



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Wednesday 7 September 2022**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Wednesday 7 September 2022**

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

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Member for Clark - Hon Madeleine Ogilvie**

[10.02 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I inform the House that Ms Ogilvie will be absent from question time today as she is unwell. I will be taking questions today for the ministerial portfolios of Small Business, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Science and Technology, Racing and Heritage.

## **QUESTIONS**

**Basslink Services Agreement - Effect of Termination**

**Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.02 a.m.]

On 10 February this year, your Government and Hydro Tasmania terminated the Basslink Services Agreement. This agreement enabled Hydro Tasmania to sell power into the National Electricity Market when prices were high in exchange for a fixed annual fee. Can you confirm that your decision to terminate the Basslink Services Agreement means that Hydro Tasmania has not only been unable to profit from the extraordinary prices in the national market, but is actively losing significant sums of money?

## **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Tasmanians can be sure that our state's energy security remains strong, and that this Government will always act in the best interests of Tasmanians.

The Tasmanian Government and Hydro Tasmania decided in November last year to protect and progress Tasmania's legal rights in relation to the Basslink cable. Since then, I am advised, the state and Hydro Tasmania remained actively engaged in the Basslink receivership and administration process, acting, as I say, in Tasmania's best interests.

Our actions follow the 2020 arbitration, considering the cause of the 2016 major Basslink outage, which found in the state and Hydro Tasmania's favour, confirming the link cannot meet the capacity requirements set out in Basslink's Services Agreement - the BSA - and that the owner of Basslink should pay compensation to the state. The state and Hydro Tasmania took further steps in that process on 10 February 2022, terminating the Basslink intercreditor agreement and Hydro Tasmania terminating the BSA.

I am advised that the termination of the BSA has not and will not impact Tasmania's energy security. This remains on firm footing with strong hydro storage levels, the Cattle Hill and Granville Harbour windfarms, and the cable remaining in service.

The receivers are conducting a competitive process to find a new owner for Basslink. The state and the Hydro Tasmania are in discussions with bidders and the process has tight confidentiality arrangements to preserve its integrity. I am advised that the receivers currently expect an outcome from the process in September 2022.

### **Hydro Tasmania - Losses**

#### **Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.05 a.m.]

Can you confirm that Hydro Tasmania is incurring significant losses so far, this financial year? If so, how much has it lost in the financial year to date?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I refer the member to my previous answer. The state and Hydro Tasmania took first steps in the process on 10 February, as you have highlighted in your question, terminating the Basslink intercreditor agreement and Hydro Tasmania terminating the BSA.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Tasmanians can be assured that our state's energy security remains strong and the Government will always act in the best interests of Tasmania.

Thank goodness, those over there are not in control of energy security.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. The question was very specific and the Premier has not gone anywhere near answering it. I ask you to draw his attention to the question, which is about whether Hydro is incurring significant losses this financial year to date and ask if he can please go anywhere near answering that question? It is in the Tasmanian public's interest.

**Mr SPEAKER** - As the honourable member knows, I cannot put words into the Premier's mouth. All I can do is ask the Premier to be relevant to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Mr Speaker, Tasmanians can be assured that this Government will always act in the best interests of Tasmanians, whether that comes to energy security, financial stability as has been demonstrated over eight years of sound financial management in very difficult circumstances.

## **Salmon Industry**

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

[10.08 a.m.]

Tasmania's home-grown salmon industry has been gobbled up by international corporations with long records of environmental and workplace crimes. Your Government's weak environment laws are designed to keep on growing industrial salmon at any cost. You are deaf to communities calling out the filth and plastic pollution. The slime, dead zones, slaughter of protected species, loss of marine life are grist to the mill of big business. From Long Bay to Cape Barren, to your own marine backyard in the north-west, this industry is out of control.

Do you acknowledge Tasmanians who love our exquisite and fragile marine world have no options but to peacefully resist your pro-industry laws? How do you feel, that on your watch, people will be locked up for loving Tasmania and wanting to protect our environment from being trashed?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question and I know her considerable interest in this matter.

I do not accept the premise of the question around any industry allowed to grow at any cost. Clearly, we have demonstrated that as a government. When the Greens held the balance of power between 2010 and 2014, what did you do to strengthen the regulations around the salmon industry? Very little I would have to say.

**Greens members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - When you had control of the salmon industry, you did nothing in terms of strengthening the regulations. You wasted an opportunity, which we took up, when it comes to ensuring that the salmon industry had a strong social licence in the Tasmanian community by improving the independence of the regulation over the course of the last eight years.

**Greens members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In my tenure as minister for primary industries and water we had many discussions around salmon. I remember it well. It was a very volatile time in the Tasmanian salmon industry but we made significant inroads into strengthening regulation, ensuring the independence of the regulator - in other words, outside of the department -

**Greens members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That was achieved and a compliance regime as well, in allowing the salmon industry to -

**Dr Woodruff** - You just got better at spin.

**Dr Broad** - It is disappointing that I got kicked out for less, that was all.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will always ensure strong biosecurity regulations to enhance finfish farming biosecurity management -

**Greens members** interjecting.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order - and I will take Dr Broad's point. The Greens have asked a serious question of the Premier and it is therefore inappropriate, and against the Standing Orders, to continually interject on him while he is trying to answer the question. Please stop interjecting and allow the Premier to answer the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have made comments in the past, and more recently, regarding our support of the mining industry, our support of foresters, our support of farmers, fishers, and those in aquaculture. We will always be in their corner but we will also be in the corner of continuous improvement. That was demonstrated when I was minister for primary industries and continues through other ministers for primary industries ensuring we have a strong compliance regime, independent regulator -

**Dr Woodruff** - Go and have a look at the slime in Long Bay.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and continuous improvement to ensure that not only do we maintain growth in the salmon industry and support thousands of jobs in rural and regional Tasmania -

**Dr Woodruff** - That are disappearing every day.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - but also our commitment to continuous improvement. I am advised the department has consulted on three proposed standards that build on existing regulatory requirements for sustainable industry, as I have previously outlined. These proposed standards are the biosecurity regulations to enhance finfish farming biosecurity management; an environmental standard to improve the environmental regulation and ensure a contemporary monitoring and environmental management framework; and marine farming operations to ensure statewide consistency through standardised marine farming management controls across all aquaculture sectors.

The standard aims to provide a contemporary best-practice framework - which you have always wanted - through continuous improvement that ensures consistency and streamlining of regulation across all sectors, while also building on existing voluntary measures undertaken



by the industry. Once finalised, ongoing compliance with the standards will be monitored by NRE Tas and the independent Environmental Protection Authority.

I understand where you want to get to. You do not want a single fish grown in Tasmania. That will never happen under this Government. We will always support a sustainable aquaculture industry. We will always support the thousands of jobs around rural and regional Tasmania, but we will also always advocate for, and support, continuous improvement.

### **Tasracing - Alleged Editing of Greyhound Racing Replays**

#### **Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.14 a.m.]

The purpose of question time is for members to ask a question on behalf of the community to a minister in a public and recorded forum. It is an important part of ministerial accountability. That is why, yesterday, I asked the minister, Ms Ogilvie, on behalf of the community I represent about Tasracing's new practice to edit race videos to cut out injuries or death. They want to hear her stand in this place and answer as minister responsible. The sanitising of race videos to remove footage of falls, injuries and death is nothing more than a PR cover-up of publicly funded carnage. This is the very opposite of the improved transparency regarding animal welfare that she claimed in her response to the e-petition.

Premier, you want integrity to be the hallmark of your leadership. Is your Government and Tasracing too ashamed and embarrassed to show the public the horrors that occur in greyhound racing? Will you show leadership where your minister has failed and immediately direct Tasracing to publish the full and unedited videos of each race instead of hiding the injuries and deaths from public view, and do you have confidence, Premier, in your Racing minister?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The answer to your last question is yes, of course I do. I have strong confidence in all our ministers and our team. I understand the community's concern regarding the importance of animal welfare across all three codes of racing.

Without wanting to again provide a bit of a history lesson, I was also minister for racing for four years. I well recall watching *Four Corners* at 8.30 on a Monday evening and seeing the horror of what the *Four Corners* report highlighted. I was in the middle of my dinner and frankly finished it right there. I was appalled, horrified and sickened by what I saw on that *Four Corners* program. Very early the next morning, I announced a review of the then Racing Services Tasmania and, following that review, implemented a number of welfare measures, including setting up the Office of Racing Integrity.

We are always committed to improving animal welfare outcomes in the racing industry across all three codes - and again, there needs to be continuous improvement. The Government and Tasracing are investing more funds than ever before into greyhound and horse welfare to ensure they are treated with dignity and care before, during and after their race days.

Vision of races is the property of Tasracing, which makes replays available at their discretion. I am advised that across all three codes - thoroughbred, harness and greyhounds - any incident resulting in injury to an animal or participant, in most cases Tasracing does not believe the incident should be broadcast. I am advised - as incorrectly asserted by you yesterday, Ms Johnston - that this is not a recent change and has been a longstanding approach since 2011 when replays were uploaded to YouTube. This is also a common approach amongst national and international racing jurisdictions. To ensure transparency regarding animal welfare, Tasracing provides monthly reporting on greyhound injuries and provides annual statistics on track injuries, euthanasias and retirement and rehoming statistics.

I believe this is the right approach, being more and increasingly transparent, as was the case many years ago. I understand where the member is coming from with respect to advocacy and ensuring the highest possible animal welfare standards when it comes to our three codes of racing, thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds and, again, we will always look to continuous improvement with these matters.

### **Health - Elective Surgery Waiting Lists**

#### **Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.19 a.m.]

Can you update the House on progress achieved to reduce elective surgery waiting lists through the Liberal Government's additional investment in elective surgery activity?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Wood for his question and his interest in this matter. Our Government will always take action to address the issues that matter to Tasmanians. As Premier, I recognise that health is the number-one priority for all Tasmanians where Tasmanians can access their health care in a timely manner at the right place and at the right time. That is why I held onto the Health portfolio, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolio, to reflect our Government's priorities aligning with the Tasmanian people's priorities when it comes to healthcare.

As Minister for Health, one of the key areas of focus for me is ensuring that more Tasmanians receive elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frames. When I came to the role I was alarmed that too many people were not receiving their elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frames. Why? It is clear that once you go over boundary then there is a risk and likelihood of becoming sicker and requiring more attention from our health system. That is why we developed our patient-focused statewide elective surgery four-year plan in consultation with our surgical leaders. We backed this strategy by committing to increase funding of \$196.4 million over four years to deliver around 30 000 extra elective surgeries and endoscopies over the four-year time frame to ensure Tasmanians get the care they need sooner.

The increased funding for the plan enables investment in a range of strategies, including opening and staffing additional surgical and medical beds, upgrading theatres and related equipment and investing in partnerships to purchase beds and elective surgery from private hospitals to ensure public patients get the care they need sooner.

Following the release of the statewide elective surgery four-year plan in August last year, I am pleased today to provide an update on the progress made in the first year of implementing that plan. The data from the summary of the year-one progress report, which will be published on the Department of Health's website, shows improvements in key elective surgery performance indicators during 2021-2022 financial year.

The key achievements regarding elective surgery include: in the 2021-22 financial year, the Tasmanian Health service delivered more activity than ever before, with delivery of a record 20 293 elective surgical admissions. This is an extra 1749 or 9.4 per cent more procedures than last year.

There are now fewer people on elective surgery wait lists due to the additional activity, with 1790 fewer patients waiting for elective surgery and 1514 fewer patients waiting for an endoscopy. This represents a reduction of 16 per cent to both the elective surgery and endoscopy waiting lists in the 2021-22 financial year.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Why do you not like good news? This is all good news. I receive letters from most of you regarding issues of healthcare and this is good news that you should be welcoming. We have more to go, but this is good news for your constituents.

We have strengthened our partnerships with private hospitals through a \$20 million fund in 2021-22, with a further \$12 million in this financial year, 2022-23, to build on the strong partnerships with the private sector to enable suitable patients to receive care sooner in the private system.

We have delivered enhanced capacity in our public hospitals by investing in infrastructure upgrades and purchasing new equipment to increase capacity within our public hospitals to deliver additional elective surgery and endoscopies over the next few years. We have delivered these significant achievements in a context of continuing to respond to the pandemic. This is a remarkable achievement of our health professionals and those on the front line. With all the pressures and disruption of the pandemic, we have people who have worked so hard to deliver for Tasmanians.

Despite the pandemic, I am advised that Tasmania was one of only two states to achieve a reduction in their elective surgery wait lists over the past year. The other state is South Australia which managed a 3 per cent reduction. The data shows that our Government's significant investment to deliver additional elective surgery activity through innovative approaches is already making a real difference to the wait lists -

**Dr Broad** - Nearly 10 000.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I think it was 9367. I stand to be corrected, but around 9300. It was 12 200 in January 2021, I am advised, so it is coming down.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Wind up please, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is good news for your constituents, but there is more to do. The implementation of the next three years of the plan will continue to be guided by statewide

Surgical and Perioperative Services Committee, which I have met on a couple of occasions, to ensure that we meet our annual surgery targets and work towards our goal of a sustainable waitlist.

I will finalise my contribution and thank all our hardworking staff in our hospitals, who have worked so hard to schedule, deliver, and provide operative care to support additional elective surgery activity over the past year. I know every single Tasmanian would support me in thanking all our hard-working frontline health professionals.

### **Water and Energy Trades Centre for Excellence**

#### **Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for SKILLS, TRAINING and WORKFORCE GROWTH, Mr ELLIS**

[10.26 a.m.]

When your Government first announced the Trades and Water Centre of Excellence in 2018, it had a budget of \$7 million and was expected to be completed in 2020. In the 2021 budget it was renamed the Energy Trades and Water Centre of Excellence, the total cost had tripled to \$21 million, and the expected completion date was pushed back to 2022. In the latest Budget the name was again shuffled around to the Water and Energy Trades Centre for Excellence - or the WET Centre - with total cost of \$26 million and an expected completion date way out in 2024. You have recently touted the troubled WET Centre as a solution for the fact that your Government has clearly dropped the ball on skills and training, with an under resourced TasTAFE that is not meeting the needs of industry.

Can you confirm that industry reps have informed you that the electrical trades facility in the WET Centre is too small and will not be fit for purpose? Not only that, can you confirm that there is no office space currently allocated in the half-constructed WET Centre building for the close to 40 teachers who will one day hope to work there?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for the question. It is nice to get a plug for one of our projects from those opposite. You are right: we are spending more because we are building more, because we are doing more training. An interesting thing about the approach we have taken is that we want to grow our economy, meaning more jobs, apprentices, and training, so we have to build more stuff. We are proud of the fact that we building the Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr ELLIS** - I am gas fitter and a plumber. I was touring there the other day and saw the world-class sandpit training facility for plumbers, which is outstanding, the gas fitting section taking shape, and the electrical area taking shape.

We are a big supporter of training. We are very proud to be building a centre of excellence for those trades -

**Mr O'Byrne** - A centre of mediocrity on your watch.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ELLIS** - Obviously, those on the other side will whinge and complain whenever anything good gets done in Tasmania. Their solution is always fewer people, fewer jobs, and less training. Those are easier problems to manage: the problems of decay, decline, and neglect.

We want to manage the problems of growth. That is why we are building this centre. It is part of a broader campus. There is a large number of facilities on site, so there is a range of office spaces in that area, a range of online training spaces in that area. This site is particularly focused on the practical, hands-on work that our sparkies, plumbers, gas fitters and others want to be doing. We are very proud of that build because it means more sparkies.

**Mr O'Byrne** - It is a long walk back mate. Do not go too far.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ELLIS** - Obviously, Mr O'Byrne is on record in this place voting against legislation which meant more training, which meant more pay for TAFE teachers. You voted against it. If that is the way you want to approach TAFE and training in Tasmania, that is fine.

We are proud of our record. It means that we can employ teachers flexibly so that they can train more people. It puts the learners at the centre of learning. We will always back those people with new facilities like the WET Centre, and we will keep getting on with the job of training more apprentices.

### **Hydro Tasmania - Losses**

**Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT**

[10.29 a.m.]

Can you confirm Hydro Tasmania has incurred a year-to-date loss of approximately \$100 million?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. At one point you might think it demonstrates his and the Labor Party's interest in renewable energy and supporting renewable energy in this state, so I ask the question, do you support Marinus Link?

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, it is a rhetorical question because the question related to Basslink. I am referring to Marinus Link, which is now on the national agenda, put there by the Prime Minister.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45. I want to read back your excellent ruling from 22 March. You said:

Before you start, minister, standing order 45 has been raised in this Chamber a number of times, allowing considerable latitude in the content -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Is your point of order on relevance?

**Mr WINTER** - You have previously ruled in this place allowing considerable latitude.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Do you have a point of order?

**Mr WINTER** - Yes, I am trying to make it, under standing order 45.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Thank you, you can return to your seat. The question is relevance and I accept that point and I will always ask ministers to be relevant to the answer. The reality is that the minister was only speaking for 20 seconds before you raised the point of order. The minister has an appropriate amount of time. He can go into a preamble to answer the question but I will always ask ministers to take note of the question.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thanks very much, Mr Speaker. For the Opposition, the truth hurts. We have had two questions from the Opposition this morning regarding Basslink, Hydro Tasmania and the state Government and our response. The Premier has answered very clearly to the first two questions. We now have a third question regarding Hydro Tasmania and Basslink. With respect to Marinus Link, the Opposition is opposed to opening up our renewable energy development opportunities in Tasmania -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. While this is not a Greens question, under standing order 45, relevance, the question asked by the Opposition had nothing at all to do with the Marinus Link. It was to do with Hydro's losses. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I can certainly do that. Minister, if you could be relevant to the question.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is entirely relevant to the question because it is very important for Hydro Tasmania. Hydro Tasmania is one of the largest government business enterprises and is absolutely integral to our renewable energy development plans for the future, including pumped hydro and being part of the Battery of the Nation. These plans are in place and are opposed by the Labor Party in opposition on a state level -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45. The minister is making a mockery of the standards of ministers expected in this House. It was a simple question with no preamble. I ask you to draw his attention to the question, otherwise you should sit him down.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I have already drawn the minister to the issue of relevance. I cannot put words or tell the minister how he should answer the question. It is as simple as that. Minister, if you could continue.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The question related directly to Hydro Tasmania, which is a key ingredient to our renewable energy development plans. We have every confidence in Hydro Tasmania to deliver for Tasmania. The Premier has already indicated energy security is not at risk. Dam levels are at 39.5 per cent, a very good level for this time of year -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, let them squabble on the other side. That is why the federal parties intervened on you. You do not like it. You are squabbling and divided. That is the fourth time.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. You have made a ruling in the past that said:

I also note the practice of the House of Representatives where, provided a minister is addressing the policy topic which is the subject of the question, the answer is deemed relevant.

Mr Speaker, he is now getting onto topics that are completely irrelevant to the question. I ask you to bring him back to the question.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Thank you. I take the point of order on relevance. I have already indicated to the minister that he needs to be relevant to the question. I will not take any more points of order on this but I will sit the minister down if you are not interested in listening to the answer.

**Mr BARNETT** - I appreciate that, Mr Speaker, because it is really important.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, while there is some silence in this Chamber, Hydro Tasmania is integral to our renewable energy development plans in this state. They are essential to our plans which include Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation, green hydrogen, and so much more - to jobs, development opportunities and a cleaner world. In terms of Hydro Tasmania, I have every confidence that they will deliver for the state of Tasmania. The Premier has made it clear that energy security is not at risk and we have confidence in Hydro Tasmania.

## **Hydro Tasmania - Losses**

**Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES,  
Mr BARNETT**

[10.36 a.m.]

I am going to ask you this very carefully and clearly: can you confirm Hydro Tasmania has incurred a year-to-date loss of approximately \$100 million?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, as I have indicated, we have every confidence in Hydro Tasmania. Members have the opportunity to scrutinise Hydro Tasmania during the usual course of scrutiny hearings. We have every confidence in terms of energy security and delivering for Tasmania and Tasmanians. We will stand up to protect Tasmania's interests and will continue to do so.

## **Hospitality - Revitalising Hospitality Venues Grant Program**

**Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for HOSPITALITY and EVENTS,  
Mr STREET**

[10.37 a.m.]

We know that it has been a tough couple of years or more in the hospitality industry. Can you update the House on the Tasmanian Government's support for our vital hospitality industry and how we are enabling local venues to refresh and diversify following the very difficult time they have had?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her genuine interest in the sector. It was a pleasure to join with her and the Premier in Scottsdale at the Lords Hotel last week while we were there for our regional Cabinet meeting to launch the new \$750 000 Revitalising Hospitality Venues Grant Program. The program provides funding of \$5000 to eligible hospitality businesses to help deliver projects or purchase equipment that will build capacity, continue to support the COVID-19 recovery, or assist to improve productivity.

It might be that a venue needs freshening up, it might need new audio equipment to improve the experience for the patrons, or they might be looking to create a new avenue of entertainment to bring in more patrons. We want venues to show their creativity and tell us what the individual needs of their business and venue are.

The hospitality industry contributed more than \$720 million to the Tasmanian economy last year and we are confident that the investment it makes in the state will continue to grow. We are helping that growth with this new grant program, as it will inject much-needed funds into the sector and allow business owners to prepare for the busy summer ahead. We believe the hospitality sector is the backbone of our tourism industry and our local way of life and the Tasmanian Government has always been a strong supporter of our operators and their venues.



I am pleased to be able to advise the House this morning that as of this morning, the Department of State Growth has approved 127 grants to hospitality businesses equating to \$635 000 and the recipients are statewide, with 81 in the south, 32 in the north and east, and 14 on the north-west coast. These recipients have either already been paid or are being paid today and I am sure that the remaining 23 available grants will be snapped up before the day is out. It is one week since launching this program and we are almost fully subscribed; one week and there are 127 Tasmanian businesses with \$5000 in their bank account to help deliver their revitalisation projects.

Mr Speaker, last weekend I was out in the community with our Liberal candidate for Pembroke, Gregory Brown. With his background as a publican, I know -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. This is right out of line. This is a politicisation of question time to promote a candidate.

**Mr SPEAKER** - What is the point of order?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Relevance, to hospitality. He is talking about the Pembroke election.

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is question time and you have the opportunity to ask whatever questions you like of different ministers. The minister has been asked a specific question and he is allowed to answer it how he likes.

**Mr STREET** - Mr Speaker, the irony of the Greens' leader interjecting on my mentioning our candidate's background in the hospitality industry when her colleague spouts in this place every day that she is an epidemiologist as her excuse for speaking on whatever she wants to is just typical of the hypocrisy that goes on from that section of the Chamber.

We are continuing to help these small businesses deliver a fantastic experience to their patrons. I urge any hospitality business still keen to apply for a grant to do so quickly before they are gone. We are excited to see the projects come to life and I am excited to see what this hand-up to the sector can deliver as I visit more hospitality venues over the summer.

### **Tasmanian Devils - Road Kill Numbers**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.41 a.m.]

Today is Threatened Species Day, the same day that we find government figures confirm 220 endangered Tasmanian devils have been killed on the state's roads in the last 18 months. In your own backyard, minister, we understand that at least 158 healthy devils have died on the 25 kilometre stretch of the industrial Woolnorth Road. Wildlife carers contacted your office in January, desperate when the number of devil deaths was only 28. Seven months later 130 more devils have died painful, preventable deaths.

Minister, this is what the war on wildlife looks like: it looks like 158 of these dead devils.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, that is not appropriate, thank you. You know that props are not allowed in this Chamber.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is important for the minister to understand there are 158 dead animals.

Your response today was voluntary reductions and virtual fencing which we know does nothing. The devils need you to dramatically lower the speed limit on these roads and enforce that. While you dither, we are losing the battle and iconic species are creeping to extinction. What hope does Tasmania's 150 plus threatened species have when you will not even prioritise saving the Tasmanian devil?

## **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I do not thank her for the nasty little character assessment that comes with it, as usual. I think we are better than that in here.

I am happy to answer the question and to confirm that I was in Smithton, Circular Head, heading up past Montagu, the Woolnorth region, just last week with the team of people we have brought together and are working with specifically on the Circular Head healthy population of devils, which is very important. Our Government is concerned about the incidence of all roadkill on our roads -

**Ms O'Connor** - That is nice.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am answering your question - including the unfortunate high numbers of Tasmanian devils that are reported to have been killed in the Woolnorth region. We know the Woolnorth region has one of the highest reported rates of devil road kill. This is because the region supports some of the highest-known densities of Tasmanian devils in this -

**Dr Woodruff** - No, it is not. That is not the reason.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff. I have mentioned in this Chamber a number of times that when you ask a question it is not an invitation to be constantly interjecting. If you continue down this path, what I will do in the future is, after you have asked the question, I will then ask you to leave so we can listen to the minister in silence. Please, if you want to stay in the Chamber, do not interject.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The region supports some of the highest-known densities of Tasmanian devils in the state, influenced by high-quality devil habitat, combined with the continued absence of devil facial tumour disease in the region and the characteristics of local roads and road use. That is why we are working to protect the local population of this threatened species.

Our Government has joined forces with the Circular Head Council, the Cradle Coast Authority, key industries in the region and other stakeholders to encourage drivers to slow down in the Woolnorth region. The multi-faceted campaign will focus on a range of initiatives to help reduce the number of devils killed on our roads in this location as part of this collaborative approach.

We acknowledge that roadkill is a challenging issue to manage and relies on a range of stakeholders, including road owners, road managers and drivers to take action. Slowing down from dusk to dawn in high-risk areas remains the most effective way to reduce roadkill, although physical or engineering solutions may also be effective in specific situations.

We have committed to further engaging with the working group to determine our next steps on how the Government can best support the council, and Cradle Coast NRM on these matters. As part of the campaign, the Government has funded the installation of signs in hotspot locations to alert drivers to the risk and encourage them to slow down between dusk and dawn.

Last week, as I said, I joined Circular Head Council, Cradle Coast Authority, members of our Save the Tasmanian Devil Program, and representatives of Fonterra to inspect one of the newly installed signs and discuss the work of the working group and the council. These signs are just one part of the broader suite of education and awareness initiatives, and my department is taking a key, coordinating role with that.

Another focus for my department is coordinating the collection and dissemination of roadkill data which is very important to determining where, when and what kind of mitigation measures we can deploy as well as determining whether the measures have been effective.

Our Government is also committed to providing scientific information, advice and support for the reduction of speed limits in the Woolnorth area. However, speed limit reduction is ultimately a decision for the Transport Commissioner. If the local council, as the road owner, makes a submission to the Commissioner seeking changes to road speed in the area we will provide the supporting scientific evidence for that submission. The road owner makes a submission to the Transport Commissioner on issues of road speed changes.

I am also advised that Van Dairy, which operates in the area, is educating their staff about speed reduction. They are using bumper stickers to promote the message of 'Drive Safe for Devils'. Fonterra has introduced a voluntary speed limit reduction for their trucks going through the area and reducing night-time milk pick-ups.

Additionally, Tasmania Police is increasing patrols in the Woolnorth area after reports of excessive speeds and dangerous driving above the existing road speed limits. Importantly, the Circular Head Devil Roadkill Mitigation Fund, managed by the Cradle Coast NRM, has also been established, which will give interested organisations a chance to collaboratively fund roadkill reduction actions. We have had pledges from corporate land users in the area to a fund to support roadkill mitigation work.

My department is also working on a replacement platform for the previous Roadkill TAS app which closed last year when the developer withdrew their support. That is currently being road-tested with stakeholders and will soon be finalised for broader release.

We are clearly aware of the importance of the intact population of devils in the Woolnorth area and Circular Head: so is the local community, the local council, the Cradle Coast Authority, Van Dairy and Fonterra. We are working together and funding actions on a range of levels to address the risk to the devils. I commend all of those who have worked with us and we will continue to invest in solutions for the devil in the Woolnorth area.

## **Hydro Tasmania - Losses**

### **Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.48 a.m.]

You claim that you want to lead a government of integrity, but your ministers will not answer simple questions. Can you confirm that Hydro Tasmania has incurred a year-to-date loss of approximately \$100 million?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Our actions, and that of the Hydro Tasmania board, who are competent and skilled in these matters, have protected our state's interests in terms of our energy interests, energy security and financial interests as well. That will continue. We will continue to take expert legal advice on how to best support our state on what are very complex matters to do with the challenges of Basslink. I trust and rely on the professionalism and diligence on the board of Hydro Tasmania to manage the company and advise the Government to support and protect the best interests of energy security and our financial interests.

This is another example of Labor Opposition undermining the confidence in Tasmanian businesses.

## **Tasmania Police - Investment by Government**

### **Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS**

[10.50 a.m.]

I come from a small business background, so this is something that is extremely important to me. Can you provide details on how the Tasmanian Government is investing in Tasmania Police to ensure that we have police officers on the beat in our local communities to keep Tasmania safe?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague, Dean Young, for the question. He is right. Making sure that Tasmanians are safe and that our police are visible and connected to parts of the community is so important for communities, small businesses and families, to make sure that they have confidence that they are keeping Tasmanians safe. Our Government is committed to supporting our hard-working and dedicated police officers to keep Tasmanians' streets and roads safe. As a result of the hard-working police force, Tasmania is a very safe place to live. Our Government is increasing police numbers to ensure that we have more officers in our communities to remind people that unlawful and antisocial behaviour is just not on in Tasmania.

As a result of investments by this Government, Tasmania currently has its highest ever police contingent, with 1395 police officers. This historic number of police officers are out on our roads in a new highway patrol, they are on our streets engaging with the community and

enforcing law and order, as opposed to those opposite, who sacked one in 10 police officers when they had the opportunity to be in this portfolio.

**Ms O'Byrne** - But almost 10 on workers compensation and they are leaving the force in droves.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Bass, order, that is the third time that I have spoken to you today.

**Mr ELLIS** - They defunded the police before it was cool. We have even more to come, with 329 additional police officers coming into the force by July 2026. Because of the additional investment that our Government has made into police officers and rebuilding the front line, Tasmanians can expect to see even more police out on the beat in their communities. On Monday this week, police from the Clarence division, in the member for Franklin's electorate, completed high-visibility foot patrols within the shopping and transport districts of Clarence, including in the Rosny bus mall. I recognise and thank my friend and hopefully future colleague, Gregory Brown, the Liberal candidate for Pembroke, who has been out listening to his community on the matters important to them -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I want to raise a very concerning issue. The minister has just gone into actions by police that have been taken -

**Mr SPEAKER** - What is the point of order?

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Actually, it could be corruption. Is the minister saying that police were operating in Clarence because of the Pembroke election? Is that what you just said?

**Mr SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order.

**Ms O'Byrne** - That is outrageous.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take personal offence to that.

**Ms O'Byrne** - You should.

**Mr ELLIS** - I ask the member to withdraw unapologetically.

**Ms O'Connor** - She asked you a question.

**Mr ELLIS** - Sorry, unreservedly.

**Ms O'Byrne** - I am happy to unreservedly -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Without qualification.

**Ms O'Byrne** - I can finish the sentence, surely, Mr Speaker?

**Mr SPEAKER** - You were asked to withdraw.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I unreservedly withdraw the allegation of corruption, but I am concerned about what he is saying to the House.

**Mr SPEAKER** - No, without qualification.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. That was bizarre. It speaks to the incompetence of those opposite. Their candidate down there could not even organise a bin pick up. Gregory Brown is doing a fantastic job out there, listening to his community, advocating for their interest, he understands how important public safety is and a strong police presence.

**Ms O'Byrne** - You are politicising the police force.

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### **Member Suspended**

#### **Member for Bass - Ms O'Byrne**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Bass, you can leave the Chamber until after the MPI.

**Ms O'Byrne withdrew.**

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**Mr ELLIS** - He also understands the need for an increased presence of police in our bus mall shopping centres and community areas. These are matters that are important to everyday Tasmanians. They might not be for those opposite. They might not have concern for our communities. They certainly did not have concern for our cops when they sacked one in 10 cops in Tasmania.

I congratulate Tasmania Police for listening and responding to our communities, for making sure they are a visible presence. Foot patrols such as this occur regularly across our CBDs and complement the crime-focused task forces that Tasmanian Police undertake. For example, a three-day blitz undertaken in bus malls and retail precincts earlier this year to address antisocial behaviour resulted in eight arrests, two summons, two youth cautions, seven monetary infringements, three cautions and 16 formal directions to leave an area.

Tasmania Police work closely with local communities to discuss the incidents of crime and unlawful behaviour. I congratulate them for the hard work that all our police are doing out on the beat.

### **Hydro Tasmania - Financial Position**

**Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT**

[10.55 a.m.]

You have not denied that Hydro Tasmania has incurred a year-to-date loss of \$100 million, despite multiple opportunities to do so this morning. Given those revelations today that Hydro Tasmania's financial position is rapidly deteriorating due to your mismanagement, how will you protect Tasmanians against further price hikes when they are already feeling the pain from your massive 12 per cent power price increase?

## ANSWER

Mr Speaker, let us deal with that question in the two parts in which it has been presented. First, Hydro Tasmania is our largest government business enterprise. We have confidence in Hydro Tasmania. We have confidence in the board. They have responsibilities for the financial operations of Hydro Tasmania, as they do regarding energy security.

Regarding energy security, it is the other side that has been scaremongering for far too long. We have confidence in the board. It has been made very clear in this place, time and again, that we act in the best interests of the state of Tasmania. We take advice, not just from the board, but we take legal advice, we take other advice, and we act in the best interests of this state. To suggest otherwise, as was impugned in the question from the Leader for the Opposition, is simply scaremongering, with the first question that was asked today, that is very much called into question.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. With all the mumblings and interjections from my left, I cannot hear the minister. Please, stop interjecting so we can listen to the minister.

**Mr BARNETT** - There is an impugning there that we are not acting in the best interests of the state. We are, we have, and we will continue to do so. We act on advice, we communicate and regularly meet with the board and its management. It is very important. It is a key ingredient to the success of our renewable energy plans in the state.

This House knows and the Opposition knows -

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. It is clear that the minister does not know the answer to the question. He has the capacity to update the House later in the day. Could you at least commit to updating the House later in the day because it is quite an important question?

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order. I remind everyone in this Chamber that I cannot put words in the minister's mouth. I will allow him to answer the question as he sees fit.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, the point that I was about to make was that the people in this place know that we have government business enterprise scrutiny arrangements where the annual report was tabled. You know I cannot reveal confidential information in this place or elsewhere. That should be made very clear -

**Ms Finlay** - No integrity.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, that is totally out of order. I refute it wholeheartedly, Mr Speaker. This is typical of the Opposition. It has been scaremongering throughout the winter, saying we have outages and the Government is responsible for them, or that the prices continue to rise.

The second part of the question related to Labor's power price cap bill and electricity prices, so allow me to respond to that question at least in partial silence. Labor brought a bill

into this place and knew it was flawed. It was said during the debate that Labor had no chance of getting it up and it was flawed from day one.

We prepared and delivered a targeted response, a winter bill buster payment, which is in most cases better than the proposed 2.5 per cent power price purported reduction, which would put to the wall the seven energy retailers in this state. They are absolutely out of line. It is flawed, and they should know better. They have a track record of delivering a 65 per cent price increase in electricity prices. They asked me about electricity prices.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - You asked me about electricity prices. I am answering the question. They do not like the truth. They have been caught out. They were responsible for a 65 per cent increase, not to mention the 10 000 job losses during the Labor-Greens time in government. It is like the pot calling the kettle black. Coming in here and accusing us in terms of lacking ability to manage the economy when it is coming from you. The level of hypocrisy is galling.

#### **Basslink Services Agreement - Termination**

**Mr WINTER** question to **MINISTER** for **ENERGY** and **RENEWABLES**,  
**Mr BARNETT**

[11.01 a.m.]

In June, Hydro Tasmania told the Public Accounts Committee that the decision to terminate the Basslink Services Agreement was taken after careful consideration and commercial assessment by the board. As minister, what advice did the acting CEO provide you before you announced that decision?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, we are now getting into matters relating to questioning of our efforts and objectives to deliver what is in the best interests of Tasmania. The Premier has outlined that we take advice. We take legal and other advice to ensure that the best interests of Tasmania get delivered. You are impugning our efforts to ensure that we deliver in the best interests of Tasmania. This is on you.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - The Basslink Services Agreement was terminated as was the Basslink intercreditor agreement. Hydro Tasmania did terminate the Basslink Services Agreement.

**Ms White** - But what advice did you rely on before you announced it?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms White, I will ask you to leave if you interject.



**Mr BARNETT** - If you are impugning the credibility of our Government to get the best interests of Tasmania, I caution the Labor Opposition with respect to that. It is based on expert professional advice to the Government and to Hydro Tasmania. At all times we have acted in the best interests of Tasmania to preserve energy security, which was very different under Labor.

When you were in government, 2012, 2013, the dams were reduced to 25 per cent. Your leader at the time, Mr Green, was talking about power shortages and power rationing under Labor and a 65 per cent power increase, of course.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, if those opposite wanted to do something about the cost-of-living, why would they not contact their federal colleagues about fuel prices? If they were interested and concerned about the people of Tasmania, why would they not act in the best interests of Tasmanians and respond on fuel prices?

### **Child Safety System - Reforms**

**Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH**

[11.03 a.m.]

Noting that this week is National Child Protection Week, and being a father myself, like yourself, minister, can you update the House on the Government's progress of reform of the child safety system, and how we are supporting child safety workforce in the important work they do?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker for his question, his interest in this matter and his parental concern for the young people and children of Tasmania, which we share.

The safety of Tasmania's children and young people is an absolute priority for the Tasmanian Government. We continue to do all we can to ensure their safety and wellbeing and support the staff who look after them.

National Child Protection Week is an important opportunity to highlight this vital, life-changing work. This year's theme 'Every Child in Every Community Needs a Fair Go', aligns strongly with the Tasmanian government's long-term whole-of-government child and youth wellbeing strategy, it takes a village.

With a focus on the first 1000 days of life, the strategy invests \$100 million to deliver the services and support that children, young people and their families need to succeed and thrive.

We are also continuing our long-term reform of the child safety system, Strong Families Safe Kids. Our reforms are ensuring more support is provided to families earlier. Fewer families are entering the statutory child safety system and fewer children and young people are entering out-of-home care. This is in stark contrast with previous decades of growth in the number of children being separated from their families and entering out-of-home care. That it is a credit to those staff on the ground delivering these reforms.

Later this year, we will bring the departments of Communities and Education together to form a new department for education, children and young people. Under the new department we will coordinate our efforts to deliver education and support to ensure that all children and young people are safe, well and engaged in learning. The changes will further ensure our systems, policies and procedures are strong and integrated and build a culture where a child's development, education and safety are a shared responsibility.

The Government has also taken important steps to establish clear benchmarks for high-quality safe services that will achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in care through the release of the Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards. The new standards mark an important step towards implementing a Tasmanian out-of-home-care accreditation framework and a carers' register which will help further safeguard and support children and young people in out-of-home care.

Our Government also recognises the need for ongoing investment to further bolster the child safety workforce. While it is better resourced than ever before, we know challenges remain, particularly in the recruitment and retention of staff. We appreciate the challenges involved in responding to families who need help and children and young people who are at risk. That is why we are progressing a number of initiatives.

We have recently contracted 16 new child safety officers and have commenced further recruitment to fill remaining vacancies. We have approved recruitment of additional relief positions above the current full staff complement to act as backfill when there are vacancies or when staff need to take leave.

We are investing in case coordinator positions that will be recruited to ease administrative work loads for child safety officers, allowing them to focus on their core responsibilities to children and families.

As part of the transition to the new Department of Education, Children and Young People we are investing \$2 million in new tablets and video conference facilities to better support our child safety officers wherever they are working across the state. We are working on an enhanced student pathway being developed with the University of Tasmania to enable fourth year social work students to be employed as case aides during their final placement. This is in addition to our commitment as part of the 2022-23 Budget of \$5.4 million for an additional 10 FTEs to be added to the child safety workforce around the state.

I take this opportunity to thank our frontline child safety staff, our carers, our sector partners and all those who directly support safety and wellbeing for Tasmanian children and young people. Your dedication and hard work in challenging circumstances is ensuring more Tasmanian children and young people are safe and well and able to reach their full potential.

**Time expired.**

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE REFORMS BILL 2022 (No. 10)**

**Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.**

### **SITTING TIMES**

[11.10 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House)(by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That for this day's sitting the House not stand adjourned at 6 o'clock and that the House continue to sit past 6 o'clock.

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we obviously have no problem with sitting past 6 o'clock. However, I want to put on the record that we have noticed in recent days there has not been as free a flow of conversation about potential late sittings. It has been noted by our office that in recent days there has been enormous uncertainty about whether we would be sitting late and we have not been finding out until very late in the day. It has been the practice that when the order of business goes around on the day before a sitting there is a note saying we may sit late.

The reason I raise this is that obviously all of us in here are hardened to late sittings and quite comfortable with it but I sometimes get questions from parliamentary staff about whether we will be sitting late. Our concern is that when there is uncertainty about a late sitting it impacts on all the staff in this building. I really have appreciated the change of tone with the change of the position of leader of government business, but Dr Woodruff and I want to make sure that we go back to a system where the night before, to the greatest extent possible, if it is believed there will be a late sitting, that we are informed of it.

[11.13 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, just to note that there was an email sent by the Leader's office this morning which helpfully outlined that we were likely to sit late tonight and we appreciate that very much.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

#### **Inaugural Speech - Member for Franklin, Mr Young**

[11.13 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House)(by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the member for Franklin, Mr Young, from making a statement to the House for a period not exceeding 30 minutes, following the conclusion of the debate this day on the matter of public importance.

I do not want to pre-empt what is going on over the other side there, but it would appear that there is some action going on between about five people trying to write something. I remind them that the leader of opposition business contacted me yesterday to ask what time Mr Young would be making his speech. I know that when you made your inaugural speech and I was in here you had guests in here as well.

**Mr Winter** - Do you understand scrutiny of your government's important -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr STREET** - I will not bother going any further, Mr Speaker.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Leave to Move Motion without Notice - Motion Negatived**

[11.14 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move -

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended to debate the following motion:

That the Minister for Energy and Renewables is to immediately update the House on the state of Hydro Tasmania's financial position.

Mr Speaker, it is quite unfortunate that we need to move this motion -

**Mr SPEAKER** - The motion needs to be circulated.

**Mr WINTER** - Sure. The Leader of the House is quite right. We were writing this at short notice. The reason for that is that we were not expecting with the questions we asked this morning that we would get such disgraceful answers, such contempt to the questions we asked and to this House and the Tasmanian people.

Hydro Tasmania is a critical component of Tasmania's energy mix. It is a critical government institution, a government-owned business, and it is urgent that Tasmanians can have confidence in Hydro Tasmania's financial position and operations.

Tasmanians need to know that they have a minister who is across his brief and who understands the financial position of such an important business. That is why it is urgent that he provides the House with an immediate update. The minister was unable to answer questions about the financial state of Hydro Tasmania this morning, despite being asked on numerous occasions and being drawn back to the question over and over. He was either unable to answer the question or he did not want to answer the question. Which one is it? Is this minister incompetent or is he covering up? What is this minister up to? He can easily resolve this matter by providing an urgent update to the House. He has time. We have seen him here with

his mobile phone with an updated little piece from his office to tell him what to say but he did not answer the question -

**Mr SPEAKER** - I need to remind all members when they get up to speak that we are talking about the seeking of leave. We are not talking about the actual motion.

**Mr WINTER** - And the urgency of that motion, Mr Speaker. That is why we are seeking leave, because this matter is urgent. It is critical that Tasmanians can have confidence in Hydro Tasmania.

The minister should provide that information to Tasmanians. He was asked repeatedly if he could confirm that Hydro Tasmania has incurred a year-to-date loss of approximately \$100 million. It is quite urgent that he answers that question today through this motion to provide a financial update on Hydro Tasmania to this House and to the Tasmanian people so they can have a very clear understanding and can have confidence in Hydro Tasmania, as he wants them to. Give it to them, minister. Tell them.

This issue could be easily resolved if we had a government that was transparent and getting the basics right. However, we have a government that has spent the morning covering up and so we have to undertake this action to try to extract a very simple answer. Question time no longer works the way it was intended. It now works as a way to cover up. The Premier says he cares about integrity and he wants to lead a government of integrity but he is happy to play along with a minister who refuses to answer the question.

It is exasperating being on this side of the House listening to these non-answers from ministers who do not appear to care about the responsibility to be transparent and to explain the situation to Tasmanians and to this House.

Hydro Tasmania is perhaps the most important business in Tasmania; in fact, it is hard to argue it is not. Its financial security and financial performance is critical to this state and to energy security. There could not be a more important issue for this House to be updated on this morning. We had to ask the same question over and over. We had a pack of seven questions this morning but only got through three of them because we have to ask the same question over and over of a minister who does not care about transparency, does not care about integrity, and does not appear to value or understand his brief.

Will he stand up this morning and provide the information that is very important, very critical to Tasmanians, because that is what Tasmanians expect? This minister has already put a 12 per cent power price increase on Tasmanians, attacked the cost-of-living and now he is after Hydro Tasmania. I urge the minister to resolve this matter very quickly this morning.

[11.20 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, the Government will not be supporting the seeking of leave. The day is set out on the blue.

**Ms Finlay** - Yes, and question time is for answering questions.

**Mr STREET** - We indicated yesterday, ahead of time, that we had an inaugural speech for the new member.

**Ms Finlay** - It is pretty simple. If you cannot get the basics right on that; hopeless.

**Mr STREET** - The MPI today is Labor's and it has been named up as energy. They have 35 minutes of the MPI to prosecute their argument on energy.

**Ms Finlay** - You had over an hour of question time to answer one question.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Bass.

**Mr STREET** - We are also on a Wednesday, Mr Speaker, where they have Opposition members' time as well. We will not be supporting the seeking of leave. This is a stunt motion because they have nothing else to bring to this place.

**Ms Finlay** - Disgraceful. You are better than this.

**Mr STREET** - Ms Finlay said to me, 'I'm better than that' -

**Ms Finlay** - You are. You are not like them.

**Mr STREET** - I thought you were better than doing that to Mr Young on the day he is making his inaugural speech.

**Ms Finlay** - Then get your minister to answer the question.

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### **Member Suspended**

### **Member for Bass - Ms Finlay**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. The member for Bass can leave the Chamber.

**Ms White** - Until when, Mr Speaker?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Until lunchtime. There will be no finger pointing and yelling across the Chamber.

**Ms Finlay withdrew.**

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[11.21 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, that is the weakest argument I have ever heard mounted by the Government. They have brought this situation on themselves. It is their minister who is refusing to answer a very basic question. Four times the minister, Mr Barnett was asked a very simple question. It relates to \$100 million of Tasmanians' money. This is a publicly-owned entity. It is critical that we hear from the minister today about the prospect of \$100 million debt that Hydro is carrying. That is an extra \$100 million that will end up having to be paid for by Tasmanians. It is a publicly-owned entity.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Again, I need to remind you that we are talking about the seeking of leave, not about the actual motion itself. Why is it so important that we deal with this today? That is the critical thing.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - That is exactly what I just said. I just made that argument, Mr Speaker. That is exactly my point.

**Mr SPEAKER** - There is to be no argument on the actual motion at this point in time. It is a seeking of leave we are talking about.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I understand that.

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is why the urgency is needed for today.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am very aware of the standing orders. I completely understand why we need to make a case for urgency. To make the case for urgency for why we need to suspend the standing orders to debate this, we need to understand the critical importance of the matter at hand. It is not any issue that the minister failed to answer; it is failing to answer \$100 million-worth of potential debt of public money.

The minister was asked a straight question four times. It is not any old question; it is about a vast sum of Tasmanians' money. The minister should know the answer; he is the shareholder minister. He does know the answer and we need to know the answer. We represent Tasmanians who care about the cost-of-living, who care about where public money is flowing in this state, who care about Hydro and the fact that it is now clearly running out of control with a minister and a government that is backing them to do whatever they want. People need to know today.

It is not good enough for a minister to not answer a straight question about \$100 million of taxpayers' money. We have people who cannot get houses, and this Government is arguing that they cannot afford to put the money into housing or to paramedics, or to nurses.

All that money that Hydro might have incurred, we need to know why. We need to know if it is true, and we need to know why the minister is not telling us. Why is he hiding? Why is he being secretive about public money? It is urgent, today, that we suspend standing orders and talk about it now.

[11.24 a.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the motion. It is a very simple motion before you. It asks the minister to provide an update on Hydro's financial position. The only reason we are having this debate, and the reason it is urgent, is because the minister failed to answer questions in question time today and he had ample opportunity to do so.

This is a minister who knows the answer to the question. This is a minister who has weekly meetings with Hydro but today he chose secrecy and cover-up instead of honesty and transparency. This is a Premier who claims to be someone who is leading a government of integrity but who does not hold his ministers accountable when they fail to meet that standard.

Just this financial year alone, we understand Hydro Tasmania has incurred a \$100 million loss. That is \$50 million per month. We are only in the month of September. How much longer is this going to go on and how much longer would it have gone on before the Government told us what is really happening?

This is an urgent motion that needs to be resolved. The Government should be willing to provide an update on Hydro Tasmania's financial situation to this parliament, to the people of the Tasmania. We are talking about a publicly owned entity and the minister responsible is sitting in this Chamber. He should be held to account for the operations of that business under his watch and he should be able to answer direct questions about it. He failed to do that today.

This is a minister who has chosen secrecy and cover up over honesty and transparency when it comes to the operations of Hydro Tasmania and the alleged loss of \$100 million in just two months. It was a straightforward question for the minister to answer today. As has already been said in this debate by other members, this is money that belongs to the Tasmanian taxpayer. This is money that will have to come out of other areas, that could have been supported by the dividends that the Government usually relies on from Hydro Tasmania to fund health care, to fund housing, to fund our education system.

Worst of all, this is happening at the same time there is a cost-of-living crisis in Tasmania and Tasmanians are seeing a 12 per cent increase in their power bills. What we do not yet know is how the mismanagement of Hydro Tasmania by this Government and minister could see a further increase in power bills as a consequence at a time Tasmanians cannot afford it.

This motion before the House should be an easy one for the Government to support but, unfortunately, they have squibbed again. They have resorted to cover ups and secrecy, despite the Premier claiming he leads a government of integrity. They should be able to willingly come to the podium to answer questions about the state of Hydro Tasmania's financial position. It is a public entity and there should be transparency about how they are operating.

Tasmanians know Hydro Tasmania is critical to our economy. It is critical to our state's future. It has been a part of our state's history for 100 years. Tasmanians have invested in it through their blood, sweat, and tears. To learn that the Government has made a decision that puts its financial sustainability at risk, the fact they do not even want to talk about it, is insulting to all those Tasmanians who have invested their time, over generations, to build that asset for our state and the state's benefit.

The question before the Chair is very simple. I cannot understand why the Government will not support it. I note there is still time for the minister to get up to speak to this motion. He is in the Chamber. There is nothing preventing him right now from getting up and providing an answer to the question about Hydro Tasmania's financial situation to clear up the question we have about whether Hydro Tasmania has lost \$100 million this financial year to date. He could clear up this issue right now and we need not take up any more of your time or the parliament's time.

He could have done it in question time. He had multiple opportunities, as did the Premier. I will resume my seat in the interests of giving the minister the opportunity to come to the lectern to answer the simple question: has Hydro Tasmania lost \$100 million this financial year to date? Yes or no. It is a simple question. If you do not know the answer, commit to coming back to the House at a later time today to provide the update. You have weekly meetings. I am pretty confident you could access that information with a phone call if you do not have it right now.



There is no reason we cannot clear this matter up right now. We do not need to proceed through the other stages of the debate, to suspend standing orders, if the House does not want to because the minister can answer the question today.

[11.29 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I will be brief. I will be supporting this motion. It is a significant question and hangs in the air. This is the reason why this is an urgent matter to be dealt with today. It is a large amount of money. Hydro Tasmania has either lost it or they have not. The minister and the Government can update the Tasmanian people through this debate, through the forms of the House to assure the Tasmanian people that Hydro is in a good economic position, that Hydro is acting appropriately, and that the minister is across his brief. It is an important matter. It could be put to bed very easily by this minister.

The problem is that this minister has completely fumbled his performance in question time. There are many forms of the House. There are many ways for that question to be resolved, either today or by way of updates to the House to assure the Tasmanian people and those people who are talking about this significant matter. It is out there in the community; people are talking about it. It is a question of great concern. It is a matter of urgency. The reason why we are having this debate is because this minister has completely fumbled his responsibility to the House and to the people to respond appropriately to questions from the Opposition and the crossbench on this.

For the leader of government business to defend their position against this motion because it will interrupt Mr Young's inaugural speech is disingenuous. I am quite offended by it. We all know how important our inaugural speeches are, to ourselves and our families and the people we represent. The person who you should be blaming for this debate is your minister. It is not us. It is not the people of Tasmania. It is not about Mr Young. It is about Mr Barnett, the minister responsible for this matter.

Only a few years ago in the statement of corporate intent from Hydro, the board flagged its concern with this Government's dividend policy. It was only a few years ago that Hydro flagged its concern with the way this Government was using Hydro as an ATM. There is now a significant question before the parliament and before the people of Tasmania regarding Hydro, the iconic company, the GBE supporting Tasmania's renewable energy, and our economy more broadly. It is a question about \$100 million of loss.

It is not a rounding up error, it is not something that we can fix in the next quarterly updates. This is a matter of significance. The minister fumbled around embarrassingly with his questions. Four times he had an opportunity to take it on notice and say it was an important issue and he will respond because he will take it seriously and will update the House. Did you do that? No. You chose base politics, fumbled around and had to phone a friend. It was embarrassing. This minister needs to do better.

The reason why we are here, leader of government business, is because your minister has failed his responsibilities to this House. This is a matter of urgency. The minister can clear it up and then we can move on and pay our respects to Mr Young.

[11.33 a.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, this is an urgent motion. It is disgraceful that the minister has not jumped to answer a simple question. This could all be cleared up in a matter

of seconds. Can the minister confirm that Hydro Tasmania has incurred a loss of \$100 million? This minister is making a mockery of question time. He was asked multiple times to answer a simple question. What is the point of question time? What is the point of the Government claiming to be one of integrity when a simple question of very few words is not answered in this place?

It is a question that is significant to the rest of the state and to Tasmania's economy. We need to know the financial situation of Hydro. That is why this is an urgent motion and that is why leave should be granted. We understand that the minister has a history of not answering questions. He has a whole *modus operandi* of not answering questions and standing up and abusing Labor.

In this instance that is just not good enough. It is a simple question; \$100 million is a lot of money. This not only has implications for people's power bills down the track but also for the state economy because the Government has been milking Hydro for dividends. If Hydro has lost \$100 million in just two months what is this minister going to do to stem that bleeding?

Is that why he is not standing, because he has no idea how to fix a problem such as Hydro losing \$50 million a month? Is that the real reason why he is not standing? We can make all sorts of assertions, but this minister could clear it up in a few seconds by answering a simple question: has Hydro lost \$100 million in this year to date?

This is an important question. If we do not answer these questions, is he going to let Hydro lose another \$50 million next month, or another \$50 million the month after that? This is why it needs to be cleared up. This is why it is urgent, not only for people's power bills, but also for the economy of Tasmania.

There is much that rides on Hydro. Hydro is a key business in Tasmania. It is state-owned. This minister is a shareholder minister. This minister would be receiving updates regularly. He should know the answer to this question. Is he trying to cover it up, or is he simply incompetent? Has he missed the fact that Hydro has lost \$100 million in this year to date? Has he missed that fact? He can clear his own reputation. He can clear up this mess. Otherwise, what is the point of parliament if we can ask simple questions and the Government goes nowhere near an answer? That makes a mockery of question times. That is why we have to do things like this.

This is urgent. It is shame on the Government that it will not support this motion. It is urgent. Otherwise the Government is making a mockery of question time. We come into this place to ask questions. We are asking questions not just for ourselves but on behalf of the people of Tasmania. The people of Tasmania love their Hydro. The people of Tasmania built the Hydro. This Government is the current steward of the Hydro. It is only the current steward. It will not be in charge of Hydro forever. We need to know what its management is like. We need to have confidence that the Government will not let Hydro lose hundreds of millions of dollars and do nothing about it, not even let the people of Tasmania know that is what is happening. This is why this is an urgent motion.

It is an indictment, a shame on the minister that he will not stand, that he did not seek the call and I had to before you closed this debate out. How can we be in such a position that this Government makes a complete mockery of question time? We have to suspend standing orders to get the minister to answer simple questions about something so important as Hydro Tasmania

and the financial security of that enterprise, and the financial security of Tasmania. So much is underpinned by Hydro.

We know that this Government has form on this. We know that the Government let the dams run dry. We know that this Government had to import generators and spend \$160 million on diesel, yet when we ask questions like this, instead of giving Tasmanians confidence that the Government is managing Hydro appropriately, we hear zilch. All we hear is abuse of us. All we hear is the minister stand up, cover up, talk about everything else in the whole portfolio of Energy except answering the question: has Hydro lost \$100 million in the year to date? He wants to talk about renewable energy. He wants to talk about energy security. He wants to talk about Labor. He wants to talk about all sorts of things except this simple question.

We have narrowed the questions very simply. There was no preamble because we wanted a simple question answered and yet this minister will not clear it up. That is why this is urgent. That is why this minister could take a few seconds to stand up and confirm the question either yes or no: has Hydro lost \$100 million in the year to date?

Do your job, minister. You are responsible for this entity. You are the shareholder minister. You should know the answer to this. If you are not answering this question, a very simple question, it is because you are treating this parliament with such disrespect that we have to suspend standing orders. It is an absolute disgrace. You have an opportunity, minister. Stand up. Do your job. Do not treat the parliament with disrespect. Do not treat the people of Tasmania with disrespect. Has Hydro lost \$100 million? Yes or no?

[11.39 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, just briefly, this is a most urgent motion, and a most urgent question that relates to \$100 million of money that ultimately belongs to the people of Tasmania. I have listened to this debate. It is a compelling argument for the minister to provide the information.

I note that he has taken the coward's approach and sat in his chair, refusing to answer a public interest question of great significance to the people of Tasmania, to their economy and to the Hydro. He should be condemned for that.

The Bolt Report noted 'behaviours and the temperature in this Chamber'. I point to you, Mr Speaker, a reason that it gets heated in here is when ministers step up to that lectern and do not answer straightforward simple questions. Then we have had a 35-minute debate which is on Mr Barnett because he would not answer the question. This is this minister's form. His default is to not answer questions. Clearly, members of the Opposition are not going to let this go so I encourage the minister, if he wants to save himself days of pain, to get up and fess up.

**Mr SPEAKER** - The question is that leave be granted.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 11**

Dr Broad  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay (Teller)

**NOES 11**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett

Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms White  
Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood (Teller)  
Mr Young

## **PAIRS**

Ms Butler

Ms Ogilvie

**Mr SPEAKER** - The results of the division being 11 Ayes 11 and 11 Noes, in accordance with standing order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

**Leave not granted.**

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Energy**

[11.46 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: energy.

As we heard this morning, energy is an important topic. It is a critical component of Tasmania's economy. Tasmanian Labor, the Opposition, has plenty of questions about what this minister and what this Government is up to, particularly with our important, critical institutions like Hydro Tasmania. This is an organisation that has built Tasmania's economy, not just with its own hydro-electric assets, the poles and wires, but also the major industrials, large-, medium- and small-sized business and all the people that those businesses have employed over the years. This is a historic investment in Tasmania.

We are concerned that this minister is not getting the basics right when it comes to energy. We are concerned that we have a government that is failing to get the basics right. For us the basics are around having a strong, viable, sustainable Hydro Tasmania and other energy assets owned by the state of Tasmania. The fact that Tasmania continues to have state-owned energy generators, a state-owned energy transmission network, is one of our strongest, strategic advantages. These are things that have been built and protected by Tasmanian labour and will continue to be built and protected by Tasmanian labour.

We have significant issues with the way that this portfolio is being managed by this minister. The minister loves talking until he is under pressure. The minister goes missing under pressure. The minister does not appear to know what he is doing. There was some debate, within that last debate, about whether the minister does not know the answer or whether he is covering up. I do not know the answer to that question. Is it better that he is incompetent, or better that he is covering up? I am not sure. It is one of the two.

The answer to the question this morning about whether Hydro Tasmania has lost \$100 million so far this financial year was not able to be answered by this minister or he did not want to. Can you confirm Hydro Tasmania has incurred a year-to-date loss of approximately \$100 million? If it is not true and the minister knows it is not true why would he not just stand up and say it? In fact, he has yet another opportunity this morning to stand up and correct the record and clarify. Or is he just going to put out a press release that talks about Marinus or talks about something else and go missing again?

We will not be letting go of this. This is going to go for as long as the minister wants it to. If he wants to keep hiding from scrutiny and if he wants to keep covering up his own performance in this place, we will not let him. We absolutely will not because the effect that this minister's performance is having is not just on the balance sheet of Hydro Tasmania, it is impacting Tasmanian families and businesses.

In this place, I have talked about my surprise that the Government did not use the price cap mechanism that it has at its disposal early this year. That is, do the same thing in 2022 as it did in 2018 - cap prices to protect Tasmanian households and businesses from rising prices in the chaotic national electricity market - because that is what it had previously done and that was their policy for four years.

Perhaps we are starting to get to the bottom of this. Perhaps it is Hydro Tasmania that is unable to support those policy instruments because of the decision of this minister - because of the termination of the Basslink agreement that was announced by the minister on 10 February 2022, when the minister and Hydro Tasmania announced that the Basslink Services Agreement had been terminated. We understand that, through this mechanism, this has had a detrimental impact on Hydro Tasmania, whereas in the past, with chaotic and high prices in the national electricity market, Hydro Tasmania as a state owned generator has been able to reap the benefit of that historic important investment by Tasmanians over 100 years. It has been Tasmania's state owned Hydro Tasmania business that has been able to benefit.

What is the impact of the termination of the Basslink Services Agreement on that ability for Hydro Tasmania to profit from that situation? We want to get to the bottom of that. That is the line of questioning this morning. We genuinely want to know the answer to this question. Tasmanians will want to know because they value it. They built it and they want it to stay in Tasmanian hands because they love the Hydro. They always have and they always will.

It will be of a great concern to Tasmanians to learn that there is a question mark now over its finances this year. The question mark is because the minister will not answer questions. Once again, I invite him to answer the question when he gets up. Presumably, he will speak on the MPI on energy, as he is the Energy minister, and correct the record. He has now had almost two hours since the first question was asked. Presumably he has sought some advice. He has been on his phone most of the morning. In fact, he had his phone as he answered one of the latter questions. I presume he has access to the information, so, provide it. Tell us what is the situation with Hydro.

If the assertion that Hydro Tasmania has lost around \$100 million so far this financial year is not true - tell us. Just say it is not true. I look forward to the minister outlining the financial situation of Hydro Tasmania, as it relates to the Basslink Services Agreement, Basslink.

When it comes to Basslink, the Government almost celebrated the decision to exit the Standstill Agreement late last year and then to terminate the BSA earlier this year. The minister was almost triumphant about it. The Public Accounts Committee heard that the decision to terminate the Basslink Services Agreement was taken after careful consideration and commercial assessment by the board.

As it appears that this has not been a good commercial decision, the minister should explain what happened.

[11.53 a.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on this matter of public importance regarding energy. It is also important to note upfront that this is a long line of publicity stunts being put forward by the state Labor Opposition.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - They have a record for this. They have made outrageous allegations with respect to outages. You have removed that media release from your website, Mr Winter, but you have made that allegation, which you know is wrong. It is contemptuous on your part to make that allegation to scare Tasmanians into believing that energy security is at risk in the state. Let me make that very clear: it is not at risk.

You have also made allegations, which are wrong, that electricity price rises can continue to rise. You know that it is set by an independent economic regulator and it goes to 30 June 2023. Again, you are scaring Tasmanians. If you wanted to do something about the cost of living, as I indicated a few moments ago in this parliament, and has been noted in the last 48 hours by this Government, you could contact your federal colleagues about fuel prices. That would be a massive step forward.

I have said, and I will say it again, that we always act in the best interests of Tasmania. We rely on the board of Hydro Tasmania, the largest government business enterprise in this state, to act in the best interests of Tasmania as well as in accordance with the government business enterprise Statement of Corporate Intent and in accordance with instructions from our Government.

The Opposition knows full well that there is time for scrutiny in the GBE scrutiny hearings. They know full well that the annual reports are tabled and sorted by 31 October every year and, by 30 June, they need to be -

**Mr Winter** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. Mr Winter, you were listened to in silence. I expect the same with the minister.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. They know the process in this place in terms of access to annual reports which are tabled in this parliament by 31 October and then scrutinised later in the year in terms of that annual report for 30 June this year. There is a time

and a place and they know that full well. There is a reference to Basslink at some level by the Opposition and you are way out of your depth, Mr Winter, when it comes to understanding how energy operates in Tasmania and the operations of Basslink.

The state's and Hydro Tasmania's decision to terminate the Basslink intercreditor agreement in February 2022 did not, and will not, impact on Tasmania's energy security, which remains on a firm footing, with strong Hydro storage levels at 39.5 per cent this week and the commissioning of recent wind farms. In the meantime, energy continues to be traded across Basslink on a commercial basis, noting that we are trading in a volatile market.

Tasmanian Labor is trying to assert and make allegations about Hydro Tasmania's end-of-year position, which is incredibly premature and, again, further scaremongering. They have been doing it all winter and they are doing it again today in this parliament.

It would be completely inappropriate to discuss Hydro's commercial-in-confidence matters for this year in detail for reasons that both Mr Winter and Ms White know and clearly understand; they know full well. They know that matters with respect to Basslink are incredibly sensitive and important and it actually goes back way before February this year. Our actions followed the 2020 arbitration concerning the cause of the 2016 major Basslink outage, which found in the state's and Hydro Tasmania's favour, confirming the link cannot meet the capacity requirements set out in the Basslink Services Agreement and that the owner of Basslink should pay compensation to the state. This is based on legal feedback and advice. We acted in the best interests of Tasmania at all times based on that advice.

We got an outcome favourable to Tasmania and Hydro Tasmania in November last year and then the state and Hydro Tasmania took further steps in that process on 10 February this year, terminating the Basslink intercreditor agreement and Hydro Tasmania terminating the BSA. The termination of the BSA has not and will not impact on our energy security: it remains on firm footing, as I have indicated. We have two new windfarms, Cattle Hill Wind Farm and Granville Harbour.

**Ms O'Connor** - Tell us about Hydro's bottom line.

**Mr BARNETT** - I am trying to explain so you and everyone else understands the process, because it is sensitive, important, confidential and clearly very important to the best interests of Tasmania. That is why we have acted on that advice, at all times putting Tasmanians first.

The receivers are conducting a competitive process to find a new owner for Basslink, the state and Hydro Tasmania are in discussions with bidders and the process has tight confidentiality arrangements to preserve its integrity. I am advised the receivers currently expect an outcome from the process this month. In my view, our actions and those of the board of Hydro Tasmania have protected Tasmania's financial interests and energy security.

We will continue to take expert advice on how to look after our state in relation to what are complex matters in relation to Basslink. We need to trust and rely on the professionalism and diligence of Hydro Tasmania and its board. Those matters of financial detail are reported publicly in the report.

**Time expired.**

[12.01 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, it is interesting that the minister can find his voice now. He had the opportunity to answer questions that were put to him throughout the course of today. We are now at 12 o'clock and he has finally been able to find some words to string together, but even then he cannot answer the question about Hydro's financial position this financial year.

There are a couple things the minister tries to do that are a little bit tricky, in my opinion. One of the things he tries to do is say he cannot talk about what is going on with Basslink, there are commercial-in-confidence arrangements there, matters before the court and we should know about those, so how dare we try to ask questions. Mr Speaker, we are not asking questions about their negotiations around the use of Basslink. We are asking the minister to provide an update about the state of Hydro's financial position this financial year.

There may be a number of reasons that have influenced Hydro's financial position this financial year. One of them may be Basslink, and we believe that is one of the reasons, but that is not going into the matters that are currently being negotiated before the court. There is no legal reason for the minister not to be able to come into this place and provide an update on Hydro's current financial position.

To say that we will have an opportunity at GBEs to scrutinise the annual report for Hydro ignores the reality that that is not until December. We have an issue today but if we want to scrutinise the accounts for Hydro for this financial year, the minister is telling us we have to wait until December 2023.

**Ms O'Connor** - And you wonder why we voted against Homes Tasmania.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Ms WHITE** - We have to wait until December 2023 to get an answer to a question we asked today. That is what the minister is telling us. This is a government that has decided to be one of secrecy and cover-up rather than transparency, honesty and integrity, which is what the Premier tries to pretend he wants to be, but it is definitely not the standard he holds his ministers accountable to.

We have very serious questions that have been raised with us that we raised with the minister in this place about the performance of Hydro Tasmania. The minister is unable or unwilling to answer them. He knows those answers and has an obligation, I would argue, to the people of Tasmania to be truthful about how Hydro is performing because Hydro is owned by the Tasmanian community. He is just the shareholder minister at a point in time, hopefully not for too much longer because he is doing a terrible job.

Tasmanians are paying exorbitant prices for their energy. They are not paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power. He does not have any intention of reducing those cost-of-living pressures on Tasmanian households and now we come to understand that because of his mismanagement, Hydro Tasmania is incurring a loss of \$100 million this financial year alone. That is \$50 million a month.

The minister says that hopefully he will be able to come to some kind of conclusion at the end of next month around the Basslink issue, but how are we to know if that is going to



occur or not? He tells us to trust him and he has it in hand. How can we trust somebody who is not honest with us, who is not willing to answer a simple question in this House in front of the Tasmanian community, to be transparent about what is happening with Hydro Tasmania? It is a business and a company that Tasmanians feel intrinsically connected to and proud of. They want Hydro to forever remain in public hands and to be properly managed and under this government, they are comprehensively failing.

This is a government that is failing to get the basics right; there is no doubt about that and the other concern that we have is in our understanding with Hydro already incurring a \$100 million debt this financial year - so, that is just in the last two months - that if you look in the Treasurer's budget papers, you can see that this government still expects to rip \$87 million as a dividend out of Hydro this same financial year.

Where is that money going to come from if Hydro is already posting a \$100 million loss in the first two months of the financial year? How are they going to find \$87 million to prop up the Government's budget bottom line? How is the Hydro going to be able to do that? Will Hydro have to borrow to pay the Government's dividend? They have had to do that in the past. Is the Government going to put pressure on them to do that again?

Hydro already has a very high level of debt. How are they going to be able to carry that obligation, manage their business in a financially sustainable way and continue to prop up the Premier's budget? These are serious questions and these are some of the reasons we need the minister to be honest with us about the current state of Hydro's finances. It is not just him trying to hide behind his rhetoric when he comes into this place to protect himself and his government from their poor decisions being exposed. It has significant consequences for the entire budget and for our community and economy. Every single household and business in this state relies on Hydro; every single one has some connection to Hydro. The mismanagement of a minister in his portfolio who is unable to be honest about the operations of that portfolio has consequences for every Tasmanian.

The minister might get up here and say that Labor is asking these questions as part of some kind of publicity stunt - which is what you did, minister - when, actually, this is a matter of significant public interest. The minister might pretend that this is about politics when in fact this is about accountability, being transparent and actually allowing scrutiny of what is happening in your portfolio. Right now, minister, we have serious questions about your capacity to do your job. Today, your failure not only to answer questions in question time, but the failure of the minister to even get up and speak on the motion that was before the Chair earlier today is cause for us to give serious consideration to whether we even have confidence any longer in this minister.

**Time expired.**

[12.08 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, the issues that we have heard about this morning make us very concerned about the ability of this minister to be honest about the serious issues in his portfolio. I listened carefully to the response that he made earlier and it sounds like he is covering himself in a whole lot of commercial-in-confidence which is actually not required.

There is no doubt that Basslink and the legal contractual arrangements that are being made regarding Basslink ought to be commercial-in-confidence but the actual dollar, the impact for Tasmanians, cannot be a matter of commercial-in-confidence. It must be known to Tasmanians and there is no reason at all except the history of Hydro in liking to manage its own affairs behind closed doors and this government and this minister is facilitating that.

The problem is that we have an enormous amount of debt already on our balance sheets from Basslink 1. We have a minister who is proposing, mushrooming ideas with scores of billions of dollars of debt that would flow to Tasmanians, a minister who never provides any detail. This is another example of the minister hiding the detail of hundreds of millions of dollars - \$100 million here - but also the supposed Marinus Link has never been provided a business case for Tasmanians.

Never has this minister done anything more than show us press releases for varying numbers of billions of dollars - 3.5, 4.1. He has never been clear with Tasmanians about who would pay for it, yet it is abundantly clear from reading the national Integrated System Provider agreements and documents that this is a cost that overwhelmingly would be borne by Tasmanians. There is no way other states will be paying for a big bit of infrastructure kit like the Marinus Link when they are funding their own state's connectors and other large bits of the National Electricity Grid Network.

We know that when the minister talks about 'scores', 'large', 'hundreds of millions of dollars' or 'billions of dollars' without providing Tasmanians with any details it is because he is fundamentally trying to hide the fact that this is going to increase our living costs, our power prices indefinitely into the future - as we have already seen from the poor decisions that have been made by Hydro on a number of occasions, which has left us picking up the bill.

**Ms O'Connor** - Or the ones they have been forced into, loss-making contracts.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - So many loss-making contracts.

What we now have is a minister who manages his portfolios in secrecy. He allows the GBEs, TasNetworks and Hydro to go about their expansionist plans without providing us with any information, without providing the communities affected with real opportunities to engage, and definitely without obeying the federal Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act laws. We have written to the director of the EPA about this. Other people have written to the federal Minister for the Environment and Water, Tania Plibersek, about the fact that we have an assessment process for the two largest pieces of infrastructure that are currently under way in Tasmania in the development stage - the north-west transmission corridor and the Robbins Island massive windfarm development - not being considered together.

This utterly contradicts section 527E of the EPBC Act that 'the indirect impacts of a development and other developments that are required to facilitate a particular development that are going ahead must be considered together'. We have to be able to consider the cumulative impacts not just of large windfarms like Robbins Island but also the transmission corridors that are required to go with it and at the end of that the so-called Marinus Link itself. At the moment, all of these things are pieces that are being quietly moved around behind the scenes on a big jigsaw puzzle that Hydro and TasNetworks are managing, and what we have is a minister who is covering for them.

While Tasmanians do not get to know the true cost to our energy bills, the true cost to electrification possibilities are being lost. We have a government that is allowing in companies - potentially Woodside, Fortescue, Origin, we understand - and the minister has not denied this: some 99 per cent of the exports from the green hydrogen Bell Bay cluster that is being developed with the support of this minister and this Government will go overseas for export. It is great to create green hydrogen for big companies like Woodside, Fortescue and Origin to go overseas for export as ammonia to be used in products elsewhere - that is fine - but what about Tasmania first? What about dealing with our need to electrify? What about the requirement to bring down our own emissions on island immediately? That is our first responsibility. We have to ensure that that new green hydrogen creation is going into Tasmania to electrify our large transport, our trains, the locomotives, the big transport. This is where we need to focus.

The work that we do, the mining, all of these things need to be greened up and the minister is hiding everything from Tasmanians, leaving it to Hydro network to make their own decisions.

**Time expired.**

[12.15 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, another day, and another delving into Labor stuff. Labor really are a sponge. I have to say this today: they need to grow a backbone. They need to stand up to their federal counterparts and get them to keep what we have done with the fuel excise; keep the fuel excise down, stand up to them.

**Ms Finlay** - Ah, fossil fuel energy, that is what we are on to now.

**Mr TUCKER** - No. This is about cost of living. If you were on the street and you were listening to your constituents, just as I have done with Mr Brown - 'Brownie' as we call him around Pembroke - that is the first thing he says to me: 'Tuck, we need to do something about this fuel excise. We need to get Labor to stand up for Tasmanians'.

**Ms O'Connor** - That's the first thing he says to you, is it? Tell the truth.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr TUCKER** - We know about Russia and Ukraine and the issues that are going around with global supply. Talk to businesses about fuel. I am in business myself. I am sending 5000 hay bales down to Smithton at the moment - 100 truckloads.

**Dr BROAD** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I urge the member to be cautious about pre-empting an order of the day.

**Mr TUCKER** - We are talking about energy. Isn't energy fuel?

**Dr Broad** - We are pre-empting an order of the day.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr TUCKER** - We are talking about fuel, and people doing business with fuel and trucks. This is how this state operates. It is a huge cost to Tasmanians. I plead with the Labor Party; I plead with you, Ms White. Please listen to us. This is a huge cost of energy. You need to stand up to your federal counterparts.

**Dr Broad** - You are pre-empting an order of the day.

**Mr TUCKER** - Yes, Dr Broad. A few weeks ago, Mr Winter, with his fatally flawed price cap bill was voted down in this place, yet he appears to have learned nothing from that experience and continues promoting his flawed policy. After an insipid showing during the Estimates process - and we are probably going to see that again this year - and more than 3000 days in opposition, and still no costed alternative budget, it was always odds-on that Labor would continue to play cheap politics. No vision, no plan, no surprise and yes, Dr Broad, no alternative budget.

No surprise at all that the puppet master is again Dean Winter, master of overreach. Who could forget his release the day after the Huon by-election, trumpeting that Labor candidate, Toby Thorpe, would come out on top, only to see Labor lose his seat.

Today's effort is no different. Once again, Mr Winter is out scaremongering and muckraking and he knows it. You only have to see the way he is reacting. Mr Winter knows that Labor's legacy when it comes to power prices is disastrous. Under Labor, power prices went up 65 per cent. Yes they did, Mr Winter. You have obviously forgotten that.

Today we witnessed the tawdry side of Labor second-guessing Hydro Tasmania's financial accounts. They know these are reported in Hydro's annual reports. They know full well that the appropriate time to ask questions about audited financial performance of any state-owned company, or GBE, is during scrutiny committee hearings in December.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr TUCKER** - Any impacts will be accounted for in Hydro Tasmania's annual report, which will be tabled in parliament in October. The Tasmanian Government has absolute confidence in the expertise and skill of what Hydro Tasmania will work through this period.

**Mr Winter** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Winter.

**Mr TUCKER** - You will have your opportunity to scrutinise Hydro Tasmania and I hope that you do it properly this year. I suggest that Mr Winter take the time until then to brush up on his own knowledge of the electricity market, because his efforts to date have been very poor. Taking the simplistic action Mr Winter has been advocating on electricity prices in today's market would send a signal to investors that we are willing to interfere with the market, causing sovereign risk issues, and risk further renewable energy investment in our state, leaving us unable to service further business and investment growth and leave us more exposed to adverse weather events.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, the member for Lyons has the call, no one else should be commenting. Order.

**Mr TUCKER** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is amazing. They were all listened to in silence. That is why we are rolling out our targeted support measures, to support those who need it most, without causing long-term damage to Tasmania's energy market and security. We are getting on with the job and delivering nation-leading projects, like Marinus Link - and we hope you support it, Mr Winter - Battery of the Nation and green hydrogen. These initiatives underpin our 200 per cent Tasmanian renewable energy target. Tasmania's Labor Party supported that vision, surprisingly; and now Labor and Dean Winter clearly oppose our renewable energy agenda. They are at odds with federal Labor and do not support Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation, or green hydrogen.

Instead of playing politics, Mr Winter, I urge you to inform yourself of the facts and ensure we work together to assist all Tasmanians during this upcoming period. Labor has no energy policy, Mr Speaker, and no energy plan. The last time Labor were in government, energy prices soared to 65 per cent over seven years. Tasmanians do not want to see it again.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **INAUGURAL SPEECH**

### **Member for Franklin - Mr Dean Young**

[12.22 p.m.]

**Mr YOUNG** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, to use a sporting analogy, they say 'a week is a long time in football.' You could say an afternoon is a long time in politics.

I should also apologise to the Premier when he rang to congratulate me, because after I had finished chasing my son around the room to get the phone that he decided to answer, I discovered that he had put the Premier on mute. I was pretty sure that by the end of the phone call I had convinced the Premier that he may be wrong. Thankfully he was not, and here I am, and very grateful to be here representing the people of Franklin. I am deeply honoured to have the opportunity and will work hard to make sure I am worthy of their trust.

I am thankful for the welcome to this House from all members. I especially appreciate and acknowledge all my fellow Liberals for their welcome of warmth, respect and genuine friendship for which I will be forever grateful.

Mr Speaker, prudence makes sure I thank one person above all else. To my wife, Allison, I love you. You are the reason I am able to do this. Allison is the most caring, fiercest and loyal person to all her family and friends, and also the loudest. To be honest, I am a little surprised I have not heard 'go Youngy,' yet as I often do around the sporting grounds of Tasmania. Allison, your support means everything to me and as usual you have taken this new

adventure in your stride. Your strength and fire continues to push me to do more. Now, if only you would stop supporting Collingwood.

To my boys, I hope this journey inspires you to keep shooting for the moon. To James, who lives in the absolute - except when it comes to the time taken to brush his teeth - keep on arguing about being right. To Leo, who can often be heard before he is seen - do not let anyone silence your voice. To Geoffy - who missed out on SRC - keep on going because you never know where you might end up. After all, here I am.

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to my predecessor, the honourable Jacquie Petrusma. Mrs Petrusma has been an ally on this journey, always willing to impart some advice and help wherever possible. I have listened to the members of this House praise Mrs Petrusma so I was wondering about the best way to describe her contribution. In the end, I have gone back to Mrs Petrusma's own maiden speech, and I am quoting here:

I commit from the outset to being a hard-working member for all of the electorate of Franklin. Being a genuine listener as well as understanding the concerns and aspirations of my community is my promise.

We can all agree that Mrs Petrusma has lived up to that promise. I wish her well in whatever is next.

I think Mr Ferguson was a bit upset that he no longer had someone to share his birthday with. However, in what could only be described as a Tasmanian quirk of fate, I also share the same birthday, so Mr Ferguson you will have to share your birthday with me. You can figure out who is older.

My parents grew up in the valley of love, the great town of New Norfolk. They worked hard to give their children the best life they could. They gave me a childhood of great laughter and life. Having left school at an early age, my father is one of the hardest workers I have ever seen. Some day I will be able to match his efforts, just not quite yet. I can safely say that this upbringing has showed me the value of hard work, making sacrifices for your family and serving the community. Despite how busy they were, there were always times for family; always time for a bit of cricket or football; always time to help the neighbour or family. My parents are an inspiration to me. If my boys grow up to be half the man my father is, I will be a very proud man.

Even though I met them later in life, I would also like to pay tribute to Allison's parents - Helen and Bill. Although we lost Bill a few months ago, the things he has taught my children will stay with them for life. I was debating about whether to put in a mother-in-law joke at this point, but thought better of it. Helen is always there when we need her and spoils her grandkids, although as a grandparent's right, maybe just a little too much.

I have probably been a little more familiar about my family than normal; however, that is a big part of who I am. One of the reasons why I am doing this is to help keep Tasmania the greatest place in the world to grow up and live. Allison and I have always tried to teach our boys the value of family and friendships and the value of being part of the community of helping where you can.

I was very lucky to have a settled childhood. I have great friends, some of whom I have known since grade 3. As I have previously said, my father left school at a young age. This is probably one of the reasons that going to university was always part of his plans for me, my brother and sister. I can still remember my father's dismay when I told him that I wanted to do woodworking in year 12. I later realised it may have been because he knew I was never destined to be a tradie and maybe having a saw or drill in my hand was not the best idea. I have become better over the years, although I am still not as useful as my wife.

After university, I moved to Sydney at the ripe old age of 21 and had a great time in the big city. However, it confirmed my love of Tasmania and that Tasmania will forever be the best place in the world to raise a family. We have the best of everything here, including people.

I have been in and around small business from the first time my parents purchased one with my uncle and family. I can still remember riding my bike to my cousin's house, via a video store - Mr Ellis, I will explain to you what a video is later on - to amuse ourselves for the day while our parents worked. Mr Speaker, if you need to know which version of the *Carry On* movies, *Jaws*, or our personal favourites the Terrence Hill and Bud Spencer movies, to watch, I can certainly point you in the right direction.

I have been involved in small business for most of my life. Small business can be a great life, but never let it be said it is always an easy one. When it is just you, it can be a lonely place, but small business people are an amazing lot - inventive, inspirational and imaginative. We have to be when you need to get something done.

I know my good friends in Braddon often say that theirs is the engine room of the state but I would argue that small business is the ignition that gets the engine moving. One of the great things about being in small business is the part you play in people's lives and they in yours. Watching a young person either still in school or just left start their first job keen but raw. Watching them blossom into adulthood, becoming confident young people, getting their licence, their first partner - sometimes the break-up - and then even leave for another job. They become part of the family; people who you want to succeed. You are proud of your small part in it.

It also shows to me the power of a job. The way a young person comes out of their shell, learns to interact and grows is an amazing thing to see. We need to have jobs, we need our jobs, businesses and industry to remain strong. This in turn helps our communities to remain strong. Businesses, and in particular small business, should be praised for their contribution to keep Tasmania moving.

Through my wife and then my children, I cannot emphasise more the value of education, especially early in life. Helping kids to learn, laugh, be inquisitive, jump in puddles, and just to love life: if we can encourage our kids to be lifelong learners, to keep on getting up after being knocked down, we are setting them up to succeed.

We have a saying in my family: how do we get better? The answer is practice. I am here as proof that if you keep coming back, good things happen.

Sport has been an amazing part of my life. Sporting clubs provide a great sense of community and friendship. At one stage, probably like many, I felt I was destined to play cricket for Australia, until I watched the great Tasmanian cricketer Mr Roger Woolley practice.

He quickly disabused that notion. From then on, cricket was more about fun and friendship, something I am happy to say ensured a great love of sport and appreciation of what goes into sporting clubs. The volunteers behind the scenes should never be forgotten, and the ability to stretch a dollar is unmatched.

These are just a couple of things that I am passionate about in my life, passionate because I want my children to grow up in a Tasmania to be proud of, to value the community they live in, which just so happens to be the best in the state: Franklin.

I have some other people to thank in this journey of mine. Firstly, Mr Graham Matthews, who was always there, happy to provide advice without fear or favour, whether wanted or not. Mr Ross Copping, the long-time electorate chair of Clark, who was good enough to have a coffee with me and help guide me through the first campaign, when I really had no idea what I was doing. Mr Felix Ellis and Mr Simon Wood were two of the first people I went doorknocking with in that election, and it makes me very happy to join them here as colleagues and friends. I cannot imagine that any of us on that first few days thought this would be the case.

The next person I would like to acknowledge is one of the great people of Franklin, Mr Paul Harriss, who agreed to meet up and have a chocolate with someone he had never met before and that shows the measure of the man. I am only one of many who has benefited from his help and guidance. The fact that I now count him as a good friend means that was probably one of the best hot chocolates I ever bought in my time.

I feel compelled to tell a story of Mr Harriss at this point. I was trying to find some sign sites with Mr Harriss - we know how hard that can be - and we were knocking on doors in the Huon area. People would open up the door with a look of 'who is this turkey on my front door disturbing me?' Then they would look over and see Paul and their whole demeanour would change. We were welcomed like long-lost family and nothing was a problem. Then as we left Mr Harriss would proceed to tell me what great people they were. This went on from door to door. Thank you, Paul, for both your friendship and help. Long may it continue. He also had the good forethought to give his son an excellent first name.

Mr Will Coates competed in that first pre-selection with me. While he missed out at that time, he put aside his disappointment and proceeded to help me through the last few weeks of that campaign, something at the time I sorely needed. I am sure that everyone in this House has felt the effort and toll towards the end of a campaign. I thank Will and wish him good luck moving forward.

While there are far too many other people to name, because it really does take a team, some who have helped me through each campaign are Clark Cooley, Rob Mallett, and Paul Taranto for helping me run a campaign; my electorate chairs over the period; Michael McKenna and Brendan Blomeley; I am now pleased to say my fellow politicians, the honourable Nic Street, the honourable Jacquie Petrusma, senators for Tasmania Jon Duniam and Claire Chandler, and former senator Eric Abetz. To my fellow Liberals, especially those in Franklin, I thank them for their support. While we sometimes disagree, we do it in the knowledge that we are trying to uphold the beliefs of the Liberal Party. I will continue to do my best for that in everything I do.



What brought me to this place could well be simply a matter of 'right place, right time'. I happened to be watching television late one night when a federal politician, who shall remain nameless, was talking - as I am sure happens often, Mr Speaker. I may have been calling him a few unkind names whilst yelling at the TV. Allison, while possibly calling him the same names I was, pointed out, 'Shut up and do something about it', all the while leaving the room, of course. Serendipity happened at that exact moment and I received an email from the Liberal Party asking for expressions of interest to be a candidate at the next election. They say never do things in anger, but in this case I am glad I replied. I would like to point out to my wife, Allison, that it is really her guidance that got us here.

What do I want for Tasmania, Mr Speaker? I want us to keep reaching for the stars, keep on believing that Tasmanians can do anything - we should never forget that. We have some amazing people and ideas in Tasmania and while we should be immensely proud of what we have achieved so far, it really is just the beginning. I am hoping to play some small part in providing that inspiration, and if I can get just one child to believe they can do anything, my job will be done.

Why the Liberal Party? Initially, it was because that is just who we voted for. As you become more involved, you look for a deeper meaning, and I am pleased to say that the more I searched, the more I felt I belonged. I will go through a couple of beliefs that have really resonated with me over time. We believe in the individual. We stand positively for the free man, his initiative, his individuality and acceptance of responsibility.

I strongly believe in the power of individuality and the ability to express that individuality. By recognising the individual, you give that person the ability to take charge of their life, to not be shackled, but it does come with great responsibility because if you accept the individual you must take great care for other people.

We believe in the great human freedoms: freedom to worship, to think, to speak, to choose to be ambitious, to be independent, to be industrious, to acquire skill, to seek and earn reward. This has become even more relevant to me since I have become a parent. I want not only my children but all the children of Tasmania to, as my father would often say, 'have a go'. I want to be part of a society that encourages those children, encourages the thought that they can do anything, do not wait, be industrious, seek out the next challenge.

I feel it is important enough to once again thank Allison for everything she does for our family. I would be lost without you.

Lastly, I have been reading many maiden speeches trying to find the right way to finish off. Maybe I can start a new tradition for Franklin because I think the words are fitting. I will end with Mrs Petrusma's promise and reaffirm it as my own - I commit from the outset to be a hard-working member for all of the electorate of Franklin. Being a genuine listener as well as understanding the concerns and aspirations of my community is my promise.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (WORKPLACE PROTECTION) BILL  
2022 (No. 15)**

**In Committee**

**Legislative Council amendments to clauses 4 and 5 -**

[12.39 p.m.]

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR** - I would like to ask the Committee for some direction. Would you like to proceed with all the amendments at once or shall we take them one by one? Minister?

**Mr BARNETT** - Madam Deputy Chair, I am happy to take the amendments together - clauses 4 and 5. I have comments with respect to clauses 4 and 5, but I would like to indicate that this workplace protection legislation is very important. It is a signature policy of our Government since 2014; three elections. We have had a mandate to provide better protections for workers in the workplace and to protect small business and businesses of any size and their right to operate free from intrusion or intimidation.

I would like to move to agree to the amendments and indicate that the Government's objective in providing better protections for workers has been achieved.

**Ms O'Connor** - It has not. How long did it take to wipe that egg off your face?

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Mr BARNETT** - We will be very carefully monitoring the response to this legislation, particularly for our productive industries. What we have delivered with this legislation is tougher laws and increased penalties when it comes to workplace protection, protecting workers and their safety in the workplace, free from workplace invasions, free from extremist activists, free from endangering and intruding into an employee's workplace. This will provide better protection for Tasmanians across the state.

Those extremists who wish to invade workplaces and disrupt businesses have been sent a message by our Government that enough is enough. We have consistently fought to protect these rights and have received mandates time and again. This has been delivered through the Tasmanian parliament and we are delivering on that important promise. Intimidating, threatening and endangering employees will never be acceptable. We have amended the Police Offences Act to ensure that our police are better able to protect workers and businesses through strengthening trespass and obstruction laws.

The Tasmanian Government respects the right to protest. It respects the right to express a view and Tasmanians' right to free speech but it is important to note that this is not at the expense of the right to lawfully work or run a business. The biggest question is, frankly, right here, right now for Tasmanian Labor. Tasmanian Labor voted against this bill in the upper House. They voted against both clauses - clause 4 with respect to obstruction of a road and access for workers to their workplace, and they voted against clause 5 which related to tougher laws and increased penalties around stopping workplace invasions.

This is mind-boggling, when on the one hand they say they support workers and safety in the workplace but on the other hand they oppose this bill holus-bolus in the upper House. Shame on Labor. Why is it that they vote against workers and protecting their rights in the workplace, and stand together in opposing this bill to provide tougher laws and increased penalties with the Greens, in opposition to the Government's objectives to deliver a very important policy which we have had on the drawing board since 2014. We have taken it to election on three occasions and delivered that mandate, and finally I can celebrate that we have better protections for workers in the workplace despite Labor opposing this very legislation. This is mind-boggling. The Tasmanian public will be aware that Labor has opposed this legislation to provide better protections in the workplace, from workplace invasions, intrusions and intimidation. They will be aware.

Every day between now and the next election, the Tasmanian public will be aware that the Tasmanian Labor Party voted against workplace protection legislation. They voted against workplace invasion, tougher laws and to increase those penalties. They voted against the workers. They voted against small and medium-size businesses.

They are voting against our productive industries, whether it be mining, forestry, salmon, agriculture, any business or any size or shape; against all the workers who want to be protected - those 500 workers at Rosebery who want to go to work, who cannot get access to Helilog Road thanks to the Labor Party opposing that with the Greens and with the Bob Brown Foundation. The Labor Party are joined at the hip with the Greens and with the Bob Brown Foundation. For them to be voting against tougher laws and increased penalties for workplace invasions is shameful. They have some explaining to do.

What did Dr Broad say about this matter in the Chamber, right here, just some months ago. He said:

I also heard of a particular instance where a fully laden truck and trailer was going down Helilog Road, and saw a protester jumping out onto the road to stop that truck. The truck driver locked up the truck. We are talking about a semi-trailer with a trailer locking up on a dirt road. This driver did whatever they could and did not run over that protester - but from all accounts it was close - only to see the protester go in between the trailer and the truck and lock on. Imagine if that road was just a little bit slipperier and the protester went under the truck. Imagine the mental health impact on the truck driver. That truck driver was impacted by that incident. He was very stressed by it. He felt like he had almost killed someone that day. This is not something that is peaceful. This is not a peaceful act.

Madam Deputy Chair, this is what we have tried to do. We have tried to protect the workers in the workplace. We have tried to protect those protesters from unsafe practices. You have Dr Broad, who is not here in the Chamber, but whom I have just quoted, debating in favour of what we have been trying to do yet you have state Labor oppose this in the upper House. It is mind-boggling. It is scandalous. It is outrageous and it is appalling for state Labor to do this.

There is plenty more. We know what has been said on the public record. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have a number of your members, including Dr Broad say one thing because he is representing the west coast or the north-west coast and purportedly, the

productive industries, purportedly feigning support for our productive industries, and then the same Labor party vote against workplace invasions and tougher laws and increased penalties. It is beyond belief. It needs an explanation from the Leader of the Labor Party today. It is clear why there has been federal intervention in state Labor. They can make no decisions about their own party between now and 2025 and we all know why.

Quite clearly, they have been caught out. They have been feigning support for the workers. They have been feigning support for safety in the workplace and now they have voted against it in the upper House. They have voted against clause 4, clause 5 - voted against the bill in the upper House. They have been caught out. There is some serious explaining to do. I look forward to listening to the Leader of the Opposition explain why they voted against this bill. I will: be fascinated, as will the productive industries, the miners, the foresters, the agriculturists, the salmon growers.

You are feigning support for these productive industries and you will not vote for tougher laws to stop workplace invasions. It is mind-boggling and we look forward to hearing about it.

I could quote Dr Broad even further but I will not at this stage. I will allow the Leader of the Opposition to explain the Labor Party's position as to why they would block or vote against tougher laws and increased penalties for workplace invasions in the upper House and I so look forward to listening to her contribution.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Minister, I have no doubt at all Ms White will make a strong contribution on this and explain why Labor voted against this odious legislation.

Minister, as I listened to you talk about Helilog Road, it reminded me that you, as the previous Resources minister, unlawfully approved a mining lease for MMG over Helilog Road. As we understand it, you are in a world of legal trouble because of that. We think that is why you have lost the Resources portfolio because you broke the law, minister. Do not come in here on this odious bill and talk about peaceful protesters as lawbreakers because you in this Chamber are the number-one lawbreaker. That is a fact. Unlawful lease, never explained.

**Mr BARNETT** - Madam Deputy Chair, I ask the member to withdraw that offensive remark.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - On what basis?

**Mr Barnett** - It is offensive.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR** - It is offensive.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Madam Deputy Chair, I simply stated a fact but if the minister takes offence at being called a lawbreaker, I withdraw it.

**Mr Barnett** - Thank you.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - What we know is that this minister has egg all over his face after three unsuccessful attempts through previous bills which were found to be unconstitutional. We now have this amendment bill to the Police Offences Act, which has been changed substantially by the Legislative Council because it was massive overreach. Of course it is still a steaming pile of legislative manure and we will not support it because it is intended to crush peaceful protest, it is intended to chill civil society into not standing up to corporations that are given free rein by this Government, largely unregulated, to plunder and profit.

In the process we risk losing places like takayna. Minister, there is nowhere on Earth like the Tarkine, and that is why, no matter what you do, no matter what legislation this House passes that is designed to crush peaceful protest, people will step up to defend that place, they will defend forests and they will stand up for a safe climate. When the law is an ass we have a responsibility to challenge it and people will challenge this law. I have no doubt about it because young people striking for a safe climate and those people who love the forests, they figure they have nothing left to lose. The rate of environmental destruction and the heating of this planet means that it is urgent, they know they have an ethical responsibility to stand up and they will keep doing so.

Minister, the real extremists in this place, the real extremists in Tasmania, are not peaceful protesters. They are people like you, a real extremist who never saw a native forest he did not want to fell, burn and chip, who can travel through takayna and be excited at the vision of a toxic mine dump in a rainforest, a minister who cheerleads for corporations at every opportunity.

We are looking at these amendments because this minister is a shill for a Chinese state-owned mining company. This is nothing to do with the protection of workers. This is a corporate protection racket bill and this is all about MMG in the Tarkine, a Chinese state-owned company this minister bends over backwards for, broke the law for and will do anything for. That is what these amendments are all about. That is what this legislation is all about and, despite the adjustments made by members of the upper House, this is still legislation that is designed to crush dissent. It is still legislation that seeks to enable massive corporate profit and environmental destruction without challenge by civil society.

Of course, as we know, it will not work. It will not stop the peaceful protests. It will not stop the people who are gathering on the lawns right now. It will not stop us, the Greens, from standing up for nature and for civil society and, for example, for coastal communities that your party and your Government has abandoned, from Long Bay at Port Arthur to Cape Barren to the north-west corner in our pristine waters. This is MMG, JBS and Cooke protection racket legislation, despite the amendments.

I thank those members of the upper House who argued valiantly against this bill and voted against it ultimately - Meg Webb, Rob Valentine, Mike Gaffney, Rosemary Armitage and Sarah Lovell, all of whom stood up for the right to peaceful protest which is core to who we are as Tasmanians.

If people had not stood up, the Franklin River would be dammed, there would be a pulp mill pumping dioxins into Wesley Vale, there would be a pulp mill pumping pollutants into the Tamar airshed, there would be a 500-home canal estate in Ralphs Bay and hundreds of thousands of more hectares of our forest would have been felled. The right to peaceful protest is core to who we are, and this law-breaking minister with his odious attempts -

**Mr Ferguson** - This has been ruled on.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Hang on a minute, it is a statement of fact that this minister broke the law under the Mineral Resources Act and he is currently subject to legal challenge.

**Mr Ferguson** - Madam Deputy Chair, please ask her to withdraw.

**Mr Barnett** - Unreservedly.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, I ask you to withdraw.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair, because you asked so nicely of course I will withdraw.

Madam Deputy Chair, today is Threatened Species Day and out on the lawns of this parliament are good people: Tasmanians from all walks of life, all ages, all genders and backgrounds, and they are out the front peacefully protesting for species you will not find anywhere else on Earth - the Tasmanian devil, the masked owl, our own wedge-tailed eagle, the critically endangered spotted handfish - and if this minister thinks the police offences amendment (corporate protection) bill of 2022 will stop those people from speaking up for those creatures, he is sorely mistaken. It will not work.

We are very glad to see that Mr Gaffney's amendments that lowered the grossly disproportionate penalties have been accepted, but the penalties in this legislation can still lead to someone being jailed for two years for exercising their right to peaceful protest.

I remind the House that we asked in Estimates this year how many reports there had been to WorkSafe Tasmania about people injured in the workplace as a result of peaceful protest and of course the answer was zero. This legislation is not about protecting workers. If this Government was serious about protecting workers it would have brought in industrial manslaughter legislation, but no.

**Debate adjourned.**

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

## **MOTION**

### **Fuel Excise Reduction**

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House -

(1) Notes -

- (a) that the Tasmanian Liberal Government understands it is a difficult time for many in our community and has measures in place to assist Tasmanians with the cost of living;

- (b) that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and other global supply issues, the cost of fuel has significantly increased nation-wide and that the decision of the previous federal Liberal Government to cut the fuel excise was welcomed by all Tasmanians who saw a reduction in fuel prices at the bowser; and
  - (c) that this Government is taking practical steps to provide relief to Tasmanian families and strongly urges the new federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction until at least the end of 2022.
- (2) Calls on the Tasmanian Labor Party to support the Tasmanian Liberal Government and also speak to their federal counterparts and demand they extend the fuel excise reduction to help Tasmanians struggling with the high cost of fuel.

Mr Speaker, we welcome the federal government's formal decision to halve the fuel excise until 28 December 2022, and it has been pleasing to see the price reduction being passed on to Tasmanian consumers. All jurisdictions across Australia, and many worldwide, are seeing the cost of fuel rise due to the pandemic and other supply issues. Tasmania is not immune, with prices increasing significantly through 2022. This has in recent times been affected by the geopolitical instability between Russia and Ukraine and other supply issues.

The Morrison government put in place a cut by half for six months to the fuel excise, for petrol, diesel and all other fuel and petroleum-based products with the exception of aviation fuels. The move was aimed at countering surging petrol prices to ease cost-of-living pressures. The government estimated the cut to the fuel excise would save the owner of a mid-sized car, about \$13 to \$20 per full tank of fuel, while businesses with fleet vehicles were expected to save thousands. The cut has provided some relief for over five months so far, and is due to return to the full levy of 44.4 cents per litre on 28 September. However, our Government is concerned that fuel prices will rise if the current federal Government fails to step in and extend the excise reduction period.

Addressing cost-of-living issues takes state and federal governments to work together. It will be good to know what the new Prime Minister Mr Albanese's, view is on extending this reduction to keep the cost of living down for all Tasmanians. I know our Premier has consistently raised this directly with the Prime Minister. We will welcome any discussions the federal Government may wish to have on how to assist Tasmanians struggling with the high cost of fuel.

Importantly, we ask the Labor Party of Tasmania what they have done to seek the support of their federal colleagues for what is a real burden on Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses. Our Government recognises that many Tasmanian households are doing it tough at the moment, which is why we are taking action on cost-of-living expenses.

Higher fuel prices are due to global fuel market uncertainty. Prices are driven by an increase in demand and more recently due to global supply uncertainties. We have listened to the concerns from the community sector regarding the impacts of the recent fuel price spike on

delivery of their services. This is why our Government took actions and continues to take action on the cost of living.

While current fuel prices are a global problem, our Government took action in 2020 to promote competition in the local market by introducing a mandatory real-time price reporting scheme. The scheme, which involves the free FuelCheck TAS app and website, helps motorists to easily access fuel pricing information and make informed decisions on where to buy their fuel.

Our Government has made it clear that we will consider further action on fuel pricing, including legislation, should there be any evidence of Tasmania being excessively out of step with the rest of the country or in the event of price gouging but to date, no such evidence exists.

The former federal government's tax cut on fuel has provided an actual reduction in fuel prices to Tasmanians, while Australian families with at least one vehicle are expected to save \$300 over the reduction period. We call on the current federal government to continue this action.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is taking practical steps to provide relief to Tasmanian families. We have announced over \$5 million in additional support in the last month alone. That is on top of \$17 million to power price relief via a \$180 Bill Buster payment to eligible Tasmanians, with an estimated 94 230 on concession cards, already having received their \$180 payment.

In fact, one customer who received their bill buster payment recently provided feedback:

I am an aged pensioner and received my electricity bill today. I just wanted to let you know how grateful I am for the contribution your Government has made in making it affordable to keep warm during winter.

I am very frugal with electricity usage but your bonus has alleviated a lot of bill stress.

With fuel the number one cost-of-living issue, our Government is very concerned that fuel prices will rise as the current federal government fails to step in to extend the excise reduction period. That is why our Government has strongly urged the new federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction until at least the end of 2022.

Mr Speaker, I will read from the *Hansard* of 22 March 2022.

Dr Broad to move - That the House -

(1) Acknowledges:

- (a) the serious financial pressure being placed on Tasmanian households by the rising cost of living;
- (b) that the most acute pressure is currently being felt with basic, non-discretionary expenses such as fuel, housing and utility bills;



- (c) wages are not keeping pace with the cost of living; and
  - (d) that this pressure is felt equally by business owners.
- (2) Notes that:
- (a) in May 2020 the Premier Hon. Peter Gutwein, MP stated that if fuel prices in the State "continue to be out of step this Government will continue taking further action and will consider price capping";
  - (b) in November 2021 Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs, Hon. Elise Archer, MP stated that the "Government has made it clear that should further action be required to support Tasmanians to access cheaper fuel prices, including the introduction of legislation, we will consider it"; and
  - (c) according to the ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission), Hobart has the highest fuel prices of any capital city, being nearly 20 cents/litre higher than other capital cities.
- (3) Calls on the Premier to outline how his Government will give effect to fuel price capping and when the fuel price legislation will be introduced.

Labor agreed that the fuel excise happened but now, due to expire, the silence from the state Labor Party on this issue has been deafening. I hope the Tasmanian Labor Party will also speak to their colleagues in Canberra. Pick up the phone, Ms Dow and Ms Butler, to encourage your colleagues to help Tasmanians struggling with the high cost of fuel.

That is unlikely, due to the comment made by Ms White on 17 August 2022. In response she said: 'It is also worth acknowledging that the number one cost-of-living pressure for most is the increase in fuel prices'. Ms White, it is rent, it is energy, it is groceries. I believe fuel has the biggest impact. It is the heart of the economy: the blood that keeps the wheels turning. Labor had the opportunity to pick up the phone and take action and that is what Tasmanians expect you to do: to do the right thing.

I will quote a recent media release. The Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs, Ms Elise Archer said:

It is simply not good enough for the Federal Government to refuse to act, and therefore double the fuel excise in the upcoming Budget.

The global situation remains uncertain and continues to affect fuel prices across the nation, and with interest rates also continuing to rise, the Federal Labor Government must take action to ease the pressure and provide real relief for Tasmanian motorists.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is already playing our part, with a number of cost-of-living measures in place, that are providing real relief for families, businesses and community organisations.

I again ask where is state Labor on this issue? Where is the Leader, Rebecca White, or shadow treasurer, Shane Broad? It is interesting that they are both absent from the Chamber at the moment. As I have previously said, they talk a big game on social media, despite ignoring the positive things our Government is doing to ease the cost-of-living pressures. When it comes to something as simple as advocating for the fuel excise reduction to be extended, they go silent and are completely missing in action.

This is why our Government has strongly urged the new federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction until at least the end of 2022. I hope that, given their now very close working relationship, the Tasmanian Labor Party would have already stepped up and asked their federal counterparts to extend the excise reduction period to help the struggling Tasmanians with the cost of living.

We still need to put pressure on the federal government and the Tasmanian Labor Party to extend and support the fuel excise due to the rising cost at the bowser and the rising overall cost of living in Australia. This is a problem all around the world, with other countries such as New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom taking similar measures to ease the cost of fuel.

While halving the fuel excise will give some temporary relief, it is important to realise it will ultimately have a minor impact on the continued decline or rise of fuel prices. It is a fact that cutting the fuel excise also means a loss in revenue collected by the federal government, which appears to be a big concern for Labor as it could result in less investment for services and infrastructure projects in subsequent years.

The federal government during 2022-23 has \$9.1 billion invested towards road funding projects and the \$2.65 billion lost from the fuel excise cut may have an impact on transport funding in future - not a problem for the Liberal Government as we work together for a suitable solution, unlike lazy Labor.

With this said, what I find interesting is that the federal government is forecast to collect \$66.67 billion in vehicle taxes and net fuel excise over the next four years. Of that \$66.67 billion, \$13.91 billion is estimated to be received in 2022-23, rising to \$16.65 billion in 2025-26 - definitely not a small amount of money, so I must ask where will it all go? No wonder Labor is not interested in extending the fuel excise. All funds from the excise go to the federal government.

Australian motorists have been suffering pain at the bowser for too long, with petrol prices pushing past \$2 a litre despite the move from the previous federal government in March to halve the fuel excise in a bid to reduce the financial pressures on drivers. The cut was not forever and the reduction rate is set to expire soon. One can only imagine what this will mean for drivers when once again they are slugged with the full excise. It is important to remember that with the cut to the fuel excise, you may save 22.1 cents at the bowser but it does not change the primary cost of fuel, which will still rise or fall, depending on many influences.

As mentioned earlier, our recent announcement of the \$5 million cost-of-living booster package will provide immediate financial and practical help to Tasmanian families through our

community sector partners and grassroots community organisations. Importantly, to directly help Tasmanians with fuel prices we are providing \$250 000 of additional funding for a fuel grants program. This additional funding will provide payments of up to \$1000 to help community organisations with the rising cost of fuel, and I think of people like Loaves and Fishes which are going out to our regional rural people in Lyons, Ms Butler.

For the benefit of members, I will outline some of the other cost-of-living measures our Government is delivering. Funding initiatives for this financial year include \$1.75 million for Tasmania's Neighbourhood Houses, with each of the 35 houses receiving an additional \$50 000; \$1 million in additional support for the family assistance program, allowing the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Anglicare and the Launceston and Hobart City Missions to extend more support to vulnerable Tasmanians, doubling the current funding for the next 12 months. We have also provided an additional \$1 million to Aurora Energy for its hardship program to provide assistance for customers experiencing financial difficulty, bringing the total amount available to \$2.7 million.

This is on top of the \$17 million our Government has already committed to power price relief via the \$180 Bill Buster payment program for all eligible Tasmanians; \$500 000 for additional funding for emergency food relief providers Foodbank Tasmania and Loaves and Fishes to help purchase and distribute food, as well as support to upgrade their distribution vehicles; \$350 000 in additional funding to the very successful school lunch pilot program to include 30 Tasmanian schools in the next 12 months; and a further \$150 000 will go to the no-interest loan scheme to allow the organisation to provide no-fee, no-interest loans to Tasmanians for items such as rental bonds, car repairs or essential whitegoods.

Mr Speaker, I could go on about everything our Government is doing to address the cost-of-living. Although it is clear we have done more on the cost-of-living than Labor ever has, it is also our Government which took decisive action early this year to influence rising fuel prices. The former premier wrote to the former prime minister requesting a temporary reduction in the Australian Government fuel excise to avoid adverse economic impacts on Tasmania as it continues to recover from COVID-19 pandemic. It was extremely gratifying to see the former prime minister take immediate action. I strongly hope Tasmanian Labor will take similar action by supporting this motion and speaking to their colleagues in Canberra, and I plead with Ms White to pick up the phone for all Tasmanians.

The former federal government's tax cut on fuel has provided an actual reduction in fuel prices for Tasmanians, with Australian families with at least one vehicle expected to save up to \$20 a tank, giving a total saving of \$300 over the reduction period which ends on 28 September. Our Government knows that this is a significant amount of money for Tasmanians. It is disappointing that when it comes to the cost of living, all Labor can do is scaremonger and throw mud, as we saw this morning, while our Government continues to get on with the job of helping Tasmanians pay the bills.

While inflation is rising, it has been very pleasing to see that our Tasmanian economy remains strong. Tasmania's unemployment rate has hit a record new low, with unemployment falling to 3.7 per cent, less than half what it was when we were first elected in 2014, and much less than the horrific high of 8.8 per cent under the disastrous Labor-Greens government. Employment has continued to grow strongly, with 264 200 Tasmanians in jobs, which is over 6000 more than at the beginning of the pandemic and 29 600 more than when we came to government in 2014.

It is very clear that our Government is focused on strengthening our nation-leading economy and providing relief to the Tasmanian families that need it. Our Government has strongly urged the new federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction until at least the end of 2022. I note that Labor backed the Morrison government's halving of the fuel excise but, sadly now due to Labor, drivers can expect to see a jump in petrol prices from 29 September.

For a long time now, the taxation of petrol and diesel has provoked disapproval in debates, especially the excises of fuels. The rise in petrol prices over the past year has strengthened debates over fuel excises, questioning the government to reduce the excises or abolish indexation of excise rates. Debates circle issues such as why the excises are levied, the rates, the indexation of rates to inflation, who should pay the excises and who should be exempt, and the purposes to which excise revenue should be allocated.

Industries that use petrol and diesel at high volumes are incurring higher input costs, increasing their prices, which causes resources to move away from these industries. This is where fuel excise reduction would assist. Fuel excise reduction should be extended to help reduce pressure on family budgets and support the visitor economy across regional Australia and Tasmania. If Labor allowed petrol and diesel to increase by 22 cents per litre in September, businesses, families, and especially regional families in Lyons, Ms Butler, will suffer the most.

The fuel excise reduction was initially a temporary and targeted measure in direct response to the war on Ukraine, supply pressures, and escalating prices for Australian motorists and small business owners. These conditions still exist today. The federal Labor Government should recognise and acknowledge these difficult times and extend the fuel excise cut.

Think about our rural communities and the distances that are required to travel. They do not have the services required at their doorsteps, unlike Sandy Bay. They travel distances daily, weekly for medical, school supplies; they do not have access to public transport as in the cities. These families are also among our lowest income earners. I can vouch for that because I live in St Helens and we are one of the lowest socio-economic areas in the state. We fight it out with George Town. These families will be first impacted, as if it is not hard enough already for these communities. Many of these rural areas rely on tourism, like St Helens; one of six council areas throughout Australia which has already been heavily impacted. Why make it worse with higher fuel costs? Do we want to add additional barriers, or discourage people who would normally take a holiday in our beautiful state exploring our rural regions, but could be deterred by the increased fuel costs?

In closing, I again call on the Tasmanian Labor Party to act by speaking to your federal counterparts. Please pick up the phone and demand that they extend the fuel excise reduction to help Tasmanians struggling with the high cost of fuel. Tasmanian households are doing it tough which is why we remain committed to reducing the cost of living for all Tasmanians. I continue to urge the federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction until at least the end of 2022, as Brownie has done when I have been around with him.

The fuel excise reduction has provided the average family with at least one vehicle a saving of up to \$20 per tank, giving a total saving of \$300 over the reduction period. This is a significant saving, Ms Butler, as interest rates continue to rise. I urge the state Labor leader, Ms White, to do her part and join us in calling up the federal Labor Government for the excise

to be extended. I stand for all Tasmanians struggling with the high cost of fuel, and stop saying that it is rent, it is energy, it is groceries; it is all this and more.

Mr Speaker, I call on all members to support this.

[2.53 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, we welcome an opportunity to discuss fuel prices and the rising cost of living in Tasmania. We have consistently brought these issues to parliament for many years. I listened to the Government's contribution to this MPI. I was hoping for some meaningful measures. It was a tad aggressive and drivel. I am left with a confused feeling from your speech, which I hope you did not write yourself because it did not sound like you.

I am yet to understand how the Liberal Party can honestly stand in this House and pretend they really care about cost-of-living pressures for Tasmanians -

**A member** interjecting.

**Ms BUTLER** - when Tasmanians under their watch are doing it so tough.

Mr Speaker, you would have noticed that I did not interject at all during Mr Tucker's contribution, even though it was quite personal. I would appreciate that assistance as well.

I would also like to inform the House that we have written to the federal government in relation to fuel prices and the escalating cost-of-living pressures Tasmanians are experiencing. We will not be supporting your motion, but we do take this matter seriously because we know that there are 120 000 Tasmanians living in poverty at the moment. We know poverty is not endemic but it persists because this Government has chosen for it to be this way. It is how you have prioritised your policies.

We have tirelessly asked Government to speak up, especially on fuel costs. Instead of taking real action and providing a solution, the minister rolled out a band aid measure, an app which provides the consumer with information and transparency on the prices of fuel but does not deal with the difference between the wholesale price and the retail price. I would argue it provides the consumer with a guide of how expensive fuel is. I am yet to see any evidence of how it has fixed the problem.

Real reform is needed. The Government has not chosen to introduce reform. We had raised this issue countless times well before the Ukraine war. Former premier Peter Gutwein stated in May 2020 that he would act to reduce fuel prices when petrol prices fell out of step with the rest of the country. That promise was repeated by the Government. In 2021, before the Ukraine war, we called on the Government to introduce legislation to bring down the cost of fuel. We also then called on the premier to deliver on his promise to address that issue because we said that it was a critical cost-of-living issue.

If you were serious about fuel prices, that would have been the appropriate time for you to have taken those measures and those steps. That was a promise that the Government had made to the people of Tasmania.

If the Government was really concerned about the cost of living, it would have supported Labor's bill to cap power prices. As of 1 July, Tasmanian power prices have risen by 12 per cent. If you were really serious about easing the cost-of-living pressures, you would not be asking Tasmanians to pay mainland prices for Tasmanian energy. It simply does not make any sense.

We are still locked in to the eastern seaboard. We are locked into mainland prices. That is despite you assuring us, and we agreed with you in 2018, that we would delink so that Tasmanians would not be hit with the increase in prices. We all knew that increase in price would be coming because of the huge reform that is needed on the mainland for them to introduce clean energy sources. We have a clean energy source in Tasmania because we were sensible and we previously managed our assets appropriately. We believed you and so did the people of Tasmania in 2018 when we all agreed that we would delink from the national grid. We would not make Tasmanians pay mainland prices. What has happened? Tasmanians are now paying mainland prices. That is on you and your Government.

After today's appalling response to whether Hydro Tasmania has lost \$100 million in two months, coupled with the fact that you told the people of Tasmania that we would be delinked from the mainland and not have to pay mainland power prices, I do not think you are being honest with the people of Tasmania.

The Hydro is an asset which belongs to the people of Tasmania. It is part of our identity and it also underpins the Tasmanian economy.

If the Government was genuinely interested in easing the cost-of-living pressures for Tasmanians, it would have prioritised the building of social and affordable housing over the past eight years. This has not been their priority. The latest housing dashboard showed the average wait for high-priority social housing applicants has blown out by nearly two years. New data from the Tenants' Union highlights the affordability crisis has engulfed Tasmania's rental market now. State-wide medium rents have increased 10 per cent in the past year, keeping further pressures on households already struggling with the soaring costs of living. Tasmanians in regional areas are amongst the worst affected, with the west coast, central coast, and north-east regions seeing some of the largest annual increases.

In Hobart, the eastern shore has been particularly hard hit, with median rents for three bedroom properties rising 13 per cent in the last year. This is cost-of-living pressures. This is cost-of-living increases because of the lack of prioritisation by the Government; that is a problem. Median rents on the eastern shore have risen 80 per cent since the Liberals were elected. It is on you. A rise equivalent to \$230 a week, or nearly \$12 000 for a year's rent. The Liberals have not built the social housing they promised to Tasmanians in need and they have not delivered the planning reform they promised to make building easier either. It is just a lot of talk, a lot of announcements, a lot of gunna, gunna, gunna, and nothing ever really happens.

The Liberals have failed to get the basics right across the entire housing system for nearly a decade, and these massive rent rises are just one of the many tragic consequences of not prioritising cost-of-living pressures. To come in here today with this ridiculous attempt at wedging, is really sloppy. Of course, we have already written to our federal counterparts. It is just sloppy wedge politics. All it is about is this Brownie person whom they keep alluding to. It is ridiculous.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms BUTLER** - I am sorry, Mr Speaker, I can hear interjecting. I did not interject when other people were speaking. I was respectful.

If you were really serious about cost-of-living, you would have ensured Tasmanian nurses, ambos, teachers, firies, sparkies, childcare workers, child protection workers, disability care workers and many more professionals were paid equal wages to their mainland counterparts. You do understand that as a government, you can assist with those kinds of things. If you were really serious about escalating cost-of-living pressures, you would have boosted education spending to ensure Tasmanian children could be given the best education possible. We all know that education is the greatest equaliser. Instead, we have some of the worst NAPLAN results in the country.

If the Government was slightly interested in addressing cost-of-living pressures, you would have addressed the completely inadequate mental health system, a system so difficult to access Tasmanians are now moving to the mainland to access mental health systems for themselves and also for their children. There are cases where people, if they are lucky and can afford private health cover and that way reduce the cost of accessing mental health services, then they have to try to navigate the 12 month wait on Tasmanian waiting lists for their children - sometimes children who are at risk of taking their own lives while they are 12 months on the waiting list.

These guys coming into this Chamber today with wedge politics have no idea about the cost of living. They do not understand. We have the lowest wages in the country and some of the highest rents in the country as well as some of the worst intergenerational poverty levels - and it is under this Government's watch - the worst correctional facilities in Australia, with the worst re-offending levels and some of the lowest life expectancies in the country, due to poor access, nutrition, and health services. This is your Government.

If Mr Tucker and his colleagues were serious about cost-of-living pressures, they would not have introduced a new tax on garbage collection. If the Government was really serious, they would be taking much greater care with water and sewerage charges. Instead, we see TasWater jacking up water costs, adding more to the cost-of-living pressures under the Government's watch.

We do not support your motion. It is politically motivated. We have already written to the Commonwealth Government in relation to fuel prices. Mr Speaker, 23.6 per cent of Tasmanians are living in poverty and one in five Tasmanians struggle to make ends meet. Tasmania is the most unaffordable state to live in under this Government's watch. We will not be supporting your motion.

[3.04 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we will not be supporting this motion. It is blatantly political and ultimately very cynical indeed but it is lovely. It is reassuring to hear Mr Tucker has woken up to the fact that so many Tasmanians cannot make ends meet. That is somewhat reassuring. However, I did not hear a word out of the people on the Government benches when the Morrison government flatly ruled out extending the fuel excise cut past September, like where we are now - not a word, utter silence. That is why we will not be supporting this motion: it is blatantly cynical and political.

I say to Mr Tucker: if you want to be part of a government that is delivering real cost-of-living relief to the people of Tasmania, as Ms Butler said roughly 30 per cent of whom are living on the breadline, advocate within government to do something about soaring rents. Advocate within government to free up some of that short-stay accommodation - whole homes that are taken out of the rental market. Support the Greens when we move for controls on rent increases as the ACT has done. Seriously.

You are part of a government that is rapidly rolling out electric vehicle charging infrastructure; that is purchasing electric vehicles through the government fleet; making sure that you are seeding the transport system with more and more electric cars. We know some of this is happening but it is not happening fast enough.

The single best way we can help Tasmanians who are struggling with the price of petrol is to invest more in passenger and mass transit but also to make sure that we are electrifying the transport system here. This Government could provide free public transport. It could make sure that the vast majority of the vehicles that it bought were electric vehicles and it could rapidly expand charging infrastructure. There is a whole suite of things that a government has the capacity to do.

**Mr Jaensch** - We have the best electric charging network in Australia.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is very, very good, Mr Jaensch. The minister just said that Tasmania has the best electric vehicle charging network in Australia, which is terrific. You would hope so on an island of our scale. Now we have to help Tasmanians afford electric vehicles. A new EV is still around \$30 000 for a cheap one. This is where government has a critical role to play in helping Tasmanians with their escalating transport costs.

There are cost-of-living pressures right across the spectrum of household costs. Now we have the Reserve Bank of Australia going rogue. Its Governor told Australians that there were very unlikely to be any increases in interest rates until 2024 at least yet now we have another rate rise. We have a whole lot of people who were so desperate to get into the housing market in the last few years that they borrowed when interest rates were low in the hope that they would stay there for longer. People I have spoken to, who are first home buyers, are stressed about what the rise in interest rates will mean for them. There are cost-of-living pressures across the system. It is just cheap politics to have a crack at Labor over the fuel excise when we have had nine years or however long that torture was of conservative governments in Canberra and never once did we hear a word from any state Liberal about putting pressure on the Morrison government to extend or make permanent the fuel excise cuts.

This is a silly motion; it is a wedge motion.

**Ms Archer** - Actually, we did raise it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You did raise it?

**Ms Archer** - Yes, we did raise it with Morrison.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You raised it in conversation with the former prime minister and suggested that -



**Ms Archer** - That it should be beyond September.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay, thanks. I will take your word for that. You have no reason not to be telling the truth. I did not hear it publicly.

**Mr Winter** - It was never exactly an enthusiastic attack on the former government, was it?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it was not a clarion call out of Tasmania taking on the Morrison government. They did not take on the Morrison government over changes to the GST distribution, which will absolutely shaft Tasmania unless a better deal is negotiated for it, but anyway, here we are.

It is a silly motion. I encourage Mr Tucker to have a look at the suite of cost-of-living measures that government can take, and advocate from within government to deliver real cost-of-living relief to his constituents in Lyons, who arguably have the highest transport costs in Tasmania because of the distances that have to be travelled, but that is probably a wildly unscientific assertion. Mr Tucker can do better than this motion. It is silly and we will not be supporting it.

[3.11 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on behalf of the Government to this motion brought on by Mr Tucker, who quite rightly as a member for Lyons is concerned about not only fuel prices but the cost of living. The Government has come into this place on a number of occasions mentioning our cost-of-living package and what we are specifically doing in this area.

I will start by addressing a couple of retort questions I have in relation to Ms Butler's contribution. I note that she said they have written to the Albanese Government. I wonder when. I hazard a guess that, because the date was omitted, it was very recent and only when they have come under pressure to do so. I do not have information which suggests otherwise so I can only assume that is the case.

I was specifically verballed by Ms Butler and she continues to verbal me in this place and indeed our Government and our former premier, Mr Gutwein, when Ms Butler said that we promised the app would fix the problem. The FuelCheck Tas app does not fix the problem and we have never professed that it would. It provides the consumer with information so they can make an informed choice about the price of fuel and therefore be able to obtain in their area - or as far as they are willing to travel - the cheapest fuel possible. I have that app and sometimes on any given day in one area there is quite a distinct difference between fuel stations. It is a very useful app to have, particularly in these times when fuel prices are significant, as we are all feeling the impact of that. People in the rural and remote areas like Mr Tucker has identified are really feeling the pinch in relation to the cost of fuel. We know that for small business in particular and for couriers, this is critically important and that is why we have put up this motion today.

As I have said, and our Government will continue to say, we understand that Tasmanian households are doing it tough at the moment. This is why we remain committed to doing all we can to reduce the cost of living for Tasmanians. We welcome any discussions with the federal government on how they can reduce fuel prices. Unfortunately, to date the federal

government has said it will not be extending fuel excise reduction beyond 28 September. We think it should be until at least the end of the year because higher fuel prices due to the global fuel market uncertainty is impacting on the cost of living. Prices are driven also by an increase in demand and more recently due to the global supply uncertainties, which we have had for some time I might add, obviously because of COVID-19 and the Ukraine situation. There has been unrest all around the world for quite some time and we know the first thing that often happens is that it is felt at the bowser.

While current fuel prices are a global problem, our Government took action in 2020 to promote competition in the local market. That is what we are all about when we talk about our FuelCheck Tas app and the website that provides the same information for people and consumers who are not familiar with having an app on their phone. The real-time price reporting scheme within that system is mandatory, so the scheme which involves that FuelCheck Tas app and website helps motorists to easily access fuel pricing information and make informed decisions on where to buy their fuel. While fuel prices will continue to be determined by market forces, providing real-time fuel price reporting allows Tasmanians to make informed choices as to where to direct their purchases.

The FuelCheck Tas website and app allows motorists to find the cheapest fuel in their area and see price variations in their workday commute or, indeed, when they are on holiday or a longer trip where obviously the price of fuel is felt more significantly because more fuel needs to be purchased.

As always, fuel prices will continue to be determined by a number of market forces. Providing that real-time fuel price reporting allows Tasmanians to search and buy at the lowest available price and it rewards lower-priced retailers and drives competition in the market accordingly by empowering motorists to choose the cheapest fuel available. In doing so, the benefit to those businesses that are competitive in the market is that they have more consumers going to them.

I also want to address the third item for which I believe I have also been verballed by Ms Butler, and that is that we promised to legislate. What the former premier and I gave as a commitment was that if we saw that anything was untoward in the market, such as price gouging, we would regulate. There would not be legislation either, by the way, so double verbalting, but the situation is that unless fuel retailers are doing the wrong thing there is no point in intervening on that free market. Therefore what we have done, as I have identified and outlined, is provide consumers with the information they need to determine where the cheapest fuel is and to reward, if you like, those retailers that compete in that free market.

I know that my department continues to work with a small number of retailers that have not been in a position yet to sign up to that mandatory scheme, and there are timelines around that, but by and large most have. I do not have the figure in front of me for this but I know it is quite significant. It is almost 300 retailers across Tasmania.

Our Government has and will continue to support Tasmanians by monitoring the reporting of price information by fuel retailers. That is why we strongly urged the new federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction until at least the end of 2022, and that is what the federal government can do. We have no control over that. It did that under a coalition government. No matter what the persuasion of each party that has been in power federally, our Government have always taken up these issues. We have previously taken up issues that affect

the cost of living, affect our health system, our education system, housing; we have always identified those issues with our federal counterparts. With the former Morrison coalition government, we worked closely with all of our ministerial colleagues on these sorts of issues. In fact, it is arguably much easier when you have access to ministerial colleagues.

I must also make the observation that the new federal Labor Government contacted their various ministerial counterparts. We have already had quite a few ministerial council meetings. I think I have virtually had all of them. The only thing remaining, I think, is a redress meeting. On Friday I have a consumer affairs ministerial meeting, both of which are online because I have not got enough time to travel to them. It is the usual busy rush to the end of the year, but the federal government has at least organised those meetings and hit the ground running. From our perspective, we appreciate that.

That is why we believe that Tasmanian Labor should urge their federal counterparts to extend this fuel excise reduction. As I said at the start of my contribution, I am not convinced by Ms Butler's contribution when she said that they had written to federal Labor. She omitted the date so I can only assume it was very recent after there has been quite a significant amount of pressure on the state Labor Party to do so.

**Ms Butler** - It is so cynical.

**Ms ARCHER** - You were cynical in contribution also, Ms Butler. I think we can agree on that: we are equally as cynical as each other.

It is very clear that our Government is focused on strengthening our nation-leading economy. That is the major difference between certainly the Liberal and Labor parties.

I congratulate our new member for Franklin for his wonderful inaugural speech earlier today. It reminded me of the difference between our parties, with him reciting some of our beliefs and principles. One of those is very much focused on the individual and strengthening our economy. We do that because strengthening our economy allows us to provide the essential services that are required by a state government. That is the significant amount that we now put into health. It is now a significant portion of our budget. We put it into education. We put it into housing. There is our enormous \$5 billion infrastructure package. Obviously a significant amount of money is required within our Budget but also within our 10-year plan in a number of areas. To fund that we need to grow the economy and we need to do that consistently.

I thank my colleague for reminding us all of what we stand for as a government and the difference between our Government and other side particularly, how we provide real relief to Tasmanian families and how we fund that. We need to be able to do that through numerous cost-of-living measures. One that comes to mind is our \$5 million towards providing relief specifically in relation to fuel costs for community organisations. They can apply for funding to assist them. We heard them loud and clear. That is a significant impost, certainly on the day-to-day-running of their activities, whether it be food relief delivery programs, of which we have seen an increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that our community organisations, and particularly our Neighbourhood Houses, provide services to local community members and some of the most vulnerable in our community. Their services have been called on more and more and that includes transport.

As we emerge from COVID-19, they are reverting to their previous activities. Some of the activities of Neighbourhood Houses and other community organisations that provide support to either their membership or people utilising their service includes taking them on outings. We are seeing more and more of this. Again, I come back to the cost of fuel and what we can do to ease the burden on these organisations and indeed Tasmanians.

Not only have I covered the consumer aspect of providing the consumer with options to find the cheapest fuel but we have encouraged the federal government and will continue to encourage them to extend the fuel excise reduction beyond 28 September. It is critical for Tasmanians at the moment - indeed mainland Australians as well - but obviously our focus is on Tasmania.

I call on the Tasmanian Labor Party to act by speaking, by picking up the phone, rather than writing to their federal counterparts and demand that they extend the fuel excise reduction to help Tasmanians struggling with the high cost of fuel. What would they do if they were in government? Would they just sit back and do nothing? Tasmanians need to be convinced that state Labor would actually do something. They have not demonstrated today that they will do that.

It is disappointing to hear that they will not support this motion today. It is disappointing that the Greens will not either. I assume the Independent member for Clark will not either, with her usual voting pattern with the Greens. That is unfortunate. I commend this motion to the House and call on all members for their support on this really important issue. It is an issue for Tasmanians and the cost of living. I express my complete disappointment at Tasmanian Labor's position, not only in refusing to support this motion, but refusing to call on the federal Labor Government to extend the fuel excise reduction beyond 28 September this year.

[3.28 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, the Government has recently found its voice, when it comes to advocating to the Australian Government for things. It is a voice that they found around May that they had not found previously, when they blindly agreed to the GST deal that will cost Tasmanians hundreds of millions of dollars over the course of the next few years unless there is any change. Never forget that it was the Tasmanian Liberal Government that acted like lapdogs when it came to that GST deal. They put out media releases saying it was a good deal for Tasmania. It was not. It was the worst deal that Tasmania has ever signed up to and it was this Government that did it.

I could not help but recall that on 30 August last year, when now Premier, Mr Rockliff, was acting Premier, he got into a spot of bother over support for businesses doing it tough during COVID-19. He said he would write a letter to then prime minister Scott Morrison. I have a copy of it here: the wet-lettuce-leaf approach from this Government when it came to Scott Morrison:

Prime Minister,

I would like to first acknowledge the support from the Commonwealth to assist Tasmanian businesses.

It went on for a whole page, Mr Speaker. I will read to you what it actually said when it came to asking:

I would welcome your consideration to extend the COVID-19 disaster payments to assist Tasmanians whose income is affected by restrictions on movement or lockdowns following COVID-19 outbreaks in other jurisdictions which are key markets for many Tasmanian businesses.

That was it. Wow. That withering letter from then acting Premier, Mr Rockliff, was responded to - no, it was not. Did not even write a response to this Government. That is how weak this Government is when it comes to standing up for Tasmania. Nothing.

We have a cost-of-living crisis in Tasmania. There are things this Government could be doing right now to support Tasmanian families such as capping power prices.

**Time expired.**

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Disallowance of Waste and Resources Recovery Regulation 8 - Motion Negatived**

[3.30 p.m.]

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

That the House, in accordance with section 47 of the Acts Interpretation Act 1931, disallows Regulation 8, 'Prescribed levy', of the Waste and Resource Recovery Regulations 2022 (Statutory Rules 2022, No 35), laid upon the Table of the House on Tuesday 16 August 2022.

The waste and resource recovery regulations that were laid on the table form the details that accompany the bin tax that was unfortunately passed by this parliament in an earlier session. The section of the regulations that were tabled last month that we are seeking to disallow today are the increases in costs. Currently, the Government has introduced a new bin tax that is \$20 a tonne. This particular regulation of the prescribed levy increases that to \$40 a tonne from 1 July 2024, and then to \$60 a tonne from 1 July 2026. In a cost-of-living crisis like we currently have, our firm view remains that this is an unfair additional burden to place on households when they are already struggling to make ends meet.

It is also having an impact on a number of businesses that have been impacted by this in a way that is causing them extraordinary headaches. I know that the minister has had representations from some of these businesses that are being sluggish with the new tax that will make no change to the way that they operate environmentally. They are already doing everything in compliance with the EPA to manage the waste that is produced and is dealt with in a private site as a part of their business, yet they are being sluggish with another tax for dealing with their own waste on their own property, even though they are heavily regulated by the EPA.

There is no way for them to be provided with any relief, particularly because those costs are going to continue to increase.

Not only is this an unfair additional burden on households, but we have also seen an increase in illegal dumping. This was a potential risk that was flagged through the submissions that were made during the consultation process undertaken by the Government. It was reported just recently by the Environment Protection Authority in its annual report that shows that during 2021 there were 111 infringements issued by the EPA under the Litter Act 2007. This was up from 86 fines for the 2019-20 period. The figures do not include litter infringement notices issued by local government officers. This illegal dumping of rubbish is already an increasing issue.

**Ms O'Connor** - How do you know there has been an increase?

**Ms WHITE** - The EPA annual report shows that. It was flagged by a number of submissions that there was going to be a risk of further illegal dumping.

With the increase in costs that households are facing, we can expect this trend to continue when the next annual report is released by the EPA. It was a concern that we raised at the time and there were questions about it. I was looking back over the exchange that was had when we debated this bill in this place, and Dr Woodruff made the point that we did not want to see an additional increase in illegal dumping too soon. That is why it is good to see the \$20 first before \$60 because there is no doubt that extra cost is going to result in illegal dumping. People are always going to try to find a cheaper way to deal with the waste they produce, especially when this bin tax that was designed by the Government does not incentivise people to reduce their waste.

There are many examples where this is already being felt across the community. I want to reflect on some of the comments from members of our community who are the ones impacted by the decisions we make in this place - people who are already doing everything they can to decrease their waste.

Christine, who responded to media commentary about the Government passing this bin tax through the parliament, said:

We keep our peelings, egg shells, coffee grounds and other compostable things in a bin and they are actually buried in our vegetable garden to attract worms, which it does. When our rubbish bin goes out there is barely anything in it. We're going to be stuck paying extra in rates and taxes.

That is the flaw with the design of this scheme that has been adopted by the Government. It does not incentivise people to reduce waste. It slugs everybody exactly the same amount, whether you have a bin that is overflowing or a bin that is nearly empty. It slugs people who are on the lowest incomes exactly the same tax as someone who is the richest person in Tasmania. It is inherently unfair.

That is why we are moving to disallow the increase to \$40 a tonne and then \$60 a tonne because we know that Tasmanians right now are already struggling with the cost of living. They cannot face further increases in their costs and manage those easily. They are already finding it incredibly difficult.

It is not just Christine who has raised this as someone who is very careful about the waste they produce and thinking about how they act within their home to reduce their waste and the burden on our community. There are people who are already struggling, who worry about what it means for their ability to pay all of the other costs they are seeing increase in their lives.

Janine said: 'Great, struggling enough as it is'.

Mick said:

How does this Government expect people to survive with the ever-escalating costs of living now and wages stagnated year-on-year? It's all about sport, sport, sport - don't worry about the community.

Troy said: 'Raising the price on these are going to cause more illegal dumping'.

Mark said:

More rental price pressure. I am already at 62.6 per cent of disability support pension with all of my living costs increasing for everyone. The bin tax is irresponsible management, but I guess some egos need feeding to fund a stadium rather than address basic issues in our society, never mind climate change. The bin tax is an insult to our friends suffering the floods interstate and shows a Government blind to world events that affect us all.

Gail said:

Just keep taking from people and soon our money will be directly deposited to the Government's coffers because after rent rises, food rises, petrol rises and now bin tax, we will have nothing left.

Anne said:

This Government is getting out of hand, want to spend all this money on a sports arena but can't fix our hospitals and doctor problems. Fix all the finance problems first. Families are going to find it hard enough as it is - beyond a joke.

It is a beyond a joke. We were opposed to this when it was produced to the parliament. We voted against the bin tax because we did not agree with the design. We thought the design was flawed. It would not incentivise people to reduce their waste. It would slug every household with an extra cost.

Since the bill has passed the parliament, sadly we have seen the cost-of-living continue to escalate. Inflation has increased, rents have increased, rates have increased, energy costs have increased. Everything is going up and it is being exacerbated by a Government that has introduced a new tax despite going to the last election and saying it would not introduce any new taxes.

As we are starting to discover, you cannot trust a thing this Government says. It is failing to get the basics right when it comes to looking after the everyday essentials that people need

their government to get right. The comments from some of our community members who I have already shared with the House during this debate illustrate that. People already feel like this Government is letting them down.

The disallowance motion before the House provides an opportunity for us to not only give some cost-of-living relief to households, who from 2024 can expect an additional increase in their bin tax to \$40 a tonne, but also to those businesses that I know have been making representations to the minister which are good businesses doing the right thing, working in an environment that is highly regulated and wondering how they are going to afford these additional costs. These additional costs are not going to make them change their behaviours in any way because there is nothing further they can do. There is no environmentally improved outcome here. It is just another tax grab by the Government. People are struggling.

I take the opportunity to talk about Labor's candidate for Pembroke, Luke Edmunds, who as a Clarence councillor was the first council member to make sure this Government knew that not every single council was on board. When I made my contributions in this place there were interjections -

**Government members** interjecting.

**Ms WHITE** - just like there are now, Mr Deputy Speaker, which you are doing nothing to control, may I point out. I know you are new in the gig but you actually have a role to play controlling the House. Those unruly ministers over there are embarrassed because of their bin tax impacting on households. They are being held to account by people like Luke Edmunds, Labor's candidate for Pembroke, who has for the longest time now been calling out the Government on its unfair tax grab with the new bin tax being imposed on every single household.

I refer to an article written by Kenji Sato in the *Mercury* in March this year, well before Luke was a candidate for the Labor Party, when he was a Clarence councillor and true to his values stood up for people doing it tough. He said:

It is a bad time to be raising rates, given the soaring costs of rents and everyday living expenses. I really think that the Government should take a deep breath and think about how much people are already having to fork out for things like petrol and groceries. Do they really want to slug people with this extra tax at this time when so many people are struggling?

Luke Edmunds gets it. He understood back in March - before he was a candidate, because he has always stood up for the eastern shore - that households cannot afford these extra taxes that this Liberal Government is slugging them with. The bin tax is no exception.

We also know that when fully implemented, the overall added cost of this bin tax over 10 years is going to be more than \$56 million. That is an awful lot of money. We are arguing that rather than roll out the full scheme as articulated in the regulations, we put a halt to that. Let us leave it at \$20, which is hard enough for a lot of people to cope with right now, and disallow the increase to \$40 a tonne and then \$60 a tonne, as set out in the regulations.

I reckon the Government is going to say, 'No way, we want to take all of that money, thank you very much, we're pretty greedy. We are going to use that for all the things we have



in mind', but I again point out - and we had this argument when the bill came to the House for debate - that none of that money is going to be able to be used to support health or housing or education. It is all going to be kept by the Government to feed back into the waste tax committee to do with as they please.

There is no way the Government can say that this is in the community's interest. How can you argue that slugging households with an extra tax is going to make their life easier? It is not going to help them reduce their waste. They get slugged the same tax rate irrespective. It does not matter if there is just a banana peel in their bin, they still have to pay. It does not matter if it is absolutely chock-a-block, they pay the same amount. It does not matter if they are a pensioner who can hardly scratch two coins together, they still have to pay. It is unfair, and we are saying that people should not have to fork out extra money when we can do something about it in this place and disallow those regulations, which are before us now, to ease the cost-of-living pressures that we know Tasmanian households are currently facing.

We know that the cost of living is the number-one issue for Tasmanians. The Government would know that and every member in this House would know that. We hear it every day. It is the number-one issue. We said at the time that it was not the right approach from the Government. I fundamentally believe that more now than ever, given the cost-of-living crisis Tasmania is in the grip of. We have already seen reports about illegal dumping. The concern we have is that that will increase because people will feel they have no choice. How is this going to help already struggling families, Mr Deputy Speaker?

We have an opportunity in this place to do something constructive to ease the cost-of-living pressure. We have not seen many options taken up by this Government when the Labor Party has brought them forward but here is a chance. They will not cap power prices, despite the fact there is an obvious option for them to do that, to help Tasmanians struggling with the cost of living. Today you can join with us to make sure that your unfair bin tax does not slug households more and more, year after year. It is the Government's choice as to how they want to tackle this.

I will provide some context for our members as they think about this. When I say the cost of living continues to go up, and it is more than it has been for a very long time, it is easy to gloss over that and say it is just another throwaway line but it is really hard for many Tasmanians.

Last week I spoke to a couple in Ulverstone. Maria talked to me about the impact on her family. She is an aged pensioner as is her husband. He is 73 and has gone back to work part-time as a farm labourer because they cannot afford to live in their home without getting some additional income. They are in public housing yet they are still struggling because their energy bill has just doubled. She is so desperate to be frugal and save money that she washes up her cups and saucers in a little bowl that she puts in her laundry tub, because that is the water source closest to the hot water cylinder and it takes less time to heat up, so she wastes less water because she pays for every drop of water that comes through that tap. She catches as much of that water as she can when she is having a shower to make sure she can put that back on her garden.

She is an incredibly conscientious person, saving every single dollar, and she needs to because she has health complications. She is on the waiting list, like so many other Tasmanians. She cannot afford private health care so she has to wait for an appointment

through the public system. She is required to take medicine to help keep her well and healthy that she has to pay for every single week. All of those are essential expenses. None of those things are discretionary. Maria cannot choose not to take her medicine because she would become so unwell that she would end up in hospital and may even die.

She cannot not use water or power, even though she has cut back on that as much as she can. Her husband has gone back to work as a farm labourer at 73 because they have run out of money to be able to make ends meet on their pension. They are not spending any money on anything that anyone would regard as anything but essential. Now the Government is going to slug them with a bin tax that they are going jack up year after year. How are they going to afford that? This is what I mean when I say this Government cannot get the basics right.

There are Tasmanians like that across our state who are struggling with the costs of living and they do not see any leadership or compassion from this Government. They see a government that is struggling to get the basics right and they want somebody to listen to them. That is what we have been doing. That is why we will keep talking about the ways we can help to address the growing cost-of-living crisis in this state by capping energy prices and scrapping the increases to the bin tax that Government wants to slug every single Tasmanian household with. We will keep doing that.

We have seen power prices increase by 12 per cent. Water bills have gone up by 3.5 per cent this year and will increase this much every year for the next four years. Median rent has increased 10 per cent in the past year alone. Inflation, as we all know, rose 6.5 per cent in the year to June 2022.

There are other costs on top of that for families who might have children. Education costs have increased more than 4.5 per cent, food costs have increased 5.4 per cent, and transport costs have increased 16.7 per cent. We know that Tasmanians earn the lowest median income in the country. It is just over \$700 a week. Tasmanians are paid on average \$10 000 less than somebody on the mainland, yet the cost of living here is as bad as anywhere. You factor in rent increases, the price of housing in Tasmania, the cost of energy, and the cost of food. It is very hard for Tasmanians at the moment. That is why we are arguing for the Government to support this disallowance motion to make sure that we keep the costs as low as possible for Tasmanian households.

We already know Tasmanians are over-represented in groups receiving income support, including the age pension, disability support pension, and Commonwealth rent assistance. Tasmanians are more likely to have a fixed income, which means they do not have a lot of flexibility. They cannot work a couple more hours to see if they can make a little bit more money. Many Tasmanians have no flexibility at all. They are trying to make their limited, fixed income stretch to cover the rising cost of living. The unfair bin tax that was brought in by this Government already slugs every single household with a new tax, whether you are rich or poor, exactly the same.

The argument we are making is let us not make that harder on people. Let us not pass on those extra costs that are due to come into effect. Let us cap those at \$20 too. By doing that, we can help Tasmanian households manage through this period where the cost of living is really hurting so many Tasmanians.

There was quite a lot of debate when this bill came to the parliament and I stand by every single word that was said at the time. I reiterate the concern we have that this new tax will continue to go up and up. Not only are we moving this disallowance motion to protect Tasmanians from what is forecast as an increase over the coming years, it will protect Tasmanians from the likely other increases that we have seen occur in other states.

In South Australia, for instance, a waste tax was introduced at a rate of \$5 a tonne in 2003-04, and with inflation, when we had the debate, it would have been about \$8. It is now \$146 a tonne. That is a story that has been repeated across the country by governments of all colours. That is why we are concerned about the risk that the bin tax is going to continue to slug households year after year with increased costs, when they cannot afford it. It is an unfair, regressive tax. As I have said already, a pensioner in the northern suburbs will pay the same as Tasmania's richest person.

As a party that is fundamentally driven by the values of fairness and equity, we cannot stand by and do nothing when we see these regressive taxes be introduced by a Liberal government to slug every single household in our state, particularly one that is designed like this that does nothing to help the environment. It does nothing to incentivise people to reduce their waste. It does not achieve the outcome the Government are claiming that it will.

We will not stand by and do nothing when we see these disproportionate burdens being felt by those who can least afford it in our community. We agree with Luke Edmunds, who has made it very clear that the Government and the Greens have it wrong on this one.

There was an opportunity for us to disallow the entirety of the regulations that were tabled in this place. We thought seriously about whether we would move to disallow the regulations entirely because we do not agree with the bill. We have been specific in the approach that we have taken and said, 'You have the scheme up. It is operating. It is already slugging people \$20 per tonne for the waste they produce. Let us instead act to make sure we put a cap on the cost burden that Tasmanian households will be forced to pay'.

This is a test for the Government. You can cap the bin tax as \$20 per tonne. Ease the cost-of-living pressures that Tasmanians are facing. Actually, start to listen to the community because they are telling you they are hurting. You can cap the bin tax and make it easier for households to make ends meet. It will not disrupt the operation of your scheme. It is already in place but what it will do is save Tasmanian households because right now they cannot afford these extra costs they are facing.

The test today is for the Liberal Government. Have you been listening to the community when they are telling you that the cost of living is the number one issue? You failed to cap energy prices. Will you cap the bin tax to stop households bearing the cost burden of your unfair tax that they are already feeling the heat from today? Will you listen to the community and support our disallowance motion?

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[3.56 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Environment and Climate Change) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to have a further discussion about

waste management and avoiding landfill, climate change and challenges in establishing a circular economy.

Labor effectively boycotted the original debate on the Waste and Resource Recovery Bill in a failed attempt to create a political distraction from their own political implosion at the time which has resulted in them ultimately being placed in administration by their national masters. Not because the waste levy, that was enabled by that legislation, was not needed or a good idea, or good policy. Not because it was not supported by a broad range of stakeholders in the community and industry but because they needed a political vehicle for that moment. It did not work on both fronts.

The parliament passed the legislation without significant amendment at all. It has been well received in the community. The levy commenced operation from 1 July, and thanks to the good work that went into designing it and consulting, and bringing people with us explaining what we were doing, the rollout has been without a hitch. We have been very grateful for the cooperation of businesses, local governments and other organisations as they have implemented the levy through its first few months. We will continue to work with them to bed it in and make sure that it does everything that it was meant to do.

Today, Labor is at it again. This motion is a faux attempt to nobble the levy, not because it is not needed or does not work, or because, again, there is a groundswell of opposition to it, but because they are seeking relevance again. What they are trying to do is bend this issue that they lost the argument on to a narrative that they are pushing around the cost of living. Cost of living is a real thing. We do understand that but what has been most remarkable is that they have dedicated an hour and a half of their private members time today, and 15 minutes into it, it was revealed as being a brazen political advertisement for Luke Edmunds, the Labor candidate for Pembroke - an astonishingly thinly veiled campaign contribution from them.

When we were out with our candidate for Pembroke, Greg Brown, most recently, one of the things that was very notable about Pembroke and the Clarence City area is the number of bins on the roads at the moment which have not been collected for quite some time, which are starting to smell, which are getting in the way of traffic and people making their way along footpaths and driveways.

Interestingly, the Clarence City Council is having trouble moving its own waste and its bins. Luke Edmunds is a councillor there and this might be something he will have to pay attention to. When the bill passed, one of the things Labor started talking about is that if they were in Government they would not repeal the bill or not a levy but offer a 105 per cent rebate to local governments of their landfill levy liability. This means that Labor is going to pay councils for every tonne of landfill that they create. There is going to be an incentive in 29 councils around the state to produce more waste for landfill. That means more bins for Mr Edmunds to collect in his streets. You will not be able to move in Clarence for bins full of Mr Edmunds' waste supported by Labor, which is providing the exact opposite of what a landfill levy is designed to do by creating an incentive to produce extra tonnes of landfill.

The first thing is that you would come in here, give us a spray and then sit out a couple of days of fairly solid debate and committee sessions on the legislation all by yourself, Ms White. None of the other people were here supporting you. It was a one-person mission to make a stand.

While the rest of your party hacked each other to pieces, you were in here sitting out the debate and playing Candy Crush on your phone while we put this debate through. We did get proper scrutiny from the Greens and we did go through a lengthy debate in the Legislative Council. This is good legislation. It is up, it is working and it is not going to result in us incentivising the creation of waste going to landfill. It will, it should and it is intended to do exactly the opposite.

I will deal with a number of points after what Ms White has to say. Ms White quoted the EPA's annual report showing that there has been an increase in illegal dumping due to the landfill levy. The EPA's annual report for the last financial year has not been tabled yet and the levy only started in this financial year. You may have been misquoting them. The other point, and the more important point, is that illegal dumping was happening before the levy. It was illegal then, it is illegal now. The levy includes funding to be given to the EPA to undertake anti-illegal dumping surveillance and compliance activities.

Through levy-funded activities, like those being run by the Rethink Waste coalition across regional waste management organisations which had previously been funded by a voluntary levy - they are now going to have those same funds remitted to them from the statewide levy - councils are increasingly offering amnesties on car bodies, on hard waste collections, on e-waste collections in an attempt to ensure that people have a convenient, safe and appropriate way of dealing with those occasional bulky items that form part of the waste stream.

We are monitoring the illegal dumping story we have heard. The case you have made, Ms White, and the EPA annual report you are quoting may have been misrepresented. The resources are being provided to the EPA to ensure greater compliance and to police these things. Illegal dumping is illegal. It was before and it is now. People will not be allowed to get away with it.

Ms White was in here yesterday and in the media yesterday saying how it was very important for us to have a much stronger climate change act, and that we should be doing everything we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. She does not seem to extend that to reduction of landfill and emissions from waste management and landfill.

One of the very important design features of the landfill levy that we have now and the modelling that underpinned it, which was published and put out for public comment as part of the development of the bill, was that the progression of the rate of the levy from \$20 in two years time to \$40 in two years time to \$60, will ultimately result by 2030 in a diversion of around 70 per cent of waste materials from landfill. That is the modelling that underpinned it.

In the same time frame, having a waste levy set at around \$20 a tonne across that time would achieve only about 50 per cent diversion. When we look at the issue of dealing with landfill in our economy and in our landscape, there needs to be a point at which the levy on the deposited landfill is worth avoiding for those who are creating the most volume of it, particularly in industry. We have taken that into account. We have also looked at the cost of living for Tasmanians and what people and what businesses can afford compared to what they have been paying in the past.

We have also looked interstate at what other states and territories have done. All of the other states have had a levy for some time. We are the last to introduce one. In three of those

states - South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria - different rates apply for metro and regional areas. Queensland and Western Australia have a flat rate. Across the regional areas and the flat rate, those rates that are perhaps most comparable to Tasmania, the average levy rate is \$73.13 a tonne.

**Ms White** - Which is my point.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Much higher than what it is here.

**Ms White** - Yes, so you are going to keep ratcheting it up.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Ours is starting at \$20 and growing over five years to \$60. The introduced legislation is based on that modelling. That has been our commitment. That sets caps out five years.

The other thing that is very different about our levy versus the ones that operate in the other states is that they are taxes. In New South Wales, of the \$147.10 a tonne that you referred to, Ms White, only about one third of what is collected ends up being reinvested back into waste and resource recovery initiatives. That levy is raised as a tax, it is remitted to their central revenue fund and there is an allocation made from that back to waste management activity. About one third of \$750 million in 2019-20 came back into waste management activities to reduce landfill, to provide alternatives to landfill, and to stimulate circular economy activities that recover resources rather than treating them as rubbish.

Tasmania is the only state which has established a waste levy - a landfill levy - under a hypothecated model, which ensures that all of the levy funds collected are held and used for waste-related activities in a separate account overseen by an independent board established under the legislation. This means that not only will we have the lowest levy in Australia, we will be using all of it. It will be the most efficient levy being used in Australia for the same purpose. That is a significant policy achievement and it is one that Tasmanians should be proud of. Those who know what they are talking about or are bothered to familiarise themselves with the facts of this, have praised us for and supported us through the debate so far.

Inside his mask over there, Mr Winter, keeps muttering tax, tax, tax. Ironically, Ms White was criticising the levy by calling it a tax but then criticising us for not using it for hospitals and police officers and roads and things which would make it a tax. Very clearly by your own admission and understanding and despite your political urges, Ms White, you do understand that this is not a tax? It is a levy for the purposes of paying for the activities required to reduce landfill, to increase recycling to support a circular economy in Tasmania.

This levy and these funds that will be reinvested will take over funding of activities and investments that are already being funded by Tasmanians through either local landfill levies across the north of the state, council investments in regional waste initiatives in the south of the state or the Government's current \$15 million portfolio of investment in waste reduction, landfill reduction and diversion, recycling and particularly organics processing initiatives. Tasmanians are already paying for these initiatives through their taxes. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that those initiatives in the future are paid for by the people and the organisations and the businesses that generate waste and this revenue will be directed straight back into helping them reduce that. It is a self-solving problem. If it works well it is an elegant policy and it is the best in Australia.

Ms White and her colleagues have made some references to businesses that have spoken with us. We know there are businesses that are very important to our economy - the long-standing major employers that generate large volumes of material that is currently going to landfill. Among them there are those that have industrial processes that they use and fuel using energy processes that generate large volumes of ash and other waste materials. These are controlled wastes, which are not harmless in the environment and need to be used or disposed of responsibly, as they have been. Yes, under this legislation they do attract the levy, not because they are taking up space in public landfill but because they are going into the ground forever. There are legacy issues associated with these waste streams. There are alternatives to burying them in the ground. Whilst I will not go into the business details of the discussions that we are having with this business and others, what we are aiming for is to find a way that those businesses' levy liabilities can be reinvested in a raft of projects that reduce or remove or replace those waste streams and their potential harms in the environment as well.

The businesses that we are talking to are committed to and invested in finding new uses, alternative to disposal options, reuse options and circular economy options for these waste streams and avoiding having them in the first place. This Government is investing with them in those alternatives. My aim is to ensure that their landfill levy liability can likewise be reinvested in solving the waste problem. That is what it is for. Across the board, this policy is intended to create solutions for waste streams, to remove and divert material from landfill, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce leachate and other pollutants entering the environment, to support new types of businesses that use things we use to consider as waste, treat them as resources and drive a circular economy in Tasmania.

That is what this is all about and it becomes a self-funding system, not a burden on the taxpayer. It is not a revenue stream for governments but a way of moving to a more sustainable, smarter, more clever economy.

When you talk about the individual household and their ability to change their liability, Ms White, when it comes to kerbside collections and waste, those are dealt with not directly by the resident ratepayer but through their council. As you would have seen with the publication of rates notices over the last six months or so, every council does this differently and always has. How they apportion their different schedules of cost to their different rate payer types are matters entirely for them. You will see, in the last round of rates notices, some councils have put their rates up considerably due to a range of issues. Some have kept them very low and very capped and below CPI. Every council has a different way of doing this, absorbing cross subsidising and ensuring, in their view, in the context of their overall budget, a fair distribution of costs across their members. That is their job to do that.

This levy puts a price on every tonne of landfill that those councils produce, collected from their residents but because in this case they are the business, that is a cost that they are incentivised to reduce by providing alternatives to landfill for their ratepayers, so they produce less and pay less.

Importantly, the levy is designed to create a pool of funds to invest in those alternatives. That is how this works. In the case of your individual family household, in the modelling that we have, the burden on an average household on average over 10 years through the operation of this levy will be around \$18 a year per household. What they are actually charged by their council will be a matter for the individual council. Those councils will be incentivised and

assisted to reduce the overall liability, the volume of material going to landfill by providing more recycling options and methods for individual households to reduce their waste stream.

We have landed nation-leading landfill reduction legislation. We have landed a carefully designed, thoroughly consulted policy and pricing structure which manages at the same time to be the lowest landfill levy in Australia and the most efficient.

Tasmania has been the beneficiary of that. We have had excellent engagement from across the waste and resource recovery sector, business and industry bodies, local government in particular, and community organisations who are interested in us becoming more sustainable and using our resources better.

We need to protect people from unrealistic increases in their cost of living and bill shocks. Every landfill in Tasmania has a finite life. In 2022 and into the future, the costs of decommissioning and rehabilitating landfills, dealing with their methane emissions and their leachate, stabilising them for potential future use, and the various intergenerational legacy issues that arise from indiscriminate burying of stuff in the ground, will cost our households, our taxpayers and our ratepayers millions and millions of dollars.

Landfills are not out in the middle of nowhere in wasteland. Landfills need to be near cities where people live, on land that could otherwise be used for building houses or conducting business and employing people. The cost of building new landfill in this day and age, under the current environmental regulations to meet our obligations to protect the environment, is going to be extortionate. The cost of landfill is not a never-never thing. It is not just out of sight, out of mind. We owe it to our taxpayers and ratepayers, who are paying for all the waste management and management of legacy issues now, to also protect them from their landfill getting full and that turning into an environmental disaster and the cost of having to build another one, because Labor wants to just bury stuff.

**Mr Winter** - Hang on a second. Councils have been dealing with this responsibility for years.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And it has been costing ratepayers for years.

**Ms O'Connor** - So keeping on doing more of the same is the solution?

**Dr Broad** - You need something that provides the right incentives, not just a blunt instrument like a tax.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I visited a demolition site in my former role as Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth. It was a CBD site where there was a demolition of a city office building being undertaken by one of our larger civil construction firms. They were able to show me that over 95 per cent of the material from that demolition was recovered and able to be reused as sand, as aggregate, as input to road building, into concrete structures and into a range of products they had developed markets for.

This was before the landfill levy came into being. What they were able to say to me is that in the lead-up to having the levy, even before we had got the bill through both Houses of



parliament, they were getting enquiries from construction companies and councils who they had been hounding for years to bring their demolition waste to, that were not interested before because they could stick it in the ground. Once there was a cost for them to do that, all of a sudden it was generating business for this company that was set up to receive what used to be waste and treat it as a resource. They recover from it something which can then go into another product and avoid the need to open a new quarry or import material from interstate, burning diesel every mile of the journey, and take us a step further into having a circular economy here on our island, not just digging things up, using them and burying them again but taking these resources through many cycles of value to our economy, employing Tasmanians and contributing to our maintaining a low emissions profile for our economy.

I am proud of the work we have done and that my office and my department have done in delivering us the levy we have. Labor will, I think, stubbornly seek to treat it as their political point of difference, though I am not sure who their audience is because it does make sense and increasingly they will be called out for playing dumb on this stuff. They will need to take responsibility for people judging whether they are fit to manage Tasmania in the future - one day, maybe - as a party that does not see that we need to be more sophisticated in how we deal with waste, how we deal with climate change and how we do not slug people with new taxes but find smarter ways of ensuring that users pay and we can return and reinvest in ways to reduce landfill into the future and support our circular economy.

We should not have had to come in here and reprosecute the fundamentals of this bill and this levy in this place. However, for the second time we have been presented with a half-hearted political stunt by Labor, who is not really here to talk about waste reduction, emissions and a circular economy at all. Last time they were just trying to look different from the other parties in here. This time they are trying to run a plug for their upper House candidate, who really should be focusing on getting the bins off the streets where he is.

We hope that Labor never gets to run out its alternative landfill encouragement policy of a 105 per cent rebate on a landfill levy, which they are now saying they do not want to have in the first place. Thank you very much for the opportunity to make a contribution, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I am sure we will be here again in the future.

[4.27 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens will not be supporting Labor's motion to disallow regulations on the prescribed levy of the Waste and Resource Recovery Regulations of 2022. We support those regulations, just as we supported the Waste and Resource Recovery Bill 2021. I was going through the minister's and Dr Woodruff's contributions on that legislation and it is quite rare in this place to hear a Liberal minister and a very well qualified Greens MP have so much to agree on. Dr Woodruff prosecuted this legislation extremely well. We strongly support a waste levy for Tasmania; it has been Greens policy ever since Mr Winter's long-ago predecessor, Gerry Bates, was the Greens member for Franklin. A waste levy is good policy.

I remember when we were in government with Labor and we were trying to talk Labor's then environment minister into instituting a waste levy, there was a deep fear that there would be community blowback if a waste levy was announced and instituted. I hear what the Leader of the Opposition is saying about concern from some stakeholders and constituents who have contacted Labor. However, our sense is that there is broad community and stakeholder support for a quite well designed waste levy.

If there was, within the community, a deeply held or strong feeling that this levy, which is designed to reduce waste going into landfill, was unaffordable and unfair, the Greens would have heard more from our constituents. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot remember an email coming in to say we did the wrong thing, as a party, by supporting a waste levy.

For those businesses that are concerned about their increasing costs, I guess business in Tasmania has been getting a pretty good deal on waste for a very long time. In other states and territories, as the minister told us, businesses, community organisations and individuals have been paying a waste levy or tax for a very long time. In delaying a waste levy system, we have been able to design one which is reasonable, efficient, and from the Greens' point of view, does provide an incentive to reduce the amount of waste that is produced.

For centuries - about two here - there has been an attitude that you can just cast your rubbish out. When it was old bottles down at Wapping, 100 or more years ago, that was a very different story from the kind of waste that many people cast out now. Any drive down any beautiful highway or byway will show you we have a problem with our attitude towards rubbish; the most beautiful state in Australia with one of the worst litter problems.

We cannot just keep shoving our rubbish out of sight, out of mind, in the bin. We cannot keep dumping into landfill and then burying and then finding another landfill site. Business needs to pay some price towards the waste they produce, which is and should be considered as a cost of doing business. They must start paying a fair price for their waste. The staged implementation of the tonne price for waste is very modest, \$20 in the first year, \$40 two years down the track, and \$60 two years down the track per tonne after that. I was interested to hear the minister average out what that cost might be to Tasmanian households, which certainly seemed to me to be affordable. This is not a hefty levy. It takes a lot for a household to produce a tonne of waste, and you would hope so.

The issue I still struggle with regarding Labor's position is that I do not know what they would do differently.

**Mr Winter** - We have said what we would do differently.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, the minister described what you would do differently, which is to pay councils 105 per cent of the costs. How that would incentivise a reduction in waste escapes me.

**Ms White** - He did not describe it accurately.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I did not hear it when Mr Winter got up before.

**Mr Winter** - It was not me up there.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it was Ms White, sorry.

We are not going to support this motion. We want to see every step taken towards a circular economy that is possible. We want to see local production of goods. There is some fantastic stuff happening in 3D-printing of a whole range of products that right now we import at a high cost to the planet and at a higher cost than it would be if we were able to locally produce these things and provide the local jobs that come with that.

We have to do things differently. The waste levy is an opportunity to do so. The way the funds are disbursed and invested into better waste management is an excellent system. We have the broad support of local government. For some years the Local Government Association of Tasmania has been supportive of a waste levy. It is actually quite a gutsy thing to do as a government to introduce a levy, which then leaves you open to criticism or political opportunism and accusations that you are introducing a tax, and this is not a tax.

Having not contributed on the original bill, because Dr Woodruff is our environment spokesperson but I am approaching this from a Treasury point of view, I congratulate the minister for getting us this far. We have finally joined the rest of the country in making sure there is a reasonable price paid for waste that goes to landfill. You only have to look at the McRobies Gully tip to know that we have a looming problem on our hands. A couple of weeks ago I visited the New Norfolk tip and it was the same thing. I stood there thinking how much more can this site take?

We have to look at this differently and do things differently here and a waste levy is one part of that picture. We will not have the land in future to create landfill sites at the scale we have been, so we have to do things smarter. A waste levy is a smarter approach and it is fair. The system that has been put in place is fair. We are not going to support a motion that undercuts the foundation of a waste levy, which has not been very well argued at all by Labor.

I would rather see Labor, for example, investing their time in talking to our new Prime Minister about walking back from the stage 3 tax cuts, which are utterly immoral. How you can, as a newly elected government, have that sort of baggage on the Australian people and the Australian economy and society into the future and not recognise that you have a moral obligation to do something about it is beyond me. If you are a senator or the Prime Minister, for example, what the stage 3 tax cuts mean for you is an extra \$10 000 or \$12 000 a year. It is morally bankrupt to continue with tax cuts which were not your policy and which this country cannot afford while we have a health system in every state and territory of this country that is buckling under the strain and the compound effect of underinvestment. It would be terrific if Tasmanian Labor, through its collective endeavours, could advocate on behalf of the Tasmanian people, the vast majority of whom will get no benefit from those stage 3 tax cuts, to have a chat to the new Prime Minister and Treasurer Chalmers, and make sure that this country does not have to carry the burden of gifting all that money to some of our wealthiest people. It is disgraceful. We will not be supporting this motion.

We understand why Labor has done it because they have decided the cost of living is their 'thing' politically but this is not particularly effective. Even if the House supported this disallowance, the impact on the back pocket or the bank balance of the average Tasmanian would be so marginal it would barely make a difference.

We would like to see Labor, for example, support our call nationally for a freeze on rents, support our legislation amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act that would allow for a fairer rent system that did not lead to skyrocketing increases.

We are not going to support this motion because we are strong supporters of the waste levy and the mechanisms that will be in place for investing those funds into better waste management so that we can look after our beautiful island better in the way that it deserves to be.

[4.41 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the motion and to deal with this bin tax matter once and for all. I listened intently as the minister tried to explain why it is not a tax. It was not a very convincing argument as to why it is not a tax. It certainly feels like a tax to Tasmanians who are paying it, and paying more now than they did last financial year, not just because of inflation but because he has implemented a new tax on Tasmanians. Every single Tasmanian with a wheelie bin now pays this bin tax. Every single Tasmanian when they go to the waste transfer station or their local tip now pay the bin tax.

That is the reality of it. This is a broken promise. This is a government that said, 'No new taxes'. Then here it is, within the first year of this term of government, a bin tax placed on Tasmanian households and businesses and they need to pay.

I listened to the Leader of the Greens talking about why she supported this. When I hear that sort of contribution, I think people are enthusiastic about the idea of the bin tax but potentially do not understand how poorly designed this is. It provides no incentive for Tasmanians to produce less waste. As the Leader of the Opposition said, 'It does not matter if it is just a banana peel in your wheelie bin, you still pay as much as you would if you had a full bin'. There is no disincentive simply by the design of this new tax.

There are other jurisdictions doing this much better than the minister has done - in Queensland. We outlined that during the debate on the bill. Ms White, I think it was in the Budget reply that we outlined what Labor would do differently. That was a question that was asked rhetorically. We have already outlined what we would do differently. We would like to see a design that would actually work, without slugging households but, that is what this does.

The regulation that we were trying to disallow, actually triples the bin tax. It triples from \$20 a tonne to \$60 a tonne over a period of time so that the minister can extract more money from Tasmanian households to put back into projects around waste management. The insinuation that I got, and I am happy to hear if I am mischaracterising what I thought was being said, is that we needed to have that bin tax so we can decommission old tips around Tasmania. The simple fact is that local government has been doing this properly for quite a while now.

I had the pleasure of being involved in the Southern Waste Solutions Joint Authority that manages the Copping facility. That is an example where local government, without needing a waste levy, was able to decommission old tips around southern Tasmanian, invest in the Copping facility and allow for a much better environmental outcome. Local government did that to ensure it was being environmentally sustainable. I have been on a council whilst we continued the work to decommission an old tip site without assistance from the state government. We dealt with leachate and with the environmental impacts that having a long-term tip site has.

Local government has been doing that for years. It is not something that is going to be able to happen just because the minister is slapping Tasmanian households and businesses with a new bin tax: one that does not require a new tax for waste to be managed responsibly. It has been managed responsibly across Tasmania, albeit by some councils much better than others. I have been to some appalling tips, as others have said, but that does not require a new tax to deal with waste. It just does not.

Councils can manage these things on their own. Indeed, if I recall correctly, during the debate last year we were talking about the fact that some councils have been effectively managing it like that themselves in consultation with their rate payers. If that is what they want to do, that is a matter for them. It did not require a new bin tax for this to occur. The regulations that the minister is trying to put through triple the bin tax from \$20 a tonne to \$60 a tonne over the next few years. There has been one local government member who has been talking about this for the entire year, well before the Pembroke by-election, well before the resignation of Jo Siejka. That was Luke Edmunds. He has been talking about this tirelessly since March. He had sounded the alarm for ratepayers. I know that that would have been upsetting for the minister because he wants as few people as possible to understand what he is doing with this tax. I am sure he would like people to blame their local councils for his new tax. It was very important that Mr Edmunds from Clarence City Council called out what this would do. He talked about this on 9 March this year and he talked about how Tasmanians are struggling through cost-of-living increases, which at that stage were only just starting.

Already today we heard the Government talking incessantly about the fuel excise. They found something that they had no direct control over, that they had no responsibility for, and decided they would focus on that aspect of the cost-of-living crisis.

Let us focus on something that has nothing to do with us so that we can distract people from the things that we are doing wrong, tripling the bin tax. That was a deliberate move by this Government to firstly implement a bin tax, and then through regulation triple the bin tax on Tasmanian households during a cost-of-living crisis - refusing to cap power prices even though this Government had done it in 2018. They are now saying that it is a terrible idea and that it cannot be done, even though it is their own approach to energy from four years ago that insisted that we cap electricity prices. Now they cannot do it.

Water and sewerage prices are going up by \$450 over the next four years as a result of their MOU with TasWater that actually instructs TasWater to increase prices by 3.5 per cent per year for the next four years. That adds an extra \$450 into the bills of Tasmanian households over that period.

There are three cost-of-living issues that this Government is directly responsible for, has promoted, and yet here we are today with them saying, 'You know what? We need to deal with petrol prices. Fuel costs are going up too much. Look at that over there. Let's talk about something we have no control over so that we can avoid talking about the things we can actually fix for Tasmanians'.

When this came in, I went through a number of council agendas and budgets to see what the impact of this was. Glenorchy City Council was the first out of the box when it came to saying how much this was going to cost. We heard that was about \$20 for this financial year, maybe a little bit under.

I looked around and saw that Break O'Day Council's waste costs will go up by \$26 this year; Brighton is \$24 this year; and Burnie is going up by \$10.84. The price is going up in the Central Coast by \$10. We have seen prices going up in the Central Highlands. We have seen prices going up in Circular Head. That is exactly what this is designed to do - extract money from Tasmanian households when they can least afford it.

The problem for the minister, and the reason why these regulations have gone through this early is because they would not want to do this later on when he is tripling the bin tax. This regulation deals with this far off in the future until 2027. This is the House's chance to disallow this tripling of the bin tax. When we talk about a \$10 or \$20 cost, we are potentially talking about that going up to \$60 per year for a household during that time.

The political design of this is to start it lower, hope people do not notice and gradually increase it, so you can cream as much money from Tasmanian households as you possibly can. That is the minister's design. It is a political design, not a design about decreasing the amount of waste. It is a design that is about trying to sneak it through without Tasmanians noticing.

They have noticed. We have heard from businesses that are being impacted, that have no alternative but to do what they have been doing. They have been looking for a more sustainable alternative for years but cannot avoid the bin tax and will incur significant costs to their businesses that they cannot avoid. They would avoid it if they could. The problem with this bin tax is that it does not promote reducing waste.

You can say that you support a waste levy or a bin tax, but look at the design of this - it does not work. The price is going up at Derwent Valley from \$206.60 last financial year to \$225.20 next financial year. The bin tax in that council was \$23.89 more for this year. That is the extra that Derwent Valley rate payers will pay.

We saw prices going up at Devonport, from \$290 to \$310. We saw them going up in Glenorchy. We have seen the waste management charge going up to \$260 in the Hobart municipality. We have seen an increase of \$22 in the Huon Valley, in my electorate of Franklin. Kingborough Council has increased its bin tax by about \$16, depending on the size of the bin in that council area.

These are cost-of-living increases at a time when Tasmanians are struggling through fuel price increases that the Government says it is interested in. It says that it is concerned about interest rate rises. We all are. This is a really tough time for mortgage holders. Renters are paying the highest rent anywhere in the country because of the failure of this Government to deal with its planning scheme and to get its changes through. The failed former minister for Planning is sitting here today. That is the record.

This regulation should be disallowed. I strongly encourage the House to support the Leader of the Opposition's motion.

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, the Government is not only imposing a tax on Tasmanians who are already struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, we are seeing the Government attempt to triple that. That is why this should be disallowed. It is a cost that should not be borne by households because it does not provide any incentives for behaviour change. We have heard that you will be paying this bin tax even if you do not put your rubbish bin out on the curb, even if you recycle 100 per cent of what comes into your household. There is no incentive for households to change their behaviour.

This bin tax also puts a huge burden on private businesses that operate private landfill sites. This is something that the minister should be well aware of, but in case he is not, I will read to him an email I have received from a very concerned constituent:

This landfill levy (tax) has quadrupled our requirement for information recording leading to many late nights trying to keep it under control.

This constituent disagrees that this is a levy. He calls it a tax.

This new tax has created the most turmoil in my business since GST was implemented. We are now in a position where many of our invoices have a larger levy charge than the dumping charge. Even though this is partly due to the fact that we charge low dumping fee compared to other landfills, it still doesn't make sense. The latest issue we were confronted with this week is the fact that the landfill levy has GST added onto the invoices. This is basically adding a tax onto a tax. Each landfill levy fee is to be shown separate from the dumping fee on the invoices, with some larger businesses failing to comply as yet. Normally our invoicing is done each Monday morning for the week finishing the prior Sunday evening. This took around two hours by two people to complete. So far this week, it has taken 12 hours and two people, and it is yet to be completed.

We are talking about a significant burden on this business and a tax on a tax.

I understand that this is partly because we do not have an installed working weighbridge as yet, which creates the issue of converting cubic metres to tonnes by an Australian standard of densities of waste and recovered materials. Our landfill is a commercial landfill only, with no public access. Most of our waste received is waste generated from construction, demolition, mining, heavy industrial and timber industries. Most of the waste brought to this site is 99.95 per cent non-recyclable yet, our customers are charged a fee anyway.

We see the lack of incentives to change behaviour. This is putting up the price for building and construction, because these construction materials have to be dumped somewhere and there is a levy charged, even if there is no way any of it can be recycled, even if it is completely inert material. Even if it is material that will have no impact on the environment, it still gets the full charge. He says:

I have an issue with charging vacuum trucks a landfill levy for the water they bring to site, mixed with the dirt which they have vacuumed up.

If you are taking a truck and you suck up water and it is mixed with something like soil, you have to pay the waste levy on the water which is inert. I will go on to quote:

I can see that the smaller customers are going to look for a way around this tax and it is clear that people with old gravel pits and quarries are already pursuing how they can operate as a 'rehabilitation enterprise' which gets them around the landfill fee, and benefit from it as a legitimate business enterprise.

It is 9.30 p.m. and we are still sitting here doing invoicing.

This comes from a business that sees what this Government has done: sees this Government implementing a bin tax on everybody; describes how there are no incentives for

changing behaviour and talks about the significant burden of red tape that this Government has pushed onto this business. It has caused headaches that have not been seen since the GST was implemented.

Imagine being compared to the burden and changes that businesses had to make when the GST came in. That is what this Government has done to businesses around Tasmania. Not only is it creating more red tape, there are no incentives for behaviour change. It is putting up the price of building. If you have to dump building materials, the fees are going to go up. This is a regressive tax. It does not change behaviour and it is a burden. The Government should have designed this better, they should have listened to Labor and implemented the model that we suggested, but instead they are creating burdens like this on people and businesses.

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

**The House divided -**

**AYES 8**

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler (Teller)  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms White  
Mr Winter

**NOES 14**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood  
Dr Woodruff  
Mr Young (Teller)

**PAIRS**

Ms Dow

Ms Ogilvie

**Motion negatived.**

**PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES (MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT) BILL  
2021 (No. 22)**

**Second Reading**

[5.06 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.



The Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002 provides a framework for the disclosure of information related to improper conduct by a public officer or public body, to provide a process for the investigation and determination of disclosures and to ensure the person making the disclosure is protected from reprisal. Although the act makes no explicit reference to whistleblowing, public interest disclosures legislation was put forward with a purpose of providing a framework for whistleblower protection.

The first public interest disclosures bill was introduced to the Tasmanian parliament in 1995 by Michael Field MP, as a Labor private member's bill. This bill lapsed due to prorogation in January 1996. A similar bill was introduced in 1997 by Judy Jackson MP. In April that year the bill was debated and amended. However, the debate did not conclude. During the debate, Attorney-General Ray Groom noted Cabinet support for whistleblower legislation and advised the government was in the process of drafting a bill. An amended version of the bill was tabled later that year, lapsed in 1998 due to proroguing, was subsequently restored and passed the Assembly, although it was not debated in the Legislative Council. Finally, a 2001 bill introduced then by then Labor Attorney-General Peter Patmore passed both Houses of parliament.

The Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002 only allow disclosures regarding members of parliament to be made to the Speaker in relation to a member of the Assembly and the President in relation to a member of Legislative Council.

There are two obvious issues with this framework. The first issue is that if a disclosure relates to alleged improper conduct by either the Speaker or President, the act only allows for the conduct to be disclosed to the same person the disclosure relates to. The second issue is the party affiliation of the Speaker and the potential party affiliation of the President. When the Speaker or the President are members of a political party, it is unreasonable to require disclosures about a member of the same party to be made to these people. Conversely, it is also an issue if a disclosure relates to a member of parliament who is a political opponent of a party to which a presiding officer is a member.

It needs to be noted that while the roles of presiding officers are nominally impartial in the Westminster system, Australian speakership traditions are not comparable to those in the United Kingdom House of Commons. When a Speaker is elected to the House of Commons, they resign from their political party, as well as any clubs with political affiliation, and refrain from making any comment on political issues. So serious is this in the United Kingdom that these traditions persist even after a Speaker retires. This is manifestly not the case in Australian parliaments.

Another matter is that of casting votes. In the House of Commons, it is held the Speaker should use their casting vote to support continued discussion and should avoid making a majority where there was none before on final decisions. Practically speaking, this means a Speaker is expected to use their casting vote to always enable debate by supporting second reading votes, and avoid making a majority, where there was none before, by voting against a third reading.

This is not what happens in Australian parliaments. If the deciding vote was exercised impartially under this tradition, then the Speaker would not vote in support of any third reading, would vote in favour of every second reading, and would not support any cloture or urgency motion. Instead, in all but exceptional cases, Australian Speakers vote in favour of whichever

political party they retain membership to. In short, in Australia, however much a Speaker may attempt to remain impartial in their ruling while in the chair, Speakers retain partisan ties as well as partisan motivations separate to this function.

This amendment bill makes sensible and non-controversial amendments to the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002 to allow disclosures in relation to a member of parliament to be made to either the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. This is the same arrangement that currently exists for a disclosure in relation to the majority of people to whom this act applies, including a person employed under the provisions of the Parliamentary Privilege Act 1898.

The bill also extends the act to allow for a disclosure in relation to an employee of a member of parliament to be referred to either the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. As it currently stands, the only body a person can refer an employee of a member of parliament to is the Ombudsman.

The reason for creating a separate reporting structure for members of parliament was not covered by the Attorney-General in his second reading contribution to the Public Interest Disclosures Bill 2001. However, a brief explanation was provided by the Deputy Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Council, who commented:

As foreshadowed earlier, the bill contains special procedures for disclosures about members of parliament, which recognised the doctrine of the separation of powers and the fact that MPs are ultimately accountable to the parliament and the electorate. However, it was noted a disclosure could be referred to the ombudsman by either the Speaker or the President, a tacit acknowledgement that this doctrine of the separation of powers is not supreme.

The Greens submit that while it is true MPs are ultimately accountable to the parliament and the electorate, MPs cannot be held accountable by the parliament or the electorate if there is not a transparent, arm's-length process for handling complaints of this nature. Of note, the 2001 bill and its debate predate the establishment of the Integrity Commission in 2009. The Integrity Commission has a clear purview over the conduct of MPs. The bottom line is the reason made to refer a disclosure of misconduct to the Speaker or President was tenuous at the time, and manifestly inadequate now.

This bill was tabled in 2021, well before the *Motion for Respect: Report Into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services* by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Sarah Bolt. While that report was not the impetus for us to put this bill forward in the first instance, this bill has now become very relevant to this report. A repeated theme noted in the *Motion for Respect* report was that a fear of repercussion or reprisal, as well as expectations of party loyalty, can prevent people speaking up about discrimination, bullying or harassment. In this context, the notion a staff member would be required to whistle-blow against a person to that person's party colleague is untenable.

Concerns about the fear of reprisal largely relate to the employees of Liberal members in this House, or employees of Labor members in the Legislative Council. However, there are also concerns with respect to employees of the Greens or Independent members. Loyalty to a

party, or more direct loyalty to an employer, could operate as a significant disincentive for a person to whistle-blow to a political opponent of their employer.

It is also preposterous that should an employee of either a Speaker or a President choose to make a public interest disclosure in relation to their employer, they would currently be required to make the disclosure to their very employer. Their employer would then have ultimate say over what happened to the complaint.

As a final matter, I would like to note that reforms to whistleblower legislation are long overdue. The CPSU general secretary, Thirza White, noted in respect of this bill that:

We need proper protections for workers who blow the whistle integral to integrity. This is not a bad first move.

We agree. This act is clearly not doing a good enough job. Whether we need a new act, further amendments to this act, or broader legislative reform, are matters that the Greens believe deserve further consideration and action. We look forward to the thoughts of the Government, the Opposition and Independents on this matter.

We are pleased today to present this as a first step for consideration of the House.

I commend the bill to the House.

[5.16 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on this bill on behalf of the Government, as the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice. As we have heard, the bill seeks to amend the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002, primarily in two ways. First, by allowing disclosures in relation to a member of parliament to be made to either the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission and, second, by allowing a disclosure in relation to a staff member of a member of parliament to be referred to either the ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. This will mean that the changes will apply to all members of parliament, and everyone will have a collective accountability to ensure we show leadership in this place, as we all have the ability to refer matters - or we will certainly have the ability to refer matters.

With this also comes a great responsibility. As we have seen, complaints can have devastating impacts on all parties, so it is important that we use these mechanisms at the appropriate time. I thought I would make that observation.

Also, while I have received a level of comfort that there are no identified legal issues with the drafting of this bill - and so we will be supporting the bill, which I have indicated to the Greens before now - I take the opportunity to highlight some of the issues raised with me when I sought some advice on this bill - just to get on *Hansard* the avenues that currently exist in relation to complaints mechanisms.

It is important to note that the amendment sought incorrectly assumes that disclosures in relation to a member of parliament cannot be referred to the Integrity Commission. The Integrity Commission Act 2009 already allows members of parliament to make a complaint of misconduct to the Integrity Commission for investigation. It is also important to remind members that the Integrity Commission - as it has said itself, in its own annual report - should never be weaponised.

I note that this particular legislation that this bill seeks to amend - the Public Interest Disclosures Act - is quite technical and intricate in nature, when you look at it.

**Dr Woodruff** - Yes, it is.

**Ms ARCHER** - In usual terms, it would have benefited greatly from some further consultation, particularly in relation to the referral bodies directly affected by this bill themselves, namely the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commission, who I have sought some quick advice from; I do not believe they were consulted as of yesterday. One of the complexities of the complaints referral process lies within the definition of the conduct being referred to.

On my advice, the Public Interest Disclosures Act refers to improper conduct and detrimental action. The definition of 'improper conduct' also includes the term 'corrupt conduct'. Conversely, the Integrity Commission Act refers to misconduct.

Furthermore, the Integrity Commission may refer matters to the Ombudsman for investigation of administrative action taken by, or on behalf of, a public authority, or any matter that the ombudsman has power to deal with under the Ombudsman Act 1978.

Whilst this demonstrates the multiple channels of complaint referrals already in place, it also highlights the intricacies involved. I also take this opportunity to highlight that our Government is already taking proactive steps to review the ability of the Integrity Commission to review conduct of members of parliament in a considered and thorough manner so we will continue to do that work.

We recently released the Integrity Commission Act 2009 Legislative Reform Discussion Paper in response to the Honourable William Cox's Report, *The Independent Review of the Integrity Commission Act 2009* that was tabled in parliament in 2016. Importantly, the discussion paper which is out for consultation until 16 September considers these complex matters and invites consultation from experts and indeed all interested parties to ensure that any further legislative reform is considered in a measured and responsive manner as we normally would with law reform. I look forward to receiving further advice from that consultation and progressing, of course, the next tranche of amendments as soon as practicable after that.

I also want to state, due to the release of Sarah Bolt's report, we are, as a government, absolutely committed to working with all political parties and independents to address issues within the MPS and the entire parliament, which would include reporting mechanisms, as per the recommendations from the independent report from the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Sarah Bolt.

It is in this spirit that we also can agree to this bill. As members know, we have committed to establishing a joint standing committee which will have a key role to play in working through the recommendations to establish a framework for implementation in relation to the parliamentary workplace. It is important that that committee deals with its own work rather than be burdened by any further set of reform of this bill. There could have been a school of thought that we refer this to that committee. I do not hold that view. It is important that that committee specifically does its work and that is it and not be distracted by other matters. It is just too important. That committee will have a key role to play in working through the

recommendations to establish a framework for implementation in relation to the parliamentary workplace. This is the action that is called on in the report and we are acting on that without delay.

If any act requires a review and options for a potential reform through that process, we will, of course, undertake the appropriate work and continue to work together to ensure that any proposed options for reform are considered in a measured and balanced way, allowing for consultation and opportunity for appropriate scrutiny.

Our Government acknowledges the effort that has gone into that report by Ms Bolt and thanks everyone who participated by giving their very frank, honest and open responses about their experiences, both current and historical. Please accept my apologies, as has been said by the Premier on behalf of the Government also, in relation to the findings of that report. We must and can do better.

The review highlights opportunities, obviously, to improve processes and policies and our Government, again, is committed to addressing the recommendations. Everyone deserves a safe and inclusive workplace where they are respected, valued and supported. It is imperative that we heed the recommendations of that review and work together to improve processes, structures and support services.

To Dr Woodruff and Ms O'Connor with respect to this bill, I know it was acknowledged. It was tabled in June last year. It is nonetheless something that has come to the fore this week and is quite topical. I accept some of what they say in relation to our practices. These days, in this place, they may need some modernisation. If I could say, when I was Speaker, Mr Speaker, what we did in relation to the standing orders dealing with maternity leave, being able to breast feed, and other things that we did to bring the standing orders up to the standard that we expect in any other workplace -

**Dr Woodruff** - Natural body processes.

**Ms ARCHER** - Yes. Sometimes that is necessary.

In doing that I do not accept that presiding officers cannot be impartial. What I can accept is that there may be circumstances where it is not appropriate to report something to the Speaker or the President in the other place. I will leave it at that but there could be circumstances where that is not appropriate.

Although, we say there already is a mechanism for the members of parliament to refer things to the Integrity Commission, and by the Integrity Commission to the Ombudsman, this bill does no harm, in that sense. That is my advice and, on that basis, we will not be opposing the bill.

[5.26 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill that will amend the Public Interest Disclosure Act. I am encouraged by the collegial way that we have heard the Government approach this bill. It demonstrates a desire to continue in the spirit of the discussions that we heard in this place yesterday concerning the *Motion for Respect* report issued by Commissioner Bolt.

I acknowledge as well, as Dr Woodruff said, that this bill has been on the books since last year, and was on the books prior to that work that Commissioner Bolt undertook. In some ways, it is a coincidence that there was legislation ready to go from Dr Woodruff. It is definitely the case that it is relevant to that work and very much picks up on some of the recommendations that were made by Commissioner Bolt in her review, particularly, the comments that she made around the expectations that she has of the parliament and the expectations that we all share as members of parliament around wanting to ensure that our workplace is a safe workplace for everybody who works here, for MPs, but for staff of MPs, and of course, staff of the parliament.

At the moment how the current act works is not logical. With respect to both yourself and the President, I have immense respect for the work you do as presiding officers of the parliament. I know that you would both be capable of acting in an impartial way. However, it does not make a lot of sense, considering that we are all MPs. The Speaker is invariably a member of a political party and, at the moment, the President is a member of a political party. It does not make sense for complaints to only be able to go to those two particular individuals when it comes to staff or MPs making disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosures Act. The act allows for disclosure to be made, but it also protects those people who are making disclosures under the act from retribution or from any unfair conduct as a result of making a disclosure.

I reflected on the comments that were made by the then attorney-general Dr Patmore, when he brought in the original legislation, although I did enjoy Dr Woodruff's description of the several attempts that happened prior to that 2001 bill, which were interesting and are on *Hansard*. I reflected on what Dr Patmore said at that time, when he brought in the Public Interest Disclosures Bill 2001. He said:

People who make public interest disclosures are officers or employees who work in the public sector who make an allegation, or divulge information, about wrongdoing on the part of another person or organisation. They generally come forward out of a highly developed sense of public duty and personal ethical standards. They can play an important role in protecting the public interest by exposing serious public sector wrongdoing. Ensuring the accountability of public sector agencies and officers, for their actions leads to higher standards and performance, and increases public confidence in the public sector. These are all aims this bill seeks to promote.

We should be treated no differently than the sentiment in those words put forward at the time that the public interest disclosure bill was being debated in 2002. We are working in an environment that is quite different from 2002. What I mean is that the confidence in parliaments, in politicians, in politics around the globe is at an all-time low. People are very cynical about politics and that is a real shame.

It is incumbent on all of us as parliamentarians to do everything that we can to show the public that we have respect for the institution of parliament, we have respect for the institution of government, and to show that in the Tasmanian parliament at least where we do have some control over our behaviour and our approach to things that we respect the importance of protecting the integrity of parliament and the integrity of public institutions.

Commissioner Bolt noted in her opening remarks to the summary report:

The participation rates from Review participants across the Survey into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Workplace (Survey), as well as written and verbal submissions, strongly indicated a workforce which is heavily supportive of and invested in the Review process and outcomes.

It is a call for greater respect within the MPS Workplace, which has a distinct working environment ...

I have lost the quote that I wanted to say. There was a part in the report where the commissioner talked about the fact that the people who involved themselves in the survey showed a huge commitment to the integrity of the parliament. That is something that is shared but it has been exposed in the review that major changes need to be made to restore that trust and integrity.

The changes that will be made in this bill are very straightforward. They remove the part of the bill that dictates that a complaint regarding a member of parliament can only be made to the Speaker or to the President of the Legislative Council. When Dr Patmore was talking about that part - with respect to Dr Patmore - there was not a lot of discussion or explanation as to why that decision was made at the time. He simply said there were exceptions to what exists for the rest of the public officers who are covered under the bill about whom complaints can be made to the Ombudsman and other bodies. He simply said that there were exceptions for parliamentarians.

The work done by this review shows that we recognise that we should be held to a high standard. We should not be held to a lower standard than other public officials who are covered under the Public Interest Disclosures Act.

The Attorney-General said in her contribution that she has sought advice from the Integrity Commission and that other changes might be required as well. I am encouraged by that. The discussion paper has recently been released, so I look forward to continuing to play a part in the implementation of the recommendations of those reviews.

The joint House committee that is in the process of being established to implement the recommendations of the Bolt review will be able to look holistically at all of the changes that are required to be made across the parliament and across this organisation. They may find that more changes need to be made to the Public Interest Disclosures Act. Without pre-empting the work that they are doing, they may well recommend that there should be further protections provided to staff or to people who make disclosures.

It is important that that work can continue and that the committee being established will be able to look across the parliament at what needs to change. I anticipate they will make recommendations for legislative change, for policy change, potentially for functional changes that need to happen in the way we do our jobs in this place.

This is a reasonable first step for the parliament to be making. It is important in supporting this bill that we also do not lose sight of the enormous task that is ahead for the joint house committee to do its work and to review all of the parts of the statute books, as well as the policy frameworks under which we do our jobs here and that parliamentary staff do their jobs.

It means that in the meantime when this bill is passed into law that people who want to make a disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosures Act will be able to do so to the Integrity Commission or the Ombudsman and that we should not be held to any different standard to other public officials. That is a positive change.

I will take my seat and indicate that we will support the bill.

[5.36 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General and the shadow Justice spokesperson, Ms Haddad, for their positive comments on our bill. This is how parliament should work. It really is.

**Ms Archer** - Do you want some tissues?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I will be right, thanks.

No party and no person has a monopoly on good ideas and good policy. Actually, I will retract that: the Greens have a bit of a monopoly on good policy. It is very encouraging to see such a collegial approach in this Chamber to legislation that will tighten up the Public Interest Disclosures Act but also just one small step, bringing this parliament in line with contemporary community expectations, that we do not regard ourselves as a closed shop: one small step to making those substantive changes which the Bolt report has told us that we need to make.

This is the kind of work that parliament does which people do not see very often where we do agree on something, where we recognise that there is a problem we can collectively fix. That is what is happening here. I commend Dr Woodruff for bringing this legislation forward.

I want to say a bit about the value of whistleblowers. They can be a thorn in the side of a government or a corporation. They are a counter to misconduct and corruption and, ultimately, they are guided by a belief in truth, in doing the right thing and in an act of public service. There are some fantastic stories of whistleblowers. One of the first I became aware of when I was a fair bit younger was the mighty Erin Brockovich. I do not know if anyone here has seen the movie or read the story. That was one incredibly brave woman who took on Pacific Gas & Electric company which was contaminating groundwater in a small town in California. She was demonised, she was hounded, her life was put at risk, and she did this for her community and she won. As a consequence of her courage and being the kind of whistleblower the world needs more of, her community's health was protected into the future and a big corporation was taken on.

Then there is the whistleblower of infamous renown in this parliament, Nigel Burch, who was a former staff member for Steve Kons. Mr Burch became aware that a proposed appointment of our current Coroner, Simon Cooper, as a magistrate had been initially agreed - I understand by Cabinet - and then unagreed, because Mr Cooper had been outspoken on the pulp mill, I believe it was. I do not have that history in front of me. I was not in parliament at the time; Mr Rockliff, the Premier, and maybe Ms O'Byrne from the current class of 2022 were in parliament at the time - but I vividly remember my former colleague, the member for Bass, Kim Booth, coming in here with the document that Nigel Burch had fished out of the shredder, which was the appointment letter for magistrate Cooper, which minister Kons had popped into the shredder once it became clear to him that he was not going to be able to appoint magistrate Cooper.



The issue then was that the Greens at that time, under Peg Putt's leadership, basically laid a trap for the minister, because the first question related to the potential appointment and minister Kons said one thing, which was not quite true. Then the second question had the evidence of the shredded letter in it, which Mr Booth had spent the entire previous night sitting up and sticking together with sticky tape. Because the then Attorney-General - I believe he was - and minister for planning had egregiously and knowingly misled the House, he immediately had to resign. For former premier Paul Lennon, the name Nigel Burch would evoke a very different reaction than it would to the Greens because Nigel Burch, as a whistleblower, exposing a corrupt act, had caused very significant problems for the Lennon Government - but he did us a public service.

If we have a culture that first of all fosters integrity and decency in government and business and other entities, you are much less likely to see whistleblowers step forward - but whistleblowers can be a bulwark against misconduct, abuse of public trust and corruption, so we should be thankful to them.

More recently, of course, people have come forward over what it has been like for the children and young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Again, the whistleblowers around Ashley have caused problems for the government of the day - but through that courage have shone a very bright light on an institution that has been torturing and damaging children for a century.

It is not actually about the government of the day. It is about the place that Liz Bennett, the counsel assisting the commission, described as a 'monster'. We and the broader community needed to have some deeper insight into what life was like at Ashley Youth Detention Centre for those children and young people. Because of the courage of whistleblowers - people who had worked there, like Alysha - we could see that this place is no place for children and young people. That has had a cascading effect, where we had the previous premier make the courageous decision - overdue, but he made the decision - that Ashley Youth Detention Centre will close.

When you look at the vitally important work of the commission of inquiry now, it is the courage of whistleblowers who have stepped up and who have been foundational to the work of the Commission. We owe a debt of gratitude to the whistleblowers out there. We recognise that it takes great, great courage to step outside your workplace and expose a truth that you know will potentially lead to very negative consequences for you - loss of job, humiliation, ridicule, marginalisation, demonisation - because you had the courage to step out and step up and tell the truth when it needed to be told.

The same should apply to people who want to report or make a conduct complaint against MPs and MLCs. It is my very great hope that as we move through implementing the recommendations of the Bolt report, there will be much less reason for anyone to want to make a conduct complaint to the Integrity Commission or the ombudsman about an MP or a member of the Legislative Council.

Dr Woodruff will probably want to say a few closing words, but again, I am surprised and delighted that our legislation will be passed.

There is so much we could agree on. It is a really interesting workplace in that way, and on a personal level, I like a lot of people I work with very much. I love Dr Woodruff, but I am

very fond of many people who work in here. I might also say that while the Attorney-General and I might disagree on some things, and occasionally get snippy across the Chamber, Ms Archer is one of the hardest-working - and I think most fundamentally decent - ministers in this place. I admire you, Ms Archer.

**Ms Archer** - I did frame your words at Estimates.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, that is right. It is okay. It will be on, then.

**Ms Archer** - She made a really nice comment and my staff rang me.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I do, Attorney-General, and partly because we have been elected for a similar amount of time, and we are very lucky to be MPs for Clark. I have also seen you out and about in the electorate and you are a very hard worker. Thank you for being open-minded about the amendment bill.

I can only reiterate Dr Woodruff in commending our bill to the House.

[5.48 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the members who have made contributions. Ms Archer, I support the comments that Ms O'Connor just made. I think you might agree that you are fairly proprietorial about the legislation that comes before you in your portfolio, and I have felt you have unreasonably at times not taken opportunities because you had not had it across your desk to consider first. I understand that comes, fundamentally, from a good place, about being very attentive to detail and across the work that you do.

I will pass on to Thomas Whitton - who has been very much involved in drafting this bill - your comments about the complexities of the Public Interest Disclosures Act, and the other acts that it speaks to. I just want to say that we did do some work on a previous bill and tried to bring together the complexities that you talked about - the fact that misconduct in the Public Interest Disclosures Bill does have a separate definition of 'corrupt conduct' and it has a definition of 'misconduct', which also includes 'corrupt conduct'. There is varying, if you like, directing between both that bill and the Integrity Commission Act, in terms of responsibilities.

We tried to consult the Integrity Commission on our previous bill to amend the Integrity Commission Act to address the fact on the issue of members of parliament not being defined as MPs during an election period. If you remember, that came up in the last election and the Integrity Commission was quite clear that they are not inclined to provide any advice or comment on our bills and so, we did not seek to get their views on this bill. You might have a different relationship with the Integrity Commission.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, we are on the second reading at the moment. You will have to finish before 6 p.m. if you want the bill to pass through; that is, if it is not going to go to Committee tonight. If you are still talking at 6 p.m. there will not be any third reading.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - My understanding is that members do not want to go into Committee. Is that correct?

I will finish up. I only had a few other comments to make.

I welcome and look forward to the Attorney-General's assessment of the niceties of the Public Interest Disclosures Act and the Integrity Commission Act and other relevant acts and how they can be tidied up. I am sure it is a big body of work and it would be great and we would be very happy to have input into that over time.

There were different views about whether this bill should be brought to a vote and sorted today or whether we should hold it off to the work of the committee in relation to the Bolt Report. I concur entirely with the comments the Attorney-General has made. It is our view that this is an important and discrete piece of legislation that should not be a burden. We should not be lumping that committee with jobs of work. It is up to the committee to define its own body of work. This is tidying up legislation that may or may not have been attended to by that committee anyway. Whatever, it will now be one less job for that committee to attend to. I do not think that is a problem. It is certainly not wasting the time of parliament.

I again thank everybody for their contributions and particularly the work of Thomas Whitton in our office who has done a fantastic job on researching this and bringing it into the Westminster system and making sure it stands in the great history of democracy that we all absorb in our actions.

I commend the bill to the House.

**Bill read the second time.**

**Bill read the third time.**

**POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (WORKPLACE PROTECTION)  
BILL 2022 (No. 15)**

**Consideration of the Amendments of the Legislative Council**

**In Committee**

**Resumed from page 50.**

[5.57 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Madam Deputy Chair, I will return to roundly condemning the bill and to telling this minister that it will not work. It will not stop Tasmanians from exercising their right to peaceful protest. You will not crush our democratic spirit. You will not deny the Aboriginal people of Tasmania their right to peacefully protest in defence of their land and their country. If you think that this bill is going to crush that spirit, you are most wrong.

I simply recommend that you set aside some money now to build a bigger prison. If you are going to have penalties in place, even though they are better, that lock people up for two years' in jail for a peaceful protest, then you will need a bigger jail because that is what is coming.

**Ms WHITE** - I rise to make a contribution on behalf of the Labor Party on the amendments that have come back from the upper House. There has been quite a significant change made to this bill by our members in the other place who agreed with us that clause 4

should not stand as part of the bill. It has been removed entirely which is good to see because it concerned us in that it would infringe upon people's rights to peacefully protest and would have significant unintended consequences.

The minister could not adequately explain in response to the questions that were asked in this place or in the other place, so I commend the Legislative Council for removing Clause 4 entirely from the bill that has returned to this place amended and provides further protections for Tasmanians. I know there were significant concerns that teachers who were protesting, that people who were homeless who were begging, that nurses who were on the streets striking against the Government would all be captured by the bill because of Clause 4 as it was drafted. It is a relief to see that the Legislative Council has successfully removed that from this bill.

We voted against that clause when it was debated in this House and we did the same upstairs. We have been entirely consistent in that regard. The other amendments in this bill are improvements on a bad bill. The amendment we were seeking to have supported was not agreed to. My colleague in the other place, the shadow minister for workplace relations, Sarah Lovell, made excellent contributions in the debate on the bill in the Legislative Council, making the argument for the protections that we wanted to see for workers to ensure that if they took industrial action, protected or unprotected, they would not be captured by this bill.

There was some confusion about whether that would only include protections for unionised members of any workforce. It was not. It was simply recognising that that action was supported by unions. It was to protect all workers who might need to take industrial action. The amendments we proposed were not supported. We have concerns that have been articulately expressed by my colleagues in the other place.

When the minister comes into this place and says he is a supporter of workers, he needs to better understand what support for workers looks like.

We have nurses striking. We have teachers striking. We have child safety officers walking off the job. It is Child Protection Week and those child safety officers are walking off the job this week. They are desperate to be better supported in their jobs as workers to care for the most vulnerable in our community. The Government is not supporting them. The Government cannot claim to be supporting workers.

This bill will not help to support workers. You did not provide the appropriate protections that we were looking to see included.

If this Government was serious about supporting workers, it would make sure it properly resourced WorkSafe Tasmania; it would make sure it implemented all of the recommendations from the Boland report; it would legislate to ensure there was new protection for workers by creating a new offence - industrial manslaughter. It has done none of those things. The Government cannot claim to be a friend of workers or to say, as the minister did, that today is a celebration for them. That is outrageous.

I will finish by saying that while we will support all the amendments that have come back from the other place because they make a bad bill better, we remain of the view that we cannot support the bill because it does not provide the protections we have been seeking throughout this entire process, both in this place and the other place. We remain concerned that there is overreach contained within the clauses of the bill before us now. We do not feel satisfied that

the minister has made the argument for the case that he has presented. I am interested in his statements. He is obviously claiming victory here and celebrating today. That is what he said: 'Let us celebrate'.

I note the remarks from the Leader of the Greens and think that there are a number of things you could do to better protect workers. This bill does not do that. It is falsely named and incredibly disingenuous.

You have not only let down workers but you misled industries that thought you were going to do something different from what you have done. You have not done anything but walk a funny kind of tightrope, minister, that has left you claiming victory when I think it is a pretty hollow one.

We will support the amendments because they make a bad bill better but we will not be supporting the bill.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We do not support the legislation and we never will. We recognise that the amendments are in some parts an improvement. We have seen clause 4 removed - the public nuisance provision. We have seen Mike Gaffney's amendments to proposed monetary penalties in most cases come to fruition.

We have seen an amendment in here which, regrettably I think, creates two separate classes of protesters. We now have another protection in here for industrial action. This legislation says that some acts of protest are more legitimate than others. It is treating members of a union or workers taking industrial action as a superior set, a lawful set of protesters, compared to conservationists, climate activists who will be protesting in increasing number and frequency in the months and years ahead. It is wrong for a piece of law to create that class structure, if you like, for protests.

I want to read into the *Hansard* a bit of the feedback that we have received on the bill when we sent out a call to help defend our democracy. This is from an Aboriginal Tasmanian person. I have not asked if I can pass his name on, so I will not. He says:

The act of quiet protest is a sovereign aspect of every person contributing to the ongoing monitoring of best practices for the welfare of the entire social and natural systems. Protest is an essential tool to assist with the toughest decisions where highly complex issues may be otherwise compromised, simply through an imbalance or corruption of power.

An example would be a corporate mining entity which has the majority of the influence over its own regulatory obligations, supposedly set by an independent body, but which is compromised. This compromise may indeed be within the governing system and its regulatory framework.

That rings a very loud bell for the Greens, because that is what MMG, JBS, and Cooke are relying on; a weak regulatory framework and the regulatory capture that corporations are so capable of achieving in Tasmania with successive majority governments. I digress. The correspondent also says in his email:

Protest enables a hearty discussion which draws on the wider communities' entitlement to have input into the decisions that ultimately determine outcomes relating to the wellbeing of assets, natural and other.

The high risk of corporate influence within government and the effects that that can have on sustainability, environment, community and other important factors enhances the necessity to have the sovereign right and freedom to protest. If the perpetrator against the wellbeing of natural and other assets has acquired a majority of, and perhaps an undemocratic influence over, the processes which are in place, which are supposedly to ensure the protection of all natural assets from becoming destroyed by the processors by which the perpetrator actually supports and indeed, may instigate, the strategy is unconscionable and treasonous in any democracy.

As Aboriginal people, and the custodians and caretakers of Tasmania, we can only reinforce the importance of proper conduct and the respect required for and towards country, to ensure that country is able to reciprocate similar qualities.

That is something which has been glossed over by Government in this legislation and the debate. It undermines the right of Aboriginal people, the palawa pakana of lutruwita/Tasmania, to defend their country, to take action to defend their place, their forests, their rivers, their waters, their mountains. This legislation undercuts, erodes - or seeks to - the right of Aboriginal people to stand up and peacefully protest, just as it does conservationists.

I will go now to one of the targets of this bill, the Bob Brown Foundation and Scott Jordan. He said:

This bill was always aimed directly at our foundation and our successful popular campaigns. It is a government of big business pandering to logging, mining and fish farming corporations, many of which drain their profits out of Tasmania, to stifle our spotlight on their destruction of Tasmania's beautiful environment and wildlife. It won't work, it will have no effect on our intention to campaign for Tasmania's beauty, naturalness and wildlife.

He also said:

There are many more than me and many younger than me who will not be deterred from peacefully protecting Tasmania's seas, forests and wildlife. The Government, bowing to corporate thuggery, is criminalising effective peaceful protest, while legalising seal shooting, owl destruction and parrot extinction. It is up to all citizens to determine for themselves what to do in this age of such deliberated destruction of nature.

Scott Jordan said:

Amendments made to the bill in the Legislative Council temper some aspects of the bill, but they do not address the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of this attempt to silence protest, particularly its intent to financially ruin and jail citizens engaged in environmental protest.

We are seeing this happen all over the country and all over the world, where corporations knowing that there is deep unease and unrest in civil society about their conduct, their corporate plunder, their unhealthy relationships with governments will increasingly step up. Young people will take to the streets. Some young people will have no choice but to peacefully protest and impede a workplace because that workplace may be at the heart of destruction of the natural environment.

It is an ethical obligation that some of us adhere to to defend nature. You will not stop those kids from doing that. You will not stop the grandparents who are part of Extinction Rebellion from taking to the streets and, at times, impeding workplaces because they are so desperately scared of what is happening to the planet because they are listening to the science and seeing governments drag their heels, seeing governments like the Albanese Government now. Boy oh boy, not much different on fossil fuels than the Morrison government. He has handed over thousands of hectares of our oceans for oil and gas exploration. He is approving coal mines and extensions to coal mines, and fertiliser plants on the Burrup Peninsula. Gas approvals. On the fundamentals of climate, the Albanese Government is as ethically corrupt as the Morrison government was.

They have set a 43 per cent target which, let us face it, is not going to do the job. Meanwhile, they keep on trucking with the fossil fuel industry, who they take tens of millions of dollars in donations from. That is what young people, people of all generations, all cultures, all backgrounds, all ages will stand up against. No law that any parliament writes that tries to stop people from protecting their future and giving their kids some hope for the future - no law will stop them from doing that. Minister, you are on notice.

[6.14 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** - Madam Deputy Chair, I rise to speak on the amendments here before us. When we initially debated this bill I said that it is a bad bill. My view has not changed one iota. However, I want to recognise and acknowledge the valiant efforts of those in the other place who tried to make a bad bill slightly less bad. I recognise Rob Valentine, Meg Webb, Mike Gaffney, Rosemary Armitage and Sarah Lovell, and I acknowledge the Labor Party's contribution to the debate in trying to do all they can to make this bad bill slightly less bad.

There is no doubt in my mind that it is an attack on democracy. Throughout the debate in this place and the other place there has been no compelling evidence for the need for this bill, for the need to protect workers. There has been no evidence presented that there is a risk to workers from peaceful protests. What this is, is a farce. It is a bill designed to stifle democracy and it should not be allowed.

I have been liaising with a number of groups, particularly the civil society groups, that are very concerned about it. It is worthwhile if in my contribution I read out and put their concerns on the record because history will judge us quite poorly when this bill is passed. It is important for those particular organisations to be able to go back to the record and point out that there was a voice in this place for them and that their concerns were put on the record.

A number of organisations put together a media release and raised their concerns when the bill passed through the Legislative Council. I quote from that. They say:

Leading Tasmanian and national civil society organisations have criticised the passing of the bill which significantly increases some penalties and creates new offences for non-violent protest-related activity.

The groups label the bill as unnecessary, disproportionate and anti-democratic and call for it to be repealed at its earliest opportunity.

While amendments were made to protect Tasmanians protesting workplace rights and conditions, the same protections weren't afforded to Tasmanians protesting on the range of other issues of importance to the community.

Although these amendments reduced for proposed penalties, civil society groups remain concerned that changes will discourage individuals and groups from engaging lawful and peaceful protest.

There are selected quotes from a number of organisations and I will read those. Kieran Pender, senior lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre, said:

Tasmania's democracy is weaker for the passing of this bill. Even with the amendments, it is a bad bill that should never become law. This bill will have a chilling effect on the rights to protest in Tasmania, limiting the ability of people to exercise their democratic rights.

Jo Flanagan, CEO, Women's Health Tasmania, said:

Women protesting against sexual and family violence who have the right to access healthcare will be at risk because of the passing of this bill and non-government organisations and charities supporting people with human rights concerns will be very wary of supporting or organising rallies - up until now a time-honoured way of drawing people's attentions to issues of public concern.

What community board could cope with such huge bias.

We are grateful the Legislative Council has voted to overturn the clause restricting protest in public places but overall this is such a sad day for Tasmania.

Bob Brown, founder of the Bob Brown Foundation, said:

There are many more than me and many younger than me who will not be deterred from peacefully protesting Tasmania's seas, forests and wildlife.

The Government bowing to corporate thuggery is criminalising effective, peaceful protests while legalising seal shooting, owl destruction and parrot extinction.

It is up to all citizens to determine for themselves what to do in this age of such deliberate destruction of nature.



Rachel Hay, research fellow at the Australia Institute, Tasmania, said:

Today is a dark day for democracy in lutruwita Tasmania. While the modest amendments that remove some of the worst elements of this law are welcome, it still remains an attack on our democracy and should never have passed the upper House.

The legislation, as it stands, still sees a peaceful protester holding a placard fined \$8650 or given one year in prison - more than a person who trespasses with a gun.

The Tasmanian House of Assembly must reject this draconian attack on our rights to peaceful protest.

Finally, Rodney Croome, President of Equality Tasmania, said:

Tasmania is a more inclusive place for LGBTQI+ people thanks to three decades of protest so we are very concerned about the adverse impact of this bill.

We are glad the upper House voted down the clause restricting protest in public places but overall the bill will still have a chilling effect on protest and the reform that flows from it.

These are really important views and opinions that need to be shared so, as I say, history is going to judge us very badly if we pass this bill.

It is a fundamental principle that people should be able to protest. It is fundamental to our democracy that people can have their say and express that. What this bill does is it demonises us for daring to speak out, to push reform, to change things for the better in this beautiful island of ours. I want no part of that and I want that very clear on the record. It is disgusting. It is an attack on our democracy and we should hang our heads in shame if this bill passes.

**Mr BARNETT** - Madam Deputy Chair, I will respond to some remarks by those who have made contributions during this debate. First, with respect to these important matters, I will respond to the Leader of the Opposition. Yes, this is a milestone event today, with this bill passing - subject to the vote proceeding as anticipated. It will provide stronger protections for workers and businesses from workplace invasions. It will deliver stronger laws and increased penalties where this is needed. This is something our Government has been pursuing since 2014. It is a milestone event and we welcome it. We are deeply saddened by Labor's opposition to this bill, and I will come to that shortly.

I remind those in this place of the quote of the former chief justice of the High Court, which I referred to in my second reading speech. He said:

The importance attached at common law and international law to freedom of speech does not convert it into a right which can be exercised inconsistently with the rights and freedoms of others. It does not carry with it a right to go onto private land in order to express a particular view. It does not carry with

it a right to go onto land when access requires permission, for example by a public authority controlling the land for particular purposes. There are and always have been limits.

We have given careful consideration to it, and that is why we drafted the bill in the way we did.

The second reading debate of the bill built on existing offences. It did not make any currently lawful protest unlawful. To remove any misconception or misunderstanding, clause 4 would not have meant a person holding a placard on a footpath would be arrested without warning and thrown into jail. Clause 4 would not have meant large protests could no longer take place. Clause 4 would not have taken away the ability of police to issue warnings or directions to move on. It would not have taken away police ability to issue a summons instead of arrest, where appropriate. It would not have taken away their discretion to determine when it is appropriate to charge someone and when it is not. In fact, it would not have taken away any rights that someone has today.

Importantly, members of the community were always able to continue to apply for a permit to conduct various activities on public streets, as they have always done.

I have made reference to the support of the various productive industries, business communities, businesses large and small. I thank them for that: forestry, mining, agriculture, fishing, salmon, the TCCI, Small Business Council and many others. It is not just those on the west coast in the mines, or those in the forests across our state - it is all across Tasmania and it affects all of us.

This protects the right of workers to a safe workplace. We are delivering on that with this bill. We are toughening our trespass laws and increasing the penalties to better protect workers. We will continue to monitor the obstruction of our roads, in particular, and the entry to businesses - and bring forward further amendments, if need be, to protect the rights of workers to work, and businesses to go about their lawful business. We will consider that very carefully in the time ahead.

The Tasmanian Government, as I have said many times, respects the right to protest and every Tasmanian's right to free speech, but this does not come at the expense of the right to go to work and to be safe at work. I quoted the former chief justice of the High Court, who makes that very clear.

I am at a loss to understand why Labor voted against both clause 4 and clause 5, and have now indicated they will vote against the bill, although accepting the recommendations, even after the amendments have been made in the upper House, and even after the amendments have been made to clause 5.

What did the Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council say about the bill:

It seeks to address the mental health issues suffered by workers and other personnel who are having to deal with people who are acting provocatively. It permits Tasmanian companies to carry out the work which has been lawfully approved. It does not preclude protesters to have their views made public, and it enables investors and job-creating employers to know that

establishing an enterprise in Tasmania can be done, provided the relevant laws are followed.

I again quote Dr Broad who, on 24 May, said this with respect to clause 5, and with respect to workplace invasions:

There are instances that I have been informed of - and indeed spoken directly with people about their experiences - such as an excavator operator swinging a boom and finding that people have run out of the bush and jumped into the moving excavator and locked on. What if they had not seen that protester in time and hit them with the excavator, or they had been crushed in the pinch-point between an excavator and a log? Or who knows what else could happen? Pretending that is harmless? That is putting people at serious risk.

That is the view of at least one member of the state Labor Party. They are the kinds of instances the Government wants to see stamped out for everyone's safety. Our goal has been clear. We want to protect the rights of workers, and to deter unlawful interference with workplaces. In other jurisdictions, it is interesting that the Labor Party has supported similar legislation in just about every other state and territory, and certainly at the federal level as well - but not in Tasmania, because they remain tied at the hip with the Greens.

In her contribution, the Leader of the Greens - and at least she has been consistent - congratulated Sarah Lovell on behalf of the leader for the Labor Party in the upper House. She congratulated the Labor Party for voting against this legislation. Labor stands with the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation who wish to do harm to our productive industries. Why is it that Labor, in every other jurisdiction, would want to stand in a bipartisan way to stop workplace invasions? Why is it that they keep voting against it - in 2014, 2018, 2021?

We have had the mandate brought on the legislation, and we have done everything we could. We consulted. This bill was a change; it was amended. We got feedback from this bill, we very carefully took the feedback on board and we remodelled and reshaped the bill but it delivered on the Government's agenda to say: no more workplace invasions.

I was at Sustainable Timber Tasmania after the workplace invasion of the Bob Brown Foundation. It was very distressing for the workers, Mr Chair. I was there.

**Ms O'Connor** - How do you think those kids feel when they see you mowing down forests?

**Mr CHAIR** - Order. You were heard in peace, Ms O'Connor. Please let the minister be heard in peace.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you, Mr Chair. The people who work at Sustainable Timber Tasmania were stressed and upset. I have no reason to believe that was not the case because I was there. I saw it in their eyes. They were stressed and upset. It was a workplace invasion by the Bob Brown Foundation. I spoke to the management at the time and was told, absolutely, it was very distressing to their employees and they said so. I called on the Greens at the time to publicly condemn the outrageous act and of course that was not forthcoming.

**Dr Woodruff** - Why don't you go to a Strike for Climate and listen to those children?

**Mr CHAIR** - Order. Dr Woodruff, please let the minister be heard in peace.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Chair, I will continue my contributions after a further contribution from Mr O'Byrne. I will be fascinated to hear how he responds.

[6.29 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Mr Chair, I will reiterate the arguments I made on the second reading. Bad law is bad law. Minister, I cannot support this bill, although I acknowledge the efforts of the upper House to try to fix some of the mess of your creation. While I acknowledge and will support the amendments that were passed in the upper House, I cannot support this bill on the basis of the principles that I articulated on the second reading speech.

It is important that we contrast the approach on this bill compared to the bill that was just passed in a previous debate. The approach of the Government in response to a bill from a cross party was about how we work together to get the best outcome. There are some legitimate arguments being made about workplace safety. Unfortunately, minister, the contrasting approach from dealing with the previous bill to your efforts on this over the past eight years have meant that the wedge that you tried to drive, the politics that you tried to fan and the flames of division in our community that you seek to take joy in creating, causes you and your Government grief.

There are some legitimate issues - not a lot but some legitimate issues - on workplace safety that can be dealt with. I argue that many of those issues can be dealt with under existing laws.

It is the politics and the timing of when you bring this legislation back on. The politics that you try to drive, and you seem to take enjoyment from, causes you the most grief. The fact that you are only able to get a skeleton of the original bill through the upper House demonstrates that. The upper House is not a radical upper House. It is not a radical House upstairs and in the other place, not reflecting on their individual votes, of course.

Contrasting the approach of the previous debate on the bill, where we came together, we agreed, we worked it through to this bill and the history of this bill and the history of your behaviour in dealing with the politics and trying to create the divisions in our community, I do not think adequately represents the constituents that you purport to represent. You drag them into the controversy. You drag them into the politics and everyone loses when that occurs.

While I acknowledge the work of the upper House to amend, I will not say improve, to take some of the nasty edges off the bill as proposed, I still fundamentally cannot support this bill. Bad law is bad law. Bad politics is bad for Tasmania.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Chair, I will make some remarks wrapping up. I think most people have had a contribution. I am happy to be advised otherwise if not.

I disagree with Mr O'Byrne in many respects. The Government made a real effort to consult on this legislation. We got feedback. We changed the bill. We amended the bill. We took advice and responded to that.

This bill is quite different from previous bills, but it still achieves the Governments objectives. That is important.

Regarding clause 4, with respect to road obstructions, the offence would only have been committed where:

- (1) the obstructions were both unreasonable and substantial.
- (2) the obstruction impeded or prevented entry onto a workplace.
- (3) the person who was obstructed from entering the workplace was intending to carry out lawful work at the place.
- (4) the person causing the obstruction intended to impede or prevent entry onto the workplace of the person intending to carry out work.

There have been some suggestions here that the Government has further objectives about impacting on peaceful protest. That is not the case.

There was some debate at one stage about impacting on homeless people. My heart is and the Government support is for the homeless and the vulnerable. There is no intention whatsoever to criminalise homelessness through this legislation. It is simply misplaced criticism or blatantly misleading.

Regarding penalties, which have been changed to some degree, the Government will accept the amendments of the Legislative Council. We believe the body corporate penalty - 250 penalty units, \$42 250 - is appropriate and we will accept that. It was higher because for body corporates and for those organisations, those financial penalties need to be quite significant and different from those applying to an individual or a person.

It is a milestone event in providing stronger and better protections to workers and their families to go to work free from workplace invasion, free from intrusion, free from obstruction, to go to work, earn a living, go home and support their families. This is what we are on about. We are providing stronger laws and increasing the penalties.

**Dr Woodruff** - What a lot of garbage. I suppose if you say it long enough, you will believe yourself.

**CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr BARNETT** - We have achieved that in this bill. We are very pleased to support our rural and regional communities, in particular, to support our productive industries, whether it be mining, forestry, agriculture, fish and salmon. Businesses - small, medium and large - across Tasmania have the right to operate free from that intrusion. The fact that the Labor Party across Australia has supported similar legislation at the federal and other state and territory level is evidence that state Labor has let them down. State Labor is standing shoulder to shoulder with the Greens in opposition to this workplace -

**Ms O'Connor** - Yes, but why were you sacked from the Resources portfolio?

**Mr CHAIR** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Mr BARNETT** - protection legislation. That is a great shame.

I know the Tasmanian people have expressed a view on three separate occasions - 2014, 2018, 2021 - and we have delivered on that mandate. We will be monitoring this matter very carefully. We will be monitoring, for example, Helilog Road, we will be monitoring the mining industry, we will be monitoring -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Mr Chair. Is it possible that the minister who has no portfolio responsibility for any area he is talking about can make a commitment on behalf of another minister that they will be monitoring a road over which he authorised an unlawful lease?

**Mr CHAIR** - That is not a point of order, thanks, Ms O'Connor.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you. We appreciate the support, Mr Chair, from those observations that have been made by the Leader of the Greens because we stand up for the workers, we stand up for business and we stand up for our productive industries.

**Ms O'Byrne** - If you were standing up for the workers, you would fund WorkSafe Tasmania and you would bring in the manslaughter provisions. Do not give faux concern for workers.

**Mr CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

**Mr BARNETT** - The Labor Party has abandoned the workers. When you vote against this bill, you will abandon the workers. You will abandon those businesses that deserve the right and the protection of the law from those invading. You will abandon small, medium and large businesses. You will abandon all their workforce and their right to operate free from intrusion, free from obstruction, free from workplace invasion - people tying themselves under equipment.

There is no wonder the federal intervention occurred in Tasmania. They cannot make a decision about their own party between now and 2025.

I will conclude by saying when the state Labor members in this place vote against this bill you should hang your heads in shame. The workers of Tasmania and the businesses of Tasmania have better and stronger protections from workplace invasion as a result of this bill. It is a milestone event for this Government. We are pleased and proud to have delivered on our mandate. We will continue to monitor this situation very carefully to support sustainable development, economic development and more jobs in this state.

**Mr CHAIR** - The question is that the amendments of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**Resolution to be reported.**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The question is that the resolution be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 11**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Mr Wood  
Mr Young (Teller)

**NOES 11**

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

**PAIRS**

Ms Ogilvie

Dr Broad

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The results of the division there being 11 Ayes and 11 Noes, in accordance with standing order 167, I cast my vote with the Ayes.

**Resolution to agree to the amendments of the Legislative Council agreed to.**

**VEHICLE AND TRAFFIC AMENDMENT (DRIVER DISTRACTION AND  
SPEED ENFORCEMENT) BILL 2022 (No. 20)**

**Second Reading**

[6.46 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The purpose of the Vehicle and Traffic Amendment, Driver Distraction and Speed Enforcement Bill 2022 is to support the government's commitment to delivering improved road safety outcomes for all Tasmanians by enabling contemporary technology to be used to enforce existing traffic offenses.

This bill is the first in a package of road safety reforms to primary and subordinate legislation required to enable the enforcement of offenses by photographic detection devices, otherwise known as speed cameras, of the following; non-permitted mobile phone use, seatbelt non-compliance, use of an unregistered, suspended, or written-off vehicle, and speeding offences by way of a vehicle's average speed.

Tragically, on average there are 32 fatalities and 270 serious injuries on Tasmanian roads each year. Of these, approximately 29 per cent are related to speed, 24 per cent to distraction,

and 9 per cent to not wearing a seatbelt correctly or at all. With a focus on reducing the level of road trauma in Tasmania, the government will be implementing a new mobile speed camera program this year. This program will primarily focus on detecting existing speeding offenses with the use of mobile speed cameras, but will also seek to trial and implement new photographic detection devices to detect mobile phone, seatbelt, and speed offenses.

This bill brings Tasmania up-to-date with current technology available on the market. It is also consistent with legislation in other Australian jurisdictions where improved road safety outcomes are being delivered through the implementation and use of new technology. Jurisdictions that have already implemented mobile phone and seatbelt detection technology are reporting significant reductions in the detection rate of monitored offense types. Regarding the use of average speed detection, these devices have a proven history of reducing fatal and serious crashes on monitored roads by up to 54 per cent.

Once implemented, this technology is expected to provide a significant improvement to road safety in Tasmania. In making these legislative amendments, the government can enforce existing offenses using photographic detection devices. Without these changes, the government can only conduct ongoing trials without prosecuting offending motorists. This bill does not introduce any new traffic offenses, but allows existing offenses to be enforced using photographic detection devices consistent with that which is already taking place in other states and territories.

Before any new photographic detection devices are implemented in Tasmania, an extensive education campaign and trial period will be conducted. Amendments to subordinate legislation required to implement any of these new technologies are being progressed and will commence before October this year.

In addition to this bill, I intend to bring forward additional legislative improvements to automated speed enforcement that will clarify that photographic detection devices will be able to operate while in motion. This means that a speed camera can be driving on the road and detecting offence motorists at the same time. These cameras operate in a similar way to existing speed detection devices mounted on moving police vehicles but without the need to intercept the offending vehicle as the required evidence is automatically captured by the camera. The implementation of any photographic detection devices will not replace enforcement efforts by Tasmania Police but rather complement it and all other initiatives being delivered by the Government to make our roads safer.

This bill will assist the Government in improving safe road use and supports priority initiatives under the Towards Zero Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2017-2026 and Towards Zero Action Plan 2020-2024, including reducing the impact that the fatal five have on our roads; investigating enhancements to automated traffic enforcement; implementing technologies to enforce and deter high-risk and illegal driving behaviours; and trialling advanced technology to reduce driver distraction.

The Government is committed to improving road safety and this bill is one initiative the Government is implementing to fulfil this commitment.

I commend this bill to the House.



**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - I can confirm that the Labor Party will be supporting this bill and will support any effort the Government takes to help reduce the road toll. Sadly, we have seen far too many Tasmanians lose their lives on our roads and this year to date, it has been incredibly tragic. Correct me if I am wrong but I believe it is 41 Tasmanians who have lost their lives. Of course we support the measures the Government is proposing to take with the introduction of these types of new technologies.

Looking at the Towards Zero Action Plan 2020-24 that the Government has, there are just two points I would like to draw attention to because I think they illustrate why this is so important. We have talked about the tragically high road toll already this year but as the action plan points out, tragically road trauma is the second leading cause of death for young Tasmanians aged 17 to 25. Further evidence provided in this document tells us that serious casualties attributed to the fatal five include speed, 29 per cent; alcohol or drugs, 24 per cent; seat belt not used, 9 per cent; distraction, 24 per cent; and fatigue, 4 per cent. The introduction of new technology like this will certainly give another tool to the Government and police in being able to identify when some of those attributes are putting at risk other road users or people who are driving.

I want to reflect on the fact that the other place currently has a road safety committee that has been hearing quite a lot of evidence and they have heard from a number of witnesses and received a large number of submissions too. I understand that the work of that committee is drawing near to completion. Unfortunately, its work has been interrupted because the parliament has been prorogued twice, which has caused delays in the work that it is undertaking. I sincerely hope that once they finalise that report, the Government is able to give thoughtful consideration to the findings and the recommendations from the work of that committee.

I would like to share some excerpts from different submissions that have been made to that committee because whilst the legislation we are debating right now adds an extra tool to what the Government has available to it to help address safety on our roads, there is so much more that can be done. The action plan details a number of those additional actions, as well as identifies the budget allocation the Government has provided for those.

In my contribution I will share some of the work that has been provided by some of the groups who have made submissions. The Police Association of Tasmania made a submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee on Road Safety. To me, they made a really important point about the role of our first responders, because often they are the first at the scene of a trauma event on our roads, which must be incredibly distressing. I will read from their submission:

In addition to being sworn to protect life and property in Tasmania, our members are strongly motivated to improve road safety as a result of the stress and trauma they are exposed to when responding to, investigating, and prosecuting offences relating to serious and fatal motor vehicle crashes within this state. Unlike most other emergency services who deal with the incident once ...

and I add here in my own words, Mr Speaker - that, in and of itself, must be incredibly traumatic, and I do not want to minimise that; but, as the Police Association points out:

... at a point a police officer must often relive the trauma as the outcome of these crashes progress. This includes attending the scene and witnessing firsthand the destruction caused; rendering first aid; comforting victims as they are extracted from vehicles or pass away; assisting in the removal of bodies and admitting the deceased to the mortuary; speaking with witnesses; notifying family members of what has happened; investigating the crash and preparing associated reporting documents; attending court and giving evidence many months and years down the path, and so on.

Mr Speaker, I raise this because not only are the people who are in those vehicles directly impacted by these terrible tragedies, but of course, the first responders, and those who are on the scene, also are, the police in particular. I note that as at July 2021, 105 of 1363 officers are on open worker's compensation claims; 57 of those are for psychological injury and 38 are fully incapacitated and away from work. Those figures may be a little bit out of date now, but they illustrate how many of our first responders are dealing with psychological injury because of their work. We need to make sure we support them in their recovery, but ideally prevent them from being exposed to such traumatic events in the first place.

The Police Association submission to the committee's hearings made a number of recommendations, and I will summarise them. They recommended: additional education, both early and ongoing, for drivers; mandating diversionary programs throughout court processes; different and better use of technology, and this bill deals with one of those options; a review of fixed and mobile speed camera uses; a review of where police resources need to be organised to maximise the best outcome for the community.

The Tasmanian Transport Association also made a submission, and they represent many heavy vehicle operators and train operators in our state. While I believe from memory that represents about eight per cent of vehicles on our road, they are disproportionately represented in crash statistics. That is not necessarily because of what they are doing on the road; it is because of behaviours of other road users around them, misjudging how long it takes for a heavy vehicle to stop, for instance, or how much time they might need to get across that level crossing.

Some of the recommendations from the Tasmanian Transport Association include greater emphasis being placed in driver education, on maintain a safe following distance and crash avoidance space, particularly around heavy vehicles and in adverse conditions. They would also like to see more opportunities for overtaking, including slow vehicle turnouts, particularly on the Bass Highway, where there is a regular presence of slow-moving agricultural equipment. We understand driver behaviour can sometimes be a little bit impatient, and when you do have larger, slower vehicles on the road, people often make unwise choices about overtaking and that can lead to some very serious and terrible consequences. The Tasmanian Transport Association (TTA) recommends that heavy vehicle driver licence training for drivers new to the industry includes specific information addressing broad competency requirements including, for example, load restraint; fatigue management; heavy vehicle national law; vehicle mass, dimension and loading requirements.

The next recommendation is particularly important. The TTA recommends that other drivers and road users, including light vehicle drivers, motorcycle and bike riders and those responsible for their training and supervision are provided with information and education

about how to share the road safely with heavy vehicles and trains, specific to safety and legal obligations at level crossings; safety and legal obligations where heavy vehicles are turning; blind spots around heavy vehicles and the need to limit exposure and risk associated with these; and safe following distances and maintaining crash avoidance space around heavy vehicles, especially when merging, overtaking or changing lanes.

One of the recommendations from the TTA was the introduction of camera devices with the capacity to detect drivers speeding using mobile phones and not wearing seat belts which is, obviously, the legislative change the Government is introducing now that has our support. They went a little further. Minister, I am not sure if you can deal with this but that the revenue from these devices be directed to road safety solutions. I am interested to understand what the Government anticipates might be collected in additional revenue from the rollout of these devices and how you would intend to use that. Will that be specifically targeted at implementing further road safety measures?

The other thing I am interested in, minister, with the roll out of these particular devices, is how many are likely to be procured by the state? When are they going to be rolled out? Do you have plans to procure more in future budgets? Is this what we can expect to see as standard practice with the replacement of existing speed cameras with these smarter technologies? If that is the case, what do you anticipate to be the time frame to replace the existing technology with this new technology?

I would also like to reference some of the submission made by the Local Government Association of Tasmania, and Dion Lester, the Chief Executive Officer, provided some evidence to the upper House committee about a variety of different matters that the Government has responsibility for, that he and the Local Government Association think will better support road safety efforts.

In their submission they said:

### **Funding Model Must Change**

Councils report that the current Commonwealth and Tasmanian Government funding streams for road safety such as the Blackspot, Vulnerable Road User Program, Safer Rural Roads Program and others, are no longer fit for purpose. The limited submission timeframe in an annual return cycle creates a limited planning horizon for submission and limits their ability for strategic investment. Their nature tends to push councils to address road safety on a site-by-site basis and limits the ability to link with neighbouring and interconnected road management authorities as they search for eligible projects to nominate. It is now difficult to find projects that meet funding eligibility criteria, as these programs have been running for many years, with the easy wins and low-hanging fruit having been addressed. We are seeing diminishing returns of efforts to achieve on-ground improvements in road safety.

I know that is not specific to the bill for the House, but I thought it was important, given the debate around road safety to highlight that the legislative amendment that we are talking about now is just one of the many things that need to happen to improve our terrible road crash statistics.

They also go on to talk about the need for sustainable revenue for road safety and infrastructure to improve road safety, which they say requires more funding. They make the point about the funding that unfortunately this revenue is not distributed across the road network, state and local, fairly.

From this minister, I think they are talking about the two existing funding sources that come from road users: speeding fines and heavy motor tax and the way that they are allocated in their contribution to the committee process. They point out the Tasmanian Government has allocated the same amount - \$1.5 million per annum- for local roads for the last 25 years. This means that the proportion of heavy vehicle motor tax revenue provided for local roads to date is less than half of what it was in 1996, even though heavy vehicle road access has increased dramatically over this time.

They would also like to see better understanding of crash causes and how to treat them. The submission from the Local Government Association reported that the availability and usefulness of relevant crash data has diminished over recent years. While the Department of State Growth provides the information when requested, access to it has not been regular or readily accessible, posing unnecessary limitation on building local government understanding of underlying road safety issues and that the available data lacks critical details such as contributory factors to accidents.

I would also like to reference the Motor Cycle Riders Association of Tasmania's submission to the upper House, which was quite detailed and comprehensive. I take this opportunity as I have in correspondence to the minister to raise again the concerns that Motor Cycle Riders Association of Tasmania has about the use of wire rope barriers and the danger they regard pose to their members, in particular. They also argue that it is not cost effective. I am not sure if the minister can make some comments about that in this debate, but I wanted to provide some feedback that the Motor Cycle Riders Association of Tasmania remain concerned about the use of wire rope barriers.

Finally, I commend the RACT because of the very diligent work that they continue to do across the state, but also, their very comprehensive submissions to the upper House committee process where they had undertaken a survey of their membership and have provided a number of excellent recommendations, including a time frame to fit implementation of those recommendations to improve road safety in Tasmania.

I know that the minister would have been engaging with the RACT about those different matters that they have raised in the report to the upper House inquiry. I also note that the minister in his second reading speech said that this was one of many measures that the Governments progressing as it seeks to reduce accidents on our roads and make our roads safer.

I will not take up any more of the House's time but I wanted to commend the work of the upper House inquiry to the minister. I am sure you are engaged in that quite closely and hope that the recommendations and findings of that will instructive to government as you continue to progress the Towards Zero Action Plan 2020-2024. If you are able to provide some answers to those questions that were specific to the bill about this technology, I would be grateful.

[7.08 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, the Greens will be supporting the Vehicle and Traffic Amendment (Driver Distraction and Speed Enforcement)

Bill 2022. We recognise that sole objective of these amendments is to make our roads safer and make sure that the technology we have available to us is able to detect driver distraction, including the use of mobile phones and able to detect people who are not wearing their seatbelts. It is very difficult to understand how someone could consciously drive a car and not put their seat belt on. Obviously, the current regime where this technology can detect speeding, will also be maintained.

I also want to note with a heavy heart that the Tasmanian road toll this year is the highest it has been, as I understand it, in more than 10 years. Forty-one Tasmanians have had their lives cut short on our roads. Every one of those people was someone who was loved and had family and friends and lives that they were looking forward to the future in. As a parliament, we need to be collectively doing everything we can to make our roads safer. It should be one of those areas of public policy where there is really no significant disagreement about the measures that need to be taken.

I am very thankful to the Road Safety Advisory Council and Scott Tilyard for the regular briefings about the advisory council's work, and the way it engages across government, and across the parliament, to help us understand the road safety issues we are dealing with - but also the work program that Scott Tilyard and his team are undertaking to bring forward legislation like this. As we know, it is one thing to change the law, to potentially have a greater range of penalties apply, but as both the minister and Ms White have touched on, it is another to make sure you have the education and the training programs in place to help people be the best drivers they can be.

I am also thankful to the RACT for their work on behalf of the whole of Tasmania. They are such a great organisation. They are basically owned by members, and you do get a real sense of a very positive corporate culture at the RACT. Their regular road forums, and the forums that they have around election time, have been for me - who is really not massively in love with roads - a real education and enlightenment.

I am also very thankful to the RACT for the work they have done on mobility vision for Hobart and our other major centres. I hope minister Ferguson continues to look at that Greater Hobart mobility vision, but also the work that has been done by the RACT on Launceston, because ultimately what we need to be doing is getting more people out of cars and into mass transit.

Mr Speaker, when I was looking up the Tasmanian road toll for this year - remembering that we are only in September - I was struck by how high this number is. At the same time I also reminded myself that 182 Tasmanians have died this year from, or with, COVID-19. The contrast between a policy and legislative process that rightly seeks to do everything we can to keep people safe on our roads, and to save lives, with the way governments around this country are managing COVID-19 could not be more stark.

If 182 Tasmanians had died on the roads this year, the minister would have to resign yet 20 000 Australians, by the end of this year, will have died from or with COVID-19. The numbers are so staggering it is hard to wrap your head around them. As an Australian who grew up thinking we lived in a society, it is hard to understand how we have got to this point, where it is apparently acceptable to the federal Labor government - and to state and territory governments of both colours - that we have so little protection in place for the broader community from a virus which kills people or which leads to long-term health disability.

All governments, collective in their cowardice, have abandoned the Australian people to a brain-invading vascular virus. More than half of the Tasmanian population has been infected - and these are the ones that are reported. The reported cases sit at 250 000, in a population of 540 000, and we know that the reported cases are an undercount. I know a number of members of this place have contracted COVID-19. I know a number of members of this place have watched their children become infected from COVID-19. All four of my kids have had it. One of my children has purple toes, just developed in the last couple of months. What a coincidence.

I say this, Mr Speaker, because the opportunities to speak to ministers and governments about their betrayal are rare, and they are going to become rarer, because the daily COVID-19 statistics report will now be weekly. We have governments which, complicit in their cowardice, have gone against the evidence of independent experts and shortened the isolation period for COVID-19 infectious people from seven to five days - knowing more people will be infected, knowing more people will endure long COVID, and knowing more people will die.

How did we get here? What no-one in government has ever acknowledged is the trauma that is felt by people who live with a disability, or who are immunocompromised, or who want to protect their children from a brain-invading bat virus. There is genuine and deep trauma in the community because people feel abandoned by their governments - because they have been.

I am sorry if it makes other members in this place feel uncomfortable when we raise these issues, but we will not let up, because we listen to the experts, and we listen to the evidence.

We are disgusted by this cavalier attitude to human health that we are seeing from governments state and federal, Labor and Liberal. If only we applied to this virus the same level of care and concern that we do to road safety, we would be in a very different position - and a lot more of our fellow Tasmanians would be alive today.

May they rest in peace.

[7.18 p.m.]

**Mr WOOD** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, everyone in this place understands that the current rate of deaths on our roads in Tasmania is unacceptable. I believe we are all united in saying that this year has already been a devastating year on our roads. Forty-one lives have been lost in vehicle crashes across the state, compared to 25 at this time last year. In our small state, 41 lives lost has a huge impact. That is way too many grieving people who have lost family members, a loved one, a colleague, or a friend. The ripples of loss are felt through our communities for a long time afterwards.

The number of deaths this year is 16 more than at the same time last year. It is 78 per cent higher than the five-year average of 23. There have already been 182 serious casualties from these incidents, and what these statistics do not tell is that these were all individuals with vibrant lives. They had goals, hopes and dreams, like we do. These statistics had names and homes to return to.

I cannot stress enough that the Government is committed to ensuring that people start getting the message about safety on our roads. Speeding has again been the major contributor to road toll, with one in three fatalities involving excessive speed or excessive speed for the road conditions or the weather conditions.

Across the nation mobile speed cameras have proved to be one of the most effective ways of making speeding motorists slow down. Therefore, as part of our ongoing efforts to save lives and reduce trauma, the Government is delivering a new fleet of automated traffic enforcement cameras on Tasmanian roads. None of us likes a speeding ticket. That is why we all slow down if we know there is a speed camera around the corner. I know where all the fixed speed cameras are in my electorate of Bass and it automatically makes me check my speed. You only have to watch the traffic ahead of you as they approach the speed camera. They all slow down as well.

It is completely understandable because you do not want a ticket. I do not want a ticket, so I make sure my speed is under or on the limit. When you think about it, and I encourage everyone to give some serious thought to this, it is much better to arrive home to your family or loved ones, a couple of minutes late or even half an hour late, than not arriving home at all.

The statistics cannot be clearer: speeding kills. The risks of speeding are well-known to everyone. It is repeated time and again. It is stressed by the people teaching our young people and adults learning to drive. We have signs on every corner that say to slow down but there simply has not been the change in attitudes to speeding to improve safety on our roads. It is not good enough that Tasmanians continue to die on our roads due to speeding.

Across the nation, and worldwide, mobile speed cameras have proven to be one of the most effective ways of making speeding motorists slow down. Based on independent research, the program can be expected to reduce Tasmania's fatal and serious injuries by up to 10 per cent. If only one life were to be saved by this program, it would be worth every cent. Our hope is that it will save a lot more lives than that.

The new cameras can be anywhere at any time, making those who speed think twice before putting their foot down and risking their own death and potentially the death of others. The eight new speed cameras will complement the already existing 10 fixed speed cameras currently operating around Tasmania. In time, the number of cameras will be extended to 16 and we will introduce extra enforcement measures such as the detection of illegal mobile phone use and lack of seat belts.

I mentioned mobile phones, which brings me to the point that inattention also kills. I will briefly share with you that as a young boy of about five or six I was involved, with my father and mother, in a quite serious car accident due to inattention. This was not due to mobile phone use as mobiles at the time were almost the size of Besser blocks and not at all easy to wield. A momentary lapse of judgment or just being aware of circumstances around you is all that it takes for your life to be changed in an instant.

My father, mother and I were on the Midland Highway, not far from Bagdad. We were driving along as normal, already thinking ahead of all the things that we had to do for the rest of the day. Up ahead a truck had stopped in the road to turn right but either he had not indicated or his indicator was not working. That one short moment of inattention was all it took for us to slam into the back of that truck. Thankfully that day no lives were lost. However, my father sustained a broken collar bone, my jaw was broken and the car was totally written off. I distinctly remember being in the back of the ambulance on the way to the Royal Hobart Hospital with my dad calling out over and over again how sorry he was and asking if I was okay.

Sadly, there are too many people who have not been able to walk away from situations like my father, mother and I. Instead, flowers mark the side of the road where their lives have been lost to inattention.

Motorcyclists are also a disturbingly significant statistic on our roads. Last month, submissions opened for Tasmanians to provide feedback on the review of the motorcyclist Graduated Licensing System. The GLS is being reviewed by the Road Safety Advisory Council as one of the 42 key initiatives under the Toward Zero action plan and aims to identify changes to make new motorcyclists safer. Over the past few years, the motorcyclist Graduated Licensing System has seen enhanced training and assessment requirements for learner and provisional motorcyclists. Despite this, they remain overrepresented, sadly, in crash statistics, accounting for around one third of serious crashes last year. This year alone, there have been nine motorcyclist deaths on our roads in Tasmania.

Submissions are open until 21 September and I encourage people to provide feedback where possible for this review. Last month, we invited Tasmanians to participate in regional road safety forums to put forward their ideas to reduce the road toll to the Road Safety Advisory Council.

In conclusion, the Government is gravely concerned about the lives that continue to be lost on our roads. We want these serious injuries and deaths to end and there can be no other goal, because not even one fatality on our roads is acceptable.

[7.27 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that was really difficult to listen to. Thank you, Mr Wood, for your personal reflections. That was very real, honest and raw and no doubt a really difficult story for you. I think we all have a story like that, maybe not quite so personal and close, but it would be fair to say that everybody in this House has a reason to be deeply affected by the loss of life and serious injury on our roads.

I acknowledge and pay tribute to those lives lost, as Mr Wood has, as Ms O'Connor has and as Ms White has. I would like to share as well. I have discussed this in other public forums. In 1983-84, I lost my uncle Kevin, who I barely knew as a nine or 10- year-old at the time. It deeply affected my dad, his sister and brothers, and my grandmother. Any individual loss of life causes so much trauma.

As the circle of influence goes out and out, so does the level of trauma and loss and grief. It reverberates throughout the community. I think of the very recent loss of three young lives in the South Arm Road area. Being aware of the ages of those young lives, young people with their whole future in front of them taken away as a result of a triple fatality. Being in that generation there would be so many young people traumatised and tonight feeling that sense of loss.

The grief that we all feel in different ways, depending on how close we were to those people, we need to harness that to do something about it, to put that emotion into effect, to do some good. I want to say thank you, not just to you, Mr Wood, but to everybody around the Chamber to know that this legislation has the very clear support of the Opposition and the Greens members.



It is really heart warming for me for a few reasons. First, it is not just any other bill, but it has been strongly brought together on the advice of road safety experts. I wondered how this would go when I was first taking this development of this bill through my party processes and through our bureaucracy, and ultimately to bring it to parliament. I wondered how difficult it might be.

I have been a reformist minister in every portfolio I have had. You embark on reform with the knowledge of risk - political and otherwise - and I have wondered how much noise there might be about the classic accusation that could be levelled about the Government just doing this for revenue raising.

I have not witnessed that at all. In all of the forums that I have been in - emails, media and social media - I hope and believe I am accurate in saying that I do not believe a single person has said, 'This is wrong, you should not do this, you are only doing it for revenue raising'.

I well remember - I think it was the early 1990s - when speed cameras were first introduced in Tasmania. It went by the nickname of 'Abel Tasman Photographics'. I remember very clearly, whoever was in power, when those cameras came in there was a very strong community feeling that the government was doing it for revenue.

I want to say with a lot of gratitude, I have not seen that from the Opposition, the Greens or any politician. I have not seen it from user groups. I have not seen it from the man or the woman on the street and I feel like that is something to be so grateful for. Everybody has approached this with the same view I have, which is that we have to do more to look after each other on our roads.

I say thank you to Ms White, in particular, because it is the Opposition of the day that often gets to choose the dynamic that will flow through changes like this one. I know it has been the case for many years that the parties in this state have been bipartisan on road and driver safety. It is with that same spirit that I wish the Armitage committee the best of success as they are, I believe, now going through the final stages of the road safety select inquiry which the Legislative Council kicked off. It has been going for more than a year now. It is taking longer than I think Ms Armitage thought it might but they have needed extra time and that is no problem. It is my understanding that they are very close to reporting.

It is a good time for us to anticipate that report because, right at this moment, the Government, through the Road Safety Advisory Council, is currently reviewing the Towards Zero Action Plan 2022-24 which we are half-way through - so it is a mid-term review. It is checking the pulse, taking the temperature and listening to the community. I was very pleased to appoint Scott Tilyard to that role. I also say thank you to Gary Bailey, the former chair of the Road Safety Advisory Council, both exemplary in looking after good advice to Government.

I was pleased to be with Mr Tilyard at the Launceston Road Safety Forum only last week. That forum had previously been to Hobart and the next day was in Burnie. We are making sure that we offer that opportunity to people from all around the state to tell us what they like, what they do not like, and what they see as missed opportunities or good ideas.

I feel very pleased with the engagement. At the Launceston forum there would have easily been 50 people in the room, which was tremendous. Their feedback has been taken on

board with no judgment. Craig Hoey in the Department of State Growth did a great job in facilitating it. The way it was facilitated was about drawing out the commentary, the criticism and the good ideas. We have committed to take all that on board and process it in such a way as look for trends or things that we have not previously thought of as a priority and find a way to sift good ideas from lesser good ideas.

Everybody has something to offer here. It does not mean we have to agree on everything, by the way, but it does mean we are all coming from the right place of wanting to deal with what is a very unacceptable level of loss of life on our roads that we are experiencing this year, which Ms O'Connor and Ms White quite correctly highlighted. We are so very much higher, even than our trend, to this date in September with 41 people killed on our roads in Tasmania. Interestingly, for the House to be aware, there are fewer crashes than in previous years. However, the crashes that are happening are having more catastrophic impacts, more deaths, and more trauma for families around our state and for some visitors.

With that said, I again, from the outset, make it really clear and re-state that this legislation, the other recommendations that we have made, the changes to the Graduated Licensing System for novice and learner drivers, and future changes that we will be proposing, either to regulation or law, will all be squarely about acting on evidence and advice to push the road toll down.

I now turn my comments to responding to questions that were raised mostly by Ms White and by other speakers. There were some common themes and I am happy to go through those as best as I can. I note that since the bill was originally drafted and the second reading speech published for the House, we have awarded the contract for the provider, the operator of the cameras. That contract, after an extensive open and competitive process looking for the best technology at a competitive cost to the taxpayer, has been awarded to Sensys Gatso Australia.

The money that is raised, which was a question, is dependent entirely on the detection rate of offence. I do not have advice as to how much we think that this may, in terms of revenue, lead to. While it is not the motivation, of course, we expect and hope that revenue will help to pay for this revenue system.

For the record of the House, we have provided \$9.1 million funded through the road safety levy. I get the advice from the council. I can accept it or not accept it, but I have accepted the advice. It is approved by me on behalf of the Government. It is taxpayers' money, \$9.1 million, and there was extra funding in this year's budget also to allow for the rollout of cameras to be expanded, so there is a further \$9.3 million, bringing us to a total resource of \$18.4 million.

I will not have any advice until the program starts rolling out as to what sort of revenue outcomes it might lead to. I can advise that the number of devices is eight. We have an immediate, if you like, contracted number of cameras at eight. We regard that as an initial rollout.

For the interest of members, that is four trailer-based devices, so they are located in a towable trailer. It is worth noting that they are more visible on approach - I will come to that in a moment - and then four other cameras are to be mounted within a vehicle. What is interesting, and I will share this without wanting to make too fine a point of it, the advice to me is that there is a benefit for some cameras to be visible and other cameras to be not visible.

There is a belief that when people see them that the enforcement is occurring. Behaviourally, it changes their belief that they are not going to get caught. That is interesting advice, which I must admit, I had to hear it a few times to fully appreciate the whole point. There is a recommendation from the Road Safety Advisory Council that it is wise to have some covert and some overt enforcement so that people develop the knowledge that the cameras are out and about and that they may or may not see them.

We will monitor that. I can also indicate that the 10 fixed speed cameras, which are already out in Tasmania will continue to be operated by Tasmania Police. Any questions about their ongoing operation or their future would be a question for Tasmania Police and the Police minister. We intend to expand the cameras from eight to sixteen. That is the future. That is where we want to go. We will do this in a staged fashion, but for now, that is the expectation.

Where the cameras will be deployed was a question that was posed as well. 'It is a fair and good question. New offence detection devices will be deployed at locations chosen to increase safe road use and maximise the road safety benefits. My notes actually say the methodology for identifying these enforcement locations 'has not yet been finalised' by the Department of State Growth and Tasmania Police; however, I think that may have changed.

In fact, since these notes were written, that methodology has been settled. The names and locations are under strict lock and key. They are in the hundreds, I can say that, but we will not ever be releasing what that catalogue of locations are. They are all around the state, and on both Bass Strait islands - the Furneaux group and King Island. People should not ever know the locations. That should never be released, the point being that they have been pre-selected. They have been identified during this original phase of testing and commissioning that we are in right now. A whole range of sites have been carefully selected by the Department of State Growth in partnership with Tasmania Police.

That preliminary analysis has been undertaken to identify suitable corridors for average speed enforcement. This analysis has identified a number of potential locations, based primarily on historical crash risk, and are mostly located on high-speed rural roads with limited intersections and entry/exits. As the offences are enforced and recorded, we will be able to report on the numbers of offences issued. I cannot forecast the number - we would only be guessing - but as they occur, we will be able to provide that information, presumably at Estimates, or RTI or other means, for the benefit of public interest.

I was not asked about this, but I was expecting to, and feel it is important to mention, because we are talking about taking photographs of the travelling public. I was not asked about security measures and protecting personal information, but I did want to bring this matter up.

Photographic detection devices used for mobile phone and seat belt offence detection take images from an elevated angle to see inside the vehicle cabin. This is required as 95 per cent of offences involving a mobile phone are in the driver's hand, or resting on their lap, as opposed to being held up against the ear. To ensure personal privacy is maintained, images taken where no offence is detected by artificial intelligence software are destroyed before a human sees the image. For images taken where there is evidence of an offence taking place, additional privacy measures are included, such as blacking out passengers, blurring the image outside of the detected phone, or blacking out the number plate of the vehicle, until the adjudicator is satisfied an offence has occurred.

In addition, all data held by the Government and its suppliers are required to be securely stored and, when appropriate, destroyed, consistent with the requirements outlined in the Archives Act 1983. The relevant department's data retention and disposal schedules are publicly available on the Office of the State Archivist's website, which I think members here will be pleased to hear.

While not central to the bill at all, I was asked a question about the wire rope barriers, which I will address because it is an ongoing source of incoming mail for all MPs. I hope you will remember I wrote to every one of you and my own colleagues about this, because I want MPs to be in possession of the evidence and the advice that we received. This has been a Labor government and a Liberal government continuation of the building of wire rope barriers.

It is fair to say that the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council does not support the wire rope barriers as a central median treatment. The Government does. The Road Safety Advisory Council does. What they are properly called is flexible safety barriers. The Government has been installing flexible safety barriers as a road safety initiative since 2006. Run-off-road and head-on crashes account for more two-thirds of serious casualties - including fatalities and serious injuries - on Tasmanian roads. Unlike rigid barrier types, flexible safety barriers are designed to absorb the force of a crash, slowing and diverting excessive force away from the people inside vehicles.

This is useful for members: a 2009 evaluation of 100 kilometres of flexible safety barrier in Victoria by the Monash University Accident Research Centre found that it was associated with reductions in casualty crashes of up to 87 per cent. This is consistent with similar research findings from Europe and North America. The *Safety on Victoria's Roads - Regional Road Barriers* report tabled by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office in June 2020 found that safety improvements including flexible barriers and other measures reduced fatalities and serious injuries on treated sections of road by 46.5 per cent.

I am also advised that 79 lives - this must be an estimate, but this is what I will read out - have been saved on the first 20 roads treated with flexible safety barriers in Victoria.

The installation of flexible safety barriers in Tasmania has now extended to approximately 270 kilometres of our state road network. We believe flexible safety barriers are a key component in making our roads safer, certainly in achieving our 3-star AusRAP rating objective as part of the Midland Highway action plan.

From 2018 until now, records show there have been more than 250 repairs to flexible safety barriers, just along the Midland Highway alone. Most, if not all, of the damage was caused by a vehicle hitting the barrier. The point I am making is that 250 repairs - where most, if not all, were caused by a vehicle - indicates 250 potential life-saving interactions between a car and that flexible barrier.

I have witnessed one. I could not believe what I was watching in front of my eyes. There was such a lot of dust and noise and debris scattered from the damage to the central flexible barrier, but I saw a young man in the white ute caught with his vehicle in the grip of those wires. It caught him and he was sitting there looking very surprised and wondering what had happened. He had driven off the road. I am not saying he would have driven into me, but I was nearby, and plenty of others were. It is just another example I put forward to the House of

an incident that, were it not for those wire rope barriers on a treated section of the Midland Highway, who knows what would have happened otherwise.

I do not want to make too fine a point about this, but we have also seen head-on crashes on the Midland Highway in those remaining final stages that have not yet received the upgrade. Many of us who have grown up in the state vividly remember the numerous times on the Midland Highway that we had head-on crashes, deaths and serious injuries. As we complete that program over the next two years, we expect to see a far lesser chance - virtually eliminating the chance - of those head-on crashes, so I make that point as well.

Thank you Ms White for the question. It is important for us, as MPs, to be well equipped with information to respond to people who have their doubts and may never be satisfied. Nonetheless we do these things on best advice, knowing they may not please everybody, but they are saving lives right now.

I do not have information or advice for Ms White's question in relation to access to crash data from the Department of State Growth but I will check that out. I am not aware of the concern. I will certainly anticipate the inquiry potentially making a recommendation in relation to that.

I have been involved with GovHack, where road safety crash data is openly shared and allows developers to create apps and maps and identifying high risk locations. I believe the information is available, but if we can do a better job, then we will do a better job.

I close my contribution by encouraging everybody in our state to be a safe driver, a safe road user, whether you are behind the wheel of a car, whether you are a pedestrian, a cyclist, a motorcyclist or an e-scooter rider. We all have a responsibility to be safe. All too often we are seeing - where there has been a crash, where there has been a serious casualty, whether it is a death or a serious injury - in nearly all cases, it is the human being who created the crash. Occasionally there are circumstantial infrastructure, or a weather event, potentially, that might create the reason for a crash, but they are the exception.

The evidence is very clear that it is the fatal five and when I read each one of those five out, they all come back to a human person making a decision:

- serious casualties: 29 per cent of them have speed as a factor. It is the number one. It is the top factor for a crash, leading to a serious casualty.
- drugs and alcohol: 24 per cent of serious casualties are attributed to alcohol or drugs.
- seatbelts: 9 per cent of serious casualties are attributed to not wearing a seatbelt. I struggle to believe this. Like anybody else here, perhaps listening, that grew up being told to put your seatbelt on, it is a habit. You do it without even realising you are putting it on. It is a habit. The coroner has in the last month reported two cases in Tasmania of people who have died and they were not wearing a seatbelt. The coroner has put it down to their not wearing a seatbelt.

- **Distraction:** 24 percent of serious casualties are attributed to distraction. We put that down to the classic mobile phone distraction, perhaps adjusting the radio, perhaps turning around to growl at the kids, perhaps eating a salad roll, doing something which is taking your eyes off the road, your attention off your driving. We are trying to deal with that in this legislation.
- **fatigue.** Interestingly, 4 per cent of crashes are attributed to fatigue; being tired. I take a really interesting view on this, which was shared with me by our chair of the Road Safety Advisory Council, Scott Tilyard, with something like 40 years experience in police. He has a personal view, without evidence, that it is probably much higher than 4 per cent because there may be situations where a person has driven past the point of making good decisions. They are tired, but they may have been involved in a serious crash, they may have died, they may have had a serious injury. It may not be identifiable to police and the coroner that that person was very tired because there was not some obvious evidence to point to that.

I will close the debate and say a heartfelt thank you to the Labor Party, to the Greens, to others, and to my own colleagues for the great support that you have expressed through this legislation.

As we implement it, I look forward to sharing with the House and our wider community, about future steps noting that the Sensys Gatso cameras are currently in the commissioning phase, very shortly to be fully operational. While inevitably, people will be booked for the same offences that have been illegal for a long time, we want people to believe the truth, that these cameras will be anywhere at any time. We should take that as a reminder that we need to make good decisions in the first place and not get caught because we have not been breaking the rules and we have done the right thing. Hopefully, these combinations of measures will lead us all to be safer on Tasmanian roads.

**Bill read for the second time.**

**Bill read for the third time.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

[7.55 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move that -

The House do now adjourn.

## **Rock Lobster Fishers - Rule Changes**

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to stand up for the rock lobster fishers of Tasmania. Over the past few months I have been supporting their position for clarity from the Government in regards to a large suite of rule changes that are pending for the industry. I want to explain why it has been important for me to put forward their views in such a strong and persistent way.

It all started earlier this year when I was invited to a meeting by a small number of rock lobster fishers. We met in the parliament. Before that meeting, I had been on many camping trips where divers had pulled in some beautiful fish for us to enjoy but I did not understand the nature of the industry. They had a list of concerns regarding the proposed rule and policy changes for the rock lobster fishery but the overriding issue was the proposal to expand the 60-pod area from the west coast to across the north west and over to the north east. It would take in King Island and Flinders Island and include a lot of space where our small and medium rock lobster fishers fish.

It took a while for me to meet with fishers at their home ports to really understand why they were so concerned about this. I want to share that this evening.

Many of the rock lobster fishers of Tasmania own and operate the boats that are at the wharves scattered right around our coastline. They have been fishing for generations. Many of the people I met were taught to fish by their uncles, their fathers, their grandfathers. They now are taking their sons and daughters out with them and hoping to pass on this classic Tasmanian way of life to the next generation. Many of them are concerned the expansion of the 60-pod area will put pressure on the fishery and pressure on their communities in the way that they fish.

The pressure is not just about the individual fisher. It will have an impact on them but it will also have an impact on their families, their communities and the economies of Tasmania where it matters most - in regional Tasmania.

Not only have I met with fishers in these communities but I have also met with the people who rely on them, people who work in the local medical centre, the local school, the local IGA, the bakery. If these fishers are lost from our regional communities, then their partners and their extended families are lost. If they cannot continue to do this job in their local community, a job that might have been doing since they were 12 or 13 and it is all they know, then they need to reskill and look outside their local communities to support their families. We potentially lose the fishers out of these communities.

When I was on the east coast I met with someone who has a slipway on the east coast. Eighty per cent of his business relies on a fleet that comes in and out of the community. I met with a boat builder: a large portion of his business is designing and creating boats for fisheries across Tasmania. There is a large ongoing ripple effect into communities if this 60-pod expansion is implemented and impacts fishers and the businesses rely on them.

We heard from Nick Tucker, the character from the east coast, who knows the absolute impact it will have on the economy of the Break O'Day community. We have heard people standing up for and speaking on behalf of these fishers but what we are getting from the Government is a vacuum of response.

I do not think it is clear to this Government, and to the minister at the moment, the impact that not making this decision and not announcing this decision is having on these local fishers. It appears to me that the anxiousness, the worry and their mental health is being disregarded. Yes, it does take time to consult. It takes time to implement good decisions. I completely understand that and the fishers understand that. However, they were expecting a decision in August. This week I have been silent on the matter to give space to the minister to announce her intentions. If the minister is not in a position by now, having done all her research and

received her recommendations to make an announcement, then the minister must put the fishers of Tasmania at ease and announce the date that she will make this announcement.

We know and the minister has repeatedly said that these rules have to be implemented by 1 November. Fishers across Tasmania have to make massive decisions about their future. They have to know how they are going to tool up for these new changes. It is not even known whether people can make the measuring devices that they are going to need to use if the different changes are going to come and change the sizes of the fish in Tasmania.

The minister and Government are not leaving themselves enough time for this to be clearly implemented. They are not relieving the anxieties of the fishers who rely on this decision to make future decisions for themselves and their families and their communities.

This has been very important to me. I have been very proud to be an advocate for the small and medium fishers of Tasmania. I have been proud to stand with them and help give strength to their voice. Right now, we need a minister who is going to make a decision, be clear about the decision, and do it in a timely way to ensure that the future of a classically Tasmanian industry and tradition can continue in Tasmania, and our small towns and our regional communities can continue to thrive, supported by our small and medium rock lobster fishers.

### **Hellyer College - Need for Upgrading**

[8.02 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I rise on adjournment to talk about a recent experience of a tour that I had of Hellyer College in the north-west coast based in Burnie.

I would like to talk about the warm welcome that I received from both staff and students who showed me around Hellyer College. It was a fantastic tour. I recognise students Makayla and Gypsy, who took me on the tour of Hellyer College, together with the school principal, Shane Cleaver and school association president, Mark Smith and other members of the school association, with other staff we met along the way.

Hellyer College, for those who do not know, has a large catchment. It takes in our students from the west coast, from Penguin right the way through to Circular Head and King Island. Currently, there are some 600 students at the school. However, it is a bit tired and in need of some work.

One of the first areas we visited was the new science lab that the state Government has invested in. They should be congratulated on that project. The new science labs look fantastic, transforming an old building into something that is both functional and a good learning experience for students: a big wrap on the Government for funding that project to improve the science lab.

On the other side, though, is the state of large parts of the rest of the school. One of the things that students remember about going to Hellyer College is the green carpet. The green carpet has been at Hellyer College since it was built, so it is coming up to some 50 years. We still have the same green carpet. Not only is it on the floor but, if you go to the canteen, it is on the columns as well. This carpet was made in Devonport. It has to be said that it is massively



hard wearing, a fantastic product by the Carpet Factory, that unfortunately is no longer there, but it is tired and needs to be replaced. In parts, it was evident that the carpet was lifting and was held down by grey and black tape, which is inappropriate for a school facility. Also, some of the other facilities were substantially below the standard you would expect at any school.

We went into the art section. We have teachers who are conducting art classes with students dispersed through what can be described as a rabbit warren, which is not good practice. The facilities are in the basement where I believe it would be a fire risk. They are doing all sorts of art creations down there. If there was a fire, it would be very difficult to ensure that all students were out. On that basis alone, there should be a massive investment into the arts part of Hellyer College.

I also did a tour of the music area where they do productions. They do some fantastic productions. I have talked about one of the productions I attended recently. Unfortunately, if for example, somebody is doing some drumming then it reverberates through that whole section and people cannot concentrate and cannot teach. That needs to be improved.

Similar to Don College, there are still Terrapins that are well and truly beyond their use-by date. These Terrapins are where many of the certificate courses are held. The deck outside the Terrapins is not up to current building standards. They should be replaced with something modern.

I turned my attention to the student accommodation. With Hellyer College having such a huge catchment, it is not practical for the students to return home every night. Students are from places like Togari, Trowutta, Marrawah and King Island and it is not practical to go back and forth from home, day to day. You would expect these students who are spending significant parts of the year at Hellyer College to have a very good standard of accommodation; unfortunately, the student accommodation I toured is below standard.

If I was a backpacker touring through Europe and I showed up to accommodation of this standard, I would probably turn around and look for somewhere else to stay. It is substantially below standard and it definitely needs an update. This is sub-standard accommodation with showers with Besser block construction all the way through. No doubt it was built to last but it would be cold, and it is not inviting. It is not up to standard. I really feel for the students, especially from King Island, because they cannot return home even of a weekend. They are there all the way through the school term. It just would not be comfortable. I would not send my children to be in that accommodation.

The Government needs to make a significant investment in this accommodation because it is still well used. There still are a number of students using these facilities and it is just not up to standard.

I ask the minister, Roger Jaensch, who lives just down the road at Wynyard, to visit Hellyer College. He has been invited. I know the previous minister, Sarah Courtney, was invited. She did not take up that invitation. I know that at the Hellyer College Student Awards it was pointed out that the association president, Mark Smith, was very disappointed that Ms Courtney had not visited because the school needs significant investment.

The school association and the school have made a detailed proposal of the works that need to be done. This is a school for years 11 and 12 that has a significant catchment. It is

vital for the education of north-west students. Mr Jaensch really needs to visit. If he does not, we know why. It is because he does not want to upgrade this school. The school association, the students and staff would really like Mr Jaensch to visit the school so he can see for himself because it needs work.

**Time expired.**

**Asialink Arts - Assembly 197  
Reclink Community Cup  
Neighbourhood Houses - Commissioners for Declarations**

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I want to talk on a couple of matters. I missed the adjournment last sitting week, so there is something I want to raise from last time we sat. I will try not to be too long.

First, I want to talk about some Tasmanian artists set to shine in Singapore as part of our Asialink Arts. We have committed to extending the reach of our very vibrant cultural and creative industries by supporting Tasmanian artists to expand internationally into new markets. As part of this commitment, and following a very competitive selection process, Tasmania's Stephanie Jack and Assembly 197 have been selected to work with Asialink Arts to develop networks and progress collaboration opportunities in Singapore in late 2022 and early 2023. These opportunities are a direct result of the partnership that I was able to launch earlier this year between Asialink Arts - which is part of the University of Melbourne - and Arts Tasmania, obviously part of the Government, to support Tasmanian artists and arts organisations to access new markets in Singapore and South-East Asia.

Stephanie Jack is a Singaporean-Chinese-Australian actor, writer and singer based in Hobart. She is also known by her Chinese name, Lu En Dian. She has been supported to work with Asialink Arts on partnership, collaboration and market opportunities for new work exploring the complexities of identity in the digital age. She hopes to secure a Singaporean producer for the work, and encourage more opportunities for exchange between Tasmania and Singapore. I congratulate Stephanie on her success with that.

Based in Launceston, Assembly 197 is home to Tasdance and Situate and is led by Tasmanian artists Adam Wheeler and Emma Porteus, who are very well known in the arts industry. Assembly 197 is a collaboration and a combination of different arts organisations. It has received support for Singapore: Double Seed, which sees Tasdance collaborate with Singapore's Dance Nucleus, while also evolving the Situate model for Singapore-based artists with a focus on developing unique site-related experimental artworks.

As Minister for the Arts, I was proud to support this partnership with Asialink Arts, which aligns very closely with our own Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy: 2020 and Beyond as it will create unique opportunities both locally and in South-East Asia for collaboration, development, performance and friendship.

I also want to mention the Reclink Community Cup, held on Sunday, 28 August at Queenborough Oval in Sandy Bay. I believe Mr O'Byrne was a participant in previous years, being a footballer. Reclink Australia provides important sport, art and recreation programs in our local communities - often for people who are less fortunate, more vulnerable, experiencing

mental illness, family violence, homelessness, social isolation, gambling harm, unemployment or drug and alcohol rehabilitation. They also provide a service to our inmates at Risdon, so I was very happy to again sponsor a player for the Reclink Cup.

A friendly football match was first played in Melbourne in 1993. It only came to Tasmania in 2016, but it raises more than \$250 000 for Reclink. I think that is the figure across Australia. It certainly was a success this year. The weather was beautiful. The theme was based on Archie Roach's song 'Let Love Rule', which is not only a fitting tribute to Archie Roach, but also to the Reclink team that runs this much-adored event, which pitches musicians against the media and other personalities. It is a very friendly but competitive match between what we call the Van Diemen Dogs Team of Tasmanian musicians, against the RaMONAS squad made up of local media, actors and politicians. I know Mike Gaffney was playing this year, representing the political contingent.

In my final few minutes, I also want to mention my delight at being able to do something for our wonderful Neighbourhood Houses network by supporting a new class of commissioner for declarations. The Neighbourhood Houses CEO, Michael Bishop, came to me and asked if I would be willing, as Minister for Justice, to allow their coordinators of houses to become commissioners for declarations, because obviously they are a local place; it makes sense. They offer so many different services to our community. It is often difficult to find a commissioner for declarations, but if people know there is always going to be one at a Neighbourhood House, I saw the benefit in that. That has now happened. We put that in place very quickly. All our coordinators across the state in our Neighbourhood Houses are now commissioners for declarations, so they can provide many more services to people in our community accessing their services.

I thank and congratulate Neighbourhood Houses CEO, Michael Bishop - and the whole network - for reaching out and seeking my support for the appointment. I am very pleased that I could facilitate what is a really great outcome for Neighbourhood Houses.

### **Threatened Species Day**

[8.17 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, today is Threatened Species Day. The Government list of threatened species in Tasmania shows us some really tragic numbers. There are 708 species listed as vulnerable, 693 as rare, and 721 endangered. Of those endangered species, 43 are critically endangered.

Today, the Government should be talking to us about its plans to strengthen the environment, fix our planning laws, and the policies they are going to change to stop the damage to the environment, to stop the destruction to natural systems that is driving plants and animals towards extinction.

Instead of doing that, the anti-protest legislation passed today. It is about a government that is focused on locking up people who will - required by the circumstances they find themselves in - stand up and do everything they can to protect this beautiful natural world that is rapidly changing before us.

The life threats to all species on Earth - but particularly the ones that we are custodians of in Tasmania - is extreme. The culmination of climate change is the greatest threat overall. In Tasmania, the biggest threat in the near situation is the Government's policies of logging native habitat and, in the north-west of Tasmania, allowing companies like CCP-owned MMG to explore the Tarkine ancient Huon pine forest - home to the endangered Tasmanian masked owl, the spotted-tail quoll, and the Tasmanian giant freshwater crayfish. The onslaught of logging and mining in that area that is proposed would wipe out irreplaceable habitat. You cannot grow back Huon pines and you cannot grow back the habitat that those animals and plants need to survive. It is a whole system.

We have a Government that will end the funding for the Tasmanian devil recovery program. We have devils being killed - 158 in the last 18 months, on a 25-kilometre stretch of the Woolnorth Road. That stretch of road could have a reduction in the speed limit. Instead the minister announced today more ineffective measures: the same ones that have been in place for years and have had no effect. You cannot get people to voluntarily slow down. Mr Ferguson was just telling us about the sorts of interventions you have to make in order to force people to change their behaviour.

There is no will from this Government to put the interventions in place on businesses, like the truck drivers who rattle along the Woolnorth Road killing a devil every couple of days, according to the wildlife carers who are documenting them every morning when they search the roads.

Robbins Island, where the largest windfarm in Tasmania is proposed, is definitely the worst place in Tasmania to put a windfarm. It is a home for orange-bellied parrots, wedge-tailed eagles, white-bellied sea eagles and a disease-free Tasmanian devil population. It is a critical part of the Arctic and Antarctic north-south flyway for migratory species yet this Government is failing to do the work through the EPA of a proper EPBC assessment process.

The Government has been actively working behind the scenes to try to remove the critical threat of logging from the swift parrot recovery plan at the federal level. Freedom of Information makes it clear that the Government is doing everything to facilitate the interests of Forestry Tasmania, a state-sanctioned, state-funded destruction machine. The giant lobster is affected by silting of waters from Forestry Tasmania residues and the wash-off that is left from clear-felling and burning, releasing carbon emissions into the rapidly heating atmosphere.

It just does not work. Tasmanians who know that this beautiful place is irreplaceable are standing up, and will continue to stand up. They will not be shut up. When there is unjust and deliberate destruction of our wildlife habitat, when there are laws and policies of a government to facilitate that destruction that is driving species to extinction, good people will step up and defend them by every means possible - legal and non-legal - if they have to. We have young and old people who are committed to doing that regardless of the draconian legislation the Government brings in.

There are groups of people in Tasmania who are working every day to defend this place: the Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, the Bob Brown Foundation, BirdLife Tasmania, Environmental Defenders Office, Neighbours of Fish Farming, Tasman Peninsula Marine Protection, The Tree Projects, Grassroots Action Network Tasmania, Fishers & Walkers Tasmania, The Wilderness Society, Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Landcare Tasmania, Greening Australia, the NRMs in the north, north west, and

south, Residents Opposed to the Cable Car, Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania, Friends of Franklin Forest, Extinction Rebellion.

These are just some of the groups. There will be more because people know that they have to stand up to unjust laws. It is time for the Liberals to make the changes that we need to the planning and forestry systems before people demand, through their bodies, that they get made.

**Time expired.**

**Huon Valley - Public Transport Services  
Parliamentary Workplace Culture - Membership of Committee**

[8.24 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to talk about a short online survey put to the people of the Huon Valley about public transport services in the region. A total of 236 passionate Huon Valley residents took the time to fill out the survey and were kind enough to share their thoughts, observations and concerns about current public transport services in the valley and how they think services could be improved. These survey respondents came from all over the Huon, from Southport to Longley, Judbury to Verona Sands, and pretty much everywhere in between. The results clearly show that current public transport services are not meeting the needs of those communities across the Huon.

There were some interesting and, I might say, damning results from the survey which I want to share:

On the scale of 1 to 10, Huon Valley residents rated current transport service options a dismal 3.6 out of 10, which demonstrates the current services are not meeting the needs of the community. This is no reflection on the bus companies that undertake it, it is the structure of the services as governed by the state Government.

One fifth said that they used public transport more than once per week, but over half used it less than once per month.

In terms of the barriers preventing people using public transport more, the biggest issue identified by our respondents is that there are not enough services or late timetable options.

One resident from Ranelagh said, 'I've often thought about working in the city, but there doesn't appear to be a bus with the right timetable'.

Another resident, who is a health worker living in Huonville said, 'On weekends you can't get to Hobart early enough to do a shift at the hospital'.

A third respondent from further south said, 'It is impossible to go out for dinner or even drinks after work and still make the last bus home at 6.40 p.m.'.

It is clear that the infrequent services and route timing can be a barrier to employment, with those in the Huon who are unable to drive a private vehicle into Hobart and pay for

parking, having their work options limited by the bus timetables. This is particularly true for younger residents and students living in the valley.

There is also a strong perception that fares are too expensive. For example, it is \$13.70 for an adult Tassie Link fare from Hobart to Geeveston. Many noted that the short lived period of free travel on Metro buses earlier this year was much appreciated. It shows that people will take buses if they can afford it or if they are able to.

Despite the very low rating that resident respondents gave the current public transport network, many respondents mentioned how polite and professional the bus drivers are. Although people rating services just 3.6 out of 10, this low rating is not a reflection on the hardworking bus drivers and operators who work throughout the Huon Valley and who the community appreciate.

These results clearly show the public transport services in the Huon Valley are not meeting the needs of the community and that more can be done. It also shows that people in the Huon Valley actually want to use public transport more if these services were meeting their needs, such as by introducing later timetable options, a closer bus stop or a bus shelter so they can wait for a bus in bad weather.

Cities and metropolitan hubs will always be a focus of public transport policy, but it is important that our regions, like the Huon Valley, are not left off the map when it comes to public transport upgrades.

It was also suggested that more could be done to improve the accessibility of current bus services for those with a disability or those with mobility constraints. Sadly, some Huon Valley residents feel that their local bus services are not equipped for their needs. Although an increasing number of buses are wheelchair friendly, many buses that operate in the Huon Valley are not. As the name suggests, public transport is for the public. It is essential that as many of our buses as possible are accessible and disability friendly.

In closing on this matter, I thank all the 236 Huon Valley residents who took a few minutes out of their day to answer my survey and have their thoughts known. I appreciate the time and effort that was put into their responses. It is important that our regions are not left off the map when it comes to public transport and that regional Tasmanians, including those in the Huon Valley, do not miss out on opportunities because the public transport network is not up to scratch.

I very much look forward to discussing these matters with the parliament and with these passionate public transport enthusiasts in the Huon Valley in the future.

On one other matter, a number of my constituents have emailed me raising an issue of concern to them. They were aware of this parliament's debate in response to the Bolt report into parliamentary workplace culture. They took a lot of interest in the debate in this House and in the other place. I have been asked to make a representation.

In my contribution I acknowledged the work of the independent member for Nelson, Meg Webb, in her work in triggering this debate and playing a key role. It was raised with me that she was not able to be included in the committee membership. I acknowledge that that is a matter for the other House and they make their decisions on their own independently of this

House. A number of constituents, a number of women, have contacted me and asked me to raise that they are disappointed that Ms Webb is not included in that committee. On their behalf, I raise that in this place.

### **Child Health Nursing Services**

[8.30 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, this week is National Child Protection Week and the theme for this year's week is Every Child in Every Community Deserves a Fair Go. I could not agree more. I thought that it was appropriate tonight to speak on the adjournment about access to Child Health Nursing Services across Tasmania, during this week, but particularly in my electorate of Braddon.

I have three beautiful children and I have benefited immensely from the Child Health Nursing Services that are available on the north-west coast. Whether it is settling your baby, or advice around feeding, sleeping, or weight gain it is a very stressful time for you when you become a new parent. They provide an invaluable service. I am sure there are many members in this Chamber who have benefited immensely from that service and will acknowledge that with me.

Tonight, I not only want to outline the important services that child health nurses provide but also to raise some concerns that have been raised with me in my electorate about the diminishing of services across the north-west coast and the shortages of child health nurses. There is a lack of a succession plan and that is having an impact on access to Child Health Nursing Services across regional parts and remote parts of my electorate. I will read from the Child Health and Parenting Service website, which clearly outlines that:

The Child Health and Parenting Service provides a free child health and development assessment for all children aged 0-5 years.

There is no doubt that those first five years of life are critical in the development of a child. That is a time in your life when you need all the support you can get as a parent to guide you through those important years, to support you, and for you to have adequate advice and support and clinical intervention if that is required in your child's development. It is even more important that those things are picked up early. That is why it is essential that people get access to regular visits to their child health nurse.

Those assessments and medical checks are recommended at two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, which is actually a medical check that is recommended, eight weeks, six months, 12 months, two years and four years, which is the Healthy Kids Check, which is essential as children are preparing to go to school for the first time. We would all be familiar with the wonderful blue book that is given to you to record all the important milestones that your child achieves throughout that period and I am sure we have all got those in our cupboards at home.

This service provides child health and development; nutrition; SIDS and safe sleeping; breastfeeding; sleep and settling; communication; plane safety; injury prevention; oral health and caring for teeth; postnatal wellbeing; health and depression.; becoming a mother or father; balancing work and family life; practical parenting tips and of course it works alongside the immunisation program, which is very important.

On this website things that you should be aware of, as a new parent, around the growth and development of your child, some facts about that, about concerns that you might have that may over time become bigger issues and the importance of seeking additional advice and clinical assistance through your local GP, or other support services to make sure that you are getting the right care at the right time for you and your family.

I recently met with a member of our community who has vast experience in the Child Health Nursing Services across the north-west coast. I want to share with you a couple of points that they raised with me about their concerns about the service and that is that:

The service has been in escalation mode for the past five years. The escalation mode has gone through orange to red escalation levels and they are down at the moment about 10 FTE positions.

I find that absolutely shocking. There has been no explanation provided about how that funding and the money allocated would have ordinarily been allocated for those positions, what that is now going towards, and whether there are any incentives being provided to attract people to work as a child health nurse, across the north-west coast, the west coast and King Island. There is no doubt that the north-west coast has one of the largest needs across the state and that we have many disadvantaged communities. Rural and remote access is always a challenge when providing health services.

There seems to be little awareness and political awareness of the impact that the staff shortages and resource shortages is having on the ability to deliver services to families across the north-west and west coasts. There is concern that the Government has a focus on the first 1000 days through the strategy which they have launched but that does not appear to be correlating to an increased investment in child health services which are absolutely critical to achieving the milestones and recommendations that are part of that strategy.

The last point that I want to make is that it was expressed to me that not only were those families who would not ordinarily seek assistance but would have been in great need of assistance, their needs are not being able to be addressed; they are not being able to be seen due to the staff shortages but also families who are coming forth willingly to attend their regular appointments are still not being able to be seen because there simply is not the staff to do that. Of course, good staff are leaving. They are remorseful about that. They enjoy their job. They want to be providing care to new families across the region but find that the working conditions are such that they just cannot continue on.

I have brought this to the attention of the House this evening because it is fundamentally important: it is a critical service that people in my electorate are missing out on right now. It is critical to the development of our children. It is critical to the future of our communities and I call on the Premier to outline his plan to address these staff shortages and come back to the House to provide an update about what is being done to address these shortages and these issues which I have brought before the House. I will also be following up with a letter to him with regard to this issue. I very much thank my constituent for bringing these very matters to my attention.



## **Ian 'Jessie' James Sports Ground - Opening**

[8.37 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I wanted to speak about an event that I attended last week. There were lots of other MPs there as well. That was a very exciting event for the Glenorchy community which was the opening of the new clubrooms and facilities - the Ian 'Jessie' James Sports Ground in Eady Street. The Attorney-General was there - the member for Clark, Elise Archer, together with my colleague, Josh Willie, Senator Carol Brown, Glenorchy Mayor, Bec Thomas, and federal member for Clark, Andrew Wilkie.

It has been a long journey for the three clubs involved and for the council and the three levels of government to bring to life these great new club rooms. It will be home to the Wellington Cricket Club, the Glenorchy Rugby Union Club and the Glenorchy Knights Soccer Club. All three clubs have been instrumental and involved with lobbying for the funding for the clubrooms which are really lovely. They include new changerooms and toilets, new canteen, club meeting room and facilities that will be used by the broader Glenorchy sporting community for a long time to come. They were funded with a \$1 million grant for the Australian Government's Community Development Grants Program together with \$113 000 from the Glenorchy City Council and \$77 000 from the state Government's Community Sport and Recreation Grants Program and, as I said, delivered a range of new facilities: home and away changerooms; umpires' room; a new scorers' room; first aid facilities; new toilets, and a canteen, bar facilities and function space to support the club but also other community events.

I know that the new clubrooms will become a central hub for community events across the Glenorchy community for a long time going forward.

I wanted to also reflect on the importance of the naming of the ground and the naming of the clubrooms which have been named after Ian and he was also known as 'Jessie' James. He sadly passed away in 2015 but was a former employee of the Glenorchy City Council. He was involved with many sporting clubs and groups across the Glenorchy municipality for many years, including the Glenorchy Cricket Club and the Glenorchy Football Club. He worked at the council for 43 years, which is an incredible term of service for anybody working in any organisation and he was a very well-respected, high-achieving sportsman and sports administrator.

Back in 2016, when new flood lights were installed at the ground, Mr James's grandchildren were there and they switched on the flood lighting and unveiled a new plaque which was when the ground was officially named the Ian 'Jessie' James Memorial Ground but that has now extended to the new clubrooms as well. I have no doubt that his family continues to be very proud of a contribution that he made to the Glenorchy Municipality and the lasting effect that having those new club rooms will have, not just on those three great sporting clubs but also on the Glenorchy community more broadly.

## **Child Care Services - Industrial Action Period Poverty**

[8.40 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I want to quickly raise two issues that may seem quite distinct from each other but are actually quite connected. The first is that around 1000

early years Child Care Services around the country closed today and thousands of staff walked off the job. Rallies have been taking place in every state and territory including Tasmania in the nationwide shutdown as early education workers are calling for greater recognition of the skills and the work that they do.

The chant was, 'What do we want? A reason to stay', as so many people were fleeing the industry. In Australia, an entry level employee under the Child Care Workers' Award is paid 47 cents above the minimum wage yet the Skills Commission have figures show that the demand for early education workers and early education teachers has hit a record national high. The early years educators are asking for three things. They are asking for decent pay, they are asking for their work to be valued, and they are asking for children to be put before profits. Why are wages low? It is because we are not fundamentally valuing the work that is done.

I want to read some of the words from one of the amazing speakers today at the Hobart rally. Maddie Calcraft, a child care worker and also a union representative for the United Workers Union, said:

One of the main reasons I am here today is to honour my grandmother. She was the first coordinator of what was then the Launceston Family Day Care. When interviewed, she said, 'I felt grateful to be part of it and having had the experience of being a country Mum with no child care, I couldn't help but want to change things for other women in the country.'

Many years from that quote, I am honoured to be here today to be part of a change for people in this sector across the country. In a single day, I am a chef, a cleaner, teddy hostage negotiator, a nurse, an entertainer, a gardener and a safety inspector but above all that, I am a safe place, a safe place for your child to try new things from their first steps to the first time they write their names. We are there to hold their hands, encourage them and guide them. I use my professional qualifications daily to interact with children from all walks of life.

Unfortunately, our current award designed when we cared for children who are actually now off to high school or starting their first jobs gives us less than 10 minutes per child per week - 10 minutes dedicated to the creation of an entire learning plan to help your child navigate every developmental stage.

Every day I see colleagues taking their work home, purchasing resources out of their own pockets and exhausting themselves to try and provide quality care. Our industry is highly regulated, over worked, under paid and undervalued.

If nothing changes, we will continue to see workers leave the sector, not for lack of love. With the rising cost-of-living, nationwide, including rental prices and the cost of fuel being an educator is heartbreakingly not financially viable to many people. Recently, after saving for two years and have a size of a deposit, I took my current income as a 40-hour week room coordinator to the bank. The loan I was able to apply for, I couldn't afford a single house on the market. Is it any wonder the sector can't afford staff? We literally cannot afford somewhere to live on our wages.

The second issue is around period poverty. Period poverty is when those on particularly low incomes cannot afford or access suitable period products. With average periods lasting about five days, it can cost \$20 or \$30 a month for tampons and pads, and some women struggle to afford that. Social enterprise, Hey Girls, has said that there is a very simple way to describe period poverty: you go to the supermarket and you have to actually choose whether you can buy a bag of pasta or a box of tampons, it is that basic. We hear a lot of mothers going without the period protection just so they can feed their children using things such as newspaper stuffed into socks or bread because they are cheaper than period products.

It is Women's Health Week so I wanted to raise it because more than one in five Australians are using toilet paper, socks or other unsuitable alternatives to manage their periods because they cannot afford pads or tampons. The world first survey on Period Poverty commissioned by Share the Dignity found that close to half of the 125 000 respondents said that they had missed at least one day of school because of their period; 74 per cent said that when they did attend school during their period they found it difficult to pay attention because of lack of sanitary care. Around 50 per cent of respondents admitted to wearing a pad or tampon for more than four hours because they did not have enough products.

The survey is part of a larger Period Proud piece of work but I share the dignity. Focusing on mapping, missing data on Period Poverty in Australia is to understand the shame and stigma that still exists around getting a period and there is shame stigma: 40 per cent of respondents reported hiding anything that shows they are having their period, and 58 per cent of people say they hated their period.

I note that Scotland has become the first country in the world to make period products free for all. There is now a legal duty on local authorities, which is equivalent to our state governments, to provide free items such as tampons and sanitary pads to anyone who needs them. They are distributed through government and education providers as the Period Products Act comes into force. The Period Products (Free Provisions) (Scotland) Bill passed in November, introduced by a Labour MSP, Monica Lennon, and it puts a legal duty on local authorities. It will be for the country's 32 councils to decide what practical arrangements are put in place, but they must give anyone who needs them, access to different types of period products easily and with reasonable dignity.

The act says obtaining the period products should be neither complex nor bureaucratic, and items should be freely accessible without people having to ask for them, which is the flaw in the initiative that has come out in Tasmania. Whilst I applaud the fact that we are providing period products in schools, kids still have to go and ask for them. What all the research says is that young women are far less likely to do that, which is why we are calling on this Government again to look at better mechanisms of distribution such as the work that is being done in other jurisdictions around vending machines.

Why are these two issues conflated? The two issues are conflated because when we look at the high rates of violence against women, and when we unpick the data and the research around that, it says that one of the reasons that women are targeted - one of the reasons women are unsafe - is because of the way they are viewed in society as being somewhat lesser. Why do people think that women are lesser? Well, we can pay them less for caring roles because apparently that is okay, and it is only those workforces that are predominantly women dominated that are still struggling with those horrifically low wages. Why are women

frightened and ashamed and at danger? We actually shame them for things that their bodies do. We shame them for their periods, and we do not provide enough support.

If we want to change the way that women are viewed, if we want to make women safer, then there are structural things we can do right now. We can pay women properly for the work they do. We can value their caring roles in society, and we can start recognising the needs and the health demands that women have and funding and supporting them properly.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **Australian Antarctic Program at Kingston**

[8.47 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to talk about a tour that my colleague, Dean Winter, and I took last week to the Australian Antarctic Program at Kingston and we were hosted by Director, Charlton Clark, and Professor Nicole Webster, Chief Scientist. Our tour included a tour of the site and the facilities, workshops, storage areas, warehouse, clothing store - which hosted 50 different templates for 50 different purposes. We also went to the crew laboratory where we learned about the important world-leading research which is currently being undertaken on site.

The Australian Antarctic Division is gearing up to lead one of the most ambitious and challenging scientific projects yet undertaken in Antarctica: the quest to drill an ice core containing a million-year record on Earth's climate and atmospheric composition. This record will help solve a longstanding mystery about the timing of past Ice Ages: why, almost 1 000 000 years ago, the cycle of Ice Ages shifted from a regular 41 000-year cycle to an Ice Age every 100 000 years.

A leading theory is that declining atmospheric carbon dioxide levels were the cause of the longer, colder, Ice Ages. The million-year ice core record will provide the essential carbon dioxide record to test this theory. By greatly extending the detailed record of Earth's climate history, the million-year ice core will also place current changes in climate and greenhouse gas concentrations into a deeper context.

Australia and a European team will drill two operations near Little Dome Sea. Each team is building ice core drills to suit the conditions they will face, and their operational methods and experience. The large scope of the logistical work that was explained to Mr Winter and myself, was absolutely staggering. Australia has also assembled a fleet of tractors, snow groomers, and sleds to tow a mobile station and drill camp infrastructure and equipment the 1200 kilometres from Casey Research Station to the drill site. It is a gigantic project that encompasses about 60 huts, that are prefabricated and designed to meet the conditions. If you think about the conditions, the average temperature of where they will be conducting the drilling, is minus 52 degrees, and I think it goes down to about minus 32 degrees for this six-week period. That is apparently when it is balmy enough for them down there to be able to conduct this drilling. It was absolutely fascinating.

The team expects to drill about 150 meters per week, so that over a field season of six to eight weeks they could drill between 900 and 1200 meters of ice core and this will produce between 6.5 and 8.5 tonnes of ice core a year. Four to five drills of drilling will be required to

drill to the base of the ice sheet and ice exceeding 1 million years old, ideally reaching up to 1.5 million years, is expected in the few hundred meters above the bedrock. We were told that the cores will be transported by Travers, the ship at Casey Research Station, for the journey back to Tasmania where they will conduct all those investigations.

I thank the team at the Australian Antarctic Program at Kingston for having us. We really enjoyed it. Anyone from the House who is interested to have a look, I highly suggest it.

**Australian Antarctic Program at Kingston  
Macquarie Point Development - Proposal to move Australian Antarctic Division**

[8.51 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I think you probably summed up the difference between a member for Lyons and myself that I did not pick up a lot of what she said on the day, I just learned a lot of it then. There was a really cool snow mobile thing we went on there. Dave O'Neill, the President of the Cygnet Football Club was there. There was a lot of science and it went over my head just like science did when I was at school. However, it was good to learn about it more than I did on the site, but it was fantastic.

All good things come from Kingston and so does Antarctic research and so it should stay where it is. I hope the Government will agree with me on that.

Mr Speaker, I rise today to talk about something related to the Antarctic which is the Macquarie Point development and, of course, we know the Government is planning to move the Australian Antarctic Division out of Kingston and into Macquarie Point, which is a terrible idea. I sincerely hope they do not do that and that it does not go ahead because it is a very bad idea and we have seen exactly why last week.

Macquarie Point has been pitched by this Government over a decade as a massive opportunity for Tasmania. They have had such enthusiasm for the project that they have had many different master plans. They could not settle on one so they had to have a new one and another and another.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Franklin, you only have two minutes. We finish at five minutes to 8 p.m., so you might want to finish up.

**Mr WINTER** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The master plans are again under threat because the Government appears to be moving to build their \$750 million stadium at Macquarie Point over the top of what otherwise would have been the other projects that they had planned over those three or four separate master plans in the years beforehand.

This is \$130 million that has been poured into this site, not in building things, in different consulting plans, different iterations of a vision for the site, and now we have the new vision of this government, which is to spend \$750 million on the site to build a new football stadium. We have a Minister for State Development who is also the Minister for Housing who, on the one hand has been promoting Macquarie Point in recent times and in fact, on 25 June he said that: 'expertise was sought to deliver the development phase of Macquarie Point.'

After 10 years they have gone to the development phase and he talked about the amendments of the planning scheme to support and implement the new Macquarie Point master plan, the site was almost fully remediated and the site was ready to move to an exciting new phase of development delivery, they were going to deliver something. He talked about the escarpment and the positive negotiations being finalised with the preferred developer, Milieu Pty Ltd, and he talked about how the permanent development of The Goods Shed had also been secured.

It is unfortunate that the minister is not here because it is really important that he outlines exactly what the plan is on the site because, after 10 years, it looks as though those developments are going to be torn up. Instead of building housing, the minister for Housing is now looking to build a stadium on that site. After all the vision, all the plans, it now appears as though rather than the minister for Housing building housing on that site that he controls as the minister for Development, we are now looking to build a \$750 million stadium at Macquarie Point.

That does not fit with the priorities of the Tasmanian people. Tasmanians are under cost-of-living pressures, there is a housing crisis, a health crisis and this is a government that wants to build a \$750 million stadium on a site that they had plans for so long to do something much different.

**Time expired.**

**The House adjourned at 8.56 p.m.**