



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

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Wednesday 26 October 2022

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

QUESTIONS

State Service Wage Offer Negotiations

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.02 a.m.]

Last night the grim reality of a decade of Liberal government was revealed with inflation forecast to hit 7.75 per cent by the end of the year. Your latest wage offer to workers in our hospitals, schools and other essential public services is just 3.25 per cent, meaning you are continuing your policy of cutting real incomes for these workers by thousands of dollars a year. We already have enormous problems in our essential services. Child safety workers are stretched to breaking point with nearly 100 children each month identified as being at risk, remaining without the support of case workers. Teachers are walking out of classrooms out of frustration at unmanageable workloads while student results go backwards. Nurses and paramedics are walking out of hospitals because they cannot sustain the overtime, the double shifts, and the overwhelming number of patients needing their help.

How is your policy of cutting the real wages of thousands of workers by thousands of dollars going to help address any of the many problems in our essential public services?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I acknowledge the cost of living pressures, again highlighted in the federal Budget last night, which we are taking action on.

Our Government is committed to negotiating with all unions in good faith to deliver wage increases for our workforce. Those negotiations are continuing. I held a round table with the unions on 15 September and the Government put an offer to unions on Friday 23 September. Following that, unions met with the head of the State Service on 29 and 30 September and a subsequent offer was provided to the unions on Monday 3 October. That offer would have delivered public servants a pay rise and response to the cost of living challenges.

We are always willing, and have demonstrated our willingness, to sit down and talk with unions and negotiate in good faith. More recently, the acceptance in the tick of our COVID-19 allowance and our support for the bonus of \$2000 pro rata is an indication that we are willing to sit down, work with industrial advocates, and listen to people on the ground doing what has been an extraordinary job in extraordinary times. I have always acknowledged that.

The offer provided for a three-year agreement with increase to wages by 3.25 per cent in the first year and 3 per cent over the next two years, which is more competitive I am informed than most other states, and is three-quarters of 1 per cent above the budget allocation of 2.5 per cent.

I need to remind members that we need fair and affordable pay rises. I have said before that 1 per cent above the 2.5 per cent is a cumulative effect across the forward Estimates of some \$397 million.

We want to ensure that we have very fair and reasonable wage growth and pay rises for our hard-working public servants, but it also needs to be affordable as well. I am sure all Tasmanians would appreciate that. We also offered a revised cost of living retention payment of some \$1500 to employees earning up to the top of the equivalent of a general stream band 6, currently \$111 379; and \$1000 to employees above a general stream band 6; in addition, a low-income payment of \$1000 for those earning up to the equivalent of general stream band 3, currently \$72 118; and a \$500 flat rate increase from the base salary of those employees. That means someone in that category would receive some \$2500 one-off payments, plus the flat-rate increase to their base salary in the first year.

I am informed that effectively means that those on incomes of band 3 equivalent and below would get an equivalent of between 7.41 per cent and 9.64 per cent in the first year. In my view we are being very fair and reasonable. Our willingness to negotiate in good faith has been demonstrated by our willingness to sit down with the ANMF in terms of the COVID-19 allowance and striking a fairer, better, and a broader deal. I am very pleased with the outcome of the tickers I just articulated a few moments ago.

I can assure those members opposite and, more particularly, our hard-working public service, particularly those on the front line, whether it be child protection, in our hospitals, or in our schools, that our Government has demonstrated that we are more than willing to work with our highly valued workforce in a very measured and supportive way, and our fair and reasonable pay offer and our willingness to negotiate in good faith is a very good example of that.

I will always talk up the work of our public service front line, and talk up the work that our hard-working teachers, teacher assistants, facility attendants, and all who go into supporting a positive learning environment within our schools. I can point to some good results and improvements.

We need not focus on the negativity that you have demonstrated. This has been a huge disruption over the course of the last two and a half years, as a result of the pandemic.

State Service Wage Offer Negotiations - Working Conditions

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.08 a.m.]

It has been made clear to you throughout your negotiations with public sector workers that this not just about wages; it is about working conditions and the ability of staff to provide the public services to which they are so committed to. With news of a \$1.3 billion state budget improvement overnight, will you now make a real commitment to start addressing these long-standing structural issues?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, let me give you an example of a structural issue that, in many respects, we are still feeling the effect of. That is the structural issue between 2010 and 2014, when you sacked a nurse a day for nine months, put hospital beds in storage and closed hospital wards.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is a structural issue that we have had to continually invest in since coming to government in 2014 to address what was a huge disruption in our ability to service the increasing demand within our health system.

I will give you an example of how we are addressing the structural issues within our health system. We have employed 1500 more full-time equivalents since July 2020 in our Tasmanian Health Service and we are addressing the structural issue of elective surgery waiting lists by investing \$196.4 million over four years in our elective surgery plan, clinician led and patient focused, which is working. I can give you a history lesson on structural issues within the public service. I have mentioned Health.

Mr O'Byrne - You are good at history but not good on the future vision, are you?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I was directing my next comment to you about when you were Police minister and sacked 108 officers, Mr O'Byrne. That was a structural issue of our police service; the reduction of 108 police officers.

Ms White - Is this what you say to teachers who raise concerns with you today?

Ms Finlay interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Bass, that is the second time.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When it comes to teachers - thank you, again - we are continuing to increase our commitment made in 2018 of employing 650 more teachers within our schools, working well and working together with key stakeholders when it comes to the University of Tasmania, the Australian Education Union, the Tasmanian Principals Association, the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment and a number of other key stakeholders when we look at the workforce challenges and the investment in terms of our teaching workforce.

Talking about structural issues in the education system, we are building a system of education based on equity. We are ensuring that, within our public system, irrespective of your circumstance or background, we are building an education system based on equity which demonstrates the objective that irrespective of your circumstance or background in Tasmania, you have that fundamental right to a quality education. Our investment in schools, our investment in twenty-first century modern ways of learning infrastructure and systems is there for all Tasmanians to see.

Alleged Assault of Aboriginal Man in Police Custody

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS and REHABILITATION, Ms ARCHER

[10.12 a.m.]

I am sure you agree that the allegations a young Aboriginal man was assaulted while in custody at Hobart Remand Centre and denied medical and legal assistance are very serious. The man's family and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre say both police and custodial officers were involved. An initial review of CCTV footage has been undertaken by Tasmania Police Professional Standards, which decided no immediate action will be taken. Given the history of brutality experienced by Aboriginal people at the hands of police and in custody, you would understand why this response is not satisfactory. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre is calling for an independent investigation into this matter to be conducted by a former member of the judiciary.

As minister for Corrections can you advise us of any steps you or your department has taken with regard to allegations about assaults by Tasmanian Prison Service employees? Will you as Attorney-General heed the calls of the TAC and appoint an independent investigator to review the full chain of evidence?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question. Corrections and Rehabilitation is the title, a very important addition to the name and the action taken in this portfolio.

As the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Mr Ellis, said yesterday, the matter was under investigation.

Also, the Hobart Reception Prison is its proper title. We now have a remand centre called the Southern Remand Centre at the Risdon Prison site. I just make that correction.

Although in this instance I am aware it is an investigation that needed to be carried out by police because of a police custody issue, I will allow that investigation to continue and will look at whether action needs to be taken under the auspices of my portfolio at that point in time. Nothing has come to me at this point in time.

Members may or may not be aware that alleged offenders coming into custody are not necessarily directly under the Tasmania Prison Service straight away until there is a processing arrangement that occurs. I will need to look into that, and indeed the investigation, and allow it to take its course.

There are a number of issues in Dr Woodruff's question, and a very general broad question about allegations of assault by correctional officers. I do not know of any that Dr Woodruff may be referring to in relation to correctional officers on -

Dr Woodruff - In this incident, I understand.

Ms ARCHER - Tasmanian Aboriginal alleged offenders. I am not sure what Dr Woodruff is actually referring to there because there has certainly been no allegations of correctional officer involvement.

Dr Woodruff - I understand that there has been.

Ms O'Connor - The TAC made the allegation.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - Can we let the investigation takes its course, rather than us continually having this debate in parliament? The minister, Mr Ellis, made it very clear yesterday that there is an investigation under way. Then I will look at what actions may or may not -

Dr Woodruff - It is about the prison service as well.

Ms ARCHER - Dr Woodruff, you can say it is about the prison service but that has not been determined. You do not know that.

Dr Woodruff - I am putting it to you on behalf of the TAC. It was in remand. That is why we have raised it with you again today.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - I do not know that. I will allow the investigation to take its course. If there is any involvement by Tasmanian correctional officers in any assaults on any individual, those matters are always looked into and investigated. I am certainly not aware, at this stage, of anything that Dr Woodruff has made allegations about in question time today.

Power Bills

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.17 a.m.]

Tasmanians are struggling after you increased power prices by 12 per cent this year. Now, after a decade of energy policy inaction from your federal colleagues, last night's federal Budget forecasts a 56 per cent price rise in the cost of electricity over the next 18 months. That is an accumulative increase of almost 75 per cent in just two years. It is the direct result of the decision to abandon your Tasmania First energy policy, your broken promise to delink from the National Electricity Market.

You have left Tasmanians exposed to the massive power price increases being seen on the mainland with prices set to go up by 75 per cent in less than two years. Will you apologise to Tasmanian households for your broken promise that could see annual average power bills rise by more than \$1000?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Mr Winter, perhaps I can ask you a question around your lobbying and what you have done to remind your federal colleagues of their commitment when it comes to reducing electricity prices by \$275 per year by 2025. I did not see much mention of that in the Budget last night. In fact, I am informed that the federal budget papers do not even make mention of this much-promised \$275 power relief bill. Perhaps you could play your part as well. I do not expect you to, with the lack of substance you have demonstrated quite clearly in the question today.

Forecast increases in electricity prices in the federal Budget highlight the need to accelerate the uptake of renewables and modernise the grid. The federal Budget highlighted that this action would put downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices over time. That is why we have a plan - and we are delivering on it - that will continue to put downward pressure on electricity prices.

When those opposite were last in government we saw price hikes of some 65 per cent. I am more than happy to give you a history lesson and highlight your hypocrisy, Mr Winter, when it comes to your party managing downward pressure on electricity prices, given they went up.

Mr Winter - Seventy-five per cent over two years.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have shown that we can consistently deliver at the lowest and among the lowest electricity prices across the nation. This was reaffirmed earlier this month in the independent Tasmanian Economic Regulator report comparison of electricity and gas prices available to small customers in Australia. We have a target to increase our renewable energy generation to 200 per cent of our 2022 baseline. This is spurring new investment, which will be further underpinned by Marinus. I welcomed the belated support of that on the day that it was announced.

Ms DOW - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. This is a very important matter. The Premier has been asked to apologise to Tasmanians for yet another broken promise. He has gone nowhere near to answering the question.

Mr SPEAKER - I take the point of order as relevance, but it is also not an opportunity to restate the question. The Premier will be answering it as he sees fit. I cannot put words in the Premier's mouth. I ask the Premier to continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Why are you not asking your federal colleagues where the \$275 promise was? That is the promise. No sign of it in the Budget papers.

Ms White - Where are you putting Tasmanians first?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You are leading with your chin once again. They were the federal budget papers forecasting increases in electricity prices. The papers also point out that

Commonwealth and state government actions to accelerate the uptake of renewables and modernise the grid are expected to put downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices over time. This is exactly what we are doing with Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation, and our legislated 200 per cent renewable energy target.

The Australian Energy Market Operator has confirmed affordable, reliable and clean energy will be unlocked by Marinus Link. The Australian Energy Market Operator's 2022 integrated system plan confirms that Marinus Link is an urgently needed and critical energy project that will deliver \$4.5 billion in net benefits to the nation, positioning Tasmania as a truly clean, smart and innovative state.

For Tasmanian families, Marinus Link will support lower wholesale energy prices in Tasmania through its two-way flow of energy, helping to keep energy bills down for Tasmanian families and businesses. It will also mean increased energy security. I understand and appreciate the cost-of-living pressure that energy prices put on Tasmanians and Tasmanian families. We will always be very diligent in ensuring that we support Tasmanians through those price shocks, as we have demonstrated with our bill-buster payment, announced this year. We have consistently demonstrated our willingness to support Tasmanians with cost-of-living measures, including energy prices. We have responded with a further bill-buster payment and other supports such as our expanded \$50 million energy saver loan.

It remains our commitment to monitor the situation and provide further assistance if needed. We will always walk alongside Tasmanians in supporting them when it comes to their concerns around increased energy prices and the impact that that has on household budgets. We have demonstrated we will always walk alongside Tasmanians and support them with cost-of-living pressures -

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind up please, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - as has been demonstrated over the past few months.

Federal Budget - Outcomes for Tasmania

Mrs ALEXANDER question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.24 a.m.]

Yesterday afternoon we heard about the federal Budget. Although we may not have had the opportunity to delve into it too much, can you update the House on the Australian Government's 2022 Budget and what it means for Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mrs Alexander for her question. I am pleased to see the federal Labor Government Budget last night delivering on commitments made to Tasmanians about infrastructure: roads, bridges, irrigation and supporting our Marinus aspirations. We are seeing consistency in the Budget papers.

I am bitterly disappointed not to see the \$275 much promised by the Albanese Government during their election campaign. I am fired up about that because they made that

promise many times. They said not only would that be \$275, but that would be every year for householders. The Budget is entirely silent on that matter.

Ms White - Do you support Marinus? Do you not get Marinus?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I support the Marinus Link. It is a great project for Tasmania. It drought-proofs our state and puts downward pressure on energy prices. Just as well, when the federal Labor Treasurer is now telling us that power prices need to go up more than 50 per cent. That sounds a lot like the state Labor government I remember when I was sitting in opposition. It was not 50 per cent; it was 65 per cent. Up those prices went.

It took a Liberal government to show care about what householders in our state, major industrials in our state, and small businesses have to experience as we put downward pressure on those prices. I am proud of the effort that our Government has undertaken. We will continue to do more, particularly through Marinus Link as one of the most exciting generation changes to the energy assets in this state.

Ms White - Then you should not say what you are saying because you sound like a fool. You do not understand energy policy at all.

Mr FERGUSON - Where is the energy from the Opposition on dealing with the real pressures that Tasmanians are feeling and will continue to feel? Where are they? Why have they lost their voice?

Ms White - Why are not you paying public sector workers?

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Leader of the Opposition, order.

Mr FERGUSON - Every single person in Australia who went to the polls in the May election went to those polls believing that there will be power price relief from the Albanese Government but they have not delivered on that.

We will expect to see a far better outcome in next year's federal budget where they do deliver. They ought to do at least as much as we have done for people on low and fixed incomes who have been doing it tough and needed our support. We were there for them. We will never walk away from our ability, limited as it is, to support people who need the extra support.

We have backed our construction sector in Tasmania. While most of the election commitments to Tasmania were cut and pasted from the then federal Liberal government, I am pleased to see delivery on important assets, including improvements to the Bass Highway, the East Tamar Highway, and the West Tamar Highway. The Great Eastern Drive, one of the most spectacular drives in this country, is scheduled for \$100 million uplift. There is \$100 million for tranche 3 of the Pipeline to Prosperity projects. I am sure Ms Palmer was delighted to see this reflected in the Budget, honouring what was promised as well by the Liberal government.

I am thrilled for Nyrstar. I am a big believer in the cell plant upgrade. That is a \$400 million project. Our Government seeded that result by putting forward \$20 million first which led to the extra \$50 million from the feds, Liberal and Labor. That is a \$400 million

project that will lock in prosperity for Tasmania as one of the four crucial major industries for our state and locking in employment for Tasmanians.

I have been around the state as minister and acting Premier when the Premier was overseas, supporting our community doing it tough through record rainfall, catchments that were flooded, assets that were damaged, and communities that were cut off. My colleagues and I saw the resilience of the Tasmanian people working through those challenging times. I am glad that the federal government supports us through the state and federal disaster recovery payments that have been made available. That is something we should celebrate: governments working together to support vulnerable people at a time of immense uncertainty.

I want to briefly address the GST. That is Tasmanians' money and it always was. The GST is John Howard's formula and it is a result of our strong economic plan in Tasmania. Our plan to grow the economy has been opposed by those members opposite. The Nick and Dougie show. They have opposed our plan at every turn, particularly when it was difficult.

Our plan has grown our economy. Our plan has seen our population grow. Finally, the ABS has caught up and recognised our population growth. I heard, from the Opposition this morning in its first three questions, 'Spend the money'. Three times. That is not how you account for the Budget. GST payments are notoriously volatile, but I am pleased to see Tasmania get the GST forecast that we deserve.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind-up please, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - Our kids have worked for that money. Our families have worked for that money. We intend to strengthen the Budget with greater support for public services. I intend as well to work with my colleagues to ensure that we support Tasmanians who need our continued support, and importantly - and this perhaps explains why Dr Broad has not had a question yet - I intend to help pay down some debt because we incurred \$1.5 billion through COVID-19.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order.

Mr FERGUSON - Our kids deserve that recognition and that is what this Liberal Government will do.

The LGBTQI+ Community and Conversion Practices

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.30 a.m.]

I understand that you personally have been a great advocate for the LGBTQI+ community and, in particular, have been supportive of a ban on harmful conversion practices. Indeed, you made public commitments to introduce a bill into this House to that effect. The LGBTQI+ community was under the impression that this would be tabled and brought in before Christmas. I now understand that this bill is yet to even be drafted. They are worried that the successful anti-transgender motion at this year's Liberal Party State Conference, as well as a sponsoring of a petition by one of your Government members - which also does not support a

ban - means you may have gone cold on the bill, or cannot get the support from your Cabinet colleagues.

Can you confirm that your Government is 100 per cent committed to protecting the LGBTIQ+ community by banning conversion practices? If so, can you please outline your expectations about when the community will see this important bill tabled and dealt with?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Our Government has had a very proud record of supporting the LGBTIQ+ communities. We have engaged with many discussions with representatives of Equality Tasmania and the LGBTIQ+ communities, the Minister for Education and Minister for Health, and we have a whole-of-government framework as well. I welcome the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute's report on sexual orientation and gender identity conversion practices. It is concerning to hear of any practices of this nature in the community. Naturally, our Government takes these concerns very seriously.

I have considered the report. I have personally met with people who have been subjected to conversion practices in the past and acknowledging the harm and the distress that this has caused. As I have said many times, we want Tasmania to be a place where everyone feels, and is, supported, included and valued to be the best that they can possibly be.

I am aware that other jurisdictions have introduced various laws in relation to this matter. Our Government has sought advice from our relevant agencies, as we do with all complex law reform proposals and recommendations. The departments of Health and Justice are undertaking further policy analysis and stakeholder engagement to properly evaluate the Law Reform Institute's recommendations and provide further advice to government.

I can assure you that our Government is committed to making decisions on the basis of expert advice and best practice as well, Ms Johnston, and the priority focus is on the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians. I have made it be known to representatives who are advocating for a change that the legislation is likely to be next year. I have been very open and upfront with our need to consult in that and on the many other areas of focus that our Government is currently involved with.

I anticipate that community consultation on draft legislative amendments will commence in 2023. I encourage everyone to participate in the consultation process when it is under way. We are committed as a government to making decisions on the basis of expert advice with a priority focus of ensuring the wellbeing of all Tasmanians.

Of course, I have made commitments personally prior to the last election. My personal views are well known with respect to these matters. I have made commitments as well during the Budget Estimates process. I can assure you and all people in the LGBTIQ+ community that the legislation will be available and tabled in this parliament. It will be next year. I have made that clear to the representatives with whom I have spoken regarding that time frame. I understand that the expectation was perhaps this year but I want to ensure that we get this right for all Tasmanians, particularly with a focus on people's wellbeing and the importance of living and being within a state where people do feel supported, valued, and included.

Energy Infrastructure Investment - Primary Production

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms PALMER

[10.35 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Liberal Government's investment in major energy infrastructure will benefit our primary producers and contribute to efforts to prevent the harmful effects of climate change that are already impacting our agricultural sector, including recent extreme weather events and floods?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. As the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I am one of the strongest advocates for our farming sector and our primary producers and processors. I have met with producers across dairy, seeds, fruit and vegetables, livestock, wine, hemp, honey and poppies, as well as our various seafood industries. I am proud of this Government's record in supporting each of these sectors, ensuring their sustainable growth. This Government recognises the vital role of major investment in future infrastructure, including in our renewable energy sector. Projects such as Marinus Link and the Northwest Transmission developments are a once-in-a-century upgrade to the electricity transmission network. These projects are needed to support Tasmania's renewable energy target to double its clean energy production by 2040 and become a world-leading renewable energy provider. The infrastructure will help to ensure an affordable energy future for our state, put downward pressure on power prices and unlock significant economic benefits that will support the rapid decarbonisation of Australia's energy system in response to the impacts of climate change.

Tasmania is set to play a key role in the national transition to renewables, contributing to efforts to prevent the harmful effects of climate change that are already impacting our agricultural sector through fire, floods and extreme weather events.

Marinus Link and the Northwest Transmission development will create 1400 direct and indirect jobs at peak construction in Tasmania and drive \$1.4 billion in economy activity in the state. While our farmers and primary producers are supportive of increased renewable energy capacity, I am also aware of some issues that have been raised around these projects.

As Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I am ensuring that the views of farmers are being heard; that their issues are being considered, and that landowners are being treated fairly through this process. I visited a farm in the direct path of the proposed transmission lines, and I have seen how farmers have been impacted by infrastructure developments in the past. I have also been engaging in discussions with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association.

It has been greatly appreciated to have time with TasNetworks representatives, hearing from its CEO about the design for these projects and discussing the issues farmers have raised with me. I am advised that TasNetworks is working with individual landowners to mitigate impacts and where any impacts are unable to be mitigated, landowners will be fairly compensated. Compensation frameworks need to be fair, equitable and contemporary. We

have seen this week that New South Wales has announced a new compensation framework and annualised compensation payments to landowners. We are reviewing this with interest.

In the past 10 days particularly, we have been standing alongside our producers as they begin the long road to recovery from flood events in the north and north-west. Last week, the Premier and I met farming families across the region who opened their gates to us and were generous not only with their time but so honest about what they face now. From losing paddocks of top soil and crops to needing new fences, pumps, pump sheds and dumping milk, the economic cost, but also the emotional toll of these weather events, will be felt for years to come.

It is important that our farmers know they do not stand alone at this time. We stand with them. We have worked with the federal government to ensure assistance is available and have announced that grants of up to \$25 000 will be available from mid this week to support Tasmanian small businesses and primary producers impacted by the flooding with clean-up and restoration activities.

The financial assistance is being jointly funded by the Australian and Tasmanian governments under the disaster recovery funding arrangements. This is just another way that this Government is supporting the important work of our primary producers and agricultural sector and helping to ensure sustainable future growth.

Social Housing Properties - Maintenance

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr BARNETT

[10.41 a.m.]

We know for a fact that many social housing properties owned by the state Government do not meet the minimum rental property standards. I have seen firsthand examples of chronic mould caused by leaking gutters, cooktops that do not work, broken windows and much more. Despite repeated requests for maintenance services from tenants, these repairs can take years to be fixed, if they are fixed at all. The impact on people's lives is profound. Social housing tenants deserve nothing less than a home that is safe and dry, with essential repairs and maintenance carried out in a timely fashion, but sadly, this is not always what they get.

You and your Government have an obligation to ensure social housing properties are maintained to a minimum standard. What do you say to social housing tenants living in properties that do not meet the minimum rental standards and will you take personal responsibility for ensuring these issues are fixed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question on what is a very important matter. As a Liberal government our priority is to support vulnerable Tasmanians in need and ensure they have a roof over their heads. Our objective is to improve housing opportunities and we have a very big and ambitious plan that colleagues know is a \$1.5 billion commitment to deliver 10 000 new homes between now and 2032. We have \$538 million committed in the

Budget over the forward Estimates and \$204 million this year alone. We have very ambitious plans.

In addition to that I indicate that investing in maintenance is also very important to provide safe and secure housing. That is why I appreciate the question from the member about the need to meet community standards and the needs of our tenants. When we came to government in 2014 we inherited \$90 million in maintenance backlog from the former Labor-Greens government. In fact, during Labor's time in government it peaked at a \$110 million of backlog for maintenance costs to support our housing tenants in Tasmania. In the 2021-22 Budget we committed \$28.5 million into the provision of maintenance services for the Director of Housing properties and \$18.6 million of this figure has been budgeted for planned programs.

Ms O'Connor - This is not new money or an increase.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - The Leader of the Greens should be very interested in this because the \$6 million I am referring to is specifically for energy efficiency initiatives, so there is a lot to do.

In terms of our commitment as a government, emergency and urgent repairs are carried out in line with the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants and to protect them. Currently, general maintenance services are being provided statewide through a head contractor model and this will continue through to 30 June next year.

In conclusion, it is a priority for our Government and it is important. We support vulnerable Tasmanians. I am not sure that there has been a government in history that has done more in this space with such an ambitious plan.

Ms O'Connor - You are the Government that created the housing crisis.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - It is lamentable that those on the other side would oppose our ambitious plan for Tasmania and oppose the Homes Tasmania legislation. They have a record of opposing and criticising. It is relentless and the public are getting sick of it. We want to do more to support Tasmanians in need, vulnerable Tasmanians, with more houses sooner and to maintain those homes, and I ask the Opposition to reconsider their position.

Power Bills

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.50 a.m.]

Labor has been saying for a long time that Tasmanians should be paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power. We also know that Tasmanian families, businesses, and major industrials cannot possibly cope with a 75 per cent increase in power prices. Such an increase will smash household budgets at a time when everything is getting more expensive and will put the viability of major employers at risk. Given power prices are now forecast to go up by

nearly 75 per cent in less than two years because of your broken promise that has left us exposed to the chaos in the National Electricity Market, will you finally reverse your opposition to Labor's plan to cap power prices?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question, which of course demonstrates once again the economic vandalism the Labor Party would wreak on Tasmania with their short-term political hits with absolutely no thought as to the consequences of the budget.

Tasmanian electricity prices for regulated customers are set by the Tasmanian independent regulator. This ensures that customers on regulated standing offer contracts are paying a price that reflects the efficient costs of supplying electricity. For the three years from 2017-18 through to 2019-20 the Government took action to mitigate the impact on Tasmanian consumers of energy price volatility in the NEM and we fulfilled our commitment to Tasmanian people. In fact, average wholesale energy prices over those three years was \$83.67 and the price determined by the independent regulator this year is \$81.82.

The member clearly forgets the last time that his government was in power we saw price increases of some 65 per cent, which hit hard. Not only did they send 10 000 people to the dole queues and forced them onto the dole on fixed incomes, but also power prices increased by some 65 per cent. That was a double-whammy that many thousands of Tasmanians still remember.

This Government will always work alongside Tasmanians to ensure the cost-of-living pressures are mitigated in a way that is sustainable, and our winter bill buster is an example of that, a significant commitment to the Tasmanian people and a demonstration that we will always have our ear to the ground and understand the effects of the cost of living on Tasmanians and respond accordingly, as we have done and will continue to do.

Salmon - Presence of Ethoxyquin

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

[10.49 a.m.]

The Australian today reports that animal feed additive ethoxyquin, banned in Europe because of dangers to human health and aquatic life, has been found in Tasmanian salmon at concerning levels. It reports that the European Food Safety Authority banned ethoxyquin in 2017 and reaffirmed that ban in March because the additive was 'likely to cause mutations in the genetic material of animals and humans'. Tests by Melbourne's National Measurement Institute in commercially available salmon found levels of ethoxyquin and related compounds in Tassal and Petuna Salmon. Toxicology experts have concluded those levels combined exceed even Australia's inadequate ethoxyquin maximum limit.

The federal government is responsible for failing to safely regulate this unsafe food additive, but you are responsible for protecting Tasmania's aquatic life. Tasmanians want our waterway life to be protected from mutagen-forming chemicals. The EU's food standards are

world's best practice. Will you conduct a review of ethoxyquin and related compounds in Tasmanian salmon feed and make that information publicly available?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I do not have a current briefing on the specific matter that you have raised this morning. I will seek advice from my department, the EPA and also the offices of the minister for Primary Industry and the Minister for Health as well. I believe that the matters you have raised cross over a large number of issues, both in your question and in potentially the range of different jurisdictions and responsibilities we have.

Dr Woodruff - I am framing it to you as the minister for the Environment about aquatic life. Can you do an investigation, please?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin, order.

Mr JAENSCH - I will seek further advice on the matter and confer with my colleagues. It is fair, Mr Speaker, for me to do that so I am able to provide an informed response.

Dr Woodruff - And provide it to parliament?

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The member for Franklin has the call.

Power Bills

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.52 a.m.]

Just a fortnight ago, the minister for Energy dismissed Labor's concern about rapidly rising power prices as 'baseless scare tactics'. Last week you dismissed a statement from the head of Momentum Energy - Tasmania's government-owned energy retailer - in which there was a warning that there are going to be big increases next year. You have broken your promises. You have exposed us to chaos in the massive price rises in the National Electricity Market. You have dismissed dire warnings from people who know what they are talking about, and now price rises are expected to go up by 75 per cent over two years. Given you will not cap power prices, what are you going to do to protect Tasmanian households and businesses?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. What we will be doing is keeping the federal Labor Government accountable to their commitments - \$275; that is what we will be doing. Frankly I am surprised that you are too scared to do it. What is holding you back? Have you asked them about their commitment? The reduction of \$275? That would alleviate and put downward pressure on power prices. That is what I expect of you. We will do our job -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Our connection to the National Electricity Market has delivered two years of very low prices for customers. Without that connection, Tasmanian businesses would not have had the benefit of this. We have always said that we are continuing to monitor the cost of living pressures facing Tasmanians, and we will continue to do that. I will continue to get up here and talk about that and repeat that, because it is exactly what we will do, and we have demonstrated that.

The Government's actions in 2017 were a direct response to the price shock caused by the sudden and unplanned exit of Hazelwood Power Plant. It is important to highlight that the operating environment has changed dramatically since we introduced the previous rebate scheme in 2017. The market is now far more complex, with seven energy retailers instead of two, and two new privately owned windfarms. Tasmania's retail market has since matured into a fully competitive one, and further interventions by government risk distorting market behaviour, influencing commercial decision-making, and eroding investor confidence.

We will keep the federal government accountable, unlike you, to their commitments made at the last election. We support the Marinus Link that will also put downward pressure on electricity prices. I was pleased to see your reluctant, if not muted support. I could read the media release, Mr Speaker. It came out at about 5 o'clock on Wednesday last week. It looked to be at some sort of lukewarm attempt of saying, 'Yes, we think this might be a good thing for Tasmania'.

We believe in Marinus Link, very, very strongly, not only for the energy security that it will provide Tasmanians and the \$7 billion worth of investment but also the downward pressure that will place on energy prices, which will be very positive for the Tasmanian people.

Ms White - In 10 years' time. How do you plan to pay for Marinus?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We make decisions. We do not wait and see which way the political wind is blowing, like you do every single time.

Mr Winter - All I expect of you is to keep your promises. Just keep your promises.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Can I say, to you, very clearly that we expect of you, like Tasmanians would expect of us, to keep a federal government accountable to their 2022 election promises when it comes to energy costs.

That being said, we are very pleased that we are able to work collaboratively with the Labor federal Government in partnership when it comes to Marinus Link. Downward pressure on energy prices - a \$7 billion investment which will be positive for Tasmania and provide us with energy security. On the cost-of-living measures, we have demonstrated over the last few years, including this year, that we will always be in Tasmania's corner, supporting them with cost-of-living increases, including energy prices.

Trade Mission to Singapore and Vietnam

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for TRADE, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.57 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the highlights and outcomes of the recent trade mission to Singapore and Vietnam, and why these trade missions are important for growing our already record exports?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this matter. I thank members for their interest in our exports and a very important trade mission to Singapore and Vietnam. Together, trade with Singapore and Vietnam represents an annual economic injection well above \$300 million, but there is significant opportunity to further grow these markets.

Across the five-day trade mission, meetings were held with senior governments, business, education, food, beverage, hospitality, and defence industry representatives. As a result of the mission, the participating delegates now have new sales and partnerships in their sights and, remarkably, some already have contracts.

There were over 100 meetings for the Tasmanian food and beverage delegate, and site visits to eight premium retailers. This included Singaporean grocery stores, Little Farms and Huber's Butchery, who are both now stocking Storm + India Tea, and Tasmanian Tonic Company products as a direct result of the Tasmanian stand at Food and Hotels Asia, held in Singapore in September.

With South-East Asia becoming renowned as a mecca for the world's best spirits, the mission also provided an opportunity to put our award-winning distilled whiskies, gins, and vodkas into the glasses of some of the most refined spirit appreciators, if I could put it that way. I include myself in that. They were very well received. Hartshorn Distillery has already received an order from Gourmet Grocer to supply six of their product lines.

An inbound trade mission is also already planned in February 2023 for leading whisky and spirit buyers in Singapore to come to Tasmania to get a full appreciation of our local industry.

My visit to Vietnam was the first official visit by a Tasmanian premier to engage in maritime and defence trade. I had the honour of meeting with the Vice Minister of National Defence, and senior government officials. We had a positive and welcoming meeting, which gave us the opportunity to showcase world-class Tasmanian products, and to introduce the Australian Maritime College's programs and services. I know we are all united in support of AMC.

These meetings have resulted in several Tasmanian companies signing up to attend the Vietnam International Defence 2022 exposition in December. A memorandum of understanding was also signed on the mission between the Vietnam Maritime University and the University of Tasmania to foster international cooperation in maritime education and research. Tasmania attracts about 800 international students a year from Singapore and Vietnam. We know there is significant potential for more students.

Workshops were held in Singapore and Vietnam to introduce local education agents and school counsellors to Tasmanian's international education credentials and to build long-term and important connections. There were record attendances at these workshops, which reinforced the reputation of Tasmania as an ideal location for international students.

These were just a few highlights from the mission. In coming months more contracts and deals will no doubt be realised given the genuine interest from all of those we met.

What resonated loudly when we were away was Tasmania's renewable energy credentials: not only our ability to produce and manufacture products using green energy but the opportunities for exporting green hydrogen and our renewable energy intellectual property. At a meeting with the Vice Minister for Trade in Vietnam, we spoke about our renewable energy targets, our commitment to 200 per cent by 2040 and where we are now with 100 per cent renewable energy. Their investments in offshore windfarms were extraordinary. That provides us with a huge opportunity.

I am talking about the huge opportunities presented in meetings in Singapore and Vietnam about the green economy; Vietnam particularly when it comes to offshore wind farm development. One of the businesses we were with was Lightning Protection International (LPI). It has been working in partnership in a business with Vietnam for two decades. It is extraordinary technology in Tasmania. Every wind turbine offshore will need a lightning protection aerial on top of the wind turbine. This highlights the huge opportunity for LPI, not only our ability to manufacture products using green energy, but the intellectual property as well.

Just as we export minerals, food products and watercraft, we have the ability to export green energy to generate even more wealth for our state. Trade missions are an important part of our plan to grow markets for Tasmanian producers. This latest mission has demonstrated the plan is working as we continue to take our products to the world.

Tamar Irrigation Scheme

Ms FINLAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.03 a.m.]

You have long promised farmers in the Tamar that you will start construction of the irrigation scheme by next year. Can you confirm that the proposed integration of water delivery for future hydrogen production at Bell Bay by using the Tamar irrigation scheme is holding up progress for irrigators and creating uncertainty for hydrogen proponents? Clearly, you need to be making decisions in the next few weeks if you remain committed to the time lines you have set for the Tamar irrigation scheme. Can you please outline where this decision-making process is at, and when our irrigators can expect a decision on the future of their scheme? When will farmers get an answer?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. What a fantastic example of a true partnership between the farmers, the state Government and the federal Government when it comes to investing in irrigation and water. There has been more than \$1 billion of investment

since 2010 in a bipartisan approach, irrespective of the state and federal government and the political colours of the time.

It has been a huge opportunity for Tasmania and when we see images on the mainland of droughts, we see the opportunities Tasmania has in the future as a result of the significant investment right now. I point to that collaboration in unlocking future potential in agriculture and sustainability. It is in the same basket as the Marinus Link. There are opportunities for partnerships between federal and state governments in the future.

Water and irrigation are transforming Tasmanian agriculture, creating jobs, and expanding farm production to meet the growing demand for Tasmanian premium produce, as I have demonstrated through my previous answer. Tasmania is leading the nation in delivering vital infrastructure for irrigation, with 15 of the last 19 irrigation schemes completed across the country in Tasmania. That is a tribute to state and federal governments working together, with farmers wanting skin in the game as well.

There is a current joint government commitment of \$222 million plus the investment for farmers which means that tranche 3 continues to proceed while Tasmanian Irrigation (TI) continues with the planning for other proposed schemes. The strong interest in this scheme to further deliver reliable water to the Tamar region was evidenced by over 195 irrigators issuing expressions of interest for in excess of 15 600 megalitres.

The water sales process was launched on 22 April this year for five weeks and extended by a further four weeks from 17 June to 15 July. Water sales results were a total of 5485 megalitres against a target of 14 000 megalitres. Tasmanian Irrigation is currently reviewing water sales results and the engineering options to develop a smaller scheme. Expressed interest in the scheme for 15 650 megalitres were received prior to the water sales launch. Water sales were opened over two separate dedicated periods for a total of eight weeks. Four education events and five drop-in days for irrigators were held over the preferred option public consultation and water sale period. Water sales closed with 5400 litres purchased. Scheme design is now under review to investigate options for a reduced scheme to service current demand.

TI and the state Government remain committed to positive potential of irrigation scheme development in the region and across the state. There has been no greater supporter of Tasmanian Irrigation and irrigation opportunities than this Government. We will work with a federal government of any political persuasion, as we are doing now, and working alongside the key investors - all the farmers who have skin in the game and have vision for their businesses and see opportunity. With water there is opportunity. We will always support our farmers to grow their businesses and seize those opportunities to continue growing the quality produce that we are world-renowned for.

Power Bills

Mr WINTER question MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[11.08 a.m.]

Prices went up for Tasmanians by 12 per cent this year because you broke your promise to de-link from the National Electricity Market. You still have not fully funded your winter

bill buster rebate scheme. Tasmanians still cannot access your energy loan scheme. Hydro Tasmania lost about \$100 million in the first two months of this financial year. There is no water or power for your hydrogen projects. Windfarm proponents are exasperated by your Government's development approval process. Farmers do not know what compensation they will be eligible for when transmissions lines go through their properties. There has been no update on the proposed pumped hydro proposal at Lake Cethana.

After spending the last two months of last year saying Tasmania did not need a combined cycle at the Tamar Valley power station, you are about to fire it up. Because of your broken promise, power prices are set to go up by 75 per cent over two years. After all of these failures, you cannot answer a simple question. After 100 years of investing in Hydro Tasmania, why should Tasmanians not pay Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian energy?

To the honourable member for Franklin, bring it on. Bring on a question and a debate about renewable energy. The rhetorical question to state Labor is: do you support Marinus Link?

Ms White - Are you going to deliver any improvements for Tasmanian households?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - Hello? Or will it be a referendum on that question? They are mute. They remain muted.

The track record for the state Labor and the Labor government was a 65 per cent increase. The track record of my shadow over here is one of scaremongering, fearmongering, and causing anxiety in the community, saying there will be outages, claiming that prices will go up, when you know that they are fixed through to 30 June next year. Your track record is abominable.

A couple of days ago we had CommSec saying that we have the fastest growing economy in Australia. We are proud of that.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - Number one in Australia of the mainland states and Tasmania. You do not like the truth.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - The House will come to order. I cannot hear the minister so I do not expect anybody else will to be able to either. Hansard must be having trouble picking up what has been said. Please, silence while the minister is continuing his answer.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Mr Speaker. As the Treasurer said just a few moments ago, one of the reasons Tasmania has responded so well with respect of our GST is because of the population increase. People want to come to Tasmania to live. It is a beautiful state. Guess what? State Labor said that there was a population recession. They said they were heading off to the mainland. Yes, that is right.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - Dr Broad, you are dumbing down on it. He is saying that they did leave in droves, but guess what? It is not me. It is the ABS saying the population is 570 000 now.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the House will come to order.

Mr BARNETT - We are on track under our population policy. You have the state Labor, and even today, Dr Broad, saying that they were leaving in droves. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

What is our record on electricity prices since we came to office? Since 2014, because -

Mr Winter - Up, up, up.

Mr BARNETT - Okay, let us take that interjection Mr Speaker. With respect to residential prices, the nominal increase was 5.8 per cent. It has gone down in real terms: 15 per cent since 2014.

What about business? They have gone down 5.8 per cent in nominal terms since 2014. That is a record: a 25 per cent decrease in real terms, since 2014.

This is the track record of our government. Your track record was a 65 per cent increase.

Housing Supply - Update

Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr BARNETT

[11.13 a.m.]

Can you update the House on work under way to increase the housing supply for Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is a big and ambitious plan that is all part of our objectives to ensure that every Tasmanian has safe and secure housing; that they have a roof over their heads. That is our ambition, that is our plan and we are backing it in. It is in the Budget: \$538 million over the forward Estimates, \$204 million this year. Backing it in with the biggest investment in housing in history. We are backing it in because we are supporting vulnerable Tasmanians. We want to do more. We need to do more. Notwithstanding the opposition from state Labor to our plans to do that. It is so disappointing. I say, come on board, please reconsider.

In terms of updating the House, there is so much that we have done: the Launceston Women's Shelter, the Devonport Men's Shelter, Burnie and Launceston Youth foyers, Burnie

Youth Shelter, Rokeby's Men Shelter, the new Bethlehem House and the new Richmond Fellowship.

There are a lot of initiatives under way. We are go, go, go in getting things done. Works have already started, and we are almost 1200 new social housing dwellings, which, once complete, will be home for Tasmanian families.

Increasing land availability, and unlocking more land for residential development across Tasmania is key to increasing housing supply, including at Huntingfield, which will deliver 470 lots. The projects take time. We have gone through various stages. The tenders for the first stage for civil works for the subdivision at Huntingfield will be advertised this Saturday. The tender is for stage 1A, 31 lots of land.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - Development approval was granted. Road access designs have been completed and approved for works. They are ready to commence: the kick-off to the first works at Huntingfield site, which have been subject to extensive public consultation, rezoning through parliament and development approval through the Kingborough Council.

I note Mr Winter actively opposed our housing supply order. As mayor of Kingborough Council, he briefed the Legislative Council against this plan to open up more property for residential development, even land that was identified as residential by his own council. Does he want social and affordable housing in the Kingborough municipality? I do not know. That is for the member.

This Saturday, there will be 24 new independent units on tender for Bellet Place at Chigwell, providing much-needed accommodation for people requiring mental health support. We are spending \$1.5 million on Neighbourhood Houses in Bridgewater, Clarendon Vale, Risdon Vale, and West Moonah. There is so much that I could share with the members.

At lunch time today, I will be opening a private investment. The private sector is getting involved in Kingborough, at the King's Court development in Kingston, later today. Congratulations, well done. This is part of our Greater Hobart plan. Our Government is working with the four Greater Hobart councils to make a difference in this space, to build more houses sooner. We are getting on with the job. I will be there with the Kingborough mayor, Paula Wriedt, to announce that development today.

We are building more houses faster. We have a big agenda. We are getting on with the job.

Time expired.

PETITIONS

Birrilee Road - Freight Curfew

Ms Butler presented a petition from approximately 85 residents of Tasmania requesting a freight curfew and reduced speed limit on Birrilee Road.

Petition received.

Declaration of Foxglove as a Weed

Dr Woodruff presented an e-petition from approximately 1782 residents of Tasmania requesting that *Digitalis purpurea*, or foxglove, be declared a weed under the Weed Management Act 1999.

Petition received.

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Windfarms - Deferral of Development

Mr Jaensch tabled the response to a petition presented by Ms Johnston on 4 May 2022:

- Petition No. 6 - See Appendix 1 on page 126.

WORKERS REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 48)

First Reading

Bill presented by Ms Archer and read the first time.

SITTING TIMES

[11. 25 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That House not stand adjourned at 6 p.m. but continue to sit after 6 p.m.

We wish to complete the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill today. If we cannot do that in a reasonable time frame I propose that at a later hour I speak to Ms O'Connor and Mr Winter with a view to sitting into an early hour this evening and potentially continue that debate into tomorrow. We would like to see the conduct of that debate and get an indication of whether the House wishes to go into Committee and then continue to judge the best sitting times to meet with the convenience of the House. I also note that minister Barnett, who is conducting that bill on behalf of the minister, will not be able to be in the House after 1 p.m. tomorrow.

I seek some understanding as we work together to look after that bill getting through and giving it full scrutiny and debate.

[11.26 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, obviously we will support the motion because it is important that we get through the business of the House. However, I will make a couple of comments on this. It was only a couple of sitting weeks ago that we watched the Government shamelessly filibuster its own bill on a Thursday afternoon. They had four or five speakers on the same bill; in Mr Ellis' case not even referring to the bill, just wasting time so they could avoid getting to further business.

Here we are this sitting week, having sat late last night - and I have to say the conduct of the debate, naturally because we are human, gets worse the later we go into the night and that was the case last night as we wrapped up -

Dr Woodruff - Speak for your own contribution, which was zero. You did not say anything.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - It got very bad, Dr Woodruff.

It would be wonderful if the Government was able to manage the business of the House in such a way that we were not in this position at this time of year where the Government's legislative agenda has been somewhat barren. The acting Leader of the House last week put out a press release that talked about the return of their legislative agenda and continuing to strengthen our economy and create jobs for Tasmanians. We have not seen a bill that does anything like that from this Government.

In fact the Government is on track for a record bad year when it comes to the number of pieces of legislation that have passed the parliament. So far this year up to the start of the sitting week on Tuesday there had been only 23 bills passed for the entire calendar year. We are here with only eight sitting days left to go. We are now being asked to sit late tonight. Of course we will support the motion because the parliament needs to get through its business but it goes to the failure of this Government to be organised when it comes to the business of the House and the chaos and dysfunction we have seen throughout the whole year.

This year we have seen a minister go, we have seen the House have to be prorogued twice, a record; in 40 years it had not needed to be prorogued twice apart from for procedural reasons.

Ms Archer - And you are being controlled by Canberra.

Mr WINTER - The interjection from the Attorney-General is interesting but not particularly relevant.

Ms White - A bit immature, really.

Ms Archer - What was that? Some spiteful comment again?

Mr SPEAKER - Order. While I have the House's attention, I need to make the point that private members' time will start at 12 o'clock. I do not want to stifle any debate but it is cutting into the time for the MPI.

Mr WINTER - The parliament prorogued twice this year. We have had a premier go. We have seen three ministers. We have seen a third of their House caucus go since the election. We are being asked to facilitate a catch-up session tonight, and I assume over the next two parliamentary sitting weeks, because the Government does not have its act together. All we are asking for is the Government to get its act together.

Ms White - There are still some very big bills expected.

Mr WINTER - Exactly right, Leader of the Opposition. We are still expecting a number of bills. Today the Premier appears to have backtracked on his LGBTQI+ legalisation that would have supported those people, presumably because they are running out of time.

It is not good enough. We expect the Government to be better organised than they have been. The chaos and dysfunction of the Liberal Party should not be impacting the parliament or the Tasmanian people.

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, obviously Dr Woodruff and I have no issue with sitting late. We have plenty of stamina to do our jobs, although I do feel for staff.

I note that because of this debate, the Matter of Public Importance debate will be cut short. I also note that in question time each day, there has been a tendency for ministers' answers to Dorothy Dix questions to creep out. This morning we had answers that were six and seven minutes in length. I use the term 'answers' quite loosely, because they are not. They are scripted responses to questions designed to evoke self-congratulation on the part of the minister. I simply note, Mr Speaker, that question time is now routinely ending at 11.20am, primarily because ministers waffle on endlessly. Much of it is scripted. They have been given long, scripted answers and then they are off on a tangent, self-indulging in self-congratulation.

On the question of whether we are going into Committee on the animal welfare bill, obviously, we will. The Greens have a number of amendments, because Rob strengthened the bill. We want to give members an opportunity to lay out their position on protecting the welfare of Tasmanian animals. Our amendments are designed to strengthen animal rights.

We expect to be going into Committee on that bill not long after the second reading. We are quite comfortable with sitting late tonight. I want to say sorry to the staff who work in this building who are being put into this position. Many of them do not get paid as well as we do to sit late, although I must say Government advisers do get paid more than MPs.

[11.32 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, that is a very worthy set of comments from Ms O'Connor but complete waffle from Mr Winter having a good whinge about the House. We are just doing our job. We have work to do. We do not complain about the work. The default is 6 p.m. The people opposite were terrible managers of legislation when in office. I remember it very well.

We expect there will be lots of interest in the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill 2022 from the Greens members, and other members. We are committed to that legislation and we want to make sure the House is able to give it all the scrutiny it wants to give to it, as we, as parliamentarians, manage our time as best we can.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Cost of Living

Mr SPEAKER - I note that we have lost around about eight minutes. I cannot tell members that they should speak for less than seven minutes. That is up to each member when they get to their feet.

[11.34 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: cost of living.

We have raised the cost of living this morning for obvious reasons, having seen the statistics coming out last night that inflation will be 7.75 per cent from next year. That will concern many Tasmanians. It is being led by massive increases in energy that have been caused by a decade of no energy policy from the Australian Government during the Coalition government. We had almost no new generation in the market. No new transmission. A policy vacuum that led to the demise of former prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, because he believed in climate change. The Coalition opposition in Canberra appears to be inching towards nuclear power for Australia. Meanwhile in Tasmania, we have had historic investment in renewable energy that should be leading to Tasmanians paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power.

The Treasurer's press release last night was an extraordinary piece, not in a good way. He said, 'It's welcome that the Australian Government has made good on its promised investment on \$540 million to improve road corridors'. He then complained that the fuel excise had not been cut. The exact thing that pays for his infrastructure, he wanted to be cut.

Mr Ferguson - That is incorrect. It was topped up. You do not realise that?

Mr WINTER - I do realise that, Treasurer.

On the one hand he wants the Australian Government not to generate any revenue for infrastructure, but he also wants money so he can build more things. On the one hand, he wants to build more infrastructure, but on the other hand he does not want the Australian Government to generate revenue that provides the funding for it.

The Marinus question was not referenced in his press release, but the Treasurer did mention Marinus this morning in his incredible answers to questions.

The Treasurer said last night in his press release, 'It is disappointing that the Budget doesn't go far enough in relieving the cost of living for families, with no mention of the much promised \$275 power bill relief'. I never know whether the Treasurer and others in the Government do not understand things, or they deliberately mislead the House. I will leave it to the Treasurer to explain which one it is.

The policy that the federal Labor Government proposed for power prices that he is complaining about in that press release is the same policy that is being used to fund Project Marinus. On the one hand, this Government is saying that Project Marinus is going to decrease power prices for Tasmanians, but on the other hand it is saying it is not doing enough to decrease power prices. Those two things cannot possibly both be true. Either this Government supports the policy which has funded Project Marinus and believes in lower power prices for transmission which flows through to a lower cost of living for Tasmanians, or it does not. Which one is it?

Does this Treasurer believe that Project Marinus will put downward pressure on power prices? If he does, he should say so. If he does believe that, then that is the same policy that the federal Energy minister, Chris Bowen, is proposing will bring down power prices. You have to have some consistency in your policy approach to this. You cannot on the one hand say that Project Marinus will decrease prices, but on the other hand say that the policy will not decrease prices.

When I listen to this, I wonder whether the Treasurer is onboard with Project Marinus, whether he actually believes that renewable energy is going to put downward pressure on power prices across Australia. He cannot be now disappointed that we have a federal Government that supports renewable energy and has a power policy.

He cannot on the one hand welcome Chris Bowen and the Prime Minister to Tasmania and thank them for funding Project Marinus, for pulling them out of the hole of six years of no coherent energy policy from the former Coalition government, and on the other hand stand up in parliament today and criticise the Australian Government for the same policy.

You cannot legitimately and coherently have both of those positions at the same time. This is a distraction about the cost-of-living issues. This Government went to an election saying it would delink from the National Electricity Market. Then it said it would cap power prices. It did cap power prices and effectively delinked for a short period of time. Now it says the same policy it implemented in 2018 is a bad idea. The inconsistency of your positions is astounding. It is shameless. You cannot say both that you did deliver on your policy and then say that that policy is a bad idea.

If it was a good idea to cap power prices in 2018, why can you not cap power prices now? Prices are going up by 75 per cent over two years. You think the 12 per cent this year was bad? This situation is going to get worse unless this Government goes back to its original policy to put Tasmanian power users first. That was the policy it took to the 2018 election. It promised Tasmanians that by delinking from the National Electricity Market, power prices would go down. Power prices have gone up. Since they abandoned that policy, the chaos in the national market has impacted Tasmanians.

The simple solution is to cap power prices. They refused to do it this year, and the Premier today stood up and refused to do it again next year. They should not be taking that off

the table because I think it is going to be desperately needed by Tasmanians. We are seeing inflation at 6.5 per cent in Tasmania. The federal Budget talks about inflation in fact getting even worse over the next calendar year. This is a very important issue for Tasmanian families that are struggling with the cost of living.

We need a government that is in touch, that listens to Tasmanians and fulfils its promises instead of breaking them. Instead of worrying about what promises may or not have been made by the Australian Government, why do you not worry about your own promises, the ones that you promised Tasmanians?

Time expired.

[11.41 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, we worry about what the federal Government promised, which was downward pressure on power prices to the tune of \$275. Our simple question to you, Mr Winter, is: are you advocating for them to maintain their commitment to that? I thought I would have heard that from you, given I asked you the question in question time.

Mr Winter - You know question time is actually the other way around?

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, but I am friendly. I ask you questions as well and I thought you might have responded in your MPI on cost of living around your advocacy for ensuring the federal Government remains committed to their promise at the last election in terms of energy prices and the \$275.

We know that a strong economy is the best foundation for ensuring Tasmanians have the support when and where they need it. A strong economy maintains jobs and opportunities while ensuring government is in a solid position to invest in the supports, the services and the infrastructure that Tasmanians quite rightly deserve.

Under this Government, that is exactly what we have done. To manage our way through COVID-19, we provided a nation-leading support and stimulus package and emerged with the strongest economy in the nation, backed up again by CommSec's announcement in the last seven days. That is testament to the plan we have in place and the fact that we have stuck true to our plan since coming to government. As we stare down the eye of oncoming economic headwinds, we will continue to fortify Tasmania against those pressures as best as we can. We will continue to do that, as we are today, through targeted support and maintaining strength in our economy so we emerge a state of opportunity, and continue to be so.

Of course Tasmania is not immune to the cost-of-living pressures that are being felt right across the world as a result of rising inflation. Interest rates are going up and I know this is very worrying for many, especially homeowners. We also know from household demand figures that spending on petrol, transport and groceries, which are impacted by fuel and transport costs, is one of the biggest outlays for people at the moment. That is why we were advocating for maintaining the fuel rebate. I am not sure what state Labor did in terms of advocating for maintaining that. Fuel is a big hit on the hip pocket. There are also the flow-on

effects, as I have mentioned, in food production and the transport of food to the supermarkets. It all adds up in terms of cost-of-living pressures.

As I said this morning in question time, as a government we are very mindful of the cost-of-living pressures on Tasmanians. We will always walk alongside Tasmanians and the organisations that support Tasmanians on fixed or low incomes when it comes to the effects of increased inflation and cost-of-living pressures. We have announced over \$5 million in additional support, in addition to the \$17 million in energy concessions provided through our winter bill buster payment. An estimated 94 230 Tasmanians on concession cards are already receiving the \$180 payment. As one customer told us:

I am an aged pensioner and received my electricity bill today. 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 the winter. I am very frugal with electricity usage but your bonus has alleviated a lot of stress.

I know there is considerable stress for Tasmanians, particularly those on low and fixed incomes who need that support. That is why we support the organisations that support vulnerable Tasmanians and why we are investing \$5 million. For example, each of the 35 Neighbourhood Houses will receive an additional \$50 000 because they do such a tremendous job in their local communities, supporting people in need. We recognise that \$1.75 million of investment into our Neighbourhood Houses is a very worthwhile and targeted investment.

There is also \$1 million in additional support for the family assistance program, allowing the Salvation Army, Saint Vincent de Paul, Anglicare and the Launceston and Hobart City Missions to extend more support that vulnerable Tasmanians need, doubling the current funding. There is \$1 million in additional funding to Aurora Energy for its hardship program to provide assistance for any customers experiencing financial difficulty, bringing the total amount available to \$2.7 million.

There is \$500 000 in additional funding to emergency relief providers such as Foodbank and Loaves and Fishes, organisations that I know very well, particularly Loaves and Fishes, which is based in my electorate of Braddon. We can support them to help purchase food, as well as support to help them upgrade the distribution vehicles. There is \$250 000 in additional funding to provide grants of up to \$1000 to community organisations with rising fuel costs; \$350 000 of additional funding to the successful school lunch pilot program to include a further 30 Tasmanian schools, a fantastic initiative; and \$150 000 investment into the NIL scheme to allow the organisation to provide no-interest loans to more Tasmanians.

Importantly, when it comes to supporting the organisations that support people, in Tasmania we have also increased indexation to 3 per cent for community sector organisations for the next financial year.

Time expired.

[11.48 a.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, with inflation forecast to be over 7.5 per cent, the RBA has also predicted a 20 per cent drop in housing prices across the country. Power prices have increased this year by 12 per cent and now, because of the Government refusing to honour

their own policy ideas of 2018, Tasmanian power prices will increase by up to 75 per cent over the next two years. Can you imagine the choices that our already struggling households and businesses are going to have to make? If they are struggling now with the increase of 12 per cent, what on Earth is that going to look like?

I was interested yesterday when the Treasurer picked sections of the CommSec report and was gloating about what a great position Tasmania was in. The passage the Treasurer did not mention was the one that talked about Tasmania being challenged over the next six months. Even that CommSec report stated that Tasmania will most likely not be in the position we are in now in six months' time. It stated that Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia led rankings on two indicators, while Tasmania leads on just one indicator, down four indicators in the previous survey. There really was not that much to gloat about but you turned that into something which was apparently positive for the Government. It did not adequately deal with the financial position that our state is in now. We actually have a 90-week wait on average for people seeking social housing.

There are over 4500 families waiting for social housing. We have children sleeping in cars. Just two days ago a person came into my office who is a guardian for her 11-year-old niece. This person works as a part-time cleaner, she picks up work wherever she can, and she is a really hard worker. She has been sleeping in her car with the 11-year-old niece. She makes sure that she is showered; she showers at the brother's house but their place is full of people as well. They have people sleeping on couches and they do not have enough room but they shower there. It is her job to make sure that her niece gets to school every day and she does that and she takes great pride in it.

What really upset me was, first, I knew that we would write to the minister - that is going to the minister's office today. We know that we will receive a response to that letter which will say, 'They need to expand their location search and these are some of the services which might assist'. We know that they will probably be stuck living in that car for some time. That person has been waiting on the social housing waiting list for four years. She is working as a part-time cleaner; she is doing everything she can. She is making sure that her niece gets to school on time every day and she takes great pride in that.

What really broke my heart was she was describing how she has found this really good spot to park the car in. It is protected from the weather; it is not too cold and it is quite sheltered. To her it was a positive that she had somewhere safe and out of the weather and harm's way to park her car with her 11-year-old niece in the car, of whom she is the guardian. She is a part-time cleaner. She is not scared of hard work at all.

That is the kind of real life that Tasmanians are living at the moment and you just glaze over that. You will not acknowledge that in here. All you do is talk about what a fantastic job you are doing but you are not. That is the reality. She is not a one-off. Cases like that come into our office all the time. I know Ms Haddad has cases like that all the time. I know Mr Winter has cases like that. I know Ms Finlay has cases like that. Your offices would as well. We need to stop the pretending. It is not productive and it is not helping anybody.

We know from the EMRS poll Tastalks survey that 448 Tasmanians, those with mortgages and those who are renting, are feeling financial pain. Those renting were worried about the future and we are very worried about the future. Three-quarters of mortgagees report paying more on their loan while more than a quarter of homeowners and renters are now

allocating between 30 per cent and 49 per cent of their gross income on their loan or rental payments; 80 per cent expect to spend more on food and groceries in the next three months. We know that food and beverages have increased by 8.7 per cent. Beef has increased by 9.2 per cent. Fruit and vegetables have increased by 14.1 per cent. Housing has increased by 14.3 percent; utilities by 19.2 per cent; electricity by 29.9 per cent and we know that is going to go up to 75 per cent.

Can you imagine the choices of people who already are making the choice between heating and eating? What choices are they going to make when power bills go up by 75 per cent? Why are they having to pay mainland prices for Tasmanian power? It is not fair. I cannot believe that this Government has reneged on their policy to not pay mainland prices for Tasmanian power. That was a policy you took to an election. The people trusted you with that and you reneged on it. You are responsible. We also know that one in 10 renters describe their current financial situation as bad, meaning they are unable to meet basic outgoings. The Managing Director of ERMS said, 'It is clear that disposal income in household budgets is under enormous pressure as the cost for essentials like shelter, food continues to rise'.

Medications are more expensive. People cannot afford that. Doctors' appointments are not being able to be bulk billed. Power bills again have increased dramatically.

Time expired.

[11.55 a.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Speaker, we know that cost-of-living pressures are impacting not just Tasmania but across the nation, and are increased across the globe. We know that two-and-a-half years ago when China sneezed, everybody got the flu. Since then everyone has been struggling to adjust their support for the population and ensure that the effects and the impact on the supply chain - ultimately, what is happening now with the cost of living around the world - is minimised. It is very worrying, especially as a lot of governments around the world do not understand the importance of coordination between a ratio of real wages to labour productivity. Also, they do not really highlight the importance around having people in employment and looking at how we forecast how many people we expect to have employed.

Quickly looking at the Budget, things that will have impact and were highlighted by Saul Eslake, TasCoss and Anglicare will not be quite favourable for Tasmania. One of the things that was not quite talked about is that overall unemployment was forecast to be 4.5 per cent across the nation as opposed to 3.75 per cent. This means that the federal budget is anticipating that 100 000 will be out of a job around mid-2024. That is of concern because, at the same time, we are talking about encouraging overseas skilled migration to come to Australia, and Tasmania as well, when there are already pressure points in our economy. There are contradictions. One of the key aspects moving forward is to have - as we do in Tasmania - our Tasmanian Government working in sync with the federal Labor Government. Sometimes things are not quite in sync.

My colleague, Ms Butler, talked about the cost of medication. This is disappointing because one of the biggest issues facing our health system, the Medicare bulk-billing rates and the sustainability of GPs and primary health care, was not addressed in this Budget. It is impacting Tasmanians; unfortunately it was not quite covered in this budget. It is something that we know GPs have asked for.

There are a few things that the Tasmanian Government has been implementing with a 'look forward'. We know that there is a significant stimulus being put into increasing our apprenticeships and getting people involved in the Tasmanian workforce. Unfortunately, this has not been supported for many years in the past. They need to re-engage in meaningful work to empower and make them capable of creating good futures for themselves and their families. This is where the Tasmanian Government is putting a strong focus on encouraging people to re-engage in the workforce because that is one way of stimulating productivity. Otherwise, if you have wage increases without a stimulus in productivity, we will not end up with putting pressure down on inflation. The Tasmanian Government understands this: productivity will be driven by a skilled workforce and also investing in that aspect.

There are a number of investments and spending that the state Government has done in the immediate term. Yes, we can say that this is not how it should be, but immediately there are a few things that have been done, such as expanding the no-interest loan scheme to cover rental bonds and initial rental payments.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Condition of Public Housing - Motion Negatived

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House -

(1) Notes -

(a) the findings of the latest Report on Government Services that -

(i) 20.3% of all state-managed public housing properties in Tasmania have more than two major structural issues or less than four working facilities;

(ii) 16.3% of all community housing properties in Tasmania have more than two major structural issues or less than four working facilities; and

(b) there was a 42% reduction in the number of work orders completed across all social housing properties in July 2022 compared to July 2021.

(2) Acknowledges that many social housing properties are in a general state of disrepair, with some tenants encountering issues such as mould, faulty plumbing or broken appliances;

- (3) Recognises the obligations of Housing Tasmania and Community Housing Providers to ensure all properties are adequately maintained with urgent work completed in a reasonable timeframe;
- (4) Calls on the Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing, Hon. Guy Barnett MP, to immediately update the House on what actions, if any, the Government is taking to ensure all social housing properties meet minimum living standards.
- (5) Calls on the Government to commit to publishing a social housing condition report each quarter that includes the total maintenance liability of the social housing portfolio and a detailed breakdown of all required and completed maintenance work. (25 October 2022)

It is days like this when the weather is not great off the back of a very cold winter that many people in public and social housing are subjected to some pretty ordinary and awful circumstances. As the motion indicates, there are not only issues throughout the houses but broken windows, holes in the walls, leaky roofs, floorboard issues, and much has been reported on mould issues. These are the days when these residents, who deserve a safe, warm and dry home, are being let down by their Government.

This was debated in question time this morning. I am not saying that this Government is complicit in terms of the situation of some of the houses but they are responsible. We know it is a challenge. We know there are issues. However, when you hear day after day example after example of circumstances and you visit homes, it is outrageous that people are being subjected to these conditions. Despite their pleas and our letters to ministers and housing providers, the work done to make the houses dry, safe and liveable is not occurring.

Almost every week, and sometimes it feels like it is every day, I am contacted by a social housing tenant in Franklin expressing concern about the state of the property they live in and the difficulties they face in getting maintenance performed on the ground. I regularly hear about those in the community who are living in public and community housing properties that have widespread mould issues, faulty plumbing, broken windows and myriad other structural issues, which cause major other issues. There are plenty of examples where a major structural issue is identified and maintenance people come and essentially put a Band-Aid over the symptoms of the problem but do not fix the problem. The situation gets manifestly worse.

In fact, there was one recent story that stood out to me. A single mother was living in a state-owned social housing property managed by a community housing provider. This property was overrun with mould due to both plumbing and structural issues. It took months for the mould to eventually be fixed, but in the meantime several of her children contracted croup and according to their doctor it was likely caused by the amount of mould in the property. It is heartbreaking. This family had to vacate the property for several days whilst the issue was eventually fixed but most of their belongings could not be salvaged. They were advised to destroy mattresses and clothing due to mould contamination and the associated health risks.

For a family in social housing trying to keep food on the table, getting the kids to school, having equipment for school and occasionally going out if they are lucky to have an enjoyable

outing, buying new furniture and clothing is not an option, through no fault of their own. This is one of many examples that come through my electorate office.

We know that social housing properties are not being maintained, structural issues are not being fixed, and tenants are powerless to do anything about it. As a result, people and families are suffering. There is much debate around the housing crisis. That is a very important debate but it is not just about getting into a property. The property needs to be warm, dry and secure. It needs not to be making kids sick, and these are the circumstances we are confronting today.

I know members across this Chamber regularly hear from constituents with examples of problems with their property. Unfortunately, sometimes in the media debate there are examples of wanton destruction by some people of some houses, but that is such a small percentage of the overall public and social housing stock. To dismiss it in that way is disrespectful of the 99.9 per cent of people who do the right thing, who treat their property with respect and do all they can to keep their home as warm and inviting as possible.

I have been to many homes in public housing that are suffering issues where basically it is just one corner of the house, or it is the kitchen or the bathroom. The rest of the house is completely fine but the problem is caused by that one fault. As to the structural issues we are finding, 20 per cent of all state-managed public housing properties in Tasmania have more than two major structural issues or less than four working facilities. This is from the latest RoGS data, because of the nature of the housing crisis and the frustration that some residents of public housing have with their provider, there are so many issues that are not identified or reported, because people are fearful that they might be blamed or evicted, or pressured to leave their property and they are fearful that they may not have a place to go to.

The housing crisis in and of itself is dramatic, but the psychological pressure on people who are in public housing is also strong as well. There are so many good working-class people who basically say, 'Mustn't grumble, there's a lot of people worse off than us', and I think that sometimes government relies on that attitude of people being selfless and saying, 'That window's been broken a long time, we've asked a couple of times but, hey, there are people sleeping in cars and tents, I won't complain, what's the use, we're lucky to have a home'. People should not feel lucky to just have a roof over their heads, they deserve the right to have a home free of mould, they deserve the right to have a kitchen with appliances that work, they deserve the right not to have broken windows to let the freezing cold wind in, which causes issues for their children and family members. It is a fundamental human right.

We know you cannot click your fingers and fix all the issues overnight, but the problem I have is with a massive lack of transparency, which is why this motion is here. The motion I am bringing on is very simple, because there is no transparency around social housing maintenance at the moment and although community housing providers have a contractual obligation with the state Government to expend a certain amount of money on maintenance each year and also have to report property condition information to the Department of Communities, I have sought this information on a number of occasions from the minister and the department with no success. One of my right to information requests, to seek the maintenance obligations of a community housing provider in my electorate, was rejected on the grounds that this information would, 'Expose a community housing provider to a competitive disadvantage'.

The minister criticises people who criticise Government policy around housing, criticise the establishment of the Housing Authority and accuses people of not getting on board this ambitious reform. We are against this because it is yet another opportunity for the Government and those responsible to avoid the obligations set out in the previous housing act and to be transparent about the money that is spent on property, the kind of conditions people are living in, and report to the people of Tasmania about what is Tasmania's asset.

One of my right to information requests seeking information about the maintenance obligations of public assets, obligations of a community housing provider, was rejected on the grounds that this information would 'expose a community housing provider to a competitive disadvantage'. It is as though it is a market. This is not a market. This is an obligation of government to provide a safety net for people to put a roof over their heads and keep their houses in good order. This is not about setting the community sector and not-for-profits and some for-profits against each other in some tendering process for a competitive advantage or a disadvantage. That is outrageous.

When we argued against the Homes Act, the minister said, 'I will be transparent, I will be open'. All the information. He could not previously, and now it makes it worse. He has given away the ultimate responsibility.

This is the genesis of this motion. This is not about pitting community housing providers against each other in a competitive environment. It is about social housing tenants who deserve to live in a property which is warm, dry, structurally sound and with working facilities.

There needs to be more transparency around social and affordable housing maintenance. One issue is that we do not know how bad the problem is. We have to rely on the ABS to survey tenants to work out the condition of Tasmanian Government-owned social housing properties. There is an obligation for governments to report on these matters and to report transparently. Members of parliament, seeking to represent their constituents, get fobbed off, more than fobbed off, rejected for asking for the most basic information about the maintenance obligations of community housing providers in a public housing system.

This motion is very simple. It seeks to acknowledge the clear problem that social housing tenants in Tasmania are facing. It also seeks to address the fact that there is next to no transparency regarding the maintenance of social housing properties or the obligations of Homes Tasmania and community housing providers to provide such services.

I have spoken to a number of these community housing providers. There is good intent. There is good will. There is hope that they can respond to some of the maintenance challenges in their area. However, it is not about them and their good will. It is about accountability to the people of Tasmania and transparency and openness about the data and the work that is being done.

Clause 1(a) of the motion relates to the latest 2022 RoGS data on the condition of public and community housing properties where dwelling condition is defined as the proportion of dwellings that meet agreed minimum acceptable standings. A dwelling is assessed as meeting minimum acceptable standards if it has at least four working facilities. These are facilities for washing people, for washing clothes and bedding, for storing and preparing food, and for removing sewage, and not more than two major structural problems.

According to the ABS, in Tasmania more than one in five state-managed public housing properties are not meeting that criteria. In state-owned social housing properties run by community housing providers, it is closer to one in six. This is clearly not good enough. We know people are waiting well over a year on the social housing waiting list, many of whom are couch-surfing and sleeping rough. The best the state can offer them is a property that has major issues and under the definition is not fit for living in.

Clause 1(b) shows data relating to the monthly housing dashboard. It relates to the number of work audits for both public and state-owned community housing properties. In July 2021, 2804 work orders were completed. In July of this year, just 1625 work orders were completed. This decrease in the number of work orders being completed must be of great concern to the people of Tasmania. Maintenance issues in social housing properties do not just go away. They worsen with time.

These numbers do not show the number of people living in properties with major issues, or how long those who did get maintenance work had to wait. This figure does not indicate what type of work is being completed and what work is required. I am not a tradesman, but some of the work you see being done in some of the houses does not pass muster. It is quick and dirty jobs. It is a slap-dash. Either that is a symptom of the stress those workers are under and the time frame they have, or the lack of resources, or more frighteningly it could be a lack of care and lack of empathy with those people who are in need of public housing maintenance.

Clause 2 relates to the number of requests for assistance with housing maintenance that I get in my electorate office. I know other members also receive such concerns.

Clause 3 is another statement of fact. It refers to the rights of social housing tenants and the obligations of the Government and the community housing providers under the Residential Tenancy Act. A landlord, even if that is the state Government or a community housing provider, must still ensure properties meeting basic living standards and are free from major defects. Not only are there legal obligations here but there are moral obligations.

The idea that it is acceptable to put a vulnerable family in a house that is not fit for living in, perhaps after they have waited an average time of 74 weeks to get a house in the first place, is completely unacceptable.

Clause 4 calls on the minister to outline to the parliament what he is doing to address these issues. That is consistent with the commitments that this minister has made both in this place and outside to be transparent, open and responsible to the Parliament of Tasmania as he undertakes his obligations as a minister of the Crown, the minister of the executive Government administering the Housing portfolio.

What we are asking in this motion is nothing more than following up and calling on the commitments he has made as minister to the people of Tasmania.

Clause 5 calls on the Government to commit to being honest and transparent about the maintenance of social housing properties. That should not be an onerous task. It means quarterly updates presented to the House, or being publicly circulated on whatever website you want, for data that should be accessible to the Tasmanian people. It is clearly within reach, and within the purview of the department and the new Housing authority that has been established. Regular updates provide an accountability point, show progress is being made, flags when there

are issues, or where there is slippage in obligations and responsibilities. It also gives hope to those people who are living in appalling circumstances at times who are desperately trying to make their homes safe and dry and warm that at least the parliament and those in government are watching the work that is required, listening to their needs and responding.

Tasmania is the gold standard in terms of this half-privatisation of housing. It was great to see in federal Budget last night and statements from the federal Treasurer saying housing is the responsibility of government, this is the role of government we are not going to give away, we are going to get more engaged and more involved which, sadly, is the opposite of the state Government.

By the creation of the homes authority and the pushing away of responsibility from the heart of government to a Macquarie Point-style corporation, the fast-track privatisation is devastating for a whole range of people who rely on good solid public housing and it is a dangerous move. As I have said in this House before - and I am not going to reflect on a vote of the House - hopefully a future government can unscramble that egg.

I am not criticising community housing providers because I have seen some houses that they have just taken over and the condition they are in is pretty poor. I know some of them make reference to say, 'We had no idea it was this bad, we have to take action' and then insurance companies are involved. That just feeds into cost-shifting or adding costs to a system that is already in desperate need of more investment.

I know that other members will want to speak to the motion. I have made the points. This is about transparency. The minister on his feet has said he will be transparent, he will be responsible, he will take action. All this motion does is reaffirm his commitment to this House. I was horrified. All I was asking was basic information around maintenance and what is being spent and what the obligations are. I have said it twice and I am going to say it a third time because this took me a while to fully appreciate: my right to information request about a community housing provider and the maintenance obligations was denied on the grounds that this information would 'expose a community housing provider to a competitive disadvantage'.

Ms O'Connor - What a load of bollocks!

Mr O'BYRNE - You were out of the room when I had a discussion about this. This says everything about this Government's approach to this kind of data and information. It is a fundamental human right to be provided with a roof over your head in public housing, to be safe, warm, secure and dry and not mouldy. That is a human right. I know there is a backlog, I know there is work to be done, but you do not walk away from that obligation. When a member of parliament on behalf of his constituents is seeking the most basic of information and it is denied on the basis that there is a competitive disadvantage - like public housing is a market - it is an absolute disgrace.

All this motion does is seek information that the Government has and is aware of and the people of Tasmania deserve to know. We, as a community and as a parliament, deserve to be able to see in a transparent and open way the progress the Government is making in terms of this challenge, the obligations they have to the people of Tasmania and for us to be able to hold him and any future minister accountable to the people of Tasmania. I commend the motion to the House.

[12.25 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing) - Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to respond to this motion and indicate upfront that we will not be supporting it. I will outline and respond to some of the remarks that have been shared by the member to make it clear that this Government is totally committed to improving housing outcomes for vulnerable Tasmanians and increasing the supply of housing. It is the fundamental law of supply and demand. It is clear, our budget makes it clear, and our commitment makes it clear that we have a very ambitious plan which is backed by \$1.5 billion through to 2032, building 10 000 new homes faster.

We have \$538 million in the Budget over the forward Estimates and \$204 million this year alone. That is on the public record; it is a fact. It is a demonstration of our total commitment to do better for vulnerable Tasmanians. If there is any suggestion from the other side that we are not determined to do better then I oppose and reject it. People in this place and certainly in the housing sector know of my and this Government's commitment to do better. We need to do better, there is no doubt about that.

All Tasmanians deserve a roof over their heads and safe and secure housing. The reason we introduced the largest reform in housing since 1935 with the Homes Tasmania legislation was because we said, 'What is happening is not good enough, we need to do more'. That level of commitment has been demonstrated. We have a very ambitious plan and that is why I am disappointed that the member who has just sat down - and indeed Labor and the Greens in this place - did not support the Homes Tasmania reform with our ambitious agenda.

I recognise that there are people in this place who have a genuine heart to make a difference. We are broadly supportive of the need to do better. I recognise the heartfelt response by members in this place but we have a plan and we are demonstrating that plan by passing that legislation through the parliament with majority support in the upper House. I want to thank the community housing sector and the building and construction sector more generally for their support, because without that support I do not think that legislation would have passed and our ambitious plans would not have been backed in. I am so pleased and thankful.

Last night after we sat late, around 9.30 p.m. I met with the board of one of the community housing providers, a local establishment. We talked about the importance of doing more and supporting more housing initiatives and they are very supportive of what we want to do, so please do not reflect upon this Government's commitment to do more and to do better. Yes, accountability and responsibility are important.

There was a reflection on the right to information process. Everybody knows in this place and publicly that it is an independent process. It is at arm's length from government and the minister. I draw that to the attention of the member; I know he knows that to be the case.

Mr O'Byrne - But it does not change the result.

Mr BARNETT - You know it is an independent process. The federal government last night in the Budget made reference to a housing accord which we welcome, but will it deliver more homes in Tasmania? The federal Labor government prior to the election made a commitment of \$10 billion for 30 000 more homes over five years around Australia. I have asked twice at the housing ministers' meetings how will this be done, how this will occur. To

date, no adequate response. I will be looking forward to raising that again with the federal Minister for Housing. The announcement last night was by the Treasurer; it seemed to be a decision of treasurers, not housing ministers. I draw that to the attention of this Chamber.

Back to the motion and the particular concerns that are raised. I will respond to those and note that maintenance and investing in maintenance is very important to providing safe and secure housing for all Tasmanians. It must and should meet community standards and meet the needs of tenants. When we came to government, we inherited a \$90 million maintenance backlog from the former Labor-Greens government. I recall a statement of the shadow minister at the time, Jacqui Petrusma. I pay tribute to Jacqui Petrusma for everything she has done to support vulnerable Tasmanians; she did a great job. During Labor's time in government when their maintenance liability peaked at \$110 million, Mr O'Byrne was a member of that government.

Our Budget this year, 2021-22, committed \$28.5 million into the provision of maintenance services for the Director of Housing Properties. I should note that \$18.6 million of this figure has been budgeted for planned programs and, as I said earlier today, \$6 million for energy efficiency initiatives. That is what has been allocated. I am really pleased, as Minister for Energy and Renewables, that that provision has been made and is now being expended. In Tasmania, we appreciate energy efficiency measures, whether it is a heat pump, carpet, curtains, double-glazing or whatever those initiatives are, they are of benefit. Emergency and urgent repairs are carried out in line with the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, and that is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants and also to protect them. We want to ensure they are protected.

Of course, maintenance is required, on an ongoing basis. Currently, the general maintenance services are being provided state-wide through a head contractor model by RCT Facilities Maintenance Proprietary Limited, and this will continue to 30 June next year.

Ms Haddad - I just wondered - by interjection - if that contractor is just for government-managed properties, or is it for community-managed properties as well?

Mr BARNETT - My understanding is that it is for Director of Housing Properties, but we can clarify that. Under the previous Labor-Greens government, maintenance was outsourced to interstate companies - that is my advice - not supporting our local industry or local economy and racking up millions in overdue liabilities. We allocated \$12 million to deliver proactive upgrades as part of the COVID-19 Stimulus Package, and a great credit to Peter Gutwein, Premier and Treasurer at the time, what a great job. The state budget included in 2021 a further \$15 million stimulus package funding allocated for energy efficiency programs. There was a lot of further investment during that time to support the economy, support jobs, to support our tenants, to support vulnerable Tasmanians, and that was over and above.

Mr O'Byrne - You cannot blame the previous Labor government for outsourcing when your current contractor is from New South Wales.

Mr BARNETT - I am just making the point, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is over and above the work being done every day. That is how much that investment was. It was in addition to the existing maintenance program, over and above, those every day efforts to deliver improvements and to resolve maintenance issues in the homes that we manage.

Between one tenant leaving and another tenant being offered a home, every house is subject to checks and maintenance if needed. That is the advice I have, and I expect they would comply with that. A quality assurance team undertakes audits on every single public housing property to ensure that properties are in appropriate shape before they are offered to a prospective tenant.

In terms of the data referred to in point (1) of the member's motion and the RoGS survey, let us discuss the survey where this information has come from, because I think this needs a response. I bring to members' attention the fact that the data Mr O'Byrne refers to is not actually RoGS data. It is a survey of social housing tenants and their views. It is not, in fact, data. Let me explain further.

Mr O'Byrne - That is not true.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Deputy Speaker, the findings from the survey -

Mr O'Byrne - That is point (b). You are confusing the data points.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr O'Byrne - The RoGS data is (1) and (2). You are referring to point (b). You are misleading the House.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr O'Byrne - He is misleading the house. He is confusing the motions.

Mr BARNETT - The findings from the surveys reported in the Report of Government Services 2022. However, this is self-reported information from a sample of tenants participating in the National Social Housing Survey in 2021. As the views of tenants, this information does not represent qualified assessments of issues in social housing. That is the advice I have received, and I am sharing it with the members in this Chamber.

Further advice is that in Tasmania the survey was completed by: 517 in social housing; 342 in community housing; for a total of 859 people across the state. Given we have almost 14 000 social housing properties across Tasmania, this survey represents the views of 6 per cent of our social houses and tenants. Of this 6 per cent of people living in social housing who have completed the survey, 20.3 per cent have self-determined that they believe there is a structural issue with their home. Again, this information is not based on property condition assessments but individual views. That is the advice I have received from the department.

As a responsible government, we assess reported concerns with qualified professionals, such as engineers who determine the cause of the issue and the appropriate remedy. As part of the same RoGS survey on something that is capable of being measured by individual views, 95.2 per cent of surveyed tenants reported feeling more settled as one of the main benefits of living in social housing. That is a very high percentage.

The Government remains committed to its obligations to meet the conditions of the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, which has responsibilities for both landlords and tenants. The fall in work orders in July 2022 compared to July 2021 completed is partly the result of some

data being excluded from one yearly figure to the next. That was footnoted in the Housing dashboard.

I am drawing this to the member's questions and to those who are reading the *Hansard*. Therefore, as I have shared before in this place, the RoGS data does not provide a totally accurate picture of the issue, and must be read in connection with the other information such as the Housing dashboard, which we transparently report on each month. Each month, that dashboard is released and made available.

During the past 12 months, the construction sector has been delivering at or near record levels of work which has restricted the trades available for maintenance activities. This is a well-known fact to anyone who has recently required maintenance on their property. To illustrate this, according to the ABS Building Activities Series released last week, the number of dwellings completed in Tasmania during the 2021 financial year was 3586 new homes. This was 16.9 per cent higher than the previous year. Very significant increase. It shows the pressure on the trades and the tradies.

The fall in work order data was also understood to have been impacted by the transfer of 2000 public housing dwellings to be managed by the community housing sector over this period. Management of the 2000 properties successfully transferred in 2021 under the Community Housing Growth Program will bring benefits to both tenants and housing providers by way of increased access to funds for maintenance, tenancy support and new supply. Despite these challenges, we completed over 25 000 work orders in the 12 months to July 2022.

There is a key summary. As a government, we are very keen to increase supply. We have been backing the First Home-Owners Grant in. Just in the 2021-22 financial year, I am advised that some 740 have been paid. This is an incentive to get more homes out of the ground. That is what I will be doing at lunchtime at Kingborough, to support the private sector to get more homes built sooner. I congratulate all those involved in the private sector to do that, because it is about the law of supply and demand.

That is what we want to do. That is our objective. I believe we have a very good chance to deliver on that objective, if we get support in this place and elsewhere.

The director of Housing owns approximately 12 487 properties as of 31 March this year, of which Property Maintenance maintains approximately 6407. This includes approximately 400 unit complexes. Approximately 444 parcels of land are also maintained by Property Maintenance. The average age of dwelling in the director-owned property portfolio is 37.7 years. Between 1 July 2014 and 31 March 2022 Communities Tasmania and the department has spent a total of \$174.8 million on maintenance.

These facts will allow those listening and interested in this topic to better assess the motion that is before us and show why we do not support the motion. We are very committed to the maintenance of our director of Housing homes, and to ensure that people have safe and secure housing in Tasmania. It is a priority.

Deferred maintenance liability has been raised in the debate in this Chamber. Changes in the property portfolio, including the ageing of the property portfolio over the past 12 months and the recent transfer of new properties from Health to director of Housing, has had a negative impact on the deferred maintenance liability. Planned maintenance works carried out over the

past 12 months both under the normal planned maintenance programs and the stimulus funding programs have, in turn, had a positive impact on the deferred maintenance liability. That extra effort during COVID-19 and as a result of those initiatives under the former premier and treasurer, Peter Gutwein, should be acknowledged. I do not think that has been mentioned so far.

The current overall deferred maintenance liability for the public housing portfolio is estimated at approximately \$11.91 million using the automated deferred maintenance tool for properties. Of this amount, approximately \$4.44 million has been identified as short-term deferred maintenance liability. The current deferred maintenance liability for the social housing portfolio managed through the community housing growth program has been estimated \$38.36 million using the automated deferred maintenance tool based on condition rating data provided by community housing providers. Of this amount, approximately \$9.66 million has been identified as short-term maintenance liability. The combined overall deferred maintenance liability is currently estimated at approximately \$50.27 million, a significant reduction of the record under the Labor-Green government of \$110 million.

Ms O'Connor - We actually got it right down.

Mr BARNETT - It is inappropriate to compare this year's deferred maintenance liability against those of previous years, given the changes to the methodology in calculating the deferred maintenance liability, significant changes in the portfolio, the transfer of properties through community housing providers, and market forces that have contributed to the unprecedented maintenance price increases over the past 18 months.

I want to leave enough time for other members to make a contribution, but I have comprehensively responded to the remarks of the member for Franklin. I hope the facts will assist members to understand the importance the Government puts on maintenance and caring for vulnerable Tasmanians to ensure they have a roof over their heads.

I thank the community housing providers, the housing sector, the reference group that I have, the feedback we get with their support for the Homes Tasmania reforms, notwithstanding the opposition from those in this Chamber. Working together, we can get the job done faster and deliver more safe and affordable homes for Tasmanians. That is our objective. We want to do more, we want to do it better, and we have a plan to do that.

[12.45 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will focus on the substantive part of this motion. We heard a lot from the minister about the commitments the Government has made about delivering supply and so on. I welcome the Government's promises and hope dearly they can deliver on those promises. The Government has been big on announcements but low on delivery.

That is not what the substance of this motion goes to. The substantive part of this motion is clause (5), which is calling on the Government to commit to publishing a social housing condition report each quarter that includes the total maintenance liability of the social housing portfolio, with a detailed break down of all required and completed maintenance works.

We heard the mover, the member for Franklin, say that he had an RTI request denied when he tried to seek information about that from social housing-managed properties. That surprises me because that information is available to the Government through its contracting.

The community sector provides an important service in managing properties on behalf of the Government. It is still a moral and fundamental responsibility of the Government to provide that housing. It partners with the community services sector, as did we in government. There is no argument with that. They are providing a service on behalf of the Government, therefore the responsibility for the maintenance of those properties fundamentally still sits with the Government although the management of those properties has been outsourced.

We have all seen examples of properties that are simply not up to scratch. They do not meet the basic living standards under the Residential Tenancy Act. In particular, that is the case for government-managed properties rather than community sector properties. However, there are problems across the board.

This motion is reasonable. I am happy to support it because it is simply asking for information to be released, which this Government prides itself on.

We hear regularly from this Housing minister and those who came before him of the changes they made to the dashboard reporting, making it monthly reporting. We all rely on those figures coming out every month to tell us about the housing wait list, the housing wait time and other information about the housing sector.

This could simply be added to that dashboard reporting each month. This information, for government-managed properties is available to the Government. The information on social provider-managed properties is also available to the Government. If it is not then it should be available through their contracting of services.

The Government funds those organisations. There is a contract of funding. I know because I worked in the department that managed those contracts before I came to do this job. There are funding agreements with reporting requirements. If they are not reporting on their maintenance liability, they should be. That information either should be or is available to the Government, available to be released in the public domain as this motion calls for.

The information about maintenance backlogs for government-managed properties is available. We routinely ask for it in Budget Estimates. I asked Mr Ferguson for that information when I had just come to the portfolio in 2021 Estimates. He took the question on notice and then provided it back to the committee in very clear terms. I asked how many active work orders there were statewide and by which classification: emergency, urgent, semi-urgent, priority and general. The minister came back with answers that there were 463 statewide, zero in the emergency category, 29 urgent, 135 semi-urgent, 90 general, 847 general repairs and 107 non-standard work orders.

Of those work orders, I asked how many were overdue and by which category. Again, the minister provided that information to the committee. He said that 18 urgent ones were overdue and 74 semi-urgent ones were overdue. He also reported back to the committee the anticipated cost of the active work orders was about \$2 million. We heard the minister say that this Government claims to have reduced the cost of that deferred maintenance backlog. It is now sitting around \$2 million for government-managed properties. My question to the minister

is how much of that has been reduced simply by transferring management of properties through Better Housing Futures to the community sector?

When properties are transferred to the community sector - and as I said, there is no argument with that; many community sector providers are doing an amazing job supporting Tasmanians in social housing - that maintenance liability moves with that property off to the community sector. I have spoken to sector providers who explain very clearly the challenge that that brings. It is an expensive and difficult challenge for them. They know they are taking on not only the opportunity to manage those properties, but the liability as well that comes with managing those properties, including the deferred maintenance backlog. They have told me stories of having to draw on their insurance policies and borrow funds to fix properties that had previously been managed by the government. That maintenance liability figure has reduced over the time that the current Government has been in power, but I would hazard a guess that a lot of the reduction in that figure has been through transfer of properties rather than through improvement to properties.

I know others will want to speak on this motion so I will not go through everything I was going to share today, but I want to highlight - because it does hit home the necessity of this information being in the public domain - a few individual stories that have been reported in the media around constituents I have advocated on behalf of.

The first one is Matthew Rook. I met Matthew in 2017 when I was still a candidate; I had not been elected yet. I was holding a street stall and he came and spoke to me and asked who I was, what this was all about and whether I could help with a housing issue. I said I would do my best. He explained to me that he had been on the social housing waitlist and was living in his car outside his Dad's house as his primary carer. There were personal reasons why it was not appropriate for him to live in his Dad's flat, but he was his primary carer and it was a challenging role. He was incorrectly removed from the social housing waitlist because they considered him housed, which he was not.

I was quite pleased because we wrote to the minister and he was very quickly housed, but in a property plagued with black mould and his physical health deteriorated to the point where he needed to go to a doctor. The doctor confirmed that he was suffering significant physical health ailments, including nosebleeds, ear aches and chest pains that were all linked to the black mould in the property. Ironically, even though he had been housed, which was a good thing, he was back living in his car.

I am not going to go through the other stories because I know others will want to speak, but there are at least three or four other people who I have written to the minister about specifically around maintenance of properties that are plagued with black mould. Children are being hospitalised and/or are going through significant respiratory issues and the best the Government can do is write to them and tell them about how to clean with inexpensive cleaning products such as vinegar and baking soda, which is really quite hurtful and patronising, because these people are cleaning the properties as best they can but they are properties that have been left to suffer in disrepair for years and years.

There are things like a totally internal bathroom with no exhaust fan and no window which has had decades of water building up in the walls and ceilings, which are having exhaust fans retrofitted into those bathrooms. That is not going to fix the problem when there are

structural issues, but the tenants are being blamed for those structural issues, which is completely unfair.

We are happy to support the motion. I am genuinely surprised that the Government is not supporting the motion, because they tell us a lot about the pride they take in releasing public information, or so we are told. I am disappointed and surprised when this information is available to government that they will not simply commit to releasing it regularly into the public domain.

[12.54 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens support this motion and we believe it is written in such a way that is fact-rich and unarguable in its intent. Like Ms Haddad, I am a bit surprised that the minister has seen fit not to support it, or at least to amend it.

The fact is that whether it is Homes Tasmania or the state Government, ultimately, or a community housing provider, as landlords they have the same responsibilities as any other landlord. If a tenant in the private rental market has an issue with their hot water system, for example, they are entitled under the Residential Tenancy Act to contact their landlord and have their hot water system fixed, and the same goes for any other number of maintenance issues in the private rental market. There is no reason at all that Homes Tasmania or our community housing providers should feel that their obligations as landlords are any different from any other landlord in Tasmania.

I want to take issue with something the minister said about the COVID-19 arrangements that came in by legislation during the early days of the pandemic, and remind him that the COVID-19 measure that put a freeze on rent increases in the private rental market was put forward and negotiated by the Greens. We will not be written out of history by this minister or anyone else on that issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, all of us here are lucky enough to have a secure and affordable home, and probably all of us here own the home we live in, which means we do not live in constant fear of a rent increase or eviction. However, that is the story for thousands and thousands of Tasmanians, whether they are in public or community housing or in the private rental market. Particularly in the private rental market, there is a high level of housing insecurity inability to meet the cost of rising rents and the constant threat and fear of eviction.

There is no reason at all that this Government should not meet the request at the end of this motion which is to commit to publishing a social housing condition report each quarter that includes the total maintenance liability of the social housing portfolio and a detailed breakdown of all required and completed maintenance work.

I will say this: as the minister who started the process of Better Housing Futures and the transfer to community housing providers, there was accommodation and I think enough enticement within the handover of management of public housing properties to community housing providers - some of it was coupled with land release to those community housing providers to invest in more homes - for them to be able to take care of the maintenance backlog in those homes that Housing Tasmania handed over, and I have been somewhat surprised as a local member that we get about the same number of complaints, whether it is people who are

living in Housing Tasmania homes or homes that are managed by community housing providers, about maintenance issues that are not addressed.

As we know, Tasmania has the coldest homes in the country. Many of our Housing Tasmania properties were built at a time when they did not think so much about insulation and design. Those homes that are now being managed by community housing providers too are often outdated and need constant maintenance.

We think that the minister, who delivers a lot of spin and not much substance, I have to say, should not be afraid to be upfront about what the social housing maintenance backlog is and provide a condition report for those homes which, let us face it, are public property. They belong to the people of Tasmania, so maximum transparency about the management of those homes is really important, but it matters more than anything else to the people who are living in them and it is not enough for the minister to come in here and say he is fixing up the backlog. I encourage the minister to get out to places like Clarendon Vale and Brighton, where people are living in homes that have been waiting for maintenance for months and years.

Time expired.

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

The House divided -

AYES 11

Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne (Teller)
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

NOES 11

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Tucker
Mr Young (Teller)

PAIRS

Dr Broad

Mr Street

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The result of the division is Ayes 11, Noes 11, therefore in accordance with standing 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

Motion negatived.

Sitting suspended from 1.05 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY AMENDMENT (SINGLE-USE PLASTICS) BILL 2022 (No. 31)

Second Reading - Negatived

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, plastic pollution is harmful in many ways. We all understand that pretty comprehensively these days. It is well understood throughout the community how damaging plastic can be to marine life. We have all seen the images of birds or fish being choked by plastics. They are unforgettable. At this point, I commend the groundbreaking research of Dr Jennifer Lavers from the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies who has comprehensively documented and graphically illustrated through her photographs and her painstaking collection of microplastics in the bodies of birds just how damaging our use of single-use plastics and all plastics can be to our marine life. We have seen how plastics can end up in the stomachs of albatrosses, seals, and other beautiful creatures around the Tasmanian marine environment. Even massive whales can starve to death because their intestines get choked with plastic debris.

These are the relatively obvious impacts of plastic pollution when it enters the marine environment - of the damage it can do - but there is less obvious harm that is being caused by plastics that is of direct concern to human wellbeing. That is from microplastics; the degrading of plastics in the environment through ultraviolet radiation and the rubbing moving along the sediment floor and on sand, the wind and erosion.

Plastics can break down into microparticles that can contaminate the environment, yes, but they also pollute the water sources and our food supplies. A study was published in 2018 that showed 90 per cent of the salt brands on the market that they sampled around the world contained microplastics. It is not just salt. We also know that seafood, rice, honey, beer, drinking water supplies and many other products that we consume have all been found to be contaminated by plastic at concerning levels to human health.

Scientists at the University of Newcastle believe the average person consumes 5 grams of plastic a week. They say that that is a conservative figure. It is no wonder that studies then are documenting that plastic particles are now commonly present in human blood, in organs, and in breastmilk; such a deeply concerning idea for women who are breastfeeding - the idea of passing on the unknown impact onto humans' genetic material and in the development of the organs of babies onto a next generation through plastics that we are inadvertently consuming, often just by breathing the air.

Plastic pollution is also a significant part of the contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions and climate heating that is occurring. We need fossil fuels to create plastics. Plastics were the brainchild of the fossil fuel industry, of the chemical industry, at the end of the Second World War, which had geared up to provide a whole range of chemicals for use in munitions and other equipment during that war. At the end of that period, they had nowhere to go with their product and essentially created the plastics industry that we have today. It was birthed after the Second World War.

What has happened is that we have increasingly become dependent on this useful, flexible, diverse, light, strong product which has become part of our social web. We could not imagine doing business, going to the shops, putting clothes on or living in any current form

that human societies are living in. Every human society now has a dependence on plastic in some form or another.

We see the impacts in the vast production of plastics that are also contributing to climate change. We not only use fossil fuels as the raw materials but we also emit emissions through transporting them to plastic factories. The refining process of plastic itself admits hundreds of millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases into the global atmosphere a year.

This is clearly a problem. It is socially, widely recognised as one. It is something that the vast majority of Tasmanians, Australians, people around the world want to do something about. When we see plastic litter on our rivers and in our beaches and streets, we feel bad. People do not like seeing it; not just because it is litter but because it reminds us that we have a problem with plastic and we are not doing enough about it.

I want to recognise the amazing work of local community groups. Despite the focus changing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people have continued to look outside themselves and to look at the impacts that we all have on the surrounding environment and to want to do their bit. We have seen community groups around Tasmania working to raise the issue of plastic pollution; their concerns about single plastic pollution and their determination to educate us and find a way of doing things differently.

We have in Tasmania plastic-free Launceston. The coordinator is Trish Hausler. Lauren and Oberon Carter are famous to many Tasmanians for their strong attempts to show people, through their lifestyle, how we can live a zero-waste lifestyle. Their group, Zero Waste Tasmania, now has 12 000 members. The Seadragons Dive Group, which spent last Sunday cleaning up rubbish at George Town, collected 280 kilograms of plastic. There is also our longstanding Plasticwise Taroona and Sustainable Living Tasmania. These are some of the Tasmanian bodies that have developed through community members standing up and wanting to do something, do the little bit that they can to push back the tide of plastic that is overwhelming us.

At the organised larger level, we have had bodies like Boomerang Alliance, the Australian Marine Conservation Society and World Wildlife Foundation that have for decades been trying to educate and promote and push for legislation for a circular economy for waste reuse, reduction, recycling and to end the use of avoidable plastics, like single-use plastics.

What we see with plastic pollution is only the tip of the iceberg. The estimates are that more than one-third of all plastic waste ends up as pollution. We cannot imagine living without plastics but we can change how we use them. We do not need to live without plastics. We need to change how we use plastics. We need, especially, to use them less or not use them at all in the first place and to recycle them. The most important thing we can do is to look at the ones that are particularly pointless, avoidable and harmful. That is why the focus is on single-use plastics.

They are in the particularly harmful group because they are usually not recycled. When we buy a single-use plastic item, we typically only use it for a couple of minutes. A couple of minutes in our life, but a lifetime of plastic that is not biodegradable, not compostable and will live forever in some form to pollute another generation and the one after that. The impact that our use for a few minutes has on the climate, on ecosystems, on the wildlife that depends on those, and on our own health, is long-lasting.

This is disturbing and grim news, but rarely is there a problem with such an obvious solution. The best news about single-use plastics is that through the relentless efforts of conservation groups working with industries and pushing governments, there is a range of excellent alternatives available. More are being developed all the time. It is no longer necessary for us to use these products. The damage caused by single-use plastics and the relative ease of moving away from them has meant that scores of jurisdictions around the world have already banned or are committed to preventing the use of single-use plastics.

In Australia, seven out of eight states and territories have banned or have committed to ban single-use plastics. Tasmania is the national laggard. I have heard the minister say he is preparing legislation. I am sure he will say it again today. We are tired of waiting to catch up to the rest of the nation. We are tired of waiting for the Liberals to take action on this. Action has been taken on this for a long time. The Greens on Hobart City Council, Bill Harvey and Helen Burnet, made the council the first place in Australia to ban single-use plastics, in March 2020. Since then, the world has not ended. Businesses have not stopped. Indeed, businesses have continued to provide products to people and people are using products that are compostable instead of plastic.

The majority of Tasmanians are appalled when they see mounting plastic pollution. People do not want birds and marine life dying avoidable deaths. They do not want to leave plastics for future generations that we can avoid using today.

This week, Environment ministers have met and talked about developing a national harmonised standard to guide the states' individual single-use plastic legislations. I understand this harmonisation would provide a minimum standard of national consistency. It is not a maximum standard, a race to the bottom, but a minimum standard that states would be encouraged to proscribe additional items on top of. Our Environment minister, Mr Jaensch, would have been the odd one out in that discussion around the table this week because Tasmania has not even made the first step of a legislated commitment. That is a pretty shameful place for Tasmania to be in, given that we have a stated clean, green brand.

That is why we brought on our bill today to ban single-use plastics. The bill goes some way towards Tasmania catching up with the other states that have either introduced or committed to introducing bans before the end of this year. It is based substantially on the ACT jurisdiction's legislation and it is conservative in the initial list of items that are proscribed as banned.

The bill aims to reduce plastic pollution by reducing the number of single-use plastic items that are either used or sold and that are littered or disposed of in landfill. It bans a straightforward set of single-use plastic items in the first stage. It would ban straws, stirrers, bowls, plates and cutlery. The initial list adopted in the bill is what all other states have moved on. It is a minimal list. Other states have moved far ahead of this list. All of the banned products in the bill can be avoided or have a reusable or non-plastic compostable alternative currently available.

The road testing with local businesses for these products to be commercially available to them has already been done and shown by the Hobart City Council. There would be a one-year period before this ban came into place, recognising that a large number of businesses in Tasmania have already made this switch. It would be the responsibility of the Government to

work, as the Hobart City Council did, with businesses over the next year to help them to come on board.

The bill introduces a framework for how additional single-use plastic items can be added to the list of declared banned items. The bill has a robust process for including those additional items through regulation. It would require the minister to undertake public consultation for any item that was added. It would enable a consideration by the minister of the costs and of alternative product options available to businesses.

The bill provides an important process for necessary exemptions. This is important. We have been contacted by people, for example, in the disability and health care communities to seek their understanding and clarification that this would not penalise people with a disability or people in the health care settings who need to use single-use plastics. It does not. The bill makes very sure that people and communities with a valid reason for using single-use plastics would be allowed to continue to do so. Those specified include health care settings, schools and anything to do with the sale of plastic items for use by people with a disability.

These bans are a first step. Through this legislation Tasmania would move from being at the end of the pack to coming up some way with the minimum level of proscribed banned single-use items that other states have already adopted. We support national harmonisation of minimum standards for banning single-use plastic items. Tasmania needs to consider adding a range of other items to a list of banned single-use items. Other states have gone down this path to include coffee cups and lids, heavyweight plastic bags, cotton bud stems, the plastic packaging of fruit and vegetables and polystyrene fruit and drink containers and the release of helium balloons and balloon sticks. These are not things that we have dreamt up. They have all been committed to by most other states.

In the process of supporting a bill like this, we expect the Government to provide incentives for the reuse of foodware for suppliers and consumers and also for events, so they can shift their practices. MONA has been a fantastic advocate for this and has normalised the use of reusable foodware and drinkware. At a MONA event you buy a MONA mug and take it around with you. You can pay extra and get it back at the end or if you do not get back you get to keep it. There are many ways for people to replace a single-use plastic item with one which is not a throw away item. In our view, the Government should provide retailers and takeaway food outlets with incentives to provide reusable containers and opportunities for people to bring their own containers in appropriate situations.

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson has been at the forefront of the Greens at the federal level in campaigning to end plastic waste and has been a key person pushing for Australia to make some substantial changes to bring us into the circular economy that other countries are moving into. The European Union has been at the forefront of a lot of circular economy, but it has to be more than a conversation because it obviously has complexities. We have recently seen stories of businesses that have been supported to recycle plastic but have ended up falling over. There was one in Tasmania, Enviroinex, to which that has happened now, which is devastating to hear.

What it says in part is where we can, the first step should be not to use it in the first place. Let us do what we can to not use avoidable single-use plastic that we only use for a few minutes. It is something we can all work on together. People really want to see the Government helping

them in the work they are doing to use less plastics. It is not a big shift and something which the Hobart City Council has shown we can easily do. All other states are doing it.

I expect that there is a will from the minister to support this legislation. I will be disappointed if the minister does not feel he can support the legislation because there is no reason to put it off any longer. We have been waiting such a long time and it is time we caught up with the rest of the country and did something good for our children, the marine environment and the birds that really do not want to pick up that piece of plastic and think it is a bit of food and end up not being able to live because of an avoidable lifestyle decision that humans have made that we can do something about.

[2.52 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Environment and Climate Change) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Greens and Dr Woodruff for having the initiative to bring on this bill and this discussion forward into our parliament.

The Tasmanian Government has committed to phasing out problematic single-use plastics across Tasmania by 2025, consistent with the national decision made at the environment ministers' meeting in April 2021. We are delivering on this commitment in an ordered and staged manner. A staged approach is important and necessary to avoid the potential unintended consequences of the transition away from single-use plastic. Tasmania needs to avoid, for example, creating a market opening for greenwashed products which make us feel good while we go on polluting. We need real solutions and an approach which also considers greenhouse gas emissions and, critically, what we phase in when we phase out single-use plastics and how we dispose of them.

It is one thing to ban stuff. It is quite another to come up with a complete solution that avoids unintended, unplanned consequences. We also need to recognise that in the national and international scheme of things, Tasmania represents a tiny market for new materials, products and technologies that we might require and that it is a valid strategy for a small jurisdiction like ours to learn from and follow other larger jurisdictions which have greater buying power in the market, particularly when it comes to introducing new types of products and materials to replace the things we are phasing out.

We are committed to a consistent statewide approach that provides certainty for both businesses and our community. To support this initiative, the Tasmanian Government has allocated \$1 million over four years to action an implementation plan, draft legislation and support businesses through the transition with a specific allocation of \$100 000. Next year, we will show leadership by starting the phase-out in government facilities and events on public land.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is continuing to work with the Australian Government to deliver on the National Waste Policy Action Plan. This commitment was cemented at the environment ministers meeting on Friday 21 October 2022, when Tasmania joined all states and territories in working towards a nationally harmonised approach in relation to the phase-out of single-use plastics.

Talking about the phase-out of plastics, it is important to acknowledge the significant broader initiatives of government which will play a role; for example, the impact that the Tasmanian container refund scheme, which we call Recycle Rewards, will have in significantly

reducing the number of plastic bottles entering the environment when it commences in 2023. In addition, \$11 million in Tasmanian and Australian government funding has been committed to increase plastics recycling in Tasmania, with developments at Timberlink wood plastic composite manufacturing plant and Mitchell Plastic Welding currently being rolled out.

Further, the Waste and Resource Recovery Act 2022, which came into effect on 1 July, is yet another demonstration of our commitment to improving resource recovery and waste management. While it is still in its early days, the levy will provide important funds to support resource recovery infrastructure and grants to ensure that Tasmania has the building blocks for a truly circular economy.

Our Government also supports Boomerang Alliance's plastic-free beaches program. Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania have been working closely with the Boomerang Alliance to help the organisation identify appropriate areas to run this program in the state. Under the plastic-free beaches program, Boomerang Alliance works with cafe and takeaway retailers in selected areas and provides practical support to help them reduce the number of single-use plastics such as coffee cups and containers which are supplied to consumers and potentially litter. The program has achieved impressive results interstate and I am looking forward to seeing similar strong outcomes in Tasmania. Clearly the Tasmanian government is concerned and taking action to address the issue of problematic single-use plastics.

I welcome the Greens' initiative in introducing the Waste and Resource Recovery Amendment Bill. I acknowledge their support of the Waste and Resource Recovery Bill last year and I hope we can adopt a similar collaborative approach around the phase-out of problematic single-use plastics.

In terms of the Greens' bill, there are many aspects which are consistent with the approach adopted by other state and territory governments. These include the types of problematic single-use plastics included in the ban. I note that the proposed bill is consistent with the environment ministers meeting decision in April of last year. However, like other state and territory governments, Tasmania will likely want to examine whether we want to expand our list beyond these plastics to include other items such as cotton buds with plastic sticks, coffee cups and lids, and takeaway containers with lids from the commencement of the legislative ban in 2025.

The bill is consistent with other jurisdictions in terms of the inclusion of the two Australian Standards for composting. It will be essential that any legislation we introduce is consistent with existing standards and provides the composting industry with certainty about the compostable alternatives to piece-ups that they are likely to be receiving.

While the Greens' bill is a welcome addition to the current discussions about the phase-out of single-use plastics, it is not supported by our Government for a few important reasons. First, we believe the Waste and Resource Recovery Act is not the appropriate mechanism for introducing the phase-out of single-use plastics. The purpose of the Waste and Resource Recovery Act 2022 is to introduce a landfill levy to discourage waste from going to landfill and encourage resource recovery, as well as to establish a board with broad oversight of waste policy and funding disbursement of levy funds.

The legislation does not deal with specific waste types or recovered materials, although the board may opt to do so as part of its waste and resource recovery strategy. A legislative

ban on single-use plastics will have a much broader impact. It will affect food retailers, suppliers of takeaway containers, plastics manufacturers and all the rest of us as well. We will need to transition and change products and behaviours. We will need to move towards substituting single-use plastics with reusable options where possible and shift to compostable alternatives where not.

Ensuring that these new items are placed in appropriate bins and delivered to an organics processing facility of the right type are significant steps for our industries and community to implement. While the Government supports the single-use plastics items identified in the Greens' bill for banning, it does not support that the regulatory tool for expanding the list to include other plastics. This is because the process of adding items by a regulatory process is complex and may not be the most effective approach, particularly when there are simpler options available to us. The Government will be looking closely at how items can be added to its planned legislation over time. This could include an order by the Governor to make changes to a schedule to the act as is the case in section 11 of the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994.

Dr Woodruff - Without any public consultation or business consultation?

Mr JAENSCH - No consultation on your bill, so.

Dr Woodruff - No, there is.

Mr JAENSCH - I thought you had given up on it. I note that the bill does not pick up on issues such the difficulty with defining plastic versus reusable plastic. This is a complex matter that most jurisdictions are grappling with. An unintended consequence of not defining whether a plastic is reusable or single-use has opened opportunities for ambiguity over whether a single-use plastic product such as a fork can be reused and is therefore exempt from the legislation. There are very few international examples to draw on when defining what a reusable plastic is, and we need to be careful with our definitions to avoid loopholes. We will be watching the work of other jurisdictions very closely to see how they resolve this issue.

In addition, I want to make some comments on the emerging issue of polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, in single-use plastic alternatives, which was discussed at some length with my colleagues at the environment ministers meeting last week. In recent months, there has been conjecture about the risk of PFAS in compostable alternatives to single-use plastic containers. One of the challenges with the expansion of the organics industry is the potential for PFAS contamination associated with food packaging. This has the potential to impact on users of organic material and compost, both from a health and economic perspective. A range of compostable food packaging was tested for PFAS in 2021, with quite high levels detected in more than a quarter of the products sampled, particularly the gas products sourced from sugar cane.

The New South Wales government recently reiterated its regulatory stance that the following items are not permitted in their FOGO streams: bamboo, timber, cardboard packaging, cutlery, paper towels and serviettes. This is because they could contain PFAS, which may cause human and environmental harm. The New South Wales EPA also advised that these products provide negligible or no nutrient value in compost. In New South Wales, only food, garden organics, compostable plastic kitchen caddy liners that meet the Australian standard and fibre-based kitchen-caddy liners such as paper or newspaper are acceptable in

FOGO bins. New South Wales has also banned compostable plastic product bags that meet the Australian standard from FOGO because of concerns that compost which is produced may not be safe to apply to land.

In contrast, other jurisdictions, including South Australia, allow these products in compost, and do not seem to have the same concerns regarding potential PFAS contamination, although we are advised that this may relate to the types of industrial composting technologies used for their FOGO streams.

There was lengthy discussion on this matter, and ministers requested for the Commonwealth to set a clear direction to manufacturers that the use of PFAS and other harmful chemicals in food packaging and food service single-use items will be phased out, with further work to be undertaken in all jurisdictions to identify the appropriate mechanism for that phase out. Importantly, we need to have clarity on how we manage these matters. Trying to resolve the PFAS contamination after the fact is costly and difficult, and it is preferable to avoid contamination in the first place.

The Greens' bill has not examined the unintended consequences of introducing this legislation without appropriate planning. To ensure that an increase in single-use plastic alternatives does not result in an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane, my department will be looking at the capacity within Tasmania to recover and recycle compostable alternatives to plastic items so that compostable waste does not end up in landfill where it may cause greenhouse gas emissions, and that it does not end up contaminating other recyclable container streams.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is about to commence a process to engage a consultant to specifically address this question and other questions about potential impacts. This planned approach does not reduce the Government's commitment to phasing out single-use plastics, rather it ensures a responsible approach to introducing legislative change. It ensures that by solving one environmental problem, we do not create another.

While these bigger questions are being addressed, I have asked my department to work across government to phase out single-use plastics from government facilities, as well as events held on public-owned land across the state. The department has already consulted extensively with Events Tasmania, events managers and sites. As the project progresses, the department will collaborate with retailers, suppliers, local government and recyclers. The experience of other states and territories will also be drawn on to ensure that the best-informed outcomes are achieved for Tasmania.

I am expecting guidelines for event coordinators holding events on government land and to guide government facilities about how to phase out single-use plastics to be released soon. The Government views this as showing leadership in working with the community. This approach will assist in broader behaviour change. Stage one is an important step in preparing the community for stage two, a statewide-legislated ban.

For all the reasons explained in my presentation, we do not support the bill, although we welcome the Greens enlivening this conversation again. It has been good to have the opportunity of putting some of the more complex aspects of this that we are engaging with on

the record. I thank the Greens for bringing this forward; however, in the form of a bill, it is very difficult for us to support it.

As we know here and with the example last night, any legislation that we seek to bring forward has to be researched. It has to be consulted. We have to take this to the people it will affect and those who it serves to ensure that it meets their expectations and they understand its implications for them. We are committed always to consulting on legislation with everybody who can be affected by it and everyone who may be required to be part of making it work.

A bill brought in by the Greens like this does not achieve that. We cannot support this in the form of a bill, although we do support the conversation and the Greens' thoughtful contribution and we look forward to their engagement and support for us as we move through our plan to phase-out problematic single-use plastics in Tasmania by 2025.

[3.08 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, for bringing the bill to the parliament today for the debate. It was interesting listening to your contribution and to the minister's contribution to understand precisely where the Tasmanian Government is in progressing the phase-out of single-use plastics. It is good to understand that we are all on the same page here: that we all support the phase-out of single-use plastics. I put on the record that the Labor Party supports that outcome too.

The difference is the timeline to achieve that. I was interested to listen to your contribution, Dr Woodruff, and correct me if I am wrong but you spoke about the time line for implementation being a one-year period.

Dr Woodruff - Yes.

Ms WHITE - From when?

Dr Woodruff - From when the bill receives Royal Assent.

Ms WHITE - Thank you. Which on the time we are at now probably would be next year, so it would be by 2023 presumably?

Dr Woodruff - The very end of next year, which would be in line with other states.

Ms WHITE - If it goes through the other place. Thank you.

I understand from your contribution, minister, that you spoke about the agreement reached in April 2021 would phase-out single-use plastics by 2025. You are talking about a maximum difference of two years, potentially less, depending on whether this bill was to receive Royal Assent by the end of this year - it is potentially two years' difference in the time line.

I make it very clear that the Labor Party agrees that we need to phase out single-use plastics. We have already seen councils across the state provide leadership and do that at a number of events, particularly outdoor events, where they require businesses operating stalls at those events to operate without single-use plastics. There has been a massive culture shift

that started way back when Ben Kearney supported the community of Coles Bay to phase out plastic bags, which occurred in 2009. Since that time, we have seen Tasmania also phase out the use of plastic bags and that has been good. Now there is the consensus to phase out single-use plastics with councils across the state demonstrating leadership on that and a number of events are already doing that.

The questions I have for Dr Woodruff include questions around what consultation was undertaken in the development of this bill. I notice they tabled this in June 2022 but I am keen to understand, Dr Woodruff, who the Greens asked for input in the development of the draft bill and then the final bill that was tabled in parliament. You have answered my question around the time line for implementation.

I am keen to understand which agency would have oversight. I presume it is the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

I was pleased to see that there are exemptions provided for people working in a healthcare setting or living with disability. Certainly our experience in feedback from people living with disability is that there are occasions where they are dependent on single-use plastics, particularly bendy straws, so we need to make sure there are carve-outs for the necessary use of some single-use plastics for some members of our community.

I agree that the bill brought forward by the Greens today identifies both the need to do that and, as the minister said, the list of plastics in the bill are not controversial. I think there is agreement they would be the sensible place to start. There is a difference of opinion about how you would add new types of plastics to that list and about the process to consult with the community on this bill, and also the phasing and the implementation of this policy.

From our perspective, we agree that there needs to be proper consultation with the broader community, not just the business community, but the broader community because it will require a culture change across households in the way they manage their affairs. It will also require conversations with big retailers and in particular supermarket chains. Personally, I cannot get over how you could single-wrap single items of fruit in plastic that are already essentially covered, like a banana or an apple with a skin. They are not required to be wrapped in plastic and I shake my head any time I see that kind of stuff in a supermarket. There will need to be conversations nationally, or at least with those big operators in Tasmania, about the need to phase those things out on a time line that is acceptable to this parliament.

I am interested to better understand what the process is for seeking an exemption. I do not disagree with the exemptions that have been provided for in the bill brought in by Dr Woodruff, but there may be other instances that are brought to the attention of government where somebody or a sector requires an exemption. I am interested to understand how that process would work.

Essentially, at this point in time, while on principle we support the intended outcome and agree that at some point we will get there, whether it is 2023 or 2025, the Tasmanian community will be banning single-use plastics. That is important for our environment, the sustainability of our community, and protection of wildlife in our waterways. I will wait for some answers from the member who brought in the bill to those matters I have raised. I was heartened to hear the Government provide some further details. If nothing else is achieved today, at least we have some updates from the Government about how they intend to progress

the banning of single-use plastics and the time line to do that, and an update about the consultation they intend to embark on should this bill not succeed.

[3.15 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the minister for those contributions. There is no doubt we are all in furious agreement that something needs to be done but the question is the time frame and the manner in which it is done.

I will answer Ms White's questions first on her particular matters. As to the processes for an exemption other than the ones prescribed, the exemptions that are prescribed are an exempt business or undertaking, which means a healthcare business or undertaking, a school or a business or undertaking that may be prescribed that involves the sale or supply of banned single-use plastic items for use by persons with a disability or healthcare needs. They can be prescribed under regulations. It would be the case that if the bill as it stands did not cover a group or an individual circumstance, that could be dealt with under regulations by the minister.

Ms White - They would make representations to the relevant minister?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, as would be the case for wanting to change regulations on other matters. As for consultation on the bill, the topic of the bill is something the Greens have been working on with community groups and stakeholders for a very long time; more than a decade. There has been a strong call from people who contact us over years about doing something about single-use plastics. We know from the surveys that have been conducted by groups like the Boomerang Alliance and the Australian Marine Conservation Society that there is overwhelming support in the Australian and Tasmanian communities to make this shift.

On the specifics of the bill, it has been on the books since July but we took it from the ACT legislation and we looked at the comments that were made in parliament about that and that also had strong support. With the situation in Tasmania we did not go to specifically direct comments from groups because we have rested a lot of this on the very good adoption by the Hobart City Council. That council's ban on a limited range of single-use plastics passed in March 2020. It has been in place now for a year and the work that Hobart City Council planners and their staff did is something that I personally followed very closely because of Councillor Bill Harvey's involvement with the staff.

There have been, as the minister said, a number of hiccups - and you have probably heard about this - not with single-use plastics but with recycling in general. It is not easy and I totally support all the questions and issues the minister has raised about the difficulty with recycling. What we are trying to do is shift our manner of production and dealing with what we have always considered waste in a completely different way. There is no doubt that there is going to be hiccups in that transition.

I understand wanting to avoid unintended consequences. That is basically about the precautionary principle. I suppose this is where I take issue with the Government's stance on this. It is far too cautious to have 2025 as the date for having a ban on this small group of single-use plastics in Tasmania.

We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good, because, while you are looking at unintended consequences in some areas, you have to look at the reality of the amount of single-

use plastic that is going into the waste stream for the next three years. By not acting, we have a set of known consequences which will be - you might have more up-to-date figures, minister - that two-thirds of the single-use plastics every day that are used for a couple of minutes, seconds, or maybe longer, will end up in not being recycled. We know this, and we can quantify that.

We can, now, quantify the damage and harm that will occur as a result of that. It is ever more plastic going and breaking down into micro-plastic, so I hear that.

Mr Jaensch - It might just involve though, things like accelerated roll-out of Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) in public spaces, statewide, to match with it.

Dr WOODRUFF - I understand that, but accelerating the roll-out of FOGO has its own very large complexities.

Mr Jaensch - Exactly.

Dr WOODRUFF - What this bill does is stop it at the source. It sends a strong signal to people and to businesses: try another way of doing it.

I note that the Government's caution in this matter is out of step with other states. This report was last updated in July of this year: ACT, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia already have a ban on lightweight plastic bags, straws, drink stirrers, cutlery and polystyrene food and drink containers. They are already in place.

New South Wales has committed to banning those things this year. Victoria has committed to having a ban on those things next year. The Northern Territory is also holding off, as you are proposing Tasmania does, until 2025.

I put to you, minister, that Tasmania is in a very different situation to the Northern Territory. We have a far advanced set of businesses that are much more compact than the Northern Territory. We also have the first jurisdiction in Australia. That is already proven. It can be done. It is being done. There is no reason to peg us with the Northern Territory in having such a commitment so far advanced. It does not make any sense whatsoever.

I do not agree that we should be so cautious. I want to say how much I support the work that has been done at the national level and the concerns that you have raised about PFAS. It is a real problem, and something that humans do, which is often jump from one thing to something that is convenient to produce on a very vast scale. The problem with only looking at large-scale production of these alternatives, is that it does lend, as it has done with PFAS into using something which appears on the outside to be a good product. That is something that is reusable, but binding it together with a highly toxic, very poisonous, persistent chemical.

There are alternatives to that. It is not the only way of doing it, and there are ways of prescribing other options. It is a very strong caution to have. I am pleased that the federal Government is helping the states to come to a position on ending PFAS altogether.

The minister asked about the research that has backed this bill and I return to the comments that I made to the Leader of the Opposition. There is an overwhelming body of evidence on this. The bill itself is based on the ACT's jurisdiction. I would like to think that

Tasmania - because of our brand of being a clean and green state - would take this on with more alacrity than waiting until 2025. There is more than enough support in the community to do that.

I do not know if the minister is doing any work with fruit-and-veggie produce bags but most people, if given the option, would return immediately to picking up their vegetables and putting them in another container rather than having them pre-packaged in the supermarket, if only for the convenience of the grocery companies, mostly. It is not something that most people, support: they are appalled at it, but it is not something that we can do much about unless the Governments step in.

The point of bringing in this bill today is because people have been working as individuals with good heart, doing what they can on a personal level, and grouping together in community groups, but they know that that is not enough. We need to change the rules. Unless we push back on the convenience that the big packaging industries have - the Food and Grocery Council is a powerful body - they have always pushed back in this area and been part of the push back against the container deposit scheme, which meant that Tasmania and other states were probably 20 years later down the path of container deposit recovery than we would have otherwise been if the food and packaging industries and the soft drink manufacturers had not had as much power as they do.

It is really about government stepping in and supporting the work that the communities are already doing, and the role that they want their government to play. They want it to have some teeth to the work that they are doing. They want to be able to 'hook it' so they can go to the next level and say, 'There's a ban here, so these are the creative solutions we are coming up with in our community, in our school, in our scout group to wind back the use of single-use plastic'. It encourages people to be creative. There is a lot of creativity. As I said, at MONA, going to events, people find creative solutions. When something is not an option, humans are very clever and we can find other ways of doing things.

There is an opportunity for the minister to be bolder than 2025, which is keeping Tasmania at the end of the pack of another three years. It is not just about competition. In this instance, working collectively as a country is important because the sooner we get rid of the single-use plastics, the sooner we can get on with dealing with some of the other resource-use issues that we have. There is a mountain of them, and we obviously have to take the actions that we can as quickly as possible.

I encourage the minister to do the modelling of the alternative cost of not acting. I know governments like to be very cautious and look at the cost of acting, but you have to balance it with the cost of not acting. I believe that the balance has long ago tipped into banning the single-use plastic items rather than keeping them in the marketplace.

Ms O'Connor - Hear hear.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The question is that the bill be read for the second time.

The House divided -

AYES 3

NOES 20

Ms Johnston (Teller)

Mrs Alexander

Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms White
Mr Winter
Mr Wood
Mr Young (Teller)

Second reading negatived.

MOTION

Referendum on New Stadium at Macquarie Point - Motion Negatived

[3.34 p.m.]

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

That the House calls on the Government to establish a referendum in accordance with the Referendum Procedures Act 2004 on the question of whether a new stadium should be built at Macquarie Point.

There is no doubt there has been a lot of interest in the announcement by the Government to build a new stadium in Hobart since it was first floated in March this year. It came out of the blue -

A member - Floated. I like it.

Ms WHITE - You like that pun? It was a floating stadium that was proposed. It was to be built at Regatta Point and \$750 million was the price tag attached to it. It was announced by the former premier, Peter Gutwein. There was very little other detail.

The Government has now moved the site to Macquarie Point. The price tag is exactly the same, even though the engineering task is going to be completely different. There is still no conversation with the Tasmanian community about whether they agree the right priority to spend Tasmanian taxpayer money is on building a stadium.

Our argument all along has been that this is not the right priority for the state. The Tasmanian community overwhelmingly wants the Government to take action on addressing the health crisis, on addressing the housing crisis, on tackling the rising costs of living, and not building a \$750 million stadium in Hobart.

It was not a project that was taken to the last election. It was not a project that was spoken about before it was announced. It was foisted on the people of Tasmania, completely out of the blue. Our argument is that the community deserves a say. This motion before the House gives them the power to do that.

As a democratic institution, this parliament should be empowering the voices of the community, particularly around decisions on big issues like this, one of the largest infrastructure projects the Government has proposed in a long time. Our argument is that if the Government tests the numbers on this, it will soon understand that the community does not want a \$750 million stadium in Hobart.

The Labor Party has been listening to the community. We hear what they tell us. They tell us they want the Government to focus on getting the basics right. They tell us the Government is failing to deliver for them and is obsessed by a stadium. They want the Government to get back on track and to do what it promised. Unfortunately, it is failing to do that. The only way the Government is going to be stopped from progressing with this proposal to build a stadium is for there to be a referendum to ask the people of Tasmania their view.

What is wrong with asking the community how they feel before the Government signs a blank cheque to build a stadium that the AFL told it that it needs? It was not in the task force report to do this. It was not in the review by Colin Carter when he provided his work to the AFL commission. It was something dreamt up by the former premier Peter Gutwein, and for an unknown reason maintained by the new Premier, Jeremy Rockliff.

The people of Tasmania deserve to have their say on whether the proposed new AFL stadium is the right priority for them now. Tasmanians have been asking for their voices to be heard on this matter. Tasmanians have asked me directly whether we can call for a referendum. Community members across our state feel ignored by this Government.

We have done our job as elected representatives to bring their voices to this parliament so they can be heard, asking the Government to listen to them and to support this motion. If the Government is so convinced that the state's priority is to build a \$750 million stadium in Hobart, it should have no hesitation in supporting the motion before the House today.

The cost of a referendum would be equivalent to about 0.5 per cent of the total cost of building a stadium. That is a small price to pay before the Government allocates hundreds of millions of dollars to a project we do not believe is necessary. Before they stumble down that path any further, we think that they should get back to basics and ask the community what they want us to do as their elected representatives.

We remain clear in our support for an AFL and AFLW team. We remain clear in our support for the bid that was put forward, that we were briefed on, that the task force briefed us on. We sat in a committee room in this same building, where we were shown what was going to be put forward to the AFL commission. It was for the team, the \$10 million a year for 10 years plus \$50 million for the high-performance centre to deliver Tasmania an AFL and

AFLW team. There was no stadium included in that bid. The stadium did not feature. There was not one cent and there was no one mention of it.

Since that time, though, things have changed. We still cannot get a clear answer from this Premier as to whether he has struck a deal that the condition of a licence relies on the state delivering a stadium. That would be a very different proposition from the one that we all signed up to, when we provided our tripartite support for an AFL and AFLW team for Tasmania. That was consulted and negotiated in good faith with members of this Chamber and also with the community of Tasmania, who were asked to come on board the campaign and who willingly signed up. We know that Tasmanians deserve their own team but the Tasmanian community has never been asked whether they agree with spending \$750 million on a stadium in Hobart, particularly when we have two stadiums already in the state, one in the north and one in the south, that already host quality AFL content.

The real concern we have is that not only is the Government potentially off doing something they never asked the community about but they are doing it at a time when there are other important priorities confronting our state that they have really dropped the ball on. Not only do we have a health system in crisis, but housing availability is in crisis, power prices are through the roof, and our workers across essential public services are taking industrial action that looks like it is about to escalate as well because of the Government's failure to negotiate a fair pay and conditions outcome for those workers. We also know that every day Tasmanians are struggling to make ends meet.

We have seen the CPI data come out today and it is alarming. The cost-of-living increases are really hurting Tasmanians and they are struggling day to day, a bit like this Government is struggling. The problem they have is that this Government is not on their side. Tasmanians are struggling to put a roof over their and their family's heads and yet it seems the Premier's number-one priority is putting a roof over a stadium. That is pretty insulting to people who I know are camped out at the Domain, up at the Cenotaph, in tents under bushes, trying to get shelter from the awful weather that is right outside this building today. They are living in a tent in Tasmania, which is appalling in and of itself, at the same time their Government is building a stadium with a roof on it and prioritising that project over their welfare. What we cannot comprehend is how this Government's priorities can be so wrong.

We know that Tasmania's inflation rate is now the highest in the nation and the highest on record since 1987. Now is not the right time to slug Tasmanian taxpayers with the bill for a new stadium. There has been no community consultation on the construction of the stadium. The project was never talked about through the last election campaign and Tasmanians have never been asked their opinion. We hear the calls from the public to have their say on the construction of this stadium. They are growing louder and louder by the day and surely the Government must hear them too; it is overwhelming now.

It is not just regular members of our community who are scratching their heads about this. I speak to a number of people involved in the football community, the AFL community, who are worried that the Government is not investing in grassroots football. They are not supporting them to make sure they have the infrastructure they need because they are so obsessed with the stadium in Hobart. Has the Government actually thought about the ridiculous situation they have got themselves into? I do not know how the Premier has allowed this to occur but essentially they have created division over something where there was unity. There

has been unity across the state for a Tasmanian team. Their decision to pursue a stadium has not created unity across the state.

This is not a north and south thing. I argue that it is Tasmanians right across the state. No matter their age, no matter their background, no matter their gender, Tasmanians overwhelmingly do not want this stadium. The Government is being ignorant or deaf to that and they are simply not listening. They are not even listening to their own people. Former Liberal premier Robin Gray, Tasmania's longest-serving Liberal premier, recently rubbished the proposal calling it a dud deal; that it would cause significant negative impact to the northern economy. He joins a long line of Liberal Tasmanians who oppose the project, including the federal member for Bass, Bridget Archer, and Brad Stansfield, who ran the Liberals' most recent election campaigns.

The economic analysis provided by the Liberals as a business case is tenuous to say the least and based on unrealistic event and attendance data. The economic arguments that underpin this proposal are in tatters before it even starts. The attendance data the Government is relying on upon to argue the stadium stacks up are simply fantasy. I am not sure who the Premier has spoken to or whether he has picked up the phone or had a meeting face to face with anyone from the A-League or the NRL, but he should before he takes Tasmania further down this path, because there is no way the data the Government has released stacks up, and that undermines the entire economic argument for having a stadium in the south of the state constructed with taxpayer funds. It simply has holes all through it and is not the right priority for Tasmania.

I was looking back at a time line for how the Tasmanian Government found itself in this situation where the Premier has essentially tied his credibility to building a stadium in Hobart. How can the Health minister of the day prioritise a stadium over health? It does not make any sense. I was trying to understand how the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, had not only found himself in this situation but had now taken ownership and become a champion of this project. At a time when we have people who cannot get into an emergency department, instead of building a hospital, he is building a stadium. When we have people who cannot get an ambulance and are literally dying waiting for care, instead of investing in those public services, he wants to build a stadium. We have a Health minister where children across the state cannot get their early childhood checks because we do not have enough childhood nurses to be able to provide those services, whether you are in Bicheno or Burnie, but the Health minister is not talking about investing in those services to support our children to get the best start in life. He is talking about building a stadium.

This is a premier who does not have his priorities right. It is true what they say: he is a part-time Health minister but it seems he is a full-time champion for a stadium in Hobart. They are completely the wrong priorities for our state and for our Government. We are very sure of our position in opposition to this stadium because it is what the community is telling us; they cannot believe it either. That is why we believe they need to have their say. If the Government is going to stick its head in the sand and not listen to the concerns of Tasmanians, this parliament should make the Government listen. This parliament should support a referendum to give the Tasmanian community a voice so the Government can finally hear them and stop with this preposterous idea of building another stadium in Hobart at a time when there are so many other priorities for our state to address.

I was looking back at a time line and it was October 2019 when the first calls were made for the Government to build a stadium at Macquarie Point. At that time Brad Stansfield, in a column in the *Mercury*, called on the Government to rule out that idea. *The Examiner* editorial in October 2019 was also raising its opposition and was critical of building an additional stadium in the south, saying, 'Spending half a billion dollars on a new stadium in a state that cannot afford to fund its own health system properly seems ridiculous ...'.

That sums it up, Mr Deputy Speaker, does it not? The warning signs were there for the Government in 2019 that if they progressed with the idea of building a stadium in the south there would be opposition from their own Liberal members and newspapers representing their communities, because they could see that it was ridiculous. That is exactly what they said.

Then what did we see? In March 2022 former premier Peter Gutwein announced a stadium plan for Hobart's Regatta Ground foreshore during his state of the state speech. We were all here for that, well, most of us, because the Liberals have had a fair bit of churn since then and about a quarter of them have left this place since that speech was given, including that premier. He said at that time:

Today, I am pleased to announce that subject to stakeholder consultation and planning approval, and achieving later this year, an AFL licence, we plan to develop this new stadium at Regatta Point.

He went on to say:

... a two-year time frame for planning approvals and contracting, and a further three years for construction, means that the new stadium could be ready for the 2027 season.

That is less than five years away now, if you were going to be ready for the 2027 season. That is four-and-a-bit years away.

At that time, it was a pretty ambitious concept. The key point to note is 'subject to stakeholder consultation', because that has not happened. I know for a fact this Government still does not understand how its proposal to build a stadium will impact on the Cenotaph. I argue they are a pretty big, important stakeholder to consult with - RSL Tasmania and all the veterans in our community, who have great respect from the broader community and great respect for the Cenotaph and what it represents. Does the Government have an answer for the RSL about what impact a proposed stadium would have on the Cenotaph?

The former premier said that he was announcing it 'subject to stakeholder consultation'. What consultation has the Government undertaken? What consultation has it done with the Hobart City Council as the Planning Authority? What consultation has it done with the broader AFL community? I can tell you that in my conversations with clubs across the state there is not a consensus view in support of this stadium. In fact, I would say, it is outweighed in the negative.

What consultation has it done with the A League, with the National Rugby League (NRL) and with these clubs that they are saying underpin their economic arguments for a stadium? I have not heard answers from the Government to any of these questions when we have asked them in this parliament, and the flaky figures they are relying on simply do not stack up.

Most importantly, what consultation have you done with the people of Tasmania? They are the most important stakeholder. They are the taxpayers who will have to fund this stadium and I have not seen the Government once ask them what they think. Not once have they been asked whether they support the spending of \$750 million of taxpayers' money on a stadium in Hobart. Not once have they been asked their view about whether it is necessary. Not once have they been asked whether this a priority for them. Not once have they been asked if they would prefer to have a stadium or a functioning health system. Not once have they been asked if they would prefer to have a premier, who is the Health minister, focused and obsessed with the stadium, or if they would prefer him to do his job as a Health minister and make sure people can get treatment when they need it, that our nurses and paramedics are supported to do their jobs safely, and that patients can get the care they need in a timely manner no matter where they live.

If they were asked those questions, I am pretty confident I know what the answer would be: we want essential services; we want the Government to deliver its fundamental responsibilities. A stadium is well down the list for us.

The question of a referendum, and specifically to the point of a question, would need to be simple. It could be as simple as: do you support a \$750 million stadium in Hobart? It does not need to be any more complicated than that. Essentially, that is what the Government is saying they are proposing to do. Test it with the community. The cost would be half of 1 per cent of the total cost of the stadium, and I argue that is a small price to pay before the Government blunders on with this project any further.

When I was doing some research on the Macquarie Point site announcement when the Government decided it was moving away from a floating stadium to an on-land stadium on remediated land - heaven knows what the engineering requirements would be to build a stadium at that site - it was interesting to note on the Macquarie Point website that in its frequently asked questions, it states:

A sports stadium does not fit with the master plan or original intent of the MONA vision which the Tasmanian Parliament adopted and City of Hobart and wider community support.

Not only has the Government completely overridden something this parliament and the wider Hobart community has already supported with no consultation, it has plundered on with a project proposal for a site that completely undermines the work that had already been undertaken to develop that site, whether it be for a reconciliation and truth-telling site as part of the MONA vision, or the proposal the Government announced earlier this year to build a retail and housing complex there. We still have no answers from the Government about what compensation will need to be paid to that developer to not proceed with their proposal to build houses. It gets more and more ridiculous, does it not? The Government is going to pay a developer not to build houses so they can instead build a stadium. It is a joke.

At the time of the announcement, made by the former premier Peter Gutwein, Launceston Mayor van Zetten expressed concerns about the north-south divide. He said, 'The ramifications, obviously, of a new, beautiful stadium and one that's got a roof on it could mean less big games here, and that's something we're very concerned about'. We still have not had a concrete answer from this Government about how many games will be played in the north at York Park. That is important. The reason the Tasmanian Labor government struck that deal

to play games in the north was not just about providing AFL content. It was an event strategy to activate the northern economy in winter. It was about providing an economic stimulus to the northern economy to support jobs. The Government is crab-walking away from something that has been a consistent feature of governments over the past 20 years. They are walking away from the northern economy. They are walking away from supporting those jobs in the northern economy that have been able to continue to successfully thrive over winter because of that investment in AFL games which activates those events across the north.

There has not been any talk from this Government about the impacts on the northern economy from the proposal to build a southern stadium and the impact on the content that will be drawn to the southern stadium away from the north, and the detrimental consequences for the northern economy because of those decisions. They say 44 games in the new southern stadium at Macquarie Point, although not all of them will be new content brought to the state - a large chunk of them will be events that would have been hosted elsewhere, including in the north of the state. It is a transference of economic activity from the north to the south. The Government has not been clean with the community about what that means for jobs in the north of this state.

On 4 April 2022, then premier Peter Gutwein resigned and a new premier, Jeremy Rockliff, stepped into the breach. He is still the Health minister because nobody else would support him in sharing the workload, so the poor bloke has to carry all of that burden and responsibility. He is loyal to the party, he is loyal to you. There is hardly anyone in here to support him now. There is desperate need for more people to support the Premier. No one steps up to help him out so he has to be the Premier and the Health minister. It speaks to the division in the Liberal Party.

During 2022, we received RTI documents that indicated that emails from Waypoint suggest that the costs of the stadium could be significantly more than \$750 million, and that it was, 'a ballpark figure'. From that RTI, a minister stated: 'We had to be able to explain what it would cost. Now we need to find out what it will cost'. That was in the email document we received through Right to Information request. The Government did not know the cost of a project they were announcing when they were announcing it; they were not quite sure. The minister needed to know so they did a bit of a ballpark figure and came up with \$750 million. You can tell it is a ballpark figure. One email lists it up and says, 'There's going to need to be a bit more work done on this'. Then we had that confirmed when they announced it is not Regatta Point, it is Macquarie Point, and the price tag is exactly the same, even though we are talking about a different site.

As I said earlier, a stadium was never a part of the bid and it was never included in the conversations or briefings that parliament received before the Government submitted that bid. In July 2022 former Geelong president Colin Carter, who authored an independent report into the viability of a Tasmanian side, believed the bid should not be contingent on a new stadium, and said, 'I do not think that should be the initial priority. Tasmanian grounds are regarded as perfectly adequate for playing AFL football at the moment'. That was his report back to the commission.

The AFL commission has had a number of representations now to say Tasmania deserves its own team, it has facilities, let us go for it, there is nothing holding this up. It has a northern facility and a southern facility, there is the passion and the drive to deliver on the commitment to deliver an AFL and an AFLW team, so let us do it. I am 100 per cent behind that proposal,

we are all on board. It was an exciting time; there was a united position across the parliament and across the state. However, we remained concerned because then premier Peter Gutwein had announced the stadium back in March.

In August 2022 Premier Jeremy Rockliff confirmed that the stadium is not part of the AFL bid. He said, 'The stadium is not part of our bid, but of course the stadium is there to support AFL content in the future'.

What concerned us is that when it was announced then premier Peter Gutwein spoke about delivering four games at the start of the 2027 season. That is not necessarily in the future if you are talking about a budget period. It is not a priority for a state when you are in the grip of housing, health and cost-of-living crises. It was not a requirement of the taskforce report and it was not identified as a priority by Colin Carter, who authored the review of the taskforce report. Yet, for some reason, the Government has concluded Tasmania needs a stadium.

What we then saw was Liberal Bridget Archer MP coming out publicly saying that she was not at all comfortable with taxpayers footing the bill for a new stadium. She called for the Government to invest in health over AFL teams in Hobart, saying:

... I certainly don't think that the taxpayers of Tasmania should be picking up the tab for that when we are having a crisis in health systems and housing situations at the same time.

Bridget Archer gets it. She understands the Government's priorities should be addressing health and housing and the cost of living. The Government remained ignorant to calls from the community to focus its effort and prioritise the fundamental responsibilities of government and not a stadium.

On 6 September, Premier Rockliff said he was open to the idea of a stadium at Macquarie Point but said, 'We will not be dictated to by the AFL when it comes to building our own stadium'. What a laugh. If you are not being dictated to by the AFL, why on Earth are you doing this, when report after report demonstrates it is not a priority? Person after person tells you it is not a priority in the community because they are struggling to make ends meet. You are saying, 'We're going to stand up to the AFL and are going to make clear what our position is independent and irrespective of what they think'.

That is what you said on 6 September but they were empty words because, on 19 September, Macquarie Point was confirmed as the new stadium site and who had been down here just before having a poke around? The AFL and it was their preferred site.

Even though Premier Jeremy Rockliff pretended that he was not going to be pushed around by the AFL, he has been. He has been too weak to stand up to them, too weak to stand up for Tasmanians, for the taxpayers of our community. Instead he has rolled over to the demands of the AFL and has signed a blank cheque for them to build a stadium at Macquarie Point with Tasmanian taxpayer dollars.

The economic arguments the Government relies upon are drawn largely from the PricewaterhouseCoopers feasibility study they have commissioned through the budget process. Already taxpayer money has been spent on this project and that is important to note. There has been an allocation of \$1.5 million to engage consultants to tell the Government whether the

stadium is a good idea. I reckon that is a waste of money. It is not a good idea and we can solve this problem right now if you listen to the community, which is the point of this motion. You could reallocate that \$1.5 million and instead of paying consultants you could listen to the voices of the Tasmanian community by holding a referendum on whether there should be a stadium.

That PricewaterhouseCoopers report indicated there would be 44 events per year with projected attendance figures significantly higher than that of actual attendance numbers. The assumption is based on estimated capacity of 23 000 seats in the stadium at Macquarie Point. That in and of itself is interesting because when a stadium was first proposed it was spoken of to host crowds of about 27 000. Now it is a 23 000-seat stadium. It would be far better and easier to upgrade York Park so that the capacity there could accommodate exactly the same number of spectators, and arguably they go close to that already. We are not talking about a significantly different stadium size compared to the one the Tasmanian community already has.

It is not like people are lining up for hours to try to get into a stadium and cannot get a seat. They are not being turned away from stadiums. It is not like we need to build a massive new stadium to host all the spectators who want to see a game of footy. They can already get a seat in Tasmania at any of the stadiums where we already host AFL content. I will tell you where people cannot get into and that is the emergency department. They certainly cannot get into the emergency department, and again the Health minister has his priorities wrong.

The Premier was asked this week to explain what the average attendance was at an A-League game last year in Tasmania, because the PricewaterhouseCoopers modelling, which the Government is relying upon to underpin its entire economic argument, assumes there would be 11 500 people turn up on average to every single A-League game, and they are proposing to hold six of those in Tasmania every year. The average attendance at an A-League game last year in Tasmania was 1500. I do not know whether the Government was maybe just adding a zero here or there to make it look better when they provided information to PricewaterhouseCoopers when they did the feasibility study but it seems very strange to us that the Government assumes there will be such a jump in attendance because people can watch a game of A-League at a stadium that is different from the stadiums they can watch it in now.

I know from conversations I have had with people involved in A-League in our state that they do not believe you are going to have that many people turn up to those matches either. They are asking for facilities that will help them accommodate 5000 or 6000 to attend an A-League match. That is what they think would be reasonable to expect from Tasmanians. This Government is saying you will get double that, when the evidence from A-League matches on average in Tasmania demonstrate you get about 1500.

The dodgy figures the Government is relying on to underpin its economic arguments have holes all through them. Their reckless allocation of taxpayer funds to a stadium that hardly anybody wants is another demonstration of the poor economic management of this Government and their inability to get their basics right. This is very problematic modelling, and the Government has not explained its reliance upon it or the assumptions that underpin it very well. That is because they cannot explain it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not just us who have been raising concerns about the Government's proposal to build a stadium in the south of the state. Former Liberal premier Robin Gray and his son Ben announced their opposition to the Hobart stadium, saying, "The

effect of this will mean that football in the north will die'. That was former premier Robin Gray. His son Ben Gray said, 'It is hard to see any real AFL financial contribution here, instead the Tasmanian taxpayers are funding it'. He went on to call it a 'dud deal'. It is a dud deal, Mr Deputy Speaker. Ben Grey also stated:

You will end up with games at much lower attendances as a result, and so the restaurants, the bars, the hotels, the cafes and all the retailers in Launceston will be significantly negatively impacted by the AFL and the Government's choice of moving all good games to Hobart.

He also stated that such a precinct would disadvantage the north even more with a loss of activity, and the expenditure will starve the state of recreational and other funds for decades. This is also a significant concern for us.

As I mentioned at the outset, AFL content in the north has been about driving the northern economy over winter; acting as a stimulus, as an event strategy, to create jobs, and to provide more economic vibrancy to the north of the state. The Government's failure to be clear about how many games will be played in the north and how many blockbuster games will be played in the north is causing anxiety. We are talking about people's existing jobs in the north. The Government seems ignorant of that concern.

This is not about north versus south. It is about starving an area that has become dependent on a northern events strategy underpinned by good AFL content because you want to feed a different part of the state, which just happens to be the south. There are serious negative consequences if the Government proceeds down this path.

The Examiner's editorial criticises the economic analysis undertaken and the assumptions it is based on, saying, 'It is built on some rather dodgy foundations'. It claims there is no evidence of the capacity to attract six or seven A-league and NRL games or stadium tours that would attract 16 000 people. It is also critical that analysis is based on seven rostered home games in the south and only four in the north, which was not what was previously promised. There is still no certainty about whether any blockbuster games will be played in the north and the impact that will have on the northern economy.

Most recently we had the opinion piece from the former CEO of Macquarie Point, Mary Massina, published in the *Mercury*. It is important to quote some of the remarks made by Ms Massina. She said -

Regardless of the outcome of the funding ask of the federal Government of 50 per cent of today's construction costs of a stadium, the site is burnt from a private investment perspective.

The 18 small business tenants are faced with uncertainty and Tasmanians are faced with yet another development argument that just cements the belief that no large-scale development can occur here.

The Government has not once spoken about those 18 small businesses that are currently tenanted at Macquarie Point. It has not once talked about how they will be supported in any transition should the Government proceed with its proposal to build a stadium there. It has not once talked about those jobs, the livelihoods of people that are built around careers that have

been made because of their businesses there. Just brush them off. Brush off comments from any detractor. Put it in a bin called 'parochial politics', tie everything up with a neat bow and argue that explains any opposition.

It is lazy politicking from the Government to be so dismissive of legitimate concerns from small businesses, from people across the state who are worried about the Government's priorities, which we say are the wrong priorities. They are not saying these things because it is just a flippant conversation piece. They are saying it because they are genuinely worried. They know the state is struggling, and they know that people cannot access the basics. They know this Government cannot deliver for them, yet they can see the Government spending all this time and effort progressing a stadium proposal. They are wondering what the hell they elected.

This was not the Government they elected. It is not the premier they elected. It is not the Cabinet they elected. They have wound up with something completely different from what they thought they were getting. It is a Government with a completely different set of priorities to the Tasmanian community.

Time expired.

[4.14 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for bringing forward the debate today on a referendum. It is the first time in my two decades of politics that I have seen an Opposition or anyone bring forward a referendum against economic growth and jobs. The first time ever that I have seen anyone suggest a referendum simply because they are not willing to decide for themselves.

Not only is the Labor Party fueling the debate, it is fueling disunity, fueling parochialism, undermining our opportunity to have our own AFL team and the 19th licence. Reckless actions are putting at risk our three-decade dream of Tasmania securing our own AFL team in the national competition and bringing forward for the first time a truly Australian Football League and AFLW national competition. It is being put at risk by the Labor Party because it sees short-term political gain.

You talk about unpopularity, and you talk about people not being enamoured with certain decisions. Ms White, I have taken good notice of people's views on your referendum idea and that is not popular either. I do not know who came up with it in the party room, if it went through the party room, but I know the discussion once you thought of the idea, 'Let us get this out of the way as soon as possible, please. We have thought about this daft idea, let us get this off the table as soon as possible because it is not going down well with the Tasmanian people'.

Tasmanian people expect leadership and they expect elected governments to make decisions. The irony of this discussion is that the Labor Party took to the last election its own stadium idea, with no costings. No mention of consultation. You lost the election. We were elected to deliver services and deliver on our commitments. Part of that discussion was securing an AFL team for Tasmania and we will. We will not be distracted and disheartened by your petty politics always there to undermine the dream of our own AFL team.

We should unequivocally want an AFL team for Tasmania that will bring benefits for all Tasmanians. South, north, north-west, regional Tasmania, all those who are passionate about the AFL code, want an AFL licence, the 19th licence, and want the AFL team.

A stadium will never supersede the priorities of the Government around economic growth and jobs, health, education, public safety and housing. They will always be our priorities. It is clearly evident that they are our priorities. You can look at the investment in housing, the \$1.5 billion that so often our minister for Housing, Guy Barnett, talks about. He is doing a fantastic job of investing and has made significant reforms in housing. I am very proud of his achievements.

Over the next four years we have invested \$11.2 billion across the forward Estimates in our health system. We spend \$7.25 million per day on average on our health system. It is not only about the investment we are making, it is the reforms we are making in key areas. It is the work we are doing with clinicians and the health professionals to bring down those waiting lists, which I have said are far too high. There were 12 200 in January 2021 and they are now under 9000 for the first time since 2018. The Government is proud of that. When you have good economic development, good budget management, you can invest in key essential services. The work we are doing in Health is paying dividends. That is why we need to keep the momentum going when it comes to our economy, our jobs, our growth, our infrastructure. Part of that idea and the proposal for a stadium is that it will provide 4200 jobs during that construction. You can dismiss that all you like, Mr Winter, southern member. You should know better.

Those jobs will be spread right across Tasmania, just like the investment in the Bridgewater bridge. I went to a function a few months ago. A local business owner was excited about the fact that they have a multi-million-dollar contract to support the construction of the Bridgewater bridge. The benefits of a large construction and infrastructure are spread right across the state, generating \$300 billion in economic activity during the construction of the stadium, attracting new industry businesses and events, supporting local retail business and hospitality and tourism, 950 full-time equivalent jobs once operational and delivering \$85 million a year in economic activity on top of the \$120 million a year our own AFL and AFLW teams would deliver. That is over \$2 billion in economic activity across our state over the course of the next two decades.

Yet, what we have is Labor wanting to waste millions of dollars on a referendum because they cannot back themselves in and make a decision. We are a government that is elected to make decisions. I recognise some of those decisions are challenging decisions for the community but if they are the right decisions, we will back them every time and argue the case.

Frankly, whoever came up with the referendum idea in your party room, demonstrates the weakness of the Opposition which is not prepared to draw a line in the sand and make a decision for themselves. You were found out last week by the Leader of the Greens, when you refused to support Ms O'Connor's motion. That demonstrated, once again, as I have said before, the slow back down that you are making with respect to this stadium proposal. You want to waste millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on a referendum because you do not have the courage to make decisions yourself.

Let us hear what others have to say about your referendum proposal. You spoke about how popular you thought the referendum proposal was. The editor of the *Mercury* said:

'Once again, the Labor Party' -

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can groan all you like but:

Once again, the Labor Party is doing its best to scare off the AFL from coming to Tasmania with more outrageous statements ... Labor's current stance could be the death knell for an AFL side in Tasmania. Every time it says 'no' and creates a fuss, Labor is putting at risk a 30-year-long dream for our state.

As I have said myself many times.

Along with a referendum call, Labor is trying to stir up trouble between the northern and southern Tasmanians by saying the north is going to lose out in the AFL deal.

Which it will not. We made that very clear.

Dr Broad - Four games. It is supposed to be 50/50 on a rotation basis.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Dr Broad, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Speaker, the editor goes on:

It is hard to fathom why so much effort is being put into panning the stadium just weeks away from the AFL making an historic decision on the franchise. It is hard to see the benefits of Labor politicking in this way right now.

That is what it is - absolute politicking, short-term politics that will potentially damage the long-term gain for Tasmania. Other Tasmanians are saying:

Let's add another \$50 million to the invoice by running a pointless referendum. We vote in government to get things done and I'd rather see that money invested into the stadium, fewer politics from an out-of-ideas Opposition.

Referendum? What a load of political rubbish.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF -

'Referendum? What a load of political rubbish. Labor is single-handedly destroying any chance Tasmania will ever have of building an AFL team'.

'Labor, I have been a supporter of yours, but you have this completely wrong. All you are doing is proving the naysayers right by going along this ridiculous path that smacks of politicking and parochialism. Get on board. This will be the best thing to happen in Tasmania.

And it goes on. It mentions public comments -

Dr Broad - Who is it? You are quoting someone. Who is it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr ROCKLIFF -

'Labor stands for factional infighting and instability. Tasmanian Labor have lost the plot. One week they are complaining about lack of progress on the site; the next they are wanting a referendum on a proposed great project for the site, delaying it even further.'

Obviously, Tasmanians, when they are making some public comment think you are a joke. You are a joke. This is serious because for 30 years our state has been trying to get our own AFL team. When it comes to the crunch, when we should be united on this matter, the Labor Party in opposition plays short-term politics.

I will tell you this: we will not be distracted, like we will never be distracted from investing in our schools, which we are. Mr Jaensch is in the Chamber today, building again that system of equity in our education system, investing in infrastructure in schools, more resources in schools, the fairer funding model, ensuring that we support our students with disability, ensuring that we are investing in trauma-informed practice in our schools, so, every single child around Tasmania has that opportunity and that fundamental right of a quality education irrespective of circumstance or background.

There are others around Tasmania who support the stadium proposal. Luke Martin, CEO of Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania - you can laugh all you like:

The project was a once-in-a-generation investment for Tasmania. Right across Australia we have seen these types of stadium infrastructure investments transform cities by igniting a whole new wave of economic activity that creates jobs and stimulates investment.

This is what we want to do: stimulate investment. Jobs for the benefits of all Tasmanians. We have spoken about the public transport infrastructure and the northern transport corridor, as well as the ferry service, which we as a government started. I am pleased to see the federal Labor Government also committing to that as well.

Dominic Baker, CEO of Cricket Tasmania, said:

Having a world-class stadium would give the state significant leverage with Cricket Australia to ensure more international games were played in the Apple Isle, particularly after appearing to outgrow Blundstone Arena.

Steve Owen, CEO of Tasmania Hospitality Association, said:

The stadium would benefit hospitality businesses from Hobart all the way to Burnie.

Rebecca Ellston, Executive Director of the Property Council of Tasmania, said:

The proposed precinct would encourage investors to purchase other economic drivers like hotels as well as retail, office and recreational spaces. It gives Tasmania the opportunity to become a world class destination for investment, migration and also liveability.

Furthermore, David Boon, former Australian cricketer and Cricket Tasmania Chairman said:

To have a state-of-the-art facility that is multi-purpose can only be of benefit, and I think it will be a great asset not only for Hobart, but for Tasmania.

Gary Baker, former VFL player, said:

We can't afford to make the same mistakes as Victoria. When I first started playing footy at Waverly Park it was a great stadium, but because it was right out in the hills, it only lasted 20 or 30 years because people wanted the stadium in the city. They wanted to fly in and stay in the hotels and walk to the stadium and the restaurants and bars and all of that and that's why they've built Marvel Stadium ... so that's what it's all about.

Brendan Self, the Managing Director of Vandemonian Touring, said:

It excites us to bring big acts to Tasmania. ... Any infrastructure or concepts that provide this, we should consider. It's about time Tasmanian music lovers invested in their own economy. ... I don't think there is a music lover that wouldn't like to see ACDC or the Foo Fighters come to Tasmania. We often miss out and have to travel and invest in other economies. Instead, we could be investing in our state, our own economy, and bring people to our beautiful state.

It goes on. John X, entertainer and promoter, said:

The stadium will not only host elite sporting events but will become a major arts and entertainment precinct, allowing the state to host major international acts often left to the rest of Australia. We've got to keep up with not only the rest of the country but the rest of the world and I think we are as good as they are, so let's at least give ourselves a chance to prove it. Not only will sport come to this precinct but you will also get concerts, acts and big shows that tour in arenas that we would normally have to jump on a plane and pay accommodation somewhere else to go to see ...

Rob Mallett, CEO of the Tasmanian Small Business Council, said:

The arts and entertainment industry have been crying out for this sort of thing.

The stadium's ability to draw new visitors to Tasmania would have huge benefits for the state's economy. It is a smart move for the state, it gives the federal government and private equity the chance to have skin in the game. A stadium like this with a pre-planned agenda of events will give small business the opportunity to know there'll be thousands of people flocking into the city and the state. ... Some people will come for major footy matches, others will come for concerts, and they will do their five or seven or ten days here, and the concerts will be a highlight, along with the beauty of our island.

Jack Riewoldt, an ex-Tasmanian and Richmond Football Club player, said:

... a roofed stadium in the CBD - can you imagine what that's going to do for Tasmanian football? For the economy? For jobs in Tasmania? For all sorts of sports ... and provide so many opportunities for the Tasmanian community to continue to shine on a national and world stage.

Professor Tim Harcourt, chief economist for IPPG, said:

As well as investing \$750 million into the stadium precinct, the Tasmanian Government will leverage the Tasmanian AFL club to life, social and mental wellbeing across the state, investing in community footy and local sports and social capital. As well as the Hobart stadium precinct, in the tradition of the Packers, the Wisconsin-based NFL franchise, the Tasmanian Government is also making initial investment into Dial Park in the north-west and UTAS Stadium in Launceston to ensure AFL games are spread around the state.

They are a few Tasmanians who believe in a vision for Tasmania and an AFL team and understand that good governments can walk and chew gum at the same time, invest in essential services and key sporting infrastructure as well. It is not just southern Tasmania. UTAS Stadium, a fantastic ground, will get \$65 million. Dial Park is another fantastic facility which is really tremendous. I do not know if members have ever been there, but it is a great combination and partnership between local, state and federal government to the tune of \$12 million, if my memory serves me correctly, and we are investing another \$25 million into what is a fantastic facility for the north-west coast.

This is great infrastructure that will support the 19th licence and ensure the sustainability of a Tasmanian team with our own colours and our own song that for generations in the future Tasmanians can really be a strong part of, and following the enormously hard work of many people over the course of the next three decades, we are nearly there. I will not do anything that will damage that opportunity to ensure that we can secure that 19th licence, but many Tasmanians are coming to wonder what the Labor Party truly believes in. Do they believe in securing the 19th licence and an AFL team or are they in such disrepair and such a rabble that they will clutch any single straw, no matter how bad it might be in terms of long-term damaging effect, for short-term gain? This is an example of it.

I do not mind the questions in question time asking us and scrutinising the proposal. What I object to is weak decision-making and political parties that are not prepared to stand up and make their own calls, because it is weakness, at the very least. I recognise the depth of community feeling when it comes to the stadium and people making comparisons of where investments should be applied. I can detail very easily the investments we are making in health, education, public safety and housing, which are clearly our priorities.

Governments are there to create and grow our economy, build momentum, create jobs and invest in those essential services that people deserve, but they also expect governments to make difficult decisions. We have made a few of those over the course of the last eight years. I remember those difficult decisions as minister for Education in our first budget, and we had to wear some considerable pain, but it was for long-term gain. I never backed away from those decisions because I knew that when you get the budget in good shape you can invest in the future. They were difficult decisions and I wore the brunt of that as minister for Education. I was pleased to do so once we had stabilised the budget, and continue to invest more in those essential services because we could.

We were very proud to advocate for that fairer funding model, the Gonski model of investing in growth funding and education in areas that matter in terms of literacy, numeracy and teachers in our schools. We are continually investing in more teachers in our schools, just like our health systems, with 1500 more FTEs across our health system since July 2020.

These are the benefits of strong financial management, growing the economy, having courage to make the right decisions, as unpopular as some of those decisions can be at times, and staying the course. This motion is all about demonstrating the weakness of an opposition that cannot make a decision. They would not back yourselves in, but last week Ms O'Connor moved her motion, which of course we disagreed with because it is fundamentally wrong for me to support a motion that would not want to lobby for funds for Tasmania. That was very foreign to me. We have a good relationship with the federal government, I have to say, more broadly.

You had your opportunity then to back yourselves in when Ms O'Connor called you out in a motion, and you did not. You spent two or three weeks here talking about Armageddon and the stadium, and what Armageddon and the stadium would bring, but when it came to the crunch you did not back yourselves in. This is what this referendum idea is about as well. You refuse to back yourselves in.

We will back Tasmanians every day because Tasmanians expect us to make courageous decisions that are the right decisions to grow the economy and to create jobs and to spread those rewards across essential services that Tasmanians quite rightly and thoroughly deserve. That is what this decision is about, not only creating jobs but the momentum to continue with our economy, of which we are very proud.

The CommSec report highlighted that just the other day. Tasmania is back on top in terms of those leading economic indicators. We are very proud of that, but that has come at no accident. That has been due to strong budget and financial management through the most disruptive times in generations with the COVID-19 pandemic, guiding Tasmanians, keeping Tasmanians safe, and ensuring Tasmanians remained in work throughout the pandemic. We emerged from the pandemic as one of the strongest states in Australia. We will continue that momentum, no matter how difficult some of the decisions we need to make.

The Tasmanian people might not always agree with us, but they expect us to make the right decisions for the future and not to be wrapped up in short-term, pathetic political games, like you have demonstrated by your utterly weak call. You have an inability to make your own decisions. It is a thoroughly weak call from a pathetic Opposition. We will not be distracted from the big game, which is about creating jobs, growing the economy and investing in essential services.

[4.41 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, of course the Greens will not be supporting this ridiculous, shallow and self-serving motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. Either Labor does not support the stadium or it does.

Mr Rockliff - It does not.

Ms O'CONNOR - It does not? Is that right? It is interesting, because for the last month or so in this place we have had question after question from Labor on the stadium because it sees a political weak point here for the Government. It most certainly is a political weak point for the Government. Then something happened in a Labor Caucus meeting late last week where some political genius - I do not know if Dr Broad is driving strategy or who is - in there said, 'We are going to take this one step further. We are under a bit of heat. I know, let us have a referendum'. This is the day after Prime Minister Albanese was in Tasmania. There is a picture on Ms White's Facebook page of her having a nice cuppa with the PM.

Dr Broad - You are drawing a long bow here, whatever you are doing.

Ms O'CONNOR - Whatever. A nice cuppa with the Prime Minister. It was on that same day, from memory, that the Prime Minister said in response to a question from journalists about whether or not the Commonwealth would fund the stadium, 'We have not seen a business case'. Not a word came out of the very savvy politician Anthony Albanese's mouth about, 'We would rather see \$375 million invested in homes for Tasmanians or a better public health system, a fair wage for public servants'. Not a word of caution about the stadium came out of the Prime Minister's mouth. All he said was, 'We haven't seen a business case'. This means that the door is still open to federal funding for this unnecessary stadium.

I can almost guarantee, since this stadium was first announced that Ms White has not picked up the phone to the Prime Minister's office or written to the Prime Minister's office to say, 'Please, we are imploring you on behalf of Tasmanians who cannot find a home or who are languishing on the elective surgery waiting list, to rule out the Commonwealth funding this extra stadium for Tasmania'.

It did not happen. Last week we gave the Labor Opposition an opportunity to be honest with Tasmanians about its position on this stadium. We were open to amendment on our motion. We did not get an amendment. Labor voted against a motion which expressed opposition to the stadium and called on Labor to write to the Prime Minister to rule out funding for this stadium. We put it forward because Tasmanians have a right to know whether this Labor Party stands for anything. It stands for very little. Every day it waxes and wanes. With Labor it is always about the politics first. What is the politics here? The question the Greens ask ourselves on every big issue is, 'What is the right thing to do?'

Dr Broad - You play politics as hard as anyone in here.

Ms O'CONNOR - We do. That is our test. I am not saying we do not get political because we do because we are operating in a political space. I am not stupid.

The first question we ask ourselves is, 'What is the right thing to do here?' I do not know when the last time was that Labor asked itself that question. Was it before the 2018 election when it had a principled position on getting poker machines out of pubs and clubs? Was that the last time it put what is the right thing to do first? No Tasmanian will forget that, within political milliseconds of losing the 2018 state election, Labor did a triple reverse somersault on the policy.

This is your motion, Dr Broad. This is your ridiculous motion, which is a desperate attempt to provide cover for yourself when you flip on the stadium. There was a story in the paper the other day, with Mr Winter standing down at Macquarie Point looking concerned, doing something that Labor is very good at, and that is hand-wringing. Mr Winter was at Macquarie Point saying, 'We are concerned about this development, we do not think it is feasible'. Not, 'We are concerned about this development because Tasmania already has stadiums that can do the job'.

Dr Broad - What did you say about the floating stadium? Did you point out it was not feasible? We did and we were right.

Ms O'CONNOR - You either support this stadium or you do not. It is a black and white question.

Dr Broad - We do not.

Ms O'CONNOR - If you do not, what are you doing putting forward motions like this?

Dr Broad - Trying to stop it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Right, okay.

Dr Broad - If you get a referendum it would be a resounding victory and the end of the stadium. That is why. It is fairly simple.

Ms O'CONNOR - So this is your strategy?

Dr Broad - I did not say that.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am just checking.

Dr Broad - This is what a referendum does. It would be a convincing win. You talk to Tasmanians. What do you think they would say?

Ms O'CONNOR - Of all the emails that come into my inbox on the issue of the stadium, I have so far received one in support. It was a very thoughtful email and I responded to it as reasonably as possible. The mood of the people who I read of or talk with or who write to me is of strong opposition to this stadium. There is a level of resentment. The resentment is multilayered.

In and around nipaluna/Hobart the resentment is about basically being told, 'We know this is your city but you are going to have a stadium at Macquarie Point'. There is resentment about a development of such magnitude and expense on Macquarie Point without any conversation with the people who live here. The other resentment is about a very reasonable perception of waste. There is a recognition that we have a number of stadiums in Tasmania but in terms of stadiums fit for purpose for AFL or AFLW we have Bellerive and York Park. Bellerive as the crow flies is a kilometre over the river.

The next layer of resentment and bafflement is that a government could prioritise constructing a stadium when we have close to 5000 people on the public housing waiting list and we have people who are dying waiting for an ambulance or for elective surgery. The resentment and opposition to this stadium is multilayered. You do not need an expensive referendum to establish that.

Come next April or May we will be halfway through a term. By the time funding is secured, contracts are signed, even the first sod is turned we will be on the cusp of another state election. Then it will be an issue in the south of the state. The Greens will make sure of it. I believe the timing of this proposal is very bad for the Government.

We do not support this motion because our position is firm. Tasmania does not need another massive stadium. Tasmania needs housing. Tasmania needs to invest in its people who are the fabric of our State Service. Tasmania needs to refurbish if necessary Bellerive, which is a beautiful stadium. Many Tasmanians are so proud when the cricket is on and you see those pictures of Bellerive and the river. It is the most beautiful location for a stadium anywhere in the country. Arguably, why would we not invest in that?

What will happen to Bellerive is that it will turn into a massive white elephant - and that is sad. That was another investment of public funds in another time by another government for the purpose of making sure we had a venue that was appropriate for national standard football and cricket games.

We do not support this ridiculous motion. Labor: make the argument and stick with the argument for why we do not need the stadium. You know people are with you. You know people in all corners at all points of the compass on this island have rejected this stadium proposal. I do not know what a referendum would cost, but it certainly would be expensive. We are not going to support this motion. We do not support the stadium, but we also do not support ridiculous political stunts.

[4.52 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we have a government and a premier who are talking about walking and chewing gum at the same time. If only he were not distracted by these follies, like trying to build a stadium. We already have a perfectly good stadium, three kilometres as the crow flies, across the river.

We understand that the Premier was not the one who suggested this in the first place. It was actually his predecessor, Mr Gutwein. Did this Premier know at that time that Mr Gutwein was going to announce what was a floating stadium at Regatta Point or was that a surprise, just like it surprised everyone else in the state? All of the sudden, out of the blue, came a floating stadium, with a beautiful artistic picture of a stadium that would be impossible to build - with a roof - and a whole bunch of claims that he has carried on for some time.

We know that a government is in place to make decisions, but a government is not in place to make stupid decisions. It is our job as Opposition to hold them to account, to hold any government to account when they seek to make stupid decisions. This is not the first time that the Government has come up with some folly, simply as a distraction. We remember, if we go back in history, when Sarah Courtney resigned as minister, what did we see then? Mr Gutwein, then premier, announced that they were going to put in a bid for the Commonwealth Games. This is equivalent to that. The only difference is that the Commonwealth Games were ruled out rather quickly because it was an outrageously stupid proposal. There is no way that Tasmania could ever host a Commonwealth Games at any scale. Then it became 'not the Commonwealth Games', it became, 'maybe we host a couple of events'. We had Mr Gutwein standing up and saying, 'We will host rowing at the Commonwealth Games', without knowing that it is not even on the optional list.

That is how farcical this Government got. It made stuff up, got everybody excited, ran around all the athletes who are currently in the Commonwealth Games, and got them excited about something that the Government could not deliver.

Now what have we seen? We have seen Mr Gutwein announce a floating stadium at Regatta Point. It was pretty obvious from even the first look at the site that this roofed stadium sitting on 20-, 30-, 40- metre concrete piers could never be built. To be honest, like the dog that caught the car, they try to make stuff up on the way.

What happens? The AFL takes this up, thinking, 'Wouldn't that be great?' It rains all the time in Hobart, apparently; not knowing that Hobart is the second driest capital in Australia, only beaten by Adelaide. You still need a roofed stadium. They come down to Tasmania and they tell the Premier where it has to be. Suddenly, the Premier gets all wishy-washy about whether this is part of the bid. He will not answer that question: is the stadium part of the bid? You talk about people wanting to be honest in this place. Will you be honest about that? Is the only way Tasmania is going to get an AFL team is to build a \$750 million dollar stadium at Macquarie Point? Is that part of the bid?

We get accused of trying to ruin the AFL's bid when we signed up to a deal that looks completely different from how it looks now. Everyone is on board for an AFL team; absolutely we want our own AFL team. We believe the state deserves our AFL team, but the key question is at what cost? It seems like the Premier is willing to write blank cheques. We know it is a blank cheque because he has no details. How can any Premier of this state make a sound financial decision about such a massive project when he will not and cannot even answer basic questions about a business case?

What he has done is he has fully signed up to it and it looks like he has made the AFL bid part of it without even knowing the details. How much it is going to cost to run? Is it going to lose money? How they are going to get these events that they are promising? He cannot even answer basic details about running costs, about what is going to happen with the escarpment - all those sorts of issues.

How are they going to have an event every eight days? That is what your economic study says. This is one of those 'wouldn't it be great?' moments. 'Wouldn't it be great to have the Commonwealth Games?' 'Wouldn't it be great to have the Olympics in Tasmania?' 'Wouldn't it be great to have the next rocket to the moon launch from Tasmania?' It would be great. All of those things would be great but they are not going to happen. You need the details, Premier.

What would it cost and how much will it cost to run every year? What are you saddling Tasmanians with? Stadiums lose money all around the country. You are pretending that this economic study says it is a real winner: 44 events, including six A-league games; seven NRL matches; international cricket; international rugby; concerts - a major event in Hobart every eight days. We are not New York. That is why we need a realistic business case. You cannot produce one because it does not exist because it is built on flimsy foundations, just like your floating stadium. Yet, what you are doing is signing up the rest of Tasmania to this folly: \$750 million: dig a big hole at Macquarie Point, and pour it in.

If you get your way and this stadium gets built, it is not just going to be \$750 million. It is going to be way more. It is going to be a ball and chain around any government that comes in because it will continually need money to keep it going and that has to come from somewhere. How do you expect us to sign a blank cheque? You will not provide details. It was something that was a bit of a media stunt because Jane Howlett had resigned as minister and you needed a distraction, just as the then premier announced the Commonwealth Games when Sarah Courtney resigned. This is no way to run a state government. This is no way to make decisions. This is not visionary. This is a delusion. That is what this is. Yet you are backing it in. You seem like this is going to be your piece as Premier, the thing that you can hang your hat on -

Ms O'Connor - Ring Albo. Save us from the stadium.

Dr BROAD - As we have seen, this Government is failing all around.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, you know you could. You haven't got the guts.

Dr BROAD - What do you mean?

Ms O'Connor - Pick up the phone to the Prime Minister. You could save us from this stadium. Why don't you? You've never responded to that, nor has your leader. No, you don't want to take a position that isn't posturing.

Dr BROAD - Yes, thank you. You have a government that is failing in Education, failing in Health. The Premier gets up and quotes all the magnificent things that he is doing. It is a folly. You know it is a folly.

Time expired.

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

The House divided -

AYES 8

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

NOES 14

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch

Ms White
Mr Winter

Ms Johnston
Ms O'Connor
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Tucker
Dr Woodruff
Mr Young (Teller)

PAIRS

Ms O'Byrne

Mr Street

Motion negatived.

WAIVER OF GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr YOUNG (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, in accordance with standing order 42(d), I indicate the Government Private Members is waived for this day's sitting.

GUARDIANSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (ADVANCE CARE DIRECTIVES) BILL 2021 (No. 4)

TASMANIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL BILL 2020 (No. 25)

Bills returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

ANIMAL WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 42)

Second Reading

[5.07 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

Animal welfare is an important issue, and Tasmania's Animal Welfare Act 1993 is robust legislation that ensures the welfare of animals, including pets, livestock and wildlife.

The act was always intended to be improved and enhanced in line with community standards, new knowledge and real-world experience with its operation.

The intent of the act is to promote continuous review, and improvement of Tasmania's animal welfare system is reflected in the establishment and functions of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) under sections 39 and 40. The AWAC provides advice to the minister on animal welfare matters, and its membership is drawn from a diverse range of

government, industry and community organisations with particular interest and expertise in animal welfare issues.

One of AWAC's core legislative functions is to conduct an ongoing review of the laws relating to animal welfare, and to recommend to the minister changes in animal welfare legislation. The act has been amended several times in the three decades since its commencement. The most recent of these amendments was in 2013-14.

Since then, officers are responsible for on-the-ground animal welfare investigations and enforcement. Both government officers and officers employed within the RSPCA have identified the need for additional improvements in the act.

The AWAC was also asked by the then minister to review the act and make any recommendations on future amendments. These two processes identified the need for a suite of further amendments to the act, which led to the development of the amendment bill that is now before the House.

I will take the House through the key amendments proposed in the bill. However, before I do, I would like to note that this bill is the product of advice and public consultation.

As I indicated earlier, the amendments proposed are the outcome of a review conducted by the AWAC, which represents key Tasmanian animal welfare stakeholders including the RSPCA, local government, Animals Australia, and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association.

The bill was also released for a public consultation period of four weeks, which closed on 20 July.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tasmania) received 85 written submissions on the draft bill from a wide cross-section of the community. All the submissions were considered carefully by NRE Tasmania prior to the bill's introduction to parliament.

I want to briefly take the opportunity to thank all the people who have contributed to the development of the bill and made submissions during the consultation process. These contributions are essential to ensuring that the bill is fit for purpose, and that the act continues to reflect contemporary community expectations and standards in relation to animal management and welfare.

Mr Speaker, I will now move on to explaining the key amendments to the act that are being proposed.

The first of these is to amend the animal cruelty offence in section 8 of the act to specifically ban pronged collars, which are used to correct animal behaviour by inflicting pain and discomfort. The ban was first recommended by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee after its 2013 review of the act. It will apply to the use of pronged collars on any species of animal, even though such collars are primarily used for training dogs.

The ban on pronged collars is supported by the national and Tasmanian branches of the RSPCA and the Tasmanian branch of the Australian Veterinary Association. They say the use

of pronged collars is both physically and emotionally harmful to dogs and does not constitute a reasonable or justifiable training method when compared with other available methods that do not involve inflicting pain.

The ban will bring Tasmania into line with Victoria where pronged collars have been prohibited since 2008. There is also currently a proposal by the Queensland Government to ban their use. The import of pronged collars into Australia is prohibited under commonwealth legislation.

The next amendments I talk about are aimed at improving and simplifying the conduct of court prosecutions under the act.

The bill includes amendments to provide for an alternative conviction under section 8 of the act, 'Cruelty to animals' if the person is not found to have been intentional or reckless in causing suffering under section 9, 'Aggravated cruelty'. This removes the current need for duplicitous charges under both sections 8 and 9 where the amendments and alternative verdict on a single charge will be available in cases where the court finds a person has committed cruelty through neglect or omissions to perform a duty in breach of section 8 but is not satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the cruelty was intentional or reckless in breach of section 9.

There is also a proposed amendment to section 3A of the act which deals with the care or charge of animals. Currently a person can potentially evade their legal duty of care by abandoning an animal and denying ownership. In such situations, despite there being *prima facie* evidence of the owner's identity, proving beyond doubt who is or was responsible for the care or charge of an animal can be unnecessarily difficult and expensive for investigating authorities. This problem often arises in cases where the apparent owner of a mistreated or abandoned animal obstructs an investigation or refuses to cooperate with animal welfare officers.

The amendment will enable an evidentiary presumption that a person had control, custody or possession of an animal to be created by an allegation in a formal prosecution complaint. A defendant can rebut the presumption by producing evidence that shows, on the balance of probabilities, they did not have control or possession of the animal. For example, in the case of livestock such evidence could be the National Livestock Identification System records which indicate another person was the livestock owner or that they never had possession of the animal.

This amendment will allow the prosecution to require defendants to disprove an allegation they had the care or charge of an animal. In other words, to reverse the onus of proof on that aspect of the case. I want to emphasise it is not intended that this amendment will change the standard of proof that is needed to convict a person of any offence under the act. A court will still need to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt of a defendants' guilt to convict. The prosecuting authority will also need to be able to prove beyond reasonable doubt all elements of an animal welfare offence with admissible evidence and that will always require a great deal more evidence than simply making an allegation in a complaint.

The amendment will likely provide added incentive for animal owners to properly identify their animals, to trace and manage their animals' movements and to keep good records. A person who has done these things will have evidence to rebut false allegations regarding their ownership or possession of an animal. Apart from the legal protection an added benefit

for livestock owners is enhanced animal traceability, which supports a rapid and effective response to a disease outbreak.

I will now move onto amendments aimed at clarifying the functions and powers of animal welfare officers, particularly in respect of the entry to premises and the possession of animals. Section 16 of the act requires amendment to give authorised officers the power to enter premises, including dwellings, in an emergency such as fire or flood, to provide immediate assistance to animals in urgent need. This power to enter a premises without a warrant will only be used in situations where an emergency exists or where the animals are in actual imminent danger.

The next amendments, additions to section 17 and the insertion of section 17A in the act are aimed at expanding and clarifying the scope of an officer's power to take possession of animals.

Amendments to section 17(1) add new grounds and replace the word 'and' with 'or'. These amendments will enable an officer to take possession of an animal if they reasonably believe that any one or more of the following grounds exist:

An animal welfare offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed in respect of an animal; or

The animal requires medical treatment by a veterinary surgeon to relieve or reduce the pain or suffering of the animal; or the animal's life is endangered; or

The animal's pain or suffering will be unreasonably or unjustifiably prolonged.

The changes will complement the extension of powers under section 16, which allow entry to premises or dwellings in the case of an emergency. Insertion of the new section 17A into the act will enable a magistrate to order that an animal be removed from the custody of a person if satisfied that without the order the welfare of the animal is at risk.

This new provision was necessary to enable a magistrate to make such orders to prevent animal cruelty on the application of an officer and purely for welfare reasons. The act currently only allows for such orders to be made by a court after cruelty has occurred, where the owner of the animal has been prosecuted and found guilty of an offence.

The meaning of 'disposal of an animal' has also been clarified to include euthanasia, sale or re-homing. Including the options available for animal disposal in the legislation from euthanasia to sale or transfer of ownership to the RSPCA or the Crown, will allow for better animal welfare outcomes and will align Tasmania with similar provisions in other states.

The bill also amends section 24 of the act to reduce the time for which carcasses of animals euthanised by officers must be kept from seven days to 48 hours. Holding carcasses can create difficulty in cases where appropriate storage may not be available, particularly for large animal carcasses. Carcasses for animal welfare cases usually have no commercial value and there are disposed of by deep burial in a municipal landfill.

This amendment has no direct bearing on animal welfare, but enables better management of carcasses, with faster disposal if required. It will reduce the cost of responding to animal welfare cases where animals are euthanised as a last resort.

That last point leads me to the next amendments, which provide for early pre-trial cost-recovery from animal owners for care of seized or treated animals and to remove doubt that this applies to costs incurred by the Crown.

The amendments allow a court to make cost orders, so the owner can be required to pay any cost and expenses properly incurred by a person, including the government, in providing care or treatment to an animal. This promotes more efficient functioning of the legislation by alleviating the burden on the public purse to bear the costs of animal care. This person is particularly important in cases involving large numbers of animals, or protected periods of care.

At present, section 22 of the act provides for cost recovery by a court order, but this must follow a final determination of court proceedings, which can take years.

Section 45(2) of the act currently provides a general head of power for a person to recover cost of functions performed under the act, irrespective of whether the matter related to court proceedings. However, there was some doubt that this section applies to the Crown. The reason for this is that section 41 of the Interpretation Act (No. 31) excludes the Crown from references in legislation to a person. The act amendment will remove all doubt that the Crown can recover animal care and treatment costs.

Recent animal welfare investigations by NRE Tasmania have revealed difficulties where the offences have occurred in Tasmania, but parties or evidence involved in the offence are in another state. Investigation of such offences requires legislative functions to be performed outside of Tasmania, or extra territorially. However, in the absence of an expressed or implied intent for legislation to have extra territorial operation, these provisions can only operate within state borders. Accordingly, it is proposed to amend section 26, which enables officers to require persons to provide information to ensure that it can have extraterritorial operation. The amended section expressly empowers officers to obtain records, documents and other information from persons who are outside Tasmania. This will ensure animal welfare compliance investigations are not prevented or impeded by key witnesses and evidence simply leaving Tasmania.

Mr Speaker, the last amendments I will outline relate to animal research. In the draft bill released for public consultation, it was proposed to amend the act in three respects.

First, an amendment was proposed to allow an animal ethics committee to approve animal research that involves baiting and shooting activities that would otherwise breach section 10 of the act, and the use of animals to train other animals in breach of section 11.

NRE Tasmania received 19 submissions opposing this amendment. Submitters argued that it was difficult to conceive of situations where activities such as live animal baiting or shooting of captive animals would be acceptable research activities. After considering the submissions, it was decided not to proceed with this amendment.

Second, the bill will enable authorised disease surveillance and monitoring programs using accepted methodologies to be added to the current exemptions from animal research

licensing requirements. The current exemptions are observational studies, normal animal management operations, and veterinary treatment administered for the welfare of the animal. An example of exempt activity would be the taking of blood samples or disease status determination.

Third, the bill will make it an offence to threaten, intimidate or abuse an inspector, animal research-appointed, under section 36 of the act, as has always been the situation for officers appointed under section 13.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, this bill will deliver another round of improvements to ensure Tasmania retains an animal welfare system that reflects contemporary community standards, promotes humane animal management practices and, ultimately, delivers better protections to animals from cruelty in this state. I commend the bill to the House.

[5.22 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to debate on the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill 2022, and indicate at this point that Tasmanian Labor are supportive of the amendment bill.

I have listened with interest to the former minister for primary industries and water, who is carrying this through the lower House, and the narration of the process to this point. The substantive bill is 1993 - a long time ago - and I understand there have been a couple of efforts to amend the bill; I have not been around very long.

At the outset, it is important to state that the original act was formed a long time ago. There has been a large shift in community sentiment about animals and expectations regarding the welfare of animals, whether they be personal pets loved in the home, livestock loved on the farm, or whether they be wildlife. Communities are now engaged with and rely on animals for so many parts of their life, and rely heavily, in many circumstances, for living a full, active and engaged life as a result of their relationship with their animals.

This amendment bill represents a move towards quality animal welfare legislation. However, it is clear that this is not the end of the road in terms of a suite of amendments that will need to land so that we can say we have fantastic animal welfare legislation in Tasmania.

Having said that, and spending quite a lot of time interrogating the reasons for these amendments, the ways they have been framed and presented, and also asking questions about matters that have not been tabled for amendment today, I can understand where the state is on its journey, but implore the state to continue doing work to make sure that Tasmania progresses towards quality animal welfare legislation.

I do want to go through the amendments that have been proposed, and outline my understanding of the purpose of those. Obviously, any time we can make improvements to prosecution processes, strengthen powers for officers, clarify definitions or, in fact, correct errors in the substantive act, then those things should be supported.

Before we head into what will potentially be a long discussion on this bill, I think it is really important to make the point that the consultation was really rich for this set of amendments. I understand 89 submissions were received. Curiously, I have only taken or responded to one piece of legislation so far in my time here - but it said four of them were

blank, so I am not sure whether that was an error and people had made submissions that were not successfully received, or they in error submitted something. I hope that in the final set of submissions, everybody who had intended to submit had their submissions received.

With all the legislation I see come through this House, that is quite a significant number of submissions. It indicates the depth of care and determination - and professionalism, because a lot of them are from organisations - but a lot of them are personal reflections on the need for quality animal welfare legislation in Tasmania.

It is important to acknowledge how many there were, because there are going to be some proposed amendments over the evening, and I think it is important that all changes are given an opportunity to be considered broadly across the community.

Whether you are talking about pets in the home, livestock on a farm, or wildlife, there is a broad range of stakeholders and individuals who would want to understand what is actually progressing and happening in this place with amendments.

The amendments have been raised in different sorts of documents. Going through the amendments in no particular order, I am really pleased to see that where an allegation of cruelty to an animal is made, it is not simply okay for someone to deny they have ownership of that animal. Creating an evidentiary presumption, where it reverses that onus onto an individual, I think is really important.

In the submissions that I read, the conversations I have had, and the documentation provided, it is important to clarify that this does not change the onus of being able to set the standard of the complaint; it just says you cannot simply say it was not my animal, it was not in my possession, and therefore I do not have that responsibility. We are really supportive of that amendment coming through.

We are also very supportive of the amendment that increases the power to take possession of animals. There have been circumstances in the past where if you understood that something was likely to happen, you still could not act; you had to wait until an event occurred before you could actually take action. In circumstances where you reasonably believe that one or more events are going to occur, then we should be able to support our officers to take action. That is a really important amendment that is being proposed here.

Similarly, with the emergency entry powers. If there is an urgent need and an animal is in imminent or actual danger, it is really important we make that amendment so that support for the animal is not delayed.

Another one that was interesting to me - again because I am often going through legislation for the first time with this sort of level of detail - is the amendment where you can actually be charged with an offence, and if you are not successful in actually having a charge of that offence, then a subsequent charge can be made, where you do not need to actually have duplication of effort in the first instance. Therefore the provision for an alternative verdict is, I think, an important update that is being made to this legislation.

As already outlined by the minister who provided this information but where, in the past, there may have been an event occur but the person, either themselves, or the evidence to support an outcome or a verdict is in another state, that has prevented charges occurring in Tasmania.

To make sure that we have extra territorial applications of the power to require information is also a really important update to this act.

There was some comment on a way that you reduced the amount of time a carcass has to be kept. There was some confusion in the consultation with submissions that were made that it was reducing the time of an animal being held before the animal was euthanised. In fact, it is once that event has occurred, then the amount of time that the carcass has to be kept. As the minister outlined, it has raised with me some interest that this amendment was about the capacity to store carcasses as opposed to any other sort of important reason, but understanding that there were no negative submissions in terms of the reduction of time. There was a misunderstanding in the consultation.

It is worth putting on record, as I mentioned, there were a large number of submissions and as a result of the consultation, clarification was provided. I know some people who made a submission had a large range of questions that could have raised other questions in the community. As a result of the consultation, they were able to have their questions answered and have not included a submission in the documentation here for want of confusing the community and others around the nature of their questions.

It is great to see, as a result of consultation, that amendments were made to the amendments. Some things were removed but also clarification was provided. The clarification to the definition of disposal: there was an assumption by many, through the use of the act, that disposal meant euthanise. It does not simply mean that but it might be that it is rehomed or that it is sold, that the ownership changes. That has been an important improvement in the definition.

As outlined, in the cost recovery process, there is not such a significant delay in the recovery of funds. That could have been years - so, again, another improvement. I want to outline - and I think it is important - that one of the recommended amendments was under the animal research area. There were 19 submissions opposing an amendment. On reflection, it was determined the baiting and shooting, as a research exemption, no longer proceed and that amendment was abandoned. However, to remain included was 'the officer not to be threatened, intimidated or abused' and 'to ensure that officers are protected similarly' with that.

Finally, I want to finish on what I feel. It seems to me that almost all of these amendments are tidying up, correcting or improving what was already intended as opposed to adding anything new. However, there is one very new amendment, which is really important and that is the banning of pronged collars. That is an issue that is emotional for so many and particularly for animal pet owners who have deep relationships with their pets and can understand pets being managed by another person in a way that is not appropriate for an animal. Compared to many other provisions in these amendments, this is a significant amendment and one Tasmanian Labor absolutely supports.

I know in the consultation there was a deep list of a lot of other suggestions of things that could be considered within this amendment. I reflect back on the reading that I have done and the understanding that I have about the time from 1993 to now. One small set of amendments went through but there was a significant attempt to make amendments to the act, from memory, in 2014 - I might be wrong on that; however, it failed -

Ms O'Connor - I don't think it did. I think that is an error in the submission.

Ms FINLAY - My understanding is, not from reading but from a conversation, that there was a large suite of amendments. There was an attempt to have it journey both through the upper House and the lower House and that it was not successful. That caused some people who I have talked to to be, what I would call, potentially conservative or moderate in their discussions with me around how much work can be done at one time to ensure that there are successful outcomes in order for not to have progress made. Tasmanian Labor has taken the position to support this suite of amendments. We believe that it is really important, particularly with the banning of the use of pronged collars. However, in supporting this suite of amendments, we urge the Government to continue to not see this as the end of the road.

This is definitely not the end of the road for improvements to animal welfare legislation in Tasmania and to continue to identify suites of changes that need to be made to bring us up to what would be contemporary and best practice animal welfare legislation in Tasmania. That might mean that the 1993 legislation requires amendments but it also might mean an open mind to a new structure to animal welfare legislation in Tasmania.

Tasmanian Labor supports the amendments as written and urges the Government to continue the process of making amendments to this legislation. We look forward to hearing the conversation through the House this afternoon.

[5.36 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Tasmania's animal welfare laws are 29 years old and they are well overdue for substantial reform. While the Greens will be supporting the amendments in this legislation, we are also putting forward our own series of amendments. There are five amendments, which we have circulated, that we believe will contemporise the act and strengthen the rights of animals on this island.

It is unarguable that since the Animal Welfare Act 1993 was written and passed by parliament, science has moved on, in terms of our understanding of animal brains and behaviour but also community expectations have moved on as well. There is a much, much stronger and clearer understanding across the community that we need to have very robust animal protection laws and that the laws we have now in Tasmania are not up to scratch.

When you have a look at some of the polling, in terms of the community mood, the Australian Alliance for Animals' submission to the act review talks about polling by Roy Morgan Research, which in March of this year, found that 98 per cent of Australians consider animal welfare to be important; 94 per cent support laws that ensure animals are provided with a good quality of life; 97 per cent support laws that ensure animals are protected from cruel treatment; 80 per cent support government doing more to protect animal welfare; 74 per cent support the creation of an independent body to oversee animal welfare; and 85 per cent support animal welfare laws reflecting community expectations and best available science.

While we acknowledge that the amendments before the House today take the Animal Welfare Act forward somewhat, in many ways the amendments are not that substantial, in terms of recognising the intrinsic rights and the sentience of animals, and also in making sure that animal welfare officers and the inspectorate have all the powers that they need to protect and save animals from cruel treatment, aggravated cruelty or neglect.

We recognise that these amendments have been put forward in good faith but I just remind the minister that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee recommendations total 65.

I have had this document for nine years, which is why it is so dog-eared. We have followed quite closely the progress of reform in this area when you hold it against the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee report. The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is made up of some very mixed and varied stakeholders, from scientists and animal welfare legal representatives to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, the Local Government Association of Tasmania, Tasmania Police, sporting and recreation animal users, UTAS and the Australian Veterinary Association. Animals Australia is on the AWAC, as is the RSPCA. Both of those organisations made very solid contributions to the review process.

Of those 65 recommendations made by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, including one that we moved for a few years ago, which was to recognise the mental suffering of animals, 14 still have not been implemented even with these amendments. When you look at the composition of AWAC, you would not call them a radical body. This entity consulted very widely in developing its recommendations for reform of the act, and agreed by consensus that these 65 recommendations should be made to government.

We have not yet had what is necessary for animal welfare reform: that is reform that, instead of looking at animals through the lens of what use they are to us and only allowing the law to respond when an animal is suffering neglect or cruelty, we need laws that place an emphasis and an understanding on the rights of animals. We are but one species on this planet with myriad species that we share this planet with, yet we are driving countless species to extinction. We are responsible for industrial agriculture processes which are a form of torture. Our laws have not caught up yet.

An indication of how strongly so many Tasmanians feel, for example, about the cruelty behind greyhound racing and the fact that it is publicly subsidised, the Greens tabled the largest ever e-petition in the Tasmanian parliament's history, with around 13 500 signatures of people calling on the Government to end the public subsidies to the greyhound racing industry. As we know, if the subsidies ended, so would the industry end, because it is not an industry that can stand on its own two feet.

We have a series of amendments which have been put forward by either the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee or by Animals Australia in their submissions. Our core amendment is one that recognises the sentience of animals.

I am not going to go through the provisions in the legislation. Both the minister and Ms Finlay have done that. I will read into the *Hansard* a letter that was published in the *Mercury* newspaper signed by Dr Katrina Ward, a veterinary specialist; Dr Megan Alessandrini, CEO of Companion Animal Network Australia; Jan Davis, CEO of RSPCA Tasmania; Michael Sertori, CEO of Dogs' Homes; Carol Hughes, president of Dogs' Homes; Melissa Fraser, president of Tasmanian Dog Walking Clubs; and Greg Irons, Bonorong Wild Life Sanctuary director. This is a plea for the Government to contemporise our animal welfare laws by recognising that animals are sentient beings that have intrinsic rights, not just to exist, but to a good life. The letter says:

In the next week, the Tasmanian Government will be reviewing submissions made towards the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill. Our group of animal welfare organisations of activists have co-signed a submission calling for the Act to include recognition of animal sentience.

Sentience can be defined as the capacity of animals to perceive by the senses and thereby to consciously experience both negative and positive effects which are important to them and which influence their welfare.

In a nutshell, they are conscious and aware of both good and bad experiences. They feel suffering and enjoyment. Currently our laws are focused on punishing those who deliver unprovoked or unnecessary cruelty or deny basic survival needs such as food and water.

Our aim to include sentience as an overarching concept when considering welfare is simple and yet profound. It swings the focus from preventing bad outcomes to the provision of good welfare, meeting species needs, desires and emotional fulfilment.

The recognition of this word is important for the quality of life for the non-human species with which we share our ecosystem, environment, survival and families.

The Government should recognise it because it is basic. Think about it over your shared toast with your dog this morning or as you lay out the straw for your hens, as you avoid the fresh road kill or as you wonder how is the kindest manner to get rid of the rats in your compost bin.

We thank those individuals who have been advocating for this substantial and profound law reform, which is not novel. It has happened in many places in the world. Nineteen jurisdictions in the world, including in the EU and other Australian states and territories are moving towards or have, as is the case with the Australian Capital Territory, recognised sentience in its legislation. We thank those individuals and thank that wonderful network of groups and individuals who give voice to the voiceless, from Animals Australia to the Humane Society International, RSPCA, Let Greyhounds Run Free, Dogs' Homes of Tasmania: there are so many terrific people working to give voice to the voiceless and strengthen rights for animals.

Let us look at examples of failures in our treatment of animals that these amendments will not resolve. In industrial agriculture, some of those practices could certainly be made more humane. Just because it is legal does not make it right. What happens to dairy calves is something we should all deeply think about. Sow stalls: those incredible intelligent beings, pigs, and the way they are kept could do with improvement. We know that the horse racing industry is cruel. For members who did not see Caro Meldrum-Hanna's extraordinary and wrenching report on the cruelty in the horse racing industry from about three years ago, I recommend it if you have a tough stomach.

It showed the scale of slaughter and wastage of beautiful horses in this country which are not fast enough anymore or are costing too much to feed. It is disgusting. It revealed footage of former racehorses, terrified, being pushed basically into the grinder at an abattoir at Caboolture, just north of Brisbane. We know that there will be horse racing trainers and owners on this island, and we have been provided with information that tells us in all likelihood it is true, who make money from sending ex-racehorses off to the abattoir, off to the doggers. That is the side of the racing industry that most people do not see or think about. We should make ourselves aware of it.

We have seen the pictures. Some of those ex-racehorses end up at places like the greyhound trainer, Anthony Bullock's place, up on the Tamar, where they are shot, strung up from a tree and fed to Mr Bullock's miserable dogs. This is the same Mr Bullock who has been operating without a kennel licence for many years. Last week, the West Tamar Council, even though it had a discretionary power to say 'no' awarded Mr Bullock the kennel licence he has not had for so long. The greyhound racing industry, as we know, is banned in many parts of the world, including nearly every US state, except from about three US states, I believe.

We know this is a cruel industry and while we know that some changes have been made here, and we welcome and we helped to drive them, through the establishment of the parliamentary Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry, it is still an industry that breeds dogs for profit. It is still an industry that allows dogs to be kept in cages that are about one metre by one metre square. If anyone wants to see a picture of how Anthony Bullock keeps his dogs I have them and will happily forward them to you.

Of course, this is about all creatures great and small. We know that one of the most miserable lives on the planet is lived by a battery hen. Battery hens live in cages that are about the size of an A4 page. Their entire existence is within that cage and they are in there to produce eggs, at mass scale, for human consumption. When we were in government we made sure that there was a treasurer's instruction issued to government departments that they needed to procure cruelty-free eggs. We also had some money set aside, which we negotiated through the sale of the old TOTE, to buy back battery cages. Government changes. Liberals came in and reversed that treasurer's decision and reversed the ban on 1080 poison - overnight. Overnight those hens, which potentially could have looked forward to a happier life in a paddock in the sunshine, were locked back up in their cages because of a change of government policy.

There is the cruelty of puppy farms. I respect people's choices, but I always scratch my head when I see people buy pedigree dogs. It baffles me that someone would first of all want to spend that much money on a dog. Second, if you want to give a dog a good life, go to the dogs' home, or the RSPCA, because in my long experience of living with, and loving dogs, it is rescue dogs that are the best dogs because they are so grateful to have a good home. I do not think as a society we should be fostering puppy farms.

Then of course there is the shooting for sport and some of the cruelty that you see when shooters do not do a good job and leave animals suffering.

I want to go through some examples of animal sentience, because this is the foundation for our proposed amendment. One of the great survivors of the planet, an outstanding problem-solver that has been able to adapt to life on every continent, within every climatic extreme, except for Antarctica and the Arctic, are corvids - ravens and crows. They are the most extraordinary bird. Corvids remember faces. Corvids remember when a human has done something that they feel threatens them, or is designed to hurt them. Corvids remember what they regard, clearly, as good people and bad people. They are amazing communicators but they are also gift-givers. I have read stories of people who have been feeding their ravens and after some months they come to the raven feeding spot and there is a little gift made out of pine sprigs and a bottle top, that has been left there by the crows.

In Tasmania we have our own striking forest ravens, which are important to the ecology of this island. This article, which is in the *Science Alert* publication, simply says:

New research into the minds of crows has revealed a jaw-dropping finding. The canny corvids are not just clever they also possess a form of consciousness, able to be consciously aware of the world around them in the present. In other words, they have subjective experiences.

The article notes that:

[C]onsciousness is difficult to pin down in animals that do not speak with words that we understand, but it is the ability to be aware of oneself and the world around you, to know what you know and to think about that knowledge, it enhances problem-solving and decision-making, at both of which crows excel.

Then there are beautiful pigs, one of the smartest domestic animals on the planet. Pigs are amazing. This is a paper by an entity called Compassion in World Farming. It is about sentience in pigs. It is referenced and very clear and well-written. It says:

Pigs have been shown to recognise other pigs and distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar ones and find being with unfamiliar pigs stressful. Pigs are social animals. They show an awareness of when they are alone compared to when they are with other pigs and they find being alone stressful as indicated by physiological and behavioural indicators of stress. Their individual personalities affect how they respond to this stress.

All of these statements I am making are referenced by research.

Pigs have memories. They are able to learn where food is hidden and remember that location after a period of time. Pigs can learn and remember where to find hidden food and learn to alter their behavior to their own advantage based on another pig's behaviour. This indicates an awareness of the actions of others. It also shows behavioural flexibility and the ability to learn and form memories.

These are believed to be markers of intelligence.

Pigs can use a mirror to find a hidden food bowl after being given an opportunity to learn about a mirror. This indicates that pigs can learn what a mirror image is and can use this information to solve a problem. Pigs can learn to find their way through a maze. Going through a painful experience affects their ability to learn. Pigs can experience pain as shown by multiple studies which have found pain receptors in pigs and behavioural indicators of pain. Such indicators include decreased or abnormal movements, abnormal postures, turning their heads towards the painful area, reduced feeding and vocalization such as squealing following a painful event such as castration without anaesthetic.

The fact that pigs are sentient is supported by a wealth of scientific evidence. They have individual personalities, and they are able to learn and adjust their behaviour.

Another story is from the *New York Times*, titled 'Dogs are People Too'. Anyone in here who is a dog lover knows that dogs learn words. My dogs understand going in the car. When you say 'car' there is frantic activity because they know that they are going to the park. At night time, when I want to take them outside for a leak, I say 'Do you wanna go outside for a wee?', and they get up and come outside for a wee. I do not know what my dogs' vocabulary is, but I know that dogs have, over millennia, been our primary animal companion, learned to communicate with us with their eyes and they understand some words. This article continues:

Because dogs can't speak, scientists have relied on behavioural observations to infer what dogs are thinking. It's a tricky business. You can't ask a dog why he does something and you certainly can't ask him how he feels.

This scientist used MRI scanning. He was able to train his own pet dog to sit still in the MRI machine, with earphones on, and he studied this dog's brain. He then went back to undertake the same work on a number of dogs. The scientist says:

Although we are just beginning to answer basic questions about the canine brain, we cannot ignore the striking similarity between dogs and humans in both the structure and function of a key brain region: the caudate nucleus.

Rich in dopamine receptors, the caudate sits between the brainstem and the cortex. In humans, the caudate plays a key role in the anticipation of things we enjoy, like food, love and money. ...

Specific parts of the caudate stand out from the consistent activation to many things that humans enjoy. Caudate activation is so consistent, that under the right circumstances, it can predict our preference for food, music and even beauty.

In dogs we found that activity in the caudate increased in response to hand signals indicating food. The caudate also activated to the smells of familiar humans, and in preliminary tests it activated to the return of an owner who had momentarily stepped out of view.

In the morning, my dog knows when I put on my work clothes, because when the Saturday or Sunday clothes go on, my dog gets very excited. When you get home at night it is the sweetest thing, because its like the dogs are falling in love with you all over again. They experience emotions. The ability to experience positive emotions like love and attachment would mean that dogs have a level of sentience comparable to that of a human child and this ability suggests a rethinking of how we treat dogs.

Now to my favourite story of animal sentience, the story of Alex the Grey Parrot - the only animal in existence, as far as we know, to have asked an existential question. Alex the Grey Parrot was bought in a pet shop in Chicago in June 1997, and his name Alex is an acronym for Avian Learning Experiment. His scientist carer, Dr Pepperberg, began training Alex with specialist techniques. He was taught to recognise a variety of different colours, objects, materials and actions, and he possessed a vocabulary of over 100 words to identify them with. He knew at least 50 individual objects, and could count quantities of up to six. The parrot was even reported to have an understanding of the concept of zero.

Possessing a distinct understanding of the words he used, Alex could also identify objects, despite them being different from ones he had been shown before. For example, if Alex was shown a plastic key that was yellow, he could distinguish it from one that was made of metal by its colour and material, while still labelling them both as keys. When presented with an object, he would be asked questions such as what colour, what matter, or what shape? He had a very high rate of accuracy with his responses.

His ability to understand and pose his own questions was a groundbreaking occurrence in itself, as he was the first and only non-human ever to ask a question. Sometimes he would get bored during the experiments, trying to create variations to the exercise by responding intentionally with incorrect answers, or by responding to Dr Pepperberg's questions with questions of his own. One of his most impressive moments was when he asked an existential question about his own appearance. Alex had been presented with a mirror and, after observing himself for a moment, he asked, what colour? He then learned the word 'grey' - the colour of his feathers - after having it taught to him just six times.

Alex died unexpectedly on 6 September 2007, at the age of 31 - much shorter than the average expected life span of a parrot in captivity. The last thing he was known to say was a few parting words during his nightly goodbyes exchanged with Dr Pepperberg. After she put him in his cage, he said, 'You be good, see you tomorrow, I love you'.

Dr Pepperberg and her colleagues were devastated by the loss. Alex's death even spurred a series of articles paying tribute to him in large publications such as *The New York Times*. That research is ongoing.

Animals are to be formally recognised as sentient beings in the United Kingdom, and I understand have also been recognised as such by the Australian Capital Territory. There is also movement towards recognising sentience in other jurisdictions. We might get to that in the Committee stage of the bill.

The first Australian jurisdiction to recognise animal sentience was the Australian Capital Territory in 2019. The Victorian government has also flagged its intention to recognise animal sentience in the current review of its act. The Western Australian government has recently endorsed a recommendation to amend the objects of the Animal Welfare Act 2002, to:

expressly recognise that animals are living beings able to perceive, feel and have positive and negative experiences.

While it does not actually say, specifically recognising the sentience of animals, that is effectively the definition of sentience. Sadly, Australia has been given a D grade in the World Animal Protection Index, because we have not legally recognised the sentience of animals. It is actually coming up as an issue in trade talks between Australia and the UK, and Australia and the EU, where there is a concern that our animal welfare laws are weak and need strengthening.

We need strong laws to protect the rights of animals. We are the creature that zoologist Desmond Morris, in his famous book, described as 'the naked ape'. We are the most aggressive and destructive animal on earth. We are the most powerful animal on Earth. That gives us enormous responsibility not to see ourselves as the superior point of the life apex on Earth, because we are just one piece, one part, of this biosphere.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our history has been one of abusing and using animals to our own ends and needs, and we have to do better than that. You cannot look into the eyes of a dog, or a pig, and not see that they are sentient. We hope that there is support for our amendments.

Time expired.

[6.07 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill. From listening to contributions thus far, it sounds like - I am hoping - that we are all in glorious agreement about the need for these important amendments. That really does warm the cockles of my heart, because animal welfare is something I care deeply about. It is no surprise, I am sure, to members of the Chamber, given the comments and issues I have been focusing on of late.

Debating this bill is an important opportunity to really highlight some of those concerns that I have brought to the Chamber in more recent times. Only a couple of weeks ago I raised the concerns and issues about some very serious breaches of animal welfare - of blatant acts of animal cruelty - in the horseracing industry, which has brought to my attention the incident in Devonport, where a trainer was alleged to have whipped a horse, in a sandpit, approximately 43 times, in full view of witnesses and in CCTV view as well. That is a disgusting act. I am sure if you went into the community and asked whether people thought that this was acceptable practice in the racing industry - or acceptable that any animal should be subjected to such whipping - there would be a resounding no.

Likewise, I have been made aware of another incident at Brighton, where a different trainer beat her horse with a PVC pipe multiple times - again in full view of a number of witnesses and in CCTV.

I asked the minister a question about it in the House. She was unaware of it, but then did come back to me in writing that day and confirmed that these incidents have taken place and that investigations are under way. The Devonport incident is being investigated by the RSPCA in the first instance. The Brighton incident will be investigated at some point by the Office of Racing Integrity.

It highlights just how fragmented our welfare laws are, with jurisdictional buck-passing, between various bodies, with what their animal welfare responsibilities might be. Animal welfare should be a core function of this Government, and a core focus of this Government. I think it indicates how well we look after our community, and how well we look after our animals.

I have also been very vocal in my concerns about greyhound racing. I have mentioned a number of times how disappointed I am with the continuing government subsidy - indeed the extra additional funding that has been given to the racing industry in the last few weeks - to subsidise what is essentially animal cruelty.

The decision by the West Tamar Council really disappoints me. Ms O'Connor, the Leader of the Greens, mentioned last week, that on 18 October the West Tamar Council granted Anthony Bullock a planning permit for the operation of kennels at West Tamar on the West Tamar Highway.

Mr Bullock is well-known to the industry. He calls himself the lead trainer in the greyhound industry. He is certainly well-known to animal welfare advocates for his cruel practices. He has given evidence at Legislative Council select committees about some of his practices, where he talks about his animals in the most derogatory terms and indicated that he would euthanise 70 per cent of dogs in his care because he does not have any use for them anymore. That is a sickening figure.

Mr Bullock has been allowed to operate as a greyhound trainer, calling himself the lead greyhound trainer. The industry celebrates him, despite his not having a kennel licence for 10 years. Anybody who has dogs would know that if you have three or more dogs you must obtain a kennel licence from your local council. Mr Bullock denies he knew this, despite the fact that dogs are his core business. He has been operating, flying under the radar, for 10 years without a kennel licence.

Upon discovering this, it was discovered that he did not have planning permits for most of the buildings on his property where he houses these poor dogs. He therefore had to seek what he is calling retrospective planning approval. In doing that he lodged a planning application with West Tamar Council and that gave welfare advocates the opportunity to look at some of the conditions of his animals, of his beautiful dogs, on that property. It was shocking and horrifying to discover, or to confirm because we knew for some time, that those poor dogs are being housed in less than minimum standards according to the Office of Racing Integrity.

The size of their cages is so small the dogs can barely turn around in them. He has not enough cages for the number of dogs that he has. Mr Bullock has between 90 and 100 dogs on his property at any one time, but only 73 kennels. Those kennels are so small they do not accommodate one dog, let alone two dogs.

We know that Mr Bullock has offal pits at the rear of his property where he puts deceased animals. We know that Mr Bullock regularly slaughters horses onsite to provide meat to his dogs. He hangs them up on trees and uses a chain saw to cut them up in full view of the school bus stop on the West Tamar Highway.

The way he treats his animals is disgusting. There has been a buck-passing exercise as to who is responsible for enforcing even the most basic requirements of animal welfare. It is simply not good enough.

Mr Bullock was granted a planning permit, despite the fact the council had discretion, particularly around dealing with faeces on the site, and environmental impacts; the issue of noise and pollution. They still granted him a planning permit. In doing so, the council noted its frustration that it was limited to only dealing with planning matters and could not take into consideration the welfare of the animals on the property.

The gaining of a planning permit for Mr Bullock is the first step in achieving a kennel licence, which is now what he is going to try to do. The Office of Racing Integrity should not give him a trainer's licence for greyhound racing if he does not meet the requirements of local council. He has not done that. The Office of Racing Integrity continues to provide Mr Bullock with a trainer's licence in the hope that he will be able to achieve, at some point in the future, a kennel licence, the most basic of requirements for dog owners.

I hope that when the general manager considers Mr Bullock's application for a kennel licence, he considers animal welfare: he considers those 100 dogs who are stuck in cold, concrete cages, who have to earn the right for a blanket, according to Mr Bullock's own admissions. The dogs are not automatically allowed to have a blanket. They have to earn the right for a piece of blanket for them to sleep on. It is disgusting.

This amendment bill will be the first substantive changes since 2008. It is long overdue. I welcome the fact that we are now starting to review animal welfare that is so overdue. I hope that there is a lot more to come. I hope the Government will make a commitment to move on the next tranche of reforms as quickly as possible. It is urgent. We have waited far too long. I believe that the sentience of animals needs to be recognised in legislation, when I know that other jurisdictions have done it. It is important that we recognise that animals are capable of feeling and emotion.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Ms JOHNSTON - I want to give a few examples of how that is and how evident it must be to members of this House. The first one is in relation to rescue greyhounds. I have recently rescued a beautiful greyhound. Freddy has been with me now for 10 weeks. He comes from Brightside. He is a gorgeous boy, but he is a traumatised dog. When I got him, he spent the first week-and-a-half inside my walk-in wardrobe, petrified of the world around him.

He had never been inside a house, he did not know what doors were, he did not know what glass was, and he was a frightened little boy. He spent a week-and-a-half inside my walk-in wardrobe and finally started to realise that humans were capable of being trusted and capable of kindness. Each day he surprises me with how much he is learning to trust humans and that they can be kind.

Freddy clearly had some terrible experiences because he has some quirks. He is absolutely petrified of the sound of running water because he associates the sound of running water with having the hose turned on him. That is what the trainers did to try to get them to do things. He will curl up in a ball and hide if he hears the sound of running water. He is frightened of men. He has no problem coming up to women and giving them a lick and saying hello. Sudden loud sounds petrify him and he freezes all the time.

It is a similar story with the lovely Gracie Mae, Freddy's friend. Gracie Mae has had a horrific story. She has been through eight different owners across a number of different states. Poor Gracie Mae's body is riddled with scars where she has been beaten by owners and trainers. Like Freddy, she is petrified of men. She knows that men cannot be trusted. That is her learned experience, that is how she feels, and that is the emotional response she gets when she sees a man. It is heartbreaking to see how these dogs respond. They do that because they have feelings, they have emotions, and they remember.

It troubles me when I hear stories like Mr Bullock disposing of his dogs in the offal pit. He would line them up alongside the offal pit, they would get what the industry knows as the 'green needle' and they would be kicked into the offal pit when they died. They would be lining up, watching each other die. I know how my Freddy, how Gracie Mae and other dogs, would respond to seeing another animal in distress.

We allow that to happen because we have weak welfare laws. It disturbs me. We know what fantastic companions dogs, in particular, can be. We know from experience, and I am sure members in the House have their own experience with pets who will recognise when they are stressed and when they are sick. A number of times I came home to find my children sick and the dog curled up next to them to alert me that they had a high temperature. When I am stressed, the dogs know that I need to have a cuddle and to be comforted. It demonstrates they are capable of emotion and feeling, capable of participating as a family member and that they need to be recognised as such.

I am pleased to support the amendments before us. They are an important start. I urge the Government to move as quickly as possible on the next tranche of amendments, I know that welfare advocates, the Dogs' Homes, RSPCA, and veterinarians all around Tasmania are desperate to see further work done.

I hope the Government can move very quickly in recognising the sentience of animals and giving them the respect that they deserve because they contribute to the wonderful life that we lead. We deserve to recognise that for them too.

[6.19 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of this amendment bill and acknowledge previous speakers and their passion for this subject. Many of us have had pets in our life. I grew up with many pets and have been the proud owner of a number of rescue dogs. We currently have two dogs. One is a rescue dog and one is a puppy that we bought just before COVID-19. For generations, pets and animals have played such an important part of people's lives. Particularly during the pandemic, we saw the importance of animals and people's connection and love for having support around them, having animals in their lives and how enriching and important it is.

It is important that any animal welfare legislation before us is contemporary, it supports the community views and it brings the community with it. I know there have been previous attempts over a number of decades for reform and changes to animal welfare that have not been successful because there has not been community debate, there has not been a general acceptance and it has been lost on the floor either in this place or the other place.

It is important that we acknowledge that it is a policy area of constant reform. It is a policy area where you see a number of jurisdictions leapfrogging each other in terms of understanding and expectations. We acknowledge that it is not a one-size-fits-all and that we focus on ensuring that any legislation before us, particularly in animal welfare, where emotions run very high and people are very passionate, reflects contemporary understanding and that it has community acceptance.

You can be in front of the community in certain things. We can be in front of the community in this area but if you get too far, you get examples of where people act and they undermine the law. There are a number of examples that have been given in this debate today, which are clearly currently illegal. This amendment bill, whilst building greater protections and ensuring that there is greater capacity to deal with behaviour which is not acceptable, which is absolutely cruel and inhumane - here are a number of examples that have been given in this debate and in the public domain which are already illegal - and should be stamped out and should be dealt with.

I can understand people's frustrations that they may not be dealt with in the way that they would seek. There are a number of examples of animal cruelty that have been given which are currently illegal and there is no bill that will change that circumstance.

There are some really obvious changes that needed to be made. There are three in particular: the pronged dog collars, the power to take possession of animals and the emergency entry power. All of those things, amongst the other powers that are provided to the magistrates and to the discretion shown to magistrates, provide a good step forward. In saying it is a step forward, it is not the end of the march, so to speak. There is a long way to go.

The argument around sentient beings with animals is persuasive, it is strong, and again, it is important that we bring people with us and that we do it in a way which is accepted by the community. Therefore, we must get the buy-in from the community to support those changes.

Our rescue dog Charlie is a staffy-cross. We got her from the Dogs' Home over in Risdon Vale. She was a very damaged animal and she is still traumatised. There is no doubt that things have happened to her that we are not aware of which have had a massive impact on her life. She has scars on her front paws and legs. When we first got her we could not leave the doors anywhere close to being closed. We had to basically leave the sliding doors and back doors open, otherwise she would not come into the house. It took quite a few days for her to come into the house. There is no doubt that she has been treated appallingly and most likely been treated in a way that was illegal at the time.

Charlie has been on a road to recovery and is a beautiful, loving dog and very sensitive to the needs of my daughters. When they are upset or when there is an issue at school, Charlie is the first dog that comes and leans up against the kids to provide that support. They are amazingly intuitive animals - well, some are; the other dog occasionally does the most stupid things you would not believe - and they understand the pack around them - their pack.

It is important we have legislation that protects animals from people who are cruel, that protects animals and gives powers to the appropriate authorities to make animals safe. This is the first attempt to address legislation since 2014, so that is eight years. We know other jurisdictions have brought in a range of other initiatives. It is long overdue. I know it has the support of the RSPCA and a range of animal welfare organisations. I know that there is a spectrum of views within that community about how far this legislation should go.

Because we have not made change nor improved the legislation for eight years, it is important that we acknowledge that these changes are supported but then it is an ongoing debate around what comes next in the animal welfare reforms.

Ms O'Connor - We were made to wait eight years for this lot. The second tranche was promised in the last term and here we are. How long should we wait until we recognise the sentience of animals?

Mr O'BYRNE - That is a matter for the minister to respond to. I do not necessarily disagree with you, Ms O'Connor, but it is important. Sometimes if you think you only get one shot at it, you become a bit ambitious and it may upset what we are trying to achieve. I think we bank the work that has been done and we accept the work of the committee and the recommendations that were provided to the minister.

Ms O'Connor - Nine years ago.

Mr O'BYRNE - I agree. That is a matter for the Government to reflect on. It is important that we get it through not only this House and this place but we get it through the other place as well. For many families and for many people, our animals - our cats, our dogs and our pets - are our best friends and it is important that we provide a framework where we can protect them and keep them safe from people who seek to do harm.

Again, I make the point, there are some examples that have been given in this debate, which are already illegal and some of the behaviour of some people to animals that we are aware of is outrageous. Any legislation will not necessarily change what they have done but we urge those responsible and the authorities to become aware of that behaviour and activity to take all necessary steps to make those animals safe.

In saying that, I commend the work of the minister, although it is overdue, and acknowledge that this is an instalment in what should be an ongoing debate around animal welfare and ensure that we do not just tick this box, move it on through both Houses and then that is the last we see of this. The passion from people who made their representations today show how much our animals are loved and how important it is that we provide the best possible safe framework for them.

[6.28 p.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Government for doing this work which has, as it has been identified, taken a while to have these discussions which sometimes can be quite divisive in society but it is a very important issue. Hopefully, it is the start of a journey that will bring along many Tasmanians who may not necessarily embrace the same feelings we have for our animals, pets and all the other animals that we have in our lives.

As always with these things, it is a journey. It is important that we educate and bring people along with us and it is done in a way in which we increase that awareness every single day through the work that we do and through other organisations that are involved in supporting the Government.

I remember a story that came out on 25 June 2021. It started as follows:

A dead German Shepherd was found hanging in a window of a suburban home in Hobart this week.

That was probably one of the things that really shook a lot of people: how that occurred and the fact that, at that time, it is understood that the RSPCA did not have the necessary powers to intervene. Cruelty like this, that probably could have been prevented, but people were not able to prevent it.

Many times I have seen members in the community witness situations where animals are being kicked or tied up or treated in a very inhumane way and there was not enough provision to allow intervention to remove those animals and ensure that they are not subjected to those sorts of cruel acts.

I can relate to what Mr O'Byrne was saying. We too have adopted rescued animals. We most recently set ourselves on a journey to adopt a pitbull mix. We know they can be quite a

difficult dog but we never considered using a pronged dog collar. I am of firm belief that there is no such thing as a bad animal but there are bad people. It is us who do bad things that make these animals eventually behave in ways that cause accidents and unfortunate events.

The bill is a good step in the right direction. We can then share what we want to do and what to achieve with the rest of the Tasmanian community. Through education and awareness people understand how they should respect those animals they bring into their lives.

During COVID-19, animal ownership in Australia increased significantly. The legislation will protect these animals because they are vulnerable, they depend on us, and quite often people look the other way and pretend something is not happening when it is. It should do this good work and ensure that cruelty is eliminated and protections are properly put in place.

Animal welfare is an important issue. These amendments will deliver the next steps that further build on the strong animal welfare laws in Tasmania. I would like to see more involvement from local councils because they have quite a strong role to play in how this matter is being dealt with.

[6.35 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I thank all members who have made a contribution during this debate for their sincere and genuine response to this improvement to our animal welfare reforms. The Government takes animal welfare seriously. It was this Government, under the leadership of then minister for Primary Industries and Water, Jeremy Rockliff, that toughened our laws and increased the penalties in relation to animal welfare.

Ms O'Connor - Reverse the ban on 1080 poisoning.

Mr BARNETT - I am just trying to paint a perspective here that it was our Government that increased the maximum penalty for aggravated cruelty to \$33 600, and/or a maximum custodial sentence of five year's imprisonment for an individual under the Animal Welfare Act 1993. It was designed to send a very strong message and increase deterrence against acts of animal cruelty. Jeremy Rockliff, the then minister for Primary Industries and Water, was very committed. It was based on reforms and feedback, including from the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

I thank all the members of that committee for the work they do. I thank Rod Gobbey, the current chair, who I had the privilege of appointing some time ago, and before that Mark Sayer, who also demonstrated leadership and credibility in that role. It was as a result of the feedback from AWAC that we are here today.

The Government sought further advice from AWAC in recent years, including when I was minister, with respect to these laws and the reforms that were possible, including pronged collars. This was part of the reform agenda that was put through in 2014 under Jeremy Rockliff. It was not successful in the upper House, so we are giving it another shot because we believe it is the right thing to do based on advice, including from AWAC.

We take complaints and allegations of animal cruelty seriously. They need to be acted on appropriately through established channels. The department's priority is to ensure that any

immediate animal welfare concerns are addressed followed by compliance investigations where any offence is suspected.

Biosecurity Tasmania and the RSPCA have a formal arrangement in place for responding to and investigating allegations of animal cruelty. I am advised that the vast majority of animal welfare investigations are resolved within 90 days of a complaint being received. We continue to identify ways to further improve animal welfare measures. We have taken action to strengthen our animal welfare laws, led by Jeremy Rockliff some years ago.

I acknowledge Ms Finlay for her contribution. Likewise, all those who have stood in this place to support the Government's amendments. Ms Finlay highlighted the merit of continual improvement. We totally agree with that approach. Quoting yourself, this is not the end of the road; further feedback and continual improvement is important. It is part of what we want to do on this side of the House.

There was a reference to the consultation and the 85-odd submissions, and we got that feedback. As I shared in the second reading speech, we responded to the consultation and feedback in a genuine way. A number of the submissions were very fervent and rigorous and comprehensive in their efforts. As a result of that, the department amended these reforms that are before us today. I acknowledge that and thank you for your contribution and support for these amendments.

In addition I want to note and thank Jan Davis from the RSPCA. She has been very active. I got to know Jan very well over many years in her role at the TFGA, but more recently in the RSPCA when I was minister. She has written to members of parliament - in fact just this afternoon - with respect to the Animal Welfare Act Amendment Bill, and has said this:

The amendments proposed in this bill ensure that Tasmania to a best practice, contemporary and effective regulatory system that protects and promote the welfare of animals, prevents and deters cruelty to animals, and responds appropriately to animal welfare abuses. We have worked closely with the government to bring these amendments forward. The government's commitment to the changes was evident in the wide community consultation process, which resulted in some further refinement of the proposed amendments.

And then she has, in bold:

I urge you to support this bill when it comes before you.

Jan Davis attached a submission, and says some other things, including the fact that the bill goes back to 1993, and that from her point of view the bill does not go far enough - but nevertheless, strong support for the bill.

I am advised that email has gone not just to me but to other members of parliament. I am happy to speak more about that, but I thank Jan Davis for her leadership in that space and support for the bill on behalf of the RSPCA. I always enjoyed working with Jan and her team at the RSPCA when I was minister.

I also thank Jo Palmer, as Minister for Primary Industries and Water, for her leadership on bringing this bill to the parliament. Obviously she is in the other place, and I am standing here representing the Government, but as a former minister, I know minister Palmer has worked very hard to get this together. Likewise I acknowledge all the members of her department who have been so studious in developing this bill and getting it forward. I thank them as well for their support and assistance.

On behalf of the Government, I thank the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor. I believe your amendments are considered, and they are genuine. I have considered your amendments. I thank you for the time and effort you have put into developing and drafting those amendments and for putting them forward. It is clearly genuine and absolutely well intentioned.

Ms O'Connor - But?

Mr BARNETT - I have said very courteously, with a genuine response, to a genuine effort for yourself on behalf of the Greens, but I want to note that, generally, the amendments cover matters that are outside the scope of the current bill and have not been consulted with stakeholders or the community.

However, the amendment bill before the House is to implement recommendations of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, and to make practical improvements to the functionality of the act. The Government does not support retrofitting objects onto the Animal Welfare Act 1993 through this amendment bill, as it may have unintended legal consequences in respect of statutory interpretation.

Ms O'Connor - Your own department says it will not have legal consequence, which was an argument they made for not including sentence. Just to be clear.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It may operate to limit the scope and purpose of the act in a way that was not foreseen. This is the advice that I have received and am sharing with the member and others in this Chamber. I am happy to provide more detail on the Greens amendments. I expect to have that opportunity shortly in Committee, but I wanted to acknowledge that, take it on board and say thank you for that.

We have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in Australia in Tassie. Many of us in this Chamber either have or have had pets. Our family had a dog called Jack, a border collie crossed with a bit of failed sheepdog. He was a member of our family. We loved him and he loved us and we really appreciated Jack. Unfortunately, he passed away more than 18 months ago. I know others in this place have pets and really appreciate them.

I was born and raised on a farm and we had sheepdogs. They were well used on the farm and we cared for and looked after them. It is not just dogs, of course. There is a whole range of pets, and farm animals, livestock, and also wildlife. This is the full gamut under this legislation in terms of animal welfare and animal cruelty, which is taken very seriously by our Government.

I wanted to acknowledge the member for Clark and her observations and remarks, and particularly the genuine nature with which they were shared. Likewise the member for Franklin, David O'Byrne, and my colleague and friend Lara Alexander, member for Bass.

Ms O'Connor - And Ms Johnston, the member for Clark.

Mr BARNETT - I did mention Ms Johnston, the member for Clark.

Ms O'Connor - Sorry, I missed her.

Mr BARNETT - I acknowledged her genuine and heartfelt concerns that were expressed in her remarks and likewise, Mrs Alexander, member for Bass. I know she loves her dog and it is part of her family.

Having said all that, I will wrap up this section of the second reading debate. I know we will be heading into Committee, but the fact is, this will further strengthen our animal welfare laws in Tasmania. It will provide greater protection for animals and their welfare. Animal welfare is an important issue. This Government does take animal welfare seriously, and the amendments in this bill represent a substantial strengthening of the act.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee has played a key role. I again acknowledge the chair, Rob Gobbey, and I thank all AWAC members. I met with them on many occasions when I was minister and I was really impressed with the quality of their work and their efforts to support animal welfare. You have the RSPCA, local government, Animals Australia, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and many more on that committee. They did a great job and I acknowledge that as well.

Before I conclude, in our view as a Government there is no welfare-friendly basis for the use of pronged collars - across all species, not just on dogs. We have tried before and it has failed in the upper House. In the media in recent days - probably the last seven days, there have been certain dog trainers who believe it is appropriate. That view is not accepted by our Government. Pronged collars have been previously used to correct animal behaviour by inflicting pain and discomfort. The ban on pronged collars is supported by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, as well as by the national and Tasmanian branches of the RSPCA and the Tasmanian branch of the Australian Veterinary Association, and I did mention that in the second reading speech. They have said:

The use of the collars does not constitute a reasonable or justifiable training method when compared with other available methods.

As I say, it has been in the public media and in the public space in the last seven days, that certain dog trainers believe it is appropriate. We failed last time when we attempted to make this reform, but we will try again through this House and then into the upper House and we will see where that goes. We believe that is the right approach with respect to pronged collars.

There has been a mention of the farming community, and I indicate that there has, of course, been liaison and consultation with the TFGA. They are a key part of our community and we respect and admire that. We thank them for what they do.

Ms O'Connor - They are also on AWAC.

Mr BARNETT - They are also on AWAC, exactly.

Ms O'Connor - Right at the table.

Mr BARNETT - They are there. I have met with them many times at AWAC and separately to AWAC when I was minister, and in recent months and recent years.

The TFGA has indicated their support for the bill. I am making it very clear. The TFGA has outlined some concerns with the consultation draft, and they did outline that concern but NRE Tasmania worked closely with the TFGA to explain key features of the bill and some of the technicalities in further detail. The TFGA has since confirmed that following these discussions, their issues have been substantially addressed and/or clarified and that they support the bill overall. I put that on the record so that members in this Chamber, and the public, are aware that support is on the table.

In conclusion, I will address the message of continuous improvement. Of course, the Government will monitor any need for reform - not just this space but across the board. That is the role of AWAC; to provide advice to Government. The Government has responded and will continue to monitor and provide improvements to our animal welfare system, where appropriate. These amendments will deliver the next steps to ensuring strong animal welfare laws in Tasmania.

Mr Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions and indication of support for the bill. I am more than happy to respond to the specific amendments put forward by the Greens in committee. I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

ANIMAL WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 42)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Section 3 amended (Interpretation)

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. Our amendment to clause 4 inserts a definition of 'abandons', 'appropriate and sufficient', 'commercial purpose', 'dwelling', 'management', 'pain or suffering', 'pest animal' and 'pest register'. These are recommendations from the 2013 review of the act undertaken by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

The amendment is to page 3, clause 4:

Leave out everything after "amended".

Insert instead

as follows:

- (a) by inserting before the definition of *Advisory Committee* the following definition:

abandons, in relation to an animal, includes the relinquishing of the care or charge of the animal without ensuring that another person has, or will immediately take, care or charge of the animal;

- (b) by inserting after the definition of *animal welfare standards* the following definitions:

appropriate and sufficient means –

- (a) in relation to the provision of food to an animal, that food of sufficient quality is provided –

- (i) in sufficient quantity to meet the nutritional requirements of maintaining the animal in reasonable body condition and, if appropriate, allowing for growth and reproduction; and
 - (ii) as often as appropriate for the digestive system and metabolism of the animal; or

- (b) in relation to the provision of drink, that fluids of sufficient quality are provided in sufficient quantity to keep the animal hydrated at all times; or

- (c) in relation to the provision of shelter, that shelter which affords protection for the animal from the adverse effects of weather conditions is provided;

- (c) by inserting after the definition of *Code of Practice* the following definition:

commercial purpose means any purpose that includes the intent to obtain financial reward from the use of an animal, the sale of an animal, or the sale of products or services derived from animals or animal labor.

- (d) by inserting after the definition of conveyance the following definitions:

dispose, in relation to an animal, includes, but is not limited to –

- (a) the sale or rehoming of the animal; and
- (b) euthanising the animal;

dwelling means a structure or vehicle where a person normally resides, and excludes land, buildings and areas around and underneath that structure or vehicle;

- (e) by inserting after the definition of *Licensed Institution* the following definition:

management, in relation to an animal, includes an act or failure to act in relation to feeding, handling, transportation, routines or regimens, confinement, administration or application of substances, physical alterations to the animal, or any activity or practices which could reasonably be expected to have a material impact on the animal.

- (f) by inserting after the definition of *officer* the following definitions:

pain or suffering includes physical or mental injury, suffering, or distress which can be observed or reasonably inferred;

pest animal means an animal of a kind or class which is entered in the pest register;

pest register means the pest register established and maintained under section 8A.

Chair, as I said, these are recommendations that have come from the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee in its 2013 review, where a recommendation was made to acknowledge distress, mental suffering, and physical suffering of an animal.

What I say in response to the minister's statement about continuous improvement is, that it is not really. It is not. The last bill that passed this place was in 2014. It simply did not implement any of the key recommendations of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. As the minister said earlier, it did increase the penalties. Yes, that is important. Apart from anything else, it sends a signal that this parliament, the state of Tasmania, will appropriately punish people who are cruel to, or neglect, animals.

However, you require so much more change in order to make sure that you have your definitions right, that the act accepts that animals experience mental suffering, and that officers have the powers that they need.

When it has been eight years since this house passed those penalties provisions, you cannot say that it is a process of continual improvement. It simply is not. That is the frustration that The Greens have. We have moved in this place for reforms to the Animal Welfare Act, so that the Act acknowledges mental suffering, for example. We were standing here on our own, just the two of us. This was before Ms Johnston's election because I know she would have been with us as well. It was just us in here acknowledging the mental suffering that animals can experience and it was not even a radical proposal. It was a proposal that was put forward by the Government's own Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

Getting back to our frustration, we are enormously frustrated because this act is taking on some of the hallmarks of an antique, it is now so out of date. It is clunky, it is heavily weighted towards what industry wants from an Animal Welfare Act. It is not contemporary and we have had to wait eight years for the Government to bring forward another set of amendments.

As I mentioned to the minister, AWAC made 65 recommendations after extensive consultation and took on board that consultation. A very significant number of those amendments have not been accepted. I heard the minister earlier talk about why the Government wants to move on pronged collars. That is great and it is important that we do but one of our amendments, for example, deals with leg hold traps. AWAC recommended that there only be an exception for soft leg hold traps, and now nine years after they made that recommendation, the Government still will not do it in this amendment bill.

It does frustrate us when we are told again to wait, to be patient. That would be fine if it just affected the Greens but it does not. When we are made to be patient on animal welfare reform, it is creatures great and small who do not have agency to advocate for themselves that pay a price when we are told to wait. I appreciate the minister's appreciation of our endeavours but I will just say, are not other members in this place a little bit tired of Tasmania always being last? Why are we always happy to be last?

We had the minister for the Environment yesterday say, 'it is really important' - no, it was on the single-use plastics bill today - 'it is really important we learn from other jurisdictions'. Sure, it is but it is also really important that we recognise that we are a state of creative intelligent people and we can do our own scientific research and have a look at what is happening in legal reform in other parts of the world and maybe even just once show leadership. It is not good enough. These are definitions in this amendment which currently are not in the act or are not sufficiently described in the act. They are definitional amendments which have been put forward by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. This is supported by animal welfare advocates.

I simply say to the minister that when he is having a crack at us about not wanting to change the objects of the act, the foundational set of principles that guide the way the act is applied, if you have a look at the submissions to this amendment bill, there is a very strong mood for the kind of amendments that we have put forward from Animals Australia, Humane Society International and the RSPCA Tasmania. They all support what the Greens are seeking

to do today. These are amendments that the Government, again, has rejected. There is a series of recommendations from AWAC which still, nine years later, have gone absolutely nowhere.

As I said earlier, we are not talking about a pack of radicals here. It is the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and it has the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers on it. There is an acceptance already within primary production communities that these recommendations will genuinely modernise the act. If the minister has a good argument for not accepting this amendment I would be very interested to hear it because we are very confident in the drafting and we believe these changes should be made. -

Time expired.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the member for putting forward this amendment. As I have indicated, I thank the member for putting time and effort into this. It is very genuine. We felt concern on behalf of the Greens and that is certainly noted and acknowledged, as I said earlier.

With respect to the amendment before us to clause 4 as has been read into *Hansard* and for the Chamber the inclusion of those definitions, from the Government's perspective we cannot support the amendment.

Ms O'Connor - Why?

Mr BARNETT - I will explain why. The inclusion of the definitions of common words and phrases that have broad meaning - and I am using your examples - and I quote, 'appropriate and sufficient management', 'commercial purpose' and 'pain and suffering'. Including definitions of those sorts of words and phrases that do have broad meanings may have unintended consequences of limiting the broad dictionary definition, meaning or leading to an overly technical or narrow interpretation of the act's provisions.

Defining the term, 'pain and suffering' in the act may result in restricting the court from determining the nature of pain and suffering -

Ms O'Connor - Your own advisory committee does not agree with that.

Mr BARNETT - in the animal in a particular case with unique circumstances. The general advice of Parliamentary Counsel in relation to statutory drafting is that where the ordinary meaning of a word is clear and does not require modification then there should not be a specific definition included. I think that is put very well, and strongly, from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Where a word is defined in the context of a specific section - example, 'abandons' in section 8 - is to expand, limit or modify the word in a context of that particular provision. In the case of the definition of 'abandons' in section 8, it is to ensure that the reference to 'abandons' in the context of the animal cruelty offence is given a broad interpretation. I have that particular clause in front of me. In subclause (3), it says 'abandons' in relation to an animal includes the relinquishing of the care or charge of the animal without ensuring that another person has or will immediately take care or charge of the animal.

I could go on but that is, as I say, in clause 8. That is an example as to why, unfortunately, the Government cannot support that amendment.

Ms FINLAY - I indicate that Tasmanian Labor will not be supporting the amendment as submitted. Given the broad consultation of all elements of the amendment bill, it would seem unreasonable to adopt this amendment without the opportunity to hear from a range of stakeholders on the inclusion. Very specific definitions have been provided and without the opportunity to engage and get feedback from the broad number of people who have provided commentary to the amendment bill before us, we are not in a position to support it.

Ms O'CONNOR - I might just remind you, Ms Finlay, that there is a range of submissions to the consultation which are supportive of the amendment that we are seeking to move today. I am very disappointed in the minister's response. This is not unreasonable, particularly given that in broad terms, our amendment would have the backing of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

I always think there is a problem when an act is vague or non-specific about a key word in the act and, even though in the AWAC report the recommendation is to make the change to acknowledge mental suffering in section 8 of the act, it is the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee that has recommended we acknowledge the mental suffering of animals. It is the AWA Committee that has honoured the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, and in fact, representatives of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

It is disappointing. It is completely unsurprising, that again we have the Liberal and Labor Partys lining up to not give our Animal Welfare Act the heft we know it needs. Anyway, I give up on Labor.

Mr CHAIR - The question is that the amendment be agreed to

The Committee divided -

AYES 3

Ms Johnston (Teller)
Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms White
Mr Winter
Mr Wood
Mr Young (Teller)

Amendment negatived.

Ms O'Connor - Stop, stop do you want to take your coughing, unmasked face out, thanks, please. The next amendment is, sorry Chair -

CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, I am doing clause 4 at the moment.

Ms O'Connor - I thought you were passing clause 4.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

New clause A -

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair, and sorry about that confusion before. I thought you were taking us places I was not ready for. This is an amendment that seeks to have the Tasmania Animal Welfare Act 1993 tell the truth about the sentience of animals. It is a scientifically, verifiable fact that animals are sentient and in the words in fact of the department -

Mr CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, can I ask you to move your clause first of all.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I will do that, but it is fine for me to say a few words before I move the clause. It has always been the practice. To be able to do that is fine. I want to give it a preface, before I read it in.

Mr CHAIR - Alright.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks. As the department has said, sentience is the ability to feel, or perceive, or be conscious or have subjective experiences as distinct from the ability to reason.

Mr CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, I am wrong and so are you. As there is no question before the Chair, you need to move this before we can progress.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, well 15 years and that is new to me. I move -

To clause 5 to insert the following new clause -

A. Section 3B inserted

Before section 4 of the Principle Act the following section is inserted in Part1:

3B. Objects of the Act

(1) The main objects of this Act are to recognise that -

- (a) animals are sentient beings that are able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them, and
 - (b) animals have intrinsic value and deserve to be treated with compassion and have a quality of life that reflects their intrinsic value, and
 - (c) people have a duty to care for the physical and mental welfare of animals.
- (2) This is to be achieved particularly by -
- (a) promoting and protecting the welfare of animals, and
 - (b) providing for the proper and humane care, management and treatment of animals, and
 - (c) deterring and preventing animal cruelty and the abuse and neglect of animals; and
 - (d) enforcing laws about the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c).

As I said earlier, Chair, this is about making sure the Tasmanian Animal Welfare Act 1993 has truth in it about the sentience of animals. I do not buy the excuses that have been made for not supporting this by Ms Finlay or Mr O'Byrne. I am sure I will hear the same from the minister that because this specific provision has not been widely consulted it should be rejected. Should not the law tell the truth in its substance, be honest?

I read out earlier the Roy Morgan research which showed that in the vicinity of 80 per cent to 90 per cent of Australians want stronger animal welfare laws. To argue that including a recognition of the sentience of animals in the Act could be significantly contentious is a straw man, Chair. It is obvious it is a statement of fact that animals are sentient beings. This is a recommendation of the Humane Society International, and the Australian Alliance for Animals. In the Alliance for Animals submission they make a very strong argument for including the recognition of animal sentience in the Objects clause of the act. They make the point that 'animal welfare legislation should be guided by a set of comprehensive objectives, which outline the key purpose the legislation seeks to achieve'. This is the norm throughout Australian state and territory animal welfare legislation, with Objects clauses generally specifying what the purpose of the legislation is to prevent cruelty to animals, provide community education and promote animal welfare.

The submission says:

An Objects clause should be inserted into the legislation, recognising that animals are sentient beings with intrinsic value. By recognising animals' sentience, the legislation will provide guidance on why protecting the welfare of animals is important. Modern societies have enacted animal welfare laws because animals are sentient. In a previous review of the act, sentience recognition was rejected on the grounds that it could have, 'Unintended

consequences in relation to animals with high levels of sentience or those considered on the lower end of the scale, depending on how such a statement is interpreted'.

These concerns have not been borne out by the legal recognition of animal sentience in New Zealand and the ACT. As I mentioned earlier, the West Australian Government and Victorian Governments are moving to include recognition of animal sentience in their animal welfare legislation. The submission goes on to say:

The background information about the bill published on the department's website, states that, 'The Department is aware there is public interest in the inclusion of the concept of sentience for animal welfare', but then goes on to state, 'legal recognition of sentience in other jurisdictions is largely symbolic and not enforceable'.

As this submission makes plain, this miscategorises the role of legislative Objects provisions. Objects clauses are not designed to be directly enforceable. This does not mean they are merely symbolic. We need to recognise sentience to improve legislative consistency so that it helps with the sentencing of offenders because as the submissions makes clear:

In the absence of express recognition of animal sentience, the act provides no further guidance to judges and magistrates as to the reasons why promoting animal welfare and preventing cruelty are important. In the current laws, the animal is not seen as a victim of the offending conduct, but simply as an element of the offense. This risks trivialising serious offences of animal cruelty that are of great concern to the community.

The submission says:

Recognising animal sentience and the objects of the legislation signals to judicial officers the underlying reasons why promoting animal welfare and preventing cruelty is important.

Also, as I mentioned in my second reading, our failure as a nation to recognise and include in legislation recognition of the sentience of animals is affecting our trading relationships, because 19 jurisdictions have such recognition. The Australian-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement, which was signed on 17 December last year, contains a dedicated chapter on animal welfare. The opening clause of the chapter, which we have signed up to, states the following:

1. The parties recognise that animals are sentient beings. They also recognise connection between improved welfare of farmed animals and sustainable food production systems.

The EU has also foreshadowed its desire for animal sentience to be recognised in the agreement it is negotiating with the Australian Government right now. Evidently, recognising animal sentience is now a feature of Australia's trade policy. I wonder if that is why states like Western Australia and Victoria are actually taking this step because they know that at the moment we are being viewed as a D-grade jurisdiction nationally for our animal welfare frameworks which are really quite weak.

I know that this amendment will not have support of the minister and the Government or Labor, but I say this to you: you are denying reality. It is a self-defeating position to adopt, because we are going to have to come back in here at some point. I hope it is not in the too distant future. We might even bring in our own amendment bill, so we can have this discussion again and recognise the sentience of animals.

Animals are sentient. Our laws should be honest about that. As we know, it is already affecting our trading relationships. While this amendment will go down, just because it has been voted down, does not mean it should not be in the bill. We know it should be in the bill. I think the minister knows that it should be in the bill. It was a thread of the submissions that were made to the draft legislation but a decision was made not to include recognition of sentience.

We know Labor stands for very little, so they have not been able to take a position on this that is based on the legal merits of the amendment and the reality of the world that we are operating in. I commend the amendment to the House. It is well drafted and it is very clear. It is in line with community expectations. It is in line with legal evolutions that are happening in other jurisdictions, in Australian jurisdictions, and it is in line with the expectations now being placed upon us by our trading partners.

Ms JOHNSTON - Chair, I will be supporting these amendments, as I stated earlier in my contribution. For me, sentience is a matter of fact that we would be including into this bill. I cannot see how accepting animals have the ability to feel could possibly be contentious. I cannot understand how anyone could deny that as a fact.

The second part of this clause in relation to what is being achieved by the bill, 'promoting, protecting the welfare of animals, providing for the proper and humane care, management and treatment of animals, deterring and preventing animal cruelty and the abuse and neglect of animals and enforcing laws about the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a), (b), (c).'

Surely, that is not contentious. Surely, that is something that everyone would want to see achieved through a bill titled Animal Welfare. It just seems to me that this is common sense. It is well accepted. It is a matter of fact. It is something that is a common thread in many of the submissions that were made to the amendment bill. I cannot see any logical barrier to this inclusion, other than it is a proposal brought forward by the Greens, which to me just is a slap in the face to all those who care deeply about animals.

It is not just a Greens issue, it is an issue that is across the whole political spectrum. I know that there are members of the Government, members of the Opposition, crossbench who care deeply and would believe this if anyone else had put it up and so, I urge both the Government and the Opposition to support this amendment. It is a statement of fact. It is something that is clearly a desirable Object that the rest of the bill and indeed, the principal act is wanting to achieve; it just makes common sense. I urge members to support it.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Chair, I thank the Leader of the Greens and the member for Clark, Kristie Johnston, for their remarks and their contributions. I acknowledge again their genuine, heartfelt commitment to this particular amendment. I can indicate the Government cannot support it but let me outline a few of the reasons.

To say that as a government we do recognise the potential value of including an explicit Objects section in legislation and recent major legislation introduced by this Government has included an Objects section; for example, the detailed objects in section 3 of the new Biosecurity Act 2019, which I took through this House.

However, the amendment bill before the House is to implement recommendations of AWAC and make practical improvements to the functionality of the act, which was developed and introduced decades ago, at a time when Objects clauses were not commonly included in legislation. You will notice in this legislation, which I have before me:

The Animal Welfare Act, an act to prevent neglect of and cruelty to animals, to ensure the welfare of animals, to repeal the Cruelty to Animals Prevention Act 1925 and for related purposes.

It is not there. What we have today is an amending bill. As I said in my summing up remarks, the Greens' amendments cover matters that are outside the scope of the current bill and have not been consulted on with stakeholders or the community. Yes, it is true that we had feedback from quite a number of submitters but in terms of the consultation with those stakeholders, it was on the amending act that is before us.

I want to address the issue of sentience, so if I could be allowed to do that -

Ms O'Connor - You have to agree they are.

Mr BARNETT - The act already implicitly recognises that animals can subjectively experience a full range of mental, emotional and physical pain and suffering. For example, when determining if a management method is cruel or animal cruelty has occurred, the courts can consider mental, physical and emotional stress and suffering of an animal, provided there is sufficient factual and veterinary evidence to support such findings.

As was noted in my second reading speech, the ban on pronged collars is based on an acceptance that the use of such collars can cause mental and emotional harm to animals which is not justifiable, even if serious injury is not inflicted. That was made clear in that second reading speech, and I want to make it clear again before the Chamber.

In addition, the Government is aware of that concept of sentience that has been referred to in remarks shared in debate for animal welfare. I am advised this can be defined as, and I quote:

The ability to feel or perceive or be conscious or have subjective experiences as distinct from the ability to reason; and that these qualities can be attributed to many animals.

The Government is interested in gaining further information and advice on sentience before action is taken.

Ms O'Connor - Okay, I am going to ask you a question about that.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you.

Inclusion of sentience in New Zealand and the ACT in the title or the objects of their Animal Welfare Acts does not, of itself, create an enforceable obligation.

Ms O'Connor - I have acknowledged that.

Mr BARNETT - Consideration may be given to including the concept in Tasmanian Animal Welfare Guidelines, if appropriate. Animal welfare guidelines are not mandatory but can be used as an aid to develop and assess animal management methods and industry practices. I put that on the record, and that is the advice I have received on behalf of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Jo Palmer. I hope that might provide some indication of the openness to better understand that concept and the importance of sentience.

I will conclude by saying that with respect to this particular amendment by the Greens which we cannot support, if a completely new animal welfare legislation had been developed it might be beneficial to include an Objects clause. However, Government does not support retro-fitting Objects into the 1993 Animal Welfare Act through this amendment bill as it may have unintended legal consequences in respect of statutory interpretation. It might operate to limit the scope and purpose of the act in ways that were not foreseen. I make that point and I make it as a legislator and as a lawyer. It is important to note that, in my view.

Moreover, a broad objects provision would need to go through extensive assessment and public consultation, which is a point I have made and I know the member for Bass, Ms Finlay, has also made. It would need to go through that public consultation process. You would need to get feedback on it to ensure it was relevant and appropriate, and reflects the broad community values, which we believe this amending bill does.

We have had that public consultation. We have the feedback. That public consultation would be important to ensure that it is relevant, appropriate, reflects broad community values, and would serve to enhance the interpretation and application of the legislation.

In conclusion, having said all that, we cannot support the Greens' amendment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, what you are asking us to do is again accept a lowest common denominator approach to animal welfare legislation. In contemporary animal welfare laws the sentience of animals is recognised. With respect to you, putting in some guidelines is not sufficient, because very few people read guidelines. If people want to understand what their obligations are, or what the penalties are, or the framework for animal welfare in this state is, they will invariably go to the act.

It is really disappointing that you are not prepared to make a stronger commitment than, 'We might put it in guidelines' and 'We do not want to insert new objects into the act'. That tells me it will be another eight years before we have an opportunity to modernise animal welfare law unless the Greens bring in an amendment bill. I understand the minister is in the other place so I cannot have this conversation with her on the floor. We should have probably acknowledged earlier that this is Ms Palmer's legislation.

There is a lot to be gained from a government being strong on animal welfare. It is the issue in our office that resonates most strongly with the most people. It is people, minister, who come from all political backgrounds. There is great value in having public support for a government to make a commitment to modernising our animal welfare laws to recognising the

fact of animal sentience. I think you know, minister, that animals are sentient. Every person in this room knows that because most people in this room, at some point or another in their life, have had a pet.

I am not mad for cats, but I know the Attorney-General is. What characters. Very destructive in their own way if they are not properly kept, but this is a missed opportunity for the Government that probably almost imagines a stronger core of resistance to real reform than what there actually is, particularly given that you have your own animal welfare advisory committee saying that the act should be more explicit about mental suffering. It might be implicit, as you say, minister, but the AWAC report suggests that the act be amended to clarify that pain or suffering includes, but is not limited to, distress, mental suffering and physical suffering because the discussion paper that was the foundation of these recommendations highlighted that the term 'pain or suffering' may not adequately capture the range of welfare impacts that the community would consider cruel.

It is really regrettable, minister, that there cannot be honesty here about the fact that animals are sentient beings. We are not only failing to meet community expectations, but more importantly and sadly we fail animals when we do this, when the law does not recognise them as beings with intrinsic value and awareness of their existence and ability to feel physical and mental pain; to experience joy. I expect this amendment to go down, but I will be having a conversation with the minister about this and the potential for a really comprehensive overhaul of the Animal Welfare Act. It plainly needs it if you cannot accept an amendment that would allow it to tell the truth about animal sentience.

Ms FINLAY - I attempted to stand prior to the Leader of the Greens. Tasmanian Labor is open to broad community consultation on the matter of sentience. However, although the member who has just spoken suggested that I was not aware that there were comments made around this matter in the submissions, I have read every submission and I am fully aware of the inclusion of comments around sentience.

However, it was not put out to broad public consultation. It is a significant issue. It is really important. It should be respected with the opportunity for broad community consultation. Tasmanian Labor is not in a position to support it at this time but is open to the process of broad community consultation.

Mr CHAIR - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Committee divided -

AYES 3

Ms Johnston (Teller)
Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad

Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms White
Mr Winter
Mr Wood
Mr Young (Teller)

Amendment negatived.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Chair, I move -

That you do now report progress and seek leave to sit again tomorrow.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Springvale - Closure

[7.46 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, on 1 October, I met with parents of children who currently board at Springvale or with children who plan to stay at Springvale so they can continue their education. In that meeting, I heard not just from parents who outlined their concerns at the Government's plan to close Springvale at the end of this year but from students who were worried about what it could mean for their subject choices and their chance to pursue their career paths.

What became evident to me was the lack of communication from the Government to these parents and that, despite repeated efforts to get answers to their questions, they were getting stonewalled. What concerns me the most about the Government's decision to close Springvale is they have given such little consideration to the impact this will have on country kids. There have been generations of kids from country areas who have been able to pursue their chosen career paths, because they have been able to access accommodation close to where they are studying.

The Government has now put that at risk and this uncertainty is creating huge anxiety for families. In the meeting I had with parents on 1 October, the current operator of Springvale, Bob Gilmore, also joined us. Following that meeting I put through a request to the Minister for Education asking for a meeting between myself, Mr Gilmore and the minister. After weeks of following up with the minister's office to ask when a meeting might be scheduled, we were informed earlier this week the minister would not meet with us. Instead, the minister's office

has offered a briefing for me from the department and suggested if Mr Gilmore wants to talk to the minister, he should get in touch directly.

Personally, I find that response disrespectful given other ministers have had no issue meeting with me and constituents I have been representing in recent times. I fully expect that once Mr Gilmore does contact the minister's office, that he would be offered a meeting but to be honest, I think it is an appalling approach from the minister to wait to be personally asked instead of reaching out himself to understand how he can help.

Yesterday, there was a meeting between parents of students currently at Springvale and the Department of Education. Even after all this time they were still unable to get answers about what accommodation options will be available for their children once the Government closes Springvale. Parents were informed the Government was still considering the Clarence TAFE campus site, but the only students who would be eligible for accommodation there would be students attending Rosny College full time and studying courses that could not be offered at Tasman. There was no option for students looking to study at Hobart or Elizabeth College.

The Government still has not signed off on the Clarence TAFE site as the accommodation option, there is no supervisor employed and there will be no tutoring available on the site. Students will live together with four in each unit and they will need to self-cater. I just remind people these students are not adults. The anxiety these students and parents face with the ongoing uncertainty about a decision by the Government is already having an impact. Parents should be confirming enrolments now for their children and applying for Centrelink payments where relevant but they cannot.

People are talking about selling their houses just so their kids can get the education they deserve and would have been able to access had the Government not closed Springvale. The Government made the decision to close Springvale in term 2 and yet at this point, at the end of October, there are still no alternative option for students needing accommodation to study next year. One parent said to me today that their kids should be playing football. At least that way they would have a roof over their head.

I call on the Government to sort out this mess they have created, quickly. I point out that the Springvale site remains available to accommodate students, just like it has been doing. The Government could easily resolve this matter and provide certainty for country kids wishing to progress their education and not just for students wishing to attend Rosny College, and not just students needing accommodation next year. There will always be country kids who require accommodation closer to where they are studying, to avoid the round bus trips of four hours or more that would otherwise be required just to go to school.

This Government needs to do better at getting the basics right. Its failure on this issue has caused enormous anxiety for people, and the continued uncertainty is impacting a number of families and students.

Sigma Healthcare - Opening of New Critical Storage and Distribution Facility

[7.50 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Science and Technology) - Mr Speaker, I was very pleased to recently be invited to open the new critical storage and distribution facility for the

ASX-listed global pharmaceutical wholesaler and distributor company, Sigma Healthcare. This facility will serve as an important supply and distribution site for pharmacies and medical facilities right across Tasmania. The 4000 square metre distribution centre is equipped with enhanced technology, security and temperature-controlled workspaces, giving our local workforce access to cutting-edge facilities and technology.

Along with me at the opening were other speakers including Dr Michael Eason AM, EG chairman and founding director, and Mr Vikesh Ramsunder, the managing director and CEO of Sigma Healthcare.

Pharmacies are small businesses, and this facility will help ensure they have access to the supplies they need, when they need them. This site will supply over 7 million units of essential medicines and related products to pharmacies across Tasmania every single year.

The supply of pharmaceuticals is an essential part of healthcare. This distribution centre will now play an important role in ensuring Tasmanians can get access to medication when they need, and where they need. It is important to recognise the logistics involved in the distribution of medications - quite a technical skill and an art form.

The safety and security of distributing medication to our pharmacies is paramount to assisting our Tasmanian pharmacies to do business more efficiently, more effectively and probably more profitably.

Through COVID-19, we also saw how critical the availability and supply of medical supplies is, highlighting the importance of investing in robust supply chains and sovereign production capability wherever possible.

With this state-of-the-art distribution centre, the safety of medications through core chain management will continue to ensure that medications and other pharmaceuticals are appropriately stored and recorded. This building represents a shared investment between EG Funds and Sigma of \$13 million right into Tasmania, enhancing Tasmania's reputation as a worthy place to invest in. The 15-year lease demonstrates Sigma's long-term commitment to Tasmania, and its confidence in our economy and our state, which is reassuring to our small business sector.

My office works very closely with these companies to help and make sure that their landing here is smooth, and they are welcomed. We are very pleased to have them in our state with the new facilities.

It was my absolute pleasure to be part of the opening, to help cut the ribbon of this very exciting new facility, and to greet the local workforce.

Fight MND

[7.53 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I have two fantastic Launceston stories to tell tonight. We do not hold props, but I do hold some things in my hand randomly tonight, Mr Speaker, and I have raised that with you in advance.

Despite the first description of motor neurone disease over 150 years ago, it remains a terminal diagnosis, with no effective treatments or cure. There continue to be no effective therapies to slow or halt the progression. The average life expectancy for someone with MND is 27 months. That is why, every year, Fight MND run their Fight MND 27 Challenge. It takes people, and that is what I want to talk a bit about tonight.

Mr Speaker, I am just showing you my T-shirt - not holding a prop at all. You wanted to see it - the Fight MND T-shirt that I have been wearing as I try to do my 270 kilometres.

There are roughly 2100 people living with MND. There are some 51 Tasmanians. Two people are diagnosed each day in Australia. Two people die each day with MND every day in Australia. It is a cruel disease. Members who I am close to will know my personal connection with MND, and my support of the work of MND Australia and Fight MND, and particularly the 27 Challenge, but I do not want to talk about that tonight.

I want to talk about an extraordinarily passionate young man in Launceston who is doing his bit - and more than that - to raise funds for MND research and support for those living with MND and their families.

These are his words:

Hi, my name is Archie. I am 13 and I live in Tassie.

Over the last two years I have been participating in the FightMND 27 Challenge.

In October 2020 I ran 27 kilometres in under 27 hours and raised over \$2000.

He was 11 years old.

In October 2021, I ran a minimum of 2.7 kilometres each day for 27 days straight, followed by a mass ice bucket challenge with 27 fellow students, teachers, and VIPs at my school, raising \$6000.

Earlier this year, I also ran as a FightMND Champion in Run Melbourne, competing in the 10 kilometre road race and raising just over \$1500.

I am so proud that with these fundraisers together I have raised over \$10 000 to fight MND. All this money goes directly towards research to find an effective treatment and cure for this beast of a disease.

So, what's the 27 Challenge all about? The 27 Challenge is one of FightMND's national fundraising campaigns, where people set their own challenge based around the number, 27.

Why 27? Because when someone is diagnosed with MND the average life expectancy is only 27 months. This needs to change.

On October 27, I am undertaking my third 27 Challenge. This year I will be running 27 laps of the Queechy School Oval with 27 different people running a lap with me, like a relay.

After each runner finishes their lap they will be taking a plunge into an iced pool, big freeze style.

The 27 people joining me for a lap include students and teachers of Queechy, along with a couple of VIP runners.

I am super excited to announce that my running coach, Josh Harris will be joining me for my final lap of the day. I can't thank him enough for giving up his time to be by my side.

I want to thank all the students and teachers at Queechy who are joining me for a lap for their support with my fundraising efforts, especially my grade leader, Mr Ritchie, who has gone out of his way to help with the set up and organisation of the event.

If you can, please support me by making a donation to my fundraising page. Every dollar counts and all funds go to FightMND which is determined to find vital MND research funding and help find a cure for MND.

Thank you soooo much for your support. It means a lot.

This happens tomorrow so I am going to miss my lap. I am going to miss the ice bucket. I am sure you are feeling that I am upset about that. I am inspired by Archie and you should be too. I ask anyone who can support him to do so. His great big heart deserves acknowledgement and those with MND, their families and their friends need a cure.

More than 700 athletes and their coaches and teams support 19 Tasmanian absolute superstars and over 200 volunteers, untold family members and support staff meant that Launceston was pumping last week with the Special Olympics 2022 National Games in town.

The atmosphere was electric, the competition was fierce but amazingly friendly, the city quite euphoric. There was not an event where people were not filled with joy as they participated, coached, supported, or in my case, hence my hat, I volunteered. I adored every minute of being one of the special Olympic Games changers. Every other volunteer I spoke to had the best time. It was a wonderful thing for Launceston to experience.

Can I give a shout out to Tas and Em for their amazing volunteer coordination. They managed a large number of people over many events with skill and kindness.

Tassie performed very well. I am so proud of all of our athletes, but it was always about participation, about doing your best and encouraging others and fun.

This was the final tally report posted by team Tasmania -

Seventh place ribbons - one
Sixth place ribbons - four

Fifth place ribbons - five
Fourth place ribbons - six
Bronze medals - 13
Silver medals - 11
Gold medals - 14

A total of 54 achievements this week and so many personal bests from our athletes. As I mentioned, I do not care about medals and how many you get. Our success is not measured by medals, our success is measured by personal bests, maximum effort, friendship, fun and joy.

Just look at the faces of these amazing athletes. Look what 19 athletes have achieved: 54 awards over three days of competition. We are the smallest state competing, followed by the Northern Territory with 20 athletes. Other states had over 100 athletes in their teams. We are so lucky in Tassie to have so many wonderful opportunities to compete, participate and do our best.

This is a big shout out for team Tassie National Games 2022 and to all of your success. Here is to more future personal bests in whichever sport you choose, to friendships along the way you never knew you could have, to meeting new people and competing in new places.

The Special Olympics National Games were amazing. I wish all of our athletes and those who support them the very best in their ongoing endeavours. To those who are heading off to the Worlds, have the best time.

The House adjourned at 7.59 p.m.

Appendix 1

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 6 of 2022 House of Assembly

The petitioners ask the House to:

The petition of the undersigned residents of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House the killing of Tasmanian eagles by an ever-increasing number of wind turbines.

- The threatened Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax fleayi*) and White-bellied Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) are protected species with no proven protective measures in place for wind farms.
- The most recent Threatened Tasmanian Eagles Recovery Plan (2006-2010) is out of date and applies inappropriate safeguards.
- The EPA Board grants permit conditions to wind farm operators allowing eagles to be killed.
- Every year, an unknown number of these raptors are slaughtered, maimed and displaced by the State's ever-increasing number of wind turbines.
- This is in addition to those that collide with or are electrocuted by powerlines and poles, killed on our roads, poisoned or shot.
- World's best practice for minimising turbine blade collisions, using minimum 3.7km nest buffers, is well known to State regulators, but is not being implemented.
- Regulators have no strategic plan to site wind farms away from areas of high eagle activity; instead they are sited where developers choose.
- The current 1km buffer distance of turbines from eagle nests was developed 35 years ago to protect nests from disturbance by forestry operations and does not protect nests from +240m high wind turbines.

Your petitioners therefore, request the House to call on the Government to defer all wind farm developments in this State, until world's best practice is adopted by the EPA Board and an updated Threatened Tasmanian Eagles Recovery Plan is finalised.

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GOVERNMENT POSITION:

The Tasmanian Government takes the protection of threatened eagle species seriously and works cooperatively with a wide range of stakeholders – including the energy sector, researchers, the Environment Protection Authority, the Forest Practices Authority and the Australian Government - to ensure the best available technology and systems are in place to understand and mitigate threats.

RESPONSE:

Recovery Plans are discretionary instruments available under both the *Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* (TPSA) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBCA) that aim to maximise long-term survival in the wild of threatened species and should state what must be done to protect and restore important populations of threatened species and habitat, as well as how to manage and reduce threatening processes.

The Tasmanian Threatened Eagle Recovery Plan is adopted under both the TPSA and the EPBCA. The Recovery Plan expires for the Commonwealth Government on 1 April 2022, however under the TPSA there is no expiration date.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRET) recently completed a comprehensive review of the Recovery Plan, in consultation with an Eagle Conservation Planning Reference Group comprising representatives from key sectors, and provided a suite of recommendations, including that the Recovery Plan be remade. NRET will be progressing the development of a best practice, contemporary Recovery Plan this year.

In the interim, my Department has initiated a series of interrelated projects aimed at enhancing existing conservation and management measures of the wedge-tailed eagle and white-bellied sea eagle, including:

- establishing a Threatened Eagle Conservation Fund for consolidating offset (and potentially other) funds and directing it to priority research and other conservation actions. The Fund is expected to be in operation by mid 2022;
- developing comprehensive Listing Statements for the wedge-tailed eagle and white-bellied sea eagle - as required under the TPSA - which will provide up to date guidance for fund administrators, species managers and regulators on where to focus conservation efforts and funding; and,
- maintaining the Eagle Conservation Planning Reference Group, currently consisting of 15 representatives from six sectors (government, academic, forestry, electricity, renewable and natural resource management), to ensure key stakeholders are represented and engaged in conservation planning process for the Tasmanian threatened eagles to facilitate effective communication and coordinated conservation and recovery action.

In relation to the EPA Board, it is responsible for assessing the potential environmental impacts of wind farms under the provisions of the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* (EMPCA). The environmental impact assessment process set out by EMPCA focuses on

minimising environmental harm, nuisance and pollution relating to noise, air quality, and water quality, as well as natural values, with a focus on threatened flora and fauna, including avian fauna.

A range of mitigation measures have been implemented at existing wind farms to reduce the risk of impact on all avian fauna, including eagles. These include infrastructure placement to avoid areas of high bird utilisation and technologies such as Identiflight, which has been installed at the Cattle Hill Wind Farm to reduce the risk of collision with wind turbines.

Each development proposal assessed by the EPA Board has environmental permit conditions and restriction imposed upon it with which the activity must comply. These conditions require the proponent to undertake their development within a framework which reduces the risk to the overall environment.

All operational wind farms are required to monitor and report to the EPA any avian fauna collisions, including eagles, as part of their environmental permit conditions.

While the limitations of using a 1 km buffer distance for turbines to be located from nest sites is recognised, it is only one measure that is considered by the EPA when addressing the risk of collision of eagles with wind turbines. Site utilisation data is also used to enable decisions to be made on avoidance of impacts by preferentially locating turbines in low utilisation areas. Where impacts are likely to be unavoidable, mitigation measures such as habitat management and technologies such as Identiflight are all considered.

The EPA is also currently contributing to world-leading research into GPS tracking of eagles in Tasmania by Dr James Pay, University of Tasmania. It is hoped this work will lead to a better understanding of species behaviour in the landscape and result in more targeted protection measures.



Roger Jaensch
Minister for Environment

Date: ~~February~~ 2022

3 March