



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 31 August 2021

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 31 August 2021

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

2. FOOD DELIVERY DRIVERS - HEALTH, WORKING CONDITIONS AND SAFETY

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, this is answer to question No. 2 on the Notice Paper from the member for Nelson regarding delivery riders for food delivery services. I will give the responses. For anyone who wants to follow, of course, it is on your Notice Paper.

- (1) The Government remains committed to making sure the health and safety of Tasmanian workers is protected. This is a complex area with issues relating to work health and safety, workers compensation and motor accident compensation.

Tasmania's work health and safety legislation is harmonised with the model work health and safety laws. It is risk-based legislation where businesses and undertakings (businesses) are required to assess the risks based on their environment and control the risks, so far as reasonably practicable, in their context.

The Government is a member of and actively participates in Safe Work Australia's research and education. Safe Work Australia has produced guidance material to assist delivery riders in staying safe at work.

- (2) The context of the industry in Tasmania is different to that in New South Wales. Where practicable, we will consider adopting any new initiatives that can improve the ongoing safety of workers in this sector.
- (3) The First interim report: on-demand platform work in Australia, of the Senate Select Committee on Job Security was released in June 2021. We note that public hearings are ongoing and the select committee is still accepting submissions. The committee is due to report by 30 November 2021. The first interim report made 15 recommendations.

Recommendations 3 and 4 are actions that the interim report has assigned to Safe Work Australia. They relate to data collection and the development of high-level guidance. Tasmania will participate in the consideration of these recommendations as a member of Safe Work Australia.

Recommendations 5 and 6 are assigned to the Australian Government. They relate to the introduction of, or amendment of, the model work health and safety regulations and the reform of state-based workers compensation schemes in relation to platform workers.

There are other recommendations that relate to working conditions under the Fair Work Act which is an Australian Government responsibility.

The Government will consider the committee's final report when it is released.

TABLED PAPERS

Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts - Report

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts in relation to a review into the Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2021. Mr President, I move -

That the report be received and printed.

Report received and printed.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - I would like to welcome to the President's Reserve Mr Bruce Neill and Penny Clive. Mr Neill is the subject of the member for Hobart's special interest topic today. Also welcome to staff and students of The Hutchins School who are joining us in the gallery to see exactly what we get up to. I am sure all members will make our guests very welcome.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Walking Wynyard Project

[11.08 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - We hear a lot about placemaking these days, a process centred on the community's assets, focusing on its people and capitalising on their needs and aspirations with the aim of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness and wellbeing.

This process relies strongly on community participation. Waratah-Wynyard Council has been doing some really wonderful work in this space in recent years and residents will be aware of a number of beautification projects taking shape, including improved walking tracks, more public art, beautiful seasonal garden tubs adorning the main street, and a new plaza complete with excellent facilities and beautiful public art in the town centre and almost opposite my office, which is lovely.

A number of strategies, plans and policies have evolved including the Liveable Waratah-Wynyard Settlement Strategy. This strategy looks at ways to create a sustainable, inclusive and nurturing environment in which to live, work and visit.

An online survey invited people to put forward their ideas on what they thought would most improve the vitality of their particular town within the municipality. This survey identified a number of priorities such as the importance of landscapes and streetscapes and the

importance of walkways in all places that make it easy and convenient to enjoy the social and health benefits that come from walking.

The World Health Organisation and the National Heart Foundation recommend that 10 000 steps per day, or approximately 8 kilometres, should be walked to improve general health and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

The strategy states that, according to CARE Australia, 93 per cent of Australians are walking less than the recommended daily distance for general health and wellbeing. The average Australian only clocks up 3.2 kilometres per day.

Wynyard enjoys a beautiful landscape, beaches, the Inglis River, Fossil Bluff and mostly flat topography, perfect for walking.

One recommendation to come from the community survey was integrated themed walks and to identify small stories at different locations within the town of Wynyard and to add a layer of history to the building or a site that residents see every day and may take for granted. These snippets of history contribute to making Wynyard the town it is today. The Discover Wynyard project was developed through the council's Public Art Advisory Group. The council's support to view the public art in Waratah-Wynyard municipal area can express the community's positive aspirations for its future, based on its unique attributes, heritage and people.

Public art can also contribute to the vibrancy of public spaces for the enjoyment of locals and visitors, enhance community identity and enrich cultural life. Waratah-Wynyard Council has shown its commitment to public art by including a funding provision in the annual budget, developing a public art policy and associated procedures, and also includes a Public Art Advisory Group that will operate at a strategic level to assist council to implement their policy.

In early 2021, the Public Art Advisory Group released a public art commission seeking an illustrated map to be created by a Tasmanian artist, thus combining walking and art. All members have a copy of this. The illustrated map is intended to communicate information about the Wynyard location, enabling a visual dialogue between the community, artist and the viewer. The resulting product is intended to be reproduced, used as a guide and to educate as well as to be enjoyed as an attractive keepsake.

Whilst decorative in its own right, the map sits alongside text communicating facts, portraying a sense of place and pointing out geographic properties, and native flora and fauna. The map is practical and serves to guide visitors and community members along the attractive walks Wynyard has to offer. Tasmanian artist Susan Irving-White [TBC] was a successful applicant and her beautifully illustrated map has delightfully captured the architecture as well as the varied flora and fauna native to Wynyard. Whilst this map is a geographical guide to the walks in the area, it also offers an informative, intimate insight into the town and its features. Stories and legends are represented alongside factual elements, just as they coexist in the make-up of our town.

Waratah-Wynyard Council is to be commended for this work and the difference it is making in our region. Wynyard is a vibrant town. There are no empty shops in Wynyard and it is a wonderful place to visit. Other towns in the municipality, including Somerset, Sisters

Beach, Boat Harbour, Yollah, Waratah and many other small communities in between have had beautification projects or other works done to enhance the livability of these communities. It is a wonderful place to live and work and an equally lovely place to holiday. With your new map in hand, I hope to see many of you enjoying the area in the not-too-distant future.

Launceston Airport

[11.12 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, today I speak about Launceston Airport, the gateway to Tasmania's north. At this time, it is slightly unusual to talk about air travel for obvious reasons, but anyone who might not have had the chance to visit the airport in a while might be surprised with what they find.

Today, I speak about some of the great work that has been done at the airport to showcase the wonderful things Tasmania has to offer, especially to our domestic and, in time, international visitors. Being an island state, under usual circumstances, air travel is critical to the Tasmanian economy with almost 90 per cent of travellers using scheduled air services for transit to the state.

In 2019, Launceston Airport facilitated the travel of over 1.4 million people. That number is considerably greater than we saw in 2020 and will see for the rest of 2021. However, I say this to emphasise how important it is to make positive, meaningful and lasting impressions on those who enter our state at any time.

This is also why Launceston Airport will be integral to Tasmania's ongoing recovery from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. In previous years, it has been estimated the airport directly contributes \$81 million in outputs to the northern Tasmanian regional economy, while the airport precinct itself provides employment for around 400 people from the northern Tasmanian region, generating \$44 million worth of value to northern Tasmania. The sooner we can return to these circumstances, the better it will be for the northern region and for everyone living and working there.

In February this year, the airport celebrated its 90th anniversary, 90 years of aviation history made right here in our backyard. According to the airport's website, Launceston Airport, formerly known as the Western Junction Aerodrome, officially opened on 28 February 1931 with the Controller of Civil Aviation, Lieutenant Colonel H.C. Brinsmead pronouncing the aerodrome open.

In its inaugural year, there were just six flights a week. Under usual non-pandemic circumstances, it now offers travellers up to 400 weekly non-stop destinations. I encourage anyone interested in the airport's history to take a look at some of the resources on the airport website as there are some fabulous tidbits that really show the amazing work that has happened there since 1931. In recent years, the airport has had major upgrades in the way it looks, functions and cares for passengers. The food and drink available - especially at the boutique James Boag Upper Deck bar, which provides a distinctly representative local selection of food and drink, making waiting at the airport much less of a chore and more a part of the travelling experience.

The Launceston Store sells a combination of the typical books, magazines and newspapers along with uniquely Tasmanian items, including lavender products from Bridestowe, clothing and gifts.

The car park, too, has had an upgrade with improved signage and organisation making it easy to get around as soon as you set foot out of the airport. Being only a ten-minute drive from town gives people the option to travel where they need to, when they need to, whether they live in Tasmania or not. This was evidenced recently by the AFL footballers flying in and flying out on the one day. I am sure it was quicker than getting to Melbourne Airport from many of their homes.

Some may recall last year my speech on Miss Flinders, a Desoutter Mk. II monoplane which was on display at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, but was looking for a new home. Built in 1933, the Miss Flinders flew passengers to the Bass Strait islands. It was recently announced it will go home to be on display at Launceston Airport, representing a powerful juxtaposition of the old and new of our history and future. The revamped terminal with a bright, airy feel is extremely welcoming to visitors and gives a warm farewell to those who are leaving.

So much incredible work has been done at the airport over the past few years and the job is not over. We still have a long way to go in the recovery and rebuilding efforts in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic in Australia. Launceston Airport will be integral to that process. It was great to hear direct flights will be commencing from Launceston to Adelaide and I look forward to direct flights from Launceston to Perth in the not too distant future.

Northern Tasmania has so much to offer its visitors and, as we compete for tourists in the coming months and years, it is vital our airport continues to project a welcoming presence and highlight everything great we have to offer.

Recognition of Visitors

PRESIDENT - Welcome to the second group from The Hutchins School joining us here today and I hope you enjoy your stay.

Proposed Leith Overpass

[11.18 a.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the issue which will be of special interest to members in this place as a similar situation could actually occur in your electorate and I would like you to be aware of what has occurred.

As members may be aware, the Government has proposed to build an overpass at Leith which will require the compulsory acquisition of a number of homes. Liaising with the residents' group, it is clear there has been significant disappointment in and disagreement with the Government consultation process and the stated factors and statistics used to formulate and justify the overpass proposal. I have offered to share their concerns for the benefit of these members. Quoting from a document from Mr Leo Beuermann with respect to the consultation process he states:

In 2017-18, consultations evidenced many residents preferred a speed reduction or a roundabout instead of an overpass.

Leith residents were excluded from and unaware of the multi-criteria analysis' other consultations with stakeholders between 2018 and March 2021. Those having homes and land taken for this proposed overpass received no notification until March of 2021, despite survey work conducted in late 2020. The July 2021 consultations were flawed in design and written to favour an overpass. The Department of State Growth staff were unable to answer many questions asked by attendees and presentation of materials did not adequately provide information of other safety options, such as a speed reduction or roundabout. Feedback forms were biased with loaded questions where two overpass designs are the only choices whilst other options were for discussion only. A set-to-fail roundabout design at Short Street with a limited value was presented, whilst a viable roundabout at Leith Road proposed by residents was not presented to residents or attendees, although this design works at Howth.

These government and Department of State Growth (DSG) consultations and website presentations were publicly criticised in the *Advocate* newspaper by an internationally acclaimed expert on social infrastructure.

Mr President, I have previously raised questions regarding the quoted crash statistics which have been given as a partial justification for the need to build the overpass. The residents' group has asked me to reiterate their view that the stated figures are not correct and that: 'There have only been 26 crashes at the Leith junctions in the last 20 years and no fatalities are attributable to these intersections'.

Indeed, the school bus no longer uses the route which originally caused the concern at that junction. Furthermore, the residents have concerns with the limited DSG field study undertaken with regard to the environmental issues. They believe that the impact on the health of the Forth River Estuary and on endangered flora and fauna has not been appropriately examined, and call on the Department of State Growth to undertake further research.

Mr Beuermann's document also raises the question of new dangers from the overpass. He says:

The Government-preferred overpass design or alternative design both create new additional dangerous intersections where potential for injury or death is migrated from the highway to any overpass, ramps and Leith Road as well as back to existing slip lanes on the highway. Both options mean vehicles entering and exiting North Leith must travel across a dangerously located un-signalised railway crossing whilst the other option also provides an entry to North Leith by requiring traffic to cross over a new slip lane towards Devonport, creating extremely dangerous situations and major potential for crashes.

The Government claims an overpass with slip lanes was chosen due to a strong desire by the community; however, the finally released 2018 Outcomes Report reveals a mere 10.1% support for an overpass with slip lanes, compared with overwhelming support for a speed reduction or roundabout.

Mr Beuermann and the residents' group called on the Government to consider other design alternatives. He states that: 'Speed reduction is readily achievable as is a roundabout at far less cost than any overpass'.

I am cognisant that the creation of large-scale infrastructure often involves the acquisition of private homes and property. However, I cannot imagine what it must be like to contemplate the loss of one's home.

A local petition now has close to 4000 signatures condemning the Government's push to evict people from their homes, probably compounded more with the current housing market situation of trying to find a new home within a certain value range. Additionally, the residents have concerns for the impact on the peaceful enjoyment of the properties in the vicinity, and indeed of the potential negative effect on property values.

Mr Beuermann states:

Homes not taken for an overpass face significant loss of amenity, reduction of value, so they become virtually unliveable due to their close proximity. This loss or damage includes overshadowing, overlooking, emission pollution, noise pollution and dangerous exits to some homes.

The taking of homes and land for an overpass makes these residents Collateral Damage for a monolithic overpass where its width of 13.8 metres funnels onto Bridge Street and Leith Road which are both only 6 metres wide.

There will be significant increase in traffic using Bridge Street and aN un-signalized railway crossing. Any overpass could result in more homes being taken or any overpass being built further onto the endangered river bank where either option causes irreversible damage and huge costs.

A regional development expert, Professor Robyn Eversole, wrote:

This is the dark face of regional development: when the project takes over and people and communities become collateral damage. Instead of infrastructure to improve our region we get the opposite: a white elephant few want at a cost we all bear.

The actual figure bandied for this overpass is somewhere between \$15-\$20 million. The residents believe that it could be done for much less value and in a much safer way.

Mr President, I hope that bringing members' attention to this matter might assist in generating support for the residents of Leith and their endeavours to have the Government revisit this most controversial project.

It also should be noted that a number of government projects are being undertaken which I believe seem to lack authentic and genuine consultation.

University of Tasmania Honorary Degree - Bruce Neill

[11.25 a.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I add my welcome to two of my Hobart constituents, Bruce Neill, and his partner in life, Penny Clive, who have committed themselves to the wider community of Hobart and, indeed, Tasmania. I was recently made aware of an event involving Bruce. He is not one to grandstand on his achievements in any way; however, the University of Tasmania made the following announcement on 20 August this year:

As the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for investment and interest in the highest-quality medical research has come to the forefront.

Someone who has always championed the importance of this is the former longstanding Chair of the Board of the Menzies Institute for Medical Research, Bruce Neill.

His service and dedication has been rewarded with Mr Neill receiving an honorary degree from the University of Tasmania.

Since becoming Chair of the Board in 2013 he quickly became the Institute's most active donor, volunteer, and advocate. He has been personally involved in the establishment of six postdoctoral Select Foundation Fellowships, which are ongoing, and led the fundraising campaign to build the Medical Science Precinct in Hobart near the Royal Hobart Hospital where Menzies is currently located.

His success as a business strategist, developer and manager, as well as his accomplishments as a cricketer, gave him extensive networks. He used these networks to provide opportunities for Menzies that would have remained untapped without his efforts.

Mr Neill's ongoing advocacy, philanthropy, and fundraising has been critical in shaping the Menzies Institute as we know it today.

In more recent years he was committed to the concept of a flagship focusing on multiple sclerosis research. He advocated for the work and facilitated meetings with stakeholders, including political representatives in Canberra. The MS Research Flagship Program subsequently received \$10 million in federal government funding plus millions more in philanthropic and other funds. Tasmania has the highest prevalence of the disease in Australia, and Menzies has become a national hub for research into MS.

His support for Menzies and the University of Tasmania has had a profound impact on our capacity to undertake world-class medical research, and this major contribution will have a legacy of improving the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians for generations.

The Select Foundation mentioned in that release refers to one of two family foundations that Bruce has established. The Select Foundation focuses on supporting medical research at

Menzies and supporting Tasmanian humanities. Over the past 15 years, Select has funded many Menzies fellowships, as mentioned earlier, which have provided researchers with salaries and some costs to fulfil their important roles.

The second foundation is known as Detached Cultural Foundation, which focuses on supporting the arts and environment and, among other causes, has been instrumental in structuring and funding arts education and many exhibitions at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Detached also financially supports scientists and research at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies.

Our previous member for Rosevears, Kerry Finch, and I recently had the pleasure of attending an evening of classical voice in the old Mercury building and supported by the Detached Cultural Foundation. The event was *Winterreise*, involving countertenor, Nicholas Tolputt, with a magnificent voice, and other distinguished company. No, the former member for Rosevears did not sing. Thank you, Bruce and Penny, for providing your support to the Beaker Street Festival, and an opportunity for the Hobart community.

What was not covered in the release, but was spoken of by Bruce in his acceptance speech, was Bruce's path to enable such philanthropy. Initially, Bruce's cricketering career brought him here from Sydney in 1977, to play for his adopted state in what I believe was Tasmania's first ever entry to the national first-class Sheffield Shield competition. This was quite an occasion for our state, given the first Sheffield Shield was contested on the mainland as far back as 1892-3. He then retired from that sport and spent some 20 years serving as the Code of Conduct Commissioner for Tasmanian cricket. Bruce's Tasmanian business life commenced in 1979, when he established a one-man financial services company. Over the next 25 years, he built that business into a national operation with around 250 employees, including over 200 in Tasmania.

The company was listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and following a series of mergers, it morphed into IOOF which is now one of Australia's largest wealth managers, approaching 5000 employees - proudly 340 of them being Tasmanian - making it one of our state's largest private sector employers. Time does not permit a fuller expansion of Bruce's business life as it is quite broad. Suffice to say that through the foundations I spoke of earlier, Bruce, together with Penny, I am sure, is now giving back to the state that has become the focus of a rather full career.

Thank you, Bruce, for what you are doing in the philanthropy space. I am sure members will join with me in congratulating you on the acknowledgement of your efforts by the University of Tasmania, awarding you the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.

Presbyterian Women's Association Anniversary

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I would like to add my congratulations to Bruce Neill and his family for those magnificent efforts and contributions to the Tasmanian community. It is very interesting, and I appreciate the member for Hobart in bringing that to our attention. We have the member for Prosser, a very proud family member, here with us in the Chamber.

The milestone of reaching 100 years of age is very special, no matter be it a person or an organisation. Last week in McIntyre, the Scottsdale Presbyterian Women's Association celebrated its centenary with a multi-denominational church service followed by afternoon tea, which you will not be surprised, included a special birthday cake.

A little of the history. The Presbyterian Women's Mission held its first meeting on 4 August 1921 at the old Scottsdale Presbyterian church at Ellesmere which you will know, Mr President. This building was moved to the current George Street site in 1918 and later, due to the old church becoming too small, the current church was built and dedicated in 1986. In 1986 the Presbyterian Women's Mission combined with the Presbyterian Women's Guild to become the Presbyterian Women's Association (PWA).

The women of the Scottsdale branch of the PWA are the last remaining branch in Tasmania and possibly that is a sign of the times that we live in. The PWA raise funds to support missions both in Tasmania and overseas and the Scottsdale-Bridport Presbyterian Church serves the community in various other ways. At the celebration, the current president, Catherine Munro spoke at the celebration about the organisation and the mission that they undertake, supporting the local community along with the global charitable focus.

Interestingly, a number of the current members are related to the foundation members. You only have to look at the surnames: Johnson, McDougall, Farquhar, Gill, again Johnson, Burrows, Thompson, Beatty, Ball. So, you see those same names still in our community. Alice Gill was a foundation member and her granddaughter, Peggy Howlett, who you will know of and I certainly know well, her son Rod went to school with me, Mr President. Peggy is still an active member of the PWA. In fact, several current members are related to those past and original members of that committee.

On the day a beautiful Huon pine plaque featuring a recent picture of the members was presented as part of the celebration. As I said, the Scottsdale branch is the last remaining in Tasmania. I found it really positive that the current members are determined to continue their work, looking forward as well as outward.

My congratulations to this dedicated group who are following a strong tradition of service, 100 years on from the first meeting in early August in 1921. I acknowledge and thank Melissa, my electoral assistant, who attended the celebration on this auspicious occasion to represent me as I was not able to be there due to parliamentary commitments. I congratulate all those and acknowledge their work. I know that the fellowship that the group brings between each other is something that will keep them on their journey.

MOTION

Noting Budget Papers

Continued from 26 August 2021 (p. 36).

[11.36 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I will start by giving some overview and then I will delve into some of the things within my electorate that I like the look of and then a conclusion.

At the last election, the people of Tasmania were given a clear opportunity to endorse the Gutwein government and its strategies, to give them a mandate to continue their stewardship of our state or not. The people made the decision and it was unambiguous. It reflected a very clear recognition and endorsement of the strong and decisive leadership that the Government has provided as we weathered the COVID-19 pandemic storm and the clear declaration of confidence in the ability of the Premier and the Government he leads to guide our ongoing recovery in the months and years ahead.

The Budget shows us all that the confidence was not misplaced. As we know, the last election was a personal triumph for the Premier where he topped the poll in his seat with a record vote. There was no complacency, no gloating and no inclination whatsoever to sit on his laurels. While we were and are doing quite well as a state from an economic perspective - very well, actually, relative to other jurisdictions - the Premier and the Government are under no illusion regarding the obstacles and hurdles to be met further down the track.

The Premier sees quite clearly that there is still much to be done. In my Address-in-Reply speech I made to this Chamber not that long ago, I referenced my own personal discussions with the Premier. I saw firsthand his determination to tackle the issues that were raised during the election campaign, issues that were still outstanding in Tasmania and that continue to raise concerns for many Tasmanians. Ongoing issues such as health, housing, education and infrastructure development.

These are issues that the Government recognises and is absolutely determined to address. The Budget we see before us clearly demonstrates this to be the case. I will reiterate shortly some particular initiatives on health, education and housing that the Budget outlines.

The evidence shows that we are quite clearly benefiting from the prudent management by the Gutwein Government and its predecessors over the last seven years. In fact, we are remarkably well placed from an economic and social perspective to tackle the challenges ahead. The figures bear out that we are one of the strongest performing economies in the nation and that the number of jobs in Tasmania continues to grow. There are now more than 263 000 people employed in Tasmania. Our unemployment rate at 4.5 per cent is below the national average. In June 2021, dwelling approvals were up by 43.7 per cent from the previous year. The value of retail trade increased 10.9 per cent over the year to June 2021.

Exports are growing. The value of our exports increased by 5.2 per cent over the year to June 2021 and business confidence is surprisingly resilient. Businesses are investing and hiring. As the Premier said in his speech, results like these do not come about by chance. They are the result of hard work and competent economic management.

That the Government is serious and absolutely committed to delivering on the plan they took to the election cannot be doubted. Indisputably, the Government has hit the ground running since the election results became clear. A number of key actions to deliver across the first 100 days of the Government taking office were outlined and the Government has delivered on each and every one of these, as we said we would. This includes important actions on a number of vital areas of health, skills and training, jobs creation, tourism and building the infrastructure our growing state needs for the future.

This Budget will maintain the momentum of the 100-day plan. The Government is intent on getting on with business and delivering positive outcomes for all Tasmanians. I will focus

on particular initiatives this Budget will deliver to address the ongoing issues of health, education and housing that I referred to earlier.

The Government will invest a record \$10.7 billion into our health system and the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians. I remember when we first discussed our Supply Bill. I asked the new member for Windermere how he felt on that day, whether he understood everything. He scratched his chin a little and said, well, I am contemplating the fact that we just passed a bill for \$2.2 billion. Here we are, with \$10.7 billion into the health system alone.

Increasing demand and COVID-19 impacts mean there will be an extra \$900 million more for the health system this year than in last year's budget. Importantly, community-based care will be strengthened as a priority, including a further \$5 million to the GP After-Hours Support Initiative, taking the total to \$8 million. This will provide more options for after-hours treatment in local communities and will reduce pressure on the emergency departments.

Other community-based health care initiatives, including funding to support the Cancer Council, Epilepsy Tasmania, Hobart District Nurses and Palliative Care clinical nurse educators are also included. Priority areas, including improved digital technology with initiatives such as telehealth and virtual care, are also supported.

Even with significant investment in community-based care and preventative measures, there will always be a need for acute care. Additional funding of \$198 million will enable the opening of more than 50 additional permanent beds across Tasmania in 2021. More elective surgeries will be delivered; another 7000 on top of the 22 300 already committed to through a \$40 million top-up, with a total elective surgery allocation of \$196.4 million.

To support the increase in elective surgery and other services, up to 280 additional FTE health staff will be employed, including nurses, doctors, allied health staff and hospital support staff. Funding of \$15.7 million will support the implementation of Health Workforce 2040, which will be released in coming weeks.

Tasmanians have understandably expressed their concerns about education and training. The Government is delivering a record \$8 billion to be invested in education, skills and training to enable Tasmanians to get jobs that will support and drive our economy forward. The 2021 Budget includes investment in additional quality teaching coaches, professional support staff, school health nurses and support for students impacted by trauma, while continuing to invest heavily in education infrastructure.

We see new infrastructure commitments of \$116 million to allow investment in co-education high school facilities in Hobart, a new north-west support school, upgrades to contemporary classrooms and a Renewable Energy Schools Program.

In addition, the Government is investing \$135.5 million in the skills and training our industry needs to help young Tasmanians get a job. I will turn my attention to TasTAFE at this point, going to Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 2.

TasTAFE is the largest public vocational, education and training provider in Tasmania, providing the majority of vocational training for Tasmanian businesses. Training is conducted statewide at TasTAFE facilities in Hobart, Clarence, Claremont, Launceston, Alanvale,

Devonport and Burnie, in trade training centres, regional locations, workplaces across the state and remotely.

I note that in the budget papers, \$3.8 million is allocated this year towards 100 extra TasTAFE teachers. This initiative will deliver 100 additional TasTAFE teachers statewide for four years to help ensure young Tasmanians can be trained to meet the needs of industry and businesses.

National TAFE Day occurred on the 11 August 2021, and I was invited to attend a TAFE school within the area. The invitation came from Gerald Innes who is the Australian Education Union (AEU) contact, and having done a trade I felt quite comfortable in going along. Gerald was very helpful, and during the lunchbreak different teachers talked to us. Some very good information was relayed to me and I fed a lot of that information back into the system. Among other things, they spoke about teachers. I downloaded 'TasTAFE transition for a better training future' from the Department of State Growth's website. I noticed it refers to action regarding teachers; and the first round of TasTAFE training recruitment will be underway by November 2021 with planning occurring to ensure this aligns with identified needs.

I was told that actually getting teachers was hard. I understand that the advertisements were there and the positions were available, but filling the positions was one of the issues they raised with me. I relayed that to the Premier's Office and was pleased that it was noted.

They also spoke to me about the digital infrastructure. The teachers said that when they put students' information into their system it would be too slow to upload or they would lose it and have to restart. I am very pleased to see that there is an undertaking to review TasTAFE's physical and digital infrastructure, and so I hope those two issues I took back to the Premier's Office are being looked at.

Housing is another issue of particular concern for all Tasmanians, and a record \$615 million is being invested into social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.

In my area of Montgomery and also a little bit in Murchison, I note a new subdivision will deliver 49 lots to help meet the high demand for social and affordable housing in Burnie. Hardings Hotmix Pty Ltd has been awarded a \$3.7 million contract for infrastructure construction to develop the subdivision. Construction in Kentish Drive, which is almost at the turn-off into Parklands High School, is scheduled to start in December 2021, subject to finalisation of project documentation and planning approvals. The subdivision will include lots available for purchase under the Tasmanian Government HomeShare program early in 2022. HomeShare provides assistance to Tasmanians on low incomes who want to own their own home. Importantly, we are already investing an additional \$10 million into that program.

The release of land at Shorewell Park is contributing to the Tasmanian Government commitment under the Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 to release a total of 670 lots of land. More social and affordable housing for the north-west is currently being considered. Crown land sites at 16 to 20 West Moreville Road, Park Grove and Roslyn Avenue remain and have great potential to provide infill residential housing. Housing land supply orders for these sites are currently subject to community consultation.

More than 60 social housing dwellings will be delivered in Burnie by June 2023, with funding provided under Community Housing Grants programs. We often hear there is no point

in simply throwing money at problems and expecting them to go away and that is true. Expenditure needs to be made more within the context of a strategic framework. \$2 million in the Budget is going towards the development of the first ever comprehensive and long-term housing strategy to consider demand across both the public and private sectors and develop strategies to deliver sustainable outcomes.

The new strategy will consider a range of initiatives to build on existing successful initiatives, such as the First Home Owner Grant, the HomeBuilder and Residential Land Rebate programs. New approaches could include extending rental assistance programs, a build-to-rent program, housing options for workers in critical industries and commercial property conversions. As is often the case in addressing complex social issues, there is no single magic bullet solution and a range of responses are needed.

Immediate action is being taken to meet increasing demand for social and affordable housing. with \$300 million through Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plans (1) and (2) and Community Housing Growth Program to help around 5000 Tasmanian households out of housing stress or homelessness by the end of June 2023, including around 3500 new social houses to be built by 2027.

This Budget demonstrates the Premier and the Government have been listening to the people, they have heard the legitimate concerns and worries of ordinary Tasmanians and have responded accordingly. Any fair and impartial assessment of their reaction to the Budget following its release will conclude that most people, most stakeholders believe the Government has got it right. I believe that the public reaction to the Budget has been overwhelmingly positive. The TCCI has said this is the budget that gets the settings right. TasCOSS says:

We were pleased to see a willingness to see a real willingness to do things a different way...One of the things we are most pleased about was there was a willingness to address some of the more entrenched problems we have in Tasmania, in a more strategic and systemic way.

The Mental Health Council says:

... we are seeing an ambitious budget, it's fantastic to see the government looking towards prevention, towards wellbeing.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation says 'I think there's some real positives'. The Police Association says it welcomes the Budget. The Small Business Council says:

Tasmania's small business sector is the big winner from today's budget ... "The announcements today set in concrete the promises made during the election period and should support Tasmanian small businesses' economic growth and the mental health of their operators".

The RACT and NBA were all positive and pleased to see the Budget delivering on election commitments. The Youth Network of Tasmania's CEO said:

This Budget contains record investment ... to improve the health and wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people and will support the

successful implementation of the Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan 2021-2025.

Saul Eslake noticed that Tasmanian finances are in a better position than most other states and territories and that debt spending was lower than feared.

What we have seen is an overwhelming positive response to the Budget and rightly so, Mr President. I will turn my attention now to some local initiatives. There is an additional \$4.3 million for the new Burnie Ambulance Station and I do believe it was about time that was sorted and something happening there. Hopefully that money can be well spent.

There is \$26.6 million for a new child and family learning centres statewide, including West Ulverstone.

There is \$7.1 million for the Montello Primary School redevelopment which is in the member for Murchison's electorate.

Ms Forrest - I will be speaking about that, do not worry.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes, good. I have been lobbying about that for a long time.

Ms Forrest - I know you have. But more than that is needed and I will have my say about that when I get up.

Mrs HISCUTT - There is \$7.1 million there for it now and it will only benefit that school.

There is \$12.2 million for the \$20 million redevelopment of the Penguin District School, from a kindergarten to a year 12 school. Every time I drive past that school I look in eagerly and there is still plenty of construction happening.

Ms Forrest - The Penguin school is the golden child of the system and has had more money spent than just about anywhere.

Mrs HISCUTT - My eldest son, who is the same age as the member for Elwick's, was one of the first intakes in that new primary school.

There is \$50 000 for the installation of solar panels at the Penguin Football Club. The Penguin Football Club is not doing as well as they would like at the minute and that will be a bonus save for them in their electricity bills.

There is \$40 000 to upgrade the Riana Cricket Club. I had a chat to Ben Radcliff, who is the president and that money is going towards a junior pavilion. The club needs about \$60 000 to do their new pavilion plus their new electronic scoreboard. The Government is kicking in \$40 000 and the community raised the other \$20 000 themselves. That is a great tight-knit little community and they work very hard. They got the pavilion underway just a little bit.

Ms Forrest - They probably need to drain the western side of the ground a bit too.

Mrs HISCUTT - The council at the moment - I do not want to say it is giving them a hard time - but they are negotiating with the council to move on with their construction ensuring it is done properly.

We attended a fundraiser for this, it was a farmer's auction. And the 10 tonne of lime we bought will be put to a lot of good use. I did not mind the three hours of excavation hire we bid for. That was pretty good, but I am not really sure about that big picture of Paddy Dangerfield hanging on our wall. I do not know what to think about that one.

There is also \$185 000 for the construction of new clubrooms of the Ulverstone Soccer Club, a club moving forward at a great pace. The council did install new lights for them and this new soccer club room will enhance all that. That club is progressing very well.

There is \$20 000 to upgrade lighting at the Forth Football Club Recreation Ground, that will enable them to do their training without having to have torches on their heads. They have been asking about that for a long time. There are also a lot of people that camp around the edge of the football field and this will also add a degree of security for that club, so that is good.

I note \$86.7 million to the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience and will come back to that one.

I note the finalisation of redevelopment of the Sheffield School Farm, which is undergoing major upgrades to provide new facilities for students to participate in high-quality agricultural learning opportunities.

The project will support more young people to take up studies in agriculture and land care as a pathway to a career in primary industries. Construction for the redevelopment of the Sheffield School Farm is now very much underway. The total spend in Budget Paper No. 1, Page 101, indicates \$.2 million of a total allocation to complete a \$3 million spend. This is a highly agricultural area and this can only benefit farming in the long run.

Mr President, there is also \$130 000 to upgrade the Lower Barrington Rowing Course to secure international events. I do not need to talk much on the Lower Barrington Rowing Course as most people will be fully aware of it.

There is \$75 000 for the refurbishment of the Lower Barrington Hall and \$25 000 for the removal of asbestos.

A committee member, Mrs Bronwyn Watson, invited me to show me through their hall. The asbestos which they talk about is in a built-on lean-to in the old kitchen and the sooner that that is gone, the better for everybody. It is a very old, very ratty little lean-to that needs to be removed in a safe manner. The \$25 000 allocated funding will certainly see to that.

I recently attended the inaugural meeting of the Don Irrigation Scheme participants and the little hall was full of people. The main hall is adequate but certainly needs a bit of attention so the funding will be beneficial.

Community groups, including the local squash club, use the hall, and they will benefit. There is also \$500 000 for the purpose-built Kentish House in Sheffield.

I noted there is \$7 million to renew and upgrade outdated classrooms statewide. A lot of the terrapins that used to be put in school grounds to accommodate more classrooms really are outdated, and hopefully some of those terrapins might disappear. Having said that, I was interested to find that the Ulverstone Primary School has a heritage listed terrapin.

Ms Forrest - It was there when I was there. There are a few.

Mrs HISCUTT - I do not know. I looked at it and said: 'If you move that out of the way, you could expand this', and they said: 'Oh, no, that is heritage listed'.

Ms Forrest - Is it on the eastern side of the school?

Mrs HISCUTT - On the sea side of the main office.

I note funding for school health and for school health nurses statewide. There is \$27.5 million for community-based healthcare, including hospital-in-the-home services and other health care delivered in the home or community, coupled with \$4.25 million for Palliative Care Tasmania to educate and train GPs, community education and workforce development.

Mr President, I put those two together because I wanted to highlight again the Rapid Response nursing team one. A friend of mine, as he nursed his wife through her cancer treatment until she recently passed away, could not speak more highly of the Rapid Response nursing team.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Mrs HISCUTT - I also highlight \$2 million funding to amend the Controlled Access Scheme and enable improved access to medicinal cannabis. I was on the committee that the member for Murchison chaired and I thoroughly believe in this. Medicinal cannabis has been able to be prescribed in Tasmania since the introduction of the Controlled Access Scheme in 2017. The Tasmanian Government is the only government in Australia to subsidise the cost of unregistered medical cannabis products and they are not subsidised by the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Tasmania is currently the only jurisdiction which does not allow general practitioners to prescribe medical cannabis products. Under a proposal that was put to us, GPs in Tasmania will be able to prescribe unregistered medical cannabis products to be considered, subject to approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration. We will work to adopt a single, streamlined online application pathway and a 48-hour authorisation time frame. That is the proposal at the moment, and I am looking forward to seeing how that eventuates.

There is also funding of \$28.6 million for the Tasmanian irrigation schemes Tranche 3, and it is good to see that happening. Every time we turn the irrigator on it is so wonderful, because we live right on the end of the scheme. We have the pressure there and it is one of the best things.

Ms Forrest - It is all downhill to your place.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes.

Mr Willie - Are you going to call it liquid gold?

Mrs HISCUTT - No. I note \$460 000 for the injured and orphaned wildlife program. There is information on that on DPIPWE's website. I mention the program because I believe at the moment there is only one vet in the Sheffield Municipality who will accept injured wildlife. I am not sure how it works for that particular vet because they would do a lot of work for no money. I am going to follow up with that particular vet.

I note funding of \$11 million towards two homeless facilities. One of them will be 23 units in the new Burnie Youth Shelter.

I am sure the member for Murchison will elaborate on the \$7.1 million going into the Montello Primary School, but there is also some money involved there for the Ulverstone Primary School. There is \$2.6 million for ward upgrades and additional bed capacity for the North West Regional Hospital, and I note that is over three years. There is funding of \$145 million for upgrades of the Burnie Port and I believe some of that money may be going to a new loader. A lot of primary products and minerals go out of that port and it needs to be kept up to scratch, so that funding will be useful. There is \$7.5 million for north-west racing infrastructure, and I hope the minister, Ms Howlett, might make mention of that in her contribution. I am keen to know where that funding will go.

I also note that in his speech, the Premier referred to a \$5 million agricultural centre of excellence at Burnie Freer Farm. I believe that is a very obvious place for that centre. During my apprenticeship, Freer Farm helped us with our practical abilities. It is an excellent facility. We had teachers like Martin Hussey and Alan Ransom, highly respected people in our community. They were quality teachers, and taught practical skills like wire tying. It is so easy when you know how, but when you do not you get tied up in knots. They also taught calibration of machinery and all sorts of things for farm machinery - from spraying to spreading super. Freer Farm is an obvious place for the centre of excellence.

Turning to Budget Paper No. 2, Volume I, there is an allowance of \$3.6 million this year and then more into the forward Estimates for the Kentish and Latrobe flood mitigation projects. I know that relates to the member for Mersey and perhaps also to the member for McIntyre. I make mention of that because I was lobbied quite heavily. There was a group who thought that things should have been done a little bit differently and I am pleased to see that they got a reasonable hearing but did not get all that they were hoping for, so I will be following that with interest.

This initiative provides funding to progress flood mitigation works in the Kentish and Latrobe municipalities to support the ongoing implementation of the Government's response to the Report of the Independent Review into the Tasmanian Floods of June and July 2016. I am not sure if either of those two members are going to say anything on that but I will be interested to hear it if you did.

I said I would come back to Cradle Mountain, which is in the far extreme south of my electorate. I note on page 302 the visitor numbers are almost back up to where there were pre-COVID-19, so that is good. I also note on page 304 there is an awful lot of money going in there. There is approximately \$61 million for the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience and there is nearly \$26 million for the Visitor Centre.

The Government has a vision that will take the iconic Cradle Mountain to the next level. The unprecedented investment in this region by the Tasmanian Government and the Australian Government's commitment of \$30 million, aligns with the Cradle Mountain master plan. I

remember about six or seven years ago, the Burnie Chamber of Commerce and Industry was shown this vision. At the time it was presented by Ian Waller, who was the Regional Tourism Manager on the Cradle Coast. That plan has been around many years and it is good to see it coming to a fruition.

It also builds on the popularity of Cradle Mountain as an iconic destination, elevating the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience to one that rivals World Heritage sites around the world. It will further build the Tasmanian brand, boost the visitor economy and create jobs.

I have heard some smaller tourism operators say, why does all the money get spent at Cradle Mountain? The only thing I can see is that Cradle Mountain is a drawcard. From the coast from Devonport or Burnie up to Cradle Mountain is no more than an hour's drive; it is easily accessible.

People who come here to see Cradle Mountain, all along the coast there will be a spin-off. People will go up to Smithton and come along the coast and back to Devonport before they go back on the *Spirit*.

The Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience initiative includes a new commercial retail precinct, car parking, shuttle bus transit stations and significantly improved visitor facilities.

Works have been completed at the visitor gateway site and works have commenced on the Dove Lake shelter with construction scheduled for completion either this year or next year.

The opening of the visitor gateway site was in the middle of winter, which was totally wonderful, but it was in the middle of COVID-19, so only a limited number of people could go. I was not invited, which I was very sad about, so I slipped up the next day to have a look. Anybody who has not been up to see the new Visitor Centre should go for a look. It is absolutely beautiful. You walk into the main room and there are copper snowdrops falling. Mind you I walked outside and had the real snow drops hit me, but that was okay.

Further investment is provided through the Cradle Mountain Visitor Experience initiative to facilitate the development of the Cradle Mountain cableway, ensuring visitors have an all-year, all-weather access to Dove Lake. As part of this commitment, funding has been provided to support the development of a sensitive and appropriate iconic tourism experience in partnership with the private sector on crown land adjacent to the World Heritage area.

It would be remiss of me not to go past the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. I love the Botanical Gardens; I love gardens, so I must make mention of it. The vision of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens is to create and maintain an exceptional garden that enriches Tasmania's social and cultural life, showcases and contributes to the conservation of the flora of Tasmania and educates the community about the importance of plants. The gardens are Australia's second-oldest botanical gardens and were established in 1818. The gardens are home to the largest collection of mature conifers in the southern hemisphere and is also the only subantarctic plant house in the world.

I was talking to a friend of mine recently, who has just sold her house. She was in a little bit of distress, saying, 'I hope they do not cut down the weeping conifer, they are so rare'. I did not realise how rare they were. She was not having pink fits but she was hoping they would not cut down the weeping conifer.

The key deliverables include constructing a new visitor centre and redeveloping the existing centre adjacent to the main gate, including a shop and public amenities, providing contemporary, world-class facilities for the almost 460 000 visitors now coming to the gardens each year. It will also continue to develop community engagement programs based on the Tasmanian Community Food Garden and other aspects of the garden's operations. I remember they had a gold carrot project here a while ago - it might be four years - which was all about the different carrots you could grow. There is a whole variety of carrots, not only Big Top.

It will also support the ongoing operations of the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre and its associated research projects in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, the University of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Herbarium and the Australian Seed Bank. I look forward to seeing the annual report from the gardens and I might put it on the Notice Paper for noting, if I can get any interest from anyone. I note the total revenue to 2024-25 will be up to \$6 million.

The 2021-22 Budget is a budget with grunt. It is an overwhelmingly positive budget that underwrites the delivery of 28 000 new jobs in four years and fulfils funding promises in critical areas such as health, education and housing. It is a budget that secures our future as a state and the safety of all Tasmanians in a COVID-19 world. It is a budget that unashamedly recognises the need for further hard work to tackle the issues of understandable concern to all Tasmanians. It is a budget that draws on the principles of fairness and compassion, together with the need to deliver responsible management and fiscal outcomes.

We are now on track to surplus and will be back in the black over the forward Estimates period, returning to a cash operating surplus of \$368.8 million next year and a modest operating surplus of \$39.4 million in 2023. This increases to an operating surplus of \$126.8 million in the 2024-25 year. This is a budget that gets the balance right. I note the Budget.

[12.18 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I welcome the opportunity to reply to the Budget. It is important we address our minds to the overall plan for the future and our financial position. As I do, I have read right through the budget papers and my comments are focused on the Budget, our future and some matters of particular interest to me. There are many I could mention but I will leave those for a later time.

There is no doubt this Budget hands out a lot of money to a lot of people. I commend the Government for meeting its election promises. I commend the Government for spending a bit more than last year. I commend the Government for adopting a more coordinated approach to renewables, climate and future industries, but that is about it. Overall, I see this Budget as a wasted opportunity.

The Government has been returned for a record third term. There is no Opposition in sight. The Government has weathered the COVID-19 pandemic in an effective manner to date, as we in the PAC have just reported in this Chamber. We have certainly emerged from the pandemic better than some of the dire predictions. The stage was set for a new beginning. Instead, we got a budget based on half-truths - a farrago of handouts bundled together as a plan for the future.

This Budget relies on the widespread misunderstanding of financial statements and the deliberate distortion of what they mean, as evidenced by the Leader's concluding comments. The Government has failed to look the people of Tasmania in the eye and tell them the reality of our budgetary position.

There will be no surpluses - and I mean cash surpluses - delivered by this Government now, or at any time in the next 15 years. A surplus occurs when we spend less than we receive. That will not occur for a long time. There is a begrudging acknowledgement that debt is rising and will keep rising for at least the next 15 years, as the 2021 Fiscal Sustainability Report revealed will occur in every year under the four different scenarios that were modelled. However, in the next breath the Government tries to pretend that a return to surplus is just around the corner.

To quote the Premier: 'We have delayed the Budget's return to an operating surplus by one year so that we can invest even more into this critical service area'.

Mr President, the Premier was referring to health. Weasel words. I remind members, that weasel words are words or statements that are intentionally ambiguous or misleading. That is what the Premier was doing when he said: 'I am pleased that next year the budget will return to a cash operating surplus of \$368.8 million'. Hearing that, Joe Blow would have concluded that we are back in the black next year. Does anyone disagree that that is what the Premier wanted us to believe? Well, they are weasel words, deliberately meant to mislead; and I will explain why.

The figure of \$368.8 million comes from Budget Paper No. 1, on page 143. This is the General Government's cashflow statement for this year and the next three years of forward Estimates. Halfway down the page in the column for 2022-23, the figure of \$368.8 million appears. It is the net cash operating surplus for that year. Immediately below this figure is the amount which will be spent on infrastructure, contributions into government businesses and other advances. These total \$1.211 billion. These are called 'investing outlays'. All these amounts are cash outlays. That is why they appear in the cashflow statement. If one adds the operating surplus of \$368.8 million to the investing deficit of \$1.211 billion, the overall cash deficit is \$843 million. That is an overall cash deficit expected in 2022-23, not a surplus of \$368.8 million, as the Premier would have us believe.

Mr President, I am insulted that the Premier continues to treat us like idiots by pretending the surplus is just around the corner. It is not and never will be, not under this Government or any likely successor.

The Premier continued his weasel words in the same sentence in his Budget Speech when he said: 'I am pleased that next year the budget will return to a cash operating surplus of \$368.8 million and in 2023-24 we return to a modest operating surplus of \$39.4 million, increasing in the 2024-25 year to an operating surplus of \$126.8 million'.

Mr President, note the deft change of wording. In 2022-23 he refers to: '...a cash operating surplus'. For 2023-24 and 2024-25, he refers to: '...an operating surplus'. Again, Joe Blow listening to the speech will be entitled to think the Premier was talking about the same measure; it was in the same sentence, after all. Surprise, surprise: in mid-sentence the Premier changed to another page of the budget papers - from page 143 to page 139, which is the income

statement. To reiterate, the 2022-23 figure was from the cashflow statement on page 143 and the 2023-24 and 2024-25 figures were from the income statement on page 139.

Most people struggle to know the difference between a cash figure and a profit figure and the Premier took advantage of their ignorance by pretending that surpluses will soon be with us once again. Comparing a profit figure with a cashflow figure is like comparing apples and oranges. In 2022-23 we will have a surplus of 20 apples, the year after we will have a surplus of 15 oranges. That is how meaningless those words are. They are especially meaningless when it is realised that both measures - which only relate to operating - fail to properly include all amounts spent on infrastructure and by way of investment into government businesses; both of which are fundamental components of all state budgets. I know the Leader went on talking about a lot of the infrastructure spend around the state, particularly in her electorate.

As the Premier told us, there are \$800 million of planned injections into government businesses over the next four years plus another \$3.8 billion in infrastructure by the Government. These are cash outlays. We cannot ignore them when we are talking about budget outcomes.

I am at a loss to understand why the Premier continues to insult us by pretending we are running surpluses when clearly, we are not. He should not be preying on people's ignorance in this matter. On the matter of equity contributions into government businesses, some - and I am thinking of TasRail and Tasmanian Irrigation - are sourced from capital grants from the federal government. When they are received they increase operating revenue - money in; but when they are injected into the GBEs they are not considered to be operating outlays and are hence ignored when calculating operating surpluses. That makes measurement of operating surpluses even more ridiculous. Operating surpluses, whether cherrypicked from the cash flow statement or the income statement, are not a meaningful measure of a budget outcome.

This is not an esoteric debating matter. If we do not fully understand our current budgetary position, how will we ever identify the best path ahead. I cannot fully understand why the Premier is playing so loose with the truth as to our true position here. It is not as though it is his fault. It is not, nor that of his Government. It is a Tasmanian problem. The seeds were sown long ago, but he is making it appear as a problem of his own making by actively covering it up and not being open and frank about it. Maybe he is trying to soften up Tasmanians into thinking there is surplus so he can justify the special deal he is planning for the gaming industry. Rather than clawing back more of the excess profits into government coffers, he is basically only planning to redistribute the spoils from gaming amongst current industry members who effectively helped elected the Government back in 2018.

Perhaps this becomes much harder to justify if the budget is hopelessly in the red; however, that is a matter for another day.

I must admit, with a wry smile, that the Premier said in his Budget Speech, 'given the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation, the Budget also provides the flexibility to ensure we can continue to respond to the impacts of the pandemic. To this end a total of \$300 million has been included in the Treasurer's Reserve in the 2021-22 Budget across the forward Estimates'. This reminded me of the Liberal's Plan for a Brighter Future issued in the run up to the 2014 election; specifically, the policy to reduce the Treasurer's Reserve. I quote from that plan:

The Treasurer's Reserve is used to fund unforeseen expenses at the time of developing the budget. We believe that with strong fiscal management the Treasurer's Reserve can be reduced from \$20 million to \$10 million. Reducing this reserve will ensure fiscal discipline and avoid the budget blow outs that Labor and Green have continually produced.

The Premier seems to think we also suffer from amnesia. It appears that appropriating amounts for contingencies is only responsible if you are doing the appropriation. It is a complete turnaround; you need to have a long memory sometimes in this place.

There is \$150 million to be appropriated this year 2021-22 and then \$50 million in each year of the forward Estimates into the Treasurer's Reserve.

We need to see this Budget in context, and to my mind the context of any plan which purports to secure Tasmania's future must be based on a realistic view of our current position. Not once did the Premier mention the challenges outlined in stark detail in the 2021 Fiscal Sustainability Report. Let me remind you what that report said and it is easily accessible on the Treasury website and referred to in the report tabled today from PAC. It said, 'Changed circumstances over the short term are not the primary drivers of the outcomes over the longer term. Rather, the outcomes over the full projection period continue to be driven by long-term expenditure and revenue growth trends'.

Even though we survived COVID-19 better than expected, nothing has changed. The fiscal challenges have not gone away. Judging by this Budget, this Government is in denial about our fiscal difficulties. They do not even admit to a problem, let alone attempt to do something about it.

Just in case people have forgotten, the Fiscal Sustainability Report concluded that the analysis undertaken in this and previous Fiscal Sustainability Reports has established the importance of the following:

Early action to correct fiscal deterioration will mitigate the severity of the measures required to effectively maintain fiscal sustainability; given the composition of the State's revenue base, it is not possible to rely entirely on economic growth to maintain fiscal sustainability; any action to maintain fiscal sustainability must recognise and address major drivers of a deterioration in the budget position; and it is likely that effective action to maintain fiscal sustainability will require the successful implementation of a range of measures.

This Budget does not even pay lip-service to the problems outlined, yet it shamelessly pretends to be securing our future. None of that is evident. Those of us who are fortunate enough to sit on the PAC received a little more detail about some of the expected future expenses over the next 15 years assumed for each of the four scenarios covered in the report.

I am referring to the expense categories of interest, infrastructure and investments into the government businesses, and members can all see these in the report that was tabled this morning. It is attached as an answer to questions.

This Budget's spending on each of these items I have just mentioned for this year 2021 and for each of the three years of the forward Estimates exceed the amounts assumed by the fiscal sustainability models. They exceed the amounts. Just to repeat the point that 'doomsday', as it has been called by some scenarios in the Fiscal Sustainability Report, assumed less outlays on interest, infrastructure and equity contributions into government businesses than are contained in this Budget.

That does not look like taking early action. Yet, there it is. There is not one word in the Budget about the fiscal challenges ahead. Do not talk about it; maybe it will go away. I would suggest this Budget is not a plan for the future. It is a longwinded prayer to the gods to keep showering us with their heavenly bounty and that is what happened this year. The revenue gods have smiled. Revenue has gone up by \$1.4 billion compared with what was predicted in the forward Estimates for last year. That is the sum of the parameter changes detailed in the policy and parameters statement in this Budget.

Changes from last year's budget are listed as either parameter changes or policy changes. It is a really good read to have a look at the policy and parameters statements to get a good understanding of this. It helps the reader distinguish between good luck and good management.

Policy changes occur as a result of a deliberate government policy decision. The rest of the changes are parameter changes. These mainly occurred due to a change in economic circumstances and are outside of the control of government. The change in circumstances has seen revenue \$1.4 billion higher than was predicted in last year's forward Estimates. Most relates to GST. There are also more conveyancing duties due to our booming property market.

The only revenue changes as a result of policy decisions, mainly land tax, have seen a reduction of \$61 million in expected revenue. So, how are we going to meet the revenue challenges outlined in the Fiscal Sustainability Report other than by hoping the revenue gods keep smiling on us if we are not prepared to make any other policy changes and decisions?

I do grow a bit weary of hearing the Premier talk about our strong balance sheet. It is just not true. If you have a look at the balance sheet for the total state sector - you need to go right to the back for these - which includes all government businesses as well as government departments and agencies, at the end of the forward Estimates in 2025 our total assets are expected to be \$37 billion. However, our liabilities will be \$28 billion. Our equity, therefore, will be just under \$9 billion or 24 per cent of our assets.

In 2014 when this Government was first elected, the Government's total assets were \$26 billion and liabilities were \$17 billion. Net assets were just below \$9 billion or 35 per cent of our assets. So, that looks like our net asset position has deteriorated in the last seven years. A strong balance sheet, which the Premier often mentions as one of his achievements, would not pass the pub test.

Just ask Saul Eslake if you do not believe me. In his recent budget commentary, he observed that our financial liabilities are, relatively speaking, higher than any other state or territory, apart from the Northern Territory. Financial liabilities need to be serviced and we cannot pretend otherwise. For years we have not felt the full effects of servicing unfunded superannuation. Each year the cash outlays to service the liability, were always less than the cost to the budget. Costs are allowed to accrue and the liability increased but the tide has now turned.

For the next 40 years or so the cash outlays will be greater than the cost to the budget. It will be like repaying a loan where the interest has been allowed to accrue over many years. That is exactly what is starting to occur with our debt. With increasing borrowings each year, the interest will be added to the existing debt or, strictly speaking, we will borrow more each year to pay the interest, albeit at very low interest rates at the moment. That is something I will take up next week, their modelling on interest rates. There is some commentary in the budget papers about that.

We need to not necessarily be alarmed about the debt. I am not suggesting that we should. However, we need to start thinking about a plan B and that is something the Government has conspicuously failed to do. Again, I do not wish to blame the Government for the current position and, as I said before, it is not their fault in that respect. It is a Tasmanian problem and it has been a long time in the making. My issue with the Government is that it has been involved in a conspiracy to cover up our problems by pretending it is all rosy and talking about surpluses.

There is so much to comment on in this Budget in terms of other areas of government service that I will now turn my mind to a few specific matters. It is pleasing to see some uplift in funding for health. However, I do not think anyone could claim it is not needed nor that it is not long overdue. We continue to see waiting lists that are unacceptable even with the latest figures showing some improvement - 11 007 people still waiting for surgery. That includes 1033 people in category 1, that is urgent cases where these patients should be treated within 30 days.

It would clearly indicate that we have a lot of work to do. The challenge is getting enough qualified health professionals in areas we need them to deal with this problem, and that is without a COVID-19 outbreak. I shudder to think what it would mean if that happens before significantly higher numbers of Tasmanians are fully vaccinated: the impact on our ICUs, staff stressed and burned out, access and timely care for emergency care for people other than those with COVID-19 as well as with COVID-19. What concerns me is the Prime Minister's safe plan to reopen if it is intended to be at only 80 per cent of eligible Tasmanians vaccinated.

If you are not sure what that means in reality, I was looking at an article or some commentary in the *Guardian* newspaper a while ago and I want to read a bit from that. Michelle Dowd is a nurse unit manager of intensive care services at South Western Sydney Local Health District. She is a frontline worker who was giving today's insight. I think it was at the press conference in New South Wales or somewhere. This is what she has said:

If you or your loved one is in intensive care right now for any reason you may not be able to have visitors. We know it's really hard at the moment to be separated from your support network but the amount of virus that is circulating in the community just poses too much risk to our patients. To our COVID ICU patients, they can't have visitors at all. Every day we're communicating with families over the phone and by video call to connect them. In the worst cases, at the end of life, we'll connect a call with the family and hold the patient's hands and provide as much care and comfort and support as we possibly can.

No-one wants to be in this position, do they?

We know this is really hard for families. This is really hard for us as well. We normally work really closely with our families at the bedside when we

look after our intensive care patients but looking after COVID patients is not just emotionally hard for intensive care nurses, it's physically really hard work as well. These patients are some of the sickest we've ever seen.

If you have been watching the figures the number of young people in ICU in New South Wales is frightening. Older people might be the ones who are dying, but these people are young, they are in ICU and in ICU for a long time which means the ICU beds are used up. Westmead Hospital, even two or three days ago, had a Code Yellow which means an internal disaster and they cannot accept any more patients.

She goes on:

The Delta variant is so contagious that we have entire family groups in the hospital in some really tragic circumstances. We have had both parents of young children so sick that they need to be ventilated in our Intensive Care Unit, separated from their children.

Sometimes, you do not have extended families to look after these children or the extended family is so sick that we need to make alternative care arrangements.

Can you imagine the stress of this, for the families but also for the healthcare workers?

This virus is literally ripping families apart. Many of our parents with COVID-19 are young, they are normally fit and healthy, they come from a variety of backgrounds, but the one thing they have in common is that they are usually not vaccinated.

I have been vocal about this and I will continue to be because it frightens me as to what could happen here. Our health system is struggling without this.

The *Saturday Paper* published a very informative article last weekend on this very serious matter by senior reporter Rick Morton. I commend the whole article to members and if you cannot access it, I am happy to print you a copy. He wrote in part:

The health workforce furlough crisis in Victoria and NSW alone is now seven times worse than at the national situation on August 10, according to data contained in a briefing to national cabinet.

It highlights another issue of vulnerability; although states have substantially increased their supply of ventilators since the first outbreak of COVID-19, they do not have the healthcare staff to operate them and the staff they do have are vulnerable to exposure and the need to quarantine.

Using figures from the same national cabinet analysis obtained by the *Saturday Paper*, the 116 patients in NSW intensive care units on Thursday represented almost 14 per cent of the entire state's currently staffed and open 863 ICU beds. Including people in ICU for reasons other than COVID-19 complications, the system is at 60 per cent capacity.

I am interested to know what Tasmania's average ICU occupancy has been over the last three years and I have a question I have sent through to the Government related to this and hope to get an answer to this week. The article goes on:

Victoria has half the number of ICU beds...compared to New South Wales - and half the expansion capacity. This week the state announced it would fly 350 medical staff, mostly doctors and specialist nurses, from overseas to relieve pressure on a system that has already borne the brunt of the pandemic in Australia.

Since the pandemic began, more than 2100 exemptions have been issued for approved healthcare workers travelling to Australia.

The Saturday Paper can reveal that although NSW government is physically capable of expanding its intensive care capacity to 2015 beds and ventilators, a document prepared for national cabinet shows it has just a fraction of the staff available to run them. The paper says that additional nursing staff resources available for bedside ICU care is just 328. In practice, this is enough staff to add only about 164 extra ICU beds.

We would face similar challenges here in Tasmania, a matter on which I will be seeking more information about this week and next. The situation is also concerning in Victoria as the article goes on to describe:

Similarly, Victoria has 125 additional staff available for intensive care capacity. These numbers are able to be increased, but not without significant intervention elsewhere in the hospital system.

National cabinet has been told the country could expand its intensive care beds by 944 places but at best, it has the staff to operate 346 of these.

What is the point of expanding it if you have not got the staff? Ventilators do not run themselves. Further, according to Nepean Hospital intensive care specialist Dr Nguyen:

'What has worried us over the last few weeks is the increasing number of patients who are admitted to intensive care,' Nguyen said. 'They are younger, they are staying in intensive care for longer, and they are needing care that cannot be provided anywhere else on the wards. There are those who are on breathing machines and on heart-lung machines.'

The article continues:

One quarter of all ICU patients in NSW are now aged 40 and under. The vast majority have not been vaccinated, the rest have received a single dose...

... The modellers are clear, however, that the assumptions underpinning the project and the vaccine coverage thresholds are uniform and do not yet account for variations within the population, such as for the disadvantaged communities, people with disabilities and others with underlying health conditions.

In any case, the model forecasts a cumulative 1338 intensive care admissions among unvaccinated people in a six-month period if a Delta outbreak is seeded at the 80 per cent vaccination threshold. There would be 673 deaths. Even among vaccinated people, the Doherty team estimates 578 ICU admissions and 306 deaths.

There are differences in COVID-19 that makes its demands on the health system peculiar. For instance, there is early evidence that the Delta strain puts pressure on the vascular system. A health source who cannot be named says, 'Just one vascular surgeon in NSW has performed multiple operations on unvaccinated COVID-19 patients who have blood clots related to the virus. Sometimes patients have had clots removed several times...'

This is with the virus, not the vaccine:

He has operated on people from 30 years and up. Amputation has also been considered in some cases', the source said.

This is important to know in terms of vaccine hesitancy related not only to the AstraZeneca vaccine, but to vaccine hesitancy generally. Those who are concerned about that, who are hesitant, need to know there is a real risk of blood clots from the virus in addition to any other impacts we have seen publicly about this on the news.

Despite these issues, Prime Minister Scott Morrison continues to push for the country to open and for our hospital systems to keep up, saying we cannot hold back and we cannot stay in the cave or 'under the doona', as he has been known to say.

I am not sure where he plans to find the necessary health professionals to meet the demand that has clearly been articulated by Doherty and others, or is this just a matter for the states to access their health professionals? If it is a matter for the states, maybe he will not mind if we manage our state borders in the way we see fit. These are matters I will be taking up with the Premier and Minister for Health when they appear before us next week. All Tasmanians have a right to know what our plan is.

We certainly cannot expect a significant number of health professionals to suddenly appear. Although there may be some wanting to leave some of the other states, like Victoria and New South Wales, it is unreasonable for us to fix our problems at the expense of other vulnerable Australians. It is the same as bringing health professionals from overseas. We are taking them from an area that would no doubt have problems with COVID-19, too. Is that a reasonable thing to do? In the global world we live in, we should be looking after our own and doing what we can to reduce our own demand, while building up our own human resources in the state.

With lower rates of pay for these health professions in Tasmania, the proposition may not be as attractive for people from the mainland, but I know health professionals in other states are feeling very stressed, with burnout and exhaustion a very real risk. They may be willing to relocate, but should this be our strategy?

It is clear to all, perhaps with the exception of the anti-vaxxers, that vaccination and high rates of vaccination are crucial to our economic and our health recovery. It is crucial for both.

I will continue to be vocal publicly about this, even though it does create some challenges in dealing with those who rely on non-evidence-based information, often shared and generated by conspiracy theorists, as I believe it is important to get as much evidence-based information to the general public to continue to counter misinformation.

I note from the performance information in the Budget papers that our vaccination rate for children at five years of age sits consistently at 95 per cent. I also note we no longer have childhood outbreaks of measles, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough or a range of other infectious disease outbreaks. Clearly, this level of vaccination provides an effective herd immunity.

The Prime Minister's push to open up at 70 or 80 per cent vaccination rates is worrying on so many levels and these are being clearly articulated by many health professionals and experts. Bearing in mind that Tasmania has an older population with a high burden of chronic disease and living in socio-economic disadvantage, we should be concerned with such an approach without much higher levels of vaccination.

I ask, if we are to open up before we get to around 90 plus per cent vaccinated, are we willing to accept that we, or our loved ones, may not be able to access the intensive care bed we need?

Are we willing to accept that access to elective surgery may again be severely constrained and many will have to wait much longer? Are we willing to accept that access to timely cancer treatment may not be able to be provided?

Are we willing to support the very stressed healthcare professionals who make decisions about who should or who should not access intensive care when they are at full capacity?

Just try to put yourself in the shoes of those health professionals who are having to make that decision about who they will treat.

Are you willing to accept that people will not go to hospital to get treatment when they need it for fear of catching COVID-19 if there is a COVID-19 patient in the hospital? No doubt we are seeing that in Victoria and New South Wales at the moment. I ask, are we happy to accept that? I am not.

I urge our Premier and the Government to stand firm on this and whilst we are, as I stated, doing well with our percentage of people vaccinated, we still face the challenge of getting to the levels needed to avoid the circumstance I have just described.

There are many welcome initiatives in this Budget related to health and I will drill down further into these next week. However, a key bugbear I have remains the lack of outcomes-focused performance information and the lack of detail about risk mitigation.

In terms of providing positive comment on this, I note Justice in its information provides some commentary in the budget papers about its performance and this is a welcome inclusion. Perhaps they could have a chat to some of the other departments about providing a bit more outcomes focus and more description about their performance information.

As has been constantly the case, and I understand to some degree why it is, Health-related performance information remains very output-focused, as do many other areas, not just Health. It does make it impossible to see if the funding - and we have heard how much has been increased, has achieved its aim and is it value for money?

In Health-related expenditure, has it resulted in better health outcomes? Surely, these are important measures and I hope the minister can provide that detail next week.

One of the risks identified with relation to Health is the risk associated with the National Health Reform Agreement and that is detailed on Budget Paper No. 2, Volume I, page 140.

The risk must be even greater if you have a COVID-19 outbreak and activity increases and the cost of delivery increases above the level the federal government will provide. They will fund the growth in funding, 45 per cent of the official growth but it is capped at 6.5 per cent. I am sure that is going to be a real issue in New South Wales and Victoria in their situation but it could become a problem for us too.

I will move on from Health. I want to talk about gender sensitivity and the lack of a gender impact statement in this Budget. I am disappointed again that there is no gender impact statement this year. Even the federal government managed to produce one this year. I ask, why is this? Do we not have the skills in our department or in our Government to do it? If not, what is the Government doing about that?

If you do not have a full understanding of the gendered impact of COVID-19, how can we respond effectively? We know there has been a gendered impact, but if we do not actually monitor it, how can we know that these decisions are good or right for all genders?

If we do not conduct a gender-sensitive audit of all policy decisions and funding decisions, how can we be sure there is not a disproportionate positive or negative impact on one gender?

This comes on the back of the recent release of the latest figures from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) that show Australia's gender pay gap has widened over the last 12 months to 14.2 per cent, an increase of 0.8 per cent and now equates to \$261.50 less per week in women's average full-time earnings compared to men. We are going backwards.

As reported in the Women's Agenda on Monday this week, and I quote:

This comes hot on the heels of countless reports highlighting the already heavily gendered impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the lives of women who are now experiencing the effects of an economic stimulus plan aimed at protecting 'jobs for the boys'. All of this is to say that after a period of economic instability and uncertainty for women, a reverse in the progress that has been made and fought for on the pay gap feels like the last straw.

The article continues:

While it can be easier to think of the gender pay gap as simply the difference between the average full-time earnings of men and women, in reality it

represents so much more than that. And it's about time that that conversation was front and centre.

So, again, I repeat, where is our gender impact statement in this year's Budget?

How are we to really assess whether these new initiatives and some ongoing initiatives are well targeted and how the main event each year - the state budget - addresses this very real problem and inequality?

In Australia, we do not even disaggregate our data related to the gender pay gap to the level of other nations, including the US, where they separately consider impacts on black women, native American women and Latino women. The article describes:

In Australia the gender pay gap experienced by women of colour, women from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, women with disabilities and by First Nations women would undoubtedly be higher than the 14.2% average.

People have been calling out this lack of intersectional data on the pay gap and the fact that it hides the reality for the majority of women and marginalised people in this country for a long time. So, what is the delay in actually collecting and publishing more disaggregated data? Surely this must be our priority if we want to close the gaps in our lifetimes. This does not include the compounding impacts women experience thus falling further behind: the longer it goes on, the greater the impact.

The article further notes:

In the capitalist, patriarchal and racial colonial system we exist in, having access to money doesn't just make you wealthy, it makes you powerful. And this equates to the very real consequences in terms of the power or lack thereof, that women have over their own lives. As the saying goes, what doesn't get measured, doesn't get managed. If we aren't including the lived realities of all women in our gender pay gap data then we are excluding them from the solution.

That point in that article, if it does not get measured, it does not get managed, relates to a gender impact statement broadly. If you are not measuring it, you are not managing it, you are not understanding it.

Ms Webb - And you are not caring about it enough.

Ms FORREST - This is right. Maybe the capacity is not there but it needs to be fixed.

So surely the gender impact statement in our annual budget should be the very base level of reporting we should require. It is not too much to ask, surely. I hope I do not have to have the same rant here again next year - or in the meantime - and that we actually see a statement prepared retrospectively in the first instance, to at least let us know where our focus needs to be.

Having said that, it is pleasing to see that there has been some increase in programs and support for women. Some of them are listed in pages 16-17, Budget Paper No. 2, Volume I.

There is a range of measures in place to support women in and into leadership positions and to gain employment in traditionally male-dominated areas.

There seems to be quite a crossover with these programs it seems. I hope they are really well-targeted and focused to make sure that we do not end up not actually getting outcomes that we are seeking. These measures are welcome, but I ask - and I do not know if the Leader will be able to answer this now or when she replies to the debate - what data is being collected to measure the success or otherwise of these initiatives? Otherwise again, without a gender impact statement, we have absolutely no idea whether they are effective or not or targeted appropriately.

I also note the importance of a gender impact assessment is not just about the impacts on women. There is a clear need for greater investment in mental health services and programs aimed at suicide prevention.

I note the additional investment in these areas, especially as men are particularly at risk here with men completing suicide more often than women and men accounting for three out of four suicides in Australia from 2015 to 2019. Rates are arising alarmingly.

I am pretty sure that COVID-19 has not made this statistic any less of a concern. Between 2015 and 2019, 326 men and 117 women have suicided in Australia. A total of 443 Australians took their own lives over this period. An average of 111 people per year, 82 men each year.

These are people who have tragically taken their own lives and this is a major and serious issue. In the absence of a gender impact assessment and statement, it is difficult to ensure funding is allocated in the most effective manner in the areas of most need.

It is vital funding is provided to services and organisations to meet identified need in all areas. This applies to all policy and funding decisions and a matter I will continue to advocate for including seeking government support for the motion on the notice paper to establish a joint House committee on gender and equalities. I will be bringing that on after the budget session and I certainly hope the Government will support it.

I will move now to housing. You do not have to look too far to see the housing crisis all around us. Housing prices have risen at extraordinary rates.

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

QUESTIONS

Paralympics - Payment of Paralympians

**Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for SPORT AND RECREATION,
Ms HOWLETT**

[2.32 p.m.]

Is it the case there is a \$20 000 payment to all able-bodied Olympians who win a gold medal and that our athletes participating in the Paralympics get \$0 for participating in and

winning a gold medal? If that is the case, what is the minister going to do in terms of lobbying to see that is corrected as a matter of urgency?

ANSWER

I thank the member for her question. That is something I will need to take on notice as I actually was not aware of that pay disparity, but I certainly will be sending a letter and writing to try and see what we can do to fix a situation that is not good at all.

AFL Games - Relocation to Tasmania

Ms FORREST - question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.33 p.m.]

With regard to the two AFL finals matches played in Tasmania the weekend of the 28 and 29 August:

- (1) how many players and AFL officials and other support staff were permitted entry into the state;
- (2) were all players, AFL officials and other support staff required to stay in hotel quarantine if they were not flying in and out on the same day;
- (3) how many players, AFL officials and other support staff were accommodated in hotel quarantine and what hotel facilities were used for this purpose;
- (4) how were the costs of hotel quarantine met;
- (5) were Tasmanians displaced from these facilities to enable the hotel/facility to be used and if so how many people had bookings cancelled or cut short and were these people compensated and if so by whom;
- (6) were any non-essential spectators permitted entry to the games, and if so, on what basis was entry to Tasmania permitted;
- (7) with regard to essential players and support staff what interaction if any occurred with staff and other attendees at the ground;
- (8) were all who entered Tasmania for these games required to have a negative COVID-19 test prior to entry into Tasmania;
- (9) were all who entered the state for this purpose vaccinated and if not, how many were unvaccinated?

ANSWER

I thank the member for her question. I did have a fairly generic answer which I will read in a moment. You put your more particular questions in later and I am waiting on responses to that.

In relation to AFL footballers and support staff coming to Tasmania, they are not being housed in hotel quarantine facilities that are currently being used for hotel quarantine, they are being housed in separate, additional facilities. It is incorrect to suggest that the existing hotel quarantine facilities had been utilised that weekend for AFL footballers and their support crew. I was going to leave that answer in abeyance, since you had submitted a more detailed question.

Mr President, I alert members that there may be a delay in questions this week with the Premier's position, the Deputy Premier, and Treasury. They have been allocated to other members so they have a fairly high level of work at the moment, and budget Estimates are coming up. I apologise if I cannot get all your answers to you in a timely manner but I am trying my best.

Tasmanian Schools - Incidents

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

[2.36 p.m.]

I will ask this question knowing I am not going to get an answer; but I believe last week the Leader gave an indication that it was being finalised so I was hoping to get an answer today.

Can the state Government provide figures for the following questions:

- (1) The figures held by the Department of Education related to the level of bullying in each Tasmanian school for 2020?
- (2) The number of student-on-student assaults or other incidents of physical violence that occurred in each Tasmanian school in 2020?
- (3) The number of student-on-teacher assaults or other incidents of physical violence that occurred in each Tasmanian school in 2020?
- (4) The number of workers compensation claims resulting from stress or other psychological injury to Department of Education employees in the schools that they worked in when the claim was made?
- (5) The number of suspensions for bullying, harassment, stalking of another student in each Tasmanian school in 2020?
- (6) The number of suspensions for bullying, harassment, stalking of a teacher or other staff member in each Tasmanian school in 2020?

- (7) The total number of student suspensions in each Tasmanian school in 2020, including a breakdown by grade?

ANSWER

We are struggling to obtain some of the answers, in light of the issues that I mentioned earlier. I will follow up on your question, member for Elwick, but it is intricate and very detailed. That is the best I can do at the moment, I am sorry.

Van Dairy Limited - Welfare Concerns

Ms FORREST question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.37 p.m.]

In asking this, I note that we have very limited sitting days this year since the election and this question, I believe, was sent some weeks ago and was sent again last week. It is not to the Premier or the Treasurer or to the minister affected by the Premier's recent illness, so I will read it again because at this point we don't have an answer.

Following on from questions asked previously regarding animal welfare at Van Dairy Limited (VDL) farms formerly owned by Moon Lake:

- (1) Have there been any further welfare concerns raised since 1 June 2021?
- (2) How many visits with prior notification and/or no notification listed separately to Van Dairy Limited (VDL) farms have been made by animal welfare officers since 1 June 2021?
- (3) What were the outcomes of these visits?
- (4) If no further welfare animal visits have been conducted, how is animal welfare being monitored at the Van Dairy (VDL) farms?

ANSWER

The member says that question was put through. We searched all the in-boxes in my office and could not find it. I apologise to the member, but it has gone missing.

Ms Forrest - It was sent again last Thursday.

Mrs HISCUTT - We received it on Thursday after Question Time. I am looking for the actual time; but we have it. It has only been in the system for a couple of days.

MOTION

Noting Budget Papers

Continued from 31 August 2021 (page 30).

[2.39 p.m.]

Ms FORREST - Before the lunchbreak I was starting to talk about housing. I will recommence my comments on that, to give context to what I am about to say.

You do not have to look too far to see the housing crisis all around us. The housing crisis has risen at extraordinary rates. This is not just a problem in our cities; it is a problem in our regions. The impact of COVID-19 on Tasmanians and particularly on other Australians, especially from Victoria and New South Wales, has been massive. It is no wonder that many want to relocate here and are willing to pay top dollar for a Tasmanian home. I believe that has been part of the impetus for rising prices, and has had flow-on effect to the private rental market, with rents outstripping people's incomes, and a highly competitive rental market where many people across Tasmania are missing out. In turn, this is leading to an increase in the number of unaffordable suburbs where workers across all skill groups can find suitable housing, whether to rent or buy.

There is no escaping the reality that a failure to provide adequate housing for all is a failure of governments and of the market. It was difficult to predict. People thought housing prices might drop with the impact of COVID-19, but we have seen the exact opposite.

Predominantly, the reason markets have failed is because governments have established policy settings which encourage price rises. Even without negative gearing and capital gains concessions, the housing market will continue to boom, simply because interest rates are so low. It is a fair bet that returns from housing will be better than from money in the bank particularly for the foreseeable future.

Even before COVID-19 these issues were not new, and many Tasmanians were suffering homelessness or housing stress. I note the Government's increased investment in social housing, and I do witness this in parts of my electorate, as the Leader referred to.

It is very welcome; but we need to do more than just play catch-up. We need to get ahead to ensure all Tasmanians have access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

Of course, building much needed social housing provides an economic boost as well as a public good. We are all aware of the inflationary impact such high rates of construction have on the cost of getting a builder, a plumber, an electrician, a joiner, a carpenter et cetera. This is compounded with a short supply of building supplies and fittings. It will be a hard target to meet for the Government to build these extra properties, but I commend them for their efforts.

In the media release from Shelter Tasmania, Pattie Chugg, the CEO noted:

This year we have seen increasing demand for affordable homes with the waiting list for social housing passing 4000 applications, and 36 people a day being turned away from homelessness services. There is every sign that housing stress and homelessness are continuing to increase across

Tasmania...All Tasmanians need a safe and affordable home, to prevent homelessness, limit the risk of virus transmission in overcrowded dwellings and reduce the stress on renting families and homelessness services.

Mr President, I note the funding allocated to develop a long-term housing strategy that is intended to set the 20-year vision for housing in Tasmania. Budget Paper No. 2, Volume I, pages 42 and 43 notes:

Funding is allocated over two years to develop a long-term Tasmanian Housing Strategy. The strategy will set a 20-year vision for housing in Tasmania and will address issues such as future growth, affordability, accessibility, ageing, planning and construction and sustainability.

This strategy will help to ensure that housing can meet the needs of all Tasmanians, including the most vulnerable, those in the workforce and people as they age.

It will also consider innovative approaches, including the use of build-to-rent models and incentives to increase the resilience and diversity of housing options and opportunities for all Tasmanians.

Developing a Tasmanian Housing Strategy was recommended by the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Committee. The strategy will be developed in consultation with the Tasmanian community to determine housing wants and needs, and will build on current policies designed to boost housing supply and put downward pressure on rents.

That is all very encouraging, and a big task, and I hope the Government consults widely on this and does not stick to the same old rhetoric about what the answer to this is. We need to look at different ways of doing things; otherwise, as I believe Einstein said, the definition of stupidity is keep doing the same thing and expect a different outcome.

In my view, any future strategy must start from what is the primary driver of housing prices - and that is land. Land and housing need to be unbundled and tackled separately.

Land forms such a large part of housing costs. Even in Tasmania, governments release land, lay down all the planning requirements, build a lot of infrastructure, both immediate works like water, sewerage and roads, and also the related community facilities such as schools and other public facilities, which together help push up house prices which then accrue privately.

The government has failed to claw back enough of the gains of land increases, which have mainly come about as a result of their decisions. Gains are almost all privatised. That has been the Australian way, the Australian dream.

Mr President, Victoria is starting to claw back some of the windfall gains that result from rezoning. To me, that is a sensible public policy. The whole question as to who benefits from increased values of land needs to be revisited. It is a perennial problem.

By all means, retain a variety of ownerships of dwellings, whether by occupier, for private rental, for rent/buy or for public housing, but we should also consider increasing the amount of public ownership of the underlying land. A range of different models are possible, from using not-for-profit housing providers, like the four entities that now run over 4000 housing properties here in Tasmania, to smaller community-based housing organisations or cooperative land trusts.

You can have models in which homes are privately owned but the costs and benefits of land ownership are shared between a home owner and the community. This is something I hope will be considered as we work together to address this crisis. I hope the Government is open to these sorts of suggestions and ideas. There is a lot of interest in different ways of looking at this and different models.

Mr Valentine - Something has to be done because it spirals.

Ms FORREST - It is a perennial problem, it feeds itself. As promised when the Leader was speaking, I will speak about Montello Primary School. It is a large primary school in an area of high socio-economic disadvantage. A lot of families really struggle, and getting kids to school is a challenge for some of these families. What they need and deserve is a quality building. What they have is not fit for purpose. I have banged on about this before in this place. It is really substandard. It has had minimal work done on it other than a façade upgrade back in the 'education revolution'. What is behind that façade is a disgrace.

The \$7.1 million allocated will go nowhere near what this school needs. I welcome funding and it is hard to say I am not happy about it. I am happy about the \$7.1 million, which I hope will be a down payment on a new school. The school has land around it. A school could be built on the flat area below, to the north of the current school, where you would have a fit-for-purpose facility.

Currently, you cannot deal with the accessibility issues in this school with only \$7.1 million. It is on a steep slope, it has stairs everywhere. When a staff member broke their ankle last year or the year before, they could not access their classroom even when they were fit to return to work. How are you supposed to teach your kids?

Parents with prams cannot access their other kids' classrooms. It is just not good enough. The windows are held up with Coke cans, such is the age and the decrepit nature of this school. These kids and families deserve much better. I have spoken about this need for a major upgrade and, preferably, a rebuild. If you just spend \$7.1 million on Montello Primary School, you will not address all the accessibility problems, all the stairs and the state of so many of the classrooms that need major work to make them fit for purpose.

I hope the minister will visit the school and talk to staff there. The parents do not feel particularly empowered, a lot of them, to speak up for themselves because that is the nature of a low socio-economic area such as this school is in. We need people like myself and others speaking up on behalf of this school community, to get a decent facility. The old school could then be demolished, which is probably the only thing it is fit for, and you could use that area for playgrounds and the like once it has been remediated.

The grade 6 classes are in separate terrapins some distance away from the school. The toilet facilities are disgraceful. I know the \$7.1 million was to deal with some of these problems but it is not going to fix some of the fundamental problems that exist in this school.

Mr Willie - It was interesting in the election campaign, when I announced a neglected schools fund, the current Government ran around the state with money for Montello, Cambridge Primary, Lauderdale, Exeter, these schools that have been languishing on the department infrastructure priority list for years. They suddenly found money for it.

Ms FORREST - Yes, but not enough in this case, not enough to do the proper job. Hopefully they can top it up and then reconsider their intention to actually spend \$7.1 million on creating a facility that is still not going to be fit for purpose out to the long term. It seems to be a waste of money when you could do a much better job on this.

Talking briefly about kinship carers, I also welcome the additional allocation of funding for informal kinship carers. These people do an amazing job. They provide such important care to members of their family. They are usually grandparents, but not always, caring for grandchildren at a time in their lives when they did not think they would need to be doing the hard work of parenting young children again. Often, they are not well prepared financially to do so. I am pleased to see that is being increased and continued. The care provided by kinship carers saves the state a lot of money as well as providing emotional and psychological support to these children. It should not just be about the money anyway. These are vulnerable kids often with complex needs, often impacted by trauma and other challenges. I hope these families are also supported through programs to assist the students impacted by trauma. I welcome that initiative. There are so many young people in our education system who are impacted by trauma. I hope that the kinship carers, a lot of whom would be caring for children who have been impacted by trauma, are recognised in that.

I would be very keen to know more about that program and the students impacted by trauma, how that intends to roll out. It is not a lot of money for a very significant issue but it is really welcome.

I will close on the topic of justice. It is a very important area and I wish to comment on a few specific matters related to justice, particularly access to justice including timely access, therapeutic jurisprudence and addressing the failings of our current approach. This is one area that I do not participate in scrutinising but is an area of significant interest to me.

Clearly, there is growing demand in this area and I hope to see a promised legislative reform coming forward soon, including the provision for non-fatal strangulation as a standalone offence. I know that there are other areas that the Attorney-General is looking at but that one has been promised. I was pretty sure it was going to be brought in before the end of the year and I hope that is the case. The Leader may be able to shed some light on that but I will have questions that I will provide to Committee B in relation to some of the other questions that I have. I hope I can get answers to them.

Mrs Hiscutt - So do we.

Ms FORREST - One of the points I want to discuss is the Burnie court relocation. As I have spoken about in this place before, the Burnie court is not fit for purpose. It is a substandard facility, it is probably up there with Montello Primary School. With regard to the much-needed

and long-overdue upgrade to facilities at the Burnie court, I note the funding for the relocation of the court has increased from \$15 million to \$40 million which is welcomed. Obviously, it is needed but I would be interested to know why there is a need for significant additional funds and what will be achieved.

Mrs Hiscutt - That is a question for Estimates.

Ms FORREST - I can pass it onto Committee B if you do not have that information. It is probably one for Estimates to drill down into that. I have a list of questions to provide to Committee B.

I understand that UTAS is vacating the proposed new site this year and I am interested in the expected time line for the completion, not just UTAS vacating but the work to turn it into a purpose-built facility for a court.

I would also be interested to know what community engagement and consultation has and will occur? Will the current building, the one the court is currently in, be demolished as part of this process? That may be part of the reason for the uplift in funding. That is why I am interested in knowing what is sitting behind that. I note that the old courthouse, or the current courthouse, contains large amounts of asbestos and the site could be well utilised for other purposes. It could be better off being demolished and used for other purposes. I know the Burnie City Council is interested in utilising that space, incorporating it into their arts and cultural precinct.

The other major area of concern as far as budget scrutiny goes, is to ensure that funding provided the area of corrections and justice is well targeted, effective and as efficient as possible. It is clear in Tasmania that jailing is failing and we have heard that from a recent briefing. It is a good catchcry, jailing is failing.

I appreciate the briefing organised by the Justice Reform Initiative, Just Desserts, and their paper titled, Jailing Is Failing, which makes compelling reading. As noted in the briefing and on their website:

Australia now imprisons more people than at any time since 1900, in both total number and per capita, at a cost exceeding \$3.6 billion annually or \$110,000 per prisoner per year. Our incarceration rate is well above all Western European countries and Canada, among many others. Sadly, instead of reducing crime it has only led to higher rates of reoffending.

From a pure budgetary point of view, we need to do better. To put the above into a Tasmanian context, as noted from the paper from the Justice Reform Initiative and related to the Tasmanian criminal justice system, in their report it says:

The Tasmanian imprisonment rate is 124 per 100,000 population, a rate higher than most comparable jurisdictions across Western Europe and Canada.

Two-thirds of people in prison in Tasmania have been to prison before. In addition, 58 % of young people in Tasmania return to prison less than a year after being released.

Rather than the experience of prison helping people to turn their lives around, it entrenches and deepens disadvantage. Prison does not support people to build productive lives in our community. And prison does not make our communities safer.

People in the general community believe prisons make our community safer but, clearly, they do not, when you look at this information. The report goes on:

Overcrowding and lack of resources make it difficult to provide meaningful education, training and support programs to help people while they are in prison.

We can only imagine what would happen if we had a COVID-19 outbreak in our prison. We see what is happening in the prison in New South Wales. It is pretty frightening. Ours is so overcrowded and you can only imagine how difficult that would be to manage. New prisoners entering the system go into quarantine, but we have people servicing the prison, guards, officers and all the others who go into the prison. You cannot run a prison without staff. Back to the report:

Most people who go to prison in Tasmania never have the opportunity to address the drivers of their offending. And, critically, an absence of housing and support on release means that people leave prison into situations which place them at high risk of reoffending and returning to prison.

The response to the increase in the prisoner population in Tasmania has largely been to spend more on a failed criminal justice model, where prison is the default response. Tasmanian taxpayers already spend almost \$94 million on prisons each year and this will only increase as the incarceration rate climbs. Other than the ACT, Tasmania has the highest per capita prison costs in the country, with each prisoner costing the state \$122,143.60 per year.

Remember, the Australian average was \$110 000 per year. We are paying \$122 143.60 per prisoner each year. The report goes on to say:

The evidence clearly shows that people from disadvantaged or marginalised groups are far more likely to come into contact with police and be imprisoned. Many of those entering the prison system are homeless and jobless, and their prospects worsen when they leave, making it all the more likely that they will return to prison.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rate in Tasmania is currently more than five times the non-Indigenous imprisonment rate. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison population has increased by 97% since 2010, compared to 7% for non-Indigenous people.

People with a range of different kinds of disadvantage are locked up in Tasmanian prisons. Instead of receiving supports in the community, they are 'managed' inside the justice system; 67 per cent of people entering prison in

Tasmania have a history of mental health conditions, while 62% reported living with a disability.

Most young Tasmanians in Australia's juvenile justice system come from backgrounds where they have already often suffered from severe neglect or abuse and/or have been placed in out-of-home care. The children in these centres need family and community support, education and life opportunities. Locking kids up makes the problems of disadvantage and disconnection worse, not better.

Although there is no doubt that crime needs to be taken seriously, if we are serious about reducing crime, we need to look at the social drivers of the justice system contact. Victims of crime, quite rightly, are disappointed by the existing system of justice, not because it needs to be tougher but because victims' voices are so often not heard properly and it simply does not work to improve community safety.

Experts from across the community are adamant that a new criminal justice model is needed which does not centre on the use of more prisons.

On purely budget and financial considerations the current approach is not working and it is costing the Tasmanian taxpayer much more than it should, but even worse than that is the failure to address the underlying factors that see many Tasmanians enter the justice system. The 'tough on crime' approach is failing as it may keep the community safe while a person is incarcerated but only during that period, but if they remain at a high risk of reoffending on release, as we know our statistics show, the community safety is not well served at all and in many ways, it becomes a worse outcome.

As with health, we need a much greater focus on prevention and addressing the underlying drivers of criminal behaviour which impact so many of those in our system. These drivers are not dissimilar to the drivers that result in poor health and educational outcomes. We know what these are: living in poverty; intergenerational disadvantage; mental ill health; homelessness; Indigenous descent; low literacy levels; social isolation; a lack of social support; discrimination related to race, gender or other attributes; drug and alcohol issues; acquired brain injury; the list goes on.

If we are to address effective justice for all Tasmanians we need to focus on prevention and reducing recidivism: both we are failing at and thus, not keeping our community safe. We are spending a lot of money to do this, and money without meaningful outcomes.

A new approach is needed and a non-partisan approach is crucial. I, for one, will support such an approach and ensure we get the best outcomes for all Tasmanians.

I urge the Government and the Attorney-General to fully consider the work of this organisation. They are experts in the field and have enormous experience and credibility in this area and I am sure we are debating these issues in coming months and the time ahead and I will add further comment then.

Mr President, I make it really clear that I am willing to work at an absolutely non-partisan way on this matter; it is so important. Again, if we keep doing the same thing and getting the same result, we must be insane.

Mr President, there are many other important initiatives that have been funded in this Budget; some were election promises; some were ongoing responses to COVID-19 and recommendations from the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) and in many ways there are too many to mention.

This is the benefit of having a significant uplift in expected revenues in the form of much more GST and state revenue, especially from the hot housing market.

As we only get to scrutinise about half of these measures in Estimates I will use question time to seek further updates and detail on the progress that many of these initiatives over the coming months and years.

I note there are many other areas worthy of comment and I will use other opportunities for this and I look forward to more thorough scrutiny next week in Estimates.

[3.03 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Mr President, the primary bulk of my contribution today will be about my electorate of Rosevears but I had just a few opening comments to start with.

The more I read of the 2021-22 budget papers, the more I am struck with the impression that this is a budget that unashamedly looks at the future. For me it is a budget of hope. It is a positive budget; it is an optimistic budget that builds on the strong foundations already put in place by the Gutwein Government to secure the safety and the wellbeing of all Tasmanians as we deal with the impacts of COVID-19.

It is a budget that delivers and builds on the commitments that were taken to the people at the last election. It is a budget that seems, to me, to be delivering at the strategic and operational levels in areas of real concern to ordinary Tasmanians. Areas like health and mental welfare, infrastructure and job security but at the same time it is a budget that also recognises community and the need to cater for increased demand for essential services at individual levels, particularly for vulnerable Tasmanians.

Mr President, for me one of the most pleasing aspects of this year's Budget is its prioritisation of the health of Tasmanians. Nothing is more important than our health, and this Budget delivers a record health investment of \$10.7 billion.

As the Premier said in his Budget Speech, 'let me be very clear, the health of Tasmanians is the Government's highest priority'. And the figures in this Budget back up those words, with the Government's commitment to see that elective surgery waiting lists significantly reduce.

Some \$160 million is provided in the Budget for additional elective surgeries, as well as an additional 180 health staff statewide. What an enormous difference this will make in the lives of everyday Tasmanians.

And of course, the health of Tasmanians includes mental health.

Only this morning I saw new research showing locked-down Australians - which includes my son and daughter for a very large part of the last 18 months, and certainly people in other states and here in Tasmania - are more worried about the toll of COVID-19 on jobs and mental health than the actual risk of contracting COVID-19. In fact, over 55 per cent of Tasmanians cited impacts on mental health as their biggest COVID-19-related fear at present. The mental health and welfare of Tasmanians has clearly been recognised as a priority in this Budget.

There is \$50 million to fully fund phases one and two of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services reforms and continue the broader rollout of the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program.

\$2.2 million is allocated to meet increasing demand for Adult Community Mental Health Services.

There is \$7.8 million to continue and expand COVID-19 introduced mental health services, including a mental health phone triage service and increased capacity for Rural Alive and Well.

\$5.1 million is allocated to pilot an innovative Emergency Mental Health Co-Response Team model.

There is \$5.8 million for the Mental Health Hospital in the Home Pilot on the north-west coast.

Funding is provided to assist school health nurses to undertake specialised training in youth mental health first aid.

It is wonderful to see that huge funding commitment, including \$12 million to the Launceston General Hospital Mental Health Services Precinct over the next four years.

This Budget also supports new paramedics with new ambulance vehicles and equipment, and \$14 million for additional paramedic crews in Launceston and Hobart.

An additional 20 000 dental appointments are provided for, as well as \$27.5 million for community-based health care including hospital-in-the-home services and other health care delivered in the home or in the community. These are services that my mum certainly relies on to enable her to stay in her home.

There is \$20 million for the Hospital Equipment Fund to replace and upgrade critical hospital equipment.

The list goes on; all vitally important initiatives that will make a real difference in the lives of ordinary Tasmanians.

As for my electorate of Rosevears, this Budget reaches out across so many areas.

We see priority road upgrades continue along the West Tamar Highway; enhanced mobile telecommunication services for Bridgenorth; the continued progression of the new Legana Primary School; and a huge investment of \$11 million for Exeter High School.

This Budget reaches across areas of need and areas of vision. Today I will touch on some of those areas, and the people who will see great benefit from the figures we look at in the budget papers.

In many circumstances early intervention is the solution; reaching out to an individual or a group of people before they are overwhelmed by the circumstances they find themselves in.

To that end, I was delighted to see a recommitment in the Budget to a fabulous program supporting young mums and their babies, with \$1 million committed over four years.

Karinya is a Launceston-based shelter that provides crisis accommodation and advocates for young girls and young women. It also runs a young mums and bubs program which addresses the needs of young parents and pregnant women aged 15-19 years.

When I have spent time at Karinya, I have had the chance to literally peep through the window at this program, and it is exceptional. It provides an early intervention service that includes supported accommodation with intense wraparound support, targeting the individual needs of parents and their children.

I take this opportunity to commend the tireless work done by the CEO, Jane Gaetani-Black. She is quite a phenomenal woman. She has an amazing team and is very well supported by her board. We are very lucky to have her.

Trauma - another area that has been of great interest to me for many years. Trauma can have such a significant impact on a student's ability to learn. Additional funding is provided over four years to meet the growing demand for trauma support, with the funding enabling an additional 100 students to be assisted each year across Tasmanian schools. This is in addition to funding announced in the 2020-21 Budget for inclusive school communities. Supporting all students to learn, to support students with trauma and behavioural challenges is part of a holistic approach to mental health and to wellbeing.

At one time I was the ambassador for Inside Out 4 Kids, a program run through the City Mission, which is all about targeting children in primary school years who have suffered trauma. There is great data out of America that shows if you can help a child through trauma in those early years, if you can support them and help them to be resilient and to learn how to handle that, then you can make a huge difference in their lives down the track. We are putting money now into getting Tasmanian data together.

We need those bandaids down the track. If we can have some strategies that really target some of these issues, especially with our children when they are young, and involving all types of trauma, I think that is a great way for us to move forward.

The Launceston City Mission, which I just mentioned, runs the Inside Out 4 Kids program. It is one of those organisations that I think is the pumping heart of the city of Launceston and its surrounding areas. I am not actually sure of an area in need that the mission does not reach into and try to find a light in the darkness for so many people.

A commitment of \$110 000 will renovate a new site for the operation of Mission Health, a drop-in service. The renovation will provide three consultation rooms and a reception room for free primary health services.

On a lighter note, one of my funniest moments this year came on the foreshore at Kelso. It is a gorgeous seaside beach community in the Rosevears electorate. I keep thinking someone is going to make a television show in Kelso. I was waiting to meet with the West Tamar mayor, the fabulous Christina Holmdahl. Christina had contacted me about a rather awful situation that had been occurring for some time. Since the upgrade of the boat facilities, certain members of our society - if I could name them I would, but I do not know their names - had decided that they could wee and poo on the foreshore. I guess they had gone out for a fishing trip and needed to relieve themselves. Is that common behaviour amongst fisherman?

I am not going to sugar-coat this. It is disgusting behaviour. The mother in me wanted to set up a camera, catch out the offenders and severely reprimand them. Sometimes I am just at a loss because not only was it polluting this beautiful space, just across the road there is a line of houses so the people were doing this quite comfortably right in front of other people's homes. Nappies and sanitary items were left in the bushes. While waiting for the mayor I could hear my name being yelled out across the street. This is the moment I met Mrs Faulkner.

Mrs Faulkner came out of her perfectly maintained home and very quickly filled me in on the situation. In her words, she had seen more male appendages on the foreshore than she ever wished to see in her lifetime.

We had a little giggle at that but on a sad note she also said she could no longer allow her grandchildren to play in this beautiful seaside space, especially during summer, because of this situation. It is not an okay situation for the residents of Kelso and it is certainly not okay for the members of the northern area action group.

I was absolutely delighted to say that this Government is now going to support the West Tamar Council with a funding commitment of \$150 000 for public facilities that I sincerely hope the fishers using the boat ramp will use appropriately.

Mr PRESIDENT - It sounds like you have got the first episode of your miniseries already in the can, so to speak.

Ms PALMER - Maybe we could work on that together, just in case this does not work out for either of us.

Ms Forrest - There was someone on Parliament lawns this morning against the bushes doing a similar thing. It is not just the boat ramps.

Ms PALMER - I am constantly aware of the commitment I made in my inaugural speech in this place to ensure that we are always supporting the on-the-ground community groups, those sporting groups. These are the grassroots people who are best placed to ensure that those who might be struggling in all our small communities are scooped up and wrapped up in community support. I will highlight some of these amazing groups whose capacity for volunteering, inclusion and seeking out those who may be in need of friendship is just immense. The funding and assistance that has been provided in this Budget is a testament to how this Government also values these on-the-ground warriors.

I will start with the Exeter Golf Club where I know locals, Ros Burr and Sue Clark, seem most happy in life. They are very excited that they will be receiving funding of just over \$19 000 to upgrade the kitchen facilities. This is going to be a huge benefit to this community,

not only with what golf can do physically and with the mental benefits that come from exercise, but also the benefits of what that club is going to be able to be even more inclusive in how it can involve other parts of the community when it comes to belonging to a club and socialising.

The Sidmouth War Memorial Hall is going to receive a much-needed boost also to upgrade its kitchen, to improve heating and outdoor spaces. I cannot tell you how thrilled the organising committee is about this. Michael Ferguson and I had morning tea with them and it was the full country hospitality morning tea. We did not have to eat again for the day. They were so excited to share with us the plans that they have for their space, for their community hall.

The Riverside Men's Shed, through no fault of their own, found themselves homeless this year. Now, in conjunction with the West Tamar Council and numerous other players, the Government will be assisting them to build a new home. I doubt there would be anyone in this room who would not be aware of the power of providing men with a safe space where if they wish to, they can talk and if they do not wish to talk, it does not matter; they just belong.

The Beauty Point Bowls Club members have become a very special group of people in my life. You get quite attached, do you not, to the different people you meet in our community. For me, it is especially those groups who do not just welcome you but they also welcome your family. Whenever I do events on the weekend, I always try to take my husband and my kids, where appropriate, because I miss them but also, I think it is good for my two sons to see what their mum's job involves. In fact, the bowls club members like my sons more than they like me being there because every time they are there, they make scones with jam and cream and the last time I was there I did not have the boys and there was no morning tea.

Mr PRESIDENT - There is episode two.

Ms PALMER - Yes. They had really outdated toilet facilities; they were filled with asbestos. There was no disability access or disability toilets for the clubrooms so it has been wonderful to work with Sarah Courtney and see that we have been able in this Budget to have an allocation of \$56 000. They have already started work. They have started the demolition. It is exciting and I cannot wait to go down there for the opening of the new toilets. I do not quite know how that will look.

Ms Forrest - There is a bit of a theme here happening with you.

Ms PALMER - I am trying to improve these toilet facilities right across the electorate.

Ms Forrest - A lot of plaques over new toilet facilities with your name on them, honourable member. Maybe, you could get one at St Peters Pass.

Ms PALMER - Send me a note.

The Port Dalrymple Yacht Club is going to receive really valuable funding in this Budget.

The slipway at Beauty Point is used to remove antifouling off the hulls of vessels. This flows straight back into our beautiful Tamar Estuary and it is a very unhealthy thing to be flowing back into our river. So \$112 500 has been allocated to assist in upgrading the slipway, which will protect our estuary from the antifouling material. I congratulate the Port Dalrymple

Yacht Club on their lobbying. They have been absolutely determined from the first day I walked into that club to make sure that this was a priority for me and I am absolutely delighted it is a priority for our Government.

A commitment has also been made to help transform an important community gathering space for the Exeter community. Funding of \$735 000 is going to help to build a new sport and recreation centre on the existing site of the Exeter Showground. The new centre will secure the show's future and role as a hub for the region's sporting and community groups. More than 120 children train at the showgrounds each week as part of the Tamar Valley Junior Football Club. The Exeter Cricket Club has been using the ground for more than 100 years, with the Exeter Art Studios, West Tamar Municipal Band and the Exeter Sheepdog Club to name a few of the community groups that use the centre on a regular basis. I was there recently and I can tell you it is in desperate need.

Ms Rattray - What about the market day? They have fantastic things at the markets.

Ms PALMER - They are amazing market days. The facilities there almost cannot be used and are in disrepair, so this is exciting for them. I reiterate my strong belief this Budget recognises the role played by our small community groups, our warriors on the ground.

There is one commitment in this Budget that means a great deal to me. I was contacted by a constituent who was very concerned about the swimming pool at his granddaughter's school. Beaconsfield Primary School has its own swimming pool inside a tin shed. The first time I saw it I was visiting the school as part of Book Week last year.

It is there I met the powerhouse that is Dannielle Murfett. Dannielle is a young mum. She seems to be on every community, school or fundraising committee in the area and to top it all off, she just started her own small business, Totally Mum Made. Her youngest child is only about seven or eight months old. She is an absolutely dynamic human, she has more energy than most people I know and is so passionate about her children, her community and the life she wants the young people to have.

Of course, she is on the school P&C Association. She was not happy with certain aspects of the swimming pool, so she rallied the troops and, before I had even met her, she had managed to raise over \$6000 to do something. It is wonderful for the school to have this facility but some parts of it are completely outdated for the year 2021. I am not talking about the roof, the guttering or the tiles, I am talking about some of the issues our young people might have getting changed in front of one another. Their bodies are growing and changing and children at this age are trying to navigate what can be a really hard time for most, I would say.

We want kids to feel comfortable learning to swim. If we are really serious this is a skill they need to have. We need to support them and make sure we are tearing down any barriers that would prevent them from doing that. If you have stuff going on, there is no way you are going to be comfortable stripping off and getting in and out of your bathers in front of other people.

The funding of over \$31 000 for the Beaconsfield Primary School is going to go a long way to securing unisex changerooms, disability change rooms, baby nappy-changing facilities- certainly an upgrade to the current change rooms, which have one private toilet block and nozzles of showers coming out of the wall. There are no shower screens, no privacy

whatsoever. At the moment it can only be used for four or five months of the year. We are looking at ways we can improve heating, maximising the temperature of the pool water so it can be used for the best part of the school year.

I congratulate Dannielle Murfet. When we talk about the power of one person, I look at her in this community and think she is going to change this community for the better. I have loved watching her work on this project and congratulate her on that. I also acknowledge the work Michael Ferguson has done in delivering this project for our children.

I would like to finish by highlighting one of our beautiful attractions in the Tamar Valley, which is the Tamar Island Wetlands. This is a haven for various birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs, fish and the wetlands are abundant with plant and animal life. It is also a haven for mothers with sons who need to be constantly on the move, and make them run laps of big open spaces. Thousands of locals and visitors come each year to enjoy the walks. When I go there with my boys I do make them run; it probably looks a bit harsh to on lookers but it is good for our home life. Of course, their favourite thing to do is to try and find snakes. I am not that keen on that part, but that is what they love to do. It is a special place and a really peaceful place even when you take your children. So lovely to see the Government has committed to improve that experience for us locals, but also when we get the opportunity to welcome thousands of visitors back to our regions.

There is funding for visitor infrastructure which will include replacing the existing boardwalk and more. I acknowledge more can always be done, and more can always be done better, but I applaud our Premier and Treasurer Peter Gutwein on this Budget. It is balanced, has great ambition for our state and it is a budget offering us hope, and isn't that what we want for all Tasmanians? To feel that hope that they are living in such a wonderful place. This Budget is also ensuring our children and our grandchildren are not left paying a debt for decades to come. Mr President, I note the Budget.

[3.26 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I rise to reply to the Budget handed down by the Premier last week.

It is obvious to most of us and to most members of our communities, Tasmania is still feeling the impacts of COVID-19, despite not having any lockdowns or cases in the state for many months, with a single exception.

We have heard many stories over the last months about this impact and how difficult it has become for many in our state. While we are very lucky to not have restrictions as we have seen in other states, most of us are still feeling the ongoing impacts of not being able to see our loved ones, not being able to travel or not being able to work in the way we might have been used to. We hear examples of this often. Just in the last week there have been more devastating examples brought to light. Yesterday on ABC radio, Leon Compton interviewed two local business people, Doug O'Neil and Kartika Franks, licensees of the Duke of Wellington Hotel in Hobart. Doug and Kartika spoke about the impact their business is suffering. Just this past week Doug outlined the business their restaurant had seen - it is pretty sobering - two meals on Tuesday, two meals on Thursday, and just eight meals on Saturday. Their staffing levels have dropped from 25 to nine because they are just not able to pay their wages. They have had to cut back their trading hours. Doug has just taken on a full-time job separate to their venue to enable them to pay their own bills and to pay their staff. Doug spoke about the businesses he

has seen close their doors, the fears he holds for their future and the impact the downturn in business is not just having on the venue, but their suppliers and their land lord. Kartika described our situation as a lock-in not a lockdown. We might not have COVID present in the state and we might not have local restrictions in place, but we are suffering the impacts of outbreaks in other states nonetheless.

Well-known Tasmanian tourism operator Rob Pennicott is reported as describing a downturn in the last month of 90 per cent of bookings with his popular business. 90 per cent of bookings cancelled and refunded.

At our major airports, staff have been stood down with 10 at Launceston and 28 in Hobart - stood down and not eligible for federal assistance for airline workers. There are another 38 Tasmanians and their families facing a very uncertain future.

This situation is not sustainable. For every one of these stories there are many more. There are hundreds of tourism and hospitality workers in restaurants, pubs and hotels, and tourism businesses, retail workers, hire car companies and their workers, small business owners who are suffering. I am sure we all saw the photos of Salamanca Market empty of people just a couple of weeks ago.

Hundreds of Tasmanian families are feeling the impact and yes, this means less money circulating in our economy both from tourists and locals having to tighten their belts. Perhaps, more importantly, the level of stress and fear this places on people is just unbearable. There has to be something done and, in the absence of support from the federal government, the state government should step in and support Tasmanian workers and business owners.

I am aware the Government has extended its business support package to more small businesses, and this is a welcome step. However, it should not have to take people like Doug and Kartika and others to tell their stories publicly and repeatedly for action to occur. I urge the Government to monitor these matters more closely, and to listen to the sectors that are most affected, to ensure they are doing everything they possibly can. We cannot afford more job losses, with 12 500 Tasmanians already out of work and unable to find a job; and with over 22 000 Tasmanians underemployed, needing more hours of employment and unable to secure them. Work is already becoming more insecure. We cannot continue down this path.

The cost of living is increasing, while wages are not. Groceries, fuel, power bills, water bills, car registration, childcare costs, parking fees, phone bills, internet bills - these are not luxuries but everyday necessities, and the costs are increasing.

Housing is the biggest cost for the vast majority of households, and the cost is increasing. The median cost of renting a three-bedroom home in Tasmania is now \$400 a week, an increase of \$120 a week in the last seven years. In the south of the state on the eastern shore, in Kingston and in Glenorchy, rents have increased by \$150 a week. In north-east Tasmania, rents are up \$120 a week, and across the rest of the north of the state they are up \$100 a week. On the central coast they are up \$90 a week, on the west coast \$85 a week, and in Burnie they are up \$70 a week.

If you want to buy a house, the average cost of a house in Greater Hobart is now over \$600 000 and almost \$400 000 across the rest of the state. Let us think that through. In order to get a mortgage for a home, most people need a 20 per cent deposit if they want to avoid

costly insurance. How is a family ever supposed to save a deposit of \$120 000 while they are paying nearly \$1000 a fortnight in rent, if not more? All the while, costs are increasing; their rent is going up, house prices are going up - while wages are not increasing. In fact, in real terms they are going down. You can set a target but by the time you have reached that target the finish line has been pushed further out. It gets further out of reach. People are left trying to save more with less. It is becoming an impossible dream and it is getting worse under this Government.

Today is Equal Pay Day. Each year, Equal Pay Day marks the day women would need to work to, beyond 30 June, to earn the same amount of money as men in the previous financial year. This year, it is 61 days, two days more than it was last year.

As the member for Murchison noted in her contribution, we are going backwards.

On average, men earn \$261.50 more than women each week. This is averaged across full-time earnings across industries. The national gender pay gap is 14.2 per cent. This has grown by 0.8 percentage points since last year. There is no doubt that the impacts of COVID-19 have been disproportionately felt by women.

Industries that have been impacted most severely are in most cases dominated by women in the workforce. Many of the frontline services that are dealing with health risks every day are dominated by women. Responsibility for home learning in many cases falls on women, who also have to maintain their own workload, whether that be in paid work or unpaid work such as caring for younger children or other members of the family.

The gender pay gap is real and it will continue to exist until we all take it seriously. There must be leadership from government at all levels. This is directly related to the impact of the budget on people of different genders and it is why we need to ensure that this is carefully considered. Therefore, it is disappointing, on Equal Pay Day of all days, to note that the Government did not see fit to implement a gender impact statement - a common practice that even the federal government adhered to in their budget earlier this year. I agree wholeheartedly with the members for Murchison and Nelson who have also called for this, as have other members over many years. It is not new or extraordinary, and it concerns me that it has been overlooked again by this Government.

I firmly believe government has no greater responsibility than looking after the most vulnerable people in its care, and there is no more vulnerable cohort than children. It is deeply concerning to see Tasmania's Child Safety Service data.

The number of notifications to the advice and referral line that have been referred for investigation has grown. Of even more concern, is the number of notifications that are not referred within the agreed priority time frames. These are notifications to the Child Safety Service when someone has been concerned enough to make a report, yet these reports are not able to be investigated in the appropriate time frames. These are children who may be at risk, and Tasmania's system is not able to respond to them as quickly as we should.

'Not able' - I use those words very deliberately because it needs to be very clear that the fault for this does not lie with the Child Safety Service workers. The reality is there are not enough staff to do the work required. Let us be clear about what that means. It leaves vulnerable children at risk of greater harm, and it leaves workers on the front line - who hear

and respond to some of the most horrific instances you could possibly imagine - with that trauma being compounded by the trauma of knowing they cannot do their job to the best of their ability.

Imagine leaving a job like that at the end of every day, having witnessed some deeply traumatic circumstances; knowing there are children in the community you could not respond to. Imagine what that does to a person. To have entered a field of work because you have a passion and a desire to do that work and to do it well, only to find yourself under enormous pressure to close cases sooner than you know is ideal; to be juggling a workload far greater than your capacity; and to constantly feel you are not doing enough - and the stakes are high. Imagine how that feels.

I am so disappointed the Government cannot see fit to prioritise this, to acknowledge we need to do more for the children and also for the people we rely on to staff that front line. We need more staff, there is no doubt and no way around it. The system needs more resources. Where are they? What greater priority can a state have than this?

There has been much commentary about debt and deficit, operating surpluses, cash surpluses, revenue. The one thing that is always a given with budgets is the financial-speak. Having come to parliament with no finance experience, I will admit I sometimes find it hard to follow this level of detail. It can be difficult to work out who to believe when you hear a range of analysis, different opinions about the merits versus the risk of borrowing, how much and when, and how long.

The majority of Tasmanians are probably not interested enough in the detailed financial accounts of government to take the time to understand it; which means it is pretty easy to spin whatever narrative you like about how well the state is doing - or otherwise. However, the impact the budget has on the services we all rely on is absolutely clear - and there is no hiding from it. No amount of spin can hide the absolute failure of this Government to deliver reliable, accessible Public Health Services. The Government's own data shows us. It used to show us each quarter; now we are able to see each month how many Tasmanians are waiting for health services.

We have some of the worst indicators in the country. The waitlist for elective surgery is sitting at over 11 000 Tasmanians. We keep breaking records, and while very occasionally the list comes down, it is never long before we break that record again. There are 55 000 people waiting to see a specialist. You cannot get on the list for surgery until you have first made your way through this list. Again, it keeps climbing. There are over 18 000 people waiting for dental services. Ambulance response times are among the worst in the country. Emergency department wait times, again, are among the worst in the country. There is a dire need for mental health services. We talk about that at every Estimates, every budget; yet what do we see from this Government? More of the same. Where is the vision for a system that provides the health services Tasmanians need, when and where they need it?

This Government has been in power for seven years, since 2014. They have been entrusted with another four years. Will it be four more years of the records nobody wants to hold? There might be claims of record funding in health, but that is a furphy. Of course, it is a record - you could make that claim if it was one dollar more than last year. With costs going up each year it is naturally going to require more funding, but that does not mean the system will be improved at all. The real question is: What services will be available for Tasmanians

who need them? Which promises will be delivered and which will be delayed further and further every year?

I am not the only one who is tired of asking the same questions of the minister at Estimates and hearing the same answers over and over, while I know there are people in my electorate who are living in chronic pain, who cannot get in to see a dentist for painful conditions, who cannot get in to see a GP. We need to see more and I hope the new Minister for Health does a better job of real change, real reform, working with the sector on a real vision, than we have seen from the Government so far.

More people are waiting for housing than ever before and waiting longer. Again, these are the records we keep breaking but the records nobody wants to hold. It is more than numbers on a waitlist. It is Tasmanian families living in insecure, often unsafe housing, children going to school from the car they slept in the night before, families trying desperately to make room for their adult children and grandchildren, cramming extended families into homes designed for only three or four people, people sleeping in tents, garages, caravans and sheds through a freezing cold Tasmanian winter. Who could possibly be comfortable knowing this is happening in our own backyard? We often talk about how lucky we are to live here in Tasmania, but that is not the case for everyone.

These are some of the services that suffer from economic mismanagement. This is what exposes the spin for what it is. It is the impact of the budget decisions of the government on the everyday lives of Tasmanians, the human cost or benefit that plays out every day. Unfortunately, for this Government it is cost we see time and again. Unfortunately, for all of us, there is an inability to access services - poorer educational outcomes, under-resourced work forces at breaking point across health, child safety services, schools - across almost all of our public services.

The Government has been trusted with four more years in power. We can only hope they use those four years to start finally making decisions that will put the wellbeing of Tasmanians first, look after the most vulnerable members of our community better and support Tasmanian businesses and workers. I look forward to Estimates, as I do every year, when I know we will all have many more questions for the ministers to answer. I look forward to hearing contributions from other members. I note the Budget.

[3.42 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, another budget, the eighth for the current Premier. I have been around a while now for budgets and, as we always do, we make some overarching comments. I have really enjoyed today's contributions by those who have already spoken and will equally of those who will speak. Everyone has a different perspective. You talk about your electorates and then we talk about the finance, it covers the whole scope and that is the most interesting aspect of this process.

I have always wondered why we do not do this after the Estimates process, which I talk about every year, but nothing changes. If you talk about something long enough, you never know, somebody might have a light-bulb moment. We have gone through that extensive Estimates process which everyone might not enjoy, but a lot of members do, particularly the Legislative Council, who have often been referred to as being forensic in their detailed scrutiny of the budget. This Budget for 2021-22 will be equally as forensic.

The Government has brought down its budget for the coming year and as we would expect of any government, is spruiking its virtues. Essentially, the message we have received from the Government is we are spending big, but responsibly. The Treasurer has stated the Budget is now on track to surplus. It will be back in black over the forward Estimates period, returning to a cash operating surplus of somewhere in the order of \$368 million next year and returning to a modest operating surplus of around \$40 million in 2023-24. This certainly sounds responsible and exactly what does that mean? Well, it has been suggested that it is actually comparing apples with oranges. Like the member for Rumney, I do not have a finance background and have often found budgets a challenge and tend to listen to what is provided by the commentators. That will certainly be interesting to progress through the budget process and the Estimates process to really drill down into some of those areas. Through the scrutiny process we can see where departments have been able to get some gains or losses - where services that have been provided are now no longer provided or you have a new initiative started. This is really the useful part.

The Premier has gone on to say that now, more than ever, it is vital we secure Tasmania's future by securing the health and safety of Tasmanians, as well as our economy and the jobs it supports. Confidence and jobs are up with, importantly, the unemployment rate down. Over the course of 2021-22, the Budget and forward Estimates for infrastructure programs and other initiatives are expected to underpin more than 28 000 jobs. Again, that is a positive message but I heard the story from the member for Rumney and saw the TV article where there is nobody, there is very little patronage in restaurants. The facility I stay at when I am in Hobart has reduced its breakfast hours because there is not the patronage there has been in the past. Certainly, as a state, we are missing those visitors - obviously, because of COVID-19 and not allowing people to come in from other states, but also is it because Tasmanians are not out and about as much because they are also worried about the security of their jobs? If you are a small business owner, there is not very much you have in reserve you can use to continue on. We heard the 25 employees for the particular business the member for Rumney talked about is down to nine employees. How many other small businesses around the state would be experiencing exactly that?

It is going to be a difficult time and I note in the budget papers there is \$20 million of business support packages in partnership with the Australian government to support businesses affected by border closures, and I welcome that support. I would like to indicate we do not want to make those applications to receive those funds more difficult than they need to be, because that is often the challenge for small business. Members might take their mind back to last year when we were supporting businesses and often it was just trying to help them get through that application process. Certainly, after those business support packages were announced we had some terrible situations. Obviously, the Government revisited that process and again I am very grateful that took place. It certainly allowed some of the small businesses I represent to continue and not be one of those businesses that had to declare they could no longer go on and are in the bankrupt figures. Again, I certainly welcome that \$20 million but I want to make sure they are able to be supported.

Mrs Hiscutt - I need to inform the honourable member that there is a bright light of business in the Penguin community. A new business called the Penguin Beer Company opened recently and they are flat out putting people on. It is a dire situation but it is not for everybody, there are a few bright lights.

Ms RATTRAY - It is interesting that a lot of the bright lights have been connected to alcohol. I am not sure -

Mrs Hiscutt - And food.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, and food. Another initiative I have come across is \$1.2 million to access financial counselling through the COVID-19 Small Business Financial Counselling Support Program. It is an initiative that will not be needed by that Penguin business because they are doing quite well and that is terrific. I expect there are a lot of other small businesses that will need some financial counselling support.

Often, it is someone being able to look at your business who is not as close as you. How many times have we looked at particular issues, even our bank statements or the like, and you get your mind set in one part and you cannot seem to move away from it. Somebody else comes in and looks at exactly the same information and it is as clear as a bell.

It is a really important aspect, to have somebody who has that expertise and is able to sit with people, albeit we wish we did not need it. I expect that assistance will be around for quite some time because, as has been mentioned by a number of people, we do not know how long the COVID-19 situation will stay with us. We do not even know what normal is going to look like in the future. I believe that is a great initiative.

There is \$2 million for the Small Business Incubator and Accelerator Pilot Program to encourage startups and help small businesses to grow their ventures. I found it interesting, I was listening to a media report only a few weeks ago that said that because of COVID-19, there have been some really bright lights as our Leader, the member for Montgomery, has already indicated.

It has allowed people who had a dream or something they wanted to follow to be able to get into their own business, perhaps because their work had changed and they were not able to go. That is a really positive thing because, as we know, sometimes you have to have that little push, and unfortunately that little push may well have been COVID-19. If it delivers small business into our community, whatever that might look like, that can only be what I consider a positive.

So, \$2 million for the Small Business Incubator and Accelerator Pilot Program. That will be interesting to drill down into more detail through the Estimates process.

Then there is \$800 000 to Business Tasmania for support for small business. I would be interested to know what that type of support is and how different that is to the \$20 million business support package. Sometimes that is a problem for small business, to navigate where you sit and whether there are opportunities to double dip. I would expect not, if you want to make sure it is shared around. If the Leader is unable to provide that, we will be able to ask the minister for Small Business in front of Estimates Committee B next week.

I note \$300 000 to the regional chambers of commerce to support their small business members. I am a member of a couple of chambers of commerce. They do a lot of work in their immediate area. This is a really good initiative and I congratulate the Government on supporting those regional chambers of commerce. I would encourage those regional chambers to work together more. Small chambers often have busy people as their members as we know.

I would suggest there is an opportunity not to have to reinvent the wheel. I have been encouraging that.

The Northern Midlands Business Association is a fantastic group and I know I have spoken about them before in this place. We have the CEO of NMBA coming to the North East Tasmania Chamber of Commerce as a guest speaker in a few weeks to talk about some of the initiatives they have been able to implement. This will give that small chamber some information that they might not have had otherwise, because often they are not always in sync with the big chambers. They have paid people and they are able to do a lot more work. I know the Northern Midlands Business Association does have a partly paid and partly funded component of their chamber but the rest of it is all made up of businesses and volunteers. I am looking forward to that. That will be a great initiative so I want other chambers to take up that opportunity and use that \$300 000 that the Government has provided.

Again, \$150 000 to support the Tasmanian Small Business Council advocacy function. That will be something again we can ask next week; I do not expect the Leader to have to get down into the detail of that.

The NILS Micro-Business Loan program, again \$75 000, and they certainly will be small, for \$75 000 allocated. Again, that will be one that we will drill down into.

One that I was interested in is the \$600 000 to the Tender Incentive Program to support and encourage businesses to submit tender applications for new contracts in the competitive defence sector. Usually defence is a federal initiative or it is usually run by the feds so I am interested in how that might work. Certainly, if the Leader is not able to provide information in the summing up after this debate, I will make sure that I put it down to progress that one through the Estimates process.

I would have thought that perhaps a better initiative would be to encourage businesses to submit tender applications for any contracts. Often, we know that in Tasmania small businesses struggle to meet that level of requirement needed, particularly for government contracts. It is quite a high bar and I do not disagree that it should not be a high bar but I know that a small business trying to meet all those requirements can often struggle and throw their hands up in the air and decide perhaps it is not really for their business. That is where I think we could certainly encourage and support businesses, through the tender applications, not just in the area of defence, which I expect is probably quite a narrow area for businesses. One for the Government to have a look at as well.

There is \$400 000 for small business mental health support packages. Then, as I have already indicated, there is \$1.2 million for financial counselling. Obviously, if you have not got your finances in place you will have some mental health problems and we have heard a lot about the stress on small business. This is a continuation of services to be provided by Lifeline. I congratulate the Government on supporting Lifeline because it is a tried and trusted access for those with mental health issues. I hope they would work with those who are accessing the financial counselling. It is a great opportunity for those two areas to work together - the mental health support package provided to Lifeline to continue their good work, along with the small business financial counselling service.

I will make some high-level comments about jobs, infrastructure, health, education, skills and training, housing and climate action, energy and the environment - and isn't that a big list?

The Premier has indicated 28 000 additional jobs, and that is fantastic. However, let us not take our focus away from the existing jobs that people already have and the areas where they will continue to need our support.

This glossy pamphlet talks about 'An ambitious, \$5.7 billion infrastructure program to support jobs and build better, safe and more connected communities'. You only have to look around the state to see how much infrastructure, building and development is underway. I may well have commented when we came back to parliament last week that I was exhausted; I felt as though I had been on the road and done thousands of kilometres as part of the Public Works Committee. There is a lot of infrastructure activity underway in the state and I know the Government is keen to keep that work rolling on, because it builds confidence. I absolutely understand that. We see and hear about it on a daily basis in our electorate, albeit that quite a few people may not be convinced that what is being put forward is the best way to go about it.

However, there is the opportunity to raise concerns through the Public Works Committee hearings for projects over the prescribed amount and if not, people can have a conversation with their local member. Clearly, the member for Rosevears has significant conversations with her constituents and they have done exceptionally well from those conversations. I congratulate her on those wins out of the Budget.

We need to make sure we keep on supporting that infrastructure, albeit let us not get in too big a hurry and not get them right. It is often infrastructure for 100 years in the future so we need to get it right. If we need to spend a little more money at the time and make sure that we get everything that we need for the future, then I suggest that that is exactly what we do.

There is a record health investment of \$10.7 billion and the Budget talks about making a significant difference to our health system and the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians. And yet again, we hear that waiting lists are ballooning. We have people in our communities who, no matter how many times they ring up to find out where they are on the waiting list, continue to be told: 'Not yet'. We need to continue to focus on that. I have often said that sadly, we will never meet everyone's expectations, but we need to do our absolute best and focus on the delivery of better access to our health system.

I know if the member for Murchison were here, she would talk about preventative health; and that will be a focus of the committee she is a member of next week. We know that preventing a health issue is the best way of making sure that particular person stays out of hospital and then the system will possibly not be as clogged as it is.

I do have a positive story about the process at A&E, particularly in Launceston. When you are admitted via the ambulance, that officer stays with you until you are transitioned to another ambulance officer stationed at the hospital; or someone who will take over to allow the ambulance officer to go back to their vehicle and wherever they come from. That is an improvement on what we have heard in the past. I heard this from someone who experienced that process last week. At each change, when a new person was allocated to them, they introduced themselves and said 'I will be taking over and looking after your care until you are seen by a doctor'. I thought that was a very good outcome.

How many times have we heard that ambulances sit ramped and cannot go anywhere because they still have somebody on board? The member for Rumney has talked about that in this place on many occasions. They have to stay with them - as you would want them to, if it

was your loved one or family member. If that approach is working in other areas across the state as well as it appeared to work at the LGH last week, then it is a good initiative.

I now turn to education, skills and training. There is \$8 billion in education to enable Tasmanians to get the job that will support and drive our economy forward. You always need to be ahead of the game. You almost need to know what skills people are going to need before they know they need them. Whenever I see someone who is looking for a trade, I tell them they will have a lot of opportunity if they would like to get down on their hands and knees and do some tiling or bricklaying.

The Government has focused on those manual trades, and they are important to have in our communities. With the building boom we have at the moment, it is difficult to access some of those really skilled tradesmen. I encourage anyone looking to focus on a trade - although I know we do not need all trades otherwise we will end up with hundreds of tilers and, when the building boom is over, what do they do? They will probably retiling somebody's bathroom.

We do a lot of renovating these days. I do not know anyone who does not have a new kitchen or bathroom or some other upgrade. People have not been able to travel as they would in the past, and so at the moment the renovation is coming before the holiday. Perhaps that is part of the reason we have a lot of pressure on our trades.

It will be interesting to explore the new initiative for TAFE. We received a letter from the minister last week. Through the Estimates process, we will talk about the proposal for TAFE and skills. That is an interesting one. The jury is out, I think, on whether this is what is needed and at this point I am listening to what has been proposed. I am also listening to those who understand the TAFE system and particularly those who work in the TAFE system as to whether they believe it is the right way to go.

Housing - even though we are building houses at a rate of knots, if you can get timber trusses. I know someone who is building and they have had to redesign their home and they have put in steel trusses because there is a six-to-nine month wait on timber trusses. So, they have done a redesign and have been fortunate enough to be able to access the steel and make that work. Obviously, you would have to have your plans ticked off again. It is an added expense on top of an already expensive exercise. I know the member for Murchison read out a little bit from Shelter Tas. Thank you, Pattie Chugg, who always makes some contact with us in regard to some of the issues that they see as a problem for people sourcing housing. I thank Pattie for that.

I have a few questions but just some overarching statements. They welcomed the commitment to deliver on the election promises and, in their submission, also talked about and emphasised that in time of crisis a secure home is paramount for all. I do not think there would be any one in this place or who is listening who would not agree with that. They go on to say that they called for an increase to the supply of social housing from the current level of 6.2 per cent to 10 per cent of all dwellings and also to include a housing impact analysis in all relevant policies and decisions.

It goes on to say that while the state Government has not committed to that 10 per cent target, Shelter Tas is pleased to see the \$2 million investment in developing a comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy for the whole Tasmanian community. It says here that it was launched today, which was Thursday 26 August 2021.

I am not sure how many Tasmanian housing strategies we have had, I expect that this is just another one. I would like to think that perhaps it might be the last one that we need for a while. It is clear to me and a lot of other people that you just need to build more houses. So, to build more houses, you need to access more suitable land.

I note in one of the snippets that I read out of the many pieces of information, that there is a surplus of crown land in Tasmania and the Government has begun a public land sales program, with its first parcels prepared for sale and listed with agents. I would suggest that is a good place to start. You cannot build a house if you have not got the appropriate land to actually place it on. Well done on that, but the wheels of issuing your title so that you can actually go to your financial institution with your title to access the necessary funds is a really important aspect of that.

All of these parts of the process have to line up. There has been some extra money, \$950 000 allocated for transactions for crown land, I believe. It will be interesting to see how many of those crown land transactions have turned into sites for houses and homes under this call from Shelter Tasmania to provide the housing that is so desperately needed.

We know that we no longer have a housing debt and there are some questions from Shelter Tasmania that will be answered next week. How much of that previous debt commitment is actually going to the initiative of social and public housing? We all used to have to be seated at the table to hear what the quantum was, year in, year out.

In Shelter Tasmania's release it also talks about how the private rental market is outstripping people's incomes. If that happens then people have no alternative but to go to the public housing or social housing waiting list. It is a real churn and it is a real issue for people. More recently I have talked about two rental properties in the town where my office is located. Two. That is almost unheard of.

As an aside, being somebody who comes from the north-east, a small house in Derby on the weekend, not exactly a home, on a large block in a really prime location if you are a mountain bike enthusiast: \$1.31 million. Wow. The unfortunate circumstances that brought about that sale is an aside but who would have ever thought? Not in my lifetime did I think that a property in Derby would bring that sort of money. Knowing the building, it is not really ready to take a family or people visiting for that matter, but there you go. Someone saw an opportunity, and they are from Sydney, I believe. They saw an opportunity, and probably they are mountain bike enthusiasts as well.

A sad rather than interesting fact: the waitlist for social housing passes 4000 applications, and 36 people a day are being turned away from homelessness services so there is every sign that housing stress and homelessness are continuing to increase across Tasmania. It is a significant issue and we must all do whatever we can to support those in our community who do not have adequate housing.

Ms Chugg also provided some information that from the stamp duty, conveyancing duty for the sale of houses, the windfall to the Government for this year is \$48.5 million more than expected in last year's Budget. They have called for that \$48.5 million to be dedicated to additional social housing and homelessness services. That is a fair request for that money that is additional to what the Government had expected to receive from the sale of housing to go

back in to providing houses. That is a big increase, nearly an additional \$50 million. Thank you, Ms Chugg, as always, for providing that information.

Climate action, energy and environment. Climate action is going to be something that, again, there are a few different views from the community as to what a government - in particular this Government - should be doing. We often hear it needs to be a whole-of-the-world approach, then we hear Australia is doing quite well and it needs to be our neighbours to the north who should be doing more.

I am not an expert and do not intend to make too much commentary except to say it takes the focus of our young people. If you ask them, what are some of the issues they see as key to their health and wellbeing, they will tell you - climate change. My younger daughter says, Mum, you have to do something about climate change. I say we are doing our best, but we also have to keep the economy going.

It is that balancing act, but we cannot ignore the young people of our state. They will be our leaders, standing here in future doing exactly what we do, representing their communities. You cannot help but think our state is in good hands. We all know some fantastic young people who are either friends, family or just acquaintances. They are good people and certainly not afraid to let you know what they think. Bold as.

Now to some of the initiatives on my patch, as I call it. There are not as many as I would like, but I think we can all say that. For no other reason, I will start with infrastructure as it is at the top of my pile of papers. A lot of the roads also have Australian government funds, such as the Railton Main Road. The member for Mersey may talk about some flood mitigation tomorrow and the member for Montgomery talked about that briefly in her contribution.

One of the other initiatives I see under Roads for Growth is electronic school zone signs. I had a request in with the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport's office, not knowing whether to go to Education or Infrastructure because I had been contacted about a standard crossing, not electronic. I was sent to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport but he sent me back to the local council, saying this is a council road and council would be the authority to make a decision about whether there needed to be a school crossing from the Scottsdale Swimming Pool across to the school site.

It is a busy road and everyone crosses just after the railway line, as you would well know - you have probably crossed there thousands of times over your time at Scottsdale High School, Mr President. Here we are, we have funding in this Budget for electronic school zone signs, yet councils are the authority to decide whether there be a foot crossing for school students. Sometimes you have to wonder who knows what they are doing. I will be following up.

We have \$27.4 million for state roads in the northern region. We will be drilling down into that infrastructure spend next week. The \$24.5 million for the Roads Package to support Tasmania's visitor economy. Do you add that to the state roads upgrade in the northern region? There is not much detail about what that does, which I will pursue. There is \$10 million for all-weather, all-access bus shelter upgrades statewide. Again, we are into the school area. Will they have to go to the councils to get the okay to put a school bus shelter on the roads that may be managed by councils? I hope this does not end up being a tug of war.

There is \$6.6 million for the Bridges Renewal Program. As we know, Tasmania has a huge amount of bridges. Ask any local government what is the biggest drain on their finances, the rural councils have the significant numbers and they will tell you it is bridges. Often, if there is an alternative route, they have not replaced bridges because they have decided it is too expensive, to the disappointment of a lot of communities on many occasions.

Mr Gaffney - The load-bearing capacity of the bridge, with the trucks and other traffic going over it, it is a safety issue. Councils just cannot afford it.

Ms RATTRAY - Exactly, the member for Mersey is absolutely on the money. The heavy vehicles that travel on our roads are often the reason the bridges no longer meet the standard. It is all about which part of the wheels and which part of the axle is sitting on the bridge at any given time.

Mr PRESIDENT - It is why we used to have railways.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. I have talked a little bit about Health, but I was very pleased to see \$2 million to amend the Controlled Access Scheme enabling improved access to medicinal cannabis. This is totally appropriate and I congratulate the Government on progressing that.

How many times have we had a debate in this place about the benefits of medicinal cannabis for particular people in our communities? We have heard some heart-wrenching stories, but we have also heard some fabulous outcomes for people who have, sadly, sometimes sourced medicinal cannabis by means they would rather not. I know a gentleman from my community who has to access it through Sydney. He gets a script from Sydney dispensed in Victoria. What are we doing? Let us hope this initiative can make some gains for those in our community who need it.

There is \$8 million to support a better after-hours doctor service and reduce pressure on emergency departments. I have talked about the ambulance situation but whatever program we can put in place to encourage more GPs, particularly in the more rural areas, to address the continuing issue of the churn of GPs. I acknowledge the work the Ochre Health medical services provide in a number of my communities, Dorset, Break O'Day and Deloraine. The churn is wearing for those patients who are continually told, I am sorry, your doctor is no longer taking new appointments or they have moved on. These are the choices. When people need a doctor, they often have to go with whoever they can access. I do not have the answer to how we encourage those highly professional people to make our rural communities their home. If there is somebody out there who does have some ideas of how we can do that then please contact the Department of Health, or contact me, because we really are in desperate need. It would take some pressure off our hospitals if people are able to see a GP in a timelier manner and not have to present to the accident and emergency department.

\$1.4 million for community transport services to access care is an area of interest of the communities that I represent. If families are not able to take their loved one in to a medical service then community transport is certainly the go-to. I see so many times the community cars on the road as I drive around the electorate, and we are so lucky to have those wonderful volunteers. I cannot thank them enough for the time and effort they put into community transport and what it does for our community. It provides wellbeing, when you can ring up and order the community car and they will take you, and will come back and collect you. You do not have to worry about trying to find a park - that is sometimes impossible next to some of

those very busy health services. I am so grateful for that community transport service, and well done for allocating \$1.4 million in this Budget.

I also noticed there is \$4.5 million for new Tasmanian Community Health and Wellbeing Networks at Ulverstone, Huonville and Scottsdale. I know the member for Murchison and the members of Committee A will be interested in that. I am not sure how that is going to work, and I would be interested to know what that actually means for those communities.

We must remember that might not work so well in a lot of the areas, if it is about sourcing information through technology. Even my constituents at Winnaleah had virtually no Telstra service over the weekend because it is all used in Derby. Everybody who rides their bike in Derby wants to upload their photos of how many jumps they have had, and who they have had lunch with and what they have had for lunch - and all those wonderful aspects that relate to mountain biking. It is fantastic, but it certainly drains the service from the surrounding areas, and it causes a problem.

\$9.2 million to support the implementation of the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Act is a significant amount of money but I know there is a lot of work to go into that and I feel sure that the member for Mersey...

Mr Gaffney - That is a good pick up. I am trying to find out some information on that.

Ms RATTRAY - Right. I will be listening to the member for Mersey's contribution tomorrow to see what that \$9.2 million...

Mr Gaffney - Correction, I said I was trying to find out, I did not say I had the answers.

Ms RATTRAY - Another important area of health delivery is \$5 million to deliver an additional 20 000 dental appointments statewide. Once again, this is preventative health. If we can deliver better oral health, then we have better general health.

There is \$4.25 million for palliative care. We know how important that is in our community. The Government has covered that particular area well, albeit as the member for Rosevears said, there is always more to do and we acknowledge that. Our communities expect us to do more.

Rural Alive and Well has received \$7.8 million to continue and expand the mental health services introduced in response to COVID-19, including a mental health phone triage service and increased capacity for the organisation. Rural Alive and Well has been a fantastic initiative, and John Jones from Kempton must be overwhelmed at times as this was his initiative. He contacted me, and never gave up on saying, our people in our rural communities should be supported. I am sure there are people who have no idea that they possibly need to thank John Jones of Kempton for the support they have received through this fantastic organisation. It has had some marvellous people working within it and continues to have some very good people on the ground. I congratulate the Government for continuing to support that mental health service. I am sure it is not \$7.8 million solely to Rural Alive and Well; but they would be funded out of that allocation.

Turning to education; I looked for schools in my electorate but I do not think any in McIntyre received funding. There is a lot of funding for new schools, updated schools and

training facilities. A lot of my Railton students go to Sheffield District High, and that is as close as I could get.

I know that not all my schools are absolutely perfect, and I know all of our schools cannot have everything they need straightaway. However, I am disappointed that there is not one school in the McIntyre electorate that benefits. I will be watching with interest. Perhaps there will be a lot next year.

I did note, in the glossies, that there was funding for school farms - Sheffield, and one other. It may have been the Jordon River. They are both fantastic school farms. I have no qualms with them receiving funding.

I had asked for some funding for the Scottsdale Stronach View school farm. Their classroom at the school farm is like a room in an old house and not fit for purpose. I was somewhat surprised that did not see favour this year, but I will continue to advocate for that school farm to have a purpose-built classroom or at least something remodelled. I do not think you could remodel that old house. There is plenty of space at the Scottsdale Stronach View Farm, so we might as well start from scratch. The school has had a concept plan done, so I hope it sees favour in the next budget. It is very much needed and I am not complaining about the funds provided to Jordan River or Sheffield school farms.

Mrs Hiscutt - This is the finalisation of the Sheffield School Farm, so that will be the end of that. Maybe in next year's, there may be a chance, too.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, maybe next year. There was a significant \$3.5 million development, from memory.

Mrs Hiscutt - I thought it was \$3 million.

Ms RATTRAY - Oh, \$3.5 million.

Mrs Hiscutt - Keep the minister for Education aware of that.

Ms RATTRAY - I will begin with that next Wednesday. The McIntyre community did quite well with individual and various projects around the state with \$5 million for the new Longford Police Station. I look forward to visiting the site as soon as we break from parliament after the Estimates process.

Quite a lot of sporting organisations received some funding. I advocated for the Malvern Park Recreational Ground and they are getting three new cricket nets, \$88 388. They are absolutely wrapped with that funding. The Deloraine Football Club will receive \$50 000 to refurbish facilities and new nets. There is \$20 000 for a new dragon boat pontoon on the Meander River in Deloraine, \$150 000 for a new outdoor basketball court at Alveston Drive in Deloraine and \$250 000 for a new pump track at the same facility. They are all very welcome. In Cressy, there will be a replacement of the recreation ground clubrooms, and \$45 000 for new equipment and new disability facility at the Railton Bowls Club. They always make me welcome when I attend and I thank them for that.

The Longford Golf Club will receive \$100 000. The area is growing and growing. I have just signed 854 letters welcoming new residents to the electorate of McIntyre. A lot of

them were from that Perth, Longford, Cressy and Westbury area. It is fantastic, really popular. You only have to drive around to see the number of new buildings and homes taking shape around that area. I thought I had finished for a little while and we received another update from the Electoral Commission with another 524 new electors to the McIntyre electorate. I have been signing those but have to get back to the office to finish them. I like to sign them personally because I often make a note on them, if I know somebody or their family. I have found that really interesting. That is just an aside to the Longford area.

\$76 000 for new equipment at the Deloraine Golf Club. A lot of sporting clubs are receiving funding and are very grateful for that. While I am on those areas of sport, \$80 000 for the Bridport Football Club, \$50 000 for upgrades to the Scottsdale RSL, \$120 000 to the refurbishment of the Bridport RSL and \$50 000 for the preparation for a new community jetty in Tomahawk, that has not been fit for purpose for some time. The Tomahawk and visiting community and those who come for holidays will certainly appreciate that. Also, \$280 000 for upgrades to the Scottsdale Football Club.

My community certainly did not miss out other than in the area of education.

Flinders Island is seen as the go-to with COVID-19. It is romantic to say you are visiting an island and Flinders, Bruny and King islands are where it is all happening through COVID-19.

There is \$60 000 to upgrade the Flinders Island Sports and RSL Club - affectionately known as 'the club' - which will make a big difference to the island and the people there.

\$2 million for a staged seal of priority sections to Palana, albeit the roads are generally good on the island. Obviously, Palana needs some extra work. That is a go-to place when you visit the island and the member for Windermere is nodding, he knows it backwards as we all know, but it is great.

A very important part of the island's success is biosecurity and there is \$350 000 to further strengthen biosecurity on the island.

Because of all those visitors there is \$600 000 to revitalise park assets and upgrade camping ground facilities. Again, important for the health of animals is \$980 000 for a new veterinary facility, equipment to attract a new veterinarian to the island.

Mr President, \$300 000 to develop a regenerative tourism plan. I thought it was going gangbusters but if it needs regenerating, obviously that has seen favour with the Government.

A couple of things I need to mention for my Break O'Day community is \$35 000 to develop new marketing projects for the east coast and Tourism Tasmania. They are a very active group on the east coast and do it very well. The new initiatives they want to explore have received favour.

There is \$40 000 for the kitchen refurbishment at the St Helens Marine Rescue clubrooms. Again, a very important part of being by the water, and they do a great job with lots of volunteers that make that place tick.

For the East Coast Rock Lobster Translocation Program - \$150 000. In the past they have relocated some of the rock lobsters to areas where they hope they will grow a little bit more, and perhaps they are caught and put back. Is that correct?

Mr Duigan - The big lobsters will kill the invasive sea urchins.

Mr Valentine - They have to be the bigger ones, not the small ones.

Ms RATTRAY - Remember that quite a while ago now, we had an electorate tour when I was still the member for Apsley and we had a look at the sea urchin factory?

Mr Valentine - We tasted some.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, we tasted some.

Mr Valentine - They are very moreish, for some.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes and I need to apologise to the member for Montgomery. The Sheffield School Farm is \$3 million not \$3.5 million, I apologise.

Mrs Hiscutt - Do not apologise, there are a lot of figures there.

Ms RATTRAY - No, I want to set the record straight. Jordan River Learning Federation School Farm received \$4.3 million. That allocation is to complete redevelopment for both schools. The Scottsdale School Farm should be next.

I just saw that on my notes while we were having a talk about sea urchins.

I cannot leave the electorate until I have talked about the proposed new northern correctional facility planned for the Westbury region. There is \$270 million in the budget for that. I would encourage the Government to continue to work with the community on the best type of facility. I know that the member for Murchison talked about Just Desserts in the briefing that we had last week from Greg Barns and the members from Just Desserts.

I continue to listen to those initiatives and absolutely believe that there is an opportunity to make this facility more about rehabilitation than incarceration. I absolutely believe that. I would like to think that the Government would continue to work with the northern community about the best type of facility to meet the needs of Tasmanians, particularly those who perhaps have family and loved ones in the north of the state. Also, it may offer other alternatives and provide a more positive pathway for those who come out of that prison system once they have served their time.

When I commenced, I said that there were a lot of big infrastructure projects and these are significant projects. They are here for a long time, so let us make sure that we do not rush them and we get them right. I know that is probably not a lot of comfort for those who may feel that they are perhaps sharing accommodation in the south of the state at the Risdon facility and would rather be closer to their family in the north. If we are going to do this, let us make sure that we explore all avenues and all aspects of what is the best facility for rehabilitation for those people who make poor choices, find themselves incarcerated and then need to get on with their lives after that. I urge the Government to do that.

If we have that conversation as a community then there will be opportunity for those who do not necessarily see a 'prison' as they call it - a northern correctional facility, as I refer to it - as not being such a terrible thing to have wherever the Government may decide to place that facility. The jury is still out, in my view, about whether the original site was the best site and whether the Government -

Ms Forrest - The original site, as opposed to the site they are looking at now, do you mean?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, exactly. The recent public meeting I attended was well attended by the community. There was not actually a representative on behalf of the Government but there was a representative there on behalf of the department, the project manager. To his credit, he did the best he could to answer the questions. On that evening we were informed there were four on the short-list. I do not even know where the four sites were. I remember asking a question here about the short list and was told there was no short list so I said, that is news to me. Next week will be an opportunity to explore that area. Perhaps it is not the right site or perhaps it is the wrong type of facility for the site.

Ms Forrest - Or both.

Ms RATTRAY - That is continually what we hear from people and there are plenty of facts to support that, the recidivism rates.

Ms Forrest - The cost.

Ms RATTRAY - And the cost. I would like to see the Government have that open conversation and as one of the local representatives, I would be happy to be part of that conversation about the type of facility and where it is best placed. Would it be better off to bring it back to the original site and make it a rehabilitation centre and not what we call a full-blown prison? They are my thoughts for what it is worth but I could not leave that piece of paper without talking about that important issue because people are passionate about it - those for and against. I thank them for their continued support of that.

A couple of other things that I know are important to the communities that I represent: \$300 000 for a new helipad in St Helens. That is absolutely integral to the health and wellbeing of that Break O'Day east coast community, to be able to be airlifted out of that area and down to Hobart. That happened to some friends of mine only a couple of weeks ago. This particular gentleman had another stroke but, due to the speed with which he was attended, he is okay. He is not any worse than he was before and the family are so grateful. We have to make sure that those services are in place for our community.

In addition, \$400 000 for the replacement of the old Bracknell hall. A lot of things happen in those smaller communities and the halls are the hub of any small community, so well done. I note \$100 000 for the new Children's road safety park in Longford, again, a growing community.

While I was waiting to take my turn today I noticed - and I need to share this with people, because this is why we need to continue to support the agriculture industry in this state. Of the 391 Tasmanian dairy farms we have in this state, with about 182 000 cows doing their bit - and this is hot off the press, this is today's news - milk production has reached 961 million litres.

That is an increase of 1.2 per cent from 950 million litres in the previous year. All that water development investment is seriously paying off for those rural communities. This is the engine room. The dairy industry is the engine room here for Tasmania. It really is. When the milk prices are up and the farmers are happy we know that makes for a happy community. For anyone who has lived in a rural community, mark my words: if a rural community is doing okay then we can pretty much say the rest of the state is doing okay. It will not always be perfect for everyone, we have winners and losers but the dairy industry is such an important part of our agriculture scene in Tasmania.

On the Braddon sheet, I noted, Mr Premier - I have elevated you today, Mr President, or maybe not. I do wish our Premier all the best. I expect he has been working really hard, you can only work that hard for so long and you need a rest. It is a pity he could not take a decent holiday and he is in hospital having a rest.

There is \$1 million for the Hobart to King Island and Flinders Island air flight subsidies. That is an important initiative and has been welcomed on Flinders Island and also by King Island residents. I asked the question at an earlier time as to why it was only out of Hobart. It is not cheap to get to the island as the member for Windermere will agree. It is well worth it but quite a significant cost.

I did ask why it was not also for people leaving from the north of the state. If you are living in the north of the state, you do not particularly want to drive to Hobart to take a subsidised flight to Flinders island. It would defeat the purpose somewhat.

Ms Forrest - It has to go to King Island in that case.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, to King Island via - I am sure it is the same for the people on the north-west coast, member. Why not fly out of Wynyard or Launceston to go to King Island? Why would you fly from Hobart? With the greatest respect, why do you have to be southern-based to receive a subsidy?

A couple of last points, and I am sure there will be something and that is what happens when you have nothing structured. I usually do -

Mr Valentine - You can always yell out.

Ms RATTRAY - By interjection, somehow weave it in. There was a lot of commentary about the state Budget. We know it has been presented as a big-spending affair, the biggest of the eight Peter Gutwein has presented since becoming Treasurer in 2014, if you discount the COVID-19 budget last year. Some commentators say the comparison is between oranges and apples and the member for Murchison delved quite significantly into this and I will leave that to her expertise.

We need to be focused as a community on making sure we keep the confidence up in the state. I refer to the member for Rumney's contribution: it is not all beer and skittles for everybody in our state. If you are waiting on the health waiting list, you are possibly struggling with your health and not living your best life. If you have a small business only putting out two meals on a Tuesday, nine on a Thursday -

Ms Lovell - Two on Thursday and eight on Saturday.

Ms RATTRAY - You are not living your best life, are you? We need to be mindful there are people in our communities that are struggling. I will do my absolute best, together with members of Committee B, to provide as much scrutiny as we can. We do like to make sure every line item gets a guernsey because the departments go to a lot of effort to provide that information to the Legislative Council. I look forward to being able to provide that scrutiny.

Like most Tasmanians have done and certainly key people in our communities, I encourage those people who can, if they can, to get themselves vaccinated. I am hoping either tomorrow or the next day to have my vaccination which I originally had booked for about four weeks ago but it was cancelled - not by myself - but by the deliverer of that service. Get vaccinated, keep yourself safe and I encourage the Government to continue to work with the community for the best outcome. I particularly would like to see a real focus on what is the best focus for the northern correctional facility and look forward to all other members' contributions and thank them for their consideration of mine today.

[5.06 p.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address the Chamber in support of the Tasmanian budget for 2021-22, a clearly defined strategy for securing Tasmania's future and delivering the plan set out in the recent election by the Gutwein Liberal Government.

This is a hugely important time for our state as we plot a course through and hopefully, out of a global pandemic as we leverage the opportunities presented to us and build the infrastructure and services Tasmanians demand.

As has been widely reported, the Budget delivers on all of the election commitments made by the Government but goes well beyond that, setting out a pathway back to surplus and the long-term sustainability of the Tasmanian economy. Some of the highlights include growing our economy, creating jobs, supporting business and connecting the skills and training Tasmanians need to grasp those opportunities ahead. An ambitious \$5.7 billion infrastructure program to support jobs and build better, safer and more connected communities, and a record health investment of \$10.7 billion to make a significant difference to our health system and the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

A record \$8 billion in education, skills and training to enable Tasmanians to get the jobs that will support and drive our economy forward. A record \$615 million into social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives to help more Tasmanians in need. A whole-of-government plan to guide climate action, to protect our environment and harness Tasmania's competitive advantage in a renewables energy future.

I am pleased to stand here to speak to this Budget knowing the strong support and real results it will deliver to my electorate of Windermere and the people like me who live there. It is also important to recognise and emphasis this Budget plots a course back to surplus. Not only is the Government allocating record levels of funding to help education and housing, but it shows the state is on track to be back in the black within the forward Estimates period with Treasury forecasting an albeit modest operating surplus of \$39 million in the 2023-24 financial year, an operating profit. No matter which fruit you choose to count, it is an operating surplus of \$39 million in 2023-24 and we will be here to judge that.

Ms Forrest - You are living in a dream world.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. It is a great place to be. Tasmanians look to a Liberal government for strong economic management, for responsible handling of the state's finances and during this most difficult uncertain time, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has demonstrated that faith is well placed.

When the pandemic hit, Tasmania, unlike all the other Australian governments, be they federal, state or territory, was in a strong financial position with \$788 million in net cash deposits and investments. Our strong financial position and strength of the economy has enabled us to deal with the challenges we have faced and Tasmania has come roaring back. There are now more than 263 000 people employed in Tasmania and our unemployment rate is at 4.5 per cent which is below the national average.

Ms Forrest - Do you acknowledge that the low interest rates have helped that because of all the debt we have?

Mr DUIGAN - They are not peculiar to Tasmania. That is the point I would make. At the height of the pandemic last year the Government laid out a plan to kickstart our economy and build our way out and by any measure that plan has worked. In June 2021, dwelling approvals were up 43.7 per cent from the previous year and the value of retail trade increased 10.9 per cent over the year to June 2021. When others were experiencing negative growth in exports, the value of our goods exports increased by 5.2 per cent over the year to June 2021. Confidence is up. Jobs are up and, importantly, the unemployment rate is down.

These results do not happen by chance. The Government has worked hard to keep people safe and invested record amounts in supports and stimulus packages. Confidence stayed strong, investment increased and the jobs have come back. However, there is work to do.

The Premier has stated publicly that health is a priority and many Tasmanians will agree with that sentiment. We recognise that despite significant investments in health, there are challenges due to increasing demand and the impact of COVID-19. That is why the 2021-22 Tasmanian budget includes not one dollar more but \$900 million more for our health system than last year's budget. The numbers make impressive reading: \$66 million for the continuation of the Launceston General Hospital redevelopment, in combination with a further \$12 million for the Launceston General Hospital Mental Health Services Precinct and almost \$50 million statewide to employ more paramedics and purchase new ambulances.

The priority is ensuring Tasmanians get the right health care in the right place at the right time which is not necessarily in an emergency department or hospital bed. This Budget will see a strengthening of community-based care which includes a further \$5 million to the GP After Hours Support Initiative, taking the total to \$8 million. This will enable more GP clinics and pharmacies to support people in their local communities after hours, providing more options for treatment and taking pressure off our emergency departments.

Even with increased investments in community-based care and ill health prevention, there will always be need for acute care. Additional funding of \$198 million will be provided to meet the increasing demand faced by our major hospitals and support opening beds. This will enable the opening of more than 50 additional permanent beds across the state in 2021, that is this year, to meet demand and support the Government's commitment to additional elective surgeries - another 7000 on top of the 22 300 committed to through a \$40 million top-up, with a total allocation of \$196.4 million in the 2021-22 Budget.

Ms Forrest - Does that cover all the medical and nursing staff as well?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, it does. To support the increase in elective surgery -

Ms Forrest - It does, does it?

Mr DUIGAN - I will get to that. To support the increase in elective surgery and other boosted new services, the Government will employ up to 280 additional full-time equivalent health staff, including nurses, doctors, allied health staff and hospital support staff. Additional funding of \$18.3 million has been secured to implement the Safe Staffing model for district hospitals, resulting in a net increase in staff statewide, as well an increase in the mix of skills available to those seeking care in regional areas.

I was also very pleased to see the Government commencing negotiations with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) on a long-term strategic partnership to support health services, particularly rural health services in Tasmania. I have a long personal association with the RFDS. In my inaugural speech, as members may recall, I spoke about my first successful flight on Flinders Island. I must admit they have not all been as successful and I remain forever grateful to the RFDS for scraping my father and myself out from a paddock on the island and safely ferrying us to hospital. This memorandum of understanding (MOU) will ensure the important services that the RFDS provides to rural and regional communities across the state can continue into the future, including those aero-medical flight services, as well as primary health care in rural and regional areas, with a particular focus on dental and mental health.

Health is the big-ticket big budget item and not far behind is education. Again, the 2021-22 state Budget provides a record level of education spending for Tasmanian students and educators.

The division of Windermere is well-blessed with more than 20 schools: the TasTAFE Alanvale Campus, the Australian Maritime College and, of course, UTAS Inveresk campus and Newnham.

This Budget delivers a record \$8 billion into education, skills and training to ensure our children and young people have every opportunity to pursue their ambitions, regardless of their background or circumstance.

There are provisions for doubling the number of school literacy coaches in our schools, support for students affected by trauma, funding for school nurses to assist students and further support health prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Further, there is \$56 million over four years for education adjustments to support students with disability across Tasmanian government schools.

In bricks and mortar, the Budget is delivering a record investment with new infrastructure commitments of \$116.2 million which will see new schools built and upgrades which will include the school classroom blitz. In Windermere, this will see upgrades at South George Town Primary School, Port Dalrymple School and Lilydale District School.

Further, there will be anti-bullying private toilet cubicles at Lilydale District School and at Port Dalrymple School.

I was also really pleased to see \$26.6 million for the expansion of the Child and Family Learning Centres statewide and this includes a new facility being built at East Tamar Primary School. They are great facilities and they really add something to our community.

I should touch on TasTAFE with almost \$100 million to be directed to the reinvention of TasTAFE, which includes \$37.6 million for new TasTAFE teachers.

Also, \$6.5 million for the Tasmanian Employer Bonus Fund, which is an interesting idea. It rewards Tasmanian employers who take on a long-term unemployed or a long-term job seeker with \$6500 into their business for giving that person a leg-up back into the workforce.

I was also particularly pleased with the commitment of \$15 million for the Tasmanian Agricultural Precinct for research, skills and development of industry in partnership with UTAS and as part of the Launceston campus redevelopment. The precinct will bring together the world's best practice in one place by co-locating agricultural science, water management, industry development and biosecurity. The Tasmanian Agricultural Precinct will boost growth in the state's agricultural sector toward a farmgate value of \$10 billion by 2050.

Ms Forrest - I told you how important it was, did I not?

Mr DUIGAN - It is super important. Sadly, the member for Elwick is not here. He would not go so far as to call water 'liquid gold' but I will; I will go there. There is \$23.6 million allocated for tranche 3 of the Tasmanian irrigation schemes which includes the Tamar Irrigation Scheme - the Pipeline to Prosperity, which I thought was a nice name, or liquid gold, as I mentioned, supporting 7500 jobs in rural and regional Tasmania.

Tasmania continues to be a leader in renewable energy, reducing emissions and fighting climate change. The state achieved 100 per cent self-sufficiency in renewable electricity last year and we have achieved our net zero emissions target in six of the past seven years.

These strengths are an important part of Brand Tasmania and our competitive advantage and the Budget will see the creation of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania, which will be established by October this year. Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania will bring a whole-of-government view to capture the opportunities, jobs and investment that Tasmania's unique renewable energy and emission positions provide. Tasmania has a nation-leading target of 200 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2040, supporting the state's renewable hydrogen vision and helping to deliver a cleaner planet through Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation.

Our vision is that Tasmania will be a global leader in large-scale renewable hydrogen production by 2030. I am advised that Hydro Tasmania is continuing to work with current and potential new major industrial customers on commercial agreements to provide clean energy for their projects, including renewable hydrogen. We will also work with the Australian Government to establish Bell Bay as one of the nation's recognised hydrogen hubs. An additional \$100 000 will be invested in the Tasmanian hydrogen technology cluster initiative led by the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone, to support this exciting opportunity.

Our major energy projects have the capacity to transform Tasmania's economy, to create thousands of jobs, inject billions into the economy, protect energy security and create downward pressure on energy prices.

The Budget further supports this notion in the Windermere electorate with a range of key investments to create jobs and provide economic and social value for the local communities, including: improving berthing and landside infrastructure to support exports through a \$10 million upgrade to the port of Bell Bay, which will benefit the coming hydrogen industry and existing businesses in forestry and the minerals sector; an expanded Northern Employment And Business Hub at Bell Bay, helped by a \$2 million Job Ready Fund for essential tools for job seekers; expanding Area Connect service where no easy transport options exist; and a \$400 000 worker connect portal linking businesses and job seekers. There is also funding for Youth Connectors for existing hubs at Sorell, Glenorchy and importantly, for me, George Town, to focus on young Tasmanians.

I also make special mention of the budget allocation for some targeted dredging of the Tamar River. There will be \$4 million over the next two years for a program that will see greatly improved access to the river for institutions such as the Tamar Rowing Club and the Tamar Yacht Club. Importantly, a further \$4 million is allocated over the next four years for the establishment and operation of a governance program to steer the future, long-term health and vitality of this most important natural asset. There may be some light at the end of what is a long tunnel.

While it is easy to become numb to the large numbers contained in a document such as the Budget and feel somewhat disconnected from numbers like \$10.7 billion or \$8 billion, it is at the other end of the scale where, in some way, the numbers are more relatable, more real. The George Town RSL Sub-Branch is a progressive organisation focused heavily on the welfare of veterans and their families, providing advocacy and support. The branch is in the main street of George Town and includes a fabulous display of military uniforms and equipment. There is an excellent kitchen and dining space, and there is also a space upstairs that provides a potentially quieter environment for veterans to watch a movie or read. The problem is that space is only accessible by a devilishly steep stairs and aged, or in some cases incapacitated, veterans are not a great mix. I am pleased to report in this years' Budget there is a very welcome \$40 000 to install a wheelchair-capable lift into the George Town RSL Sub-branch. As I say it is not always the big things.

George Town RSL is just one example of this Budget having a positive and welcome impact on the division of Windermere. There are other great examples which include: \$380 000 for a new artisan's guild in George Town; \$200 000 to the George Town District Hospital for some much-needed upgraded equipment; \$276 000 for a range of improvements at the Hillwood recreational hub; \$22 000 for sound and on-air equipment and a new phone expansion for the WAY FM radio station, an important piece of infrastructure for many people in the community; funding of \$25 000 for repairs and the completion of the historic site at the Mount Direction semaphore station; \$250 000 towards the establishment of a new multicultural hub in the north of the state, at the Migrant Resource Centre at Mowbray; and \$70 000 for the construction of a new men's shed at Lilydale.

I will move now onto some of the sports initiatives that are happening in my area. I thought it was important to take some time to thank the minister. Sports and recreation are one of those things that reaches into the lives of almost all Tasmanians. There are thousands of participants and supporting volunteers, not to mention the many hundreds of pieces of sporting infrastructure throughout the state, and maintaining and keeping those up to a usable level is a big and important job. The Budget commits more than \$38 million, with over 140 sports organisations to deliver programs and infrastructure statewide.

Funding includes: \$10 million towards Improving the Playing Field Grants Program, assisting sporting clubs with upgrades to changerooms, toilets, shower facilities, lighting, security, fencing, parking, scoreboards, drainage and other works; a further \$10 million for Solar Power Sports Club no interest loan scheme for solar system installation to help sporting clubs save money on their energy bills.

Barriers to participation, particularly for our young people, are reduced with a doubling of the successful Ticket to Play voucher program, providing \$200 in vouchers to help eligible children to become involved in sports and activities. That is an investment of \$3 million.

In sporting infrastructure in Windermere, there is \$750 000 towards the \$1.5 million redevelopment of the Northern Hockey Centre at St Leonards. For anyone who has been there, the centre is over three decades old and does not quite measure up to contemporary standards in some areas. The redevelopment will provide modern fit-for-purpose facilities for the dozens of clubs and thousands of people who utilise them. This will include improved disability access, refurbished change rooms, function centre and spectator areas.

Ms Rattray - Will that be used for soccer as well?

Mr DUIGAN - As far as I know, yes; but I would have to check that.

What I can tell you is that it has been a massive year and even bigger week for the Lilydale Football Club, which is celebrating its centenary in 2021. Even more exciting than that, potentially for the first time, in I believe in its NTFA history, this weekend both men's teams - the reserves and the seniors - will feature in the grand final.

Ms Forrest - The Redpa team won all but the seniors, last weekend.

Mr DUIGAN - That is the big dance, the seniors. Well done, Redpa. Indeed, grass roots are super important.

This will be a huge day for the town and for the club, and without pre-empting what might be a dream double, whatever happens they will celebrate. They will have good reason to do that because not only has the club had a great year, there will be \$350 000 towards the extension of the Lilydale Football Club clubrooms. The club is 100 years old. The clubrooms are in the order of that, and this is very welcome funding. It provides an upgrade, as I said, to the clubrooms, accessible toilets, covered viewing area and the purchase of a new electronic scoreboard. It is going to be very flash. It is going to be a great place to unfurl the premierships flags next season.

Ms Rattray - And set a big precedent for the rest of the clubs too, by the way.

Mr DUIGAN - Well, that is right and it is an ongoing process no doubt. But it is not just football in Lilydale; there is funding of \$190 000 toward the Lilydale Bowls Club for a synthetic green which will allow year-round competition. As the point was being made by other members, like many of our country towns in close proximity to major centres, Lilydale is experiencing growth and demand and the growing pains that are associated with that.

I should also mention, there are some things happening outside of Lilydale: \$80 000 for a new communications system at the Elphin Sports Centre and \$78 000 -

Ms Rattray - What about disability access? That is the biggest issue.

Mr DUIGAN - It is coming. It is happening. Watch this space, we will fix that.

Ms Rattray - Right.

Mr DUIGAN - And \$78 000 for a new roof at the George Town Community Bowls Club. One final area of the Budget that I want to highlight is housing. No previous Tasmanian government has experienced this level of economic strength, together with population growth. Nor has any previous government responded with such strong measures to deal with the increased pressure on housing.

We all understand that stable and safe housing is critical for Tasmanians and that is why the Government is increasing supply at record levels. \$615 million will be invested to build more houses, to provide more homelessness accommodation places, to help more Tasmanians into home ownership.

In the electorate of Windermere, which has its own challenges in the space of housing, these investments will lead to more land being released to the market and housing built for Tasmanians who need it. This will include more than 50 lots of land in a new subdivision in George Town, more than 60 new social housing dwellings across the electorate, from Launceston all the way up the East Tamar to George Town and at least three units of supported accommodation for people experiencing mental illness.

These are the outcomes that will be delivered through until the end of June 2023, with possibly more work to come as the Government completes its next Affordable Housing Action Plan, which commences from June 2023 onward. Across the state, the Government will build 3500 new homes by 2027, adding an additional 2000 homes to the current plan to deliver 1500 homes by 2023.

The Government will also develop the first ever comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy, which will consider demand across both the public and private sectors, and formulate strategies to deliver sustainable outcomes for all Tasmanians. I think that is very important.

I commend the Government, for its commitment to the issue of housing and the others I have mentioned previously. This is an important budget and I believe this is a good budget. As noted by S&P Global Ratings, Tasmania is on a path to operating surpluses and debt levels are likely to remain lower than other states. The projections are strong and there is record spending in health, education and housing. These are the rewards of a stable, majority, Liberal government.

Mr President, I note the Budget and I adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

[5.34 p.m.]

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

That the Council at its rising adjourns until 11am on Wednesday, 1 September 2021.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT - Mr President, I move -

That the Council does now adjourn.

Sue Neill-Fraser - Case

[5.35 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Thank you Mr President. This is my first adjournment speech in my thirteenth year of representing Tasmanians in this place - such is the very seriousness of this issue, which I believe deserves the attention of the members in this Chamber and delivered to the Tasmanian people recorded on video and accessed via *Hansard*. I also acknowledge a number of the advocates for and supporters of Sue Neill-Fraser who are present in the Chamber today.

My intentions are first to bring us together to right a wrong and secondly to have the Attorney-General join us in that quest. Many of us would be aware that Sue Neill-Fraser has spent 12 years in prison for the murder of her partner, Bob Chappell, on the *Four Winds* yacht on Australia Day 2009. Our community has been divided about her guilt, some being certain that her guilt was well established, others not giving up the fight to clear her name.

This case will not rest and for good reason. We have all received the recently published papers by Hugh Selby and Barbara Etter, sent to us by the former premier and former attorney-general, Lara Giddings. None of us can ignore these papers establish a miscarriage of justice now that we are aware of the following issues:

- (1) An inadequate investigation and tunnel vision by police which led to obvious lines of inquiry being ignored or barely followed up.
- (2) Police failure to provide to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (the ODPP) the full disclosure of all relevant information.
- (3) Failures within the ODPP to ensure that their director and the defence received all of the material supplied by the police.
- (4) False evidence being put before the jury.
- (5) A conflict of interest within the ODPP that personal interests had interfered with the proper conduct of the case.

- (6) An acquiescence in delay that entailed that Ms Neill-Fraser's application for leave to appeal took over three years.
- (7) Further delays so that the prisoner then waited almost another two years to have her appeal heard.
- (8) Despite several sound appeal grounds being available, the March appeal was run on one issue only for which the only witness, a young woman, was not adequately prepared, managed or supported. During cross-examination her evidence was abandoned by those who had intended to rely upon it.
- (9) The appeal court being misled in final submissions by an incorrect answer from the DPP about the significance of one of the sightings of another dinghy, a grey dinghy, alongside the yacht at a critical time.

Central to the case are the sworn admissions in 2019 of that young woman that she was on the yacht that Australia Day with named males and that Bob Chappell was assaulted. She also stated that Ms Neill-Fraser was not there. Supporting her admission that she vomited while on the deck of the yacht, is a large DNA sample on the deck which was matched to her in March 2010, seven months after Ms Neill-Fraser's arrest. At trial, this DNA was said by the prosecution to be secondary transfer and a red herring and not left there by the young woman. However, it is clear that she left it. It is also clear that in 2010 one of our local forensic scientists thought so too.

Tragically and inexplicably, the young woman was never offered immunity from prosecution. This is quite extraordinary as it must have hampered any proper inquiries about those males she named.

So far, attempts to get the Attorney-General, Ms Elise Archer, to involve herself in this case, have been rebuffed with the reasons that this is before the courts and that such involvement would offend separation of powers. It is true we cannot speak of matters before the court and I am being careful not to but we can speak of matters not before the court, which are the issues I highlight tonight and that are so well documented in the Etter Selby papers.

Issues that were not presented at this year's appeal in early March include:

- (1) Neither the prosecutor nor the defence knew that key evidence allegedly showing the yacht's dinghy, a white with blue trim Zodiac - and hence Sue Neill-Fraser to be at the yacht at 5 p.m. - was false. However, a police officer and a DPP officer, both at the trial, knew otherwise. The supposed presence of that dinghy supported the prosecution case; its absence supported the defence.
- (2) Once that false evidence is removed, the evidence of other witnesses who saw another dinghy at the yacht corroborates the young woman's sworn admission of having been on the yacht with named males.
- (3) A forensic officer misled the court as to the presence of the blood in the Four Winds dinghy and countenanced a highly misleading photograph,

when the prosecutor knew that there was no evidence or blood at all. The prosecutor admitted in 2017 he was ignorant of these falsities and he did not understand the basic scientific principles.

The defence had the necessary laboratory reports, but failed to understand them. Blood in the dinghy supported the prosecution theory that Neill-Fraser disposed of the body in the river using that dinghy - no blood and no support for the body disposal theory.

- (4) The prosecution alleged the accused had used the winches and ropes on the yacht to get the body from below so she could place it into the dinghy, but an expert report explains how the relevant winch could not function as required to substantiate this theory.
- (5) A red jacket was found onshore. The police failed to bag and tag it and then lost it for several days, finding it in a police car park. The jury was not told about those problems. Ms Neill-Fraser's DNA and that of several other unidentified persons was found on the jacket. At the time of testing in early 2009, the young woman's DNA was not in the database. There are no public results for those unidentified persons' DNA being tested with advanced DNA technology or subsequently checked against the young woman or those she has named. Repeated requests this year that it be checked or any results provided have been refused.
- (6) A prosecution lawyer who, it seems, had an active role regarding both the blood in the dinghy and the lack of disclosure at the trial to the prosecution and defence about the false sighting of the Four Winds dinghy, then played an active role both in resisting Ms Neill-Fraser's quest to be allowed a fresh appeal and in the prosecution case, presented the recent appeal. This is a clear conflict of interest between their duty as a prosecutor and a personal interest to prevent their seeming shortcomings at trial being revealed.
- (7) There is now evidence police chose not to properly investigate the incidents of break-ins to yachts, they failed to check critical mobile phone records and they failed to follow up reports about the young woman and her known associates. All those with responsibility have failed to act. They first received written advice about some of these shortcomings in August of 2019. They resolutely ignored it. Likewise, they have shut their eyes to the latest information. These past few weeks we have all had the benefit of a full exposé, the results of years of RTI requests, the seeking of expert advice and detailed forensic analysis.

Our courts have been misled. A woman has been incarcerated for 12 years as a consequence. The second limb of the Attorney-General's refusal thus far to take action is the claim that it would breach the separation of powers. The Attorney-General is the First Law Officer. She has a duty to protect all Tasmanians and in light of the information that has been so expertly gathered and collated in the Etter-Selby papers, she must use her common law right

to go to the court immediately and seek its permission to have this material presented to the court with the opposing arguments, so that the court is properly informed of the issues should they be before it.

It is my understanding the Attorney-General has been asked to take the case from the DPP under her common law power, so as to seek to maintain public confidence in the courts by seeking leave to open the appeal. It appears there are examples of the Attorney-General intervening when she is inclined to do so.

In order for this House to be better informed I request the Government Leader arrange a briefing from Ms Barbara Etter, APM, former senior police officer, inaugural CEO of the Tasmanian Integrity Commission and former solicitor for Sue Neill-Fraser, and former attorney-general and premier, Lara Giddings, for every member of this place as soon as possible, so we can fully grasp the extent of the wrongs.

I would like each and every member to consider, what if Sue Neill-Fraser was a member of your family, a friend or a person you represented in your electorate? I raise this matter here in this place as this place is here to protect the rights of all Tasmanians, to ensure proper process because I believe we must put this right for now and into the future.

Mr President, I seek leave to table the associated papers.

Leave granted.

The Council adjourned at 5.44 p.m.