District Hospital; renovating the nurses' accommodation on Bruny Island; refurbishing buildings and undertaking civil works at St Johns Park; and upgrading the air conditioning and reception at the Central Coast Community Health Centre.

Importantly, the islands do not miss out on this program. The Flinders Island District Hospital is getting an upgraded generator workshop, a new storage shed, and floor upgrades, while King

Island will benefit from window replacement, roofing and deck replacement in the nursing accommodation.

These projects build on the \$15 million already being delivered through our Rural Hospital and Ambulance Station Upgrade Fund, which I spoke about recently at Beaconsfield Hospital. The \$270 000 of improvements we are seeing at this facility are supported by local businesses and local tradies. We have seen Scene Constructions do the windows, Vos do the sinks, and Choices Flooring from Launceston do the flooring.

This Government will continue to deliver on investment across the state. We know how important our health facilities are, ensuring that this infrastructure and construction rollout touches all parts of Tasmania and we will continue to deliver.

COVID-19 - Independent Inquiry into North-West Outbreak

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.47 a.m.]

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation and the Health and Community Services Union have asked you to grant formal immunity to health workers and other public servants to participate in an independent inquiry into the north-west outbreak. They point out that hospital workers were targeted and publicly blamed for the outbreak, including by the Chief Medical Officer and the Prime Minister based on false information they received, and many are fearful of speaking up.

ANMF Secretary, Emily Shepherd, said that the Premier should write to all public servants, giving them full immunity to encourage them to make a submission, otherwise it will be an exercise in futility if they cannot speak out. Premier, will you agree with this sensible request and grant immunity in writing to all public servants participating in the independent inquiry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Dow for that question and her interest in this matter. I made it clear yesterday in terms of the independent review - which will be headed by a very well qualified and eminent Tasmanian, Greg Melick AO SC, who is also the Chair of the Integrity Commission - that there would be provisions available within the review that would enable confidentiality where people felt it was required. That is quite clearly specified in the terms of reference.

If your question is, are people able to come forward, have their submissions remain confidential and engage with the review confidentially? Absolutely. That is clearly specified in the terms of reference.

Stimulus Funding Support from Federal Government

Mrs RYLAH question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.50 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on today's announcement of the stimulus funding support from the Morrison Government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon, Mrs Rylah, for that question. She supports infrastructure and transport investments in our state, unlike the Opposition which called on us to spend less.

I am pleased to inform the House the Australian -

Ms White interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - You have form for making up stuff over there. Allow me to speak about our investments.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, order, otherwise we are all out for coffee.

Mr FERGUSON - I am very pleased to inform the House that the Australian Government and the Tasmanian Government are partnering to deliver even more economic stimulus to support and reboot Tasmania's economy with real and costed projects. I welcome the Australian Government's announcement today that it will inject funding into our state with our Government investing \$46 million to deliver projects that are shovel ready for infrastructure and urgent road safety upgrades.

This is a package of nine projects which will complement the \$40 million in new roads funding this Government announced only three weeks ago as part of our COVID-19 recovery package and will make it even easier for Tasmanians to get to where they need to go safely and efficiently. More importantly in these difficult times, the package will continue to build on our Government's strong pipeline of infrastructure works which, as of today, will invest more than \$820 million in roads and bridges over the next two years. This provides even more certainty for our construction sector enabling them to ride out the contraction in private investment that has occurred.

Members of this House will be pleased because this package of works will deliver much needed safety outcomes in all corners of our state. As our friends in the transport industry would no doubt appreciate, the investment of \$5 million into heavy vehicle rest areas is an important announcement in the health and safety for our truckies and for all other road users on major freight routes. I give a shout out to Michelle Harwood at the Tasmanian Transport Association for the work that organisation in particular has been doing with me and the previous minister, Mr Rockliff through the heavy vehicle rest area project.

We will also be investing \$2 million in new road barriers and a massive \$3 million into the electronic school zone signs to ensure the safety of our kids as they go to school each day. We are doing this as some signs are wearing out and techniques replaced.

The Australian Government's commitment of \$4.8 million builds on our election commitment to enhance pedestrian safety in Campbell Town enabling us to deliver an underpass solution under the main road, not just a basic Labor Party \$1 million overpass which would not have allowed disability access. We have done a proper job so it is available for even the most vulnerable road users, fully compliant with disability access requirements enabling all members of the Campbell

Town community to safely access facilities and cross the road safely. It was a bit of extra work, but it has been worth it. Yes, Madam Speaker, we have done it right.

In partnership with the Morrison Government, we will now invest \$7 million to provide an enhanced intersection upgrade at Sandfly Road on the Huon Highway incorporating the valuable community and stakeholder feedback we have been receiving. I spoke to Rob Armstrong, member for Huon, on the phone. I spoke with Bec Enders, the mayor of that council, on the phone. That is how people can talk to each other and they were absolutely delighted. By working together, we have been able to come up with a design that is better, safer, has taken some more cost, but they agreed to work with the Government to do this work. Working with the federal government, they are putting their shoulder to the wheel and it is a great outcome for, particularly, the heavy vehicle sector that were concerned about the design and gave us some great ideas we have adopted.

The funding support from the federal government will also enable us to invest \$2.5 million in bridge strengthening upgrades at Blythe River and Barossa Creek. We will also deliver \$10 million in state road network enhancements across Tasmania. This includes road surfacing upgrades to the Bass Highway, Arthur Highway, West Tamar Highway Channel Highway, and the Bell Bay and Bridport main roads. We will also invest more in shoulder-widening works, with \$4 million on Railton Main Road, and a further \$6.5 million to complete the upgrade of Richmond Road that is already underway.

The most important thing about these projects we have been working on is that they are ready to go right now. This is not just more numbers on a paper. These are not projects for years down the track. This is a mix of projects that are shovel-ready now, that we have worked on with the federal government, and together with a range of road safety initiatives that can be commenced in the next six to 12 months.

The shovel-ready projects will be progressed to tender as soon as possible, to allow construction to commence early in the construction season. The remaining projects will be progressed through the design and approvals phase as quickly as possible, to allow construction to commence.

On this side of the House, we love roads, we love infrastructure, and we want to help businesses get their product to markets safely and more efficiently, and to help our businesses get those contracts to enable those businesses to employ Tasmanians. It has been a delight to work with the Premier, Treasurer, my colleagues, the local government sector and industry and, of course, the federal government. I am thrilled today with this fantastic outcome for our beautiful state of Tasmania.

COVID-19 - Support for Veterans and Ex-Service Personnel

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for VETERANS' AFFAIRS, Mr BARNETT

[10.56 a.m.]

Can you provide an update on the Government's support for Tasmania's veterans and ex-service personnel during the coronavirus, and as we enter the recovery phase from the pandemic?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and strong support for our veterans and their families in this state.

Tasmania has a very long and distinguished military history, from the Boer War right through to the Middle Eastern conflicts in more recent years - 10 500 veterans and their families across this great state of Tasmania, and parents, siblings, partners, grandparents, friends to many in the community. I know many in this place have a connection as well.

The recent coronavirus pandemic has been particularly hard and particularly challenging for this very important cohort of our community. They have been unable to meet for a drink and catch up with their mates in their local RSL or ex-serving organisation. They were unable to get together for our treasured Anzac Day services - like no other we commemorated that on 25 April this year. They were unable to enjoy the camaraderie of each other's company as they would ordinarily do.

In recognition of that, and in light of the very difficult financial circumstances, our Government made available \$500 000 for Supporting Our Veterans - COVID-19 Grants Program - grants of up to \$10 000 for that RSL ex-service organisation, and up to \$25 000 for special programs to provide services, new services, for that organisation. I am pleased that the grants have been appreciated. I spoke to the president of RSL Tasmania today, and it is very greatly appreciated.

I can give a heads-up that some \$320 000 has already been provided to some 40 RSL and ex-service organisations across the state, from Circular Head to Queenstown, from St Helens to Cygnet - particularly rural and regional areas where their trading and fundraising operations have all been adversely impacted during these uncertain times: even all the way to King Island, and I know the members for Braddon would be very pleased about that. They have supported the provision of further support, care and assistance to our veterans during this difficult time.

More recently, I was at the Beaconsfield RSL with the Liberal candidate for Rosevears, Jo Palmer - it was great to be with Jo; she is an excellent candidate. She was advocating for our veterans and their families very strongly, as well as the local community.

I can also announce today that we are going to continue with this grants program. It will be extended a few more weeks through to 12 July. That is going to be well received and appreciated by those organisations. In addition, I am delighted to announce today that our Liberal Government will be committing \$60 000 to a joint federal-state feasibility study looking at the integrated support service for a wellbeing centre for our veterans.

Mrs Rylah - That's great news.

Mr BARNETT - It is really good news. I hear the commendation from the member for Braddon and others in this Chamber. This is something we have been working on, collaborating positively with the federal government, with Darren Chester. Thank you, Darren Chester, for your support for this state. It is really appreciated. Likewise, to Gavin Pearce, the federal member for Braddon, who has been working on this up hill and down dale for some time and it has been great to be working with him as well. There will be, during this feasibility study, broad stakeholder engagement and there is a lot of connection and research. I will be in liaison with our Deputy Premier and minister for Mental Health with respect to this important matter.

There are six veteran wellbeing centres around other parts of the country, on mainland Australia, and my ambition on behalf of this side of the House, and I hope all of us, is to secure those support services for this state, for our veterans and their families. This is another example of our Government delivering, doing things, acting, delivering on our promises and rolling out further effort. It is in stark contrast to talk on the other side.

Initially, the Labor Party said they would be working shoulder to shoulder with the Government but clearly there is more talk from the other side, rather than acting and supporting. Politicising the pandemic was not a good move from the Labor opposition.

In conclusion, and it may be last answer from this side of the House, in relation to my Veterans' Affairs role, you may wish to receive an update with respect to Teddy Sheean but there will not be enough time in this answer to provide that update. Relating to the campaign for a Victoria Cross for Teddy Sheean, the matter is ongoing. We will fight on.

Mersey Community Hospital - Return to Full Operation

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[11.02 a.m.]

You shut the emergency department at the Mersey Community Hospital nearly three months ago. Last month, the department opened with limited hours but you have been noncommittal about when this crucial service will be restored to full 24/7 operation. Tasmania's hospital system was already at crisis point before COVID-19, so it is critical that the Mersey Community Hospital's emergency department returns to a 24/7 clinic to alleviate the additional pressures on the entire hospital system, including more ambulance ramping, stress on ambulance paramedics and further delays to elective surgeries. When will the Mersey Emergency Department return to 24/7 operations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. First, I put clearly on the record the Government's thanks for all the staff at the Mersey Community Hospital. What they did during the north-west outbreak in receiving patients from two hospitals over that extraordinary weekend was amazing and they went above and beyond to receive those patients from the north-west and care for them for a long period of time, and many of those were COVID-19-positive patients. It was a brilliant effort by the staff there. Having had the opportunity to visit and see that hospital, the measures they have put in place regarding infection control have been exemplary.

With regard to the Mersey emergency department, I have been clear on the record about my expectation and my desire to get that back to 24-hour operation as quickly as possible. The reason we have not been able to has been because of staffing challenges. It is clear that we are having challenges recruiting locums in that area. Unfortunately, regional areas across Australia tend to be heavily reliant on locums as that area has been. This is not a new challenge and we have been trying to recruit permanent staff there. We have had some successes across other specialties. However, we remain challenged in finding permanent staff to work within those emergency departments.

With regard to locums, this is a continuing challenge. Many of our locums travel from Victoria and we all know what challenges there are in Victoria at the moment. Every time we have a locum

looking to come and work in Tasmania, there is a very stringent process to ensure they are not coming from an area of high risk to come and work within one of our hospital areas, which we know are a very high risk setting in themselves.

Madam Speaker, this Government is committed to that emergency department returning to 24 hours -

Dr Broad interjecting.

Ms COURTNEY - I cannot predict the future, Dr Broad. I would like to see it as soon as humanly possible. I want that emergency department open. I know how important that is for the community. However, I cannot pre-empt what is going to happen in Victoria. I cannot pre-empt what is going to happen on the mainland with regards with locums from those jurisdictions. I am not going to put a hospital in Tasmania at risk by bringing in staff from a location that is a hot spot of coronavirus.

Madam Speaker, clearly, we are committed and I have spoken to many in the community there. I would like to reassure the staff of that hospital we are committed to that emergency department: however, we are only going to staff that in a way that is safe for them, the patients, and the north- west community.

Racing Industry - Increase in Stakes

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.06 a.m.]

You imposed the toughest restrictions on the racing industry in the country and they are now desperate to get back to work and back on their feet to support jobs. It is no surprise you had strong support from the Greens and you seem to share the Leader of the Greens' hostility towards helping industry recover from the impact of the shutdown.

Yesterday, your minister for racing failed to answer a very simple question about the recently announced stakes increase for the racing industry. How was the decision made? Did your Government make the recommendation to the board of Tasracing? Did the minister for racing meet with you and your office about the decision?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. It is the last question of the day and it would be lovely to get through it without anybody being reprimanded.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow racing minister for that question and his interest in this matter.

First, I am a very strong supporter of the racing industry and I do understand how difficult it was for them. It was a difficult decision to make. With the discussions with Public Health, they

felt very strongly about the fact we were facing the possibility of a pandemic striking the state and impacting on, not only our more central locations, but also causing issues in the regions.

With the decision - and you raised this in regard to other states and territories - it is a statement of fact that we have an older and more vulnerable population in Tasmania. This has been at the forefront of my and Public Health's minds, also the Health minister and the people who supported her so very ably through this.

The very difficult decision was made to shut the racing industry down. Regarding the concerns they raised, we put in place what I thought was a very generous package for them. It put more money back into the industry than the stakes were through that period. This enabled us to ensure the animals continued to be fed and cared for, and there was support for those small businesses that operated in the industry.

I understand why you would want to make politics out of this and it is unfortunate but, as I said in my opening question today, I have never been prouder of how this parliament performed through this very difficult period. Tasmanians have never been prouder of their parliamentarians in how they performed through this very difficult period and how we set our differences aside and we worked for the benefit of Tasmanians. Ms Ogilvie, it is absolutely true.

In having the opportunity to finish on my feet today, I am not going to step into politics -

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order on relevance, Madam Speaker. We are not going to argue with the statements of the Premier on the broader issues around how we manage this issue. The question was clearly about the state's commitment the Government made a few weeks ago to the industry. Did the Government make a recommendation to the board, and was he and his office involved in the discussions with the Racing minister? It is a specific question.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. I appreciate it is not a point of order and it is up to the Premier to answer that as best he can.

Mr GUTWEIN - Regarding the decisions that are made in terms of our Government businesses, it would be of no surprise to anybody that, as I am a shareholder minister on the vast majority of them in my position as Treasurer, obviously I have line of sight on these matters. In terms of any decision like this - which was for a significant increase of over \$600 000 in stakes to the industry - obviously I would be involved, as would the board, and as would the minister.

I find it quite extraordinary that a former minister of the Crown does not understand that, for decisions like this, the business, the minister and the Treasurer would all be involved. It surprises me. I do not know how matters were conducted under your government, but under this Government we do things in a collaborative, collegiate way, and we work through these matters sensibly and responsibly.

I come back again to the nub of the question, noting the politics that the minister has been attempting to play here in positioning this Government and the racing industry. I make this point again very clearly to the racing industry: it was a very difficult decision. It was taken on Public Health advice, and it was taken with the best interests of ensuring that we could protect our older and more vulnerable population here in this state.

Time expired.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Sustainable Timbers Tasmania - Additional Coupes

[11.12 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, I would like to add to an answer to a question from the Leader of the Greens. I indicated that I would take that part of them on notice.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania does not export woodchips. The private sector does.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania advises with respect to this question that no new woodchip contracts were signed. Woodchip volumes have not increased, and the trade mission will result in no new native forest harvesting specifically to supply woodchips to China. Our native forests are harvested primarily for high-end timber that is used for construction, for furniture, kitchen benches, floorboards and even the timber in the House.

As part of this process to make the industry more sustainable in delivering more Tasmanian business investment and jobs, we also export woodchips as a by-product.

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation Committee - Inquiry into the State Service Amendment Regulations 2020

Mr Street presented the following report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation -

Inquiry into the State Service Amendment Regulations 2020.

Report received.

LAND TAX AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 22)

Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

HOMEBUILDER GRANTS BILL 2020 (No. 23)

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION (REGULATORY REFORM AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 21)

Bills returned from the Legislative Council with amendments.

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

That the last two mentioned messages be taken into consideration at a later hour of the day.

Motion agreed.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS BILL 2020 (No. 24)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Ogilvie** and read a first time.

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Honourable John Charles White

[11.16 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) (by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That this House expresses its deep regret at the death on 20 June 2020 of the Honourable John Charles White, a former Minister of the Crown from 1989 to 1992, Member for the Electorate of Denison from 8 February 1986 until 29 August 1998, Member for Newdegate from 19 September 1998 until 29 June 1999 and further, that this House respectfully tenders to his family its sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to former state Labor member for Denison, the Honourable John Charles White who passed away on 20 June 2020. He was the son of former Labor member for Denison, Sir Alfred White.

John was born in Hobart in 1942, attending schools in Hobart and London, and later obtaining a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Tasmania. There is no doubt that growing up in a political household had a strong effect on John, which he pursued in joining Labor Youth in 1963 and later serving as its president. It was not preordained that John would ultimately follow in his father's footsteps. Quite the contrary. John was passionate about the arts and cinema, originally planning to study film with the intention of being a director himself but ultimately accepted parental advice, as many of us do, to follow a different path.

Armed with a law degree, John worked as a legal officer with the Australian Solicitors Office from 1972 to 1977 and later as a partner with the law firm Wong McDermott & White.

John first stood for office as a Labor candidate at the 1977 federal election without success, before being elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly as a Labor member for Denison at the 1986 state election. A successful local member, John managed to hold this position for 12 years before resigning his position to contest the Legislative Council seat of Newdegate which he held for a further period until its abolition.

During his career John held a number of ministerial and parliamentary positions, including as minister for health, minister assisting the premier on multicultural and Aboriginal affairs, shadow minister for tourism, arts and Aboriginal affairs, ethnic affairs, industrial relations and employment and training. He served as a member of the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

After political life John served in a number of roles, including as chairman of the Abt Railway Steering Committee, chairman of Tasmanian Centenary Federation, and also formed the Tasmanian Compliance Corporation 2003.

Civic-minded, John was an active member of the Battery Point Progress Association of Tasmania, Council for Civil Liberties, Labor Lawyers, Amnesty International and the Australian Bicentennial Committee.

While I understand he never made a film himself, throughout his life John maintained a strong interest in films and theatre and loved to converse about all things pop culture and was also an avid tennis player and fisher.

All members of this place offer their sympathies to John's family, his wife, Louise, and his two children, Charlie and Charlotte and their families, and to his friends.

[11.20 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to make a contribution to this motion today. I had the pleasure of knowing John for about 10 years, the term of my parliamentary career to date. He has been somebody that I have come to know. In reflecting upon his life and his career, and his contribution to Tasmania, I found it fascinating to read all the different things he has done, and particularly in his private life.

The Premier just provided an update on the education he had, the career he had, his contribution in parliament, and the roles he played. The thing that stood out most to me about John White was his commitment to social justice. He was a very firm believer in the Labor movement and the progressive cause. His dedication to that is demonstrated not just through his contribution in this place, but outside of this place too.

The first time I met John that I can recall vividly was when he was working in Bridgewater. He was practising law for the Hobart Community Legal Centre and was working out of the Bridgewater office in Cove Hill. He was tucked away in a humble little office out the back and he was dedicating his time then to helping people manage their daily stresses and making sure they had good advice and free help with any legal issues they were dealing with.

I was a very newly-minted MP then, and I have to say that John took me under his wing a little bit. I used to visit him in his office in Bridgewater because I also had an office in Bridgewater at that time. He would often ask me how I was finding the job and what I was working on. He really did take a keen and genuine interest in what I was doing and was very encouraging. He would tell me about the sorts of problems that he was helping people with in the community, and as a lawyer, the sort of work he was doing to support them to manage their challenges.

He was always incredibly humble, and for a man who had quite an extensive career and had gained many accolades, he was never the sort of person who made you feel that you were not able to speak with him equally. He had that manner about him that put people at ease. I certainly noticed that with his interaction with his many clients in the Bridgewater office. He spoke to them one-on-one in a way that was endearing and he never made anybody feel like they were not worthy. That is a remarkable characteristic in anybody and I certainly saw that in John.

It is the case that every time I arrived in his office he would joke to anybody who was there that I was his daughter. That was a joke that never seemed to get old even though it is not true and we were not blood relations at all. I would be very proud to call him my family because he was a very supportive person to me. He always had time for me. He was always very encouraging and kind, and he continued to support me and the Labor Party right up until the end.

In speaking with other members of the Labor movement there were some recollections they have that I would like to share.

Michael Aird remembered him blasting the TV airwaves with ads that said, 'You know it's right, vote John White'. I have to say there is something about that phrase that strikes a chord with me. It apparently worked and he was very successful and gained election. He was a trailblazer for left-wing politics and was very principled by all accounts. He was not afraid to take on causes that were unpopular at the time, such as gay law reform, and he argued very strongly for those things.

Fran Bladel, who worked with him as a member elected to this place also, remarked that he was a great family man. He loved his kids and his wife. He was very, very proud of his children and he talked about them all the time. She remembers John as a very kind person, a very charming man, who had a great sense of humour. He could disarm a room with his humour. She also recalls that he was very good at breaking down barriers and his collaborative approach ensured that he brought people with him. That is what I saw of him working in the community in Bridgewater. He had a way of working with people that meant that he could put their minds at ease and get the best outcome for them.

Senator Carol Brown remembers him as a man that no matter how busy he was he always had time for everybody, particularly party members. He was a great mentor to many party members and particularly Young Labor members. She recalls that he was somebody who was adamant that everybody needed to feel included, particularly members of the party, and he was very connected to the membership and never saw himself as important or above anybody. He was also very supportive of affirmative action rules being adopted within the Tasmanian Labor Party. She remembers him as someone who had the force of his convictions and said if you knew John was for a policy, you knew he would give everything to get it adopted or implemented.

Terry Aulich, a former member of this parliament, remembered him as a team player, and he took the knocks and the kudos equally. He recalls him being very passionate about protecting important heritage for Tasmanians.

There is no doubt from conversations I have had, and from my own experience of knowing John, that he was highly regarded and well liked. He made an enormous contribution, not just to this place, but outside this place in the community supporting people. I will always remember him for that and I am very sad that he has passed away.

My sincere condolences to Louise and his family, particularly his children Charlotte and Charles, who he adored and spoke about so frequently and was very proud of.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Labor Party I thank John for his service to the Labor movement and to the people of Tasmania as their representative in the parliament, and convey our sincere condolences to his family. He will be greatly missed.

[11.26 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Deputy Speaker, what a lovely man John White was. I was very sad to hear that he had passed on. I spent quite a bit of time, obviously as Ms White has, thinking about the man himself and those qualities that made him really quite loveable.

John was a kind man with a very big heart. He had a twinkling way about him. There was always that sense, slightly, that he was up to some sort of mischief, and as the record shows, he did get into the occasional spot of mischief. He was very cheeky, very funny and sharp as a tack.

One of the traits that I really loved about John White was that he was genuinely curious about people. He was always interested. He had this manner of talking to people - and Ms White touched on it - where he would give people his entire attention. There was just something warm and lovely about that man.

When I first arrived here in February 1989, it was about the time that the Gray government fell and there was the Field accord government, and not long after that John White became Minister for Health, I believe, as the member for Denison. He was very refreshing for a journalist, because he was one of those politicians you could ask a question of and you would get something pretty close to a straight answer, but the language was always clear. Underneath all that there was that sense of humour and that big, big heart.

I was having a look through my emails for I remembered that there was an email he had sent me after the last state election. I am going to read a little bit of it into *Hansard*. I will leave out all the nice things he said about my election night speech:

I went to your office but it was closed, twice, during this week to congratulate you face to face. The result was crushing to your spirit in my opinion, but you spoke with courage and admirably still bored it up Hodgman, 'The election was not a mandate for the 200 unpublished policies and the gun legislation.'

He goes on to say:

My view is that the Greens need to be in parliament. I am so glad you have Rosalie Woodruff with you. I have never met Rosalie but she admires my dog. She stopped when I was going to Salamanca Fresh early and she told me she had two dogs like mine. I didn't introduce myself.

He closes with:

I'll tell you who I voted for if you press me.

Sincerely, John White.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be many people who, on the passing of John White, feel sad. I am sad that I had not caught up with him in the last couple of years. I am sad that we have lost such a kind and decent man from Tasmanian public life. Yes, he had a bumpy time in public life from time to time, we know that; he had a famous pseudonym - people will remember 'Bill Fraser from Queenstown'. He was always curious about life and people and, yes, he got himself into trouble a couple of times, but if we can make our way to 78 and only get into trouble a couple of times we are doing very well.

On behalf of all the Greens, Dr Woodruff and I, I want to pass on my very sincere condolences to Louise and to their children, Charlie and Charlotte, and their families, to acknowledge that he will have left a huge hole in their lives.

Tasmania has lost one of its true characters, a proper leftie and someone who never claimed to be perfect but who gave so much of his life to this island and its people. Whether he was talking about health reform or social justice, or his deep and abiding love for the heritage of Battery Point and Salamanca, it was always about making Tasmania a better place. That came from his love of this place and his fundamental love of people, which is great quality for anyone to have in public life. John White had it in spades.

Vale John Charles White.

[11.32 a.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I was saddened when I read in the *Mercury* on Monday morning that John Charles White had passed away at the age of 77, having recently had a lovely warm chat with him down at Salamanca where he used to spend a bit of time outside the café there.

John was a friend and a well-known Labor identity for many years. It seemed he was destined for parliament from an early age. One can understand that, as his father Sir Alfred White was a Labor minister and a member for Denison from 1941 to 1959, when at that time he resigned to become Tasmania's Agent-General in London. John was educated at Mount Carmel School and then St Virgil's College, until his father moved the family to England to take up his post as Agent-General.

Sir Alfie had been in parliament with my grandfather, Eric Ogilvie, and there was a good family connection. My father recounts the story of his own travels as a 23-year-old law graduate being made to feel most welcome by Sir Alfie, as he was known, and the Tasmanian contingent in London. They played tennis together and he seems to recall that they had a Pimms or two as well - that probably meant more than a couple of Pimms. They remained lifelong friends.

John finished his schooling at the Oratory School in London and then worked as a trainee quantity surveyor and attended technical colleges both in the United Kingdom and Tasmania before studying for a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Tasmania.

John joined the Labor Party in 1963 and soon became President of Labor Youth. He was a member of Labor Lawyers for many years, was vice-president of the Tasmanian branch of the Labor Party, and president of the Sandy Bay branch. He was a real contributor. He was persistent in his endeavours to serve as a member of parliament, as can be witnessed by his standing for the Legislative Council seat of Queensborough in 1977 and for a Labor Senate seat in 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983. He had the commitment to it.

After these five unsuccessful attempts his persistence paid off in February 1986 when John was elected to this House as Labor member for Denison. He was soon entrusted with numerous shadow portfolios including environment and land management, multicultural and ethnic affairs, the arts and Antarctic affairs.

John must have owned a crystal ball because, when he rose to his feet to deliver his inaugural speech, he urged governments to properly fund the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery to enable it to become the museum and gallery that we know and love and enjoy today. He spoke of the need for a theatre centre around the Theatre Royal complex and the need for continuing development of that complex. We are now seeing that development in its final stages.

He spoke of the importance of preserving Salamanca Place, Arthur Circus, Battery Point Precinct, much of which was earmarked for a major road development and home demolition at that time. How lucky we are that that did not occur. He spoke of the need to retain our history and uniqueness, and not bend to the wishes of developers who too often are driven by profit. He dreamt that vintage boats would be moored in Constitution Dock. He would be more than happy that a majority of his wish list is now a reality.

When Labor came to power in 1989 under the leadership of Michael Field, John became minister for health and minister assisting the premier on Aboriginal and ethnic affairs. He held these portfolios for three years until Labor lost government in 1992.

John then took the role of shadow minister for a number of portfolios including industrial relations, justice, environment, the arts, historic cultural heritage and Aboriginal and ethnic affairs.

In August 1998 John resigned from the House of Assembly to contest and win the Legislative Council seat of Newdegate in a by-election in September of that same year. His tenure as the member for Newdegate, however, came to a fairly abrupt end in June 1999 when, unfortunately, parliament was reduced from 54 members to 40 members.

As can be seen, John's parliamentary career spanned 13 busy years. He had reputation for championing many social issues which a number of his parliamentary colleagues thought were too radical at the time, issues such as the decriminalisation of drug offences, same sex law reform, and the hand back of Aboriginal lands, to name a few.

But it is not only as a parliamentarian that he made his mark. His contribution to the wider community was equally as impressive. He was a trustee of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for six years; vice president of Albuera Street Primary School Parents and Friends; deputy chair of the Australian Bicentennial Authority (Tasmania branch) for five years; chair of the Tasmanian Council of Civil Liberties from 1985 to 1989 and its spokesperson for legal affairs for many years. He was also on the North Hobart Football committee for a number of years.

His 30-year involvement with the Battery Point Progress Association deserves a special mention. John was its chair for 15 of those years and his name is synonymous with its success in helping save Battery Point Village and the iconic Salamanca Place.

John was a successful lawyer working with the Australian Solicitor's Office for six years prior to being the cofounder of a successful legal practice. He was a partner in the firm Wong McDermott & White and he was a well-respected lawyer who helped very many people.

John will be remembered for his multifaceted contribution to Tasmanian life. He will be remembered and missed by his many friends but especially his close family who he often, and always, spoke of fondly. Our sympathies go to his lovely wife, Louise, his children, Lottie and Charles and their partners, and his five grandchildren Poppy, Coco, Alfie, Ella and Oliver.

[11.38 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, when I first entered parliament condolence motions, with a few notable exceptions, were always about people who had served many, many years ago. Sometimes you knew their names and sometimes you did not. It is an unfortunate process now that so many of the condolence motions are people that are actually known to us all, who we served with, who we cared about during that time.

This motion today acknowledges the services to this House and to the other place of John Charles White, who I really, really liked.

I first met John as a brand new member of the Sandy Bay branch when I first came down to Hobart. He was a member of both Sandy Bay and Battery Point branches. He was kind, he was jocular, and he was very passionate about many good and progressive causes. He also used to quite happily shout the pizza on those meeting nights that he would hold in his lounge room. As young people we were very pleased that he would always fork out for the pizza.

He would host people there regardless of their level, whether it be brand new branch members who had just moved to Hobart, or party leaders, like Bob Hawke, who would also be hosted at his home. He made everybody feel welcome. It really did not matter at what level you were, John liked you and engaged with you and shared with you. That is a very special quality.

I remember an event at the Albert Hall when I was a federal member and it was a multicultural affairs event for a festival that was coming up. At one point the person who was speaking encouraged everybody to come together and dance. There was this sort of horrid silence as no-one wanted to participate. The moment John realised no-one else was getting up, he grabbed my hand and dragged me onto the dance floor, because John would never leave someone hanging. If someone said we were going to do something he was not going to leave that person on their own, and that brought everybody forward because he actually cared about how people would get through things.

It was the hallmark of his commitment to public life, equity and equality. In his first speech in this House in March 1986, he spoke passionately of the arts, of TMAG, heritage and of tourism. He started by saying:

I want to raise these matters in the way in which I understand from precedent first speeches should be made: in a non-provocative and inoffensive manner. The areas I wish to canvass are a combination of my shadow responsibilities, and also my personal interests. I make no excuses for the fact that there is no costing, very little detail and that I am uncertain about how best to implement some of these ideas. Also, it is possible that some of the suggestions may already be either under way or planned for this parliamentary term. But be that as it may.

He finished with a clear statement on gender equity:

I do not wish to continue further. I appreciate the fact for once in my life I have been given an audience which has not interjected or interrupted. I have said some things which are more important than others but in ending my first speech tonight - with respect, Mr Speaker - I draw your attention to the fact that I have used non-sexist language.

John was very passionate whenever he took on any cause and he would fight it to the end. He was an avid supporter of Labor's affirmative action campaign, not that it would give him any benefit. He did so because it was the right thing to do. As you have heard, he also supported same sex law reform and marriage equality long, long before they were popular causes for politicians to campaign for. He did those things because he believed in them. He always thought that you should fight for what you believe in and did just that.

It is a reality, too, of politics that some people when they depart the political stage depart their political party. John never did that. He was a member of his branch right until he died, so I reckon I have an idea of who he might have voted for, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor - Who will know now, Ms O'Byrne?

Ms O'BYRNE - We may never know.

He would often drop into Labor headquarters and have a chat and offer advice, and even hand over small donations to campaigns that might be going on at the time.

He was charming, he was funny, and he could disarm a room very quickly with humour. He liked people and he could achieve those collaborative outcomes because he listened and he worked with people. He was always across the detail of any policy or issue he was talking about. He always knew the information and he made sure that people were engaged. It did not matter who you were, where you lived, or who you voted for, John would talk to you and John would help you.

It is one of the reasons he offered *pro bono* legal work for so many years. There are many Tasmanians who would have missed out on legal representation if not for the time and commitment that John gave them.

He will be farewelled today in a small ceremony necessitated by our unusual times. We cannot attend to be there to say farewell and to show our respect - not only to him but to his family for the cost that they paid. It is a cost that all of our families pay when you offer up a family member to public life, whether it be your partner or your parents.

Labor will be represented there today by some good friends of John's - Senator Carol Brown, former member of parliament, Michael Aird, and state secretary Stuart Benson.

John loved his family so very desperately, and he would speak with such love and pride of his children and his grandchildren. Our thoughts today are with Louise and Charlie and Lottie and their partners and children.

Vale John White, go gently.

Motion agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

Motion by **Mr Gutwein** agreed to:

That a copy of the foregoing resolution be forwarded to the family of the late John White.

SITTING DATES

[11.44 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business)(by leave) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 18 August next at 10 a.m.

[11.46 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it should come as no surprise to the Government that we will be seeking to amend this motion, given I have written to the Premier about this. I have also spoken publicly in the media about the need for us to have more sessions of parliament during a period of a state of emergency.

I move an amendment to the motion that the words '18 August' be replaced with the words '7 July'.

I will circulate that for members to see now.

I wrote to the Premier on 8 May and copied in, at that stage, the Leader of the Greens, the member for Clark, the Speaker of the House, and the President, calling on the Premier to consider allowing the parliament to sit through what is traditionally the winter recess, providing our support for the Government to recall the parliament on 8 and 9 July or 20 and 23 July if we were to have COVID-lite parliament as we have been experiencing throughout this time. On reflection it seems it would be wise for us to return on 7 July, which is a Tuesday, and for normal parliamentary activity to resume, given so many other restrictions have eased and a number of stages have been brought forward.

We very strongly encourage the Government to provide for parliamentary sitting dates over the course of the next seven to eight weeks. Otherwise, during a period of a state of emergency, there will be inadequate opportunity for this parliament to scrutinise the Government's activities. Indeed there will be no opportunity for the Government to have its activities scrutinised by the parliament because the parliament will be in recess.

We normally have a winter recess to follow the budget session but we have had no budget session yet this year because of the coronavirus. That has been pushed back to a later date so we have not had the intensive budget Estimates period where we normally have a session of about five weeks and then go into the winter recess.

These are unprecedented times so it seems warranted, given the arrangements we currently have in place, that we have parliament sit over the next seven to eight weeks. We have not indicated in this debate how frequently the parliament might need to sit throughout that period. We just think it would be important in the interests of transparency, scrutiny and accountability that it does.

In the letter I wrote to the Premier on 8 May I indicated that we would be supportive of having two sitting weeks for the month of July and another in the first week of August before resuming the normal sessions on 18 August, which is what has been now moved in the motion by the Leader of the House. It remains our view that we could have two weeks of parliament during July and another week added to August. It is important that the Government not only provides for the parliament to have a role, given the state of emergency, but also that we can be here to support the Government if there is a need for any important legislation to be dealt with through that time. We have already had a circumstance where we have been recalled on occasions to deal with urgent legislation that has been necessary for the Government to introduce, debate and pass to provide support to businesses, to individuals, to those who are facing hardships, to bring in more protections, and to provide additional funding and support. There is no knowing what might happen over the next eight weeks.

It would be prudent for the Government to enable the parliament to sit throughout this period should there be the requirement for legislation to be tabled and debated. We are still in the process, even as recently as yesterday, where legislation is tabled on the same day that it is then brought in for debate. It is obvious to us that the Government still does not know very much in advance of when they are bringing these matters to the House that they will be required. How can they be confident that over the next eight weeks we will not have a situation arise where they need to bring legislation to this parliament that needs the support of the parliament for the Government to be able to give effect to the necessary arrangements that are required to support our community during this time?

It is not difficult for us to come to an agreement today. In the spirit of bipartisanship, which the Premier now seems willing to resurrect, we put this amendment forward to bring the parliament back for the month of July so that we can work on behalf of all Tasmanians in a collaborative way to support the Government's endeavours to keep our community safe and assist the economic recovery for Tasmania, but also do it in a way where there is appropriate transparency, scrutiny and accountability.

The parliament is the people's House. It is right and proper that we continue to sit during a period of a state of emergency. Not only do we have a state of emergency for at least another 10 weeks and no parliament in session, we also have a public health emergency. It is important that we have parliament sit through this time, and I have moved an amendment to the motion. I have made the arguments. I wrote to the Premier, the Leader of the Greens, the member for Clark, and the Speaker of the House, on 8 May. I have also spoken about this in the media, so it should not come as any surprise to people that we have moved this amendment today. I hope there is willingness to cooperate to ensure that there is parliamentary oversight and all members can continue to bring forward the views of their community to this place during a time when we still have a state of emergency.

I remind people of that fact, because this is an unprecedented set of circumstances. It should not be disregarded or regarded lightly that we are in a state of emergency. This is very serious and it is important that the parliament has a role. I am very concerned that the Government, judging by the motion that has been put right now, is of the view that the parliament does not have an important or necessary function to play over the course of the next eight weeks. We disagree, and that is why we have moved this amendment.

[11.51 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will speak briefly. The Government does not support the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. The calendar needs to set with some level of confidence and certainty, as we are allowed to plan the way that MPs themselves and the staff of the parliament make arrangements for the winter recess, and of course there is nothing new about that.

What is new is that in March we agreed that the entire parliament, both Houses, would be suspended or adjourned until August. When circumstances allowed, the Premier recalled the parliament. I believe it met with everybody's approval and we have been able to continue to sit during the regularly scheduled weeks with fewer sittings. That has been generally successful.

In my opposition to the amendment, I repeat my gratitude on behalf of the Government, for the way we have been able to work, including yesterday when we saw again two bills being supported. To my pleasure and even surprise, they went through not just our House, but both Houses yesterday,

which we did not expect, and that demonstrates the goodwill being shown by members of the Labor Party, the Greens and Independents. It has been great and has allowed us to get the job done.

We have now completed the legislative program that we needed to get to at this point in time prior to the winter recess. We have achieved everything we needed to in terms of the business of the House. It is not true to say that the Government continues to take actions that cannot be scrutinised because this House specifically set up legislation to ensure that any Government decisions that are taken are scrutinised. In fact, as we saw yesterday with the reports of the Subordinate Legislation Committee, and more this morning, the Subordinate Legislation Committee is going through them thoroughly, some would say too much. I do not, but some would. That committee is doing inquiry after inquiry into a range of Government decisions, as is their right, the right that we gave them. The point I am making is that there is continued oversight over executive actions. The Premier has been accountable. The Government has been accountable. We have worked to ensure that the traditions of this place have been honoured.

The parliamentary sitting schedule, as is well known, is established by the Government and published by the Government. It is put out with as much notice as possible to try to allow people to plan their diaries and their year. In doing so, it is not an arrogant, one-way process. Advice is sought from the Clerks of both Houses. There is an intention to honour the traditions, for example, of the number of sitting weeks and sitting days that would be had, and the best attempts possible to ensure that the budget Estimates process and the GBE process are all factored in in a way that broadly meets with the expectations of members. I believe we have successfully done that and that will continue to be the case.

What is going to be unusual is that when we resume in August it is going to be a very busy latter half of the year. If you have looked at the calendar, it is going to really test members of this House because there is a lot of work to do. The Budget is scheduled for 12 November. I believe there was a query about that earlier today. That date is set. There is a lot of work and it is going to really test members here, but that is work we need to do to ensure that the Budget is delivered and scrutinised in the usual fashion. I believe it will be in the usual fashion too, by the way. I hope when we return that we can move the motion that sets aside the earlier resolution of the House that deals with the special interim arrangements. I think today ought to be the last day for these interim arrangements and we should instead be able to go back to what is our new normal, with the usual seating and usual forms of the House but perhaps with continued hygiene and some social distancing arrangements in place.

I broadly put for the view that scrutiny does, can and should continue and will in respect of the executive decisions of government that might be taken. We have set aside much of our legislative agenda that was due to occur between March and now, if it was not COVID or economic recovery related. We have done that and we are having to reshape our own program to ensure we do not overburden the House in that latter half of the year, particularly noting that the Budget will become the priority from 12 November.

I appeal to members to be reasonable about this, noting that it is hard not to look at this as a stunt from the Opposition because the Opposition really has had opportunity, more than was envisaged. A fair-minded person would say the Premier has worked hard and done more than was expected to bring the parliament back. That is a reminder that I make in respect of this amended motion.

I will conclude there and say if it is put forward in good faith, I have tried to keep my remarks moderate in response. We do not support the motion but the business of government will continue during this time. I genuinely hope that members will have an opportunity to have a break and refresh themselves as well with their families, because I believe they need it. Everyone needs to think about those things. It is not a six-week holiday, by the way, but I hope members can catch a few days along the way.

[11.57 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I agree with some aspects of both the previous speakers. More scrutiny is good and the winter break gives us an opportunity to spend more time in here engaging with Government ministers, trying to get straight answers out of them. However, Mr Ferguson is right; it is a stunt. I believe it is a stunt for Labor to try to rub some of the egg off its face over its bad behaviour during the state of emergency.

That said, Dr Woodruff and I are not going to allow ourselves recorded in this place as voting against more scrutiny opportunities so we will be supporting this amendment. Should it pass the House, we will be in here as we always are, asking questions on behalf of our constituents and stakeholders, taking it up to Government on issues that neither of the major parties will deal with including, for example, forests and major projects legislation and pokies legislation - all of these issues which we now know both the Liberal and Labor parties are absolutely in sync on.

John White was right: this place does need us. If it is the will of the parliament that members are back in here in July, we will be here. We will support more scrutiny but if you did a scratch test on most members of the Opposition they would tell you what they really thought of spending the winter break in here.

[11.59 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, on the amendment, the irony of the Greens calling out other people for political stunts is not lost on this side of the House. I know that the spirit of détente between the Leader of the Greens and the Leader of the Liberal Party in this state is a unique moment. I am not sure if there are elements of Stockholm Syndrome but the approach you have taken is interesting. We take at face value your commitment to more parliamentary scrutiny. We accept that.

The irony of the Leader of Government Business talking about how busy we are going to be later in the year is that you cannot help but look at the lack of a legislative agenda of this Government over the last 12 to 18 months and the lack of bills that they bring to the House. The lack of matters that they seek to prosecute beyond their short-term politics is not lost on us either. No doubt we will be busy later in the year because the shambolic nature in which you have managed this House since we came back in 2018 is plain for all to see.

When the COVID-19 virus hit our state with the restrictions and the work that we needed to do, the goodwill across all parts of this Chamber was evident and we needed to make sure that the first issue we confronted was the health and safety of all Tasmanians. Our commitment to that was strong and unequivocal and we behaved as such. We made it very clear that we did not seek to have this parliament suspended but reluctantly agreed to the Premier's will to suspend parliament. Then commonsense prevailed and he called parliament back.

Having said that, we have as a parliament been able to focus on COVID-19 and we respect that. We have an issue we will deal with later today that has been a bit of a scramble because of the timing issue. We know there is a whole range of things that the Government needs to do to continue the work of government. There are other bills, other legislation, that we could have dealt with. We know the Government is busy focusing on the response to COVID-19 but that does not mean there are not other matters pressing for the Government to deal with, and we know other state parliaments have been able to deal with that.

Regarding the sitting days, Western Australia has increased their sitting days; in South Australia, there has been no major interruption to their sitting days; Victoria and South Australia have had a slight reduction, Tasmania and Queensland have been comparable in terms of the sitting days they have scheduled, while New South Wales is the only state parliament that has significantly reduced their days, but they have been able to do the work of government. For example, the Victorian Government has dealt with 15 bills that are non-COVID related, the Queensland Government has dealt with 14 bills that are non-COVID related, Western Australia has dealt with 29 non-COVID-related bills, South Australia has dealt with 45 non-COVID-related bills, but in Tasmania this Government has chosen to only focus this sitting on COVID-related bills.

Government members interjecting.

Mr O'BYRNE - We agreed, but we are moving an amendment to have more sitting days so that you can do your job. That is the point of the amendment we are moving, because the work of government does not stop. Yes, you can focus on COVID and we absolutely support that. We are not criticising that, but you know in all of your portfolios there is a range of legislative duties and commitments that you need to meet and follow through and there is a scramble for the matter that we are dealing with this afternoon. It does not mean everything stops.

The Leader of the Labor Party makes a clear point that traditionally the winter recess is off the back of a very intense budget session, with Estimates, with questions and with the Budget passing both Houses. We have not gone through that; that has been delayed until 12 November. The reason for a recess is to allow members to reset and take a break, for the work of government to continue and the work of local members to represent their constituent base.

Given the fact that we have not had that budget session and the fact that other state governments have been able to deal with more than just the COVID-related response, we think it is important that we come back. If you are saying, Leader of Government Business, that we are going to have a very busy end of the year, we will give you some more days so you can knock off some work before you get there. How about we do that? How about we deal with those matters instead of, as we are seeing today, a mad scramble with a last-minute briefing and last-minute information and now we have to deal with the matter brought forward because we do not have any sitting days. That is why it has been brought on.

This is an important moment for us to reflect on the work of this parliament and Government. We are willing to come back to this place to do the work to enable the Government to fulfil their alleged comprehensive legislative agenda, and it is them not wanting to do the work in the short term to allow that to occur.

The House divided -

AYES 10

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

NOES 12

Ms Archer
Ms Courtney
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Hickey
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Ms Rylah
Mr Shelton
Mr Street (Teller)
Mr Tucker

PAIRS

Ms Houston

Mr Barnett

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

HOMEBUILDER GRANTS BILL 2020 (No. 23)

In Committee

Council amendments to clause 14.

[12.11 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Deputy Chair, an amendment to the HomeBuilder Grants Bill 2020 was passed last night in the other place. The amendment affects clause 14(3) which establishes the nature of an order made by the minister under clause 14(1) of the bill. The amendment will require any orders made by the minister to be referred to the Subordinate Legislation Committee for review, pursuant to the Subordinate Legislation Committee Act 1969. The specific sections of that act referenced in the motion require the Subordinate Legislation Committee to examine an order to assess its appropriateness and empowers the committee to require the minister to amend or revoke the order or to suspend the operation of the order until parliament can consider the committee's report on the order.

Essentially, the committee can request that the minister take such action to ensure that the order has been made in accordance with an appropriate authority, complies with the requirements of the Subordinate Legislation Act 1992, and is not in contravention of other legislation.

The Government accepts the amendment. We did not believe it was necessary but it does not harm the intent of the legislation. It could be said by others to strengthen it so I suggest that it be agreed.

Ms BUTLER - Mr Deputy Chair, I will add to the comments made by the minister. This was an area of the bill which we raised yesterday in the House. We also support the amendment made by Ms Forrest. We believe that it is a prudent measure. It gives another level of oversight. There are no regulations that go with this bill and so, we will be supporting it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Deputy Chair, of course we support this amendment because it clarifies that if the minister does make an order under the legislation that we passed yesterday it must go to the Subordinate Legislation Committee. I think it is an indication that the upper House wants to be absolutely sure that should orders come out of this extraordinary legislation, which provides the stimulus relief for first home buyers, builders and provides that Commonwealth legislation, that there is effective oversight. We are very pleased to support the amendments.

Ms OGILVIE - Mr Deputy Chair, I must admit that I am still confused about the period for which amendments would be provided to the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

The legislation that we are bringing in and the progress of this grants scheme will last a year. We will be back in parliament in August. The normal standards of the House, therefore, would apply and so I am not entirely sure how those two things dovetail. That is more of question. That does not say I do not support further scrutiny; of course, everybody's eyes across everything is a good idea. But it seems to me that when we are back in parliament in August that there would be no need for anything other than regulations to be going to the Subordinate Legislation Committee as it was prior to the change in the laws we had.

I would like to understand - it is more of a bigger picture question - when we return to full parliamentary flight, so to speak, what arrangements there are for drawing back the particular provisions we have made for the emergency periods in relation to how we patched together parliamentary processes for when we are not sitting.

It is worth having it on the record, so I am interested to know that.

[12.16 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Deputy Chair, I am not sure how to answer the question, I will be honest.

The legislation already provided for either House of parliament to disallow a ministerial order made under clause 14(1), which would become section 14(1) of the act. The intention expressed in the original legislation - it is not a regulation; it has never been intended to be a regulation. It has been an intended arrangement that this House at least agree to, at that time, that the minister would be empowered to make changes to the amount of the grant. I made a commitment not to abolish it or to reduce it on behalf of Government. It also contains the provision to allow the transaction date to be altered if some unforeseen arrangements came along, or there was a change to the national partnership agreement. We wanted to make sure that our legislation allowed for those changes to occur and to pass onto the grants administration without needing to bring in more legislation.

The intention was that it would be very narrowly focused. That is why it is an order and not a regulation. A regulation quite ordinarily should go to the Subordinate Legislation Committee. There are many pieces of legislation that provide for ministerial orders that do not go before Subordinate Legislation Committee. But, in the interests of being fair-minded, if some people in the upper House who did feel this way felt that it needed the additional accountability measure, our members did not support that when that question was put to the Floor of the Council. But to stand

firm on that in this place today would hold up the legislation. It would be very counterproductive. We do not see it as necessary nor helpful, but it is not harmful to the legislation. So for those reasons we are quite happy to accept it.

Ms Ogilvie - Would it be okay to ask further questions by way of interjection?

Mr FERGUSON - I am happy to take further questions.

We have no intentions of making an order at this time but it is about futureproofing the legislation. I can sense that I have not answered your question fully but I am happy to take it again or another question.

Ms OGILVIE - You sort of have answered it.

The Subordinate Legislation Committee, of which I was a member for some time, has the capacity to look at ministerial regulations and also notices. We have done that by practice not through its own legislation. I am asking what will happen going forward when parliament returns fully and the standard operating procedures of both downstairs and upstairs are back in play, assuming we may or may not have emergency regulations still in place. How is that going to work with the new arrangements? Are we going to bring those back, or are we going to leave those layers in place?

Mr Ferguson - Are you referring to the COVID-19 legislation?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes. Are we going to continue to send everything through the Subordinate Legislation Committee? That arrangement was made on the assumption that we would not be sitting. But we will be sitting. We will be back in action. That is what I am asking. I am not suggesting I do not support the amendment. I am asking; will this be the way we go forward as a usual state?

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Deputy Chair, I am happy to try to help here. We passed legislation yesterday, which will be in place for the duration of the grants program. That will allow for some orders to go to the Subordinate Legislation Committee, but for any member who thinks that the Subordinate Legislation Committee's scope right now is adequate, I refer them to Dr Brendan Gogarty's work on the Subordinate Legislation Committee during the COVID-19 response. His strong suggestion on behalf of the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute was that we in fact expand the scope of the Subordinate Legislation Committee, rather than working to limit its scope.

If it happened, that as a result of the emergency, there was a broader range of subordinate legislation, which can include orders, notices, regulations, to go to the Subordinate Legislation Committee, that would be a very fine thing for the democratic functioning of this parliament.

Ms Ogilvie - May I respond?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - You have spoken twice, unfortunately.

Ms Ogilvie - The comment was directed to me. I would have liked the opportunity to agree.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I am sorry, Ms Ogilvie. You have spoken twice.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Chair. You might permit the member to interrupt me during my answer, but I accept that there is an understanding here. There are rules that must be followed, so I will do my best to accommodate the questions of the member.

I believe I have adequately answered much of the question in my opening statement about the amendment. I believe that some of your question does relate to the COVID-19-specific legislation, which this does not touch in any way, shape or form. It is standalone from all of that, except for the reference to the pandemic period, which is in the legislation relating to land tax, which we will come to later. So, we are not touching it. We are not going near it.

What this particular amendment does do, though, is expose a potential ministerial order to the wider powers of the Subordinate Legislation Committee that would always be picked up if you were making a regulation. We tried to pick up some of the key parts in respect of the ministerial order.

This is a limited-term funding program. It is intended to live for a defined period of time, for the known downturn in the building industry. I do not want members to take this as an expectation, but hypothetically, if the end transaction date were to be amended, parliament would not be sitting during that time, because the date is 31 December. If it were to be extended for a few days to allow for some paperwork, for example, that had been delayed in the post, or somebody had some issue over Christmas with their lawyer, it might be that a minister might be encouraged to make such an order. I would not do anything of the sort without advice. I am just giving you an example. Parliament not being in place, the Subordinate Legislation Committee could take it on board, ensuring that not just the parts of the Subordinate Legislation Committee Act that were already invoked, but also sections 7, 4, 8 and 9 of the Subordinate Legislation Committee Act would also apply.

I hope that is helpful. I think it is. I see you nodding. I suggest we might agree to it now.

Ms BUTLER - I seek assurances from the minister about whether the Government could potentially reduce the payment as well as reduce the period. Yesterday you gave assurances on the floor that it would not be the case, in relation to the grant. Now there has been a change to this. Can I ask you to reaffirm those assurances on the Floor?

Mr FERGUSON - I am happy to provide the same reassurance. There is no intention to make any ministerial orders at this point in time. Circumstances can change. The House has kindly agreed to an understanding that if circumstances were to change, particularly if there was a change to the national partnership arrangements, which can only occur by agreement, of course, that they are able to flow through.

We will not be reducing the grant. We will not be shortening the period of time. There is potential to allow that, but the only thing we are agreeing to today is a change in the scrutiny arrangements around the ministerial order and I hope that gives you adequate comfort going forward.

Council amendments agreed to.

Reported the Committee had resolved to agree to the Council amendments.

Resolution agreed to.

**BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION (REGULATORY REFORM AMENDMENTS)
BILL 2020 (No.21)**

In Committee

Council amendment to clause 7 -

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Chairman, I move -

That the Council amendment be agreed to.

The amendment proposes to change the time frame in which planning authorities must respond to the applicant in relation to the receipt of further information requests by the planning authority. Under the current act the planning authority must notify the applicant whether a request for additional information has been satisfied in 14 calendar days or two calendar weeks, which is typically but not always 10 working days.

As you will all be aware, this was amended to five working days in the bill that left this House. That is what we wanted and said would be best for the regulatory reform project. However, it is a two House parliament and the other place has seen fit to amend the bill to eight working days, a change I believe is acceptable in respect of the fact that were we to stand on our digs on this it would stop the whole bill in its tracks today, which is not acceptable.

It should be noted that the eight days effectively reduces the time a local government council has to respond to the information provided by an applicant by two days, although over holiday periods such as Easter and Christmas this will result in councils being provided with additional time to respond to further information requests. If I can rehearse the debate I had with Dr Woodruff on this matter a couple of weeks ago, I think we might have said it is a question of how long this piece of string ought to be. We agreed that the piece of string should be five days, if I can use that metaphor, but the other House has sent back to us -

Dr Woodruff - We accepted five business days; it was seven in its original.

Mr FERGUSON - It was intended to bring it from two weeks to one week. We accepted feedback from local government that a better measure of that week is five working days. We felt that was acceptable as a government and amended the bill accordingly prior to introducing it to the House. This House agreed that five days was appropriate. What we have done here is meet more or less in the middle. It certainly will not be weakening this Government's resolve to continue on the red tape reduction pathway that we have been pursuing and, very encouragingly, members of the other side of this House have dared us to continue, particularly in our own agencies.

We will not let that slow us down and I do not want to make too fine a point about it but we need to continue to set the pace. We also need to show that each level of government and indeed each agency within government and statutory authorities all have the capability not just to work harder - often it does not require more hard work - but to work smarter and to provide more certainty to the business community that when they make an application for a particular development permit, while they will not always get the answer they want, at least they will know that there are time frames being introduced whereupon a decision will be made. That is what we are looking to do. I think this should be agreeable to members of this House and we should accede to the Council's amendment.

Ms BUTLER - Labor will be supporting this amendment. It is quite clunky, though, in the process in that we have had three amendments now on the same passage. It has gone from seven to five and now to eight. Because we are in an emergency period, there were very little time frames for us to consult properly and it looks like for your people to be able to consult properly as well, otherwise we would not have had three changes to one passage. We are advised that LGAT are accepting of eight days and therefore we will be supporting this.

Dr WOODRUFF - From memory the Greens did not exactly accept five business days. We were concerned that when there are large planning development applications there may be difficulty for planning staff to be able to assess whether adequate material has been provided within that time period. Clearly this is a matter of scale. For normal residential builds or medium-sized builds that should be enough time, but for larger builds, as has been pointed out to us, council staff may still be wading through hundreds or thousands of pages of paper. We are happy to accept what the other place has suggested. We think that is a more reasonable landing place.

Mr FERGUSON - This has not changed multiple times without purpose. From my knowledge the usual expectation with changes that affect local government is that by agreement we will try to get five weeks, but we do not have that luxury at all. I will say though that LGAT specifically has been aware of these proposals for proper periods of time. They are great people. We have all been working to do our best on this and this is one of the smaller, more modest reforms in the bill. In relation to what you might describe, Dr Woodruff, as thousands of pages that may come in, that is a genuine hypothetical but let us accept it, let us accept a 1000-page response to a further information request. That eight working day period is not to assess the quality of those 1000 pages; it is not to make a determination on it. It is really only a question does this answer the question that we pose?

Dr Woodruff - I understand that.

Mr FERGUSON - I wanted to clarify that because we believe as a government that if local government puts forward the question about more information required, it ought to know what to expect in return. This is a procedural matter that ensures local government does not sit on it for too long and keep an applicant waiting unnecessarily.

I believe we are landing in a healthy spot here. To my mind, one of the most exciting changes in the overall legislation is the minor development approval application which had no time frame at all and is not touched by this amendment. They are the reforms that the development community has been particularly keen on seeing realised so I suggest we crack on and accept this minor amendment. If it makes some people feel more comfortable then I am happy to oblige.

Council amendment agreed to.

Reported the Committee had resolved to agree to the Council amendment.

Resolution agreed to.

MOTION

Major Infrastructure Development Approvals (North West Transmission Upgrades Project) Order 2020

[12.35 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Planning) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals (North West Transmission Upgrades Project) Order 2020, which has been made pursuant to section 7 of the 'Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act 1999'.
- (2) Approves the Order as drafted.

Yesterday I tabled the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals North West Transmission Upgrades Project Order 2020 as made under the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act 1999, which I will refer to as the MIDA act.

Today I ask the House to approve the order and to declare the North West Transmission Upgrade Project to be a major infrastructure project. From the feedback from the briefings yesterday and some comments earlier on, I need to account for why we are bringing this on today. I will do so now and throughout the presentation or at a later point in my contribution.

This is our first opportunity to bring the order forward. We had hoped that it would be earlier in the year but a range of circumstances has delayed the development of the order and the reports it requires. We have ended up with the order only being able to be tabled this week and then an artefact of the calendar that would happen in any year with an order under this act whereby we are approaching a long recess and a requirement for 15 days on the table of both Houses for the order to be disallowed.

In any year, landing this order at this time would put us in this position where the 15-day requirement under the act effectively costs us three months. We do note that the act does allow for approval of one of these orders under MIDA to be by a positive motion in both Houses of parliament. While this is a large and complex project, the matter of giving effect to the order which is already being supported by six local government councils, the EPA, the Governor and the minister, is a relatively straightforward matter and we would hope that this House is able to turn its attention to that matter today.

I will lay out what it is and why I believe we can do it today.

The North West Transmission Upgrade Project is essential to facilitating the development of the planned Marinus Link across Bass Strait and supporting anticipated new wind generation and long duration pumped hydro energy storage facilities. The project, in facilitating connections to wind farms and pumped hydro schemes and in conjunction with the proposed Marinus Link, has the potential to provide cheaper energy prices to Tasmanians through the export of clean energy to mainland Australia. The export of clean energy will also raise additional revenue for Tasmania and reduce mainland Australia's dependency on coal-fired power stations.

In accordance with the requirements of the MIDA act I am satisfied that the order is in the public interest. The project's transmission lines - new and upgraded - will cross six local government areas. I have consulted with each of these councils and none has raised any local issues in regard to the project that ought to be considered against the state's interests. The order provides the project with a 120-metre wide corridor but for most of its length the actual width required will be much less. Depending on the circumstances of each section of the powerline, the nominal height for the towers will be 36 metres to 60 metres high while the nominal width for the substations will be 300 metres by 300 metres. The project also requires conductor, winching and braking sites to be placed up to 150 metres outside of the corridor during construction to enable the appropriate tension to be applied to the powerlines.

The project consists of a high voltage 220 kilovolt powerline from Palmerston to Sheffield, Sheffield to Burnie via a spur line to Heybridge, Burnie to East Cam, East Cam to Hampshire and Hampshire to Staverton. The project will include four substations at East Cam, Heybridge, Hampshire and Staverton. The project will also include three sites at Hampshire, Nietta and South Nietta that will provide concrete batching plants, site offices and storage areas during construction.

The project also includes necessary ancillary development such as access tracks, concrete batching, communication systems, conductor winching and braking sites, construction camp site and storage areas. In determining the location of the corridor, TasNetworks considered a number of alternative routes for the powerlines as well as alternative methods of transmission. The preferred routes and the method of transmission are reflected in the draft order and TasNetworks' supporting report.

Importantly, the proposed powerline from Palmerston to Burnie is to be located within an existing powerline easement and is also a replacement for the existing powerline. The powerline from East Cam to Hampshire is to be located within an existing corridor which is to be upgraded and the powerline from Hampshire to Staverton is to be located within a new powerline corridor.

The project is large scale and complex and crosses six local government areas and it stands to benefit Tasmania as a whole. My view and that of the proponent, TasNetworks, is that the project should be considered through a consolidated assessment process that allows the assessing authority to consider the project in its entirety and remove the potential for duplication or inconsistencies that may result from multiple council assessments being conducted in parallel. The MIDA act provides for such an assessment process.

An order issued under the MIDA act declaring a project to be a major infrastructure project enables an assessing authority, established in accordance with the order, to consider the project as a whole. It also provides for other statutory regulators such as the Environment Protection Authority to consider the project in its entirety, generating additional efficiencies, rigour and consistency. Similarly, public consultation processes will also consider the project as a whole. Finally, should the project be approved, a single permit would be issued which would provide additional certainty to the proponent, TasNetworks.

I also note that previous major linear infrastructure network projects including the Waddamana to Risdon Vale electricity transmission line and the southern pipeline extension natural gas project were declared as major infrastructure developments and assessed and ultimately approved in accordance with the requirements of the MIDA act. This is exactly the type of project that MIDA was created for.

The MIDA act provides for the assessment of a declared major infrastructure project to be undertaken either by a combined planning authority consisting of representatives of the six relevant local councils or by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission. Given the size and complex nature of the project and as requested by at least one of the relevant councils, I determined that the assessment will be referred to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, a trusted delegated panel of independent experts which will act as the planning authority. I communicated this to the six councils and they did not object.

Once declared as a major infrastructure development, the project is deemed to be a discretionary application under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 and is assessed as such; that is, it can be approved or refused. The MIDA act requires that draft planning assessment criteria for the project must be publicly exhibited and that the commission, having regard to public comments, will then finalise the planning assessment criteria against which the project will then be considered.

In assessing a project under the MIDA act the commission is acting in the role of a planning authority and not in its statutory role as the Tasmanian Planning Commission. This is an important distinction because just like a standard discretionary application the decision in regard to a MIDA assessment is subject to third party appeal to the Resource Management and Planning Appeals Tribunal. This is the only circumstance where there is a merit appeal following from a commission determination.

Under the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act an order must be laid before both Houses of parliament. Parliament can either approve the order or the order is taken to be approved if the order sits in parliament for 15 sitting days and a motion is not passed to disallow the order.

The 15 sitting days required to have the order deemed approved by parliament in this case would take us through to October. Like many projects, COVID-19 has delayed the order being progressed and this has led to some compressed time frames. As a result, TasNetworks has a tight time frame in which to conduct botanical surveys in spring 2020. Failure to commence these surveys and other season-dependent actions in the process as scheduled, will have significant impacts in terms of time and cost. I am therefore putting this positive motion to both Houses of parliament in accordance with section 7(6)(a) of the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act which specifically provides for a positive vote once the order has been tabled.

In making our decision here today as to whether to support this motion it is important for me to stress that the decision is not about approving the major infrastructure development approvals process. It is not an assessment of the merits of the project. It is purely a decision as to whether we consider that the north-west transmission upgrade project satisfies the criteria to be declared as a major infrastructure project. I am satisfied that it does, as are six local government councils whose communities are directly affected, as is the EPA and through the making of the order, so does the Government of Tasmania.

In summary, this project stands to benefit Tasmania as a whole. The consideration of the project is best carried out through an assessment process that provides a singular, broader view of the proposal and removes any unnecessary duplication of multiple approvals being conducted in parallel.

Approving a declaration will enable the assessment process to consider the project as a whole across the six council areas and, if suitable for approval, will provide a single permit for each part

of the project, which will bring efficiencies to the assessment process for both state and local government.

Importantly, if the project is not received through this process, which was developed specifically for projects of this kind, the proponent will need to decide whether to submit separate development applications to six separate local planning authorities. A failure to gain approval in any one area would effectively prevent the whole project from proceeding. You cannot have gaps in a transmission line. I am asking you to agree to this now, rather than waiting for the passage of 15 sitting days and in the interests of giving a proponent and the communities involved access to the MIDA process so the assessment of this important project can commence this year.

I thank you for taking up the offer of a briefing at short notice. I will listen carefully to your contributions and will do my best to address any further matters that might arise from this debate.

[12.48 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I take at face value the commitments and the statements and the intent from the member who has just resumed his seat and the mover of this motion, but it is a shabby way to deal with something as significant as this.

This is the first time in 16 years that this legislation has been used for a major piece of infrastructure. No one is arguing that this is a major undertaking. It is consistent with the previous decisions made by this House in allowing this action under the act to be called in and to be referred to the Tasmanian Planning Commission to allow the work to be done. The fact that it has not been used in 16 years means it is only done in certain circumstances.

Of course we have been aware of the discussion on the upgrading of that line, and the work that would be required to support the Marinus project, and the energy assets proposed to be built on the north-west coast as well as the need to upgrade not only the existing line but also to create a new line. These are significant documents that we only received late yesterday afternoon. Yes, we received the briefing, but we did not receive the document that we now have until very late yesterday afternoon.

I will take at face value that your intent is not to seek to undermine parliament's ability to scrutinise and have appropriate oversight over these things. You have just voted on a motion. We gave you opportunities to come back next week and have more sitting days. We gave you that option but you chose not to. On one hand you say it is beyond your control because of the timing of the winter recess but then you vote against the opportunity to allow appropriate scrutiny of such a significant document. It is a significant decision. As I said, it is not legislation that is used or a process that is used every year. It has been 16 years. I remember the environmental heritage minister being appointed in 2010 and dealing with some of the heritage matters on the Waddamana to Risdonvale in 2010. It does take quite some time between us doing our work here and the actual line being built. My understanding is that it has not been proposed to be built until 2024.

As a matter of process, we think it is a bit shabby. We think it is not appropriate. We gave you the opportunity to schedule more sitting days to deal with matters such as this, particularly given that there already has been significant community debate on the north-west coast about the placement of transition lines. I am not saying that you are extinguishing that but this will add to the concern that all of a sudden this has been dumped on the table and in 24 hours we have to allow it to trigger a process that people are not expecting. Whether we like it or not, people are not expecting this process to occur.

Mr Jaensch - Give them somewhere to have their input.

Mr O'BYRNE - I am not saying that you are extinguishing it but that it will add to the concern of the local community who want to make sure they have their say. When there has already been significant community debate, discussion and consultation through TasNetworks and UPC and through the government facilitating the community debate, they are expecting a process. This is my understanding. The minister may correct me if I am wrong but they are expecting a very different process going through their local council.

This triggering does not extinguish their rights, does not stop them having a say, does not stop a whole range of regulatory approvals and considerations, particularly with the EPA under the EPBC, but it is a different process. So, it is a cautionary word to the government that by your own hand you may make this process more difficult and you may increase the level of concern around people's ability to have their say.

This work is essentially connected to the Marinus project. We are very clear. We think the Marinus project is an extraordinary opportunity for Tasmania. It is exciting that we can maximise our renewable energy strength and resolve a range of issues globally, nationally and locally in terms of the strong profile that Tasmania has had since hydro industrialisation in Tasmania. We have been providing clean green energy in a limited way through the current Bass Link but the Marinus Link will turbocharge that opportunity and resolve a massive energy security issue for the mainland but also moves away from carbon-intensive energy generation to a cleaner generation.

We think it is a wonderful opportunity. Jobs will be created, particularly through the pump hydro projects, UPC and the wind farm projects and a range of other proposals that are in the development, approval or contemplation phase within Tasmania. It is one of our global strengths and we should be advancing it.

Our concern is that there are still fundamental questions. We are doing all this work. This line will cost \$500 million. We are unclear about where that money is coming from. We hope the minister will clarify that for us. There is no clarity about who will pay for, or who will own, the Marinus Link. There is no clarity around delivering on those elements of the project. Without those matters being resolved satisfactorily, dealing with not only energy security but energy prices and the opportunity that is presented by selling our excess energy into the mainland market, the entire house of cards of the Government's renewable energy policy and these proposals of half a billion dollars of investment completely collapses. Your whole draft renewable energy action plan relies on Marinus being delivered. Without Marinus being delivered, that all collapses. The 200 per cent that you pat yourself on the back every day about, that all collapses.

You have no strategy. You already have \$56 million from the federal organisations arena and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to get the business case up. You are seeking more funds to get the Marinus project to development and approval ready. The whole strategy relies on that, yet there are two big dark clouds on the horizon. You need to clarify that. You cannot just sit back and hope there is going to be a change to the national rules and beneficiary pays. You cannot assume that is going to occur. There is a whole range of bilateral negotiations between state governments and the federal government to allow that to occur.

There is a massive risk in this. The opportunity is magnificent. There is no doubt about that. The Labor Party has a strong record of backing in renewable energy. We built the Hydro. We built the first wind farm in Woolnorth. Our record on this is rock-solid. We see the opportunity but we

are worried that the work is not being done to make sure that can be realised, not only in the next decade but for future generations of Tasmanians.

In terms of the order that was initiated, you referred to having a response and a ministerial recommendation and agreeance by those six councils. It is not in the order. You do not outline that approval, and from what I understand it is not in the document.

Mr Jaensch - It is in my report.

Mr O'BYRNE - In this report?

Mr Jaensch - No, in my report which is in the pack.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is the only report we have received. We have received the motion and this report.

Dr Woodruff - We were told we got it two hours before the briefing and we did not have it in the briefing.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is indicative that this is a shambles. We are very patient compared to some. When I was a minister in government between 2010 and 2014, there were protestations from the Opposition at that time for even a slight error in the process. We have been very patient and this should not be seen as not supporting what you are trying to do, but you have to do this better. It looks shambolic and if we cannot trust you with the basic stuff, then it does -

Mr Jaensch - Given the nature of that framing, can I ask you to check that a document titled 'Report to Parliament', signed by me, is not part of the hard-copy pack that you were provided by the Clerk of Papers?

Mr O'BYRNE - We did not get a hard-copy pack. We were emailed this document - this is all we received.

Mr Jaensch - Were hard copies at the briefings?

Dr Woodruff - We asked to see this document at the briefing but were told it had been sent to us. It had not, we checked. We got it after the briefing, after we asked for it.

Mr O'BYRNE - We had the briefing around 2 o'clock or 2.30. I had to come back up here to the House so I could not sit through the full briefing and then this was forwarded to the Opposition Leader's chief of staff around 4.30 p.m. or thereabouts, and that is all we have received.

Mr Jaensch - My understanding is that a pack when tabled is available from the Clerk's office to anyone who wants to take their own hard copy, and that is where they were.

Mr O'BYRNE - We did say that we did not have it. We asked for it and that is all that was sent through.

Mr Jaensch - So you did not go to access it yourself - okay.

Dr Woodruff - It was not given to us.

Mr O'BYRNE - I understand what you are trying to do and I get it. Yes, you are right, but you are bringing this in at the last minute. You are giving us 24 hours and it is a sizeable document. We would have thought you would say, 'We understand that this is last minute so we're going to do all that we can to make sure you've got all the information and check with us', but if you just want to tick the boxes that is fine, but that has consequences.

Minister, given we have not received that, we would like for you to either provide it or table the advice from those six councils.

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

MOTION

Major Infrastructure Development Approvals (North West Transmission Upgrades Project) Order 2020

Resumed from above.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I have been hand-delivered by the minister the document to which we were referring prior to the break, and I thank him for that.

My colleague, Anita Dow, the member for Braddon, will be making a contribution on some of the questions she has in terms of the questions I was raising about local councils, the consultation, the approval of the councils to refer it to the TPC as the appropriate body to assess and the establishment of that as the planning authority in this matter.

I have made a number of points around the Marinus project itself and the importance of the Government to resolve a couple of questions on that matter. In the debate with the Minister for Energy we talked about the cost of \$500 million so could the minister put on the record, if possible, in his contribution the funding for this important piece of work and how that will be framed out? I know the building of the actual project is beyond the forward Estimates. I get that, in terms of a whole-of-government government business enterprise expense, but any idea of where that money would be coming from would be good.

Having made the points I made before the break about the process, the importance of this project and my disappointment around having only 24 hours to deal with this, we will be supporting the motion. We think it is an appropriate project to be pulled in under this bill. My comments still stand about how this might be perceived by the local community. We all know that projects like this will end up with the Planning Commission anyway. It will head through, no doubt, given some of the views that have already been expressed to virtually every member of this House about these kinds of projects, and there will no doubt be a number of views raised and there may be some further processes beyond the Planning Commission's decision as a planning authority. Be that as it may, we believe this is an appropriate project to be pulled in under this legislation.

[2.34 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, the bill we have before us is about bringing forward the Marinus Link. It is understood to be a project to unlock renewable energy potential in

Tasmania and to make that energy available across other parts of mainland Australia as a contribution towards bringing Australia's greenhouse gases into a safer place.

We have to understand the context of this, which is that we are in a climate and extinction crisis. This is a global emergency and reducing our carbon emissions comes from Australia using fewer fossil fuels. The basis for any drive for renewable energy projects must be to look at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The first place we need to go to is fossil fuels, and the first decision we need to make as a country is to stop exporting all thermal coal by 2030. That has been the position of the Greens for some time now and it is in line with the scientific evidence. We also have to support coal workers and communities during that transition period, so these are huge issues for the country we are grappling with at the moment.

The hypothetical Marinus Link could form part of an Australian energy grid and help to theoretically stabilise parts of the network. What is apparent is that there are a huge number of hypotheticals at play here and one of the most substantial ones is the Liberal and Labor parties' policy position on energy at the federal level. It is very clear that, despite trying to sit on both sides of the fence, the Labor Party at the federal level, judging by Anthony Albanese's comments at the National Press Club yesterday, is continuing to move more closely towards the Liberals in backing continued mining and exportation of fossil fuels.

Where that leaves us as a country is in a very difficult place for forging ahead with renewable energy like we need to be doing and it puts question marks over the commitments at the federal level towards funding renewable energy projects. Clearly the Liberal Party, in their choice of the head of a mining company to look at the COVID economic recovery for Australia, have made a choice to subsidise gas projects, coal and other fossil fuel projects. We are in a very conflicted space and it is important to look at this bill within that context because we are here today on the basis that this is an urgent bill and we have been given to understand that this must be rushed through.

I want to speak about the COVID emergency in Tasmania and the extraordinary parliament that we have constructed as a response to that. We are the only jurisdiction I am aware of in Australia that does not have a level of additional scrutiny over the constrained parliament we have. Labor and the Greens have tried on numerous occasions to expand the level of scrutiny we have in our COVID-constrained parliament and have failed. That means we have a parliament which has been sitting now for about three months under a COVID emergency arrangement and the agreement that was made by the Premier with the Labor Party, the Greens and the member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, was that only legislation or orders that relate to the COVID emergency or an urgent response would be introduced into parliament during this period.

We have an extraordinary suspension of parliamentary oversight. It is a big step away from the normal democratic processes that parliament seeks to continue; hundreds of years of democratic processes that have stood us in good place. It is out of step with other jurisdictions. The Premier stood here in parliament three months ago or so, and gave us his personal guarantee that he would not abuse the trust that was given to him by other parties in this particular matter. Only bills that were required for the COVID-19 emergency, only bills that were required for an urgent response, would be introduced into this place.

We first heard yesterday about this bill being introduced into this place at 11.35 in the morning. That was our first notice that this bill would be brought on for debate today. Yes, it was tabled yesterday, but we assumed it would be attended to in the August sitting of parliament, 18 August

or thereafter. We heard about it at 11.35 a.m. Our staff member asked the minister's staff member, who advised that this would happen whether the order was related to the COVID-19 emergency and that person replied, 'not to his knowledge'. Our staff member also asked whether it was in relation to the emergency, and not that he understood was the response.

There was not even the pretence of a pretext that this was a COVID- related bill. It is not being rushed through for COVID-19. It is not required as part of the emergency. It is, in fact, completely contradictory to the commitment that the Premier gave us that he would not try to push through stuff, with the constrained timing that we have, to consider bills.

So, the Government's public statements and commitments to this House about reduced time frames for documents, for bills or for orders, was that there would be a reduction in time from two days to one day for bills to mature. That was necessary because of the context of the emergency, to make sure that there could be fewer sitting days, fewer staff in the building for safety and physical distancing reasons, for safety and physical distancing in the Chamber, and on the basis that Government staff were busy doing all the things with the emergency. This would be a reasonable reduction in oversight from parliament of bills that came before us. We agreed to that. It was given to us on trust and we took it in good faith.

We have the Leader of Government Business also asking us to trust him. He said that numbers of times in parliament, 'trust us, we are not going to do anything dodgy with the process. We will not be shifty here. We are all in this together'. Well, we have trusted the Leader of Government Business and I know, because we asked at the briefing, that the Executive Council had this bill signed off on Monday. It was gazetted. Yes, the *Gazette* appeared on Wednesday, but a special gazette could have been issued for this matter. But let us not even go to a special gazette. The minister could have picked up the phone. He could have given the opposition parties, the Labor, the Greens, Ms Ogilvie - we could have actually had a copy of this bill on Monday night, but Tuesday morning would have been fine. That would have been two days.

So, we heard about this yesterday at 11.35 a.m. We were given a briefing at 3.30 p.m. I asked numerous questions in the briefing about particular matters to do with when councils knew things, aspects of the bill. I was told at one point, that all that I needed was in the bill pack. I said that I did not have the bill pack. It was, 'Oh, do you not have the bill pack? It was sent to you two hours ago'. I said, 'No, it was not sent to us'. We went back and checked all the emails. No bill pack arrived.

The answers to the reasonable questions I asked were, 'Have a look in the bill pack'. Well, I have not had time to look at it. It did not arrive. The bill pack arrived after we had requested it at 4.42 yesterday afternoon. Here we are, less than 24 hours later and the bill pack had a 78-page document from TasNetworks. It had all the correspondence from the councils. It had the minister's statement. That is a fair bit to get through and to consider it.

Mr Ferguson, the Leader of Government Business, said this morning in parliament in response to something he was talking about, 'That is how people can talk to each other. I rang him on the phone. I rang Robert Armstrong. Just pick up the phone'. I throw it back to the Leader of Government Business and to this minister - pick up the phone. Do not do this rubbish to us and pretend we will not be affected and not want to uphold parliamentary standards and processes here. This is not a COVID-related bill. This is not how you treat the process of the House. This is what happens when we trust you. You abuse our trust. There is no reason and what is the rush? What is the difference between one day and two days? What is the difference?

It is ironic when you look at the bill and some of the time frames that are required under the MIDA act. It is ironic that 28 days for councils to respond, a week here, different weeks there. All of this stuff is like laws that are being attended to. Meanwhile, the Government cannot even attend to the parliamentary process of two days' maturation for a bill. You sort everything else out but you do not bother to sort out the parliamentary process and the democracy of this House. That is not important to you. The one thing you think you can control you cannot, because you do not own this place.

I want to attend to some of the particular issues that came up for us in relation to this bill, other than the fact that it is unnecessary to rush it through in the first place. These multibillion-dollar projects and things that take a decade to construct, or maybe five years; there are a long design and development and construction time lines. I did not understand and I did not find the reasons that the minister gave, or that I heard in the briefings, plausible about the whole rush for this bill hinges on being able to do some ecological surveys in spring. It is possible but we have not seen evidence of that. We were given no evidence that that was required. We would have to take it on good faith and I am not feeling like having a lot of good faith on this matter because of the way that you continue to treat the processes around planning with some disdain. It is not just the instance here: it is writ large across major projects; the Tasmanian Planning Commission Review, a whole range of other areas. You seem to be very cavalier about the processes which are normal in government.

This act was last used in 2004 and it has only ever been used twice. It is not a common act. It is obscure and requires time to look at the particularities of it. Ultimately, normally if this was being done properly, we would have time to consult with stakeholders and we would have time to consider the details of the bill. Clearly, we have not had time to consult with stakeholders. As a member of parliament, as a person who takes legislation and my role seriously, I find that offensive when there is no reason. It does not persuade me there is a reason to forgo having the sort of checks and balances that should be made of any bill, this one included.

One of the issues in the minister's statement that I want to look at now is the question of council agreement. So that an order can be made under the MIDA, the minister has to comply with the number of conditions that are outlined in section 8. These include receiving a report from the proponent with a comprehensive description of the project, which is section 8(1)(b), giving relevant councils notice of the minister's intention to make a recommendation and considering any recommendations made by those councils, section 8(1)(c). The notice must include a copy of the report received by the minister from the proponent, the minister's reasons for proposing that the proponent be declared to be a major infrastructure project, and a draft order. Also, there must be a decision that the declaration is in the public interest - section 8(1)(d).

The minister's statement has his opinions in relation to the submissions that were received. The minister notes the support from councils for the use of the Major Projects Infrastructure Development Approvals Act. At that point, there were two options open to councils. One is that they could choose to have that infrastructure development application assessed through a combined planned authority model. The second option is it could go to the Tasmanian Planning Commission who will, under the act, act as the planning authority, in this instance.

The minister says:

I note that the Meander Council prefers the Tasmanian Planning Commission to conduct the assessment.

Then he goes on to say:

I note that the other councils have also indicated that they do not object to the Tasmanian Planning Commission being directed to conduct the assessment.

That is not an accurate reflection of what I read in the councils' letters on this matter, and I would like to understand how you came to that interpretation by looking at what the Northern Midlands Council said. The Northern Midlands Council, in a letter dated 3 March, said:

I refer to the notice received from Minister Jaensch dated 27 February 2020 advising his intention to direct the Tasmanian Planning Commission undertake the assessment of the North-West Tasmania Transmissions Upgrades Project.

The notice allows 7 days for a response to be made. Council is not meeting within the next 7 days, therefore I am unable to express any concerns Council may have.

When Council considered the Minister's initial request it advised its view the project should be assessed by a combined planning authority, not the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Council has expressed frustration at the timeframes for responses provided in this process which has not allowed for reports to be presented to Council for consideration in time for the deadlines expressed by the Minister to be met. I understand these timeframes may have been set by legislation, however, it is requested these be reviewed to ensure Councils have fair opportunity to make comment regarding this process in the future.

I do not read that letter as saying that this council does not object to the Tasmanian Planning Commission being directed to conduct the assessment. That is not an interpretation which is valid, from that letter. In fact, they made it very clear they wanted it to be assessed by a combined planning authority in their letters of 24 February and 3 March.

You also go on, in your ministerial statement, to say, 'I wrote a further letter to councils to express my views and to test if any council would be opposed to this course of action', which was that the assessment be carried out by the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

You cannot actually test a statement when you do not give people meaningful options. There was no testing; you effectively informed them that that is what you would be doing, and there is no test when a party does not have the power to say no; it is simply a power play. Let us be honest about what is going on here. You wrote to the councils a second time and you could have said, 'I have power under the act to make the decision and I made the decision to go with the Planning Commission'.

A number of councils make this very point themselves in the second letter. The Burnie City Council indicated that the assessment should be conducted by a combined planning authority and they did not change their position. They say that the minister had set out his reasons to support appointing the Tasmanian Planning Commission to undertake the assessment of the project. The council does not have grounds on which to challenge or object to the minister's reasons. That is not the same thing as to agreeing to them. In their letter they say again that the assessment should be

conducted by a combined planning authority. Waratah-Wynyard Council is also clear that they would prefer it to be undertaken by a combined planning authority.

In the briefing yesterday I was led to understand that initially councils had mixed views and the majority would have preferred a combined planning authority but by the second ask they were in agreement that they would go with the Tasmanian Planning Commission. That is actually not correct. It is correct that in the first request one council did not respond, one council wanted to go with the Tasmanian Planning Commission and four councils wanted to go with a combined planning authority. In the second request letter that you wrote one council did not respond, three councils wanted to go with a combined planning authority and three councils wanted to go with the Tasmanian Planning Commission. It was split. You should be upfront about this. If you have the power to override the councils just say that, but do not pretend and be shifty. If you are asking people to take things on trust then you have to be really clear, upfront and honest about what you are doing and not try to hide things from people. The response from councils makes it clear that they do not like being treated like that either and it is fairly imperious.

I want to talk about the other aspect of this development, which is that this order provides that the Tasmanian Planning Commission acts as the planning authority and in that situation it raises some potentially concerning issues about process. The planning authority that deals with an application for a permit in relation to a major infrastructure project may determine that application 'in such manner as it thinks fit'. That is the MIDA Act section 11(1)(b). This may entitle the planning authority, in other words the Tasmanian Planning Commission in that situation, to dispense with procedural entitlements that would normally apply under LUPAA. Whether the Planning Commission chooses to do that or not is a matter for them but this act enables that to happen, so I think that is a matter of concern. If these projects were being looked at council by council, then each council would be required to look at it under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act and they would not be able to dispense with normal processes. Also, if it was looked at council by council then anything that was prohibited within LUPAA would remain prohibited. Under the MIDA, this means that regardless of the terms of any relevant planning scheme or a special planning order, the major infrastructure project is taken to be a discretionary use of development under the land. In other words, if something is prohibited in a council planning scheme this provides that it becomes discretionary within the MIDA process. When we asked a question in the briefing about this the reply was that it was not understood that there was anything within the separate planning schemes of the six councils that would be prohibited that would be affected by this particular that would become discretionary under the planning authority with the power of MIDA.

I make the point that this should have been provided to us. We should have had some written material about this. The last time that this act was used the aspects of the planning scheme that were to be overridden and/or provided as discretionary, I understand a table and information about the exact ones were provided to members of parliament who were making decisions at the time. If there is nothing then we needed to see that material. We need to see the evidence that this aspect of the planning scheme, if elements that are prohibited become discretionary under the planning authority, then I would have liked to have seen that. I think that is basic information. It was not clear to me that we got a comprehensive answer and that the staff who provided the information to us in the briefing yesterday were confident of the answer that they were giving us. That is a concern if you could address that.

The ecological values that are at play with this project are large and substantial and they are outlined in the proponent's paper. On page 42 and 43 it is clear that there are a large number of

ecological values that will be threatened by the possible corridor and so we make the point that the communities are very concerned about, their private and public land that they care for and these groups like the Nietta Action Group -

Time expired.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the member be heard for one more minute.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I will allow that because I am a nice guy.

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Deputy Speaker, these groups, these communities that are being affected by this transmission route, which is not yet finalised, need to be able to have some surety and we are very concerned that this process which has been rushed through - pointless rushing - means that these issues need to be sorted through with the communities before they go into the process that they are going into. There is no reason for that not to happen so we will not be supporting this bill today.

[3.04 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I put some energy into getting across the documents during lunch and I think I now have a handle on it, so I will hold forth and if I am going off track I am sure the minister will correct me if anything I say is completely wrong.

My best assessment of what is going on here is that under the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act, section 7, we have before us an order which effectively establishes a Tasmanian Planning Commission oversight by way of being the planning authority for these links.

I am looking at the map which is in the Marinus document and I am aware that this link and the increased transmission capacity is necessary for the Marinus project, which I support. As I look at the map, I see that a majority of the upgrades that are contained in the order are overlaid on existing lines. There is new work, it seems to me, between Hampshire and Staverton. I believe the use of a single planning oversight is sensible because I come from an infrastructure background. I have done major infrastructure projects before. It is incredibly difficult, time consuming and costly dealing with all of the different sets of approvals from lawyers, et cetera.

I know this act has been in place to do infrastructure level work. I have always said, and I am on the record as saying, I see benefit for infrastructure level work that is for the people of Tasmania to be dealt with in a consolidated way. I am not sure I feel the same way about your major projects bill, but we can talk about that going forward. But this is infrastructure level work and it is a dangerous commodity we are dealing with, so it is important that it has the highest level of oversight and coordination, particularly amongst the engineers. Electricity is not a simple commodity to be dealing with.

At the moment, we are not actually looking at a bill. We are looking at an order and the request of the House is that we either - and I will read out the motion because it is important to understand what we are being asked to do. The motion is -

That the House -

- (1) Notes the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals (North West Transmission Upgrades Project) Order -

a copy of which we have -

which has been made pursuant to section 7 of the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act 1999.

and approves the Order as drafted.

When I turn to the notes provided by the minister, which were quite helpful, the dot points, and I look towards two-thirds of the way down the page, 15 sitting days are required to have the order deemed approved by the parliament. Under current circumstances, that would take approximately two to three months to pass.

It is my understanding that this would normally be a procedural motion, the order would go in - we might not even notice; it would be terrible if that happened - but the order would go in and it would, effectively through the effluxion of time, be approved. But to do it this way we need a formal approval process. We do that by way of a motion, and a positive motion to approve the order would put it through the House. Complex, but I think I have got it. Is that accurate so far?

Mr Jaensch - Yes.

Ms OGILVIE - Okay, I see nods. Nods are good. Just the process of it. I am by no means an expert in planning. I have never worked on a council or been involved at that level with councils. I take on board that there was some disagreement about the best mechanism for a planning authority to take control. To my mind, the planning commission, which is our central planning commission, and it has been around a long time and makes sensible decisions in the main part but which can be appealed in any case, is a good way to go.

On the back of that - and connected to my support of the Marinus project - it is also my understanding that we need this link to be able to effectively make the Marinus project ready and able to take not just hydro energy but wind-generated energy to the right transmission stations. Ultimately, hopefully, it will connect to the Marinus cable, which I hope we will own. It is a great special purpose vehicle. We will build, own and operate all of this new energy capacity and not be subject to other states' and territories' interference, telling us how we can get our energy off the island. That is me being a bit of a bolshie Tasmanian, but I think we ought to own it. The feds can tip in some money to help us do that.

This work is important; it is timely. We need jobs. They are fairly specific jobs within in the electricity industry. I hope we have enough people with the capacity to get on board with that work.

I had a chance to have a look at the Major Infrastructure Development Approvals Act, section 7, major infrastructure projects. To my mind, major infrastructure projects sit quite apart from other sorts of projects we might do - telecommunications projects, water, anything to do with pipes under the ground, transmission lines; anything where it is economically sensible for the state to have a monopoly. It is sunk cost and we will have to claw it back over many years. It is an investment by the people in peoples' infrastructure. Under Part 2, section 7, Declaration of major infrastructure project -

(1) The Minister may recommend to the Governor the making of an order -

which we have here -

declaring a project to be a major infrastructure project.

The Governor may so make that order.

I note that we have the compliance elements with the report to parliament, description of the project, public interest for submission in relation to the proposed order; all of the arguments are in this document. For those who have been able to read them, I would say they probably make sense. In dealing with such a large project, you might be going to tell me most of the land is either state reserve or council-owned land. I would be interested to know how much of the new line traverses private property or is close enough to private property. We need electricity. We need energy. I am very supportive of the north-west coast. They have not had it easy and to be able to inject some jobs, energy and economic activity up there would be a good thing.

I am supportive of this motion. I would like to know a little more about ensuring that local private landowners will not in any way be disadvantaged through the process that has been put in place. My understanding is that LUPAA will still apply and the Environmental Management, Pollution and Control Act will apply. I note 'any other act which relates to land use, planning and approval, other than the act which may be prescribed'. I want to make sure that the consultation communication processes are robust and that individuals and small landholders, private property owners, will have their right to have a say.

Major infrastructure projects can be incredibly complex and to coordinate all the pieces of the puzzle is an art form. A lot of engineering muscle goes into that; forward planning, critical paths, all of those sorts of things. In order to get Marinus going and for us to take a leadership position on renewable energy generation and sales, commercialisation, and to sell, hopefully, at a premium to Victoria, we need to be ready and to charge an extra 10 per cent for our energy because it is clean and green. This component of the work has to happen, regardless, because there is some wind energy production involved as well.

Then the next step is to land Marinus. If we can land Marinus, then we can connect properly into the Battery of the Nation, which would put us at the national forefront of renewable energy and show all the other states and territories how to do it.

I would like us, with our deep and long knowledge of how to do energy properly, to fly the flag nationally for what our engineers and GBEs and generations of Tasmanians have done and really take a leadership role in that. I am looking forward a long way. I think Marinus is scheduled for 2028. It has been put on the list of top 15 projects for the nation.

I would love to have a chat to Scomo personally. I would tell him how much energy we have for this project and ask him to fund the cable, our special purpose vehicle, to put Tasmania in the driver's seat of our future economic growth with a product that is renewable clean and green, which requires intellect, capacity and know how. We can use those skills that we have on this island in a beautiful way to get the nation headed in a better direction with renewable energy. We know we have to do that. We are very lucky here.

Just a final aside. Back in the 1930s, when all of this started, Granddad was a very big fan of renewable energy. In 1936, he took a trip to Russia and saw the building of their big dams. He came back with his brother. They met Mussolini. He did not like Mussolini.

Ms O'Connor - He was tremendously impressed by him according to media reports at the time.

Ms OGILVIE - No, no. I will tell you the family story. We heard he was invited to see Mussolini who was sitting way down the end of the marble corridor at his little desk, like a potentate, a little emperor, a little fascist. As he walked towards the desk to have a conversation with him, he decided that he very much did not like this man. He felt that he was jumped up. That was a side issue.

Back to Russia. There was major infrastructure development. Huge amounts of water energy was being produced; lots of other interesting things. He went to Canada and saw similar stuff and brought that thinking home.

We have to take some risks and we have to take some leadership. In a small way Tasmania can do that in relation to what is happening on the mainland. They have their coal issues. We are in a much better position. I would love to see us flying that flag; therefore, I will be supporting this motion.

[3.19 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to follow on from my colleague, David O'Byrne. I have a number of questions to put to the minister this afternoon. I know others have made the point quite strongly around the process, about the reason this was brought on so quickly. Consultation was finalised with councils back in March. We have been calling, as others have, for extended sitting days in this place, acknowledging that we are in the midst of the pandemic. Nonetheless, if there is important business of the House that needs to be dealt with we are willing and able to do that.

It is disappointing that this has come to us in this way. A number of pieces of legislation have come in exactly the same way. It is true to form in many aspects. After asking for it yesterday, it is really disappointing to only receive the briefing information in my pigeonhole just at lunchtime. I am pleased though that it did arrive because it enabled me to scrutinise more thoroughly the responses from each of the individual councils that should be giving consideration to this matter and this important infrastructure project.

I note that throughout the proponent's report it talks of the great benefits of this infrastructure and of the accompanying Marinus project, but also the great potential of renewable energy right across the region where I live and the employment opportunities that will flow for local people from that.

I make the point today that whilst we are doing all of this preparatory work around the required infrastructure - and we hope the Government is doing a lot of work around the required funding as well - there is a need for that preparedness in the community of skills and training and working with local manufacturers and others. We need to ensure that they have every opportunity to be part of this development, and to work within this development, and that the true economic benefit when it comes to construction and the jobs which will be made available through that is enabled to local people. That is absolutely essential.

Given the time frames for this are quite a way off, there is much discussion about the importance of this project but we need to be realistic that it is some time away. There will need to be other levels of intervention to create employment opportunities across the region in the meantime

but it does give us some time to prepare a workforce and to provide skills and training in renewable energy to our people to enable them to be involved in these very important projects.

I move to the declaration of the major infrastructure project in the legislation and point 9. During our briefing yesterday it was stated, I think, that Meander Valley Council had wanted the assessment process to be conducted through the TPC. After that, I wondered, it is not clear in this legislation, but what is the trigger? Is it just an overall ministerial discretion that you can then say that this process will be administered and assessed through the TPC, or does there need to be a number of councils that consent to that process?

As others have stated, there is some inconsistency and differences of opinion from councils about whether there should have been a combined planning authority to make the assessment, or whether in fact it was a suitable and appropriate role for the TPC. I would like some clarification regarding what the trigger for that is, minister. Is it at your discretion? If it is at your discretion, what happens now to those councils that indicated that they would have preferred the other model of assessment? Do you then go back to them and consult with them? What role do they play now? What role does their community play as part of that process?

The question I wanted to ask, and we raised in the briefing yesterday, was about the development applications and the fact that there will be a number of those for different segments of the project. Are they dealt with as one combined development application by the TPC, or are they done separately? It goes to the issue Dr Woodruff raised regarding the process for discretion. When we look at the existing planning schemes across each of those municipalities and how that works across those individual development applications, as to what that process is going forward with the TPC administering that rather than individual councils, or that combined planning authority. Could I have some clarity about that, please?

TasNetworks proponent's report says that it will be a discrete, staged development and there would be separate approvals process. I thought that differed from the advice provided in the briefing yesterday where I thought that was not the case. I would like some clarification about that and to understand better how that would work.

During the briefing it was noted that it was not thought that the intention of UPC as a proponent for the other part of the transmission line would be seeking a similar model of assessment, or for that to be dealt with through a similar legislative process. Is there any further information about that? As we know, the two are quite interrelated as they are to Marinus and the general success of the renewable energy industry across our region.

The other final thing I wanted to mention was to read from the Waratah-Wynyard Council's second correspondence to you on 5 March, which states that:

Council also noted its preference for the assessment to be undertaken by a combined planning authority with further discussion to determine the makeup of the panel, with a view that it should comprise a range of skill sets including planning, engineering and environmental professionals. This decision was based on the fact that Councils have vast local knowledge and an ability to undertake site inspections as required, which will be much more difficult when managed from Hobart.

We are also conscious of the increased workload on the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) who need to be processing multiple planning schemes at the same time.

Council will not object to the assessment being conducted by the Tasmanian Planning Commission however questions if the benefits for this approach are as significant as stated why Councils were given a choice in the first instance. This is particularly relevant given that the majority of respondents favoured the combined planning authority. The applicant has not indicated to Council any concerns around timeframes to establish a combined planning authority. Based on the above, perhaps legislative change is required to remove the options.

I wanted to put that on the record, because they raised a number of important points. I would not mind if the minister provided a comparison of how those skills and expertise that the council felt would be made available through the combined planning authority would be made available through the TPC.

Also, that point about being removed from the south of the state; just understanding how that on-site assessment will occur, as well.

As my colleague said, we will be supporting this. We support Marinus, and we support the renewable energy industry's further development in Tasmania, and the employment opportunities that it will create for Tasmanians, particularly regional Tasmanians.

We have a moment in time to get it right, and as I said before, it is very important that we have every opportunity for our local people to be involved in the economic opportunity that will come from investment in such infrastructure in our state.

[3.27 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy) - Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to contribute to debate on this motion. I provide strong support to my colleague and friend, Mr Jaensch, Minister for Planning.

I strongly support this motion before the Chamber and thank those who have already spoken and expressed their support for Marinus Link, and the Government's plans for the Battery of the Nation and growing our renewable energy credentials. Tasmania is the renewable energy powerhouse of Australia, and in fact, is leading the country in this regard, as well as having big plans to lead globally.

In the last week, we have been able to welcome Prime Minister, Scott Morrison's identifying of Marinus Link as a priority project for Australia. It is in the top 15 infrastructure projects for Australia. I am absolutely delighted: A contribution and the strong positive working relationship that we have with our federal colleagues, Angus Taylor and the Prime Minister and others, with the Tasmanian Liberal team. Gavin Pearce and Bridget Archer are strongly supportive, together with the Tasmanian Liberal team.

I know there are many others across the political divide. I acknowledge the bipartisan support. I thank the Labor shadow, Ms Dow, and the Labor Party for their support. I will have more to say about the Greens shortly.

Ms O'Connor - We support it in principle. Depends how it is paid for, whether or not it is a rushed job. The principle of getting clean energy to the mainland is terrific.

Mr BARNETT - I will address the Greens very shortly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Tasmania has what the rest of Australia wants and needs, what the rest of the world wants and needs, and that is affordable reliable clean electricity. We are zooming in, now, on our 100 per cent target of being fully self-sufficient in clean electricity by 2022. We set a target and the Premier announced this not so long ago, with me, on the docks in Hobart, and that is a 200 per cent target by 2040.

We are proud of not only the credentials we already have but the potential we have in this state to deliver in terms of the win-win, win-win. Let me explain each win. The first win is thousands of jobs. That is our top priority as a result of Marinus Link and the renewable energy developments that flow from that. Second, it is more than \$7 billion of investment as a result of Marinus Link and the resulting flow-on benefits of that project. The third win relates to the downward pressure on electricity prices. Just two days ago I was able to announce and welcome the 1.38 per cent reduction in electricity prices for our residential and business regulated customers here in Tasmania. As Energy minister I am proud to be able to do that, particularly in comparison to other previous governments where electricity prices went up 65 per cent. The fourth win is energy security, which will deliver more benefits in improved energy security for Tasmania. Win-win, win-win.

It was hard to listen to the contribution of the Greens member for Franklin, Rosalie Woodruff, because it seemed to be a difficult position to be in. It was like walking on a barbed wire fence as to whether there was support for, or opposition to, the Marinus Link. We know that Bob Brown and green lobby groups are totally opposed to Marinus Link -

Ms O'Connor - You are so boring when you go on these rants. It's like listening to children in grade 4.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Let the minister continue his contribution in silence. Other members can make their contributions shortly.

Mr BARNETT - I am not sure if the Leader of the Greens is disputing Bob Brown's position or not, but the views of the Bob Brown Foundation and others are clearly on the public record. What we have heard from the member for Franklin, Rosalie Woodruff, is that Marinus Link is a hypothetical project. Another word was used, that it was a 'theoretical' project. Throughout her speech she referred to the motion before us as a bill. Of course it is not a bill, it is a motion.

Let us be clear. We want full support for Marinus Link. We want full support for our ambition for Tasmania as a renewable energy powerhouse, not just for Australia, but the globe. We have big plans for the Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation, and hydrogen and other renewable energy opportunities. It is very exciting. The Prime Minister has indicated his strong support to bring forward the project wherever possible in the planning and approval process.

Dr Woodruff - There is no commitment to Marinus Link from the federal government at all and you know that.

Mr BARNETT - It is very encouraging to have the Prime Minister's support for this project. It is one of his top 15 in Australia.

Dr Woodruff - It just scraped into the 15 projects.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The member for Franklin has already made her contribution.

Mr BARNETT - In short, it is all about building on our world-class wind and water resources. We are proud of that and we have every plan to continue that. I acknowledge and thank the Labor Opposition for their support for our Government's initiative, the Tasmania First energy policy, which is delivering on Marinus, Battery of the Nation, lower electricity prices and more jobs. That is encouraging, despite the barrage of criticism and negativity from my shadow minister in recent weeks with respect to Marinus Link.

I want to address a couple of questions; first the \$56 million that my shadow indicated was provided from CEFC and Arena. No, that is not the case. It was a grant of \$56 million from the federal government, agreed to in February last year, to progress the design and approval process.

The plan is that it will be a regulated link. That means there will be a guarantee rate of return over the long term, as a regulated link, like nearly every other link in Australia. There are one or two that are unregulated or private, so it is a regulation.

The Energy Security Board is reporting back to the COAG Energy Council in July and then a further report in September this year, as requested in December last year by me, fully supported by all state and territory ministers and the federal minister at that time. That work is ongoing in terms of the fair cost allocation. That is important work. There are two main options there. One is the status quo, which nobody supports and we need to move away from that. The other one is the beneficiary pays model. That option will be considered carefully by my state, territory and federal colleagues and we hope to get to a landing point in due course with respect to that approach.

The Premier has indicated this morning that this is important national infrastructure. I have said it uphill and down dale. Marinus Link is national infrastructure. We recognise that, the federal government recognises it, and we appreciate that. Second, Tasmania will only pay our fair share and no more and I have said that consistently throughout this discussion.

The integrated system plan is being developed by the Australian Energy Market Organisation. I have constant contact with the chair and the CEO. Their officers work with my department and that work is ongoing. It is very pleasing to know it is considered a priority project, not only the design and approval process but going forward as a major infrastructure project.

I have responded to some of those queries and concerns. I should note the Premier's announcement today in question time regarding Tasmania's greenhouse gas inventories. In 2018, the most recent year, there was 2.19 megatonnes of carbon dioxide reduction or 111 per cent reduction less than the 1990 baseline. It is encouraging for Tasmania to be leading Australia and many parts of the world in that regard. It is all because we have that renewable energy prowess and credentials -

Ms O'Connor - It is our forests. Have you had a look at the graph?

Dr Woodruff - Our carbon store, Mr Barnett.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I cannot hear the member speak. I ask Dr Woodruff and the Leader of the Greens to allow the minister to speak, please.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but he was inciting interjection.

Mr BARNETT - Minister Jaensch has made this process very clear and will no doubt respond to some of the queries and questions and clarifications very shortly. It will allow Tas Networks to commence those botanical surveys in the springtime. That is important, particularly on the Hampshire to Staverton route, because they need to get on with it. As the Prime Minister has indicated, this is a priority project out of COVID-19; our renewable energy projects are very important as we move through this coronavirus pandemic. We want to get this job done.

This motion is here for a reason. It is a procedural motion in many respects but it is important that we are able to have an airing and the public can hear the views and comments of people in this place and in due course the other House.

We want to get on with the job and it would have been good to have done it earlier but we have had COVID-19 and we have been engrossed with that, the Premier and the minister, Ms Courtney, and others. We have all been involved with our backs to the wheel and it has been a very challenging time getting on with the work that needs to be done to protect Tasmania, keep people safe and ensure that the economy remains strong. We have plans to build a stronger Tasmania and that is very clear with our plans for building and construction and bringing on that \$3 billion of investment over the coming years. We are backing that 100 per cent with the support for our jobs but this is an important project we do not want to delay. There is an indication that perhaps we have plenty of time; well, no. We want to get on with the job. This is a priority project. We want to bring it forward and have ensured that all those the I's are dotted and the t's are crossed. We have to get on with the job. We want to get on with the job. There is priority work to do and great support for the Minister for Planning, Mr Jaensch. We have the job ready to be done. We are ready for it. We did not want to sit around for another 15 sitting days. We wanted to get this job done to allow TasNetworks to do that during springtime. That is part of the plan.

Ms O'Connor - You made us a promise.

Mr BARNETT - TasNetworks did indicate that their north-west transmission development forms part of the TasNetworks North West Strategic Transmission Plan. It is the state's jurisdictional network planner and was part of the TasNetworks annual planning report published in 2019. That is on the public record and has been for some time. That is the position. There is strong support for the motion.

I appreciate the encouragement and feedback from the Labor Opposition and look forward to getting this job done.

I also acknowledge the member for Clark and her strong support, not just in this debate, but also this morning and publicly for the Marinus Link. The member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, understands the importance of this opportunity for Tasmania, not just renewable energy but telecommunications and the opportunities in that regard. There is a whole range of opportunities here for Tasmania and we want to grasp them with both hands and we want to deliver a win/win for the Tasmanian people.

[3.42 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I listened with some intent to what has been said already. This process has been a bit of a shemozzle, and it has been rushed. It was tabled at

11.30 a.m. yesterday. The briefing was hastily arranged and the documentation only arrived at lunchtime today, a mere hour or so ago, actually during the debate. The debate was already underway before the final documentation came to us.

That being said, this is an important project. Marinus and our renewable energy projects certainly set the state up, potentially, for a very bright future as the major exporter of renewable energy and propping up the mainland grid, should Marinus go ahead. It is an important project and it needs to be done. The reason given: the assessments need to be done in spring. It all seems reasonable. It is a shame we were not given very much notice. Also, the documentation was not emailed so that we could share it amongst ourselves. This has been far from the easiest and best way to do things. Far more notification would be great.

I listened with some intent to the Greens' comments, and right up to the very end I was thinking are they going to support it, are they not going to support it? It was very unclear. It seemed like Dr Woodruff was searching around for a reason to be against this order, to be against this motion.

Dr Woodruff - I spent the first 20 minutes giving very good reasons for why, as a parliamentarian, we will not accept this way of treating parliament.

Madam Deputy SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, you have made your contribution. I ask that the member be heard, please.

Dr BROAD - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Then right at the last minute, Dr Woodruff indicated after an extension of time that the Greens were going to be voting against this motion today. This means they are throwing their toys out of the cot.

We are not particularly happy with the process, with the timing of it. Those points have been made. I made them just a minute ago. My colleagues, Mr O'Byrne and Ms Dow, have also made those points. We put it on the record that we are not happy and that it should be done better. What we are not prepared to do, like the Greens, is throw the toys out of the cot, to stamp the foot up and down, to come up with some way to be against it because they have some difficult stakeholder negotiations to be had here.

On one hand, it is renewable energy, so they should be for it, but on the other hand, there is a powerline - especially the strip between Staverton and Hampshire - that is going to be contentious. So, you have stakeholders there to play to. Are you going to be able to go to them and say, we voted against it? You are going to have this straw man process-type argument to have with those people who say, 'Hang on a minute. The Greens are supposed to be for renewable energy'. So, you are trying to make that balance. It seems like Dr Woodruff was desperately clinging for some sort of reasoning to oppose this motion. Opposing this motion - and we are supportive so the vote is more than likely going to be approved - would mean a massive duplication process. Knocking this order off would mean that Burnie, Waratah-Wynyard, Central Coast, Kentish, Meander and Northern Midlands would all have to go through the same process.

For example, a massive duplication doing exactly the same thing, putting it in the same reports. This has been used before for the gas pipeline. If I had more time - and this is one thing that we could have helped out if we had a bit more time. It would be interesting to go back and see if the Greens opposed the use of this mechanism for the gas pipeline or the use of this mechanism for the upgrade of the Waddamana to Lindisfarne line. It seems they are anti this order and that staggers me. If you have a look at the mapping, the powerline upgrade goes through the very back corner of the Waratah-Wynyard Council area. If I had more time again I would have looked on LIST but

I am pretty sure that where it actually goes through is Forico's land. It takes up the very corner of Waratah-Wynyard Council land and negotiations have already happened with Forico. I am assuming that those negotiations have gone reasonably well and there is some sort of agreement on how that line is going to progress.

However, if the Greens had their way, the Waratah-Wynyard Council would have to go through exactly the same process as somewhere like Central Coast where a large part of the contentious powerline is located. That means people would have the ability to put in the same objections to every council. It makes far more sense for everybody that it is done by one process. It is virtually the same process as a single council doing it. Why would the Greens want six councils to do it? It beggars belief.

We have been lobbied; I have been lobbied. I have visited people who have concerns about the Loongana and Nietta areas especially and I believe there have been changes made. The initial line was going to impinge on the views from the Leven Canyon, which nobody wants. In the documentation that was shared with us via email, three options were discussed and the reasons for the choice of the preferred option were laid out for everyone to see. I have taken the time today to forward those reasons to the people who have objections because I am interested in their feedback.

There is an interesting conundrum here in that the powerline is going to impact something. No matter where it goes it is going to impact something. If the line went through the world heritage area there would be certain members of this parliament stamping their feet and banging the table and complaining about that particular route. This is why the Greens are around there clutching for some sort of reason so they can square away their own stakeholders. It seems like it is pretty opportunistic.

Why would you want six councils replicating this process? It is an established process. A scare campaign about major projects has fallen over because we know that people were thinking that the powerline would be done under the proposed major projects. Well that has fallen away, so what do you have to campaign on? Now the Greens are going to be able to say that they have voted against this order.

Dr Woodruff - No problem finding things to campaign on.

Dr BROAD - No problems coming up with campaigns. We know that.

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, allow the member to make his contribution please.

Dr BROAD - The people who are opposed to the preferred route can put their case forward. That is a process. If things do not go their way they will still be able to appeal. So, what is the problem? It is a process thing. We are unhappy about that. I thought the process was you come in here; you make your points; you get a bit of a rap on the knuckles, minister, for the way you have done this. But we are not prepared to throw the toys out of the cot like the Greens are. They obviously have stakeholders to manage.

I was very interested in the documentation that was sent through to us from TasNetworks. Perhaps the minister could pass a note to Mr Jaensch to answer these questions. I always found it curious as to why the Hampshire to Staverton route was taken over by TasNetworks. The original proposal was that it was the way for UPC to connect Robbins Island and Jim's Plain through to the

greater network. Then it was taken over by TasNetworks. Now it seems that this is potentially answered.

We were assuming that it was to connect UPC to the network but now it appears that part of the issue there is they want to connect the network to the outlet from Marinus. It looks like the Tasmania landside access point for Marinus is either going to be East Cam or Heybridge. It looks like the network is being set up to do that. Is that the proposal? The design of Marinus indicates that the landside part of Marinus will be either East Cam or Heybridge. Therefore, you need to potentially get not only power from UPC to the network but you need to get the network power through Staverton, Hampshire and then to Burnie or Heybridge to get the power from the rest of the grid to Marinus. Is that the case? Is that what this design is indicating? That would clarify, at least in my mind, why TasNetworks has taken over. It is not just about UPC; it is about getting power from the rest of the grid to the jumping off points for Marinus. I am interested in an answer to that. It is relevant to my electorate of Braddon.

It seems like everyone can still have their say. The people who have an issue with the current route and the impact of the corridor and the power towers and so on can still have their say, and it can still be appealed. It is virtually the same process. It has been used before. It is an established process. We are aware that it has not been used for a number of years.

I cannot understand why the Greens are against it. It seems like rank opportunism and a desperate effort to manage stakeholders and pretend that you are for renewable energy when you are obviously not. I know the Greens have been against windfarm developments in the past. They have been against hydroelectric proposals in the past. Now they are against powerlines. I do not know what is left in the power network to be against. Maybe there will be a campaign against the transformers and stuff like that. That is all that there is left to be against. It is pretty disgraceful. This, also being far from an ideal process, it is still worthwhile supporting the motion because everyone still gets their say.

Motion

Sitting Times

[3.54 p.m.]

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

Pursuant to Sessional Order 18A, that for this day's sitting the House not stand adjourned at six o'clock and that the House continue to sit past six o'clock

Motion agreed to.

[3.55 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Housing) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank everyone for their contributions and commentary on each other's contribution as well. I will aim to move through the major issues raised by each speaker in the time I have available to me.

I thank Labor and Ms Ogilvie for their support, particularly given that this has arrived with short notice and was not a planned part of this week. It has been able to come in to today's list

without stealing time from urgent government business associated directly with the COVID-19 emergency. We are grateful for the opportunity to do that. We have been opportunistic. We did not design this timing. It has not been a lack of good planning. This was the very first opportunity we had yesterday to table this order because of some delays in bringing it together. Today was the very first opportunity for us to consider this motion. It is a motion; it is not a bill. It requires only one day to mature before it is live and it is ready to debate.

The other matter that other speakers have spent a fair bit of time on is the matter of access to information. I want to put on the record the advice I have. As is routinely the case, when documents are tabled in this place, printed copies of the pack of information is available immediately after the tabling in the Clerk of Papers' office which is about four metres behind where Dr Broad is sitting right now. Hard copies are delivered to the parliamentary offices of opposition parties. My department created hard copy packs for the purpose of being distributed to those parties as per the normal process. I expect that each morning your offices should be routinely monitoring items that are tabled in front of the whole parliament, following them up to access those documents and distribute them so that they can be given scrutiny.

Dr Woodruff - Are you saying it is our fault that we were misled? That is outrageous.

Mr JAENSCH - I am reading the normal practice as it has been advised to me.

Mr O'Byrne - The normal practice is not to introduce something and then try to knock it off in 24 hours.

Dr Woodruff - The normal practice is to provide material to members of parliament.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I ask that the minister be able to make his contribution please.

Mr JAENSCH - That matter of handling of the process occupied a fair bit of Mr O'Byrne's contribution. From what I have been advised, that handling happens at both ends of that communication.

I reiterate that the timing of this has not been of our choosing. We are trying to make the best we can of a situation that could have arisen in any year in this parliament where, at the end of this sitting, there is a matter that arises that needs to sit on the table for 15 days. It is not just 15 days. It becomes three months because of the nature of the calendar. Because of the nature of this project and the time frames and the lead times for the Marinus project and associated transmission lines, three months matters in getting into the process and into the site.

I will go to Dr Woodruff's contribution. She repeatedly referred to this being an urgent bill. This is not a bill. It is a motion seeking approval for an order. It requires a day to mature. It has had that day. I need to ensure that it is on the record that Dr Woodruff is not going to be in a position to say that we have brought in a bill in this emergency period and then forced it through the parliament with a day's notice. That is not the case.

There were the various comments on access to the information. I say that maybe your office has missed there being material tabled. I cannot account for what happened to the copies that were delivered to your office.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take offence that the minister has repeatedly refused to listen to the circumstances that arose around this bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, Dr Woodruff.

Dr Woodruff - I am offended that he continues to misrepresent the truth.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Dr Woodruff made various other comments which I believe are out of scope for this, but she got into some planning matters and matters regarding the correspondence with the councils, which were also of interest to Ms Dow, which I am very happy to address.

The report that I made to parliament as part of this pack goes through the process that was undertaken, first to seek from the councils their comment on the declaration of this project as a major infrastructure project and on the method of assessment. Amongst the responses, which are reproduced in the packs that you have, there were a variety of responses regarding the method of assessment. There was unanimous support for the declaration of the project as a major infrastructure project. I wrote back to the councils seeking their comment on my proposed or preferred method of assessment, seeking advice to their objections. The Meander Valley Council indicated its inability to make comment given the time frames. Others stated that they had no objection.

I believe Ms Dow asked what the triggers were and the requirements in legislation regarding these; the minister's discretion to determine the method of assessment by a combined planning authority or by the TPC. I refer her to section 9(2) of the act, which says:

- (2) In responding to the Minister under subsection (1), a council may request that the Commission administer the planning approval process in respect of the proposed major infrastructure project.

Subsequently, section 10(3)(c) says:

- (3) An order made by the Governor under section 7(2) may -
 - (c) if a council has made a request under section 9(2), declare that the planning approval process in respect of the major infrastructure project is to be administered by the Commission ...

In this case there are six councils involved and there is a range of views including a trigger to nominate the TPC.

I note also, and this will come up elsewhere in the discussion, that amongst the responses from the councils, I think Burnie and Waratah-Wynyard both initially expressed a preference for going through a combined planning authority process. One nominated that that should be a planning authority made up of representatives for participating councils with a planner. The other preferred a more skills-based panel made up of professional people with relevant backgrounds.

This was one of the factors that was taken into account in developing a preferred approach, in that the matter of the makeup of the combined planning authority would first need to be settled with those councils, and be able to meet the requirements of the legislation.

Then there are other stages involved with establishment of that combined planning authority, including appointment of the general manager and various other structures and arrangements that allow it to conduct a business of a planning authority, including the receipt and distribution of fees and other matters. That is about creating more structure and process for this, whereas the TPC has those matters in place already. There is the matter again of getting agreement across six councils, about how they are going to approach this, given that their starting points are different, and there are costs and time involved in establishing that. The estimate given to me was that could be another two to three months of establishment. That, plus the 15 days, is six months delay and in weighing up these options on how to proceed, we are mindful of those things.

I will deviate just from talking about the matters raised by Dr Woodruff because this comes to another issue that was asked about how the councils had a role in the process. As I understand it, if the TPC has carriage of this matter as the planning authority for the purpose of the development application or applications, the council is in a position to make submissions at various stages, including during the exhibition and submissions process on the development of the assessment guidelines for each of the development applications as they come through and also in being able to respond to those DAs and projects as they are exhibited publicly and give its full resources and effort to channelling the views of the community and the local knowledge. The Waratah-Wynyard Council letter spoke eloquently to that. Those councils know their patch well and are in a position to provide that as input from a very highly qualified perspective as the experts on their local area into that process as well.

The other matter which has been brought to my attention is the council is also in a position to appeal the outcome at the end of the day, which is an important thing to bear in mind in terms of the council's ability to serve the interests of its community that elected it through those different channels of involvement. The report to parliament that is included in the pack goes through the process of the correspondence with the councils and I believe accurately reflects the context of the correspondence, which is also at the back.

Dr Woodruff raised the question of the ability of the TPC as a planning authority to apply the normal planning assessment process but to be treating the matters and the development applications as discretionary, therefore they could be approved or rejected and accurately identified. That is not just about taking permitted stuff and treating it as discretionary, but there is a process for identifying where there may be matters or instances where the establishment of utilities is prohibited in a planning scheme which would prevent a DA from being assessed. I am advised that the process in this case involves an analysis for any of those areas of a planning scheme where a prohibition may prevent the consideration of a development assessment and a process to provide an amendment or specific variation to allow the proposal to be considered would be undertaken.

I am also advised, however, that the current crop of planning schemes we have - the interim planning schemes and the Tasmanian Planning Scheme that will replace it - are highly unlikely to have many instances where utility developments of this type are prohibited. They are more an artefact of older versions of planning schemes where utilities might not have been anticipated, but in contemporary planning schemes the possibility of utilities which may have a public good purpose above and beyond what is anticipated in that the balance of the planning scheme is not prohibited.

This is a provision that exists so that if a prohibition is identified it can be modified or set aside so the development application can be assessed. That was a good pick-up, Dr Woodruff, and a detail I was not fully across, but I am now and I can see why it is in there, particularly if this is an act that has been around for some time, and as Mr O'Byrne rightly pointed out, it has been around for some time. As Mr O'Byrne rightly pointed out, it has not been used for 16 years which means there was at least a decade where Labor did not do any infrastructure work of note to give it an outing.

Members interjecting.

Mr JAENSCH - Oh, you did use it. You were the one who said it was not.

Ms Ogilvie, I thank you for your good legal process of understanding and reading the motion back to us and the intent of the act that it refers to. You asked some questions about the project. My response is that we are setting up the assessment process at the moment. We are not the proponent. There will be some detail there. There are some questions that Dr Broad asked that are best directed to TasNetworks. The minister, Mr Barnett, may be able to assist with their intentions.

Regarding our private landowners, there are a couple of issues. I note in the TasNetworks report there is a breakdown of the land types that will be traversed by the proposed routes. It does not give areas or titles but it is a starting point so you can see the anticipated mix of different land types in there.

I can also let you know that there is a provision for notification of private landowners of the proposed lodgement of a development application, which is different from that under the normal process for a council assessing DAs in that it is in advance of the lodgement by at least 14 days, I understand: 14 days before lodgement, notification of private landowners if there is a DA which is for a pipeline or the transmission line that affects their property. I also note in relation to matters you raised that if that extends to the processes of land acquisition that TasNetworks as an electricity company has its own access to land acquisition legislation and the stages and processes of that. So that is not the business of this MIDA process and assessment.

I can confirm that LUPAA, EPBC, EPA arrangements all apply as per normal and in the making of this order, the EPA has confirmed that they are prepared to deal with the project as an entire project as well. They have affirmed their ability to work in that process for the major infrastructure project across boundaries. Supplementary information: private landowners are notified 14 days before the DA is lodged and then get to make representations to the planning authority during the exhibition period. They also have access to appeal pathways beyond that.

Ms Dow asked about the triggers, the legislation and the decision around the minister's discretion on what was the councils play. She also asked a question about project stages and the reference in the document that the project may proceed in stages, whereas in the preamble we talked about it being considered as one project. I am told that there is a distinction between the project being dealt with by each council assessing the section that occurs in their area and the proponent being able to assemble a section of their transmission corridor and deal with it as a section that might run across several councils. They can bring a DA for a section of their overall project and that is why we might have multiple DAs, whereas the mechanism of dealing with the MIDA act allows for that, rather than a DA for each council area. That is the distinction. It is still one project, maybe multiple stages, and maybe each stage has more than one council area that it overlaps, and that is the intention there.

Ms Dow brought us back to the Waratah-Wynyard correspondence, and the opportunities for councils to be able to invest their local knowledge in the process. They can represent their local communities and not have the conflict that can arise when they need to hear their community out and then disappear into a room and become the planning authority, hearing that for themselves and applying the scheme to make a final call.

Dr Broad, regarding process, I think we have covered that. I will not go back to that. Otherwise, you were doing my job for me a little bit. Thank you very much for your insight. There is strong feeling in parts of the region, particularly where new corridors are being planned. They tend to be areas that are not densely populated, but the opinions and lifestyles, and quality of life of people in those areas matter as much as anybody else's.

This is something we need planning machinery for. We need to be able to put infrastructure, utilities for energy, water, gas, and other essentials for our economy and life, through our landscape. It has to be somewhere. It is always going to be crossing over other values. That is why we need a competent process. That is why I am confident in the legislation that we have, that has been used and tested and relied on before. I am confident in the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission, with its resources and its ability to call in specialist knowledge and information, and have a robust, and time-tested process of dealing with public exhibition, the input of communities, non-specialist people, but people whose opinions and insights matter nevertheless, to look into not only the project and its merits itself, but also into the design of the assessment guidelines by which that process is tested.

I believe that is a robust process and it will serve those communities, my communities, my electorate, well. It will help us to get from talking or promoting or worrying about things like Marinus and powerlines, to get into a process where there is a structure to how you can ask questions, have your say, get information, be heard, get answers and, at the end of that, deliver a result that we need.

I thank the members for their contributions, and their support in principle and for the motion that I have brought to this House. I acknowledge the short time frame. I thank them for their forbearance and for responding quickly to the invitation to be briefed and for the discussion we have had on this important matter today.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[4.19 p.m.]

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

That the House does now adjourn and goes into the COVID-19 MPI.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

COVID-19 Emergency

[4.20 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, while the Government's focus has been on keeping Tasmanians safe from COVID-19, the Tasmanian Liberal majority Government is still focused on keeping Tasmanians safe from the threat of bushfires and we must do everything we can to prepare before next summer's bushfire season.

The Tasmania Fire Service has 334 career firefighters and over 5000 volunteer firefighters stationed strategically throughout the state in 228 fire brigades. Our firefighting agencies are instigating a broad range of multi-agency measures in preparedness for the coming bushfire season.

The autumn 2020 burn season has been very successful, with a total of 143 strategic fuel burns across Tasmania and 227 786 hectares of Tasmania completed to date. These burns have largely been conducted by the key partners in the Government's fuel reduction program, Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania, with a small number undertaken by local councils and private forest industry contractors.

All burns undertaken have strategic value against the fuel reduction program objectives of bushfire risk reduction to communities, critical infrastructure assets and significant natural values. A large number of the burns have been conducted this autumn in locations to protect communities, including Launceston, Hobart, north-east, north-west and southern communities. The autumn burn program has been accompanied by an extensive autumn fuel reduction program media campaign designed to continue to grow communities' understanding of actions and support for strategic fuel reduction activities across Tasmania.

Opportunities to conduct burns are still being sought by agencies where possible. As the national council for fire and emergency services, AFAC, has said, there is no viable alternative to broadscale fuel reduction and the resultant risk reductions for communities. While fuel reduction burns are not going to prevent every catastrophe, it is a fact that reducing fuel loads in Tasmania is one of the most critical tools in the firefighting toolkit.

I can confirm that all the recommendations arising from the AFAC review into the 2018-19 bushfire season have been implemented, although there are always continuing ongoing works required. Of note, the seventeenth edition of the inter-agency protocols was distributed in the first week of December 2019. Three additional fire officers have been funded to implement and manage the new volunteer remote area team capability. In addition, funding has been allocated to support the rollout of the program in marketing, doctrine, purchase of equipment and training, and expressions of interest will be advertised shortly, inviting volunteers to nominate.

Funding has been provided to the Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure we have winch insertion capability for remote area teams within Tasmania to ensure we can insert specialist firefighters and respond quickly when needed. A state air desk has been created within the state operations section of TFS and operates all year round. Multi-agency aviation standard operating procedures have been finalised and the funding has been provided to begin the establishment of the new state control centre in a central location from which all emergency services may coordinate our response to emergencies.

This summer, across Australia, we have witnessed more intense bushfires and extreme weather events. It is clear that Tasmania is not immune from the same threats. This is why the Government has committed to being better prepared before next summer. The Government will introduce legislation in the coming months to make it easier to reduce fuel and mechanically clear vegetation for a fuel break once a bushfire hazard reduction plan has been issued.

We are also bolstering our nation-leading fuel reduction program by adding two new fuel reduction teams with 12 extra staff to reduce fuel loads across the state. The 12 positions were recently advertised on the Tasmanian Government's job website. We have expanded the Red-Hot Tips program which aims to educate, engage and support farmers and rural landowners to actively manage their bushfire risk while encouraging collaboration, practical vegetation fire management and ecological sustainability. As part of the state Fire Management Council's presence at Agfest in the Cloud this year, landowners were invited to register to participate in the enhanced Red-Hot Tips program. Facilitators will start work with landholders in August this year.

The Government also welcomes the Commonwealth's \$11 million boost to aerial support during the bushfire season. Investment in the national aerial firefighting fleet is a critical part of protecting Tasmanian communities during bushfire season. The additional funding to the National Aerial Firefighting Centre will increase the length of the existing lease arrangements and/or the number of contract opportunities available to aircraft suppliers.

I also want to note that our firefighters have been doing a tremendous job during this winter responding to dwelling and structure fires and I urge all Tasmanians to be safe with heating during this winter. While we are working hard to keep Tasmanians safe through the COVID-19 pandemic, this does not mean we are not working equally hard to keep Tasmania safe from the threat of bushfires. Tasmanians can be assured that in the lead-up to the coming season our firefighting agencies will be undertaking a range of activities to further mitigate the risk to our communities.

Time expired.

[4.26 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management's presentation and agree that the people working in our emergency services and Tasmania Fire Service do an outstanding job to keep us safe in bushfire season.

However, if the minister wants their job to be that much easier, he needs to advocate within Cabinet for an end to native forest logging, because the science that has come out of the University of Tasmania, the University of Melbourne and the Australian National University, and is verified by the experience of science agencies overseas, is that logging increases bushfire risk in intensity and severity. It is that simple. If you log an old forest you take the moisture out of the ground and you make it a tinderbox. One day this minister and this Government will come to terms with that science. I hear Dr Broad up the back huffing and puffing again.

Today we asked questions in parliament about evidence we have received that native forest logging is escalating under this Government and has particularly ramped up during the emergency period. When most Tasmanians, including people who would normally be out there defending the forests, have been in lockdown and making those personal sacrifices, the logging industry has gone hell for leather. We know that. Just this year, an extra 19 coupes have been added to so-called Sustainable Timber Tasmania's three-year plan. We first became aware of this through coupe

CZ003A, which is in beautiful forest up near Derwent Bridge. That was added to the website on 5 June - two days after the Forest Practices Plan was completed. This is what we found out from STT when the Bob Brown Foundation asked the question about that coupe.

The wood volumes are as follows: categories 1 and 3 and veneer, 1300 cubic metres; category 2, 200 cubic metres; specialty timbers, 0 cubic metres; category 8, 200 cubic metres; peeler, 300 cubic metres; and pulpwood, 7000 tonnes. Dr Woodruff and I had to do a bit of mathematics in order to work out what 7000 tonnes equates to in cubic meterage, and it is 16 600 cubic metres. No wonder STT fudged that last number. The rest of it is in cubic metres but the woodchip is in tonnes. What we find out now is that while 1300 cubic metres might be going for categories 1, 3 and veneer, there is 16 600 cubic metres coming out of that coupe and going straight to woodchip. Our question to the minister, which he refuses to answer, is: can he confirm what we are hearing; the evidence of our constituents and stakeholders and what we have obtained from Sustainable Timbers Tasmania that native forest logging is escalating? The vast majority of the timber that is coming out of those forests is woodchips, which means it ends up as toilet paper and newspaper. In a time of climate and extinction crisis, that is unforgivable. It makes a lie of this minister's claim that those forests are being logged for sawlog. They are not; they are being logged for chips.

We know that last December Mr Barnett, at a cost to the taxpayer of close to \$100 000, went on a trade mission to China where pulp and paper companies do not demand Forest Stewardship Certification. They do not care. On his itinerary is a meeting with Asia Pulp and Paper. This is handy for Mr Barnett because Sustainable Timbers Tasmania has twice now failed to secure FSC. The auditors found that STT is driving species to extinction; it is logging the habitat of species such as the swift parrot and the masked owl.

In question time this morning it was the most surprising statement to hear the Premier and Minister for Climate Change describe our forests as a carbon bank. This is a breakthrough. For the past six years of this Government we have had to listen to various ministers and the Premier, even when he was the Treasurer, describe those exquisite carbon-rich, biodiverse-haven forests as a wood bank. From the state and territory greenhouse gas inventories, which came out yesterday, we know that Tasmania has an extraordinary positive emissions profile that starts to flatten out in 2012-13. What happened in 2012-13 is that the industry and the environment movement came together in the right political climate, sat around a table and tried to map out a path for the future that protected forests and gave the industry dignity. The loggers were removed from more than half a million hectares of our beautiful, old, carbon-bank forests. In the same data that the Premier and Minister for Climate Change was rightly applauding today, we see that it is the Tasmanian Forest Agreement forests as well as the work of conservationists over decades and the growth in our plantation sector that are making sure we are a net carbon sink.

As we recover from COVID-19, and we are seeing this around the world, neo-con governments, like Scott Morrison's, cosy up to the gas fossil fuel lobby who see this as an opportunity to lock us in to climate poisoning emissions for decades to come through massive fossil fuel infrastructure. We are lucky here because we are largely driven by beautiful hydro power and renewable energy. But we do have a government that is flattening old growth carbon sink forests. Tasmanians, particularly young Tasmanians, are demanding better.

Time expired.

[4.34 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join the conversation on the COVID-19 matter of public importance.

I recently did a Facebook post that commended the public health staff of the Launceston General Hospital in particular for the amount of work they did when our north-west hospital services were under lock down, or shut down in some cases, and the amount of work they did to take care of all those people. Everyone in the hospital - in allied health, in administration, in the tech and cleaning space, the nursing staff and the medical staff did a phenomenal job. I gave some credit to that.

I was contacted by some people from our private hospitals in Launceston. What I was not aware of - and I believe most people would not be aware of - is that St Vincent's and St Luke's in Launceston as part of Calvary, the Little Company of Mary Healthcare, are the only private hospitals in the country that took on public sector work during the COVID-19 crisis. That is pretty significant. They cared for over 350 public patients during that time. Around 320 to 330 of them were surgical patients, predominantly at St V's but also at St Luke's. I note that they operated the two emergency theatres across both sites. There was a huge amount of work done by those staff that made it possible for us to not only support the local community, but the community of the north-west during that period.

I particularly extend thanks to Colin Chilvers and David Penn who coordinated most of it, and also to the fantastic medical, nursing, allied health and general staff at St Vincent's and St Luke's who worked so hard to support our community.

That leads me to the rest of my contribution, which is about Labor's document, the Little Red Book, as the Premier so sadly and dismissively referred to it. It talks about one of the very important issues for the north, which is the progression of the co-location of our private and public hospitals. In Launceston there is a very important co-dependency between our private and public hospitals. We both rely very heavily on each other and many of our staff work across both sites. That is one of the very important issues in our document that needs to be progressed. I understand that it has slowed down during COVID, but the conversations are starting again. We all look forward to that matter being resolved.

It is important to look at the health implications for Tasmania because this virus has had one of the greatest social and economic impacts on our state that we have ever seen, taking the lives of 13 people, which is one of the highest rates per infection rate across the country. We had a weightier-than-most impact in terms of loss of life, so it is an important thing to get right.

We still believe that a royal commission, or commission of inquiry - depending on which framework you want to use to describe exactly the same thing - would be an appropriate vehicle to have that discussion; not about blame but understanding what we did well, what we could do better, and what we might be able to learn from. Whilst we are calling the increase in infection rates in Victoria a second wave, many of us are firmly convinced that we are still in the first wave. There is so much about this virus that we do not know so we need to be prepared and we need to make sure we do the job right.

We support significant investment in jobs. That is the other thing that is going to get us through this. We have had phenomenal job loss in Tasmania; over 20 000 people. I have another speech in adjournment, which will go through some of the very disturbing number of job losses in Tasmania, particularly for women, that I will address later on.

There seems to be a response from the Government that is very much, 'If we build roads everything will be fixed'. The reality is that if we are going to make a significant shift we have to have a much more broad-reaching investment and a much more broadly-registering engagement in rebuilding our state. That is why Labor has done this work. We have done it in consultation with local government, with community, with businesses, with industry. There is nothing in this document that has not come from the sectors. They are saying these are the sort of things that we could invest in.

I was very disappointed when Mrs Rylah was speaking on the subject matter yesterday. I wish I had been able to turn up here and participate then. She criticised some of the projects. I believe it was very unwise to pick out some projects within the document and say, 'We should not worry about those because, for instance, that is a council road at Golconda and therefore we should not worry about it'. We are not talking about who owns and manages roads; we are talking about what projects might be ready that we can invest in that will stimulate the economy and keep it going. That is why they are there. That particular road is there because the council of Dorset said to the state Government, to the federal government and to us that this is a project worth investing in.

When the Government says, 'We want to be very collaborative about a response. We all want to be involved in the economic turnaround for Tasmania. We all want to be involved in rebuilding Tasmania post this incredibly significant impact', it is important to note that they do not want to hear from everyone. They clearly do not want to hear from us. That is very concerning.

It is probably because they did not start from a very good base. The most recent budget in May last year showed that Tasmania was accumulating \$1.4 billion of debt over the next three years. We left \$200 million in cash for the incoming government in 2014. So, during the good times this Government has squandered that opportunity and made some significant impacts that have not been good.

It is important to recognise that the Government is not starting from a good base. It is not just COVID that has impacted on our economy. There were problems before. Before COVID-19 the underemployment rate was the highest it had ever been. That means there are many people who cannot find enough work to make ends meet, enough cobbling together of part-time jobs, enough hours, enough money to pay their bills and maintain their families. We know - and I will talk about it on the adjournment later - that the people who are most impacted by that are women. It is women who work in highly casualised industries. It is women who often work part time. It is women who, when there are carer responsibilities, make the decision to go home. They are really important issues that we need to deal with.

Saying we will have an infrastructure spend and that will fix everything is not enough because the Government's record is not strong on infrastructure spends. We have not actually had a situation where the Government has ever spent its infrastructure budget. There has been a massive underspend in infrastructure every time. It is all well and good to put the projects on the books. It is all well and good to then press them out to the next year's books and the next year's books, so there is always an infrastructure structure project there, but what we do not have is the actual completion of those projects. I am concerned that when the Government is talking about focusing on those new projects it is not really focusing on those projects that can be delivered in this time, because the time frames are unmanageable for many of those projects.

Time expired.

[4.42 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about COVID-19 and the impacts in Tasmania and globally. The health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on Tasmania and our usual way of life have certainly been a shock. COVID-19 is disrupting people's lives. The broader social cost of such a loss and life, globally and nationally, is hard for us to fathom and estimate potential containment. Uncertainty is, indeed, our new norm.

At the moment - and these statistics change all the time - 103 Australian lives have been lost to COVID-19 and 13 Tasmanians have lost their lives. There have been 481 000 deaths globally, with 14 500 deaths in India, 120 000 American lives lost, and there are plenty more of those statistics. It is remarkable if you look at America with 120 000 lives lost, if you think of Tasmania having 500 000 people, you can imagine 120 000 people. It is huge.

The health impacts are significant and the economic impacts are beginning to show. There are now 20 000 Tasmanians who have lost their jobs and we are scrambling to protect our families, our communities, our economy and our way of life.

We know that the impact of the Commonwealth Government Budget position is also substantial. Using the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, PwC projects that the 2020-21 tax revenue is projected to fall by \$25.8 billion. This is an excerpt from that report, and it says:

Assuming an additional 1% increase in expenditure, which may be conservative, the Budget's underlying cash balance would fall from a projected A\$6.1 billion surplus to a deficit of A\$24.8 billion; a \$30.1 billion swing.

For comparison, at the time of the GFC the cash balance was a deficit of A\$27 billion (2008-09) and A\$54.5 billion (2009-10).

In layman's terms - and this is probably the best way I can explain it, especially when I am talking this through with constituents - at the moment our economy is very much like a holding pattern. Within that holding pattern we have six or seven different planes and each of those planes represent a buffer of sorts, a stimulus or a trigger which is there to provide some comfort around these extraordinary losses.

I think of JobKeeper as one of those planes. That is a temporary subsidy for businesses and these payments are allowing people to receive a wage and allow businesses a reprieve on wages, so to speak, but that plane will land. Even though we do not know when it is meant to land, if you look at the childcare sector, their plane landed a lot quicker than what was anticipated, but when that JobKeeper plane lands it will have a significant economic impact.

We also have JobSeeker as another plane within this holding pattern. More than 1.3 million Australians are currently on JobSeeker. The double payment of usual unemployment benefits is reported to finish in September. That plane is also set to land. That is also one of those other planes in that holding pattern which is creating a buffer; a false economy of sorts at the moment.

There is also the deferral of mortgages. That is another aeroplane sitting in that holding pattern. The Australian Banking Association estimated that 429 000 mortgages have been deferred, totalling \$153.5 billion. The figures take the total number of loans deferred to 703 000, worth a value of \$211 billion. That plane is also set to land in September.

At the moment another of those planes in that holding pattern is a 50 per cent reduction on commercial tenancies. That is also set to expire at the start of October. That plane will also be landing around the same time as the other planes in that holding pattern. Another buffer also within that system is no forced evictions from residential rental properties. Any rent increase that was due to take place between 23 April 2020 and 30 September 2020 will no longer occur. This includes any rent increase where notice was given prior to 23 April 2020 if that rent increase is yet to take place. That plane will also be landing at the end of September.

Changes to sovereignty laws during the COVID period is another buffer within that holding pattern, another protection to the economy. Currently there is a six-month temporary debt protection scheme. The federal government increased the temporary debt protection period for people in financial difficulty from 21 days to six months. This protection now prevents recovery action by unsecured creditors for a six-month period. We have increased the debt threshold required for creditors to apply for a bankruptcy notice against a debtor from \$5000 to \$20 000. There has also been an increase in the time frames for a debtor to respond to a bankruptcy notice from 21 days for up to six months. This means that a creditor will have to wait until the six-month period has passed before they can commence bankruptcy proceedings. These will also be landing at the same time from that holding pattern.

We must prepare our community. We must, as members of parliament, be aware that this is not real at the moment, that the full impact of the coronavirus and the outcomes will all be hitting around the same time. We have to be mindful about the release of those triggers from that holding pattern. I know that economists and policy makers are lying awake at nights worrying about this. I am worried about it. It is important that we all understand what some of these protections are and how they all will be landing around the same time.

One of the areas that has done well to safeguard their workers to make sure there is viability and ongoing continuous work has been the building and construction sector. The industry has grabbed the bull by the horns and has been responding in measured and targeted ways to keep building sites open and support the Tasmanian economy transition through these economic challenges. As in previous economic crises, the housing industry has effectively kept the Tasmanian economy moving with the assistance of programs aimed at stimulating demand and supplying housing. The sector creates and maintains 20 000 jobs, although it is estimated they have already lost 1000 of those jobs, and it also generates ripple effects through the Tasmanian economy to up to 8000 businesses. It is very important that those wheels are able to keep turning in the building and construction industry here in Tasmania.

I know the HIA has impressed on the Government the need to address expected declining commencements and I know a lot of the organisations have supported the stimulus grants for home builders. Many organisations think that is great for the Tasmanian economy. However, there has been concern raised about whether the commencement date will inhibit those grants. When you look at the precariousness of the economy at the moment, and this false economy with this holding pattern of protections, we want to make sure that we do not cut anything off, that we leave as many options open for the Tasmanian economy to be able to prosper.

Time expired.

[4.50 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the COVID-19 matter of public importance this afternoon. It gives me the opportunity to put on the

record some of the many practical supports this Government has provided to households, individuals, communities and businesses as outlined in the latest update of the Tasmanian Social and Economic Support Measures.

It is important to put on the record that the health, safety and wellbeing of Tasmanians is the Government's highest priority. The Government continues to receive daily advice from health professionals in relation to COVID-19 and is acting on that advice. It will continue to manage the risk of the virus based on the best and the latest evidence and the medical advice available.

While Tasmania has now reached the significant milestone of zero active cases of COVID-19 in the state for 40 days, we acknowledge that the necessary actions that have been taken to reach this milestone have resulted in significant economic and social consequences across Tasmania. That is why we have put in place our \$1 billion social and economic support package, which is unprecedented in the history of Tasmania. Our \$1 billion support package complements the federal government's multibillion-dollar response and is at a scale not seen in the history of this state in both the amount of funding and the breadth of measures.

This package comprises initiatives to support the health sector, businesses and jobs, households and individuals and the community. Some of the supports that have been provided as of the 29 May 2020 is that the school levy relief has been paid to the bank accounts of 13 300 parents and 8000 have been refunded by cheque. Hobart Safe Space has provided assistance to 722 people in May 2020. This included assistance to 449 people overnight and 273 people during the day. Volunteering Tasmania has increased the number of volunteers registered in the emergency volunteer crew database from 1242 to 2257, which is a massive 81 per cent increase in the number of volunteers registered.

Approximately 5700 hampers and 84 322 ready-to-eat meals had been provided for vulnerable Tasmanians from the end of April to the end of May. A total of 446 applications have been received by the State Revenue Office for the payroll tax waiver for Tasmanian hospitality, tourism and seafood industry employers, with a total refund of approximately \$11.6 million paid to date. A massive 10 355 emergency grants of \$2500 has been provided to support businesses, 2076 grants have been approved and paid for business continuity, grants of \$750 to support business to access continuity planning, and 330 Tasmanian have sought help with the Rapid Response Skills Initiative. A total of 258 Tasmanians signed up for training or are actively pursuing training options to broaden their skills through the Rapid Response Skills Training Support Program.

In addition, \$147 million in loans have been approved for 20 local government authorities. More than \$33.8 million will be spent through councils in the north-west of the state, \$32.5 million in the north and \$80.5 million in the south.

Once again, I take this opportunity to extend my deepest sympathies and condolences to the families of all those who have lost their loved ones, and especially thank all Tasmanians who have made enormous sacrifices over the last few months to help stop the spread of this insidious virus. Due to the hard work and many sacrifices of all Tasmanians we have been 40 days now without active cases. This has led to the easing of more restrictions from noon tomorrow. As the mother of four and grandmother of six now I know that all of them are definitely eagerly awaiting the easing of restrictions, just to get out and about.

Unfortunately, we still face the second and arguably tougher phase of this fight, which is to avoid a deadly second wave of the virus, which is now happening in Victoria. I thank everyone for

what they have been willing to sacrifice during this time. As a parent, I know it can be pretty hard. I had three teenagers at home, trying to educate them. One moment I was doing industrial revolution, the next moment I was doing physics and maths and checking my son's narcotics assignment, and at the same time doing public works.

But other households had it a lot tougher. Last week I went around quite a few of the Neighbourhood Houses in my electorate, six of the seven Neighbourhood Houses, and it was inspirational to visit the Neighbourhood Houses to see what they have been doing during this time.

One Neighbourhood House was producing 300 meals that day to be packaged up and provided to the most vulnerable in their community. They were saying that they have been able to reach people they have never seen before through this time. It is good that they have been able to let people in their community know about the great services they can offer. While their programs are different, and they have had to move things online, they are still reaching out to their community in many different innovative ways.

I acknowledge the great work of our Neighbourhood Houses. Each and every one of them has been delighted that the Government gave them the extra \$20 000, \$7 million in total for our 35 neighbourhood houses throughout the state. They have been true champions in their most vulnerable communities.

I also acknowledge the great work of the RSLs. Last week I saw three different RSLs that had very much welcomed the Government's grants and assistance during this time. The Government made available \$500 000 to help our RSLs. Our RSLs, especially with Anzac Day not being held - I was only just warming up.

Time expired.

ADJOURNMENT

Pat Blood - Tribute

[4.58 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Madam Speaker, tonight I pay tribute to Pat Blood, one of our long-serving, diligent and most conscientious members of our parliamentary staff team. After more than 40 years of hard work, supporting us all in this place, she has now taken her well-deserved retirement.

I am not sure if Pat is listening today or whether she was pleased to get out of here and is never going to have another look. But if you are, Pat, I wanted to put on the record our thanks for your service over 40 years. Chatting to some of Pat's colleagues they have described her as one of the most humble and hardworking people who has ever been in this place. I will use a quote here that was provided to me:

Pat is a person who would have had the ground swallow her if someone made a fuss.

So, I do not intend to make too much of a fuss, Pat, but I did want to say from the parliament thank you for all of your hard work over time.

I will add a couple of things because it was interesting and I looked at this this afternoon. With 40 years service, Pat would have been here through a series of important firsts: the first Tasmanian-born governor would have been declared in this House, Sir Guy Green back in 1995; our first female governor, Kate Warner; she would have been here for the appointment of Richard Butler as governor, which was interesting for a period of time; our first female premier, Lara Giddings, in 2011; and our youngest premier would have been right on the borderline - that would have been Doug Lowe back in the period up until 1981.

She would have been here and noted our first Aboriginal member of the House, Kathryn Hay, and then in the Legislative Council, Paul Harriss.

She would have seen the youngest people elected to this place in Matt Smith, who was aged 20 when he came here, a Liberal, and then the youngest in the Legislative Council, Ms Allison Ritchie, back in 2001 when she was 26.

The first female party leader was Christine Milne and Pat would have been transcribing for her. She was here for the first female deputy premier, Sue Napier, the first female Speaker, Elise Archer, and the first female premier, Lara Giddings.

She would have also been in this place when we saw the reduction in the size of the parliament. She would have been here when Peg Putt brought in the deckchair and she would have been here through a series of major debates. There would have been parts of the dam debate occurring around that time and the pulp mill debate -

Ms O'Connor - All night into the wee hours.

Mr GUTWEIN - Very much into the wee hours. As well, she has served this place whilst there have been a number of significant events, too many to name in terms of bushfires and floods and government responses. Obviously Port Arthur would have been a challenging time and was for not only our community but for this place as well. She has also been here through COVID as well.

I place on the record our sincere thanks to Pat Blood. This parliament has many parts to it and those who work in Hansard and those who support this place every day do their little bit to ensure that democracy in Tasmania is alive and well. On behalf of the parliament I thank Pat for 40 years of hard work and service to the state of Tasmania.

Members - Hear, hear.

Pat Blood - Tribute

[5.02 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I want to say how happy I was to hear the Premier stand up on the adjournment and acknowledge the incredible contribution and dedication of Pat Blood to this parliament. Over the past 40 years, what history Mrs Blood has seen being made.

One of these things which really was a saga during Pat's time as supervisor in Hansard was the debate into the wee hours of the morning on the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, as did the pulp mill debate before we had something like sensible sitting hours.

Some of the things I have always admired about Pat in the 12 years I have been here are her kindness, her humility and her sharp brain. She is very hardworking, highly respected, efficient and obviously endlessly patient, because she spent 40 years of her life coming into the seat of democracy here in Parliament House and dedicated herself to interpreting what lawmakers in this place say and making us, more often than not, sound more erudite and coherent than we actually are. That is the mastery of a good Hansard writer, editor and supervisor.

We asked Peter Hancox for a bit of background on Pat, and I remind the House that when the Parliamentary Service Awards ceremony was held last year Pat Blood was recognised for her outstanding service to the parliament. The information Peter Hancox has provided us is that Pat started as a casual transcriber in Hansard in 1979 or 1980. She began assisting Peter Hancox in 1996 as he built the IT department that underpins our functionality here. She was appointed permanent full-time clerical officer for Hansard and IT support service for Computer Services on non-sitting days. Peter says that Pat had an enormous learning curve for IT and picked up computer support very easily. Peter used to send her out to fix a problem and nine times out of 10 the issue was resolved without a follow-up call to Peter.

On 29 November 2000 Pat was appointed supervisor of the Hansard typing room and on 2 September 2005, supervisor of typists and office manager. In 2005, in a note to then Clerk Peter Alcock, Jenny Batchelor said:

Mrs Blood is an excellent office manager-cum-supervisor. Her extensive knowledge of IT, her familiarity with the day-to-day workings of the Hansard operation and her highly developed interpersonal skills make her an outstanding employee in both her demanding roles. I do believe that she is more than qualified ... to level 6, and that her diligence and competence are deserving of recognition.

Hear, hear, Madam Speaker.

In April 2009 Pat was promoted to supervisor/office manager of Hansard and until Pat retired, I gather that Pete used to go to her for a bit of advice on IT and Mrs Blood used to continue to undertake IT support for Hansard and others when asked. As Peter rightly observes, Pat is well respected by all the staff at parliament, as she has always been very helpful. Indeed, Madam Speaker, over the 40 years in this place and the contribution that she made, Pat earned the respect of everyone who came into contact with her. Pat Blood is much loved in this place and I know that in Hansard her departure brought heavy hearts.

One of the points that the Premier, in his long list of historic achievements that Pat was here for, did not get in there was that Pat was here when this parliament reached gender balance, when we got the numbers right finally, Madam Speaker. That was a great achievement for this parliament and also the voters of Tasmania.

I wish Pat Blood a fantastic retirement. Someone that sparky and with so much to give I do not think is going to have a terribly quiet retirement, but I hope we see Pat Blood in here from time to time. In the Greens we miss her, and I wanted to say to the people of Hansard who have worked

with Pat, we feel your pain, but you do have the lovely James Reynolds there now, who has taken over from Pat.

So Pat Blood, thank you for all your service and your kindness, thanks for making us sound good, and have a fantastic retirement.

Replacement of Heaters in Housing Tasmania Properties

[5.08 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to again advocate for a constituent of mine, Amanda in Devonport, who is being driven into poverty because of the gas heater in her Housing property. I have written to the minister, Roger Jaensch, on a number of occasions, and again when I heard that the Government were proposing to have a \$50 million public buildings maintenance fund. When I heard about that, and the replacing of heaters in Housing properties, once again I wrote to the minister urging him to replace Amanda's gas heater.

I stood up here in parliament in the last sitting begging and pleading for the minister to take action, considering there is a \$50 million fund, and to change the life of this one constituent. What that plea got me was a reply to a letter. The letter, amongst other things, highlights the \$50 million Public Buildings Maintenance Fund, but then in a couple of the last paragraphs it says:

I am advised that Ms -

I won't give her surname

heater remains in good working order, and fit for purpose, and therefore it would be inappropriate to replace the heater at this time.

I find this absolutely disgraceful. I have advocated for her on a number of occasions. This is a heater that was built to heat a hall. It is not a heater for a house. I have shown the evidence of that in correspondence to the minister and yet he refuses to replace this heater. It is driving this single mum into poverty.

I will give the minister some figures, so his heartlessness is exposed. Amanda's income is roughly \$450 a week. She is not rich by any means. She is in a Housing property. She is a young, single mum with a primary school aged son. The rent from Housing is approximately \$145 per week. Her heating for just the gas and hot water is costing her \$100 per week and that leaves her with a bit over \$200 to pay for power, food, car expenses, expenses for her child, and also for her NILS loan, because when she first moved into this property the carpet was mouldy and would not get replaced. She is a diligent, young woman who budgets extensively. She took out a NILS loan to replace the mouldy carpet because Housing would not do it for her and it was after she got hit with these extraordinary heating bills that she got herself into trouble through no fault of her own.

I find it incredible and unreasonable that the minister would not recognise that having an oversized gas heater is taking almost a quarter of a single mum's income just for heating and hot water. I find it extraordinary that the minister does not have it in his heart to replace this heater, considering there is a \$50 million fund.

Imagine being Amanda. In the last bill she got the cost for a heater was about \$30 per week but she is on a repayment plan that is costing her another \$70 per week. That is because of the extraordinary bills she got last winter. The bill for this winter has not come in. I cannot think of the situation she is in considering that there has been a lockdown and she has been at home. I can imagine Amanda wrapped in a blanket, trying to stay warm, because she is too scared to turn on this gas heater.

I have talked about this before. I really do not know what else to do. Why cannot the minister have it in his heart to replace this heater? She is doing the best she can and yet this heater is driving her into poverty. There is a \$50 million fund. Replace this heater, minister. I do not know what else to do. I have written to you and I received a letter with your signature on it advising it is in good working order and fit for purpose. I disagree wholeheartedly, minister. That 'fit for purpose' heater is driving a young, single mum into poverty. That is not fit for purpose; that is abuse. Please, minister, replace this heater.

Pat Blood - Tribute
COVID-19 - Impact on Women
ABC - Cuts to Staff, Services and Programs

[5.12 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I will not repeat the words about Pat Blood that the Leader of the Greens and Premier have said but since she started as a casual transcriber in 1979-80 she became the mainstay, the rock, of Hansard. My fast speech has certainly given her some difficult days over the years and I apologise for that.

Most importantly, Pat has not only had an amazing career here but she is a truly lovely human being. It was always wonderful to catch up with her in the hallway or downstairs or when she contacted you to find out exactly what you said because we had made it so incomprehensible. I really hope Pat has a great retirement as well. I hope she is not listening to this; I hope she is sitting back having nice glass of wine and enjoying herself.

I want to talk about the impact of COVID on women. We know that women have been disproportionately impacted by COVID. It is important to know that the payroll jobs and wages data shows the number of jobs held by women in Tasmania has fallen by 11.1 per cent compared to 7.7 per cent for men. The latest labour force data from the ABS shows that 9800 women have lost their jobs since March, and the participation rate for women is down to 52.7 per cent. If participation rates were at the same level they were in February those numbers in Greater Hobart would be 15.3 per cent in terms of unemployment rates; in Launceston and the north-east, 9.2 per cent; in the south-east, 10.8 per cent; and in the west and north-west, 15.5 per cent. It is very clear that women are bearing a disproportionate impact of this COVID experience.

We have been raising it for some time. I raised it back in May. When we said that the Government needed to have a targeted response to deal with the issue of women's unemployment and underemployment, the minister, Michael Ferguson, responded saying that Labor continues to demonstrate a very narrow socialist view of how the economy works. That is just ridiculous. There are social and economic commentators calling nationally and internationally for targeted intervention for women's employment and underemployment. The problem is that this minister does not have a strong view of women working and that has come through with him.

We have also just seen it come through with Dan Tehan in his decisions around child care. We already know that people who work in childcare - a woman-dominated industry - are paid far less. In fact, early childhood educators in Australia with a Certificate III are paid an hourly rate of \$21.29, which is nearly half the average Australian wage of \$42.84 per hour. By comparison, a metal fitter with a Certificate III who trains for exactly the same period of time makes an average of \$39.47 an hour. We already know that women are being paid less to work in that sector and now we have had a decision by this Government that they will end the free childcare period on 12 July and that the JobKeeper assistance that they promised to maintain until September is being ripped from the childcare sector a week later on 20 July.

If you had any view that this Government had a fair and genuine interest in women and women's work you would know that is not true. Frankly, this state Government and this federal government should stop attacking those who work in the sector and those who use the sector.

I wanted to talk as well about the ABC cuts because that matters a lot to us in regional Tasmania. Cuts to staff, services and programs to offset the latest \$84 million budget shortfall are a result of successive cuts from this federal Coalition government. Indexation fees announced in 2018 reduced the ABC's budget by \$84 million over three years and resulted in ongoing reduction of \$41 million a year. The freeze is part of ongoing reductions totalling \$783 million since 2014.

Under the latest cuts announced yesterday, 250 staff will lose their jobs. ABC Life becomes ABC Local but with fewer staff. The flagship 7.45 a.m. radio news bulletin will be axed. Independent screen production will be cut by \$5 million. This is in addition to everything else they have already cut and axed over the last seven years.

Lateline and state-based 7.30 programs will be axed. *The World Today* and *ABC PM* programming will be halved. There will be closure or reduction of our international news bureau, cuts to Radio National of programs like *Sunday Night*, cuts to international broadcasting, the end of shortwave radio services to the Northern Territory, a reduction in live concerts and Classic FM, a contraction of Australian drama, cutting costs for Australian children's programming, a reduction in women and local sport, an end to the international coverage of events like the Olympics, an end to non-news and current affairs television outside of Sydney and Melbourne, the closure of ABC Open, and 100 websites shut down.

These ongoing cuts threaten the ABC's future and have politicised our national broadcaster to such an extent that journalists and program-makers live in constant fear of losing their jobs and being pushed to breaking point, with increased duties and responsibilities and fewer staff.

At a time when fearless independence has never been more important in our media, this Government appears intent on bullying the ABC into submission. While the organisation has been accused of bias in the past by many sitting governments, this rhetoric is ramped up under the Coalition to such a degree that the ABC has been hamstrung in its ability to carry out its duty under its own charter.

While the organisation has had to adapt to a modern media landscape, particularly our digital media, it is a service for all Australians and the loss of more news bulletins, programs and services are going to have a huge impact for many Australians, particularly those in regional areas who rely on it for up-to-date news and information. The ABC - and the minister responsible for our fire service is here - was credited with saving lives during the devastating bushfires. Its emergency broadcasts are relied upon during times of such crisis and many people tune in to try to find out the latest way to protect themselves, their homes and their livelihoods in the midst of a disaster.

Without adequate staffing and resourcing, this crucial service will face huge challenges to keep Australians informed and up-to-date and keep on saving lives. It is especially important in a situation like a bushfire because we know that internet services are often cut and people have to rely on the information they get through the radio. The loss of the 7.45 a.m. radio news bulletin is a huge blow. Listener numbers may have declined, but radio news remains a vital service for many of us, particularly those without adequate internet services and in regional areas.

The fact that the ABC has earmarked this staple of our lives to be axed demonstrates the seriousness of the state that the national broadcaster now finds itself in. People all over the country have expressed dismay at the loss. It is emblematic of the decline of our national broadcaster that has been experienced for some time. The ABC is crucial to our democracy, particularly in light of Australia's high concentration of media ownership. Without the ABC we all lose.

This House should condemn it, and our Premier should use whatever influence he has to stop this vicious attack on our ABC.

National Blood Donors Week

[5.19 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, I rise to recognise that National Blood Donors Week was held between 14 and 20 June.

Each and every day across our nation someone somewhere needs blood. Many people donate. There are around 500 000 blood donors across Australia providing about 1.5 million donations each and every year. These transfusions of blood and blood products save many millions of lives across Australia and around the world. As someone in the House who has raised this issue previously and acknowledged the efforts of the blood donors around the nation and around our state, I encourage everybody who is fit and healthy and can do so to head into Red Cross and donate some blood.

I have been fortunate over my lifetime to be reasonably fit and healthy. I started donating blood when I was around 16. It has been a privilege. When you have half a litre of blood in you that you do not need, there is a process involved that goes to the Blood Bank. The work of the Red Cross through their life blood process helps so many people through their lives. A safe blood supply is a critical part of our health system. It goes to patients with blood, bone marrow disorders, inherited disorders of haemoglobin and immune deficiency conditions. It can provide critical support for people with traumatic injuries and in emergencies. We know burn victims need a lot of blood. Disasters, accidents and patients in ongoing advanced medical and surgical processes, all need blood.

You head into the Red Cross Blood Bank to give a whole blood donation. The rules are that you only give a whole blood donation every 12 weeks. The maximum you can give in a year of whole blood is four donations. So it takes a while to build up any substantial contributions but over a lifetime many people have made over 100 donations. You can also go through the plasma process where they extract the plasma from your blood. It only takes about an hour for a blood donation, and a little more for a plasma donation. You are assisting our world-renowned health system in Australia, which cannot survive without whole blood and blood donations.

To everybody who does donate, I congratulate you and implore you to keep going. For anybody who does not but is fit and healthy and can give blood, please see your local blood bank.

Type 'Red Cross Blood Bank' into your computer and you will find out where your local blood bank is and you can donate blood. It is a privilege to be part of it.

I commend Red Cross and all blood donors for their efforts over the years and acknowledge that last week was National Blood Donor Week.

Digital Access and Inclusion for People with Disability

[5.23 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to raise an important issue about digital access and inclusion for all Tasmanians, in particular for people with disabilities. TasCOSS has highlighted this as a significant issue in the past. I quote from an executive summary of a report on digital inclusion recently that was produced by TasCOSS -

Digital inclusion is about ensuring everyone can make full use of digital technologies so they can enjoy the social and economic benefits it provides.

As the first State to be connected to the national broadband network (NBN), Tasmania should be making the most of the opportunities that digital technology brings. And many Tasmanians are. But if you are on a low income, not in paid work, have low levels of education, older or living outside of Hobart, you are more disadvantaged when it comes to participating in the digital world.

It is hard to look for work and fill out government forms when you can't afford to connect the Internet at home, or your only access is through pre-paid plans on your mobile phone. It is difficult to study and keep in touch with friends when you live in a rural area and your Internet speeds are slow and intermittent. It is not easy to learn about the digital world when you are afraid of the technology, you have a disability or you have low literacy skills.

I particularly want to raise an issue on behalf of a constituent, not of mine in the seat of Franklin but living in Devonport. Richard Hannon is a blind person. He is a member of Blind Citizens Australia. I thank him for raising this issue with me as acting shadow minister for disability services. He highlighted the importance of digital access, particularly the Tasmanian Government websites and forms. He says they are not designed with user experience and accessibility in mind. Tasmanian government websites are lacking in readability or large text, high contrast colours and large links and buttons. He says the forms cannot be readily filled out electronically. Many forms are unable to accept digital signatures. Others have glaring faults such as non-functional tick boxes.

I draw to the House's attention an example. I am holding a picture of the Department of Health website that illustrates this fact. There is a fairly busy layout. You can imagine it would be difficult for people with vision impairment to navigate a page like this and to identify where to go and where to look. By comparison the United Kingdom government has a very simple layout, which is alphabetically listed with larger type, and links that go directly to the information that relates to it. It is much easier to navigate.

As I have said, Richard has highlighted this issue for me, in particular around patient travel assistance forms. To access the very sophisticated, complicated form, which cannot be filled out online and has to be printed as a PDF and that requires the right sort of software, he has to visit a social worker in order to get assistance to fill it out. He says valuable time is being taken from

social workers to assist with filling in forms. People like Richard are having to provide private information, such as bank details, to somebody they do not know. Because of the Government's inability to pick this up at this point, he says disabled Tasmanians are being forced to leave their homes during the coronavirus pandemic to fill out forms.

I can back that up from my housing portfolio. On a number of occasions I have raised with Housing minister, Roger Jaensch, the inability to have a digital alternative to constituent consent forms in the housing area. I raised this issue in early April. He promised a solution by the end of April. I followed it up a couple of weeks later and, now, five weeks later again I have heard nothing at all. It seems to be a systemic issue.

Australia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Article 9 states -

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.

The question really is: how is this Liberal Government ensuring people with vision impairment have that equal access to ICT and systems?

The South Australian government has recently undertaken a review of websites to make them more accessible. They have taken submissions from the public and leading experts and organisations such as Vision Australian. They are moving into implementation phase soon. The Canadian government is looking to South Australia as an example of what they can do.

As I have said, the United Kingdom has ensured its government websites are accessible to all users. The text is large and it is readable. Forms can be filled out directly in the web browser not just as PDF or Word documents. The forms are filled out step by step. It is very simple indeed. It is two pages. It is not until you fill out the first page that it takes you to the next page of the form. It is much simpler and easier to use for people with low literacy, English as a second language, and importantly, vision impairments as well.

PDF and Word documents can cause concerns as users require specific software to use them. Government staff as a result are left telling people to seek help from family or neighbours when filling out forms. How is this a solution for a blind man living alone in Queenstown who is a friend of Mr Hammond's? Likewise these forms are not accessible to children who act as carers to parents with disabilities or grandparents caring for grandchildren.

Labor has been contacted by many organisations representing these communities advocating for changes. I call on the Government today to hold a proper review to update all digital resources as the South Australian Government has done to ensure high levels of accessibility. All government websites, forms and digital services must be fully tested by various disability organisations before going live. It is high time, particularly in these times of a pandemic, it really highlights the importance of digital access, but this is an issue that is only going to become more problematic as we navigate an increasingly digital world.

Thermal Coal Projects

[5.30 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, the continued support by this Government for thermal coal projects in Tasmania remains an ongoing concern to many people in the community and to the Greens. Despite the climate emergency that we are in and the massive community opposition to coal, gas and other fossil fuels - because people understand that it is more important now than ever to stop using these sources of fuel so that we can reduce our collective omissions - the Government continues to have a commitment to supporting thermal coal in Tasmania. The Government has net zero emissions as a nominal objective into the future but that is totally meaningless if we were to start exporting emissions through thermal coal projects. The Government's actions show that despite the rhetoric of wanting to achieve net zero emissions their actions demonstrate that they are prepared to do exactly the opposite.

The recent history is that Midland Energy group was granted two exploration licences last year and received the promise of a \$50 000 drilling grant to help them seek investment from an American company. Junction Coal had one exploration licence and received a \$23 000 drilling grant from the Government for hard rock coal with a mining lease attached to it. All those companies want to export thermal coal. Tasmanians were very shocked to understand the extent of those projects and the preparedness of the Government to support these, essentially, speculative investment opportunities by international companies with a reckless disregard for the impact on the environment.

When the Greens found this out, we moved a motion in parliament to clarify the Government's position and to make it clear to Tasmania what that was. Our motion was to ban all new thermal coal mines in Tasmania. It should have been an entirely uncontroversial motion given that we were in a climate emergency and given the widespread community discussion about this with the school strikes for climate movement and all the other conversations that we are in the midst of.

The Greens' motion was supported by dozens of non-government organisations, hundreds of academics - these are Tasmanians - and many other important community members including a former Labor premier and a former environment minister. The fact was that no-one in this House, except for the Greens, supported that motion. The Labor Party and the Liberal Party members voted against that motion.

Where are we now? Midland Energy exploration licences expired in September 2019. That company applied for a one-year extension and nine months later that renewal is still pending from the Government. Typically, that assessment process should take two to three months at the absolute outside but if the company did not meet the licence renewal requirements the process demands that the application ought to be rejected. Clearly, the Government is trying to support the Midland project going ahead in any way possible, or possibly they themselves do not want to publicly endorse the signing-off on an extension of an exploration licence yet again.

The Junction Coal exploration licence expired in mid-April this year and evidently the company did not reapply. However, within three weeks the site they had that exploration licence over was once again listed as an exploration release area by the Government's department, Mineral Resources Tasmania.

Even though there is no company interested in being involved any longer in exploration in that area, the Government is still insistent on trying to push ahead thermal coal projects in Tasmania.

The Government's agenda is about marketing itself as pursuing zero net emissions at the same time as pursuing policies and projects that are entirely damaging to our climate and to the people of Tasmania. They are doing everything possible to get thermal coal projects off the ground, even though a perfect exit opportunity presented itself. They could have ended thermal coal projects in Tasmania without losing face with both of those companies finishing their licences, but the Government has refused to let thermal coal opportunities die in Tasmania. They continue to keep on knocking down carbon rich forests.

In this process, Labor has backed the Government in every single step of the way. They continue to back them in on the exploration of thermal coal licences in Tasmania. They continue to back them in on clear felling and logging our carbon rich native forests in Tasmania. Fossil fuel donations are clearly the factor that drives the voting by both of these parties in this place, and it is more important than anything else, even the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

Coronavirus and the global pandemic have not meant that the climate crisis has stopped. We know there could be nothing further from the truth, sadly. Recently, we recorded a 38-degree day in the Arctic Circle - never before recorded. It is a truly horrifying figure if you think about it - the Arctic Circle with 38 degrees.

The worst Australian fire season ever happened just a few months ago. We are still moving rapidly towards a tipping point with the climate crisis, and whilst our focus has been on coronavirus, we cannot forget the biggest catastrophe that this planet faces, the humans and all the other flora and fauna that inhabit it.

One of the few simple actions that the Government could take is to draw a line in the sand over this ludicrous idea of exploring thermal coal exploration in Tasmania. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity in the COVID-19 recovery period to make it very clear to these predatory, speculative companies, that there will be no opportunity for them to explore, or mine, thermal coal in Tasmania.

Arts and Culture Sector - COVID-19 Stimulus Package

[5.37 a.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney- General) - Madam Speaker, I will make a relatively short adjournment contribution tonight. It would have been remiss of me not to mention the significant announcement, particularly for the arts and culture sector, as a result of the federal government's stimulus measures that have been released today.

It is gratefully welcomed, I know, by the industry, and I will run through a few of the main features. I have been very pleased with the reaction to the stimulus package we released very early in the piece of COVID-19, and I will also run through that in a moment, as well. It demonstrates that our Government is very supportive of our state's cultural and creative industries. The sector not only provides enormous vibrancy to Tasmania, it also provides \$179 million annually to our economy. It is a significant contributor to our economy.

In recent years, some of our artists and organisations have gained record levels of national and international profile, which in turn contributes enormously to the standing of Tasmania as a place to visit and in which to invest as well. We have been working hard to understand and support participants in Tasmania's arts and culture sector through the challenges faced by COVID-19. That includes culture ministers from the different states and territories virtually meeting on a regular

basis, as well. Those meetings have been very useful. Our early package of \$3.5 million in direct support to our artists and arts organisations was met very well by other states. On a per capita basis, it is the largest level of assistance for the sector compared to other states such as New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

I really do wish the shadow spokesperson on the arts would stop issuing incorrect statements on this and downplaying the significant level of the stimulus on a per capita basis. Tasmania has a smaller population, and it is pretty obvious, of 520 000 people compared to millions of people in other states. She tries to compare the figures purely on the level of funding without taking into account the calculations on a per capita basis, which is completely incorrect.

Our package included \$1.5 million of new funding which is significant to the art sector and has been met with a positive response, and also the \$2 million of operational measures to support individuals and organisations to have certainty with their funding as well. The package was designed specifically to address the challenges facing our arts and screen practitioners and organisations. It included what we called the Arts and Digital Production Fund of \$500 000, the Tasmanian Contemporary Music Fund of \$250 000, and the additional Screen Development Fund of \$250 000. There is specific focus on those parts of the industry that can deliver content during these challenging times in conjunction with other practitioners.

As Minister for the Arts I have been involved in numerous meetings with my counterparts. In particular, I have had a number of discussions with the federal Arts Minister, Paul Fletcher, and I thank him for listening to that feedback. I was delighted to hear the announcement by Mr Fletcher and the Prime Minister today that the federal government is providing \$250 million by way of an arts stimulus package. This is a significant package which is targeting funding measures to support the arts and entertainment industry to recover over the next 12 months. The program will help people in the entertainment, arts and screen sectors move back into employment and will be delivered as a mix of grants and loans over 12 months, but also stimulating different parts of the \$112 billion nationwide creative economy and supporting the more than 600 000 Australians the sector employs.

Measures in this package include: seed investment to reactivate productions and tours, that is \$75 million in competitive grant funding; the show starter loans is \$90 million in concessional loans to assist creative economy businesses to fund new productions and events to stimulate job creation and economic activity; kickstarting local screen production, which is \$50 million for a temporary interruption fund to be administered by Screen Australia that will support local film and television producers to secure finance and start filming again, supporting thousands of jobs in the sector; supporting sustainability in sector significant organisations of \$35 million to provide direct financial assistance to support significant Commonwealth-funded arts and cultural organisations facing threats to their viability due to COVID-19; and Creative Economy Task Force which establishes a ministerial task force to partner with the Government and the Australia Council to implement the JobMaker Plan for creative economy.

The federal government has indicated that guidelines for the grant and loan programs will be released over the coming weeks, and I welcome that, and the members of the Creative Economy Task Force will also be announced. Once again, I thank the federal government, particularly the minister, Mr Fletcher, for the announcement today. They have listened to the arts community and responded positively to that sector. There is no doubt there will be a longer-term recovery for many in the sector. We recognise that but this funding provides that necessary boost, particularly to our

festivals. Tasmania is very well placed because we have some of the best festivals in the country - Dark Mofo, Ten Days on the Island, Junction Arts Festival, and the list goes on and on.

Maria Island - Facility Upgrades

Tasman National Park - Car Park Upgrade

[5.44 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I am going to talk about a couple of national park upgrades tonight. The Maria Island upgrade facility has now been completed. Is this not fantastic news? This has consisted of new toilet facilities at Encampment Cove and French's Farm campsites to provide better facilities for visitors to the Maria Island National Park.

I do not know whether you have ever camped there, Madam Speaker, but I remember my first camp in grade 7 with my mates - Shroud, Victor, Prawn - and I have very fond memories of Maria Island, and now my own children are following their dad having their grade 7 camps there. I am really thrilled about this facility upgrade.

Ms Standen - Did you camp in a tent?

Mr TUCKER - Yes. Could not carry the swags around. They were too heavy.

Ms Standen - It is a great grammar school tradition that.

Mr TUCKER - These facility upgrades are located about 10 kilometres outside of the World Heritage Darlington Precinct. The two new toilets have ambulant cubicles, including ramps and wide doorways to ensure the facilities are accessible to all visitors. Construction was undertaken during the closure of parks and reserves due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a great example of how we have prioritised and completed essential works during the closure. These improvements are important, particularly as this world class national park becomes more popular. We need to make sure we have comfortable facilities for visitors and that we have adequate waste treatment systems to preserve the environment as these sites become busier.

The work was completed by local business Eastcoast Constructions and I commend them on the excellent job they have done on these facilities. The project was completed in time for the reopening of the park this month and provides an improved visitor experience. The small sheltered campground at Encampment Cove is about a three-hour and 45-minute walk from Darlington and provides an opportunity to explore the convict ruins that once made up Long Point Probation Station.

French's Farm, a three-hour walk from Darlington, can be reached by the coast track or inland track which takes visitors through scrubby forest and offers views to Mt Maria and surrounding valleys.

The other upgrade I am going to talk about today is Tasman Arch Devil's Kitchen near Eaglehawk Neck, one of the Tasman National Park's most popular tourist attractions. Tenders have been called to deliver a redeveloped carpark. Work on the new carpark is expected to begin in July and take about four months to complete. The carpark will provide space for 30 vehicles, two accessible carparks and eight dedicated long vehicle bus spaces as part of the Tasman National Park

Gateway project. This project will not only provide infrastructure to meet visitor expectations, but will also create jobs for Tasmanian workers at a time when they are needed the most.

Helping our tourist industry recover from the impacts of COVID-19 will be vitally important once our borders are re-opened, especially for jobs in our regional areas and for the broader economy. These upgrades will ensure we can continue to attract visitors while delivering high quality experiences well into the future.

Parks and Wildlife Service has been carefully planning the renewal of the Tasman National Park for over a year and the remodelling of the site aims to provide a more sustainable long-term solution to traffic and pedestrian movement, whilst protecting the extensive sea cliffs and natural arches carved out by the Tasman Sea.

The carpark will be relocated further from cliff edges to provide greater room for viewing and pedestrian circulation of this high visitation site, also complementing other works currently underway within the Tasman National Park, including stair upgrades at the nearby Remarkable Cave.

Walking track upgrades commenced onsite in March, and plans are well under way for the construction of a new viewing platform, and toilets which are expected to be completed before next summer.

The House adjourned at 5.49 p.m.