



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Wednesday 7 August 2024**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Wednesday 7 August 2024**

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

### **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER** - Before calling questions, in the gallery today we have members of the Saputo Dairy workforce who are campaigning outside the building. Thank you for joining us.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **QUESTIONS**

#### **Saputo Dairy Workers - Tasmania-Mainland Pay Gap**

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

[10.01 a.m.]

Tasmanians are paid on average \$11,000 per year less than workers on the mainland. It is an issue for families struggling with the cost of living, and it is a big economic issue for our state. Lower wages make it harder for essential services and businesses to attract staff. It is a big reason why our young people are currently leaving our state in droves. There is also no justification for it, given Tasmanians pay just as much for housing, energy and other essentials as people on the mainland pay.

In the gallery today are workers from Saputo's Burnie plant, and I welcome them here. They work in your electorate, Premier. They are on strike because Saputo think it is okay for them to be paid 23 per cent less to do the exact same work as their colleagues in Melbourne. Do you believe that Tasmanian workers deserve the same pay as people doing the exact same job on the mainland for the same company? If you do, what action will you take to support the Saputo workers and their fight for equal pay?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I acknowledge the workers from Saputo in the gallery today and thank them for their work over many years in supporting our dairy industry in Tasmania, which we value. It has a farmgate value of over \$500 million, a processed value of some \$850 million, and some of our iconic brands of cheeses and the like. There are many in the supply chain, whether that be dairy farmers, farm employees, food manufacturing workers or those who transport milk to the factory who create value regarding almost \$1 billion dollars' worth of economic value-added opportunity. It is industries such as the dairy industry, and the people I have just spoken of, that will ensure we get to our target of a \$10 billion farmgate value in agriculture by 2050. We are well and truly on track for that.

More broadly to the member's question about wage growth, my understanding is that we are leading the nation on the wage price index. Our headline measure of underlying wage

growth grew by 1.6 per cent from the March quarter in Tasmania. We are leading the nation more broadly on wage growth -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my left can take a point of order on relevance or ask a supplementary question if the Premier does not come to the key question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - On wage growth more broadly, we are leading the nation in wage growth and other economic indicators. I am pleased about that.

I am aware that the maintenance employees at Saputo's Burnie cheese factory walked off the job in late April this year. We have been engaging. This morning, we had two ministers respectfully engage with employees to listen and understand their concerns.

More broadly to your question, we support fairness and equity. I have always done that, throughout my time in this place, regarding fairness and equity and people being supported, paid fairly for -

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - I repeat the question again: what action will the Premier take to support Saputo workers' fight for equal pay? The federal member Gavin Pearce refused to meet with them. Will the Premier at least meet with these workers today?

**The SPEAKER** - I will accept the first part of the supplementary. The second was more of an argument. Premier, to the question on action you intend to take.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am willing to meet with anyone. Thank you for the question. I understand that negotiations are continuing. I am hopeful of a resolution for this matter, to the satisfaction of our workers and the company itself. I am sure we can work through these matters. It is not an intervention opportunity for a state government. Nonetheless, we do support fair work. This is in the federal sphere. We are not reaching in to intervene, but we will always support fairness and equity for employees in Tasmania.

### **Port of Devonport - Wharf Upgrades**

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

[10.07 a.m.]

Yesterday, TT-Line admitted what you would not: that the *Spirits* can barely be half-filled at Berth 1, your interim solution. They said:

When operating from Berth 1, the new vessel will be able to carry the same number of passengers, passenger vehicles and freight containers as the current vessels. It is an interim solution only. Berth 3 is designed to operate with fully-functioning vessels.

This is a complete farce. You have spent nearly a billion dollars on ships that can barely be half-filled because you have not delivered the wharf upgrades you have had seven years to prepare for, some of those years as Infrastructure minister. How on Earth has this happened?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Questions will be asked in silence and that applies to both sides of the House, Leader of Government Business.

## **ANSWER**

Thank you, honourable Speaker, for your ruling, and I thank the member for his question. We will get the job done. There are challenges, and this is a massive project, but we do not shy away from large infrastructure projects.

**Mr Winter** - Which you have not started.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We do not shy away from rebuilding the Royal Hobart Hospital that you could not lay a brick on, and it was challenging. I remember the Deputy Premier as Health minister at the time getting a number of questions about the build throughout that time and facing some significant challenges, but we got the job done, including a helipad on top of the Royal Hobart Hospital, saving lives. We are proud of that.

We are also proud of the fact that the Bridgewater bridge is there for everyone to see. You could not decide on that for 20 years or so, but we made the call and we are building the bridge, another challenging project.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Speaker. Under Standing Order 45, relevance. The question was specifically about the *Spirits* and wharf infrastructure. Can the Premier come back to the question?

**The SPEAKER** - I draw the Premier to the question. You have been going for over a minute.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Speaker. Regarding the *Spirits*, I recall a commitment in 2010 from the then-Labor government to have new *Spirits*, brand-new ships, online by 2014. Eight months after the election, if my memory serves me correctly, that was dumped. Why was it dumped? It was too hard for the Labor Party.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my left, if we are going to stop the Premier yelling, you will need to be quiet today.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You cannot decide to rebuild the Royal Hobart Hospital, you cannot decide on the Bridgewater bridge. You decided to bring on two new *Spirits* back in 2010 for 2014 and you backflipped on that within eight months. We do not dodge the hard decisions. This is a challenging decision and we will deliver these ships with or without your support, and we have had no support from the Leader of the Opposition -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, members on my left.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - who talks a big game, talks up jobs, but backflips at every single opportunity when it gets too hard. How many questions did I get this time last year on the stadium? My colleagues would probably say hundreds, but we stuck to it. You backflipped after the last election because you are weak.

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, I took the point of order. I draw you to the question. You have 19 seconds.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you. There are significant benefits from having the new ship, even with the temporary berth. *Spirit IV* is much more efficient for freight, with a new freight loading system. It is safer for caravans, campervans and vehicles with wider lanes and it provides -

**The SPEAKER** - The time for answering the question has expired. After reviewing the footage of yesterday's question time, there are a number of people who should have spent some time outside the Chamber. That will happen today if this continues.

### **Saputo Dairy Workers - Tasmania-Mainland Pay Gap**

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

[10.11 a.m.]

Maintenance workers at Saputo's Burnie factory have been striking for almost nine weeks. They are taking this action because of a significant pay gap with their mainland counterparts, initially 21 per cent but now 23 per cent, because of intractable negotiations with the company that believes paying Tasmanian workers less is okay. This morning, Saputo Burnie workers travelled down to ask for the Tasmanian government's help. Do you support the Saputo workers' fight for equal pay with their mainland counterparts? Do you believe Tasmanian workers should be paid less and what will you do to help these vulnerable workers?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question, along similar lines as the first question from the Leader of the Opposition, so I refer you to my answer there. Again, I acknowledge the workers in the gallery. We are in a sphere of federal industrial relations laws and I hope and expect that there can be a resolution to this matter with good-faith negotiations.

**Dr Woodruff** - We have not seen evidence of that.



**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader of Greens.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We need good faith on both sides, thank you, Dr Woodruff.

I received many questions - it might have been towards the end of 2022, early 2023 - about wage negotiations for our public service, and I said many times then that we would negotiate in good faith and we led those discussions. For our police, firies, nurses, doctors and teachers, we had those negotiations in good faith and came to a fair and reasonable decision.

**Ms BURNET** - Point of order, Speaker. Under Standing Order 45, relevance. We are talking about Saputo workers.

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, it was a very precise question from the Greens today, with very little preamble. I draw the Premier to the question asked by the member for Clark.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, who is being helpful on my right and would like to spend time outside? Just checking. Nobody? Excellent.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Speaker. My point is that when two opposing parties come together in good-faith negotiations there can be an amicable resolution. As there was, by example, with the Tasmanian government negotiating with various members of the State Service, including industrial union advocates, coming to a fair and reasonable resolution. That is what I expect. I expect that from union representatives and also the company. I will always stand on the position of fairness and equity for our Tasmanian employees and -

**Dr Woodruff** - They get paid 23 per cent less.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, the Premier has the call.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My expectation is that with robust industrial relations laws across the nation with the Fair Work Commission, there can be an amicable resolution to this if both parties come and negotiate in good faith.

### **Disability Transport Services**

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

[10.15 a.m.]

Last year, I stood with workers in supported employment at Oakdale Industry Enterprises who, until the Metro buses stopped turning up, had been able to rely on public transport as their only means of getting to and from work. The impact that your government's mass bus service cuts have had on this group of people is heartbreaking. Some of them have had to reduce their hours just so they can get home. One year on, these workers are still struggling to get to and from work. The cuts are yet another barrier for people, including those with a disability, entering the workforce.

Your predecessor admitted that neither he nor Metro even consulted with the disability community before stripping away the public transport services that many rely on. Have you personally met with the disability community and discussed with them the ongoing impact these cuts are having?

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, in my capacity as minister for Resources, I have talked to people from Oakdale and asked them about the transport issue, and that which the member for Franklin raises is a correct assessment. It is a problem. We are seeking to work through the lack of drivers that Metro has. As I mentioned in reply to questions yesterday, this is not a problem unique to Tasmania. There is a 25,000-driver shortage across the nation. Metro is seeking to recruit. They have had another 11 drivers join in July. There is currently a training group of 15 drivers and, as new drivers come on board, we hope that we can achieve a return to services.

It is an intractable problem, but we are seeking to get onto it. In relation to the question asked yesterday about Hobart College and other buses being put on that service as a result of representations made, there is a degree of flexibility for Metro services, but at the end of the day, the question is the number of drivers and that is something that we are grappling with. I gave some extensive answers yesterday in relation to how Metro is seeking to deal with that.

In the past, Metro had a scheme of trying to recruit women drivers - a great program. Unfortunately, with some of the anti-social behaviour on the buses - such as the rocks through windows - and some of the places where they drive, drivers and the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union have requested that the drivers not be required to go into certain areas. That detracts from the attractiveness of what otherwise might be an appropriate employment opportunity for some people. These things all have to be considered in the mix, and Metro management are doing their very best in all the circumstances.

It is not good enough. I agree with the member for Franklin, but we are seeking to work through the issues to ensure that the services are maintained at the best possible level. I look forward, as I am sure my fellow member for Franklin does, to the day when services can be fully restored.

## **Supplementary Question**

**Mr O'BYRNE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It took a question in parliament to get the Hobart College thing sorted. I did not ask you, as a minister for Resources, about your consultation with the disability community. I asked you, as Minister for Transport, whether you have consulted and worked with the disability community on the issues confronted by people seeking to access public transport who cannot. Oakdale is one example. There are many more.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you. It is not time to put an argument. Minister, the original question was about the broader community.

**Mr ABETZ** - I misunderstood that; I accept the question and apologise if I just focused on the one issue. My friend and Minister for Disability Services, minister Palmer, held a round table recently with me and the disability sector. Transport was raised as a specific issue, so I can assure the member, not only have I been engaged with a specific group that he mentioned, but also the disability sector in general.

### **Port of Devonport - Wharf Upgrades**

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

[10.20 a.m.]

The new *Spirits* were meant to deliver a 40 per cent increase in capacity, but as TT-Line admitted yesterday after you would not, the new *Spirits* will not be able to be fully loaded from Berth 1. Until you deliver the upgrades to Berth 3, which you say will not be until 2026, there will be no increase in capacity compared with the existing ships. Why are you spending at least \$50 million on Berth 1?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I was going through several matters pertaining to the question that he just provided, and we want the new *Spirits* to be up and running as soon as possible. Do you agree with that or not? We have given clear direction to TT-Line -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, you do not get to ask them questions, and then they do not get to interject.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and TasPorts to get the job done, and we will get it done. I was going through -

**Mr Winter** - It is supposed to be done already.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I was going through a list, Mr Winter, of the benefits of having the new ship, even with a temporary berth. *Spirit IV* is much more efficient for freight with the new freight loading system. It is safer for caravans, vehicles and vehicles with campervans due to the wider lanes. It provides a much better customer experience and is more fuel efficient, which is another benefit of getting the ships up and running as soon as possible.

It is a difficult project, as most infrastructure projects are across the nation and the globe, and in Tasmania, but we get the job done. I look forward to the *Spirits* coming up the Mersey River in the not-too-distant future. That will be great. Most of us will be celebrating. It will be good news - I am not sure where the Labor Party will be, but no doubt you will be there, basking in everyone else's hard work and glory as usual.

I take you back to some of the matters that I spoke of before. It is important, considering the challenges that we have taken head on as a government that form part of our legacy such

as rebuilding a Royal Hobart Hospital, getting the Midland Highway done and building new schools -

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you for taking us there, Premier. Can I take you to the question that was asked?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You can, absolutely. The Bridgewater bridge is an example. I take you back 12 months ago with the stadium: we stayed the course; you backflipped after the last election. If you lot were in charge of the show, it would be going nowhere. We would have no AFL team. We would have no 20 per cent increase in Auskick with young people picking up the footy - 20 per cent more people because of the excitement of a new AFL team, the Tassie Devils coming to Tasmania. You would have squibbed it because it got a little bit too hard for you.

That is not how we operate. That is not how we have operated, and we will get these *Spirits* done.

**The SPEAKER** - As the Premier resumes his seat, I remind him he is speaking through the Chair, and referring to me as 'you lot' is not okay.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - Regarding that answer about efficiency and being safer for caravans, and those limited benefits the Premier mentioned, how long does the Premier expect until these new ships are operating with those benefits from Berth 1?

**The SPEAKER** - That does arise from the answer the Premier gave, even though he touched on the question very briefly in his answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I thank the member for his question and we are more than open to giving a briefing on these matters to the parliament, individual members, and individual parties and entities.

**Ms Finlay** - Be upfront about these things.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Ms Finlay. I am just picturing all those 'No Stadium' stickers. They are being used as a door stop for your brand-new office or something like that. I am sure you found a good use for those 'No Stadium' stickers.

**Ms Finlay** - I am picturing an underground bus mall - you never passed that. No capacity, no delivery, no shame.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier will resume his seat and we will stop the clock, because it is getting out of control.

**Mr WINTER** - Standing Order 45, relevance. It was a very specific question: how long will Berth 1 be used for the new *Spirits*?

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, it was part of the original question and it is part of the supplementary question. I appreciate the challenges you are facing today, as you are speaking about regularly, but we do need an answer to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am anticipating that they will be here a lot sooner than when the member for Bass, Miss Finlay, tables her no stadium petition. I am happy to provide an update for the member for briefing times for where it is at. It is always open to that in an open and transparent way

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time answering the question has expired. I remind members that Question Time is for an opportunity for questions to be asked of the government benches and answered, as opposed to offering briefings every five minutes.

### **Native Forest Logging - New Coupes**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN**

[10.26 a.m.]

We understand that you will be doing media today on the delisting of some animals and plants from Tasmania's threatened species list. That is welcome, but while you are celebrating the delisting, your government is also ramping up its plan to log and burn critical native forest habitat. Your science-denying forestry minister is planning to open up 39,000 hectares of high conservation forests, home to critically endangered and threatened species like the swift parrot, Tasmanian devil, masked owl, wedge-tailed eagle and so many more. These reserved forests are yours to sign off for logging. No one wants species to be removed from the threatened species list because they go extinct. Do you accept that signing away this critical reserve forest habitat will push precious species towards extinction?

**Mr ABETZ** - Honourable Speaker, a point of order. I ask for your ruling, whether this question pre-empts the notice of motion put forward by the Greens, which is an order of the day. It covers exactly the same topic.

**The SPEAKER** - It is not unusual for a question to go there. I will seek advice. I do need the order of the day in front of me, if you would not mind resuming your seat while I get a copy of the notice of motion.

The question I have written down is broader than the specific motion. One of the things that we allow in Question Time is the ability to discuss matters that are of public interest, despite the fact they may be listed on the paper. As a further bit of information, any tabled bill is therefore an order of the day and not just if they are on the blue. What we would not want to do is restrict debate on all matters simply because a member has put a matter on the parliamentary record. With that, the question is in order.

**Dr Woodruff** - Desperate attempt to not answer questions about forests.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader of the Greens. I have called him so we will allow him the opportunity to answer the question.

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As a point of clarification, I am not doing media today on any points of threatened species delisting. I am hoping to share some very positive news about the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. I welcome their input into that, to set that straight.

The Tasmanian government remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting Tasmanians pristine natural environment and protecting our unique species.

**Dr Woodruff** - To the question, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would point to some very positive news of recent times about the delisting of certain species you have referenced in your question, which is good news. It is very good news and points to a well-managed and well stewarded environment -

**Dr Woodruff** - Meanwhile, are you going to sign off a whole bunch of species to extinction?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Amongst those species is the iconic humpback whale, you might be interested to know. Another species also, which is very important to the Tasmanian way of life, the southern bluefin tuna. Many members of the Chamber would be pleased to hear that those species are emerging from a position of some threat to a much healthier and more sustainable population.

In our 2030 Strong Plan, we committed \$8 million over four years to establish a Tasmanian Threatened Species Fund to directly support conservation activities for priority species, including but not limited to the Maugean skate, swift parrot, and the Tasmanian eagle. Work is underway on how this new fund can best support the protection and recovery of threatened species. Tasmania is renowned around the world for its rich biodiversity and unique plants and animals -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Speaker. Standing Order 45, relevance. The question was about the 39,000 hectares of critical habitat that you will sign away or not, and do you accept it could drive species to extinction?

**Mr Abetz** - Which is exactly the notice of motion.

**The SPEAKER** - It is, but if everything that was - I will stop the clock again and the Leader of the House can come and talk to me about this later if he would like to.

**Dr Woodruff** - That is right. He should learn how this parliament works.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader of the Greens. I am attempting to get an answer to your question. That will cease if you continue interjecting.

Leader of the House, I am happy to talk to you about it later but if every matter that was published as an order for the future was not able to be mentioned, this would be a very short Question Time indeed.

Minister, your first two minutes have gone to addressing the preamble. I draw you to the question now.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The question dealt heavily with the issue of Tasmania's threatened species. As minister for Environment, that is the area where I have a responsibility, so that is the area of the question I will address. The other area of the question is a matter for my colleague minister. As the minister for Parks, I have nothing in front of me in relation to the matters you have raised in your question. That is where I am at. I have nothing in front of me. That may change in coming weeks and months but, as of today, that is the case. I point to some very positive news in the threatened species space. I talk to our government's continued -

**The SPEAKER** - The minister's time for answering the question has expired.

### **Supplementary Question.**

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I hear the minister's reluctance. What I asked him was, does he accept that signing away this critical reserve forest habitat would push threatened species to extinction? It is not about what is in front of him. Does he accept that -

**The SPEAKER** - I am sorry. It was not the answer you would like to have heard and not the answer you were trying to get at. However, I cannot in good faith say that the minister did not address the question in the range of capacity he has. A question to another minister may elicit another response.

### **Ben Yole - Conviction of Worker**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Ms OGILVIE**

[10.33 a.m.]

Yesterday, *The Examiner* reported the outcome of criminal proceedings against Lily Blundstone, a 21-year-old who fell asleep shortly before a horse trailer crash which injured two people and resulted in the death of four horses. The court heard the circumstances that led to the crash. Ms Blundstone and four other stable hands in the employment of Ben Yole had been working for more than 13 hours without a break. The horse float was unregistered and was non-compliant because it was not fitted with emergency braking. It was loaded 3000 kg beyond the manufacturer's specifications. It was also reported that Mr Yole did not have workers compensation insurance and that he instructed the employees to tell lawyers they were not employed by him to avoid liability.

Ms Blundstone has paid the price. However, she was clearly acting under the direction of her employer, Ben Yole. Is Ben Yole's unsafe workplace and his attempts to avoid liability acceptable? What will you do about this appalling situation?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, these incidents are nothing short of tragic and my heart goes out to all involved, particularly their friends, loved ones, and everybody who has been impacted by this event. We know that every single person deserves to come home from work safely every single day.

WorkSafe, the work health and safety regulator, is investigating serious motor vehicle incidents as well as other compliance issues relevant to the industry. As there are active investigations being conducted by WorkSafe, I will not prejudice those investigations. It is important that we all take care about commenting on matters that are either before the courts or under investigation by WorkSafe -

**Mr Winter** - She was convicted on Monday.

**Ms OGILVIE** - This is a serious matter, Mr Winter. You seem to be wanting to make light of it by chipping in while I am speaking.

**Mr Winter** - You have been the minister this whole time and you have done nothing.

**Ms Finlay** - Shame.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you all. 'Shame' is considered to be parliamentary so you may continue with that interjection.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Thank you for your question. I am trying to answer it. All five people in the vehicle were treated for injuries at the Launceston General Hospital. It was a serious matter and that horses died in the float, two immediately and two being euthanised at the scene, was tragic.

As you would be aware, we cannot comment further on determinations of the court. Work Safe Tasmania is the responsible authority which regulates the *Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act* and ensure compliances, including investigating alleged breaches of the act.

**Port of Devonport - Wharf Upgrades**

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

[10.36 a.m.]

Was TT-Line planning to spend at least \$50 million upgrading Berth 1 for no increase in passengers or freight before the ministerial direction issued by your government?



## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. These are operational matters. There has been an intervention by our respective ministers to get the job done and we will. Regardless of which berth, the new ships' entire vehicle decks will be of the full height. That is another advantage of the interim arrangements -

**Mr Willie** - That is \$50 million of advantages.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We know that you will criticise every single step of the way, but we will get the job done with or without Labor's support. We recognise that steps along the way will have challenges. We are working hard to overcome those challenges, as we will.

You will criticise and talk down Tasmania in the same breath, and talk down the opportunity of the increase in freight and passenger capacity of the new ships when they come online as well. We are not up for your negativity. We are up for getting the job done and we will.

## **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - Regarding the content of the ministerial direction, is it publicly available? If not, will the Premier table that ministerial direction?

**The SPEAKER** - I am happy to take that as a new question. The Premier answered the first one by saying he does not intend to answer it because it is an operational matter. That is something the Premier can reflect on later on. I will take this as a new question if you would like to submit it as one.

**Mr WINTER** - I will come back to you.

## **Hotel Occupancy Rates**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.38 a.m.]

New figures from the Tasmanian Hospitality Association released on Monday revealed hotel occupancy in June was at 56.75 per cent, the lowest level since the COVID period. However, in response to Mr Winter yesterday, you mentioned your government is investing in some 57 events, bringing 400,000 bed nights between April and September this year. Given the concerning occupancy figures and the loss of Dark Mofo, how have you calculated the 400,000 bed nights?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I understand the knowledge the member has about the visitor economy. As I said yesterday, I recognise that occupancy rates are about those pre-COVID levels, and we are supporting the industry through some very challenging times.

In the absence of a full-scale Dark Mofo event this year, the Tasmanian government, through Events Tasmania, committed to seeking event content that could be hosted across Tasmania in the winter months of 2024 to boost those visitation numbers. From April to September 2024, as stated yesterday, the Tasmanian government will support 57 events across the state. It is projected that these events will bring over 70,000 visitors to Tasmania with over 400,000 bed nights. I am happy to provide, at a later stage, the calculations and the formula about that. No doubt Events Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania and Department of State Growth will have worked through the formula. I am more than willing to speak to you about that.

We can assure Tasmanians that we recognise our winter months are always very challenging in Tasmania, pointed to pre-COVID. There is a one-year hiatus from Dark Mofo, albeit we did invest in some Dark Mofo events and supported that organisation, plus other events across the regions. We made a small but important investment for the Scallop Festival, for example, which brought over 2000 people to the north-east region. I was there on Sunday and had great feedback about the liveliness of the town, particularly the night before, which is good.

We will work with events and continue to support. My understanding is that they give visitor numbers and nights of stays. We can then work out where we best apply our resources to invest for greater bang for our buck. I am more than happy to provide the member with the formula with which that is calculated, if she so wishes.

**The SPEAKER** - Can I clarify, Premier, that you are not taking it on notice? You are providing an answer to one member for that question and not the House?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**The SPEAKER** - Noted.

## Rental Law Reform

**Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Ms OGILVIE**

[10.42 a.m.]

Tasmania's rental laws mean tenants have fewer rights than their mainland counterparts and, as a result, life is harder than it should be. The Greens have spent years campaigning for reform to rental laws, only to be repeatedly denied by your government and Labor. We are glad to see some recent moves towards basic changes. However, this is not enough.

We are the only state where tenants are unable to make minor modifications to their home. Current laws mean people like Jenna, who is unable to use certain types of taps due to

her disability, has to go through a months-long process just so she can access water in the home. Ten community service organisations wrote to members asking us to support reforming rental laws to give tenants the right to make minor modifications for safety, security, disability, energy efficiency and accessing telecommunications reasons. These organisations represent Tasmanians from different walks of life and who face different challenges, but they all agree on the need for reform. Will you heed the call made by these organisations and recognise the needs of thousands of renters? Will you support giving tenants the right to make modifications to their homes in these circumstances?

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

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, the question was more like a speech so I have tried to pick the eyes out of it. As you are aware, we are making much-needed reforms and we brought some reforms to the election that have been well supported. I am aware of the letter to which you refer; I have sighted it.

In our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future, we have committed to changing the law to allow renters to have pets as a right. We all love our pets. We introduced the legislation, delivering on our commitment made in the first 100-day plan and know that renters should not have to choose between having a place to live and the pet they love. We recognise that many tenants rely on the comfort and companionship of animals, particularly for their mental health and their wellbeing. We also recognise the importance for tenants to have pets for comfort, companionship -

**Mr BAYLEY** - Point of order, Speaker, on relevance, Standing Order 45. I am obviously aware of the bill and the pets element. I did not go anywhere near pets. This is about minor modifications.

**The SPEAKER** - Minister, I draw you to the specific part of the question which is about minor modifications required in rental properties.

**Ms OGILVIE** - As I was saying, we are doing the work about pets in rentals and you will also notice that we have brought in some reforms for toppling furniture, which as a mother I have championed. I see you grinning there, but it is important for the kids. We do not want furniture falling on children and it is important that those minor adjustments and fixtures are allowed to happen.

I am aware of your letter and I am aware of quite a long list of proposals that you have made. I will consider those very carefully. I am not opposed to doing things that are sensible and balanced in a measured and prudent way. At the moment I have the two reforms that are very serious and very important - I think we have your support on them - that will make lives for tenants better. It is important that we manage the balance between tenants and owners to make sure it is not a barrier for people to let their properties out. They are the conversations that will be happening and I am always happy to talk more.

## **Native Forest Logging - New Coupes**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN**

[10.46 a.m.]

The 39,000 hectares your government plans to log are currently sitting within the Reserve Estate. They are your responsibility. You are also responsible for the *Threatened Species Protection Act*. What communication have you had with your minister for Resources about threatened species in the high-conservation reserve forests that are on the chopping block?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I begin my remarks by saying this government was re-elected to rebuild Tasmania's forest industries. We have made no secret that the future potential production land has been set aside for industry use. We are planning to harvest our renewable carbon sequestering resource and then resow and replant for a new crop to further satisfy our wood supply needs, provide job security, sequester carbon and reduce our reliance on imported forest products, which is a very substantial question for us all.

Under the first 100 days of our Strong Plan, we committed to begin the process of unlocking the wood bank for future potential production forest and the 27 parcels of Future Potential Production Forest land totalling about 39,000 hectares of largely regrowth forest, as outlined in section 7 of the *Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act 2014*.

The important part of all this is that minister Abetz is currently in the phase of obtaining detailed information, as required under section 7(2) of the *Forestry Act 2014*, which will determine the exact hectareage and location of the parcels and he has, as yet, not written to me. So far this has -

**Dr Woodruff** - Or communicated with you in another form.

**Mr DUIGAN** - That is the current status of this matter. I understand your interest in it and I understand Tasmanians' and wider forestry sector's interest, but that is the current status of the issue.

## **Port of Devonport - Wharf Upgrades**

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

[10.48 a.m.]

Has your government directed TT-Line, against its wishes, to spend more than \$50 million on wharf upgrades that deliver no benefit in terms of passenger or freight capability? Is the only purpose of this massive spend to prevent the PR disaster of having new ships floating somewhere off the coast unable to be used, like a giant floating billboard showcasing the incompetence of your government? Are you spending \$50 million of taxpayer money to avoid an embarrassing news story and will you table the ministerial direction that appears to have caused this debacle in the first place?

## ANSWER

We are the government and we will get the job done. That is why we do it directly, because we are the government and I make no apologies for that at all. We will get this job done with your support or not. You can talk about PR disasters all you like. You have one on your own hands at the moment. When I picked up *The Australian* newspaper today there was mention of civil war within the Labor Party, so I would be watching your back, Mr Winter, well and truly.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, the House will come to order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You are a bit chipper about it, Mr Willie. You are a bit chipper about *The Australian* newspaper -

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier will also come to order.

**Mr Winter** - What has that got to do with the question?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It has everything to do with the question because he mentioned public relations. He mentioned public relations and *The Australian* newspaper called it out. You have successfully divided those who normally support him and helped him to get where he is. You can sort out your own sign gate on that side of the house, and we will get the ships starting up the Mersey River as soon as we possibly can. We will not take any of your negativity. Recognising the challenges, I have gone through a list of benefits of getting the *Spirit* on the run -

**Mr Winter** - Safer for caravans, you said. Is that what you said?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, it was.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, conversations across the Chamber will cease. The Premier will be drawn to the question. Thank you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It was one of the benefits.

**Mr Winter** - A wider lane for caravans and \$50 million for wider lanes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is safer.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier will resume his seat if he is not going to answer the question. Stop having conversations with members.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am trying to answer the question, honourable Speaker, but I keep getting interjected on.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier is resuming his seat.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - Will the Premier table the ministerial direction? That was the original question. I wonder if you could answer that?

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, you have one minute to answer whether or not you will table the ministerial direction. Please stick to the subject matter.

**Ms Dow** - Yes or no.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, honourable member. I will seek advice. Ministerial directions are available in annual reports, but I am happy to seek advice about tabling and get back to you.

**The SPEAKER** - Will the Premier update the House today? I am just getting some clarification.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Premier. I call the honourable member for Braddon, Mr Garland, who does not spend his entire time making me say 'Order'.

### **Saputo Dairy - Workers Strike - Assistance**

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

[10.52 a.m.]

When I found out about the Saputo workers' situation - that they are being paid 24 per cent less and that the company is now flying in workers from Europe at probably a greater cost than what it would be to pay the original workers what they deserve, I thought the least I could do was give them a box or two of mutton birds and half a beast, so I took it across and donated to them. That was the least I could do.

As the Premier of this state, what can we do as a government to assist them in any way possible? These blokes all have families and commitments, and it should be recognised that people going on strike is not an action that is taken lightly. What can be given to them?

**Members** - Hear, hear.

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I make no light of the question at all, but I do like mutton birds. They are one of my favourite foodstuffs, I have to say.

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, if you are trying to entice the member to give you gifts, we will deal with that out there as well.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am just stating the facts. I am meeting with the workers after Question Time. I look forward to those discussions and I expect fairness and equity irrespective of people's circumstance, whether that be in an industrial dispute or other areas in the community. I would expect that the company comes to good faith negotiations with the employees and resolves this matter in the best interests not only of the workers and their families, of which you refer, but also the production of our high-quality cheese - the brands we are very proud of.

## **Efficiency Dividend**

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

[10.54 a.m.]

Your so-called efficiency dividend is set at \$50 million this year. Would not saving the jobs of health workers, education staff and police be a better way to spend \$50 million than wharf upgrades that deliver no increase or benefit to Tasmania's economy?

**The SPEAKER** - I remind minister Ellis that I can hear him, even if he does not look at me when he speaks.

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, that is a ridiculous question. To make that comparison, frankly, your ignorance about the budget challenges - notwithstanding the \$2 billion worth of cuts that you have in government in your red book of Budget despair, as we have argued well and truly in this place. We look forward to 41 days' time where you detail to the Tasmanian people - for the first time in 3000 days we might see an alternative Budget from the state opposition. If you want to be taken seriously then step up to the plate and deliver an alternative Budget, as we did in opposition.

When we came to government, we got the Budget under control. You have claimed in your question no benefits to the berth upgrades. I have listed those benefits for you. You dismiss the value of campervans and caravans. You seem to dismiss the freight value. You seem to dismiss the safety aspects as well with the wider lanes. You are not listening to the answers that are provided for you, Mr Winter -

**Mr Winter** - They are the most expensive lanes in history.

**Mr Willie** - You are cutting health workers at the same time.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Mr Willie.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, we are not, Josh. Seriously, we are not.

**Mr Willie** - What is the Health secretary saying?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. If the Premier and Mr Willie would like to discuss it outside, that is fine, but could we come to the question?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are investing in all frontline workers. That is evident. That is clearly evident.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, both members for Clark, thank you. Premier, stop attempting to entice them to interject. Come to the question, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will. To the member's interjection, you know that is not true. You know full well that in 12 months' time we will have more paramedics, more nurses -

**Ms Haddad** - You are cutting now. You have cut nurses and cleaners now.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, member for Clark.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Within our health system, we have already employed some 2500 health professionals with the good diligence of both the Deputy Premier and minister Barnett over the last 10 years. We are proud of that record. We are also ensuring that we have a very efficient public service that delivers. What we are seeing in other states are cuts. That is why we are advertising interstate to come and work in Tasmania.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired. The Premier will resume his seat.

### **Tourism Marketing Strategy**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to the PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.58 a.m.]

I commend Tourism Tasmania on their marketing strategies thus far. They have achieved a paradigm shift with people wanting to visit Tasmania during the winter months. This year is obviously challenging. Is it time for a new marketing strategy - a new quarter action? Has 'Come Down for Air' run its course? Is it time for change?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, the Come Down for Air campaign, if my memory serves me correctly, has been here for about five years or so, which might well be the reason for your question. It has been very successful, and my understanding is that the evaluation of such campaigns remains very strong.



I have had the benefit of a recent briefing with Tourism Tas, and several of my colleagues have as well, which linked strong marketing campaigns with an increase in the visitor economy, which is important to Tasmania. The tourism industry supports some 37,000 jobs in Tasmania. The hospitality industry is some 8 per cent of the workforce. It is significant.

The reason why we are investing heavily in events - and I acknowledge minister Street's good work and advocacy in this area - is to bring more people to Tasmania. These campaigns will go through some evaluation. You will appreciate that the marketing investment for Tasmania is not as large as other states, so we have to be very targeted and 'quirky', if you like, to capture people's attention. The 'Come Down for Air' campaign does exactly that. We were able to cut through that marketplace.

The recent marketing with the job for a day, we have had people come to Tasmania walking wombats and a few things like that. The evaluation of that proved, for the investment provided, that it was an enormous success. I am happy to provide that detail at a later time. Estimates coming up will have a number of these discussions.

It was pleasing for me to be at The Cove on the north-west coast and great to see Kim Robinson there. It is a significant investment in what was traditionally a farm area. The Cove has won state awards and been nominated for national awards. They have benefited from the tourism loan scheme. When I was meeting with Kim and Bruce Robinson, it was great to be able to re-announce that commitment we made at the 2024 election as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. The Regional Tourism Loan Scheme provides low-interest loans for investors to invest in new projects, thereby stimulating the visitor economy and creating jobs.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mrs PENTLAND** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - We acknowledge that past campaigns have been successful, but the question was: is it time for change on the campaign that is running at the moment?

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier probably addressed it, but he was continuing. If he wants to add to it, he may, but the Premier did address the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I thank the member for her question. It gives me the opportunity to provide some clarity about the tourism and hospitality sector in terms of jobs. One in eight Tasmanians are employed in the industry, an incredible 42,900 tourism-related jobs in Tasmania in the 2022-23 financial year. I mentioned 37,000 in my previous answer, so I just wanted to ensure that was clarified.

I have not seen any evaluation to suggest there should be a change, but Tourism Tasmania evaluates and says we do need to shift emphasis to bring more people to Tasmania and cut through in what is a very competitive marketing place. No doubt we will agree with that. I can ask the question, but I have seen no evaluation that would support a time for change at this stage.

## *Spirits of Tasmania - Project Delays*

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

[11.02 a.m.]

The *Spirits of Tasmania* project is the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmanian history. Your government tore up a memorandum of understanding with a shipbuilder which delayed the project by at least three years. You have been determined to keep the truth from Tasmanians at every step of the way since.

Two years ago, I asked your Treasurer whether the contract price had changed. It had, by more than \$13 million, but he denied it to a parliamentary committee. During the caretaker period, TT-Line made an \$80 million bailout payment to a Finnish shipbuilder which you never planned to tell Tasmanians about. In May, I asked whether the wharf upgrades had blown out to about \$350 million. They had, but you denied that as well. Yesterday I asked whether Berth 1 was too shallow for the new ships to operate at full capacity. You tried to hide the truth, offered a briefing, but later TT-Line did tell the truth. That was true as well.

How is it that I seem to know more about this project than you do? Further, why have you repeatedly tried to mislead Tasmanians about this entire fiasco?

**The SPEAKER** - Misleading parliament is a serious allegation so I ask all members to pay attention to the answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Honourable Speaker, I reject the premise of the question. What it does highlight is that the member and the Labor Party have been negative about this from whoa to go and continue to be so. We have always been open and transparent. We have always -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Members on my left have an opportunity to move a substantive allegation before the House, if they choose to. I draw the Premier to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You ask the questions; we provide the answers. We will put answers and those matters on record. We have had briefings in caretaker with the opposition, as has been detailed, and we have a very strong record of openness and transparency across the whole of government. You can whinge all you like, and day in, day out, you come here and whinge about all sorts of matters, including this. I am more than happy to provide any member of this place an opportunity for a briefing -

**Mr Winter** - Just answer the question when we ask you about it. That is how this place works. You answer questions.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - And we are?

**Mr Winter** - No, you are not.

**The SPEAKER** - It is not a pantomime. Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am answering questions -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - I am drawing the Premier to answer without responding to the interjections.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and offering briefings across a range of areas. We have opportunities, if you highlight any question, GBE scrutiny, budget Estimates, all sorts of matters -

**Mr Winter** - But not Question Time.

**Mr Abetz** - I can see why Josh is smiling.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader, and thank you, Leader of Government Business. Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Hush.

**Mr Winter** - See why you have the portfolio.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Clark, do not be the only person I ever warn in this place.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, honourable Speaker. We will always be accountable to this project and other projects. As challenging as they are, as I say again, we will get the job done. You can ask questions, we provide answers, we take them on notice. We have done that before. I have offered you briefings. There are other opportunities for scrutiny about budget estimates and GBE hearings and all sorts of things -

**Mr Winter** - You are gaslighting now.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - What is consistent, if nothing else, is your whingeing and your negativity about TT-Line, TasPorts and the huge opportunity that this will bring to Tasmania, of which this government will be very proud. Unlike your government in 2010, when you went to an election for a few votes to bring on two new *Spirits*, and eight months later, you squared it. We do not -

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

**Time expired.**

## **CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS**

### ***Residential Tenancy Act - Interim Protections***

**Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Ms OGILVIE**

[11.08 a.m.]

Constituents from Bass, members of the Tourist Park Residents Association from Beauty Point, a few of them are here this morning ask the following questions. When will you, as minister, as a matter of urgency, effect an interim moratorium on evictions at the Beauty Point Tourist Park by making a regulation to do so as allowed under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*? This interim protection is clearly required, as you have demonstrated that you will take your time to consult on reforms much needed for long-term residents in caravan parks.

### **Racing Industry - Standards of Care**

**Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT**

My question is in relation to the current standards of care within the racing industry, on behalf of my electorate of Bass. As a result of the media attention our government's recent reforms to the racing regulations attracted, there are many in the community calling for detail on how the government is addressing equine and greyhound standards of care in the industry. Can the minister please provide an update on this important method?

### **kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary Rezoning Proposal**

**Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS**

My question is from concerned residents in the West Tamar. One hundred and seventy-two hectares adjacent to Point Effingham on kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary have been proposed as a SunCable development site. This land is currently being assessed for re-zoning by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The draft amendment seeks to rezone an area approximately half the size of the residential area of George Town to light industrial, without any supporting studies or strategic planning and contrary to Council's own endorsed George Town Structure Plan. This proposed rezoning is contrary to multiple adopted strategic plans and strategies, including the Northern Regional Land Use Strategy and the Northern Tasmanian Industrial Land Study.

Why is there no documentation, strategic or otherwise, to support this industrial rezoning? Have all correct planning procedures been followed during this rezoning process? Was this rezoning application specifically tailored to suit the requirements of a proposed SunCable development?

## **Caravan Parks - Long-Term Residents**

**Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Ms OGILVIE**

There is no doubt that reform is needed in caravan parks with long-term residents, as both proponents and residents are calling for reform as a matter of urgency. Tasmania is the only state not to have legislation to regulate tourist parks. Will you make interim regulations to allow for repairs on dwellings and for the ability to sell dwellings until such time that you complete the much-needed reforms? Will you consider requiring mandatory Working with Vulnerable People registration for workers in tourist parks, the management and workers who, as an example, directly engage with elderly long-stay residents?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - I am very surprised that we are getting interjections during Constituency Questions. I note the behaviour of the minister in that.

## **Fishing - Bluefin Tuna Stocks**

**Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ**

My question is to the minister in his responsibility for the fishing industry. Although I have heard some good news this morning on this issue, I have committed to asking the question.

I understand the southern bluefin tuna population had previously been placed under considerable pressure from fishing. However, I have been contacted recently by fishers on the west coast who believe the status of the southern bluefin tuna has changed. Can you advise if the southern bluefin tuna stocks are recovering and continue to increase, and that the Tasmanian fishers can confidently enjoy this blue-water sport?

**The SPEAKER** - You are obviously concerned about members in your electorate, as constituency questions are related to electorate questions. I note your interest for the fisherfolk in Lyons.

## **Road Safety - Bunnings Slip Road in Launceston**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr FERGUSON**

The exit to the Bunnings connector from the Midland Highway in Launceston has become a dangerous situation during peak hour. Vehicles are forced to stand still, often banking up end-to-end for hundreds of metres as they wait to clear the congestion on the slip road. This is forcing people to have little choice but to line up on the edge of the busy Midland Highway, which has not been designed to accommodate such practice. Cars and trucks travelling south on the highway at the posted speed limit of 110 km/h are met with vehicles at a standstill.

Will the government make the necessary safety improvements to the road infrastructure of the Midland Highway as a matter of urgency before a serious accident occurs?

### **Beauty Point Diving Platform**

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

Regarding the removal of the 'Divo' diving platform at Beauty Point, Jenna from the West Tamar would like to know what the point was of the public survey - which found 96 per cent of people wanted it to stay - if people were not going to be listened to? What are the statistics of injury/death off the 'Divo'? Why have they not taken into consideration the public interest, history, and ideas for solutions? Was the government ever going to publicly address it rather than hide it deep in the public notices of the newspaper? Why not a floating structure for people to swim at high tide, like the one at Low Head?

Are you concerned kids will now go to more dangerous areas to jump off, like the wharf or the headland trees, which is where they go now when there is not enough water to jump off the 'Divo'?

### **Online Access Centres - Ongoing Funding**

**Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER**

This is a question from numerous constituent groups on the east coast. Online access centres provide vital services, particularly in our rural communities where there is often unreliable or no internet connection and a digital divide in tech services and abilities. Supported by skilled, dedicated volunteers, online access centres help rural residents manage online tasks such as paying bills, completing digitised paperwork and job-searching. To be clear, this service is distinctively different from that of Libraries Tasmania.

Funding for online access centres ends in the next financial year. Many operators have been trying to get clarity for a long time on what the future will hold so they can plan ahead. Can you finally ease the understandable angst of many online access centres and the communities reliant on them and articulate what the plan is for the future? Will they amalgamate into Libraries Tasmania or will we see a roll-out of hubs customised for the needs of each unique community, as we have seen in Queenstown and Devonport?

**The SPEAKER** - The time for constituency questions has ended, which brings question time to an end.

**Time expired.**

## **STATEMENT BY SPEAKER**

### **Question Time - Briefings**

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members, in the early part of the new parliament, I commended the government on taking questions on notice because it resolved a number of the outstanding issues. I note with concern a new tone, which is to offer individual members briefings on questions that are asked in Question Time. If questions are serious enough for Question Time, then, wherever possible, the answer should be given to the House in a public way. I just make that observation.

## **TABLED PAPERS**

### **Question on Notice - Answer**

[11.15 a.m.]

The following answer to a Question on Notice was tabled -

#### **No. 8 of 2024 - RENTAL DEPOSIT AUTHORITY - BOND CLAIMS**

Ms Haddad to Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs

See Appendix 1 on page 138.

### **Response to Petition - Social Poker as a Business**

[11.16 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Minister for Sport and Events) - Honourable Speaker, I lay upon the table the government's response to petition No. 2 of 2024, Bring Back Social Poker.

- Petition No. 2 of 2024 tabled by Mr Wi\*-nter on 15 May 2024

See Appendix 2 on page 140.

## **VALIDATION (STATE COASTAL POLICY) BILL 2024 (No. 37)**

### **First Reading**

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

## **MOTION**

### **Leave to Move Motion Forthwith**

[11.17 a.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I seek leave to move -

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

**The SPEAKER** - The seeking leave debate is a 35-minute debate. Do you wish to speak to the motion of seeking leave or are you happy to go straight to the motion?

**Ms BURNET** - I am happy to go straight into it.

**The SPEAKER** - You are speaking on the matter of seeking leave, which is where you explain why it is urgent.

**Ms BURNET** - I will later move that the House support calls for Saputo workers' pay parity. This morning, we were greeted by Saputo workers from Burnie, mainly maintenance workers, who have been striking for almost nine weeks. They are in their ninth week. They have come down from Burnie to ask for our help to fight for pay equity with their mainland counterparts. The Leader of the Greens and I spoke for some time this morning with workers who are doing it tough. They have been on strike for almost nine weeks because they are not getting the same level of pay that their mainland counterparts are receiving.

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Clark, at the moment we are on a seeking of leave motion. You are seeking leave to move a motion to suspend the Standing Orders, so you need to address why you are seeking leave now rather than the content of the motion.

**Ms BURNET** - I seek leave because of the urgency that these workers find themselves in after having been on strike for so long without pay.

**The SPEAKER** - You still have some time on the clock if you would like. Otherwise, I can call other members on seeking leave.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you for your indulgence, honourable Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** - Everybody gets one turn at new stuff. This is your second one.

**Ms BURNET** - This pay gap is significant. A question to you, honourable Speaker. I am speaking about -

**The SPEAKER** - The first motion you have moved is that you are seeking leave to be able to move a motion which is outside of the normal process of the House. The reason you are speaking to it now is that you are explaining why seeking leave now matters.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you, honourable Speaker. We are seeking this consideration by the House to stop the deadlock these workers find themselves in. It is very important to undertake this consideration today since they have been in a situation where they have not received pay over a number of weeks because of this action and inaction to come to a resolution.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you. It is a 35-minute debate.

[11.20 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, we support the seeking of leave today for very good reasons. It is urgent that we deal with this today,



because we can see people in the gallery, Saputo workers, who have travelled from Burnie to be with us this morning. They have made the effort to come here to engage with parliamentarians and they are looking for leadership. They are looking for a government that will back them. Today, we have an opportunity as a parliament to back these working people from Burnie.

I was privileged only a few weeks ago to meet with these workers and speak to them about the urgency they are going through. These workers have been not working for nine weeks and if we all think about what it feels and looks like to not be paid for nine weeks, it must be extremely difficult for them. We need to honour and respect their being here by having this debate today.

These workers do not have big demands. They are asking for fairness, they are asking for respect, and as Tassie workers they are fighting the fight, not just for themselves and their own families, but on behalf of so many Tasmanians, which is why it is urgent.

**The SPEAKER** - Yes, and you will get to speak to the substantive motion if leave is granted once we get through this debate.

**Mr WINTER** - Quite right, Speaker. The urgency is in them being here, in their plight and in their failure to have been paid for nine weeks. This place has a duty to them to deal with this today while they are here. It would be nothing but disrespectful to those workers not to deal with the substantive debate following this motion. That is why we will be supporting the seeking of leave. We will be supporting these workers because they are not just fighting for themselves, they are fighting for every working Tasmanian.

[11.22 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, there is an urgency that this industrial dispute be resolved. The question before the House is whether this is a matter of urgency to be debated with a suspension of the Standing Orders. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that if he honestly believed that this was a matter of urgency, he could have taken up the Labor Party's private members' time later today, or he could have raised it on the adjournment, but what has occurred is that the Tasmanian Greens have gazumped Labor in relation to this in what they are seeking to do. The Greens are in a similar position. They have the MPI today, they also have private members -

**The SPEAKER** - At this stage, this is just on seeking leave in order to move the motion to suspend Standing Orders.

**Mr ABETZ** - Yes, and I am making the point - I would have thought pretty obviously - that there is no need for a suspension because the Greens have other capacities in this Chamber with the MPI and their private members' time today to use the same allocation of time without disrupting that which is occurring in the Chamber today.

**Mr Winter** - You were their friend this morning. You were out there talking to them this morning.

**Mr ABETZ** - I was out there talking with them because I wanted to understand firsthand the plight of the workers. I understand the urgency of this situation, but the urgency is not for us as a parliament to resolve. The member for Clark said that the parliament somehow has to

stop the deadlock. We all know that we cannot do that. We have an independent umpire in Australia called the Fair Work Commission. If two parties are in an intractable dispute, are unable to resolve it, then the task is to go to the Fair Work Commission. Where is the urgency? If we pass this motion, does it change anything for the plight of the workers? Absolutely nothing, because the parties will continue their negotiations and the Fair Work Commission, with great respect, will not be guided by emotion from this place from the member for Clark or the Leader of the Opposition. They will not be guided by that.

**The SPEAKER** - I remind members that the debate is on the seeking of leave to move a motion without notice for the purpose of moving the suspension of Standing Orders. That is the only thing we are debating. We are not debating the content of the motion. We will do that in the next one.

**Mr ABETZ** - The urgency that is being asserted in relation to this matter has not and cannot be made out, because no matter what this parliament may or may not determine in relation to this matter it will not influence if the matter ultimately goes before the Fair Work Commission.

As an independent umpire, the Fair Work Commission should not be swayed by a vote of this parliament; it should simply be swayed by the submissions made by the union, workers and employers. It should come to a decision, should that be the eventuality, if the parties cannot resolve the matter between themselves. The issue of the need to suspend standing orders has clearly not been made.

**The SPEAKER** - We are simply seeking leave. The next debate will be about the Standing Orders if it is approved.

**Mr ABETZ** - There is no need for this motion given the other opportunities in today's orders of the day, where members who feel motivated to speak and deal with the issue could have done so and should have done so. The Greens, having gazumped the Labor Party - the Labor Party are now jumping on board. I would say, as a matter of principle, we should reserve the suspension of Standing Orders for genuinely urgent matters, and a matter that has gone on now for some months cannot be considered to be an urgent matter this morning. I thank the House.

[11.25 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, on the seeking of leave, I rise to support the motion to seek leave to consider this as a matter of urgency. It is urgent, and the reason why this House needs to debate this in the form that it has been brought is because it is not a matter for a party, an individual or the government's private members' time; it is a matter for the parliament to consider. It should not be a sideline to a single party or individual campaigning for matters such as importance of equality for Tasmanian workers.

It is not a matter for a single party to own that issue. The parliament should debate it as a matter of urgency because the parliament needs to send a statement - not to the Fair Work Commission; the minister who resumed his seat is correct. Absolutely, it is not our role to intervene in matters before the Fair Work Commission, but it is our role to say to corporates in Tasmania, 'Do not treat Tasmanian workers second rate. Do not trade on our fresh air, trade on our providence and trade on our brand but rubbish workers when they demand fair and equal pay.'

This is not necessarily purely a matter of enterprise bargaining outcomes. This is not purely a matter for workers and employers disagreeing. This is a fundamental matter about Tasmanian workers being treated equally to workers not just on the mainland but across the globe. This is a matter of urgency. It should not be sidelined to other elements of today's debate.

We need to support these working people. It is a matter of urgency because I met a couple of their families, and you could see the desperation in their eyes. They want their partners to go back to work. They want their families to go back to some form of normality. We all should agree on that. To say that this parliament and this government has no influence over a large corporate like Saputo in Tasmania is naive at best.

Every corporate that comes to Tasmania trades on their relationship with the Tasmanian government and Tasmanian politicians. This is a matter of urgency. We need to debate it. We need to send a statement not only to these workers but to all Tasmanian workers that we support them and we will not support corporates coming and trading off our brand but not treating workers equally.

[11.29 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, on the seeking of leave, I will provide clarity to the Chamber and thank Ms Burnet for bringing this on behalf of the Greens. On the importance of now - the Greens did consider using our matter of public importance to address this issue today, but the reason why we did not is because it is so important that there is a statement from this parliament in support of the people who have driven today from the north-west coast and the Burnie region who are suffering. It has been nine weeks. They have no pay. They are strong and they need our support. They need a statement from the Parliament of Tasmania to say, 'We are on your side'.

It is not okay to be paid 23 per cent less by the same company for the same work that is undertaken on mainland Australia. It is the normal convention of this place to allow the seeking of leave to have the conversation. I am very surprised that the Leader of Government Business, after seeing him outside talking to the workers as though he cared and was listening to their concerns, does not even want to have the debate. He does not even want to allow us to have the debate. I am shocked at that. I might have expected the government to vote against the motion and I hope they will not, but I am surprised to see that at this point you are not wanting to ask to have the conversation.

**Mr Abetz** - That is false.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I just heard you say that you did not think it was appropriate. It is the time to have it. We checked all the other opportunities and, as I am explaining, it is not appropriate just to talk about it in the MPI. These people deserve a statement, and the majority of Tasmanians would say it is unfair. There is very little that the government can do. As you have said, it is mostly a federal matter, but we can still show our support and solidarity with workers who are being shafted by a large multinational corporation that is choosing to pay the same work done by workers on mainland Australia a large amount more.

They are being paid 23 per cent less, so we need it today. I thank the parliament for considering this issue. It has nothing to do with Labor and the Greens. We are in this together. We are supporting the workers and that is the conversation we want to have now.

[11.32 a.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, the seeking of leave should be supported because this is urgent. It is no surprise that minister Abetz has put this in a political frame of who is gazumping who. He is not considering the impact that this is having on the workers.

The workers have been on strike for nine weeks. They have gone without pay for nine weeks. We have a multinational company that is not coming to the table, and that is why this is urgent. We would like to see Saputo come to the table for good faith negotiations and explain why they are willing to pay 23 per cent less than mainland workers for the same job. The seeking of leave is urgent. These workers have been without pay for nine weeks, and Saputo is not coming to the table.

This parliament has an opportunity to send a message to Saputo that this parliament supports fair pay for Tasmanians and supports these workers, and that they need to come back to the table. At the moment, Saputo is effectively ghosting these workers, happy to let them sit on strike for nine weeks. They are also happy to pay more to get their maintenance done at their factory in Burnie because they are willing to sit this out.

This seems like it is a matter of principle for Saputo, and if this parliament has this debate today, then we can send a message to Saputo that it is not good enough to let these workers be paid 23 per cent less than their mainland counterparts for the same job. That is why this is urgent, and that is why the parliament should be supporting the seeking of leave. Let us have the debate. Let us send that message to Saputo that Tasmanian workers are not second-class workers. They deserve the same pay and conditions as their mainland counterparts.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

### **Move Motion Forthwith**

[11.35 a.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the following motion from being dealt with forthwith:

That the House supports calls from Saputo workers for the pay parity.

**The SPEAKER** - The content of your debate is why we should suspend the Standing Orders, so why today's blue should not be adhered to because of this matter of urgency. If it is successful, you then get to argue the case in a normal debate time. This is just a limited 35-minute debate now on urgency.

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Point of order, honourable Speaker. Given the vote of the House, I am wondering whether we need this further debate and whether we can go straight to the substantive motion to save time.

**The SPEAKER** - The member has the right to make her argument. If you then wish to seek the call and put that, then it is okay. I can put this vote at any time. Normally, we would not have spent so much time on the seeking of leave. We would have dealt with the seeking of leave and then suspension. Both of these now only require a simple majority, as opposed to the historic two-thirds majority.

**Ms BURNET** - Given the urgency and the willingness of the minister to hear this motion now, I ask that the motion be put.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you. The motion before the House is:

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the motion as moved by the member for Clark being dealt with forthwith.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Saputo Dairy Workers - Support for Pay Parity**

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Clark, you may now move your motion and this is a normal debating period without the restrictions I have applied to you for the last half an hour. Lots of new members. We are going to get through this. It is also helps for the people in the gallery to understand.

**Ms BURNET** - Good. They will be able to tell me how it works.  
Honourable Speaker, I move the motion and would like now to speak to that motion -

**The SPEAKER** - Just read the motion again and then you speak, and you have 30 minutes if you wish to take that long.

[11.37 a.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House supports calls from Saputo workers for pay parity.

Honourable Speaker, we have workers from the Saputo facility at Burnie with us today. Maintenance workers there have been in a pay dispute with the company - a multinational company - because they are being paid less than their mainland counterparts. It is not just a few per cent less but a substantial amount. When negotiations started, it was a 21 per cent pay difference with their mainland counterparts.

A recent skills audit found that these maintenance workers are more skilled than some of their mainland counterparts.

They are now in their ninth week of striking for equal pay with their mainland counterparts and to be considered and valued. They are now feeling like they are not valued by this international company that is giving Tasmanian workers - and they are Tasmanian workers - a raw deal.

To add more insult to injury, that 21 per cent pay gap is now closer to 24 per cent because their mainland counterparts have been able to have successful wage negotiations and increased their pay. Meanwhile, our workers in the beautiful electorate of Braddon are being let down by this international company.

It is not just about money. While these Tasmanian workers are on strike we are seeing them being replaced by international workers. The term that is used is that this is 'scab' workforce, which is coming in and being paid more than the workers have been paid.

It is even more insulting to Tasmanian workers that we see the Saputo maintenance workers in this predicament. I acknowledge the workers and union solidarity from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) and Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU). We were written to by Unions Tasmania on this issue. We need to show our support for these workers. We should take up this issue of equal pay with their mainland counterparts and support these workers.

We seek the House's support for these workers as a matter of urgency because they have been on strike and without pay for so long. They do need, if not the action of writing to Fair Work or to Saputo, but the moral support that this parliament can provide. That is why it is so important to support this motion and to support those workers who are doing it tough.

[11.41 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - I thank the House for allowing us to have this debate. It is good and appropriate that we have this in front of the working people who rely on this parliament to make the right decisions for them, who have come all the way from Burnie this morning to be here with us and to hear us firmly focus on something that is important to them and working people all over the state; that is our wages and conditions at work.

The Saputo workers have been on strike for nine weeks and that is a huge thing for them to have done. Having spoken to the workers this morning and in Burnie a few weeks ago, that has been something that has put stress and anxiety on them. The thing that has been so impressive about them is their solidarity and commitment to each other to continue to fight for themselves, their families and for fellow Tasmanians in this fight. Tasmania has had an explosion in cost of living over the last few years. We have all seen and felt it, we have felt it in our own communities and people we have spoken to, but something this place has not spoken as much about is wages.

Tasmania has historic and long-term lower wages than its mainland counterparts. This particular example of Saputo demonstrates it so well because these workers are doing the exact same job for the exact same company, but being paid almost 25 per cent less than their colleagues on the mainland. It is not fair and we should not accept it. We should not expect it. This place has an important role to play in sending a message to Saputo that Tasmanians will not stand for it and that Tasmanians stand beside these workers. We stand beside them in their fight for wages which allow them to meet the demands of cost of living which has increased so much in Tasmania. They do not have big demands. They are asking for fairness and respect. They were paid 23.5 per cent less than their counterparts doing the same job. They are also well behind other companies on the north-west coast.

The silence has been deafening from Saputo in responding to the workers, in engaging them with them in good faith and, frankly, the response they gave to the letter I wrote to them was completely underwhelming and showed their lack of regard for the plight of their workers in Tasmania. When I had the opportunity to meet with them in Burnie a few weeks ago, I made it clear that Labor supports these workers and the unions that are backing them, the AMWU and the CEPU, who have been doing a fantastic job and supported these workers at every step of the way and given them the safe place to take this action. That needs to be amplified and we need to show respect for the work that they continue to do. It is a good example of what Labor stands for: jobs. We stand for well paid, safe and secure jobs. The reluctance of the Liberals to even have this debate this morning highlights that divide. It highlights that Labor stands for working people, that we understand the importance of wages and conditions, and the government did not want to have this debate today.

Labor stands with these workers. The reason we support industry and support a strong economy, and why our policies are so focused on that, is because, at the end of the day, we do it for working people and their families. We do it because we expect people to be able to earn a decent living when they go to work, we expect them to be safe, and we expect their jobs to be secure. With Saputo, those things have been lacking from a business that does not appear to respect its workers. At least, that is the approach they have taken so far. I say to Saputo: you are standing not just against the workers; you are standing against Tasmania. We are not prepared to accept the approach you have taken for so long.

The disappointment from those working people: when I met with the Saputo workers, it was not long after the federal member for Braddon, Gavin Pearce, had refused to meet with them. He backed Saputo and refused to engage with working people in his own electorate. He disrespected working people in Braddon. He is on the way out the door, but that does not mean he is not the federal member and it does not mean that his words do not hurt. They hurt Saputo, they disrespected those workers and working people across Tasmania, and they demonstrated a party that is out of touch, that does not understand the impact of their words, government policy, and approach.

Federal and state parliamentarians of every party need to fight for wages, particularly during the economic circumstances we are in today where we have had this extraordinary explosion in expenses. Ten or 15 years ago there was an excuse about wages, with people arguing that the cost of living was lower in Tasmania so it was acceptable to pay lower wages. They certainly cannot make that argument today, not in a coherent way. You cannot make the argument that Tasmanian workers at Saputo should be paid less, because their expenses have gone up enormously. To fail to support them is to not understand the cost-of-living crisis that all Tasmanians are feeling and the wage crisis that has been with Tasmania now for decades.

We should also point out that being paid almost 25 per cent less, on average, than your mainland counterparts is not just at Saputo; it is across the economy. On average, Tasmanians earn 20 per cent less than the rest of the country. It is not something extraordinary; it is widespread in our community. The Saputo workers are making the point about wages in a very real way that has not been made for quite a while. That is their strength, their solidarity together, and their presence here today has been an enormous success.

As far as I am aware, the Premier did not reply to their letter, did not meet with them this morning, did not accept the meeting. I have not had a go at the Premier for not being in the Chamber because I understand he met with representatives of the workers between Question

Time and now, or is currently meeting with them. We appreciate that. However, it should not take them coming to parliament for him to meet with workers in his own electorate. They are just up the road at Burnie. He could have met with them at any time. We appreciate and thank him for doing it eventually, but it should not have taken a motion in this place, or a trip to Hobart by these workers, to make it happen.

We have private members' time and the government obviously has an agenda. It is important to have this debate but I will not prolong it unnecessarily. I will talk about the workers with young families. It is going to be very tough on them, especially when they have kids and families to support. They are not just looking after the brothers and sisters they work with; they also have to think about their families. I respect what they are doing. They have handled themselves exceptionally well. Today has been an enormous success for them in getting the House to debate this motion, getting the Premier's attention. Having Eric Abetz out there on the lawn this morning was something I did not think I would see. I appreciated the Leader of the House meeting with them this morning. It was a good move. Perhaps some of the workers were taken aback, but I appreciated the willingness from the government to listen.

I commend the motion to the House. I thank the House for being willing to have this debate and I again thank, appreciate and support the workers in their plight.

[11.50 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, given the disruption that has occurred to the parliamentary timetable with the suspension, now that we have come to the motion I indicate that the government supports the principle of pay parity. It is a pretty easy proposition that people who do the same amount of work in a similar situation, be they male or female or any other characteristic, should be paid the same. That applies in the nation of Australia, irrespective of where those workers might be working. The argument made out for pay parity is something that we as a government acknowledge and accept.

As to the cheap jibe by the Leader of the Opposition about me meeting with the union officials and union members, I tell you minister Howlett was there to look after me and she did exceptionally well.

When I was minister for employment I met with nearly every union under the sun. As Minister for Transport, I met with the relevant unions. I have a name for 'union bashing', because I was one of the first to call out the ugliness of the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU). People on that side had a protection racket for the CFMEU for well over a decade. They knew what they were covering up. They knew the rivers of gold flowing in from the CFMEU to ensure that their campaigns were funded and I was willing to call it out time and time again. Have you besmirched me, given me a particular reputation? So be it, but the truth will out. It has outed and now even the Australian Labor Party -

**The SPEAKER** - Minister, the Standing Orders require that you address the motion before the House. I have given you a certain amount of latitude.

**Mr ABETZ** - I thought I was, because the allegation made by the Leader of the Opposition was allowed without intervention from the Speaker, and in those circumstances -

**The SPEAKER** - On that point, I am hoping you are not reflecting on the Chair. If you took offence then you have an absolute right to notify that you have taken offence and I will



ask the member to withdraw it. If you would like that to be the case, I can do that now, but do not reflect upon the Chair.

The Standing Orders require that the debate before the House must be relevant to the debate before the House. As the minister is very well aware of the importance of following the Standing Orders, you may ask for that comment to be withdrawn and I will take that on immediately. Otherwise, we will continue with the debate.

**Mr ABETZ** - You are the Speaker and you make the rulings but, with respect, when there is argy-bargy across the Chamber it is appropriate for a member to be able to defend him or herself in relation to that.

**The SPEAKER** - And I gave you some latitude to do that, minister.

**Mr ABETZ** - Coming back to the issue, Tasmanian workers deserve to get pay parity if at all possible in whatever circumstance, and that is where companies have a responsibility. The issue of pay parity is often a complicated question because there can be hourly rates and under one Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) you might have penalty rates for certain activities where it is booked in as an hourly rate instead of people being paid penalty rates, et cetera. The exact nature of pay parity is something which is sometimes difficult to exactly determine. If the parties cannot come to a resolution, which I dare say if they do resolve it, it is a conclusion to the matter. If they cannot do that then the Fair Work Commission intervenes.

What I urge on behalf of the government is that both sides ensure there is equity, pay parity and that they compare like with like. Different EBAs in different workplaces sometimes have different clauses, given the nature of particular workplaces. I do not know and I have not looked at the EBA, I have not looked at the details of the negotiations, but the principle that is put before us today, namely that the House supports calls from Saputo workers for pay parity, is something which the government supports.

[11.55 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I rise in support of the motion. I will only be a few minutes to allow others to have their say. I made several points on the previous debate, but first and foremost, my personal solidarity expressed in my vote for this motion goes to the Saputo workers and their families. Protracted industrial disputes and protracted industrial campaigns take a heavy toll on those workers. Once it is resolved - and we do hope we get a solid resolution for the workers - and they go back to work and continue to contribute and resume their contribution to the company, making significant profits out of Tasmania providence and produce, this will be with them for quite some time.

These workers are going through protracted industrial disputes, sacrificing pay and sacrificing their commitment. In my long experience of representing working people, 99.9 per cent of workers are committed to their career. They are committed to the company they are employed by. They want to be acknowledged and recognised for the quality of their work. They want to contribute to a good environment inside the workplace and they want to say when they head to retirement, 'I was proud of the career I had, I did good work'. Having spoken to a number of these workers, they fall very clearly into that lane. These are workers who are proud of the work they do. They deserve respect and dignity and the current dispute with Saputo demonstrates that at this point in time, that company does not respect them. It does

not respect these workers and their families. First and foremost, my thoughts, good wishes and solidarity goes to the Saputo workers and their families.

I would say to Saputo, we welcome your investment in Tasmania. We welcome you contributing to our economy. We welcome you branding your products as Tasmanian. We welcome these things, but what we do not welcome is when you come to our state and trade off our name and brand and do so in a manner which denigrates working people and the value they provide to your company. We do not support that. This motion is important in the context of a statement from us on behalf of the people of Tasmania that we do not accept workers being treated as second rate. We do not accept Tasmanian workers and the productivity they provide you to be disregarded in such a flippant manner.

We do not support you in bringing in a workforce to undermine what is a worker's legitimate right to take industrial action and bringing in strike-breakers or labour that costs you more and makes your business bottom line even harder, undermining those workers you rely on. Particularly around Christmas and times when you need to get product out and you ask for overtime, it is not those workers that you seek to get support and get you through a tough time, it is the workers you currently employ, the workers who are currently taking legal industrial action.

Let us be clear. Australia is one of the hardest places in the world for a worker to exercise their human right to withdraw their labour. The kinds of hoops they have to go through to take industrial action on legitimate matters, this jurisdiction is the hardest in the world. The fact that they are nine weeks down the track demonstrates that the plight of the workers is just and the approach of Saputo is unjust and unfair. It is crucially important that this parliament sends a statement to a corporate citizen, which purports to be a strong corporate citizen in the Tasmanian business community, that this parliament does not accept their approach and is seeking a resolution.

This is not necessarily the parliament reaching into a Fair Work matter. They are already being dealt with. The Fair Work rules about taking industrial action are already being applied, but this is simply a statement from this parliament on behalf of these workers that they deserve better. We are sending that message to those workers and to Saputo, and to all Tasmanian workers, that they have a parliament and representatives of the people of Tasmania that hear them, see them, will represent them and will fight for their wage dignity.

I support the motion.

[12.01 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, it is my privilege to speak in support of the motion. It is in Labor's DNA to support workers, and I thank the workers who have come from the north-west coast today to parliament's doorstep and asked us to support you. This debate is the least we can do. Many of you have dependants and family members. Nine weeks of industrial action is not taken lightly, and I understand the pressure you are under at the moment. We absolutely stand with you in solidarity.

The Labor Party will always stand for safe, secure and well-paid jobs, and supporting workers. There are two major issues with the Tasmanian economy at the moment. One is that the cost of living is biting hard. Many Tasmanian households have reduced their spending and are watching their budgets and that means less money in the broader economy, which hurts

business and economic growth. That is a major issue at the moment. This is an important message that the Tasmanian parliament can send: that we support wage growth in Tasmania so that Tasmanians can stay here and live a good life and have good opportunities here.

The other major issue with the Tasmanian economy at the moment is that we have record numbers of working-aged people leaving the state - numbers not seen since the 1990s. Supporting wage growth and opportunities here, and fighting for them in this parliament, should be a priority of every parliamentarian. That is something that we all need to work on and turn around - making sure that Tasmanians can live a good life here and that they feel supported, and that when fellow Tasmanians are reaching out for support, we stand with them.

When a multinational company based in Canada is treating Tasmanians unjustly, we should stand up for them. I understand that multinational companies are not necessarily driven to look after their workforces. They are driven by profits for their shareholders, and when they are not looking after their workforce, that should be called out. If this parliament passes this motion today, it sends a very important message to a multinational company in Canada that the parliament in Tasmania will not cop it when you are treating our fellow Tasmanians unfairly.

I was speaking to a worker outside this morning, and I will not say his name to protect him, but he had worked for the company for 35 years: not Saputo, but he had worked at the factory for 35 years under different ownership. He explained to me how much it had changed. When he first started there, he thought he was only going to be working there for 12 months but there was a real family values sentiment about the company. Employees felt valued as workers. That has completely changed over the 35 years, to the point now where the way they value him is leaving him on protected industrial action for nine weeks without pay. It is just not good enough.

These workers do not stay in a factory or a workplace for 35 years if they do not care about what they do. They absolutely care about what they do in supporting the Tasmanian economy, supporting fellow Tasmanians to access great products and promoting the Tasmanian brand. They do not take measures like supporting a boycott of products that they pour their heart and soul into lightly either.

While I am standing here, they have a campaign along with the protected industrial action to boycott products to send a message to Saputo, a multinational company. There are products like Cheer, Cracker Barrel, Devondale, Great Ocean Road, King Island Dairy, Liddells, Mersey Valley, Mil Lel, South Cape, Sungold and Tasmanian Heritage. If you are doing your supermarket shopping, you can support the workers in that campaign.

We need to put the pressure back on Saputo so that they can come to the table with a fair offer: the same pay for the same job in the same company. A wage gap of 23.5 per cent is not good enough and it is time for this company to listen. This is an important motion and we can send a message to them today.

[12.06 pm]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, we prosecuted the importance of this argument well today in the parliament. It is fantastic to see members of parliament standing in solidarity with people from the Burnie community who have come here. It would have been another expense for them, the petrol and the travel, after

nine weeks without pay. No one in this Chamber could imagine what nine weeks without pay would be like. These people have been doing it along with their families, and I support them.

Should this motion pass today - and I understand that the government will support the motion - the next step needs to be that the Premier writes to Saputo and reinforces that the will of parliament is for their company to meet the demands of the workers for fair pay.

There is a next step. This is a strong statement of parliament, of unity and solidarity. It is a demand to an international company not to take us for granted and not to treat us differently from other states in the way that they do business and protect workers. It is not okay for the people who have been working 20, 30, five, two, seven years - all the different times that these people have been working at that factory in Burnie - to now be in a situation where they are being paid 23 per cent less than mainland colleagues for the same work in a cost-of-living crisis.

We all strongly support the view that Saputo needs to not go back to horse trading. This is about meeting the demands of workers for that particular call of an increase of pay of 23 per cent. There is a job for the Premier on the back of the motion today to write on behalf of us all, and on behalf of these workers, to the firm to and reinforce that that is a statement from the parliament, the will of parliament and that this should happen. It is a strong position and we look forward to supporting the Premier in taking that action.

On behalf of the Greens, I am - and I am sure the member for Franklin, Mr Winter, Leader of the Opposition, would be more than happy, along with other Independent members - happy to co-write a letter to Saputo. That would take it an extra step, because this is such an obvious point of injustice happening in Tasmania.

It was disappointing to hear the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources making this debate personal and going back into old history and making it about himself. This is a place where we have come together for workers. It is not a disruption to parliament. It is the work of parliament to work on the critical issues of the day, to be able to be flexible and respond to the changing concerns in the community. That is what we have done, so I thank members for their support of this motion and we very much hope that it passes.

[12.10 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, it is a long way from Burnie to travel here today to be with us in the parliament. I extend my thanks to each and every one of the workers who have done that today. It should not have got to the point that they had to drive all that way to meet with their elected representatives. It goes without saying that Labor supports this motion and we support those workers. We have been doing that now for some time, even during their stop work action at the factory in Burnie. We have extended our thoughts and support to them now over a very long period of time.

As our leader, Dean Winter, and Josh Willie, our shadow treasurer, have said, Labor is all about working people, standing up for their rights and supporting their families. That is what we will always do.

It is pretty simple to me. I was brought up to believe that when you see an injustice, you stand up for that and you fight. Growing up in Burnie, industrial action was quite a commonplace thing, particularly in my family. We do not see that as often now, and that is

what makes this so much more significant. These workers are courageous in their efforts in standing strong, united for their cause, not only for themselves and their families but for our community and for workers right across Tasmania. It is not right that they get paid less than their Victorian counterparts and that should not go unnoticed or unaddressed by Saputo.

I was part of a council that was working with the state government and federal government at the time to make sure that we could continue to produce world-class products out of Burnie from our dairy industry and through cheese manufacturing. We recognise the great benefits that that brings to our people, primarily by creating employment.

All that aside, what makes this even more important for our parliament to acknowledge today is that many of the workers have worked at that factory in our community for years, and I have spoken to some of them about that, now up to 35 years. Some of them might have even done their apprenticeship there. That is years of dedication and service to a company, our local economy and their community. I thank the workers for that. That is what makes it so important that our parliament today stands together and shows our solid support.

I was talking to my dad over the weekend about this and we were talking about the protracted amount of time that workers have been out on strike. We were talking about the fact that this is a very long period of time for workers to go without pay, and we thought back to some of the strikes that took place at the pulp mill when I was growing up. Whilst I cannot fully put myself in your shoes today, I have some insight into what it is like when your dad is not going to work. I know what that means for a family and being able to provide for a family.

What the workers are doing is courageous. They are doing it for their kids, to give them an example of standing up when you think something is not right, standing up for a community, and fighting for better wages and conditions for Tasmanians. Thank you, you have our continued support and all the very best into the future.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[12.13 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, it is the least we can do today to support this motion and these workers. Standing up for what is right takes a toll on both these workers and their families.

Nine weeks without income absolutely hurts. Nine weeks of uncertainty absolutely hurts, yet they are standing up for what is right, not just on behalf of themselves but on that bigger principle that Tasmanians deserve the same pay as the same workers in the same jobs by the same company.

This sort of strike action is not taken lightly and it is not easily forgotten, especially as this strike action has dragged on for nine weeks and we have a company that does not come to the table. This is absolutely not forgotten. We have just heard from my colleague from Braddon, Ms Dow, about the impact that the strikes in Burnie at the paper mill had on her family. When I met with the workers along with the Labor leader, Dean Winter, some time ago, I talked about the impact that strike actions have on families, and I will give you an example. My grandfather was part of the 1948 Great Rail Strike in Queensland, and that lasted nine weeks. That is a strike that is recorded in history. These guys have been striking for nine weeks as well. It took

such a heavy toll on the family, so much so that some 60 or 70 years later, my mum was still talking about the impact of that strike and not having any income.

Saputo needs to come back to the table. It is such a shame that some members of parliament who are supposed to be standing up for these workers - and I will speak specifically about Mr Gavin Pearce - refused to meet with these workers to discuss the issues that they were having. That is a shame. This parliament today has an opportunity to send a message to Saputo that now is the time to come back to the table. Now is the time to come up with a fair deal of pay parity.

Labor supported upgrades to the Burnie factory, and Ms Dow has spoken about that. Although it was not Saputo that owned the factory at the time, there was a massive investment from the Labor government of the time that should be recognised. There has to be a compact between governments and companies like Saputo: we helped you when you needed it and now you have to look after your workers. That has to be the compact. Not only did Labor support the upgrades to the Burnie factory, but Labor also supported upgrades to the stormwater and sewerage system to allow the factory to grow in size. The deal at the time was this was going to set that company up for decades, but what we see now is that the new owner seems to have forgotten about that and they are not treating their workers fairly.

The minister, Mr Abetz, put a political frame on the debate, but we welcome his comments on pay parity. It is very interesting to hear Mr Abetz talk about welcoming pay parity because in this parliament in the past Labor has been actively bagged out by the government for talking about things as outrageous as pay parity for Tasmanian workers.

We will be holding that member to account and, indeed, this Liberal government to account, because that principle of pay parity is much bigger than these workers. That is why these workers are standing up not just for themselves and their families, but also for other workers in Tasmania who do not receive the same pay for the same jobs. More power to these workers for standing up not only for themselves, but for the rest of Tasmania.

We have not taken nine weeks without pay. They are the ones who have taken nine weeks without pay. That is why we stand in solidarity. Fair pay for a fair day. These workers should be proud and we stand with them.

[12.17 p.m.]

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I thank Ms Burnet for bringing this on. I thank all those members who have spoken so well about why this is so important. My network members and I support this motion. We believe in fair pay for Tasmanian workers and we believe that this is a matter of urgency.

I had the opportunity to meet with some of the workers a few weeks ago, and speaking with them, I saw firsthand how much they were hurting. I have experienced the stress and pressure of being the only wage earner in our family, and I was particularly impressed with the solidarity they are showing in the face of the length of time this has gone on. Some of those partners and mothers are pushing hard to work extra - to take extra shifts or just tighten their belts and manage their budgets. This is a difficult economy at the moment, and it is important that these people are paid well.

The word 'solidarity' is running around. As someone who represents these people, we are here with you and we care. No Tasmanian worker should accept less pay than other workers in comparable employment, and we need to stand and say Tasmanian workers deserve their wages.

[12.19 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, we certainly support this motion today and acknowledge the nine-week campaign that the workers have undertaken to stand up for their rights and to make sure that there is parity with their fellow workers in Victoria.

I think a point that has been missed is that Saputo, in refusing to negotiate and pay the Tasmanian workers the same as their Victorian workers, are ignoring the fact that the skill set these workers have is one of the most in-demand skill sets in Australia at the moment. We are 120,000 workers short of what we need to build the renewable energy future of our country in order to meet our targets. The skill set these workers have who are already being paid 20 per cent-25 per cent lower than their Victorian counterparts is so in demand, and I acknowledge that they have chosen to stay in Tasmania.

When I met with the workers this morning - and I acknowledge it is probably because I am ageing - there are a lot of young faces in that group out the front. The skill sets that they have are so in demand, not just in Australia but right around the world, yet they have chosen to stay in Burnie. They have chosen to stay in Tasmania, despite the fact that they can be employed for a much bigger wage probably anywhere they would like to work in the world, and this is only going to increase. It is not a clever business move at all by Saputo to ignore these workers because they are in the position of power. The skills that they have and the backing they have from their strong unions means they have very much the advantage in this negotiation and I am amazed this organisation has not understood that.

We will always support good, well-paid jobs. That is very much part of our Labor DNA. We also support business and our economy. It makes no sense why you would ignore a cohort of workers within your economy who you need and who could leave your workplace and move interstate. A lot of other people in Tasmania, well-skilled, bright youth, are leaving Tasmania and taking up job opportunities all around Australia and being paid more because housing is more affordable and the cost of living is more affordable for these young people. The skills these workers have are unique and they are much in demand, so good on you for standing up for your rights. We will stand with you and we certainly support this motion.

[12.22 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, one thing I hate is injustice and inequality and what is happening to these workers is summed up in that. This corporate-driven cult of success that is measured by money whereby anything goes as long as you can get away with it is abhorrent. It should be dealt with.

I watched an American Indian the other day protesting about salmon hatcheries which were affecting their wild fishery. That indigenous elder said, 'We don't care how much money they've got. We don't care how big they are. We will fight them to the end.' I commend these strikers for what they are doing. It should not be taken lightly. They have not taken this action lightly and we have an opportunity as parliament to be united, support them and send a loud message to these corporates that they cannot come here and do what they want and pay their

workers a lesser wage than what is deserved. They are also paying the dairy farmers less than what they deserve, so it is right across the board.

They are turning over billions of dollars in turnover so they can pay these workers what they want and deal with this issue. As Tasmanians, we can send a loud message: 'If you want to come down here and do business, you do it in a fair and equitable manner or do not bother coming'.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MESSAGES FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **Bills Passed Without Amendment**

[12.24 p.m.]

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council has agreed, without Amendment, to a Bill, intituled -  
"A Bill for an Act to amend the Sentencing Act 1997".

C.M. Farrell  
President  
Legislative Council  
7 August 2024

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a further message from the Legislative Council:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council has agreed, without Amendment, to a Bill, intituled -  
"A Bill for an Act to amend the Annulled Convictions Act 2003, the Crown Proceedings Act 1993, the Ombudsman Act 1978, the Personal Information Protection Act 2004, the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Supreme Court Civil Procedure Act 1932".

C M Farrell  
President  
Legislative Council  
7 August 2024



## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Violations of the Convention against Torture**

[12.25 p.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: violations of the convention against torture.

Yesterday, the Custodial Inspector released the Inhumane Treatment in Dry Cells Review. It is the first report of its kind in the nation and it is devastating reading. Dry cells are cells with no water that are designed to retrieve contraband concealed internally. The cells are situated in the reception areas of prison centres. They are lit 24 hours a day, whether by lights within the room or lights outside shining through the observation windows and doors. The only furniture in the room is not even furniture, rather cold stainless-steel benches lining each wall, with mattresses provided at night but removed during the day despite the inevitable lack of sleep from the lights. Some detainees have been held in dry cells for up to 10 days with nothing to do - no television, reading material, paper or pens, nothing.

CCTV monitors people in the dry cell but this is not reliably monitored and there is no intercom for clients to seek help in a medical emergency. This is despite the risk of illness and death as a result of internally concealed drugs. All the while, there is no opportunity for people held in these cells to appeal for a review because they do not have pen and paper to do it and it must be in writing. To add insult to injury, despite these inhumane conditions, contraband is seldom found and what has been recovered was voluntarily handed over. People detained in the Tasmanian prison system have endured treatment that contravenes the convention against torture for no good reason. Preventing contraband from entering prisons is important, but it does not justify the use of what equates to torture in Tasmanian correction facilities.

The Custodial Inspector described the conditions as worse than those imposed on people who have been segregated for disciplinary reasons. The United Nations provides standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners. The use of dry cells in the Tasmanian Prison Service contravenes these rules, the very first of which states that:

All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings. No prisoners shall be subjected to and all prisoners shall be protected from, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, for which no circumstances whatsoever may be invoked as a justification.

In addition to this, the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment provides a definition of torture:

... the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is

inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

From this definition it is clear that the way dry cells have been used within Tasmania is in violation of the convention against torture.

These concerns about human right breaches are not new in Tasmania. They have also been raised in relation to the treatment of youth at Ashley Youth Detention Centre where the commission of inquiry found that children at the detention centre had in the past been subjected to degrading strip searches. As of June 2023, children in Ashley Youth Detention Centre averaged barely more than six hours per day out of their rooms. The practice of keeping children in solitary confinement is in contravention of the convention and the Nelson Mandela Rules.

It is shameful that these practices are used in Tasmania. It is shameful that Tasmanians have been and are being treated in ways that convenes the UN convention against torture. It is shameful that we could amend the *Custodial Inspector Act 2016* to protect people who report breaches in Tasmania, but the government chooses not to.

This shameful and awful treatment of Tasmanians needs to end. No matter what a person has done, no-one deserves to be treated in this way. The very least we can do is ensure we are complying with the UN conventions against torture. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, and we must do better. I call on the government to take all actions necessary to ensure the rights and dignity of all Tasmanians are protected.

[12.30 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation) - Deputy Speaker, I rise today to address a critical matter. It goes to whether there have been violations of the United Nations' conventions against torture, otherwise known as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). Today's MPI follows the release of Custodial Inspector's review report on dry cell management for 2024, which was tabled yesterday.

The Custodial Inspector plays a pivotal role in overseeing our correctional services. This position, established by our government, is designed to ensure that we not only meet, but exceed, the standards of accountability and effectiveness required in our prison system. The latest report tabled yesterday identifies areas for which the inspector seeks to enhance and improve dry cell management.

Dry cell management involves isolating and observing prisoners suspected of internally concealing contraband, including drugs, mobile phones and weapons. This process is essential for maintaining the security of our facilities, but also safety for prisoners, staff, visitors and others on site. The risks associated with contraband, especially drugs, cannot be overstated. Preventing contraband such as drugs and weapons from entering the broader prison population is an age-old issue. It is important to note that the practices described by our Custodial Inspector were not designed to erode prisoners' human rights but to reduce the harm and risk of harm to both prisoners and staff.

Managing prisons is no easy task. Balancing the rights of individuals whilst protecting them and others from harm can be challenging. The introduction of such substances into our

prisons presents severe challenges. Drugs concealed in the body, such as the stomach or elsewhere - and I will run through the areas so people get a sense of what we are dealing with - whether it is the colon, mouth, rectum, ears, vagina, penis foreskin or surgically implanted, pose significant health risks. The concealment methods can be used to include ingested packages wrapped in balloons or plastic which can rupture and cause fatal overdoses. This is not merely a security issue; it is a pressing public health concern that threatens the safety of all individuals in the prison environment.

Our commitment to addressing these issues is reflected in our substantial investment in body-scanning technology. The government has allocated \$1.3 million to enhance our ability to detect contraband. This funding supports the installation of body scanners at key facilities, including the Hobart and Launceston Reception prisons, the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison, the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and Risdon Prison Complex. These scanners are a major advance in our contraband detection efforts. They provide a non-invasive method to identify concealed items, reducing the need for invasive searches. Four of the five planned body scanners have already been installed. Comprehensive staff training is underway to ensure our personnel are proficient in operating those. The implementation of scanners is not just about upgrading technology; it is fundamentally enhancing the way we manage security and contraband. Body scanners offer a more dignified approach to searches, reducing the need for physical contact and minimising discomfort.

We are enhancing the overall security and efficiency of our facilities. The Tasmania Prison Service has a focus on continual improvement to reduce the risks associated with contraband. We recognise that the introduction of drugs into our facilities poses severe risks. These substances can lead to a range of problems, including health emergencies, increased violence and disruptions to the rehabilitation process. Concealment methods have become increasingly sophisticated. For example, some individuals may use custom-designed internal compartments or surgically altered body parts. Drugs can be ingested in large quantities wrapped in materials like balloons and providing health risks such as fatal overdose. Our goal is to prevent these issues from arising and ensuring that our security methods are both effective and respectful of the individuals involved. The steps we are taking are both necessary and transformative. By investing in cutting-edge technology, we are ensuring our correctional facilities are equipped to handle the evolving challenges of contraband management. We will continue to take steps, to listen and to work on this terribly difficult problem.

### **Time expired.**

[12.35 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute on the motion brought forward by the Greens. I will talk about it in a bit of a different context, in relation to the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute's (TLRI) report released in April this year, *A Charter of Human Rights for Tasmania? Update*. Members may be familiar with this. The TLRI is pretty good at sharing information it does research on with members of the parliament. The report posed the question of whether Tasmania should have a charter of human rights. The TLRI concluded, as it did in 2007, that Tasmania should.

I have not yet seen a response from the government to the work from the TLRI. Usually, there is a response from the government when reports like this are produced. I recognise that it was not a referral from the Tasmanian government to the TLRI for this particular report to be created. Nonetheless, it would be helpful for the government and the Attorney-General to

provide an update because the report contains what specific rights would be protected. As part of recommendation 16, it says:

The rights in the Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights should be modelled on the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* subject to the modifications recommended at paras ...

It goes on to talk about those in recommendation 17. Members can see this on the TLRI website if you do not have a hard copy.

Rights the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute recommends for inclusion in the Tasmanian charter include the right to humane treatment when detained and the right not to be subject to torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. If we had a charter of human rights in Tasmania, arguably some of the treatment raised by the member for the Greens would be captured and there would potentially be remedies available for those individuals who felt like their human rights had been violated or in instances where there were accusations of torture.

Recommendation 13 of the TLRI report proposes the entities responsible for upholding human rights. I will read a section that is relevant for this debate:

The Institute recommends that all government departments be encouraged to develop human rights action plans referenced against legislation, policy administration and service delivery.

...

All Tasmanian Government departments should include detailed advice in their annual reports about what they have done to comply with human rights under the Charter.

There are other jurisdictions in Australia, namely the ACT and Victoria, that have charters of human rights. That means that when bills are brought to the parliament, there is usually a statement that accompanies them that talks about how human rights might be impacted and any other relevant considerations. The report notes that this is not the case in Tasmania. It talks about how that would be an improvement. That is not specific to the motion that is before the Chair at the moment, but it is worth considering.

In the broader context of how we uphold human rights and do not subject people to torture, whether that is intentional or unintentional, in policy considerations the government should be able to justify, through its agencies, why it is taking certain steps. The minister has just given some context for why certain steps might be taken in certain circumstances, and perhaps the government can justify those steps in certain circumstances but if we had a charter of human rights, then the overarching principle of upholding everybody's rights to be free from torture, to make sure they can be kept humanely if they are in detention, would be paramount features. Under law, they would also have protections.

A debate like this gives rise to the potential for this parliament to turn its mind to whether or not we agree that it is time for charter of human rights for Tasmania. I am keen to hear the

government's response to the TLRI report, given that this is the second one they have done on this topic. There does not appear to be any movement or interest from the government to progress a charter of human rights. At this stage, there are other states which are progressing it or have achieved it, and it is time for this to be brought back to the public domain for discussion.

[12.40 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the Greens for bringing this motion on today. It is important that we talk about the report given to us yesterday by the Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, the *Inhumane treatment in dry cells - review report 2024*. I commend the group on the report. It is very professional, as is most of the work that comes out of that office: extremely thorough and professional, and holds the government accountable. This report is an Australian first. Other states will be looking at the faults that they found in the dry cells' operation in Tasmania.

It is disappointing that the government has apparently known about these dry cells since they were first identified in 2022. It has taken them to issue a response in the last few days, trying to apply some protection for them in light of this report, which is pretty scathing of the operation of dry cells in Tasmania. One of the reasons why the Office of the Custodial Inspector in Tasmania has been provided with this opportunity to enter into our prisons and report on issues, such as the dry cells, was information that was provided by a correctional officer. They were concerned about reprisals, which was debated here yesterday.

Richard Connick, who is the Custodial Inspector, is Tasmania's NPM and part of the National Preventative Mechanism, and is part of OPCAT, a new type of international human rights agreement aimed at strengthening the protections of persons in places of detention. It is open to be joined by any state that has signed the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, also known as the CAT. International law provides that torture is a crime in all circumstances. It is never allowed nor justifiable. It is what is known as an absolute and non-derogable prohibition and is *jus cogens*, meaning it is binding on all states. Australia ratified that CAT in 1989 and OPCAT in 2017.

Richard Connick, through his role with the Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, is part of that movement. We know from this report that a Tasmanian Prison Service staff member brought up the issue in 2022. They went into the prison to examine those dry cells and found the information that was provided by that correctional officer was correct and they raised those concerns. Apparently, the 24/7 lighting, which was fluorescent lighting, was used in that cell - there are examples where prisoners were kept in there for 10 days. It was interesting as well that the minister talked about the importance of making sure that contraband does not get into the prisons. If it was really about contraband in those dry cells, there should have been some form of intercom system in that dry cell. If a prisoner was carrying contraband, and there was a significant health impact from the high risk associated with carrying contraband inside themselves, there is no mechanism for that prisoner to alert the TPS staff that there had been a health issue. That is against the Aboriginal deaths in custody recommendations. It is also against the Nelson Mandela obligations and the Tasmanian government, through the prison, was in breach of those conventions.

This is a fantastic report. The government now has to be a lot more accountable. We also need to make sure that there is an appropriate number of correctional staff to be able to conduct their jobs. It is not on them; it is on the government to provide the proper amount of resourcing and services.

**Time expired.**

[12.46 p.m.]

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk about this matter of public importance. It is a clear priority for our government to keep all Tasmanians safe. This includes a strong and firm commitment to continually improve the safety and security of our state's corrections system.

As the Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation has stated, the Tasmanian government is a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, following the Australian Government ratification of the protocol in 2017. OPCAT is an international treaty designed to strengthen protections for people in places of detention.

The Commonwealth Government agreed to establish an independent National Preventative Mechanism (NPM) to conduct inspections of all places of detention and closed environments. By agreement, the states have also agreed to establish local NPMs. In addition to the NPMs, state parties also agreed to international inspections of places of detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on the prevention of torture.

OPCAT provides for a two-part system for inspecting places of detention, including allowing periodic visits by the United Nations Subcommittee on the prevention of torture and establishing a domestic National Preventative Mechanism to conduct routine visits to places of detention.

To the specific allegations being made by the Greens, it is important to note that Article 1.1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment states that any torture must be intentionally inflicted. There is no basis to any claim that the Tasmanian Prison Service has contravened that article.

Further, Article 16.1 of that convention states that each signatory must prevent actual behaviour that would contravene Article 1. In respect to that Article, the Custodial Inspector's report is a good example of steps we have taken, and are taking, to identify and address potential issues of inhuman treatment. The Custodial Inspector's role is, in part, to identify those areas where degrading treatment might be occurring and to recommend how that might be redressed. This is that system working.

Tasmania is leading the nation in its implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. Tasmania was the first jurisdiction to pass a comprehensive OPCAT statutory framework and the Tasmanian NPM is making significant inroads to establishing the operation of the NPM. We have invested in establishing comprehensive oversight of Tasmania's custodial facilities, with over \$1.2 million being spent so far on the establishment of the Tasmanian NPM. This report demonstrates that our oversight systems are working and we have taken appropriate steps to resolve the issues that have been identified.

I have been advised that in regard to the lack of running water and the intercoms, prisoners are provided with water and where there are not intercoms, those prisoners are kept under very close supervision.

Another area of work that is helping to address prisoners' rights concerns is the implementation and rollout of body scanners. As members will recall, the government has invested over \$1.3 million in acquiring and implementing body-scanning technology in Tasmania custodial facilities. This technology detects objects in and around or on a person without the need to physically remove items of clothing or make any physical contact with the person being searched. This will enable the use of evidence in detecting contraband rather than just relying on correctional officers' suspicions or beliefs. It will mean a more targeted and appropriate response to people concealing contraband in Tasmanian prisons, which is a legitimate concern.

It is irrefutable that the use of body-scanning technology is a massive improvement in our safety measures in the TPS. It will preserve the dignity of prisoners who will not need to be personally searched by staff and staff will not have to undergo personal search procedures on prisoners entering facilities. Despite what some opposite may believe, we know that some personal searches are required for safety and security reasons, including to ensure the safety of prisoners and staff in prisons, as well as to prevent drugs and weapons from entering our prisons, which is a very legitimate and serious issue. This is a huge step in implementing measures that align with trauma-informed practice and maintain prisoners' dignity while keeping our prison population and community safe.

**Matter noted.**

## **TABLED PAPER**

### **Letter and Ministerial Direction to TasPorts and TT-Line**

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - If I may, Deputy Speaker, intervene between two items of business? This is just for the purposes of tabling the letter and the ministerial direction to TasPorts and TT-Line, as requested during Question Time. I thank the House.

## **MOTION**

### **Treatment and Welfare of Animals - Motion Negatived**

[12.51 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes community concerns regarding the treatment and welfare of animals, particularly in the racing, meat processing, and puppy farm industries.
- (2) Agrees that -
  - (a) animals are sentient beings that are able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them;

- (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.
- (3) Further agrees that this is achieved through enacting and enforcing laws that:
- (a) recognise animals as sentient beings;
  - (b) promote and protect the welfare of animals;
  - (c) provide for the proper and humane care, management and treatment of animals; and
  - (d) deter and prevent animal cruelty, abuse and neglect.

I am an animal lover and I know that I am not the only person in this place who would make the same claim. In various debates over the last few years in the corridors of this place and out in the community, it would be safe to say that I have heard all members of this place, in one way or another, profess to be animal lovers concerned about animal welfare.

That is not surprising. As humans we have a sense of empathy for the wellbeing of other animals. As members of parliament, we also reflect community sentiment and it is clear from media coverage over the last few years in particular that the community cares deeply about animal welfare. When the RSPCA, the Dogs Home, Brightside or a plethora of other animal rescue and welfare organisations call out for assistance, Tasmanians respond overwhelmingly.

When the state of Ben Yole's horses was revealed publicly, the community was outraged. When they saw the pictures of horses standing in dusty, dry paddocks with no food or shelter in summer, or in knee-deep mud in winter, so emaciated that they were forced to eat their own faeces, the community was sickened and called for action. When footage from abattoirs was released last year showing cattle in significant distress, farmers were angry at the treatment of their cattle and again, with the community, called for immediate action. The video footage was harrowing. The fear in the eyes of those cattle was chilling.

Most recently, when the plight of 250 labradoodles in a puppy farm was publicly revealed, Tasmanians not only dug deep into their pockets, they opened up their homes and hearts to these rescued creatures. These dogs had been exploited for money. They had been overbred, were starving, and malnourished. Their coats were in such poor condition and matted that in many instances you could barely tell it was a dog, let alone which end was which. They were unsocialised and deprived of love and care. They have hip dysplasia, eye conditions, sores and other medical conditions that have gone untreated. It is nothing short of sickening.

Tasmanians care and want better for our animals, both domesticated and wild. Tasmanians recognise the value of animals and feel an affinity with them because they recognise animals as sentient beings, as we are. I would argue that the 30-plus-year-old



*Animal Welfare Act* is no longer fit for purpose and no longer reflects the community's views that animals are sentient beings with thoughts, feelings and individual personalities. However, in the absence of new animal welfare legislation and because we have spoken about it and professed these values so often in this place, I bring this motion forward to give members the opportunity to practically demonstrate to Tasmanians that we have heard them and that this parliament is committed to recognising animals as sentient beings or, how the RSPCA put it, animals that have feelings that matter.

Some people may disregard the importance of an animal's feelings or dismiss them as being subjective and too hard to understand or measure, but science tell us that this is not the case. Scientific research into animal sentience has moved a long way forward since the *Animal Welfare Act* was last amended. Scientific research is clear that animals are sentient beings. This means that they have a capacity to subjectively perceive or feel things such as happiness and suffering. The scientists researching animal sentience have uncovered many remarkable abilities of different species. They have developed methodologies to measure and understand the emotional lives of animals, and these can be applied to ensure that animals can live the lives they are capable of. For example, how animals feel can be discerned from their body postures and behaviour. Neuroscience shows us how some species have developed different brain structures for possessing emotions like pain, fear and joy.

Some of this scientific research includes studies which have demonstrated that pigs are incredibly intelligent animals with the ability to learn, memorise things, demonstrate pain and recognise each other. Studies have also shown that crows remember faces and experiences. They recognise and can categorise people as good or bad people. They are capable of rewarding good behaviour in people.

Government is starting to catch up and respond to this science, and is starting to acknowledge community concern. The Australian Capital Territory expressly recognises sentience in its animal welfare legislation. The statute in the Australian Capital Territory now states that animals are sentient beings that are able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them, have intrinsic value, deserve to be treated with compassion and have a quality of life that reflects their intrinsic value, and that we humans have a duty to care for the physical and mental welfare of animals, much like in the motion.

I understand other states and territories are also working to follow suit. In addition, there are more than 19 jurisdictions around the world which have moved to expressly recognise the sentience of animals in some way or another within their jurisdictions. Some examples of governments which have made this move are New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the European Union and Spain.

I do not have a lot of time to go into too many details here, but it is worth reading into *Hansard* the telling words contained in Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It says:

In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals ...

I invite members of this place to think about their own interactions with animals and how they demonstrate that animals have feelings that matter. I have spoken frequently and often

about my three dogs and how they have demonstrated their capacity to feel emotions deeply, and I reiterate those here today.

Freddie, my rescue greyhound, was rescued from Barry Hayward's property. He experienced severe trauma in his young years and he has been with me almost two years now. That trauma that he felt stays with him for life.

When Animal Liberation recently released audio recordings of Barry Hayward, I listened to those from when Freddie was around. Freddie has not heard Mr Hayward's voice since he was rescued over two years ago. However, hearing Mr Hayward's voice, a soundly sleeping greyhound on a couch next to me woke suddenly, began to shake uncontrollably and cry. He expressed fear in his body movements and in the sound that he made for almost a week and a half afterwards. He remembered that sound - those voices - and it triggered an emotional response in him.

My Cavalier King Charles, Toby, who is 14-and-a-half years old, has long been able to recognise when my children get sick. Often when they are sick he will be found curled up with them trying to comfort them and offer care, compassion and love.

My almost two-year-old Labrador has no brains, I think, but he has a deep heart and feeling. He is still a sentient being. He is a crazy sentient being. He has a fear of us leaving him and he cries when we leave him. Indeed, the bond between these animals is significant. If I take Charlie out and leave Freddie behind, Freddie will cry and cry and cry until Charlie returns.

These are animals experiencing deep emotions - deep understanding of each other and their connections to us as humans. There are plenty of other examples that I am sure members can recall or have seen. We have all, I am sure, seen on social media and in news items, service dogs who openly grieve when their owners pass away, and footage of grieving dogs lying on grave sites.

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

## **MOTION**

### **Treatment and Welfare of Animals - Motion Negatived**

**Resumed from above.**

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, before the lunch adjournment I was talking about examples I am sure all members are aware of from observation of life, media and social media about how animals can have, and have demonstrated, sentience. I was talking about those images. I am sure we have all seen videos of service dogs who openly grieve when their owners have passed away.

When Animal Liberation Tasmania released footage last year of the treatment of cattle in some slaughterhouses in Tasmania, the fear in the eyes of the cattle was obvious. Their feelings were very clear on their faces and the way they demonstrated that. I am sure you can find plenty of examples of the fear experienced by animals that have been abused once they are rescued. We see numerous occasions where rescued animals shy away from humans. They

are scared, they shake, they respond differently to voices and sounds. They experience that fear.

On the flip side, in recent days my social media feed has been full of wonderful videos of animals who have been rescued from the labradoodle farm and are experiencing happiness and love for the very first time. I encourage members to go to the Facebook pages of the RSPCA, the Dogs Home and Brightside, and see the pure joy and relief these labradoodles are experiencing for having been rescued. Their little faces are lit up with joy and relief, the feeling of being able to run, free from matted hair, in an open environment. That demonstrates that these labradoodles are sentient beings. They have been through horrific times but they can appreciate and be grateful for the opportunities given to them now.

Although I am not a particular cat lover, many people are and there are people in here who can attest to the fact that cats can demonstrate feelings, and influence and coerce their owners into doing certain things. I have seen many a video of cats showing annoyance at their owners by flicking items off a table or pawing at them, wanting to have certain treatment, or demonstrating their disgust at how their owners have behaved. These are creatures who are able to have feelings that matter, to be able to communicate them in their own ways. These are responses of sentient beings. Just because animals cannot express them with words does not mean that those feelings are any less real or deeply felt.

Because animals are sentient beings, they have an intrinsic value and deserve to be treated as such. Where we have so much control over the environments in which animals live, we have a responsibility to provide for the care and welfare of animals in a way that recognises their intrinsic value and sentience. That goes beyond mere words to responsibility to enact and enforce laws that reflect that value.

There are other ways we have inadvertently recognised this sentience. I suggest we recognise sentience in the value of assistance animals because they provide love, care, support and protection for their humans. We have also inadvertently recognised sentience of animals and the value of animals in the workplace. We allow animals into our workplace because they are sentient beings capable of feeling and expressing love, compassion, care and gentleness. That is why we let animals into childcare centres, hospitals and aged-care facilities - because these animals are sentient beings and they can express feeling and emotion that we can understand as other sentient beings. This is the very essence of sentience.

If animals are to be valued and their welfare properly provided for, it is no longer good enough to only recognise their sentience as an aside or inadvertently.

My motion today is unashamedly derived from an amendment to the *Animal Welfare Act* moved in this place previously by Ms Cassy O'Connor. At the time, an amendment bill was being debated and Ms O'Connor moved a further amendment to the objectives in the principal act in similar terms. Whilst I was personally disappointed that Ms O'Connor's amendment was not supported, I recognised the argument put forward by the government and the opposition was that the amendment itself was outside of the scope of the amendment bill that was being debated and more appropriately dealt with at another time. I accept those reasonings.

Now is the time, and whilst this is a motion and not an amendment bill, if the House supports this motion it is making a principled statement, a statement of value and worth that can be used by governments of all persuasions in the future as a guiding principle for legislative

and regulatory change which better reflects community sentiment about the objectives of animal welfare.

Finally, I will read into *Hansard* part of the letter that Ms O'Connor referred to in her contribution a couple of years ago, because it articulates why recognising sentience as a principle is important.

It comes from a letter published in the *Mercury* signed by Dr Katrina Ward, a veterinary specialist; Dr Megan Alessandrini, CEO of Companion Animals Network Australia; Jan Davis, CEO of RSPCA at the time; Michael Sertori, CEO of Dogs' Home of Tasmania; Carol Hughes, president of Dogs' Home of Tasmania; Melissa Fraser, president of Tasmanian Dog Walking Clubs; and Greg Irons, Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary director. It was a plea for the government to contemporise our animal welfare laws at the time by including sentient beings and having an intrinsic right not just to exist, but to have a good life.

Their letter says:

Our group of animal welfare organisations of activists have cosigned a submission calling for the act to include recognition of animal sentience. Sentience can be defined as a 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 influences 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 a 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 nonhuman species with which we share our ecosystem, environment, survival and families.

It concludes by saying:

The government should recognise this 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 roadkill, or as you wonder how is the kindest manner to get rid of the rats in your compost bin.

Those words expressed by those advocates go to the heart of why sentience is important and reflects that in some capacity or other every one of us considers the sentience of beings in our daily actions.

Honourable Speaker, I sincerely hope there is nothing controversial about this motion. The ability to recognise capacity to feel in others should not be political or party-political. As sentient beings ourselves, I hope that we are capable of recognising the sentience of other beings. Animals have feelings that matter and Tasmanians care about that. This parliament should do too. I commend the motion to the House.

[2.39 p.m.]

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, why would anyone wish to harm an animal? Sadly, there are people who do and it is time for change. I commend Ms Johnston for this motion. As the JLN, I stand here to agree that there are community concerns regarding the treatment and welfare of animals, particularly in the racing, meat processing and puppy farming industries.

Just last month we saw the closure of Tasmania's largest puppy farm at Epping Forest when the RSPCA rescued over 250 labradoodles. Puppy farms are a significant concern, with the RSPCA calling for stricter regulations. Facilities that have an intensive breeding operation where dogs are kept in inadequate conditions, often lacking proper food, water, veterinary care and social interaction, where the goal is to maximise profit, often at the expense of the animals' wellbeing, are not acceptable in Tasmania.

We agree that animals are sentient beings. Sentient beings can perceive and experience the world around them, including sensations such as pain, pleasure and emotions. Recognising animals as sentient beings is an important aspect of animal welfare and ethical treatment.

I purchased a little puppy for my husband a couple of years ago to keep him company, as he cannot get out and about very often, and I believe this is the most expressive dog anyone has ever met. He wags his tail with his entire body and you can just about have a conversation with his face. He is beautiful.

In 2019 the ACT government passed the Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Bill which amended the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* to explicitly recognise animals as sentient beings. In principle, we would support an amendment to Tasmania's *Animal Welfare Act* to also recognise animals as sentient beings.

Animals have intrinsic value and deserve to be treated with compassion and have quality of life that reflects this value. Quality of life speaks to the need to look after our animals where their life has deteriorated, when they are in pain and in suffering. I will soon be faced with the difficult decision regarding my 18-year-old very elderly cat Aleta, who is quite arthritic but generally content and I am struggling to make that decision.

This motion is requesting the House to agree that people have a duty of care for the physical and mental welfare of animals. The House already recognises the currency and currently in the *Animal Welfare Act* it states:

A person who has the care or charge of an animal has a duty to take all reasonable measures to ensure the welfare of the animal.

The way it is worded in this particular motion is probably a little too broad. It does not have any kinds of boundaries as to where our duty of care leads and that is a struggle. I can see that there might be a few people with issues with that, but in general, the sentiment of it is appreciated.

Point 3 of the motion would like the House to further agree that the items in point 2 can be achieved through enacting and enforcing laws that recognise animals as sentient beings, promote and protect the welfare of animals, provide for the proper and humane care, management and treatment of animals, and deter and prevent animal cruelty, abuse and neglect.

Last week, Mr Jenner announced his support of improved roadkill reductions in Tasmania which is particularly supportive of that part of the motion. We agree that most Tasmanians would agree with this motion and that the whole sentiment behind this motion is suitable. There are a couple of little tweaks that I feel might be pushing the boundaries a little too hard in future. I appreciate the member for Clark for bringing it forward. I believe this motion is delivered in goodwill and we may need a little more detail to provide support. In general, thank you for bringing it on.

[2.44 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I was waiting for some more information, but I have plenty of things to say about this. I thank the member for Clark, Kristie Johnston, for bringing it on today. It is important unfinished business for Tasmania. We welcome voices like Ms Johnston's and people in the community, the majority of Tasmanians, who want to have animal welfare laws that reflect the truth about animals. It is a well-established fact that animals are sentient beings. It is not something that needs to be proven, although more research is coming through all the time about the fact that animals can feel feelings like fear. They can obviously feel pain and suffering, joy, excitement and pleasure. It is a huge range of emotions that we are seeing from people's personal experiences.

Animals like birds - corvids are particularly clever birds that we know and love, but also the raven family and pigeons - have a cerebral structure that is strikingly similar to the cerebral structure for mammals. They can learn things; they are smart. Birds have been taught to speak. Birds are being taught to have existential conversations, as has been described by scientists.

A very old African grey parrot, Alex, was picked out as an everyday shop bird and specifically trained by scientists to prove the point that it was not a special bird, but an everyday bird. One scientist worked with Alex for years before he died. His ability to understand and pose his own questions was groundbreaking in itself. He was apparently the first non-human to ask a question.

We recognise how far Tasmania is lagging behind other states and territories and other countries in our animal welfare law. The Australian Capital Territory legislation has recognised sentience since 2019. The Victorian reform process acknowledges that animals are sentient beings with the ability to feel, perceive and experience what happens to them in a negative or positive way, including physical pain and emotions such as happiness, fear and distress.

New Zealand also recognised in 2015 that animals are sentient, and in the United Kingdom four years ago, the House of Lords introduce the Animal Welfare Sentience Bill into that House. That legislation reflects the majority of people's views in those countries, and that is exactly why we should be listening to the community in Tasmania because, overwhelmingly, the community in Tasmania wants to provide true wellbeing and protection for animals.

People, when surveyed, overwhelmingly love animals and are deeply concerned when they see images of suffering and distress. The images that were released by the Farm Transparency Project of video footage from inside a number of Tasmania's largest abattoirs show images of cows who had obvious fear in their eyes as they were in pain and aware of what was happening to them because they could see the pain and suffering that was occurring to animals further down the line.

It is very well established that pigs are very special animals. Pigs can recognise pigs; they can distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar pigs. They do not like being with unfamiliar pigs and they find that very stressful, just like most humans. It is challenging to be around people that you do not know when you are in a stressful situation and cooped up.

The question of animal sentience is not a question, and it is not something which we need to debate anymore. The only reason we are having the conversation is because it is put up as a straw horse, as an argument this government and previous governments have made for not changing the law. The reason we do not change the law is not because the evidence is not there that animals have feelings - feelings of joy, pleasure, pain and fear - but because the industry is winning, and industry stakeholders see it as a threat. The big food and agricultural industries see it as a threat. The racing industry sees it as a threat.

Rather than doing what other countries and other jurisdictions have done in recognising that if you really want to look after animals and give them true welfare, you must recognise their sentience, in Tasmania there is seemingly a fear and push back on this, as though certain industries would stop altogether. However, there are ways of doing business. It is no surprise that the Greens do not, for example, support the racing industry, and we do not support the public subsidies of \$30 million-odd a year that goes to the racing industry.

We do not support the secrecy and the cruelty of the practices and trainers - greyhound and horse trainers - that has been found on a number of occasions in their treatment of the animals in their care. That does not mean that there are not different ways that businesses can practise that reflect the reality of animals being sentient beings; it does not mean that businesses cannot change their operations accordingly to have treatment that is more respectful and less stressful.

There are things that can and have been done in other jurisdictions to provide true animal welfare for animals who are going to an abattoir. There are ways for animals to be killed that do not involve the pain and distress that we have seen happening in too many Tasmanian abattoirs. We do not have the evidence that that is no longer occurring, because we have not had the monitoring work and we have not seen an increase in money for enforcement. We do not have the information that anything has substantially changed in our abattoirs from the conditions that we saw there before Christmas when that Farm Transparency Project information was released.

Honourable Speaker, how much more time do I have to speak?

**The SPEAKER** - You have 21 minutes and 20-odd seconds, and the debate concludes at 3.20 p.m.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you.

**Mr O'Byrne** - Other people want to have a say as well, I am sure.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, I was not planning to speak for that long. I recognise the minister wants to say something.

There have been horrific animal rights abuses in Tasmania in recent years that could have been avoided if the animal welfare reforms that have been campaigned on for years by hundreds

of community members and organisations had been listened to and enacted. I recognise Companion Animal Network Australia, RSPCA Tasmania, Dogs Home Tasmania, Tasmanian Dog Walking Club, Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, Brightside Farm Sanctuary and Coalition for Protection of Greyhounds, Animal Liberation Tasmania, Farm Transparency Project, members of the veterinary profession and all the greyhound lovers who regularly contact us and work with us. These are the champions of animal welfare and animal rights in Tasmania.

It is the RSPCA and the Tasmanian community who have had to shoulder the financial and emotional burden about the recent closure of Tasmanian Labradoodles. It is RSPCA Tasmania that has had to undergo the lengthy battle and rely on huge donations from incredibly generous Tasmanians who have reached their arms out, put their hand in their pocket, and spoken up to foster and eventually rehome the 250 puppies that were rescued from those terrible, inhumane conditions at Tasmanian Labradoodles. The animal abuses at Tasmanian Labradoodles were raised by the community for many years but this government did nothing about it.

It is the same lack of interest and lethargy that we see in their duty to end the abuses and neglect that is occurring in the greyhound racing industry. I heard from other members in the Chamber this week that the government, along with other members, will be undertaking a review of the *Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations 2016*. That is welcome news but that review has apparently been ongoing since September last year. If that had been fast-tracked, the loopholes in the *Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations* could have enabled puppy farms and puppy mills to have been put under more scrutiny and might have resulted in better attention to what has happened at Tasmanian Labradoodles earlier.

The Greens have been campaigning for a ban on puppy farms since 2012. We have also been campaigning for the need to have sentience introduced in our legislation since 2012. We raised it in the review of the *Animal Welfare Act* in 2012-13. We also raised it in the legislation that came to parliament in 2022. We moved that amendment and it was only Ms Johnston in the Chamber who supported us. That is unfortunate because this parliament is now out of step with other jurisdictions in Australia and other western democracies that have taken the step of recognising sentience.

Two years ago, we tabled a petition in parliament to condemn the greyhound racing industry. It was the largest petition ever tabled in parliament: 13,500 Tasmanians called on the government to end the subsidies to this cruel racing industry. It is funded by about \$30 million of taxpayer money every year. It is two years now since that petition and what has changed? More animal rights abuses have been perpetrated by Anthony Bullock and others. The racing regulations that went through last year do not give us confidence that the system is changing substantially.

It was so disappointing when the government and Labor Party joined to vote down our amendment to introduce 'humane' as one of the functions and objectives for the new Tasracing body. It was an opportunity to turn the corner on the path Tasracing and the integrity body has gone down for years. Were 'humane' to have been an objective of the new body, we would have had a situation where it is not just about promoting the racing industry, not just about making money on the back of animals, but also about ensuring that the animals involved in the racing industry are treated humanely. That was an important statement that the Labor and Liberal parties would not make. On behalf of all the animal welfare groups who are watching closely, we are deeply regretful that the government did not take that opportunity.



Along with those community groups I mentioned, we will keep presenting the arguments for protecting animals, along with other good-hearted members like Ms Johnston. We have had so many petitions, community campaigns, investigative work by journalists and independent reviews. They all show the depth of feeling and passion in the community for looking after animals and not just using them as objects to make money out of and treat with a lack of the attention we would expect to give another sentient being

I will conclude by talking about the other things that are overdue in Tasmania, and it is part of a package. If we accept that animals are sentient beings, as the Greens do, then we have to establish an independent animal welfare commission with strong powers. That should have been done in the racing regulation bill. It should still be done. We also have to fully fund the RSPCA so that they are not relying on the good will of Tasmanians to do their important work. People can fund the costs of caring for labradoodles and put their hands up to foster them, but they are not empowered to go onto farms or racing trainers' properties to do the enforcement work of the RSPCA. Unless that is properly funded, we can never get any justice and assurance that animals are being properly cared for by greyhound and horse-racing trainers, and by people who run abattoirs.

We also have to finish the work that then minister Jo Palmer promised to do last year, which was to introduce strong regulatory requirements for slaughterhouses. There needs to be mandatory, independently monitored CCTV and incident-reporting frameworks that hold the footage for a long period, and to have independent enforcement authorities assessing the footage. It cannot be self-monitoring, which is what is happening at the moment in the slaughterhouse industry.

There is so much more that we can and should do for the animals in our lives. We do not need evidence to know that when you put your boots on and start to walk out the door, and you are not taking the dog on a walk, that they give you a look of pure dejection and unhappiness. That is a feeling. When you look into the eyes of the cat sitting on your lap and you can feel their contentment, it is not the same feeling they are expressing when they are lying by themselves on the couch. When you see your pet in pain going to the vet, you understand it is not just the pain; there is fear there as well. If we have these emotions with our own animals - and we do, those of us who love and care for pets - then we know, by extension, that all the other animals we see in the world have those emotions and feelings.

I do not understand, on behalf of the people who spend their lives working to protect animals, why this parliament will not commit today to bring sentience into an act in Tasmania so that animals can be treated with the justice and compassion they deserve.

[3.04 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I will be as brief as I can. This is a 60-minute debate. The independent member who moves the motion obviously has the right to determine the length of their contribution and I know there are other members who want to speak. Motions of parliament are never moved or debated in isolation from a bigger political issue. My approach to this matter is to take the motion on its merits as an individual motion, separate to the politics, because politics is played in this place about racing and animal welfare that is heavily loaded. It is not done in a constructive light. It tars people, industries and communities unfairly. There have been many moments when I have seen questions and debates in this House about racing and other industries which have been unfair on the racing industry and communities and I do not support that.

The member who moved the motion, and the member who just spoke and resumed their seat, used a number of very loaded political arguments and emotion and information and half-truths which reflect poorly on them, but also unfairly stigmatises people and industries that, on the whole, are trying to do the right thing.

Having said that, when I look at the words of the motion I cannot argue with them. People are concerned about animal welfare. People in the racing industry are concerned about animal welfare. Animals are sentient beings. I have animals. People who love horses acknowledge the intelligence and their capacity and the kind of beings they are. It is important that we recognise, promote and protect the welfare of animals, and there are many people in the racing industry who support that as well.

I only have a few minutes and other people want to have their say. I do not believe in the loaded politics about these kinds of issues. There are some people, and please excuse the term, who see this as a bit of a stalking horse for a bigger argument. I accept that there are concerns about the nature of this motion, but this motion is not a bill. It is not an act. We are not changing laws, so the motion will stand on its merits.

Having looked at the wording, I do not disagree with any of the words in the motion. I disagree with the politics in the use of this issue in how it is being displayed in the Tasmanian public debate, but the words stand for themselves. This is a motion. It is not a change of an act or a bill. I support the racing industry and I support animal welfare and improvements in how animals in the racing industry are treated, and the same in the agricultural sector and others.

I will conclude my statements there to say I disagree with some of the politics and how this is being used by some people. Regarding the words and face value, it is hard to argue that people do not believe in improvements in animal welfare.

[3.08 p.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for bringing forward this very important matter for debate and I thank other members for their contributions today.

The government acknowledges the importance of animal welfare in the wider community. I have met with the member for Clark to discuss this motion and our shared commitment to animal welfare and priority areas of reform for the government. Indeed, this government has a strong animal welfare record and we are continuing to improve animal welfare outcomes for all animals in Tasmania.

Like the member for Clark, I have been horrified by recent animal welfare incidents, including Tasmanian Labradoodles and previously the unacceptable abattoir footage. That is why this government is taking decisive action so incidents such as these do not happen again, as well as delivering other ongoing animal welfare measures. We are rebuilding trust and restoring faith in the racing industry through new legislation that will improve probity, integrity and animal welfare outcomes, introducing new animal welfare standards and guidelines for livestock processing in Tasmania, including compulsory video surveillance, and reviewing Tasmania's dog welfare regulations. Tasracing has also recently released an equine code of conduct for public consultation and the code will be finalised in the next 100 days.

This government has previously acted to strengthen our animal welfare laws. We worked closely with the RSPCA and key stakeholders in developing those amendments. We increased the maximum penalty for aggravated cruelty to \$33,600 and/or a maximum custodial sentence of five years imprisonment for an individual under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* to send a strong message and increase deterrence against acts of animal cruelty. We also improved the powers of animal welfare inspectors while also increasing their accountability and professional standards.

Other recent changes to the act include providing power of emergency entry and the power to take possession of animals when authorised officers believe that animals are to be of imminent risk; multiple changes to assist welfare inspectors and courts in gaining information to assist in securing a prosecution; and the banning of the use of pronged dog collars in Tasmania. Importantly, the Liberal government will be providing additional funding of \$3.2 million over four years for the RSPCA inspectorate to enable it to effectively carry out its vital work of safeguarding animal welfare and continuing to provide advice to government on animal welfare measures.

In regard to sentience, which can be defined as the ability to feel, perceive, be conscious or have subjective experience as distinct from the ability to reason, and that these qualities can be attributed to many animals, it is important to note that the *Animal Welfare Act* already implicitly recognises that animals can subjectively experience a full range of mental, emotional and physical pain and suffering.

A person who has the care or charge of an animal or group of animals must not use a method of management of the animal or group which is reasonably likely to result in unreasonable and unjustifiable pain or suffering to the animal or an animal in the group. Further, 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.

The *Animal Welfare Act* also established a duty of care. A person who has a care or charge of an animal has a duty to take all responsible measures to ensure the welfare of the animal. Consideration may be given to including the concept of sentience in Tasmanian animal welfare guidelines if appropriate. The previous minister committed to this when the *Animal Welfare Act* was last amended in 2022-23.

Animal welfare guidelines are not mandatory but can be used as an aid to develop and assess animal management methods and industry practices, which we feel is appropriate at this time. While I again acknowledge the member for Clark for her motion and her ongoing commitment to improving animal welfare in Tasmania, the government will not be supporting the motion today. I remain, however, committed to working with the member for Clark and the community to continue to improve animal welfare outcomes for all animals in Tasmania.

[3.14 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this afternoon to provide a contribution on behalf of Tasmania to the notice of motion provided by the member for Clark and in doing so, speak with my experience and Tasmanian Labor's ongoing commitment to many sectors across Tasmania who, on a daily basis and for many generations, have loved and raised livestock and animals across Tasmania.

In my portfolio responsibility of primary industries, but also in recognition of the work that is represented through this motion in racing, we recognise that across Tasmania, the country and the world, humans who have a sense of humanity love animals and care for them, and nobody - whether you are a farmer, in the racing industry or a legitimate and respectful animal breeder - wants to see harm occur to an animal, whether that be a domestic pet or livestock, in whatever way that is.

We recognise, along with people I have spoken to in preparation for this motion, whether it be TasFarmers, Sprout Tasmania, who represent small landowners, or the Southern Tasmanian Association of Meat Producers (STAMP), who represent meat producers in Southern Tasmania, that everybody who has a role to play in raising and processing meat for consumption, or whether it be animals for racing, does that with a deep commitment, investment and care for that animal.

Many of the things raised by either the member who authored the notice of motion or by the Leader of the Greens are things that would not change whether an animal is recognised in the legislation as being sentient. They are to do with exceptionally poor behaviours of a human. Whether you are not taking a dog for a walk - be a good human, take your dog for a walk. Whether you are breeding animals: there are already frameworks and processes that can occur to ensure that poor human behaviour is called out and managed. There have been years of effort in the racing industry and there have been improvements in the agricultural sector where people expect the highest of standards.

I trust the work that has been done by the task force under Felicity Richards. I am looking forward to being able to see the report on that. Farmers, people in the racing industry, people of Tasmania expect the best. They expect animals to be cared for with the greatest of intention. In the State of Tasmania there is current consideration of reforms occurring, there are current frameworks that exist that ensure that it is not necessary and is seen by many as an overreach that sentience would be formally included in legislation.

It is curious when we consider notices of motion in the parliament within the greater context of the political environment and understanding how these decisions will be used publicly to progress an issue that take things on face value without deep consideration of the overall agenda. The agenda here today is to shut down racing, impact agriculture, along with aligned agendas to shutdown mining, forestry, aquaculture. These types of motions being tabled here need to be considered in that greater context. There are protections at the moment. There should be more done and improvements made, but Tasmanian Labor stand with farmers and people in the racing industry who love and care for and expect the best for their animals.

[3.17 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank members for their contribution. When I drafted this motion - and as the minister has indicated, I met with her last week to talk about my intention to bring this motion forward to raise my concerns about animal welfare and where we are heading as a state - I tried to deliver a straight bat. I recognise, as the independent member for Franklin has said, that there is a lot of loaded politics about animal welfare and this issue. There has been a lot of debate because we are talking about sentient beings, in the very heart of it, and about things that people deeply care about. There is politics about that.

What I want to achieve with this motion is to find some common ground, a basic fundamental principle that I hoped that all members of this House could agree on, from which

we can then have future discussions and debate. I recognise the work that the government is doing and the minister has outlined a number of reviews, particularly about welfare of dogs' regulation and the *Dog Control Act* coming forward to us. I hoped this motion could provide fundamental principles about how we should move forward in that debate and frame any objectives we should achieve by changes to dog welfare regulations, the *Dog Control Act*, or equine welfare in the racing industry. That is what I hoped to achieve. I recognise that there is a vast range of views about the racing or meat industries. There is probably a vast range of views about puppy farms. It is probably safe to say that we all think puppy farms are abhorrent, but what we need to be able to do is to agree on some fundamental principles about how animals should be treated when they are in these industries.

When we were talking about regulations and welfare standards and guidelines, I presented to the parliament what I thought was a very straight bat. It does not say shutdown racing or the meat processing industry. It simply recognises facts. Tasmanians are concerned, animals are sentient beings, and we have a responsibility as humans to enact and enforce laws that recognise and protect them. It is a straight bat. In adopting a straight bat fundamental principle, I hope that this parliament can work collaboratively to achieve those outcomes in whatever changes the government, opposition or crossbench bring forward. I hope that we can go back to this motion and say, 'Yes, okay, this is where we all have common ground and we all can agree. How do we advance that?'.

It is with deep regret that it would seem that the government and opposition will not be supporting this very factual motion. It speaks volumes. It says that they are prepared to put politics ahead of basic facts. I encourage members to reconsider.

**Time expired.**

**The SPEAKER** (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is -

That the motion moved by Ms Johnston be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 10**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Mrs Beswick (Teller)  
Ms Burnet  
Mr Garland  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Mrs Pentland  
Ms Rosol  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 23**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad (Teller)  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie

Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Ms White  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter  
Mr Wood

**Motion negatived.**

## **MOTION**

### **Forest Reserves - Motion Negatived**

[3.27 p.m.]

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

That the House -

- (1) Recognises the global significance of the 50.4% of Tasmania's land area protected in publicly owned reserves, including their importance for carbon sequestration.
- (2) Notes with concern the Government's intention to convert 39,000 hectares of high conservation value forest reserves into land available for logging.
- (3) Further recognises the findings of the 'Independent Verification Report for the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement' that noted the conservation values of the Future Potential Production Forests, including significant habitat for threatened, listed, and priority plant and animal species, ecosystem services of carbon storage, connectivity for key species, and adaptation to climate change.
- (4) Further notes with concern the likely negative impact that increased native forest logging of this scale would have on Tasmania's net-zero emissions status.
- (5) Understands the Minister for Resources has begun the process under the Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act 2014 to convert 27 parcels of land from Future Potential Production Forest to Permanent Timber Production Zone.
- (6) Further recognises the community's concern at the Liberal Government's move to convert reserved forests for logging, and the need for transparency about which forests and what values would be impacted.

- (7) Orders the Minister for Resources to provide, before the adjournment of the House on 8 August 2024, all available information regarding the 27 parcels of land that are to be converted to Permanent Timber Production Zone, including maps, lot numbers, locality descriptions, and other known details.

Honourable Speaker, lutruwita/Tasmania's Reserve Estate is the most iconic value that this beautiful state possesses. Few other places on the world can boast having over 50 per cent of their land area in reserves, and we deservedly have that status. We have a biodiversity beacon in Tasmania that draws tourists from around Australia and across the planet.

Tasmania's wild places and functioning, healthy ecosystems support plants and animals unique in the world. It is a carbon store that naturally traps and holds warming gases. The government's plan to convert 39,000 hectares of high conservation reserve forest to permanent timber production zone directly threatens these values.

It was a shock during the election campaign for people to hear that the Liberal government would go in to these beautiful places, because they are part of the 356,000 hectares that were legislated to be protected as future reserves in 2012. It was the Liberals who ripped up that legislation and renamed them as future potential production forests (FPPF).

Let us not be deluded. The minister likes to call them a wood bank, but they were originally designated to be future protected reserves. The Liberals plan to lock those 39,000 hectares would leave, if they are successful, just 49 per cent of Tasmania's land protected in reserves. If all the 356,000 hectares of FPPF was converted to permanent timber production zone, which the Liberals have opened the door to doing by ripping up the Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA), then this number would fall further to just 45 per cent in Tasmanian reserve forests.

These 39,000 hectares are publicly owned lands and they are globally significant forest reserves. They deserve to be protected in perpetuity, not just because they contain extraordinary, rare and endemic biodiversity and not just because they protect the critically important and healthy ecosystems within them but, critically, they draw down carbon from the atmosphere and hold on to it.

Tasmania is one of the only places on the planet to become net carbon negative. We hold and store more carbon than we release. The single reason we can make this claim is because of the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement when over 500,000 hectares of forests were protected from logging and rates of native forest logging more than halved. This drastically cut the volume of native forests being logged and burned and has prevented thousands of tonnes of carbon emissions. It reserved hundreds of thousands of hectares of land for their conservation value. It is these very forests that the Liberal government now wants to destroy that would directly threaten the survival of the many species within them and put our state's net carbon-negative status at risk.

In question time last week on 1 August, minister Eric Abetz said:

To say that this area was to be locked away for all time is simply untrue. It was set aside for the possibility of this eventuality that it may well be used for harvesting.

The more than 572,000 hectares of land that were originally recommended for protection under the Tasmanian Forest Agreement in 2011 were identified specifically because of their conservation values, so the minister can claim otherwise, but that is misleading Tasmanians and rewriting history.

The forest negotiation process between the environment and the forestry groups went on for nearly three years and Tasmanians watched on after decades of forestry wars with a great deal of concern at seeing a result and an end to the conflict we had had. The conservation value of those forests was documented in great detail by the people who worked through that process and it included experts from the Australian Conservation Foundation, Environment Tasmania and the Wilderness Society, who did a massive assessment of the land parcels. Their findings were then corroborated by scientific experts in evolutionary biology, paleoecology, botany, zoology, dendrology, conservation and reserve management, and ultimately by the members of the independent verification group for the Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement.

These reports found that the land that has gone on to be known by the Liberals as FPPF land substantially contributes to conserving a huge range of important values, including habitat for threatened, listed and priority plant and animal species that live within these forest communities. They are a refuge for the plant and animal and invertebrate species that have survived in some of these forests and nowhere else on the planet since ancient paleological times. They are a stronghold for Tasmania's many endemic eucalypts. They hold critical fire-sensitive flora that are uniquely Tasmanian and nowhere else on the planet. They have diminishing habitat across the state for the Tasmanian devil, the spotted-tail quoll, the eastern quoll and the swift parrot, which is critically endangered and has only hundreds of birds left. They contain hollow-bearing trees that so many of these animals and mammals and more need to survive.

When the Hodgman Liberal government was elected in 2014, one of its first acts was to undo years of that collaborative effort. They tore up the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. They took the forests, the scientific community, conservationists and the forestry industry and the work that had been done to protect, and they junked all that work and reclassified these identified high-conservation-value forests as future potential production forests. As FPPF, the government would like to have its cake and eat it too. On the one hand, they claim happily - as was done just last week - that 50 per cent of Tasmania's land is safe and protected in reserves, while also trying to help Forestry Tasmania get Forest Stewardship Council certification status. Forestry Tasmania has twice failed in its attempts to do that.

At the same time as they are doing that, they have promised their forestry mates that the wood supply will never dry up and they can have these forests that ought to be protected for their values as an additional body of supply for them to get on and clear-fell and log. They want to convert this forest into active forest industry wood supply and ramp up the destruction of these high-conservation and mature forests.

Where are the conservation values? What are the conservation values? Where are these lots that are on the chopping block? The government stated that the 27 parcels of land they are going to clear-fell are regrowth forests predominantly from the north-east and north-west of the state. I have checked the work that was done by the independent scientific body and there is detailed information about the threatened flora, the threatened fauna, the tourist attractions, the adjoining reserves, the forest types, the names and the area for each of the 295 lots that



comprise what is known as the 356,000 hectares of high-conservation forests that were reserved as future forests, now called FPPF by the government.

Some of the values in some of the lots include lot 14 in the Tarkine/takayna, which borders the Savage River National Park and a number of regional reserves. That place has important habitat for the rare narrow-leaf geebung and the rapid river freshwater snail. Both of these are endemic Tasmanian species with restricted habitat ranges. That area also has the endangered Tasmanian devil and the captivating and extraordinary giant freshwater crayfish, which is already vulnerable from the extensive forestry logging that has occurred in river catchments that has silted the waters of the rivers it lives in.

Lot 35 of the 356,000 hectares of high-conservation forest is in Beaconsfield and is known as the Dazzler Range. It borders the Briggs Regional Reserve, the Andersons Creek Regional Reserve and the Dans Hill Conservation Area. It is a short distance from the Beaconsfield Mine and Heritage Centre, one of the major tourist attractions in the area. It has beautiful, tall, open forest with habitat for the endangered masked owl. The federal department of the Environment tells us that habitat clearing and fragmentation from forestry and land use change is a key threat to this beautiful owl's survival.

Lot 69 is in the Blue Tiers and adjoins the Blue Tier Regional Reserve and the Frome Regional Reserve. This area holds many communities of rainforests and tall eucalypts. It is a critical land connection that links the Blue Tier Regional Reserve all the way east to the Bay of Fires and it is where the endemic velvet worm lives. This is a beautiful creature that lives nowhere else on Earth and also lives nowhere else on this island, lutruwita.

Lot 191 is on the west coast and borders the Mount Dundas Regional Reserve and the Teepookana Forest Reserve. The West Coast Wilderness Railway, which is a major tourist attraction on the west coast and also a major employer on the west coast, runs right through this lot. Visitors to Tasmania who enjoy views of spectacular rainforests from the windows of the train might be treated instead to views of scorched earth and the charred remains of Tasmanian devils, which is what we have seen occurs after -

**Dr Broad** - In a rainforest?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, it has occurred in rainforests and elsewhere when the hot burns that Forestry does after a clear-felled logging coupe dry out rainforests. Unfortunately, that is what happens, Dr Broad.

**Dr Broad** - Dead devils in a rainforest?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Dead devils can occur after incendiary burns.

**Dr Broad** - In a rainforest?

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We have seen them in other places around the state.

**Mr Abetz** - In other places, not rainforests.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Not in that rainforest. I was just saying that these things occur. These are the sorts of animals that get killed in hot burns. They cannot run. Not all animals get killed

in the clear-felling process, but they get scorched and burnt to death in the incendiary burns that Forestry Tasmania does afterwards, the so-called 'regeneration' burns.

Community members from the Dial Range, Quamby Bluff, Derby, Maydena, Waratah and hundreds of other locations around Tasmania have experienced seeing their loved natural areas placed on Forestry Tasmania's chopping block. They have rallied, held public meetings, written letters, contacted ministers, written articles in the newspaper, held forest walks, lodged complaints, done education campaigns in the local community and, when they have had no other choice, they have put their bodies on the line between loggers and the forests they love. That is what you do when you see senseless destruction occurring to precious, irreplaceable forests.

We know we have climate heating coming down the line. It is already here with us. We see the evidence of that in Tasmania, as we do around the world. We know we do not have time to regrow these mature forests to capture the carbon they will release when they have been logged and burned. Across Tasmania, many communities are waiting to see what will happen to the wild places they love; that they spend time in and use for exercise and pleasure, places that are used for tourism, places they thought were protected under the long and intense process of the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement and the legislation that went through in 2012, under which these forests should have been protected as future reserve forests. They want to know whether these forests will be converted to give Forestry Tasmania an extra 39,000 hectares in its cache of forests to clear-fell and burn.

I will now talk about the importance of carbon stores in our forests. It is popular forestry industry spin, perpetuated by the minister, to tout regrowth forests as being good for carbon sequestration. It is convenient to ignore the fact that carbon dioxide is only drawn out of the atmosphere and safely stored if the tree stays in the ground. Functionally, that is true. The real story of forests in Tasmania and the reality of how poor our non-Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) operations work in practice is that forests are chopped down, burnt and regrown for a short period, between 50 and 80 years. Some have also pointed to rotation cycles that are less than that. At that point they are harvested again.

Only 6 per cent of Tasmania's forests will ever go on to be sequestered in long-term wood products such as benches and lecterns. The study done by the Tree Projects and the Wilderness Society provides an update on the original research done by the Tasmanian Forest Carbon Study, published in 2012. That study found that over the 40 years from 2012 to 2050, only 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from Tasmania's forests would ever be held in domestic wood products long-term. That figure was calculated from a pre-Tasmanian Forest Agreement baseline, so the figure now would likely be even less. For comparison, Tasmania's forestry sector currently emits that amount about every two years.

Why is the amount of a carbon supposedly locked up in wood products so low? In question time last week, I saw the minister slapping the top of the lectern and saying, 'It is okay, everybody, what happens in Tasmanian forests is all the wood just gets transferred from one state in a tree to another state in a lectern', as though there is no loss. It would be amazing if that were true. If we could manage that carbon loss issue, the planet would be a different place and we probably would not be in the climate emergency we are in at the moment. The fact is there so much carbon loss from the way forestry is done in Tasmania, from the way clear-fell logging and burning is done everywhere.

According to the Tasmanian Forest Carbon Study, most of Tasmania's forest biomass is exported as woodchips to make paper products. These decompose and release their carbon back into the atmosphere after two years. The rest of that forest is left, after it is clear-felled, on the forest coupe floor to be burnt in so-called regeneration burns. These burns release millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year - in fact 1.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, calculated by Tasmania's forest carbon estimate, per annum. That is just under half the total emissions from the whole of our transport sector, I calculate by the latest emissions data.

It is true that younger trees draw down carbon at a greater speed than old-growth trees, but our mature old-growth trees have been in the ground for hundreds of years, some of them for over a thousand years. In their lifetime, they draw and store, they sequester far more carbon than a regrowth tree that Forestry Tasmania cuts down after 50 years.

Where does the carbon go in the Tasmanian forests logged at the moment? We know that about 60 per cent of the biomass is left on site and burnt, 30 per cent from slash-burning and 30 per cent from woody debris left on the site. When that biomass is burnt, the emissions disappear into the atmosphere immediately. We have some 29 per cent mill waste and paper products that is pulp; that pulp is turned into paper products and mill waste and they biodegrade very fast. Seven per cent is peeler logs. Four per cent is sawlogs and they go into the sort of solid sawn timber; approximately 1 per cent goes to sawn timber and approximately 5 per cent to engineered timber.

That does not stack up with what the minister is trying to pretend to Tasmanians - that it is a simple exchange from a living, breathing, biodiverse forest to being locked up in tables and chairs. That is not what is happening in Tasmania. That is a myth that has been perpetuated in Tasmania for decades. It is misleading and untrue. It is designed to sow a false story so that people do not understand what is happening in our forests.

Another thing that happens when a regrowth forest is logged is that the trees will never grow large enough to have hollows for birds and other animals to nest in, and the age structure of the forest will never gain the complexity it needs to sustain diverse life. The 100-year-old trees, and the 1000-year-old trees that exist in Tasmania, will not fall and stay on the forest floor to become nursery carbon habitat. I have walked around the Grove of Giants in the Huon Valley. They are the largest, most glorious trees I have ever seen. I have never seen a bigger stand of trees anywhere in Tasmania, or on the planet. I do not think it exists anywhere else on the planet. When US ambassador Caroline Kennedy came to Tasmania and went up to the top of those trees, she asked the question: 'So, tell me, why do these forests get logged?' There is no response to that that makes any sense. You cannot possibly take a mature forest like the Grove of Giants, or any of the other forests in the 39,000 hectares, and see them as something that can be exchanged on a piece of paper to try and keep an unsustainable industry continuing into the future in the current climate and biodiversity crisis.

That land will be clear-felled and burnt, the animals that survive the clear-felling will die and the forest will dry out. It will change from a wet state to a dry state and become an increased fire risk to other forests and to local communities living nearby.

That is what happened in the community of Geeveston in the fires in 2019. That is exactly what happened. The highest risk areas were found afterwards to have been ones that were regrowth forestry coupes - they were plantation areas. It was the areas of wetter, intact native forests that burnt less than the others. That is a scientific fact, and that is information which has

been repeated from studies in other parts of Australia. It is not just in Tasmania, but also in Victoria and other places, that there is a clear risk that intact, moist forests - they do not have to be wet rainforests, but moist forests - dry out and never recover. On a landscape scale that leads to overall drying in large regions, which is what we have already seen in Tasmania.

By 2050, if things continue like they are today, Tasmania's forestry sector will emit a total of 186,000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. That is not what we need in a climate crisis when the planet is tipping into dangerous levels of heat. They are figures from Tasmania's Forest Carbon Study.

The science is clear. Immediately stopping native forest logging is the forest management response that we need to draw and store the most carbon from the atmosphere. I would have thought that the minister would understand the importance of this if he understands, as I hope he do, that human-induced climate change is speeding up at a dangerous rate, and that there are things we can do to avoid tipping the planet into a dangerous place. Everyone, everywhere across the planet, should be doing everything they can to bring down our carbon emissions.

In 2012, the state government, under a Greens climate change minister, commissioned the Tasmanian Forest Carbon Study report, which modelled the impact of different forest management scenarios on our state's carbon sequestration. It found that stopping all native forest logging immediately would have the most positive impact. According to that report, if we stop native forest logging on private and public land, then by 2050 we could draw down and hold onto just under 200 million tonnes of climate-heating gases. Would we not want to do that as real climate action? Is that not what climate action looks like - to make the changes that we can today?

We are talking about the government continuing forest management as we are today. If that were to happen, at best just 93 million tonnes of carbon would be held by our forests over the same period to 2050. That is 100 million tonnes of carbon extra that we are contributing to our overheated atmosphere over the next 25 years. That is something we can avoid. We can decide to avoid doing that. We can choose not to release those gases. We can do everything we can to strengthen the conservation of the forests, to help them maintain their moistness, which is their best protection against bushfires, and to look after the incredible plants and animals that they hold.

We need to end native forest logging and to shift to plantations only. We need to increase the rotation length and the growth rates of plantations. That is a strategy that a minister and a government who took climate action seriously would implement.

We are here today talking about this because people want to know exactly what the government intends to do and where those 27 parcels of land that collectively represent 39,000 hectares of Tasmania's reserve estate are. Where exactly are they? We know that the minister has been dishonest with us and is playing with Tasmanians, because we saw the media release from 29 February -

**Mr ABETZ** - Point of order, Deputy Speaker, reflections on people about being dishonest is clearly imputing an improper motive. I ask it to be withdrawn. I put up with enough of it.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Did you take personal -

**Mr ABETZ** - I did.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Deputy Speaker, I did not say the minister was lying. I said the minister had been dishonest with Tasmanians. I was about to point to the press release. It is my right to provide the evidence to Tasmania about how the minister is not being honest.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The minister has taken personal offence and I ask that it be withdrawn -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - What are the words that the minister takes particular offence to?

**Mr Abetz** - Dishonest.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I withdraw that you are dishonest.

**Mr Abetz** - Thank you.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The misleading information that the government provided in a media release and the minister has continued to present the same position in the response to questions when I asked him last week is that the government has already identified which parcels of land they were going to make available for logging. That is what the media release said on the 29th: that the government has already identified them. Felix Ellis was Resources minister then and he said:

The parcels have been identified on the basis that the state's comprehensive, adequate and representative CAR reserve system is not compromised, that there is no negative impact on STT's current and future certification and that maximise carbon carrying capacity, fire protection and recreational opportunities.

How is it possible, if all that had already been identified, for the minister for Resources not to have had that information last week? I hope the minister has got it with him now. I expect that he probably would have decided that that is the right thing to do, because it is pretty clear that the government's known for more than six months exactly what parcels of land they are talking about. We had a number of community members outside demanding that the government be more transparent about this, so we are calling on the minister to release that information.

**Time expired.**

[3.57 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Deputy Speaker, the Government unequivocally supports the thousands of our hard-working fellow Tasmanians who have gained employment in the timber industry in all the regional, rural towns around Tasmania. In the electorate of Clark at McKay Timber, for example. There are jobs in Launceston in timber yards courtesy of the timber products that we are able to gain from the bounty that nature has given us. This is a very important sector for employment opportunities and for rural regional communities to remain sustainable. It is important for good environmental management to encourage the use of wood products.

The difficulty with the discussion that we have is that there is always this narrow, focused approach to the carbon that might be released if you chop down a tree. Sure, there is some carbon released, but if you do not chop down the tree, what do you use instead? Hardwood from Brazil? How does that get to Australia? By belching out thousands of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from bunker fuel. You never put that into the equation if you are an extreme environmentalist because you do not want to see the whole picture. Recently, there have been green elements in city councils that have championed the cause of getting rid of one-use plastic containers. Guess what they are using? They need paper, which has been condemned by the Leader of the Greens. What would the Greens have us do? Eat with our fingers? Hold it in our hand, have the dollop put in our hand? It is either plastic or paper, and we are all agreed that getting rid of plastic in favour of paper is a good environmental outcome. The question is, where does one get one's paper from? When you use timber that is not able to be used for sawlog or veneer or other value add, it is wood chipped, and that is what makes our paper, which is what is used in our paper cups.

Where do you think all those wooden forks come from that we now have at places like the Bridport Scallop Festival? Where did they come from? From trees. How do we get those forks from trees? They do not grow on the trees; you cannot pick them. You have to chop down the tree, harvest the tree and make the paper for the fork out of the tree.

Let us be very clear: if you have good forest management, then for every single tree that is cut down, a new one or, even better, two or three might be planted. As the Leader of the Greens acknowledged - one of the few concessions made in this debate - young, growing trees sequester more carbon out of the atmosphere than a mature tree. Does a mature tree have a lot of carbon?

**Dr Woodruff** - It is a very short timeframe.

**Mr ABETZ** - Yes, but does it sequester carbon and does it do it more quickly? Yes, it does. Acknowledge the simple fact. Once you acknowledge that fact, you then might also ask, if we do not use wood in a housing crisis, as the Greens remind us of, if we do not use wood products for things like this lectern, this bench and this table, what is used? Plastic. Where does plastic come from? It would not be a petrochemical industry, would it?

If you do not use wooden studs in houses, you would not use aluminium or steel studs, would you? How are they made I wonder? By the burning of a lot of energy. The myopic approach to this debate of talking about wood and not the consequences of one's actions is where the Greens fail in relation to this debate.

One thing I did appreciate about the Greens' motion was in paragraph 2, where they were willing to acknowledge that in the area of land that this motion talks about, there is high conservation value forest, the vast bulk of which is - the Greens will never tell you this - regrowth forest. The fact that we do forestry so well in Tasmania that when it regrows, the Greens are willing to identify it as high conservation value is a big tick to all our forest workers who work through all the elements of the weather to ensure that we have new forests coming on for harvesting. Acknowledging that they are high conservation value is a big tick to them, and it is one concession I am thankful that the Greens have made because it showcases how well we do forestry. I have done it in another place, and I do it here on a regular basis, and that is to ask rhetorically, where do they do forestry better than in Tasmania? There is never an answer.

**Dr Woodruff** - There is an answer. There are 83 countries and 1500 jurisdictions that have forest stewardship certification.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, I ask that the interjections cease.

**Mr ABETZ** - The forest stewardship certification. I have had the capacity to look at some of them - West Papua has been signed off on, Papua New Guinea had forests signed off on. When you have a look at what was signed off on, even the little bit of hair that I have left curls because I say, how on earth could that have been signed off by FSC with any integrity whatsoever? Unfortunately, these certification schemes are money-making schemes and are willing to trade in relation to forest practices, something we will not do and never will do. That is where the big difference lies.

The arguments put forward -

**Dr Woodruff** - Were you going to hand over the information?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, you will have the opportunity to sum up at the end. I encourage you to take a record of all these comments and to feel free at the end to make them there, please.

**Mr ABETZ** - Talking of which, Deputy Speaker, you have reminded me that I took copious notes while the Leader of the Greens was talking to allow me to debunk some of the commentary made.

At the beginning of the Leader of the Greens' commentary, she made mention of the fact that this is publicly owned land of which we speak. I do not think anybody disagrees with that, but it is publicly owned land, not Greens-owned land. In her speech, she reminded us of the battle that Labor and the Greens lost at the time in 2014 in relation to the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. We were told that when former premier Will Hodgman won office he tore up the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. Wrong. What the then leader of the opposition did was rip up the forest agreement before the election and say to the people of Tasmania openly and transparently, 'If you elect me as your Premier in 2014 I will ensure that the legislation is changed'. Here we are a decade later and the Greens seek to re-fight the battle that they so comprehensively lost.

In relation to Tasmania's status in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the 200 per cent status that we enjoy, I remind the House that part and parcel of that is not only about half of our land mass, which is locked away in perpetuity, but also hydro schemes where we deliver renewable energy for all sorts of things, including making green zinc, aluminium, and manufacturing, because we are able to use energy which does not pollute. Who were the greatest opponents of this green form of hydro energy? It was the Tasmanian Greens. In their narrow focus of wanting to so-call save this river or this waterway, they could not see past that and therefore were willing to countenance a coal-fired, CO<sub>2</sub>-belching power station in the Fingal Valley, yet again because they cannot see past their myopic, very narrow approach to issues.

You condemn the use of paper and wood but you also condemn the use of plastics for takeaway foods. How are you going to get the containers for takeaway foods if you do not have trees providing the basic substance?

In relation to the process, we were very transparent before the election to say we would look at releasing wood from the wood bank subject to a whole host of criteria which are contained in section 7 of the *Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act 2014*. That year will not be lost on people in this place, the year that Will Hodgman became Premier after having agreed to rip up the so-called Tasmanian Forestry Agreement.

To have land taken from the particular future potential production forest, a letter needs to go to the minister responsible for Crown lands, Mr Duigan. However, before making a request under section 7(1) to the Crown lands minister, the minister administering the *Forest Management Act 2013* must obtain and have regard to information relating to the reasons for the request being made: the size, location, value and conservation values of the Future Potential Production Forest land that is the subject of the request. The issue of conservation values has to be assessed in relation to each and every one of those parcels. To suggest that there will be carte blanche logging and burning exposes a misunderstanding of the legislation, but also a misunderstanding of how we do forestry in this state. We do forestry in this state based on the particular forest type. What nature allows us to replicate to the very best of our ability is what we seek to do in relation to forest practices in this state. With some, burning has been considered a way to get regeneration happening to replicate nature.

I understand when the first white settlers came to Tasmania and came up the D'Entrecasteaux Channel they saw the burnt remains on the western side because a huge wildfire had ripped through. If you go to some of the undisturbed soils in the south of Tasmania, you see that there are layers of ash or charcoal suggesting that wildfires ripped through those areas about every five decades. That is the way nature has been working in the southern Tasmanian forests for a long, long time, so let us just understand the actual process.

Under the legislation, we will be looking at the conservation values and then an assessment of forest resources within the Future Potential Production Forest land that is subject to the request and demand, the forestry sector's intention to undertake the regrowth forest harvesting on the land that is subject to the request, and so it goes on. There is a huge number of checks and balances.

**Dr Woodruff** - Are you going to show what you have so far, minister, and reveal that to the community? That's what we need.

**Mr ABETZ** - I sometimes wonder why the Leader of the Greens reminds me of Rowan Atkinson, and I think I have finally got it.

**Dr Woodruff** - Are you going to be honest with Tasmanians about what you are doing?

**Mr ABETZ** - She is at her best when she keeps her mouth shut - Mr Bean. I will call you that from now on.

**Dr Woodruff** - I take offence at that. He is telling me to shut up, effectively.

**Mr ABETZ** - I did not say that.

**Dr Woodruff** - I take offence at that.



**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - I ask the minister to withdraw.

**Mr ABETZ** - I was going to affectionately refer to the Leader of the Greens as Mr Bean, but -

**Dr Woodruff** - Don't delude yourself. There is no affection between us, Mr Abetz.

**Mr ABETZ** - you have thwarted that so I will withdraw that comment unreservedly. It may be a bit unfair to Rowan Atkinson as well. What we need in this debate is -

**Dr Woodruff** - Not everything is a joke. Women are annoying, are we not? We just keep talking.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, your interjections are inciting comments. I ask you to make your comments during your summing up.

**Dr Woodruff** - I am taking notes.

**Mr ABETZ** - Can I remind the Leader of the Greens that one can take notes silently?

**Dr Woodruff** - I am not very good at that.

**Mr ABETZ** - We have noticed.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ABETZ** - What we unfortunately have are scare tactics run by the Greens and others, the Bob Brown Foundation in particular, for the purpose of money raising, the sort of multi-million-dollar enterprise that they are now. If any concession were to be made that threatened species were being removed from the list or less endangered than before, which ought to be celebrated and considered to be good news, it is shunted aside -

**Dr Woodruff** - I welcomed that this morning.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, I do not think you would like to be asked to leave the Chamber during your own motion, so I do ask that you make your comments during your summing up. Minister, please resume. The member can count it as a warning.

**Mr ABETZ** - The scare tactics that are run by the Greens are quite disingenuous because the public is now waking up to how the Bob Brown Foundation and other organisations are making their money. It is by disingenuous commentary that is very narrowly focused and misleads the public.

The way we do forestry in Tasmania is world renowned, and it has a lot of ignorance attached to it. I remember once being at the university - I think at the agricultural science school - for a forestry forum, and a journalist from a particular news outlet, no guesses where from, said, 'How do you feel about the mushroom clouds that emanate from regenerating forests?' When I advised the inquiring journalist that it was in fact 80 per cent steam, or water vapour, he laughed at me whilst the camera was going. I suggested to him, 'Don't believe me; ask the professor over there.' Off with the camera they went and asked the professor, who

confirmed exactly what I had said. I then inquired whether that segment would be playing on the evening news that night. Shock horror, it did not play that night.

That is part of the problem. If people were to be informed as to what was going on, they would be so much more understanding of what is occurring. Our friends who live in the rural and regional communities in Tasmania fully understand what is going on. They have lived in these forests for generations, and the reason they have been able to live in these forests for generations is because they do not just chop down and burn and pillage. They have a genuine interest in ensuring that the forests regrow and regenerate so that there are jobs for their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. One of the great things as you move around areas such as Geeveston in my electorate of Franklin or elsewhere is that there are multi-generation families involved in the forest sector who take great pride in looking after our forests.

In fact, in the Styx Valley, way back in the 1950s - I dare say before even Bob Brown was born - foresters in the Australian News Mills concession coming across those tall trees thought that they were worthy of preservation, and so they were preserved. Then, a couple of generations later, people ride in on their steed and claim that they are the saviour of these large trees. Not so. The people who have worked in the forests have a genuine understanding, not from textbooks but from lived experience, with experience handed down from generation to generation.

I turn, in the time remaining, to some of the important information as to who supports the way we do forestry in Tasmania. Allow me to read this section into the *Hansard*. It is very important:

When it comes to the contribution of Tasmania's native forest estate to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the government will continue to be guided by scientific best practice. Our current approach to forest management is supported by the viewpoints of world-leading experts, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Food and Agricultural Organisation, and the International Energy Agency.

These organisations have concluded that a mixed strategy of conservation and timber production can lower greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to climate change mitigation. This is achieved through carbon capture and storage in trees and wood products, minimising imports with high carbon miles and reducing Australia's reliance on high emission alternatives.

Research published in 2020 - and there is a growing body of published science in this regard - found that within wet eucalypt forests in parts of south-east Australia, including in Tasmania, a mosaic of managed native forest, including regenerating eucalypts, mixed forests, rainforests and reserves, was likely the best strategy for carbon management into the future.

Why is it that the Greens seem to blind themselves to these internationally recognised studies and recommendations? The Greens would suggest that we are about burning and pillaging. No, we are not. We have a basic approach that says we have been given the bounty of nature, we can harvest it in a manner that is renewable and sustainable and which avoids the use of aluminium, iron, bricks, all sorts of plastics and petrochemicals. This protects our

environment whilst also protecting our economy and, most importantly, the jobs of the men and women of our rural and regional areas.

I ask in this debate for some common sense. If you do not want plastic takeaway containers and you support paper and cardboard containers, you might need wood products to make them. You might need trees to make them. If you do not want plastic forks at public functions and you want wooden forks, I wonder where the wood might come from?

Let us have a genuine, balanced and more moderate approach to all these things, recognising that the vast bulk of Tasmania will not be harvested for timber, but it makes good sense for us to have a balance in relation to these matters. That is why we as a government fully support and will continue to defend and champion the hardworking Tasmanians who gain a living from the forests and in ensuring that the forests last for generations to come.

That is the beauty of the timber industry in Tasmania. I have had the privilege of observing it now for many years over a number of decades, having been a federal forestry minister and now a state forestry minister. The commitment of the people who work in our forests has not changed. They are committed to their heritage, to the work they do, to the communities in which they work and to their knowledge that they are dealing with a good, renewable, vital resource.

In case anybody is under any illusion, the government will be opposing this motion.

[4.23 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, right from the outset, I have to say that one of the most pointless things in parliament would have to be Greens' private members' time. Honestly, I am getting sick of these debates, and the reason why is because it is pretty obvious that people are not going to change their minds. No matter what I present - scientific papers or thought or well-reasoned arguments - the Greens 100 per cent are not going to accept it.

Yet here we are again. Let us have the debate again. Let us go over the same things again. We also have the other side of it, which is the Liberals politicking on forestry, which I will get to a bit later maybe.

I will start off with the Greens who are bringing this motion. The Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff, gets up and waxes on about destruction and extinctions and all that sort of colourful language with zero evidence behind it. She refuses to accept that forests regrow and refuses to accept that Tasmania has a very good native forest system and regulation of native forestry. She refuses to accept that the amount of native forest being harvested is reducing over time.

In a couple of years' time the numbers will be falling off a cliff, but they refuse to accept that. No, you cannot touch a single tree. They refuse to acknowledge the past. We heard Dr Woodruff talk about all the contentious logging coupes around Tasmania, like at Derby or Dial Range, while also forgetting that every single coupe, every single tree was approved by the Greens when signing up to the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. Every single tree currently on schedule to be cut down, at one stage not that long ago, the Greens said, 'Look, we are happy for you to cut them down'. They refuse to acknowledge that is the truth.

They might say that things have changed. Maybe they have, but the agreement still holds. They have even more history, member for Clark, Mr Bayley, if you go to page 13 of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, there is a whole series of signatures across environmental groups, governments, unions, and Mr Vica Bayley has his signature literally on that agreement. That agreement said, 'We have struck a deal' and these areas they now say you should not touch, 'We are willing to let those ones go for the sake of an enduring agreement'. The agreement does endure, Deputy Speaker, and I cannot argue that it does not because there has not been a single tree in Tasmanian state-owned native forest that has been touched without that agreement as a background, without that tick of approval from the Greens, and Mr Bayley with his signature there in black pen. They refuse to accept that.

Let us move on from that for a second. I heard Dr Woodruff go on about stuff that is completely unsubstantiated. She talked about the bushfires at Geeveston and how native forest logging was virtually to blame for the extent of the bushfires there. Dr Woodruff was referring to a piece of work that was heavily criticised, heavily scrutinised and, indeed, was withdrawn by the authors. That is the paper by, amongst others, Dr Jennifer Sanger.

They go around and say, 'Look, it is very credible that devils are being burnt to death in rainforests', and stuff like that. It does not matter because nobody is going to change their mind here. This is why it is such a complete waste of time. All the people you could class pejoratively as tree huggers, those people who do not want anybody to touch a single tree ever, the Greens already have them voting for them. These sorts of parliamentary stunts are completely useless because you are not going to win anybody over. The only ones who can understand the nonsense they spout are the people who are going to vote for them anyway because they do not want a single tree touched ever. That is why this is so pointless.

The other reason why this is so pointless is because if the government wants to go down that road and open up these forests, there is a whole bunch of work it has to do. The most crucial is that the government has to bring it before both Houses of parliament to get signed off. If you want to run the politics, you can run it then. That is your real opportunity to play the politics on this. You are pre-empting your political stunts and stuff because you want to keep continually using forestry as a political wedge to churn over and keep those members of yours who do not want a single tree touched ever on the Greens ticket. They are never going to leave. Roughly 10 per cent of Tasmanians completely agree with the Greens mindset and are never going change, so it is a complete waste of time.

When middle Tasmania hear these arguments, they do not believe it because they think, well, we went through this strife and struggle, and there was an agreement struck. The agreement still holds. The Greens try to make up new arguments and a list of why you should not touch a single tree ever. We know what the Greens do: they bank the gains and then shift the goalposts. If the Greens ended up with their policy now instead of sticking by the TFA, the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, is to end native forestry.

A couple of weeks ago we had a debate where they wanted to reach into native forestry on private land and have a say on what farmers can do on their own land. They have already moved the goalposts.

What do the Greens stand for? What happens when they completely run out of arguments? We come into this place, they talk about forestry, do not touch a single tree. The

Greens talk about the need for renewable energy, especially nationally, but are against pretty much every wind farm that is ever proposed.

I recently saw a classic example of how stupid the environmental movement in Tasmania can be. I will find out in a minute if the Greens have signed up to this. The aforementioned scientist, Dr Jennifer Sanger, recently brought out a report about e-fuels, biofuels and hydrogen. Anybody would think that, for example, the shipping industry using bunker fuel is bad for the environment. That is probably the worst type of fuel to be used. It is inefficient, they have to heat it up, it is sluggish, and it blows a lot of smoke into the atmosphere. You would think that an e-fuel would be a far better alternative.

I do not agree with the hype on hydrogen by the way. It does not make sense for me, even the basic physics but biofuels do. The only problem with stuff like green methanol, for example, which has a huge future, is that it needs a carbon source. You get a molecule of water and you split it, and you get your two hydrogens and get your oxygen and then you need a carbon source. You can use agricultural waste or - shock horror - you can use timber; you can use wood waste. Then you get a product that you would stick into the global shipping industry instead of bunker fuel.

Who would have thought that that was a bad thing? It is a bad thing and this report tells us why. The alternative is nonsense. I will read from the report directly. Where do I start? This is in the summary. If you want to read the whole document, it is online:

While green hydrogen and e-fuels could be a solution to reducing carbon emissions for aviation and shipping, this cannot be achieved without significant impact on the natural environment. The renewable energy footprint needed for this would be enormous.

Meanwhile, the idea that Tasmania can have a sustainable export for green hydrogen and e-fuels is questionable. A significant amount of land would be needed to be converted to renewable energy use.

One of the most concerning issues about an e-fuel export industry is the impact to Tasmania's forests. Currently, there is not enough plantation residues to sustain the two proposed e-fuel projects in the north of Tasmania, let alone further expansion as proposed by the Tasmanian Government.

Look, this is disputed by the way, but I will keep going.

There are justified concerns that demand for biomass and e-fuels will be met by our native forests.

Oh my God - it does not say that in the report. Obviously, that is me ad-libbing.

**The SPEAKER** - You might want to explain it for the *Hansard*.

**Dr BROAD** - I will explain that for the *Hansard*.

This could lead to the e-fuels industry becoming a driving force that will ensure the continued logging of Tasmania's native forests for decades to come.

That is my emphasis. It is not in bold or anything, but it might as well be. While at the same time saying:

We need to take immediate action to address climate change. Native forest logging is the highest emitting sector in Tasmania, and we must be wary of any climate change solution that could continue native forest logging into the future.

It is no surprise that Dr Sanger puts out a report that says, 'Native forestry is bad'. I have seen a number of reports from Dr Sanger. Bushfires caused by native forest. Do you want to stop bush fires? End native forestry. You want to protect the swift parrot? What are you going to do? End native forestry. You want to reduce carbon emissions? What do you do? End native forestry. The kicker in every report is 'end native forestry'. You come to a reasoned debate about something like replacing bunker fuel, which is what the project at Bell Bay is going to do. It is going to replace heavy bunker oil in ships sailing around the world carrying all the things we need. We are an island state and rely on global shipping. Australia, as an island nation, relies on global shipping. What is being currently powered by that global shipping industry is heavy bunker fuel, which is the worst type of fuel there is, full stop.

Global companies like Nest are currently procuring ships that will run on green methanol. That is better for the environment than pumping oil out of the Middle East, shipping it all around the world, including that driving our containerised shipping. You think that would be a good thing but, no, you cannot have that in Tasmania because you might contemplate touching a tree, so zero interest. I noticed the Greens are very silent for once. Zero interest in touching a single tree, therefore you cannot do e-fuels, you cannot do green methanol in Tasmania.

You know what the solution is? This is the bit that gets me. There is a talk about renewable energy, but we know the Greens oppose every renewable energy project, and they will because that is the way they run politics. However, according to Dr Sanger, this is what you need to do:

The real solution to climate change is to change the way we use resources and to re-organise our economic system.

Bingo. We cannot do projects like renewable energy, projects to replace heavy bunker fuel. What we have to do is, 're-organise our economic system'. If that completely lacks credibility then I do not know what does.

Technological fixes to climate change often just displace harm to other environments. We need to rapidly decrease our impact on our planet. This is the only long-term solution for maintaining a healthy and livable world.

If these sorts of ideas get currency, what you would need to do would be very scary for ordinary people. We are not just talking about standards of living and so on. This is a pretty scary thought of the outcomes required to reorganise our technological system and 'rapidly decrease our impact on our planet'. There is a very slippery slope developing there.

What would the Greens have us do? Obviously, they would end native forestry, then they would move and would want to end native forestry on private land and then would want to get rid of plantations because they destroy communities, and all the arguments they have run in the past about plantations being heavily reliant on chemicals and petro-chemicals in terms of fertilisers and so on. They would move the goalposts and then start campaigning against native forestry.

However, I do digress. I talked about the pointlessness of these debates. What we do is we come in, the Greens propose something about forestry and seek to wedge and the like, and it simply falls flat. They then send out emails to their supporters about how bad Labor is or how bad the Liberals are. What do the Liberals do? They just use this as politics.

I was disappointed in the minister, Eric Abetz. I thought he might have learnt the lesson of his predecessor, Felix Ellis, when he dropped a bombshell during the election campaign to reopen this so-called Future Potential Production Forest, the wood bank. It came as a surprise to the industry. The industry is not interested in starting another war with the environmental movement because this peace deal, the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, has been in place for more than 10 years, 12 years, and everybody is sticking to it.

The government then pulled a pin on a grenade and threw it into the middle of the election campaign. The industry did not support that. The evidence was that they received zero support from the industry. The industry came out and bagged it. That should have been a clear message for the Liberal Party when pretty much the representatives for the entire industry were standing behind Labor during that election campaign. Who did the Liberals have? They had a logging contractor who was very surprised when the major announcement for their industry turned out to be reopening these contentious areas. I thought Mr Abetz had learnt that lesson until he started politicking about it. I was made aware of a press release that went out this morning with the same old stupid forestry tropes - all the people behind the door over there smashing away at a computer keyboard, bagging out Labor, and it goes out with a headline:

Does Labor really support Tasmanian jobs?

The Labor Opposition's true colours will be tested today with Labor being forced to choose between backing in Tasmania's forest industry or jumping back into bed with the Greens who want to destroy forestry jobs.

On it goes, the Liberal Party using the forest industry as a political wedge and a political toy. The industry, during the election campaign, said they had had enough of that. They are sick of being a political toy. We know that the Greens are going to use forestry as a political toy, but I thought that the government had grown up after the election campaign. Clearly, they have not, and it is very disappointing.

Here we are again. We will just go around this cycle one more time. We will all get up and we will make similar speeches. We will completely waste our time. We will not be supporting this. We think that there is plenty of opportunity for all this information to be available - even if it is available, I might add - when it all has to come back to parliament and we get to vote for it here. If it passes here, it has to go through the upper House as well, and I would add that that is going to be a very difficult task.

First of all, the industry has to support this, and the industry does not. You have the government measuring up the curtains and saying, 'Here's a bit of timber that may or may not be regrowth and we will have a crack at it,' but what the industry does not want is another war. They know that the environmental movement will then have a legitimate reason to tear up the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, which has protected them from attacks in the market, and that is why they have been able to value add. That is why they have been able to get their high-value products into Australian markets. That is why they have been able to employ people in regional Tasmania and they have been able to invest.

At the same time, that industry is looking at a transition, because there is good evidence that the amount of timber available, even with these reserves, is not enough to sustain the volumes of timber. This government has not delivered the 137,000 cubic metres of high-quality sawlog that was in the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. They are delivering less and less every year. It is supposed to drop off a cliff in 2027, but it is already happening.

This industry has to invest. They have to make significant investments to stay in the industry and to stay employing people in regional Tasmania. The last thing they need is the government using the industry as a political plaything, giving the Bob Brown Foundation and others, and the Greens as a party, the great opportunity to go and bag their industry out, to go attack the markets and make it so that investing in the equipment that they need to transition to a majority of plantation timber - the government is obviously willing to tear that opportunity up and the Greens are just sitting there waiting, rubbing their hands together, saying, 'Do it, do it, do it', because they want the fight. They want to energise their base.

They want those people who get angry about logging to get fired up again, to march on the streets, to show up to the lawns of parliament to go over the same things and get the photos of the swift parrots. They talk about snails that no one has heard of and these are the most important animals ever. Yet they cannot demonstrate, as I have asked them to do in the past, what extinctions forestry has driven.

**Dr Woodruff** - They are driving the swift parrot to extinction.

**Dr BROAD** - Logging does not cause extinctions.

**The SPEAKER** - I have a note here saying that the Leader of the Greens is already under one warning. I would rather not have to do another.

**Dr BROAD** - Native forestry, as it is done in Tasmania, does not drive extinctions. Land clearing does. Land clearing drives extinctions, absolutely. One hundred per cent. Logging native forests, as happens in Tasmania, is sustainable.

The reasons why, as the minister has pointed out, is because these areas of high conservation value that you want to protect have been logged in the past. If that is not proof, then what is? You can do things in a sustainable manner. We have a good forest system here. The Greens absolutely do not agree with it and that is why a lot of these debates are completely pointless. We come in here once again on Wednesday afternoon, the Greens propose some forestry motion, the Liberals will oppose it, the Liberals play politics with it and we try to be sensible somewhere in the middle.

The industry does not support opening another forest war, and yet the Greens are begging for it to happen because they want to energise their base. The Wilderness Society wants it to



happen so they can crank up their donations; they can hit that donate button and have those pictures of forests laid to waste, and obviously the government looks like they are willing to throw the whole industry under the bus.

Here we are again. This is a completely pointless debate but the main reason this is pointless is because everything the Greens are demanding in this motion they will get a chance at. If the government is serious about doing this, and who knows what they are doing, then it has to go through both Houses of parliament. It will get as much scrutiny as just about anything ever.

This is probably one of the most scrutinised parts of Tasmania in terms of use of resources. There has been so much hot air blown into this subject and yet we are all about to do it again. We are all about to make the same points over again. We are all about to go around that cycle again. I think it is completely pointless and from a political point of view, the Greens' strategy is just singing to the choir. That is probably why this is the most pointless part of the debate. Maybe they believe that the real solution to climate change is to simply - ironically, I am saying 'simply' - change the way we use the resources and reorganise our economic systems. That is basket weaving and living in caves. Otherwise, we will have an impact on the environment. The question is about a sustainable impact on the environment, not this whole 'never touch a tree ever' mantra from the Greens.

[4.47 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her contribution and the other members. There is not a lot I agree with in that contribution from Dr Broad but when it comes to the pointless nature of these debates, one of the fundamental elements is the fact that there is zero daylight between Labor and Liberal about these issues. You cannot tell the difference between them from a policy perspective. They are on a unity ticket for logging these forests and denying the scientific impact of logging on species.

Dr Broad, it is very clear, whether it is from the ANU scientists or some of our local scientists here, that the logging of native forests in swift parrot habitat is absolutely driving the swift parrot towards extinction. It is one of the key reasons Forestry Tasmania has failed twice now to get Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, and it is why it will continue to fail to get FSC certification unless it changes.

I will be quick so I can allow some time for Dr Woodruff to sum up. The debate I heard from the minister was reminiscent of the 1990s and 2000s. Prior to Gunns Limited collapsing there was denial of the scientific impact, pointing to science that is convenient and at the end of the day, talking about sustainability when it is anchored into self-regulation of the industry, the industry making its own decisions about what it logs, publishing its own science about how good that logging is and justifying its own existence.

We have an assault on some of our greatest assets in lutruwita/Tasmania. We are known for being clean and green, 'Come down for air', net zero, all the rest. Whether you look at kunanyi/Mt Wellington and an approach that undermines the Wellington Park Trust, whether it is the coastal policy and an approach that undermines the Environmental Protection Authority, or whether it is this forests move and unlocking these 30,000 hectares of the so-called 'wood bank' reserve forests that are listed as part of the Tasmanian Reserve Estate, it is clearly going to undermine everybody. It is going to undermine the community. Clearly, it is going to undermine the conservation community that wants to see them protected for all time

under the *Nature Conservation Act* as new national parks and reserves and, as Dr Broad said - I do agree with you - it is going to undermine the industry.

It has had no support from the industry. It had a couple of contractors backing the minister when he announced this and clearly, if the industry cannot get FSC certification on its current land base and current practices, it is clearly not going to succeed in getting FSC certification if it starts logging what are currently reserves.

We heard a couple of times through the minister's contribution about plastic and paper and forks and so forth. I ask the minister, who is making timber forks in Tasmania out of native forest trees? It is the most ridiculous proposition. You would think, judging by the minister's contribution, that plantations as an alternative resource to transition and shift into do not exist. Plantations do exist. The reality is that as long as Tasmania is logging tall, straight, native forest trees and as long as we are subsidising the sale of those trees to sawmills through Forestry Tasmania, there is no impetus or motivation for the industry to shift across to processing those plantations.

That is an absolute travesty because there is no doubt that logging these forests is driving species to extinction. There is no doubt that it is contributing to climate change, and there is no doubt that it will end one day. It is a matter of when, and the quicker it happens, the better off the whole of this state will be. We will be able to avoid these debates, Dr Broad. We will be able to avoid the extinctions and the emissions, and, ultimately, we can get behind the one thing.

The Greens have a strong support base that is backing us. Talking about forests, and the counter to that and the issue that I find interesting, is the Labor Party continually ostracising and alienating its support base with backflips and reversals of long-held policies, whether it be pokies, donations, stadium, or UTAS. I can understand the jealousy of Dr Broad of the Greens having a support base that backs us with these kinds of motions and backs us in standing up for the forest. You guys are busy abandoning your base bit by bit, policy by policy.

I will leave some time for Dr Woodruff to sum up. Clearly this motion is all about transparency and getting information now so we can understand what is happening and scrutinise it going forwards.

[4.52 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - That was a depressing and very black contribution from Dr Broad. He was very cynical about the motives of the Greens in bringing this on. I am surprised that Labor is taking this position today. We crafted this motion to call to order the government to provide documents. I would have thought that as the party that signed the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, and as the party that signed those forests into being future production forests, a remnant of Labor would at least have wanted to fly a flag of transparency for Tasmanians about what the Liberals are planning to do to those forests.

Those were forests that were to be protected as reserve forests in perpetuity. It is so disappointing for Tasmanians to hear that Labor was making noises during the election campaign as though they did not support this policy, but it appears that the only part of it that they were not interested in was that there were not people standing behind the Liberals when they announced it during the election.

People will be saddened to hear that Labor does not stand up for transparency. I am disappointed to hear that you would vote against ordering the government to provide information that they clearly have to Tasmanians. We have demonstrated that ad nauseam. They have the information. They are refusing to hand it over for the very reason that they know communities around Tasmania will rise up with absolute outrage to think that forests that have been protected for all this time are now going to be on the Liberals' chopping block, and it will be the Labor Party supporting the Liberals in making sure that the community does not get that information.

It feels like a pointless debate to you, Dr Broad. That is because time and again the Liberal and Labor parties stand together. The majors stand together and they support each other to make sure transparency does not happen in Tasmania. We do not get accountability out of the Liberals because of the Labor Party. I have to say that is the way it is. You could have carried the day and supported the parliament to get those documents from the government. It is that simple.

Fundamentally, this is an issue that Tasmanians will continue to fight for, because we know from survey after survey that the majority of Tasmanians do not support the logging of native forests. They support real climate action. They want us to be doing everything we can to keep carbon stores intact. They want us to be doing everything we can to stop pushing the swift parrot, a critically endangered bird, to extinction, which is being caused in the greatest part by Forestry Tasmania's activities. That has been proven again and again by the FSC reports where Forestry Tasmania has failed to achieve FSC, principally and almost directly because it is continuing to log swift parrot habitat. Now we know it is also logging masked owl habitat, while masked owls and chicks of masked owls are in the very trees that are being logged.

Just the other day in Snow Hill - we have the evidence from people who are there - Forestry Tasmania deliberately took an ancient mature tree that had swift parrots in it at the time. This will continue under the Liberal government. It is so disappointing that Labor is here supporting them in not providing Tasmanians with that information.

We do not have dominion over animals. We do not have, as the minister would say, control over the bounty of nature. We are one with a community of life on this planet, and we need to be working together to support all the people who care about maintaining life on this planet. If Dr Broad thinks that that is a joke, well, I am with the majority of Tasmanians who understand that our forests are for life.

**Time expired.**

**The SPEAKER** (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is -

That the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 9**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Mrs Beswick

**NOES 24**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis

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

Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs (Teller)  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Ms White  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter  
Mr Wood

**Motion negatived.**

## **MOTION**

### **University of Tasmania Land**

[5.03 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House:

(1) Recognises:

- (a) the significance of housing in Tasmania and the negative impact this has on rental affordability, home ownership and Tasmania's ability to recruit and retain key workers; and
- (b) the vacant University of Tasmania (UTAS) land in Sandy Bay could provide nearly 2000 new homes, close to existing infrastructure, public transport routes and community facilities such as schools.

(2) Expresses its concern about:

- (a) the falling number of Year 11 and 12 STEM students in Tasmania;

- (b) the programs being run by Victorian universities to poach Tasmania's top STEM students, which include flying students to Melbourne to view their superior STEM facilities;
  - (c) the inability of UTAS to fund a new, state of the art STEM facility, currently estimated to cost \$500 million, because of the Liberal's policy; and
  - (d) the harmful signal the Liberal's policy sends to investors across Tasmania, by effectively blocking a development process that has been underway for more than a decade.
- (3) Further recognises that constructing 2000 new homes at Sandy Bay and a \$500 million STEM facility would create thousands of safe, secure, well-paid jobs, and hundreds of apprenticeships.
- (4) Orders the Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, to table copies of all advice received from relevant departments regarding the 'University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill' by 5pm Thursday 8 August 2024.

Honourable Speaker, I rise today to talk about something important for the Tasmanian community: the future of the University of Tasmania.

The University of Tasmania is Tasmania's only tertiary education institution, and it has been steadily working to revolutionise and modernise its facilities right across Tasmania. I have had the great fortune of seeing the facilities that it has updated - the new facilities at Burnie, which have been a massive success, and then more recently the shed in Launceston, seeing the work that is now almost complete in the city move into Launceston, which was supported by federal, state and local governments.

In Hobart, the university has also been undertaking its city move for a very long time, as it turns out - a very long time in which they have been supported by the Australian Government, the Tasmanian government, the Hobart City Council as well as the other city councils and the southern councils.

There was great endorsement of the city move, of building new STEM facilities, of making the University of Tasmania easier to get to, and that has been happening over a long period of time. Once the new forestry building has been completed, about 70 per cent of students and staff will already be in the city. I noted an interjection from the Leader of the House last week, who said, 'What do you mean by reverse?', or words to that effect. The university's move is already well underway. Most staff and students will already be in the city. However, we have a government that is looking to take the university back into the past through its policies, standing with people who are desperate to make the university something that it was a long time ago, but not something designed for the future. Education in this state needs to be ready for the future, not planning for the past.

In Tasmania, our education results have been letting Tasmanian students down. We have had NAPLAN results that were worse in 2021 than in 2008. We have had huge issues not just with retention of year 11 and 12 students, but also attainment, which I would argue is more

important. Attainment for young Tasmanians leaving our education system has not been what we would like it to be. That has had flow-on impacts into the university. The university is dealing with a number of challenges at the moment. One of them is that there are fewer STEM students coming out of year 11 and 12 looking to study, and those students are choosing to travel interstate to Melbourne more and more.

Over the last few weeks, perhaps because I have been talking about UTAS a lot, I have been bombarded with ads from the University of Melbourne encouraging young Tasmanians to go to their expo in Hobart and then go to the University of Melbourne to study STEM. They are doing this not only through what they are doing in Hobart, but they are also literally paying young Tasmanians to get on a plane and fly to Melbourne, putting them up in accommodation and then showcasing brand-new, modern STEM facilities for Victorian students.

What we have in Tasmania are university facilities that desperately need updating. The University of Tasmania outlined a plan for the Tasmanian government, the Australian Government and for local government over many years where they explain exactly what they wanted to do. They wanted to move the university into the city for a number of reasons, most of which were to create modern facilities that were ready for modern learning for students. We have encountered resistance to that from people who, perhaps, have a more traditional view of learning, to put it politely, who want to see the university stick to a more traditional path. The University of Tasmania needs to accept that we are moving into the future, and young people certainly are.

Unfortunately, in Tasmania in 2024 it is very different from when I started university at the Sandy Bay campus in 2004. Twenty years ago, the rent I paid was \$90 a week. I had to work one shift at Woolies to pay the rent, another shift at Woolies to pay for the food, and another shift to pay for a couple of drinks with my mates. It was a pretty easy lifestyle compared with what students are dealing with now. There was time to sit around the university, chat to people, have a coffee or a beer at the Uni Bar.

These days things are different and that is a real-life consequence of the cost-of-living crisis. Students today are paying massively more in rent. If I told a student today that I was paying \$90 a week in rent, they would scoff and be, well, presumably jealous. It is not the reality they are living in. They are having to work longer hours to make ends meet. We heard from the university only last year - one of the reasons for our policy about scholarships was that there are about 1000 young Tasmanians every year who are choosing not to study at university because they simply cannot afford it. They cannot afford the cost of living, they cannot find enough hours to work and study, and they just cannot make it work anymore. This is the reality they are facing. Students are not able to sit around like they did 20, 30, 40 years ago, 50 years ago some people remember right back to. They need to work and change the way they work. Having a university in the city is more accessible for the vast majority of students. It is one bus ride away from places like Sorell, New Norfolk, Bridgewater, the Huon Valley, rather than Sandy Bay, which is difficult.

It was Kerry Vincent, the member for Prosser in the other place, who summed it up well in his comments a couple of years ago, when he talked about how important it was for young people in his area at Sorell that the university moved into the city to make it more accessible. He talked about students saving up to 40 minutes a day if the university was in the city rather than in Sandy Bay. There is someone representing his community who stood up for the city move. When I was the mayor of Kingborough I backed the city move. I signed up to support it

through the City Deal process and in other forums. Based on my own experience of living in Kingston and studying, I thought it would be much easier to get to a university in the city than in Sandy Bay for many thousands of students like me.

Today's motion recognises that the university move is, fundamentally, a good thing. The motion recognises that this is also about housing. It expresses concerns about STEM facilities and the university's ability to fund that \$500 million potential cost for new STEM facilities.

We have made sure not to refer to legislation that is coming up, and I will not go any further than that. What we do understand is that the University of Tasmania needs certainty for its plan. It is a very long-term plan because when the university started moving its assets into the city, it received support from the Australian and Tasmanian governments, and from the local council. To stop it from doing what it is doing now would put severe financial strain on the university and impact its operations right across Tasmania. This is the concern it continues to raise.

The motion also recognises the significant shortage of housing in Tasmania and the negative impact this has on rental affordability, home ownership and Tasmania's ability to recruit and retain key workers. It recognises that the university's land in Sandy Bay could provide nearly 2000 new homes close to existing infrastructure, public transport routes and community facilities such as schools.

I accept that our decision to back the university move has not been universally popular. One person who spoke to me the other day said, 'What a silly place to build homes. Why would you want to build homes there?' I was on a local planning authority for seven years and I do not think there is a better opportunity to build housing in greater Hobart than on that site above Churchill Avenue. I am getting scoffs from the member for Clark as I say that, but there really is not. No, not Mr Behrakis.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I did not scoff.

**Mr WINTER** - My apologies if that offends you.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I did not. You have offended me.

**Mr WINTER** - I apologise if I have offended, honourable Speaker.

It is an opportunity to build housing. It is a 100-hectare site and it is underutilised. When we were there, we saw the Medical Science building, which is completely unused at the moment. It could be retrofitted for housing pretty quickly if the zoning was changed. It is close to public services. It is close to a very regular bus route along Churchill Avenue, close to shops through the local Hill Street Store and Sandy Bay. Some of Tasmania's best schools are in Sandy Bay. It is close to health care. This is an opportunity not in the outer reaches of Hobart.

For planning, you want to do infill housing, and this is an opportunity to build more housing. The only reason you would not do so is if you did not support development or if you wanted to listen to loud voices that say no. Let us be very honest about it, that is what we have seen here. There are people who do not want to see more housing in the suburb of Sandy Bay and some of them are in the Chamber today.

I have a long record of supporting more housing in infill areas. When I was mayor in Kingborough, we supported the Maryknoll development, which was very controversial at that time. It was an old nunnery and the nuns there wanted to convert the land they held. They were retiring from active work, and active work in the church, and they wanted to convert that to housing in a housing crisis. We received a lot of pushback from locals there who were concerned about some of the same issues in Sandy Bay. We held firm at our council and supported development.

That is why I have been surprised to see that some of the biggest proponents for development in the city of Hobart are sitting on the wrong side of this issue. Mr Behrakis, as a former alderman, initially strongly supported the City Deal. He endorsed the master plan about the Sandy Bay campus, if I recall correctly, and has also had such a crack at the Greens on council for not supporting development, relentlessly attacking the Greens for knocking back development. I do not know if a single Green on that council has ever knocked back 2000 homes though, like the former alderman and now member for Clark, Mr Behrakis, is proposing to do. Knocking back 2000 homes is an awful lot of homes to knock back during a housing crisis. That is a real proposal. The University of Tasmania went to the City of Hobart with its plan. It has withdrawn the plan for now, but it still wants to build those houses because that is the plan that it embarked upon many years ago.

You have the Labor Party, which is supporting more housing and better education facilities in supporting a future for education. You have a Liberal Party that has now decided it is against development in our city and in our state, and that wants to stand with those who oppose development to oppose more housing during a housing crisis. The housing crisis is not just about people sleeping in tents. It is not just about people who are homeless. It is about the cost-of-living crisis and rents that continue to grow and put more and more pressure on people in our state.

Adding additional housing to greater Hobart in Sandy Bay will add to supply, and the basic economics of this means that it will take pressure off rents. It will be a good thing for the entirety of greater Hobart to have additional housing in that area, and through the motion before the House we have an opportunity today to support that.

The motion also recognises the falling number of year 11 and 12 STEM students in Tasmania and the programs being run by Victorian universities to poach our best and brightest young people. We have seen this through anecdotal examples. Last week I spoke to a young man who is currently studying at Hobart College. He tells me that he is interviewing and going through a process to be accepted into a Melbourne university. I asked him about the reasons for that, and he just did not feel like the University of Tasmania was for him. I despair at that, because we need to make sure that our best and brightest young Tasmanians stay here, and that they feel like they have the best possible facilities to operate from. Young Tasmanians want a university which is modern and has outstanding facilities, but they are not going to get that by using the existing facilities at the University of Tasmania. They have served us well for decades, but it is time for a change and time for a move into better facilities in the city.

In the motion we have also talked about the inability of UTAS to fund a new state-of-the-art STEM facility currently estimated to cost \$500 million because of the Liberals' policy. The university has a plan. The plan went through and was endorsed through the City Deal for a \$500 million STEM facility. What an opportunity for us to work together with the university that. For them, part of that discussion about their ability to finance that is through divestment



of land through sale or lease at Sandy Bay so that they can continue to invest more into the city and into their new STEM facilities.

The STEM facility might be in the city. They might choose - they are going through a process at the moment - to build it on that part of the Sandy Bay campus closer to Sandy Bay Road or below Churchill Avenue. That is a decision for the university, which is our point. Labor believes that the University of Tasmania should be making decisions for the University of Tasmania. They have their own governance structure, and this place and the other place have largely decided to keep out of the weeds of what the university is doing until the government's recent policy announcement.

We do not believe we should get in the way. We do not think we should freeze the assets of our only university. We do not believe that we should attack them through the policies of this place. We think this place should get out of their way and let them do what they have been doing.

They have either invested or are currently investing \$700 million worth of new facilities across greater Hobart. It has been part of the amount of construction work that has been going to support our economy over the last few years. I had a tour of the forestry building; there are 200 workers there on site most days at the moment constructing what will be a state-of-the-art facility. The artist impressions of what this will look like are extraordinary. This will be a place that I would love to study at, frankly, a place that far surpasses the experience that I had at the University of Tasmania Sandy Bay campus, regarding the facilities, layout, and the technology associated with a brand-new building.

When I went to university, some of us were still attending lectures, but we were just starting to get tape recordings and downloads of audio from lectures, and people were just starting to transition from the very traditional learning of everyone turning up to a 101 lecture in the Stanley Burbury lecture theatre to people starting to migrate back to spending more time at home and less time at work. This university must be allowed to continue to modernise its facilities. It should not be sent back to the past by policies of this Liberal government.

The motion also recognises that the construction of the new STEM facility would create thousands of safe, secure, well-paid jobs. Like those 200 Tasmanians who have been working at the University of Tasmania's forestry building, there is an ability for the university to continue to invest and continue to create jobs across Tasmania as it has been doing for a long time.

The Medical Sciences building was built back in 2009-11 in the city, which was a \$58 million development. The second development was \$90 million between 2011 and 2013. The IMAS at Salamanca - an incredible building - between 2012 and 2014. This is how long this has been going on for. The Centenary Building at the Domain was a \$ million build. The Hobart Apartments, where the university has been building more housing in the city, are helping to create better accommodation for their students. The Podium Building fit out, is a \$2.7 million build. The Hedberg, an absolutely incredible investment by a federal Labor government in that facility. The Philip Smith Centre, which I and other Labor members were able to go to recently to have a look at what they have done - absolutely incredible development. You also have what has happened down at Taroona with IMAS, and what is happening at the moment with IMAS, with those investments there. As I said, the Forestry building in the city will be an incredible place to learn and to teach.

The University of Tasmania has been on this path since at least 2009. The university move is not new. The university move is something that has been happening, and you cannot have your cake and eat it too. You cannot say that you support those investments in the city but say that you want to keep 100 hectares at the Sandy Bay campus. Everyone knew when they were doing this that as they invested more and moved more into the city that the university's footprint at Sandy Bay was going to be reduced. It had to be.

Everyone knew, including the Liberal members for Clark. They knew that this was happening and, as I said, we had all kept away from this until the politics of an election got in the way of that. We have had a very unfortunate situation where we have a government that is now intent on completely changing the sovereign risk profile of investing in this state with this decision. The decisions that they are making about the University of Tasmania's campus, as outlined by our business community in Tasmania by the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce, the Master Builders, HIA and the Property Council, are creating sovereign risk.

The message they are sending to anyone who invests here is that even if you have been investing in a move that has been going on for nearly 15 years, the government might decide to pull the rug out from under you and try to legislate to stop you in your tracks. That is what their legislation does and why it is so dangerous. It is a dangerous approach to policy that is going to put enhanced and increased pressure on the university's finances and, in fact, could lead to pressure that impacts not just study in the south of the state, but study right across Tasmania.

It is bad policy. It is a bad approach and that is why paragraph (4) orders the Premier to table copies of all advice received from the relevant departments regarding the University of Tasmania's protection bill by 5.00 p.m. tomorrow. I want to know what sort of advice they got from this, or whether this was another trick pulled out of the Liberal Party playbook during an election, because that is certainly what it looks like. You have a member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, out there saying that they were going to save the University of Tasmania, and then later on saying, 'Actually, it does not really do anything', and 'Actually, nobody is stopping anything.' That is what this legislation does and that is what we need to see the advice about. We need to see what advice this government received about this absolutely reckless approach to housing, education and investment in our state.

Where else but in Tasmania would a government - this Liberal government - try to freeze the assets of its only university? What other government would have such a lack of regard for the education institution of the university that it decides to attack it by freezing its assets? I want to know what advice the government got about that, if they got any advice whatsoever. This House should demand that we see the advice to understand exactly where this reckless approach came from.

I am deeply concerned about the message this sends to every Tasmanian young person about the future of education in this state and about this government's commitment to housing during the housing crisis, which has been neglectful to say the absolute best. They declared a housing crisis in 2018, and since then have done almost nothing to resolve it, and things have got worse.

I have been critical of the Jacqui Lambie Network, but on this issue they have formulated a policy to support the University of Tasmania's move and that is good. It is good that Tasmanians can see what they stand for. On this occasion I believe they are standing up for

what is right, which is a modern university, with modern learning in this state. This demonstrates that they have seen the arguments and have seen through the ridiculous arguments of the Liberal Party on this. The arguments are incoherent and make no sense. Freezing assets is something that world leaders do to foreign dictators, to oligarchs in Russia. They have their assets frozen. Who would ever do it to their university? That is what this Liberal government is doing.

I am also looking forward to the Greens' contribution today. The Greens have been talking about housing federally and at a state level for a long time. We know what their record is at local councils. I have been on the local council with the Greens and listened to the arguments as they oppose housing. They oppose things like the Maryknoll development that I referred to earlier. We have seen what they did. We have seen what Mr Behrakis, the member for Clark, used to believe. He used to believe in development in this city. He does not anymore. He now opposes 2000 homes.

I want to know what the Greens think about this, because there is a 100-hectare site available there at Sandy Bay.

It is close to services, public transport, shops and health care. It has fantastic education services there. There is no reason that I can think of to prevent development of housing particularly on that part of the site north of Churchill Avenue. If the Greens want to have any credibility when they talk about housing in this state, it is important that they do support 2000 new homes. To say something positive, the Greens have now backtracked slightly and are saying they have not made their final decision on whether they are going to support the government's ridiculous bill, and that is good.

The Greens should oppose the government's ridiculous bill, because if they care about tertiary education in this state, and if they care about housing in this state, they should stop the government from freezing the assets of our only university. They absolutely should. The Greens have a responsibility here to protect Tasmanians from the diabolically bad policies of the government on this matter, and to protect our university from those who would freeze its assets during a period of significant change.

We are concerned, and I am concerned. This is one of those occasions in politics where you can back something that you passionately believe. I do passionately believe in the university's move. I am proud of the work that they have done in Launceston, impressed with the work that they have done in Burnie, and I am excited about them completing the university move in the city.

The worst thing that we could do to this university is freeze their assets. The worst thing we could do is enact the Liberals' policy, which might have made a few people happy during an election, but surely they understand how bad this will be.

The motion today gives the House the opportunity to send a message to the government that we are not going to tolerate policies like this. They are populist in a small section of the community, but do the complete opposite to what this state wants. The university's proposal gives us the best of both worlds. It offers us an opportunity to build 2000 new homes during an education crisis, and generate the funds that we need to upgrade and build great brand-new education facilities. Those things are worth recognising and worth supporting.

I am a passionate supporter of the University of Tasmania's move to the city. I wholly commend the motion to the House and I hope that the House will support this today.

[5.30 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs) - Gosh, that was a lot of words. It is very interesting to see how you can not only try to walk both sides of the street but all sides of all streets at the same time. Let me just unpack a little bit of what is going on here.

First, we are all agreed that the university is marvellous. We want to look after it and support it. I have been on the record for a very long time, particularly about ICT and the STEM and tech sector, saying that a STEM refit of the Sandy Bay campus is a great idea. It has been on Infrastructure Australia's radar since 2017, which is where the \$500 million figure that Mr Winter keeps latching onto comes from. Since 2017 there would have been an increase in the cost value of that proposal, and that the Universities Accord has recently published. One of the questions that I ask Mr Winter is: has he picked up the phone to his colleagues in Canberra to seek the funding that is necessary for our beautiful university? You know and we know that the Universities Accord talks about regional universities and talks about the sort of investment we need, not just the University of Tasmania, being the one university that we have in this state, but right across Australia for those regional communities that need more investment in education. I am pretty sure you have not picked up the phone, so that is fairly disappointing.

I will talk about the political games that Mr Winter and his team are playing over there. He talked at some length about the experience he had at university. I will too. I was very fortunate to be able to attend the University of Melbourne as a Tasmanian student, luckily before HECS, so it was free to study arts there. Then I chose to come back home to the University of Tasmania where I studied law. As a third-generation law graduate of that university, we love it as a family and as a community. There are members of our family currently there. I say that by way of full disclosure so that people understand my passion and perspective on this.

The University of Tasmania is an iconic Tasmanian institution. It has educated generations of Tasmanians, and our Sandy Bay campus is an integral part of the university's appeal and offering. We support it. As the only university in our state, UTAS has an important role to play in the economic, social and cultural development of our state. Yes, there has been a concerted effort by the community to ensure the site's future is secure.

By way of background, let us remember that in October 2022, 74.38 per cent of respondents voted 'No' in the City of Hobart elector poll regarding the university's relocation from Sandy Bay into the Hobart CBD. These are the people the opposition claims to represent, but when they get their opportunity, they turn their back on them. Surprising? I think not.

Those opposite must remember that the land in question was gifted by the people of Tasmania to the university in 1951. The university is committed to ensuring that the University of Tasmania delivers positive outcomes for students, staff and the broader Tasmanian community and our very economy. It is very important. Through our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, our government committed that within the first 100 days we would introduce enabling legislation to prevent the disposal of land at the Sandy Bay campus without the support of both Houses of parliament. We made an election commitment. We followed through on our election commitment. We tabled the bill within the first 100 days.

I will read you the operational clause so you can see that what we are doing is pretty straightforward and is about ensuring transparency. We say:

On and after the commencement day, the university must not dispose of all or any part of the vested land unless the disposal has been first approved by each House of parliament.

It is pretty straightforward; it is pretty simple.

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, minister, are you referring to the detail of the bill? You cannot refer to the detail of the bill without pre-empting debate. The motion is permitted because it speaks broadly about the issue.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Okay, I can speak more broadly about the issue. What the people I have spoken to want is discussion in this place, and that is good. They want to know that our MPs from every part of Tasmania, from every electorate, are part of the discussion about this very important matter.

The Tasmanian government has kept our promise. The bill - hopefully I am getting it right?

**The SPEAKER** - You can speak about the bill broadly; you cannot go through any of the clauses.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The bill is not about whether the university should have a presence in the Hobart CBD, despite what Mr Winter has said and the opaqueness with which he has made his argument. We note that the university already has a presence in the CBD, including its Creative Arts precinct across the waterfront, the Hedberg facility and the Menzies Institute for Medical Research. We welcome all of this.

We note our policy is not that UTAS cannot dispose of this land. The question must come through parliament. I am not surprised Labor does not understand. Labor does not understand transparency, clearly. Our bill simply ensures there is transparency and an opportunity for Tasmanians' views to be represented through their elected members before a final decision is made. It is pretty straightforward.

The fact is that Labor refused to state a position on UTAS during the campaign because they were fearful of the electoral backlash. Only now, comfortable in opposition with four years until they face the voters, have they revealed that they will defy the will of the overwhelming majority of residents of Hobart, which is very wishy-washy and reeks of the same old Labor nonsense that we are used to.

As I mentioned previously, Mr Greg Barnes put it perfectly in his 22 July *Mercury* piece when he said:

Mr Winter seems not to care for the fact that the university is not a private institution but is one that must be held accountable for its expenditure of taxpayer funds, and that it is not a property developer. Labor clearly does not care about UTAS students or residents, and their enthusiasm for this project is purely about votes.

Mr Barnes then goes on to say:

The Opposition Leader's rhetoric on this issue is overblown and even comic.

Then there is the recent commentary of Mr Barry Prismall:

Opposition Leader, Dean Winter, who so far in the new parliament reminds me of a limp whinger with no presence or stature.

Oh dear. Perhaps you will have to do some work on that. It remains to see that we are merely introducing an important check and balance for a vital community asset, nothing more. If the Opposition Leader is seeking - as I think he is - to stir up a storm in a teacup, then Tasmanians should think twice about this opposition's legitimacy and the legitimacy of their arguments. If Labor was supportive of Tasmanians then they would back our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future and advocate to their federal counterparts - pick up that phone for the \$500 million-plus required to bring world-class STEM facilities to UTAS in Sandy Bay. Just pick up the phone. As each day passes without advocacy to their federal counterparts, the whingeing continues and the Labor team is robbing Tasmania of our STEM future.

Our work with the university on a STEM-led plan for the Sandy Bay campus is practical, prudent and measured and will ensure that the site has a future ready to support and drive the careers of Tasmanians and attract investment and industry. The Tasmanian government understands that our important science and technology sectors offer great potential for economic growth together with global work opportunities, and that the ICT leadership is essential to bridge the digital divide for all Tasmanians.

We all want Tasmanian students to have access to the most contemporary tertiary education opportunities, and, equally, we understand the need to meet workforce demands in the STEM sector both now and into the future. This is precisely why we are acting to address this issue, and that is why I continue to have ongoing dialogue with the university and with STEM industry leaders and continue to work with our Commonwealth counterparts to support UTAS's enhancement and STEM-led plan. The University of Tasmania is also consulting with their expert STEM staff to understand how to deliver the best possible STEM education experience for our students, teachers, and broader community to ensure we cater for our future needs.

This idea of upgraded STEM facilities is not new. They have been on Infrastructure Australia's radar since 2017. Given that seven years has now elapsed, I look forward to working with UTAS to update the business case to pursue a Commonwealth investment for some \$500 million-plus into revamped STEM facilities at Sandy Bay. While Labor purports that UTAS was going to be funding this \$500 million project itself, I am advised that this is simply not true. Our bill in no way limits the advocacy for the university's fair share of funding to support its STEM future.

Perhaps the Opposition Leader should divert his attention to advocating to his federal counterparts rather than constant whingeing. We all know Labor cannot tell the truth and does not let that get in the way of a good story. Regarding their aspirations about declining rates of enrolment in STEM subjects, let us remember that this is not just a Tasmanian issue. I am also advised that STEM enrolments have recently increased. Data on year 12 subject enrolments from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) show a

national decline of enrolments in maths and science subjects when comparing 2018 to 2022 figures. It is in all our interests to arrest that decline and get our kids learning STEM, and showing them the opportunities both in further study, tertiary education and jobs that they can have globally.

We know that having specialist teachers has a positive impact on enrolments. That is why our government has committed to recruit an extra 25 full-time-equivalent maths and science teachers as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. After all, this is Tasmania's education future and it is why STEM is so important.

I will turn to housing, a topic our government is addressing for Tasmanians now and into the future. Before I do, I feel I need to address the Leader of the Opposition's misleading comments about 2000 homes. I am not aware of a current proposal for 2000 homes to be developed on that site.

**Mr Winter** - Pick up the phone to the University of Tasmania, minister.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Perhaps you would like to table it, Mr Winter. Fundamentally, there is nothing stopping UTAS disposing of the land that was gifted to them by the government. What we are doing is introducing an important check and balance for a vital community asset.

We are delivering on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future commitments to provide more housing options for Tasmanians, to bring more housing supply online and to allow more Tasmanians to realise their dreams of home ownership. In our first 100 days we have expanded our MyHome shared equity scheme, helping even more Tasmanians to buy or build a house, joining the more than 1000 Tasmanians who have already been supported into home ownership through the program.

We have increased our highly successful Residential Land Rebate program, offering eligible applicants a rebate of up to \$15,000 per lot to bring more affordable residential land to market for home ownership, bringing hundreds more lots to market over the next two years. A request for tender is now registered for our Apartment Development Purchase Program to support a suite of initiatives to stimulate housing supply, increase medium-density apartments and deliver more affordable rentals. We have expanded our Private Rental Incentive scheme to bring on an additional 200 homes into this highly successful scheme.

From October 2020 to June 2024, our government has delivered a total of 3620 social and affordable homes towards our goal of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. That is a key part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. That is because our government recognises that every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head, which is precisely why our 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2023 to 2027 sets out our plan for safe, appropriate and affordable housing for our state.

Labor's implications that we are somehow stopping the development of the Sandy Bay campus site is false. Tasmanians expect checks and balances, and that is exactly what we are doing.

**Mr Winter** - What is the point in what you are doing if you are not stopping anything?

**The SPEAKER** - Leader of the Opposition, order.

**Ms OGILVIE** - The opposition ought to stop playing politics with the lives of Tasmanians. They should respect the some 74 per cent of respondents who voted no in the City of Hobart's elector poll. Those opposite should be offering their full support for Tasmania's STEM future, for the future of our young people, the attraction of new and innovative industries which create jobs and people. The negativity and rhetoric we are hearing from the other side and the conflation of separate issues - it never ceases to amaze us over here how opaque you can be. Tasmanians do not deserve the negativity of Mr Winter and his crew of anti-Tasmania's future people. That is why only our government has a 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, a future that sees this great state as the best place to live, work, raise a family and study.

[5.46 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion forward. It is good to have an opportunity to discuss these issues ahead of future debates, including public debates and debates in this House. The Tasmanian Greens have significant concerns about the state of the university which go above and beyond the issue of the move. Yes, we are concerned about the move and have a position on it. We also have concerns about the university's accessibility for students, the decisions and accountability of the university itself and the concerns of the community.

We have a clear position statement: we believe that the University of Tasmania, as Tasmania's only university, must be a leader in tertiary education, community standing and transparent decision-making. The *University of Tasmania Act 1992* needs to be reviewed and amended to improve governance, accountability, decision-making and academic outcomes. There are deliberations in the other place looking into that.

The state government should use opportunities to ensure that UTAS halts the relocation to the CBD and confirms an ongoing commitment to the maintenance of the Sandy Bay campus for educational purposes. This commitment must respect the built heritage, public open space and natural environment of the site. The concerns of academic staff, students and the broader community must be genuinely considered and addressed by the University Council. All UTAS decisions must be based on credible public engagement and accountable decision-making processes, and any statutory planning approvals provide for third-party rights of appeal.

That is our position on the university. It is a clear position, founded on the fact that the university is our only tertiary education facility. It needs to succeed; it needs to be focused on academic outcomes and academic excellence.

There are also principles about the land and the site. This is public land that was gifted to the university in 1944, 1951, ultimately. There are significant amounts of taxpayer's money that shift across to the university every single year and the *University of Tasmania Act* is a statute that arises from this place. There are significant issues which drive a lot of the public concerns about the institution - not just the move but the performance of the institution, full stop.

We support the order contained in this motion to increase transparency, and I will talk a bit more about the motion itself. We certainly support more transparency. We welcome the opportunity for more information to be put on the table, but we do not support the move as it stands at the moment. We want the Sandy Bay site retained for educational purposes. That does not mean we give blanket support to the Liberals' legislation as it is drafted at the moment. We do not automatically think that is the answer. I am sure all members have received the same



correspondence I have had from the university that flags some initial legal advice about its concerns about the effect of this legislation. I will read it into *Hansard* for the benefit of those reading this in the future. This is a letter from Pro Vice-Chancellor Nicholas Farrelly to, I think, all members:

Our initial legal advice is this bill looks to be inconsistent with the fundamental principles of land ownership in Tasmania, amounting to a reverse compulsory acquisition that effectively prohibits the sale in order to force land use which the University Council would otherwise have decided is not in the best interest of the university, deprives the university of the value of the land, imposes an ongoing cost burden on the university through ongoing holding and upkeeping costs of the land and buildings which it is prohibited from disposing, and inhibits the council's long-term planning for the university to achieve the objective set out under the act.

I have not seen that legal advice and we have not sought our own legal advice. I am unsure whether the government has legal advice about the legalities and implications of this legislation regarding the responsibilities of University Council members and other issues. The Greens certainly do not want to be involved in anything that cuts across any legal responsibilities or any other issues about other parts of statutes or the responsibilities of the university. We broadly support the intent of the legislation, but we have significant concerns that we will need to see addressed.

From the Greens' perspective, the UTAS move into the city looks completely untenable at the moment for a range of different reasons. It looks like the Labor Party has jumped on a horse that has already bolted.

**Mr Winter** - Yes, because it is already there, it is already in the city.

**Mr BAYLEY** - We will get to that, Mr Winter. I will anchor back to 74 per cent of Hobart residents who voted no to this in the elector poll. This is not every council in the state, it was not a plebiscite of every single person in the state, but both the Sandy Bay site and the city are in the Hobart municipality. By any measure, 74 per cent is an unequivocal result, an unequivocal condemnation of this as an approach. We do not understand the motives, and people will cast pejoratives as to why a lot of people voted that way. However, the reality is that 74 per cent of people did not support this and that needs to earn an element of respect from this House and the University of Tasmania.

There are also the financial issues. Mr Winter raised the finances. I will read into *Hansard* some commentary from Mr John Lawrence. He is a well-respected retired economist and accountant. On 5 July he wrote:

The primary focus should be on arresting the decline in earnings from core operations. Moving to Hobart will only defer and exacerbate the problem. Building STEM facilities with a sale-and-leaseback arrangement will not fix negative earnings from the core activities of teaching and research. It will make it worse, as any investor lessor will want a rate of return well in excess of the rate at which UTAS could borrow, if only Treasurer Ferguson will approve an increase in UTAS's borrowing limit. UTAS knows this but its sheer bloody-mindedness has led it to deliberately pursue the reckless course

of taking UTAS to the brink of insolvency by trying to force the hand of parliament and the government to allow it to sell parts of Sandy Bay so that it continues with its vanity project whilst ignoring the wishes of most other stakeholders.

That is the view of an eminent economist and accountant who has been tracking this and reading annual reports closely. He believes the financial landscape that sits underneath the university has fundamentally changed, and we know that is the case. This decision was made many years ago, prior to any level of consultation, at a time when the university landscape was very different. It is anchored in a business model that is reliant on international students, and international students, theoretically, want a city-based campus. However, the era of Australian universities, including the University of Tasmania, relying on international students has changed.

Whether that be through COVID, the trade wars with China, the federal caps that the federal government is currently considering on international students to universities, the landscape has changed and by any measure, whether it be community support, financial realisation or the future prospects, this move is now fundamentally untenable. Yes, students are getting courted by other universities, of course they are: it is a business, now a corporate business. When Keating and the federal government started to change the structure of the university model, when it started to charge students HECS and withdraw public support for education, it forced them into a business model and yes, they are competitive. This comes back to one of the challenges with UTAS. UTAS has effectively moved its entire course offerings online, barely offers face-to-face engagement with students, certainly not in a lecture context.

**Mr Winter** - Why do you think that is?

**Mr BAYLEY** - That is because it is cheaper to do. It is cheaper. They can recycle the same lecture that has been recorded by a lecturer. It is not necessarily what kids want to do. I can speak from my own experience. My daughter went through the last couple of years of her school in the COVID period. My daughter could think of nothing worse than doing an entire university degree in her bedroom. She chose to go to Sydney University. She had an early offer from UTAS and she ultimately got an offer from University of Sydney. She chose to go to university in Sydney because she wanted to interact with human beings face to face. That is a reality. That is one challenge.

If UTAS wants to start to become more attractive to students and academics, if it wants to up the level of academic offering that it is putting out there, it needs to have a look again at the decision to rationalise learning, put most of it online and bring into place face-to-face learning again. That, in my view and of the young people I talk to, is one of the key reasons that people are looking interstate or overseas for their support. Indeed, if you wanted to do a degree -

**Mr Winter** - Why do you think it is cheaper to teach online?

**Mr BAYLEY** - If you were happy to do an online degree, many people would potentially be better off looking at universities overseas.

The Leader of the Opposition flagged that UTAS has been moving for 15 years. Yes, some elements of it have been. Menzies, the Conservatorium and Hedberg, the art school,

IMAS and Taroona, all these are largely on uncontroversial moves. They are either already in the city and have been for a long time, or they were uncontroversial. Putting Menzies near the hospital makes logical sense. We did not see pushback on that. Then it comes to the Philip Smith Centre: introducing a new outdoor education faculty or course offering running out of the Philip Smith Centre on the Domain makes perfect sense. We welcome that and celebrate it.

It is well beyond time that Tasmania had a Bachelor of Education with a focus on outdoor education. It is one of those niche areas that we should be offering in this state. Most of that move has largely been uncontroversial and is replicating facilities that were already in the city.

The big challenge came with a whole scale move into the city, paid for by a rationalisation of the university campus site at Sandy Bay, paid for by selling off that with the kind of developments that were put on the table represented a complete overreach for a whole range of people.

**Mr Winter** - What sort of developments are you talking about? Housing?

**Mr BAYLEY** - Housing and a whole range of things. Look at your motion.

**The SPEAKER** - I ask that the interjections cease. You can keep it for the summing up.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Onto housing, Mr Winter. The day that the Labor Party supports the Greens in its efforts to rein in short stay accommodation to manage rentals' excessive rents, any no cause evictions and deliver minimum standards is the day we are happy to be lectured by you about housing, Mr Winter. Just because there is a site - 100 hectares, as you say, I am not sure that it is 100 hectares because a whole lot of that is currently bush. I do not know whether you are proposing to clear all that bush and just have a wall-to-wall suburb up towards Mount Nelson, but the day you support those initiatives that we bring into this House is the day I am happy to be lectured by you.

It is not vacant land. Your motion reads as if this is vacant land - as if it is just some vacant block with birds nesting in it and so forth. It is not; it is a university campus. It is zoned for education. It has a bushland reserve. This is not your average piece of vacant land. If you were going to mount an argument that this is vacant land, we should just as well mount an argument that we can build housing on Parliament House lawns or St Davids Park. It is a ridiculous argument that this is vacant land.

It is not vacant land. This is university land used for educational purposes. It has teaching on it. It has people living on it already in student housing, and it has community interest that is anchored there. There is no guarantee whatsoever that any planning authority - the Tasmanian Planning Commission - would agree to it being rezoned. There are no guarantees whatsoever. To claim that it is vacant land and that you can suddenly start turning a sod and building houses there is utterly ridiculous.

There may well be a future vision for the site. There may well be a landing point for this site that does include student housing. The Greens can totally see a vision where there is a whole lot of student housing built around that campus. Then, do you know what? No one will be able to argue that there is not a community of interest that wants a central hub on the university.

**Mr Winter** - You are happy if it is students living in the housing, so why are you not happy with other housing?

**Mr BAYLEY** - There are students living there already, Mr Winter.

**Mr Winter** - Why is it okay if the students live there?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. I do ask that the member is allowed to make his contribution without interjections.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Everyone knows there is tripartisan support for STEM. I am sure there is support across this Chamber for a new STEM facility but, again, it is untenable in the city.

It is very clear that the university should and can anchor back to the Sandy Bay campus, sell its surplus facilities and land in the city and go, cap in hand, together with tripartisan support, to the federal government and others looking for funding for a STEM facility at Sandy Bay. That is clearly a vision and part of the solution in this debate. It is about anchoring back to Sandy Bay and making sure that the facilities are there.

The reality is some of the science facilities are there already - the science labs, the geology stores and so forth. They cannot be moved anywhere. They are so big and extensive.

**Mr Winter** - What is your proposal for the forestry building? What a great relationship.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, I can hardly hear the member speaking. I ask members on both sides to allow the member to make his contribution.

**Mr Winter** - Furious agreement. It is like the same policy.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - All interjections will stop. Thank you.

**Mr BAYLEY** - That is where the solution lies, with STEM in Sandy Bay. If this House and the university made a commitment back to Sandy Bay - gave a commitment to retaining Sandy Bay's site and to building STEM in Sandy Bay - a lot of the heat would disappear out of this debate. There would be a lot of support for the university and its future anchored back to that site, and there would be a good prospect of going to the federal government and others to get the money and build the facility there.

I know we all have different positions on these different things and maybe you have had a road to Damascus moment, Mr Winter, but you have commented about this in the past. Correct me if I am wrong, but this is a comment from you from some time back:

It's not UTAS's role to inflate CBD numbers. It's not UTAS's role to fix the housing crisis. It's not UTAS's role to create construction jobs.

**Mr Winter** - No, that is not me. That is incorrect.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Are you happy to record that?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, that is not me. That is not a comment from me. You have misinterpreted a social - that is not what I have ever said.

**Mr BAYLEY** - It has your name on it, Mr Winter.

**Mr Winter** - It is incorrect.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Was it fabricated by a third party?

**Mr Winter** - No. I have never said that.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Fabricated?

**Mr Winter** - Yes.

**Mr BAYLEY** - By a third party, or a staff member?

**Mr Winter** - A staff member? What are you talking about?

**Mr BAYLEY** - So, someone -

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - All comments through the chair, please.

**Mr Winter** - No, it is not me.

**Mr BAYLEY** - I will continue to read this in, and Mr Winter, you are welcome to correct it:

UTAS's role is to provide world-class student education outcomes and research facilities for their academics and industry partners. Cross-disciplinary STEM that requires shared resources - central science laboratories, super computing power, libraries, controlled environments, teaching resources and tools, specimen depositories - fragmented over the city is totally unviable.

Shrink Sandy Bay shore, sell the condemned buildings above Churchill Avenue and put housing on its shore, but keep the campus and take the opportunity to build it out to a STEM hub that is the envy of the nation. The solution is moving students to the classroom, not the other way around. Fix public transport. Agreed. It is three kilometres from the CBD.

**Mr Winter** - I have never said any of that. I ask you to stop because I have not said this at any point.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Okay, I am happy to withdraw that. I will listen to your summing up.

I will not talk any further. We absolutely support paragraph (5) of this motion. We would like to see paragraph (4) of this motion; we would like to see additional transparency. I move an amendment that strikes out paragraphs (1), (2) and (3). I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraphs (1), (2) and (3).

**The SPEAKER** - I call Mr Bayley on the amendment.

**Mr BAYLEY** - On the amendment, I will be quick because I do not need to say any more. This basically removes the preamble and a whole range of statements that we contest or do not believe are necessarily helpful in the context of this debate. It retains the substantive element of this motion, which is ordering the government to release a range of documentation. We certainly support that.

We have concerns about the legislation. We would be fascinated to see if there is any legal advice. We are looking forward to continuing conversations with the university about its advice and thoughts. We are all for transparency, but, as it stands, we would like to amend the motion to take out the hyperbole and the preamble and just anchor back to paragraph (4).

**Ms OGILVIE** - Point of order. Just so I understand, are we on the amendment or -

**The SPEAKER** - Yes, we are on the amendment. We are definitely debating the amendment.

[6.08 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - What a mess. What an awful mess this University of Tasmania debate has become. What has been lost is its fundamental role to give Tasmanians a tertiary education and to conduct research through cooperative research centres, partner with industry and business and communities, and lift the overall debate, intellect and educational outcomes in Tasmania.

That is what has been lost in this debate. The university's act of parliament establishes its public character but it also enshrines its autonomy. It is a universally recognised cornerstone of university governance to ensure universities remains free from political interference. It is not an unfettered autonomy; it is a responsibility that they must maintain the goodwill and the support of the Tasmanian community in the decisions that they make.

We have a university that has completely bungled the move, the debate about it, the challenge and the argument about the delivery of modern universities and the environment in which they compete. They have completely struggled to explain that, not only to their staff but to the broader community. We have the politics of the three parties cherry-picking stats, information and data to create a political outcome.

It is a disappointing outcome overall and I am reflecting on everyone. I am sorry. The University of Tasmania is such an important institution in Tasmania and to have the level of debate that we have seen over the last six to 12 months on this matter has diminished all Tasmania.

I will wait until I see the final version of the bill in terms of the proposal from the government and make my position clear leading into it.

This is such a low point in terms of a higher education institution in Tasmania. It seems that anyone who has an axe to grind with the university over the last 50 years, this is their time to jump in and have a real crack. The debate is murky; the debate is turgid.

In terms of the motion and the amendment, there is a fair bit of cherry-picking and political posturing about paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) which are being proposed to be moved. However, at the end of the day, paragraph 4 is the nub. It is important for transparency that the government produces the advice they received as a government regarding the decision to force both Houses of parliament to approve any major change in real estate or ownership or use of university property, which is something that challenges the original underpinning concept of the act that established the university - the parliament's act, the parliament's process of establishing the university act and its autonomy. As I said though, that autonomy is not without a responsibility to the Tasmanian people.

I support the intent of the motion in paragraph (4). I will see where the numbers lie on the amendment. The entire debate about the future of the university and the politics that have been played over the last 12 months or so has diminished everyone and has diminished the institution of University of Tasmania.

[6.12 p.m.]

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I indicate that the Liberal Party will be supporting the amendment, and will talk about this issue and call out some of the misrepresentations that are being peddled by the Labor Party -

**The SPEAKER** - You do need to address the amendment. I am happy to give you a call if the amendment is going to be supported. I am always happy to put that vote and move back to the substantial motion.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - I will stick to it. I know the amendment. I know those paragraphs that are being removed do touch on the policy, do touch on the UTAS issue, so I will try my best.

We can all agree that the university is an iconic Tasmanian institution, has educated generations of Tasmanians, including many of us here. What Labor fails to realise, and I am speaking to particularly paragraph (2), which is being proposed to be removed, the Sandy Bay campus is an integral, critical part of the university's appeal and offering in southern Tasmania. There has been a very clear and a very concerted effort and message by the community to ensure the site's future is secure.

Contrast with we have listened to the community which is why we brought this policy to the election. It is interesting that Labor had no policy on this until after the election. What is being proposed, what is being talked about, our policy does not prevent the university from investing in accommodation, does not prevent them from developing elsewhere, selling or leasing parts of the campus. It literally means that we are proposing that any disposal of land specifically on that site, that there is a consideration of the community and the approval of parliament. That is all it does. It is about striking the right balance between protecting the public interest and the huge level of public concern, and allowing the university to get on with their core business, which is educating Tasmanians.

I will highlight some of the points that have been raised in regard to our policy. I have to say that it is the first time in my life I have been accused of being anti-development as I have by the Leader of the Opposition. There is a first time for everything. I am disappointed that the other Greens member for Clark was not in the room. I am sure she would have had an interesting response to that. The reality is nothing can be further from the truth. It is funny

coming from the same opposition who spent their election making their core platform opposition to a development, being the stadium, only to realise after the fact that they got it wrong. They changed their position and flipped. Now they have this policy that they have picked on and they have decided to get onto it and now call themselves pro-development. I welcome it. It is great to see Labor trying to turn over a new leaf and call themselves pro development like I have been for years.

I am glad Mr Winter was able to acknowledge on Twitter a few weeks ago, but they have been radio silent on this issue right up until the election. Afterwards, they have tried to label everyone who does not agree as a vocal minority. Seventy-four per cent of the council voters in the first ever election that had compulsory voting - I would hardly call that a vocal minority. I can get behind the statement itself that too often we get developments that get held up by a couple of vocal people. I have seen it a million times on council but 74 per cent is not a vocal minority. That includes the broad cross-section of the community. It includes people who also vote Labor. It involves people who vote Greens, and it involves people who vote Liberal. It also includes the student body of the university and a huge number of staff.

I am happy to be corrected, but I am pretty sure the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) also has a position against the UTAS move. I am trying to whittle down what it is. What is the vocal minority that the Labor Party is talking about here? They have tried to have it each way. They remain silent on the issue and they come out afterwards. They were very quiet on this because given the clear feedback from the community in Clark, this would have given them a huge electoral backlash if they came out with it and they were honest about it before the election. They waited until it was safe to do so without consequence. They are happy to come out on this and act strong and say that we are pro-development. They can sit here and wait four years until they have to test what the people of Clark say about this.

Let us be very clear about what has been proposed here and what we are talking about. No-one is talking about stopping development on the Sandy Bay campus. No-one is talking about forcing or ceasing or reversing the development or the CBD campus locations. No-one is talking about blocking housing from being built. That is what Labor thinks is being discussed, or what they are purporting is being proposed, but it is not.

What this side is doing through our policy is acknowledging that the land on which the Sandy Bay campus resides is public land. It was gifted to the university with the intention of it being for an educational purpose. That is the history of the place. We are ensuring that any development that occurs on that site, and development should occur on that site, and should be in line with the broad community expectations.

**Mr Winter** - Do you support 2000 homes on the site? You just said you support development.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - I will get to that, Mr Winter. I love that Labor is trying to reinvent themselves and they are trying to be supportive and trying to be pro-development. I know that is a novel concept for them but I have been there for some time, as Mr Winter has acknowledged.

Being pro-development does not mean every single development without question. It does not mean that. It does not mean rubber stamping things. It does not mean that development that occurs should not have checks and balances.



**Dr Broad** - That is what the Hobart City Council does. You just came from there.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - No, that is not what that is. There are many developers building homes in our state. We are committed to continuing to facilitate that development. It is why we are doing things like the development assessment panels and taking politics out of council planning, which I hope Mr Winter supports.

The reality is that there is only one university in Tasmania. It is important that the state's only tertiary education institute remains focused on providing the world-class education that they are known for, and letting those who specialised in developing the housing that Tasmania needs to focus on that.

I will also add, this whole talk about 2000 homes and opposing it, and blocking 2000 homes, completely pre-empts the Mount Nelson/Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan that the council has embarked on. The fact the university has withdrawn their planning applications for it in anticipation of the neighbourhood plan -

**Mr Winter** - Do you support it or not?

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Well, there is no plan at the moment. There is no plan for 2000 homes. That is the fallacy of this whole conversation. The university withdrew their application to see what comes out of this neighbourhood plan. To suggest that we are even talking about 2000 homes completely assumes that nothing is going to come out of it.

**Mr Winter** - They do want to build 2000 homes there.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Why did they withdraw the application?

**Mr Winter** - Because of your council.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, members on my left, just because the member asked you a question does not mean that you are entitled to answer it.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Our apologies for inciting.

Further to that point, the argument that we are going to provide 2000 homes in that area, we do have to wait and see. The university has not come back saying they are definitely going to build these 2000 homes. They have withdrawn that application. They are waiting to see what happens. We cannot now act like this is what is going to occur.

Another policy that we took to an election, were brave enough to take to an election, the university will still be able to present whatever plans they want for the site, including the need to rezone, but these will be up for the consideration of the community, the council and, if necessary, the Planning Commission and the parliament, which, in most circumstances, would be fair and reasonable.

I do not know why the Labor Party thinks they can hoodwink Tasmania by continuing to push this rhetoric of 2000 houses. Any attempt to have checks and balances, any attempt to make sure that what is being built does align with broad community expectations, is blocking. I am not sure what they are trying to achieve other than trying to claim a little election win and

trying to rebrand themselves as pro-development. I know they have a fair bit of rebranding to do, but we have been very clear. We took our policy to an election.

**Mr Winter** - There is nothing clear about your policy.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - We were very open about it. Labor was very quiet at the time, very quiet. What we are talking about doing will respect the right of the university to establish new facilities in the Hobart CBD. We are not stopping that. We recognise the importance of, as has been discussed, our STEM sector potential for economic growth, and the global work opportunities and ICT leadership. We are working to make sure the university has a STEM-led plan for the Sandy Bay campus. We are listening to the students, we are listening to the teachers, and we are listening to the 74 per cent of people in the council area who want to make sure that this campus represents the best educational purpose as it historically has.

It does not mean that we cannot have housing development occur on that site. It does not mean we cannot have all sorts of development happening. All it is saying is if the university wants to dispose of land, public land gifted to them by the people of Tasmania, there has to be some sort of check and balance -

**Mr Winter** - Called the planning scheme.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - No, we are talking about public land. It still has to go through a planning scheme.

On the issue of the university's move into the CBD, Mr Winter can check my record as far as how I voted on all those and my position has not changed ever.

Let us talk about housing. Where do we want those houses to be?

**The SPEAKER** - Let us talk about the motion before the House. If you are talking about those houses that you say do not exist, you are okay.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Those houses and the fact that the motion is referring to 2000 houses that are not going to be built, this is the best place to build these 2000 homes. Just up the road on Argyle Street and Campbell Street, the same council that is embarking on the Mount Nelson/Sandy Bay plan has identified the easy development potential of over 5000 properties in areas where there are private owners who will not talk about developing public land and are talking about doing it with their own money. That is where our focus is, on facilitating those kinds of developments in the inner city, which has a much lower impact on infrastructure and much higher amenity for those who are living in the inner city and access to services. It is not in those areas where the broad community in the entire city is against it.

To talk about the suggestion that this is a very localised opposition of people outside of Hobart who do not care, I know the attention on this was very much focused on Hobart. I still drive around in Clarence and see signs with the Save UTAS move. Let us not pretend that this is something that is just -

**Mr Winter** - It is going to be driven by signs. It is sign-led policy, is it?

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - Let us not talk - no, it is a reflection on the 'Oh, this is just some NIMBYs in Sandy Bay' and that is not true. It is untrue, it is a mistruth. It completely minimises how big an issue this is for many people in the community. As I said, we are not just talking about people who vote Liberal or people who vote Green, but also Labor voters, which is why you did not make this your key policy during the election, but it is your key policy now.

**Mr Winter** - We have had the same policy on this for a decade.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - You were very quiet in this sitting during the last election, were you not? With that, Speaker -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - I am attempting to hear Mr Behrakis, the member for Clark, in peace, thank you.

**Mr BEHRAKIS** - I could talk about this for hours, Honourable Speaker, but I will not. I will leave it there. I indicate that we will be supporting that amendment.

[6.26 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, we will be opposing the amendment. I know that there is not much time left to debate, but on the amendment in particular, and listening to the arguments on the amendment, some of the contributions were quite extraordinary.

The most interesting one was the other member for Clark, Mr Bayley, who said that they would be okay with student accommodation on the site at Sandy Bay, which made me wonder what sort of housing they would not want on the site. The Greens are happy with students to live at the University of Tasmania, homes, presumably, so why is it they do not want anyone else living there? Why is it that they will not allow social or affordable housing to go there? Why is it only students who are allowed to live in Sandy Bay?

**Mr Bayley** - Because it is a university campus.

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, I remind the Deputy Leader of the Greens that, (a), he should not be interjecting and, (b), he is certainly not allowed to do it while he is standing in the corridor. You will be asked to leave if you do it again.

**Mr WINTER** - The member for Clark, Mr Bayley, exposed the Greens when he said that they might be okay with student accommodation, presumably, but not okay with other types of housing on that site, which speaks to the sort of position that they are now holding on this position - adverse to good outcomes for housing in this state. It is a disappointing position and they have belled the cat in terms of what this is all about for them.

Then we had the other member for Clark, Mr Behrakis, who has talked a lot about voters, not about people. He talked about Liberal voters, Labor voters, and Greens voters because that is how this government has seen this entire debate: who the voters are, who is voting for them. That is what the issue is. I have news for Mr Behrakis, former alderman Behrakis: this whole place has had the same position on UTAS and the move for years and that has been to keep out of it. This place has refused to enter into the debate. Your Premier was education minister for

years while this move was going on and kept out of it. The Greens kept out of it for a long period of time until a little bit before you, but kept out of it for a long time. We have kept out of it as well because we respect the autonomy of the university, and we respect the planning authority that exists for checks and balances. That is what your old job was, alderman Behrakis. Planning in this state is not your job now.

This government's position on this is confused. We have a member for Clark who said, 'We have heard you loud and clear and listened, and UTAS will stay in Sandy Bay'. That is what he said during the election. Then we had the other Liberal member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, who denied that the new laws were designed to prevent the sale of Sandy Bay campus land, but provide an extra layer of scrutiny over what she referred to as a vital community asset.

What is it? Are they supporting housing or not? The member for Clark, Mr Behrakis, said that they might support housing in the future, they might support, in fact they do, there will be development on the site but he cannot say if they support 2000 new homes. Yes, the university withdrew their planning application and zoning changes. They did so because of the council that he was on. They did so because they have gone -

**Mr Behrakis** - They did so because of the elector poll.

**Mr WINTER** - They did so because of the attitude from the council, Honourable Speaker. A council that had unanimously endorsed the city move had councillors and alderman like alderman Behrakis voting for and supporting the university move, then after more than a decade of moving, decided to change their minds. That is called sovereign risk. That is the issue with this government and with the policies.

We do not support the amendment because we support good policy. We do not support the sort of approach that is being proposed by the government. I hope that the Greens are true to their word and carefully scrutinise the proposed bill because it is a shocking thing for Tasmania and our most critical education institution.

We do not support the amendment. I hope the House will not support it either.

**The SPEAKER** (Ms O'Byrne) The question is -

That the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 24**

Mr Abetz  
Ms Badger  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Bayley  
Mr Behrakis  
Mrs Beswick  
Ms Burnet  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs

**NOES 9**

Dr Broad (Teller)  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms White  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter

Mr Ferguson  
Mr Garland  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Pentland (Teller)  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Ms Rosol  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Mr Wood  
Dr Woodruff

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

## **MOTION**

### **Homelessness Week**

[6.36 p.m.]

**Mrs PENTLAND** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I move the motion in my name.

**The SPEAKER** - Is a vote required today?

**Mrs PENTLAND** - Yes, Speaker. I move -

That the House -

- (1) Recognises that 5-11 August 2024, being National Homelessness Week, is an opportunistic time to focus on policies and services that promotes more Tasmanians into stable and secure housing.
- (2) Further recognises that the theme for the 2024 Homelessness Week is 'Homelessness Action Now' seeking commitments from Governments across all Australian jurisdictions to act to end homelessness, which is particularly relevant to Tasmania as we continue to experience a housing crisis.
- (3) Acknowledges that the Government's proposed Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill 2024 (No. 27) has received criticism from many within our community, including from industry and landlord representative bodies, which requires further consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

- (4) Refers the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill 2024 (No. 27) to House of Assembly Government Administration Committee B, for inquiry and report thereon and to allow for further public and stakeholder consultation and critical assessment on the impacts of the proposed amendments on the availability and housing supply for long-term rentals in Tasmania.

I acknowledge that this week is Homelessness Week and it is an opportune time to focus on policies that promote more Tasmanians into stable and secure housing. At the end of my contribution, I will be moving an amendment to my motion.

Given the current workload of Committee B and the shared desire to pass this bill, I intend to amend my motion to call on the government to ensure that further consultation is carried out in respect of the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill 2024.

**The SPEAKER** - If you wish you can move that now.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - No, I do not wish to move it now. I will move it at the end of my contribution.

It is no secret that Australians love their pets. Some 68.7 per cent of Australian households contain at least one pet: 47.8 per cent of households have a dog, 33.3 per cent have a cat and the remainder have either fish, birds, reptiles or small mammals such as mice. I have a dog and I am an animal lover, but I am also in the property business and as such, before I continue, I do own and let a property in Tasmania. My interest has been properly disclosed on my parliamentary disclosure.

I reinforce that today my contribution to this motion is motivated to achieve the best-balanced public policy outcome for the communities so that we maximise properties available for rent. I emphasise is that every roof is precious.

Realistically, the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill 2024 will most likely pass, but I believe I would be doing a disservice to the constituents and stakeholders who have reached out to me with their concerns about the limited consultation or lack of consultation by not referring the bill for further consideration. I would be doing a disservice due to the limited protection or no protection in place for those who are being mandated by the government to allow pets in their hard-earned investments.

It is crucial to make sure that this amendment is well and truly thought out, detailed and has had the appropriate checks completed. Without proper consultation with the industry, stakeholders and the constituents that this mandatory bill will impact, how can Tasmanian property investors be assured that the cost to cover damages and repairs will not impact their ability to own and operate the said properties?

The main concern raised by constituents is twofold. Firstly, the government mandating that pets be allowed in rental properties and secondly, the cost for repairs to their properties when damage occurs. At the very least, damage affects constituents' insurance premiums. However, many insurers do not provide cover for damage incurred by pets. Costs are required to be covered by owners or recouped through a civil claim, another lengthy and costly process.

Mandating this amendment bill without proper consultation is both unfair to stakeholders and risky, given it could result in negative impacts on the already diminishing housing economy and market.

Tasmania should be learning from other states that have introduced similar laws and consider any missing details or mistakes in their own rules to secure Tasmanian laws for the better, both for the renter and the property owner. When similar laws were introduced in the Australian Capital Territory, ACT Revenue found that there was an approximate 5000 reduction in properties between October 2020 and May 2021, which was partially attributed to landlords selling property due to the introduction of pet laws.

From speaking with property owners and property managers within the industry, it is clear many property owners are prepared to sell their rental properties if these laws become effective without protection for them.

In a state that already has issues with housing, losses of these properties will add to the already growing homelessness epidemic. Launceston alone has as many as 300 people sleeping rough, so every roof we are able to keep in the rental housing system is precious.

The desire of property owners to keep pets out of their rentals is also reflected in the current available rental properties. A search of all available properties on realestate.com.au in Tasmania reveals that 15.6 per cent of advertised rental properties are classified as pets considered. This already shows that 84 per cent of property owners in Tasmania do not want pets in their properties.

It is important to note that the constituents who have reached out do not hate or dislike animals. They are concerned that this amendment bill is being rushed through as soon as possible to maintain the government's election promise. When I recently held a constituent forum meeting on this issue, many had already opened their rental properties to pets and have had negative experiences.

They were also concerned that the new amendment bill is not specific enough regarding what types of pets are allowed. How many pets are allowed? Are there any restrictions concerning these animals to try and minimise the damage to the properties that are being rented? When I was a little girl, my favourite movie was *Babe* and I wanted a little pig more than anything. Under the current definition of a pet, there is no reason why I should not be able to have a pet pig in someone else's property, or some chickens or a horse.

Research from the University of Western Sydney indicates that 11 per cent of pet-owning tenants did not tell their landlords or body corporate about their pets. This can be attributed to the limited amount of pet-friendly properties on the market currently, to avoid paying for damage costs that occur and to possibly avoid having to surrender their animals for the sake of a home. Unforeseen damages and costs incurred from undisclosed pets is a main reason property owners face increasingly higher insurance premiums. To mitigate these rising costs, changes to the current amendment bill that would include a pet bond that must be paid at the start of the rental term has been discussed.

The website realestate.com.au explains that almost 30 per cent of households with a mortgage own a secondary property or investment property, suggesting that a large proportion of landlords rely on these properties as supplemental income. The rising cost of

living is already putting pressure on property owners to stay on top. Adding rising interest rates, doubled land tax, the cost of damage and increasing the vacancy rate due to repairs is a significant financial burden.

In addition to the costs themselves, other states that have introduced similar laws have reported an increase of time for claim hearings to recoup costs. On average in the Australian Capital Territory, ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal waiting times for claim hearings increased from nine days to nine weeks shortly after pet laws were introduced, with the times peaking at 12 weeks. Anecdotally, this correlates with more substantial damage claims due to pets.

In terms of cost for repairs, according to the Australian Capital Territory, the average cost of remediation comes in at about \$6500. This is dependent on how extensive the damage is to the property, the types of repairs required and how long the property is out of action to have these repairs completed. This loss of income is significant to the landlord who is still having to cover the mortgage.

According to the [justice.tas.gov.au](https://justice.tas.gov.au) website, as of 31 March there are 47,413 rental bonds lodged with the Residential Deposit Authority. In Tasmania, there are already more than 2000 bond disputes each year, suggesting congestion will come with the addition of claims for pet damage, as experienced in the Australian Capital Territory.

A loss of income for these extended periods ultimately forces property owners to seek cover from insurance if they are able to do so. Insurance companies including Allianz, AAMI, Suncorp and Budget Direct do not cover damage caused by pets as a standard insurance option, and, as a result, higher premiums to include damage caused by pets must be paid. Insurers including QBE, EBM, Landlord Select and CGU include a maximum \$3250 claimable for pet-related damage. This does not cover the average \$6500 cost of repairs.

Damage caused by pets includes and is not limited to damage to furniture, with tearing and scratching often caused by cats; damage to walls, for example, skirting board damage due to pet urine; and damage to yards from dogs digging. When speaking to Tasmanian cleaning companies, they advise that properties require a deep clean if the carpet is damaged due to pets, for example with hair, fur, urine, faeces, vomit and other bodily secretions. This level of forensic, medical-grade clean does not include the cost of replacing carpet underlay.

An average size property with three bedrooms can often cost over \$400 to restore carpets to a state suitable for future rental. The cleaning companies that were contacted also explained that any attempts from these tenants to restore the carpets themselves often makes any issues worse. In these situations, the companies will not attempt to clean or restore that area as the tenants have effectively set and sealed any stains or damage due to the use of inappropriate products and cleaning methods.

Underlays are also unable to be repaired and must be replaced if damaged. The cost of underlay replacement for an average size three-bedroom house in Tasmania is approximately \$1500, based on retail costs on 26 July 2024. This means that the total carpet repair, if required, caused by pets for an average size three-bedroom home can cost upwards of \$1900.

To reiterate an earlier point, damage caused by pets usually is not included as a standard landlord insurance on their policies. If the amendment bill is to remain the same with no



protection in place for property owners, insurance costs will continually rise. A forum that I held for constituents on this matter revealed one of their main concerns is that their right to choose who rents their property is being taken away without any protection for potential problems that may arise.

One of two solutions to this - an idea supported by many constituents - would be to change their properties from long-term rental to short-term accommodation in order to maintain this control. The other common solution would be to simply sell. Both solutions are the result of strict legislation that proposes to mandate pets in their rentals and take away any protection when damage occurs. Both options, if used in the numbers suggested by REIT, would result in a housing crisis even more dire than our current situation and many properties becoming unavailable as rentals.

To quote stakeholders I have spoken to on these issues, constituent A said:

If there is no change to the proposed legislation, then as investors we will consider either the move to selling our current investment properties or converting them from long-term to short-term accommodation.

Constituent B shares this view:

With the uncertainty this legislation causes in its current state, there's pretty much no chance I can afford to charge what I do now. Going forward, if it passes as is, a lot of landlords are saying they will switch to short-term accommodation such as Airbnb, which is already taking a huge bite out of rental home availability, according to statistics. I do not want to be one of those people.

Constituent C has been forced to consider other options:

My wife and I are already researching costing and considering our next move with our rental property in Launceston should this legislation be passed.

The ABC published an article on 16 July in which we heard the concerns of Terry, who helps his father manage two modest rental properties that finance his father's retirement. Terry stated:

This isn't a rich landlord; this is someone who is renting out a place to survive.

Terry then went on to say, referring to the proposed laws:

And now it's all at risk.

Without having to continue quoting many constituents and stakeholder concerns I have received, I can say with confidence that the main shared sentiment is in fact the shifting of rentals to accommodation and the total abandonment of investment, which is a huge loss to the rental properties during a housing crisis. Remember, every roof is precious.

By making this a mandate rather than a choice, these rules will significantly impact the housing market. That much is obvious but has the government thought it through enough to

know how much this will also affect their own public housing or affordable housing properties? Who will be covering the incurred damage and repair costs to those properties? The taxpayer? If so, how are Tasmanians expected to fully commit to supporting this mandated bill?

Today's speech is not against having pets in rentals, but instead allowing renters the right to keep a roof over their heads while homeowners are not burdened with the cost of lifestyle choices that are mandated without balance.

To summarise, this amended bill fails to specify the required process for renters to advise either the property owner and/or manager about the type of pets and how many pets, and what may constitute a valid reason to deny which types of pets are allowed and which ones are not.

This mandated bill also fails to protect those being mandated to allow renters to have pets in their properties to receive remuneration to cover the costs for damages.

**Dr BROAD** - Point of order. I am a little bit confused here. This whole speech is pre-empting an order of the day rather than debating the motion at hand. I seek your guidance. The entire debate has been about the merits of the bill.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The honourable member was not referring to specific clauses in the bill.

**Dr BROAD** - It is in order?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - It is wider-ranging and a bit vague, but I will seek advice.

Because it is not referring to specific clauses and going into the actual details of the bill itself, it is allowed.

**Mrs PENTLAND** - This amendment bill also fails to protect those being mandated to allow renters to have pets in their properties to receive remuneration to cover the costs for damages caused by pets living there, and reduce the risk of higher premiums for insurance companies.

It is for these reasons today, and based upon the conversations I have had with constituents and stakeholders in my electorate, that I move the motion to refer the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill 2024 as it presently stands for further general consultation to ensure maximum properties remain available as rentals. Every roof is precious.

I will now move my amendment to my motion.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Have you provided copies to members of the House?

**Mrs PENTLAND** - I have.

I move -

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (4) and inserting instead:

- (4) Calls on the Government to ensure that further consultation is carried out in respect of the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill 2024, prior to the bill coming on for debate in the House, to ensure that all relevant stakeholders and interested parties have the opportunity to inform the proposed reforms and forthcoming debate.

I am moving this amendment because, like I said earlier in my contribution, I am aware that Committee B is undertaking a lot of work at the moment, and I am aware that there is a shared desire to pass this bill in a fast fashion.

[6.55 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I am aware that others in the Chamber want to speak, so I will be concise. We support the motion and we support the amendment. It is prudent and sensible and I understand those committees are jammed.

As the minister responsible for the bill, I am open to supporting consultation. Topics like this are of such importance to people for many reasons, both from pet owners, tenants, landlords, everybody, but to allow further dialogue is sensible and I thank you for bringing on this motion. I was pleased to hear, I took a few notes as you were speaking of your constituent meetings, which are great, and that you have heard people want more consultation. That is helpful to know. Understanding different perspectives is something we try to do in this House as well. On balance, that leads me to say we support the motion.

I will disclose that I let a property. We have for a long time, as a family, been fortunate to have had great tenants over that time, mostly students. They have been good and we have a personal policy of allowing pets. We have done okay, we have wooden floors, it does help.

You spoke a little bit about National Homelessness Week and what we need to do for Tasmanian renters. As I am noting your amendment to move to the motion, we would like to reiterate the stakeholder consultation years as we see it as fundamental to the process of this parliament. Not everybody will want to participate in consultation, but it is critical that everybody has the opportunity. When I hear people want more consultation, I am open to doing that. That is an important thing to do. We heard in the discussion before this one about consultation as well. I am in meetings with a broad range of stakeholders about the *Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill*. There are more meetings coming up and listening is happening.

We try to be collaborative and bring together a position that everybody can support, which is where we would like to be. I do also want to, at a very personal level, acknowledge those in our community who are doing it tough and face uncertainty on where they might be sleeping tonight. These matters are incredibly important and they touch all our hearts. It is also important and the government recognises that. I recognise personally how important it is for people to have their pets with treasured family members and we understand that many tenants rely on the comfort and companionship of their animals, particularly for mental health and well-being. During the state election, we announced that we would change the law to allow renters to keep a pet as a right. I am a dog lover. I have a new puppy in the house, Penny, which I am very excited about and she is a gorgeous girl but I say that by way of empathy for those who do have pets and love their animals.

We do understand that, but there is pressure on facing renters. When we introduced our amendments, we committed to doing that within the first 100 days and we have done that. We try to deliver our promises. Under the proposed changes, landlords would only be able to refuse a pet if they have permission from TASCAT, and the changes also mean landlords would not be permitted to unreasonably reject applications from prospective tenants on the basis that they will be accompanied by pet. The only reasonable grounds for refusal would be pets causing a nuisance, damaging the property or endangering the safety of neighbours as determined by TASCAT.

The effect of that is placing the tenant in the same position as an owner-occupier who must also comply with relevant council by-laws, strata by-laws and acts such as the *Dog Control Act*. I was interested in the commentary you were able to give us regarding insurance and costs and associated issues. Happy to take that on board. We know that not everything we do is supported by everybody, but unanimously, no matter what the case, the topic, we want to do our best to make sure that we deliver on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, and this bill is one of those elements.

I am the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs, also the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, and I understand that housing is vital, particularly, for individuals fleeing family violence as it offers the stability necessary for their recovery and the process of rebuilding their lives. It is ethically and morally the right thing to do to help with that. Secure long-term rental accommodation allows survivors to focus on healing and personal growth. Stable housing also provides a reliable foundation from which survivors can seek employment, continue their education and access essential support services. Being able to take a treasured pet when fleeing family violence is very important and the bill makes that easier. That is a conversation we could have as well.

The Chamber should note that the bill in question also makes amendments to facilitate tenants to make certain safety modifications. This is a bit of a passion project of mine, as a mother, when I had young children - they are older now - to make sure that toppling furniture can be managed. We do not want little ones being crushed, maimed or killed because of falling furniture. That work was undertaken prior to the election and I am looking forward to seeing that delivered for families by this parliament.

We have a critical topic of homelessness before us. We know it does not discriminate, that it can affect anybody. Everybody deserves to have a roof over their head and access to safe and secure accommodation. We have delivered, from October 2020 to 2024, a total of 3620 social and affordable homes towards our goal of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032, a key part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. We are trying to tackle the issue of homelessness in the housing space; it is not just about shelters and services. Having a housing system that works for everyone is the best way we can move forward. I would love to work with you on that to make sure we can find consensus.

Our government's Housing Connect is a single point of entry for that. It has been a good service. Many Tasmanians now have better access to housing assistance and support through Housing Connect. Tasmanians in need can receive a consistent and personalised approach to housing assistance, from their initial assessment to receiving support that is tailored to their life stage. Housing Connect partners now offer personalised support that is tailored to people's specific circumstances and life stages. We want to make sure that we have a support service that better meets people's needs and provides support specifically for young people, single

adults, families with or without children and pets, and older people, connecting them to appropriate housing service and resources. We know everyone deserves a roof over their heads.

We have launched our housing strategy. We are delivering new builds. Units of supported and homelessness accommodation are a key priority of that strategy. There will always be more to do in the homelessness and housing space but we are making a significant difference and, we hope, a good difference to the lives of many Tasmanians. We recognise that homelessness is a significant and growing issue, sadly, and we are committed to tackling it.

Summing up, we are going to support the motion. We support the amendment. I think that is prudent and sensible. I am happy to work with you, with anybody in this Chamber across the aisle who will work for the best interests of Tasmania. Thank you very much for the motion. I appreciate your interest in our proposed amendments and look forward to many more good discussions.

[7.04 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, as you can probably gather from my seeking of clarification, I am a bit confused about this motion, especially with the amendment that is proposed. What I have heard tonight basically pre-empts a debate in terms of the content of what we will be doing if and when this bill comes on for debate in this place. The member for Bass obviously has some issues with the bill as it stands and is seeking to have those concerns aired, but also to get some more consultation on this bill. The reason why I am confused is because original motion did something. It was a call for the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill to be referred to the Government Administration Committee B to allow for further public stakeholder consultation and critical assessment of the impacts of the proposed amendments on the availability and housing supply for long-term rentals in Tasmania.

This gives the people who feel like they have not had the opportunity to make comment, or feel like their concerns have not been listened to, an opportunity to present evidence to a committee, and for the committee to make judgments on that evidence and make a report. The report will say, 'Here are the issues, here are the concerns', and it gives everything a decent airing.

We have all received a flurry of emails from both sides of the debate - people who want to see pets in rentals and landlords who would rather there be no pets in rentals. Labor has a long-standing policy of supporting pets in rentals. Landlords have raised a number of issues and Mrs Pentland went through a bunch of those.

The amended motion calls on the government to ensure that further consultation is carried out. However, it does not put any detail about how that consultation should happen. If the minister says to me in the corridor, 'What do you think about the bill?', that is further consultation.

**Mrs Pentland** - No, it is not. We have a process.

**Dr BROAD** - There is no detail here like, 'The consultation shall be open to the public for a period of time', or something along those lines. There is a heap of different ways this could be structured so that the government has to go out and consult.

We have heard from parties like the Real Estate Institute of Tasmania that they do not feel they have been properly consulted. They put ideas forward but the government appears to have completely ignored the Real Estate Institute's concerns. This motion could have been constructed to describe who the government should consult with, whether there is a period of public comment or something like that. Basically, all it says now is: 'Okay, government, ensure that there is further consultation'.

This is an issue that opens up the *Residential Tenancy Act* itself for discussion. Stakeholders in the housing and homelessness space want to see greater view of the *Residential Tenancy Act*. Going to a committee could open up those discussions about other changes to the *Residential Tenancy Act*. It would be up to the committee to decide on the terms of reference and how it runs, how much time they should allocate, and so on. Basically, all this does is call on the government to ensure that further consultation is carried out, but that could be two days, one day, a notice in the paper. It could be anything and it would tick that box.

The amendment does not go far enough and does not do anything, whereas the original, unamended motion did. It called on the government to send it to a committee. The committee process is one we established in this place to deal with situations like this. There is debate on both sides of this bill, it is contentious. Some say it does not go far enough, or that the *Residential Tenancy Act* should be opened up for further discussion, and there are landlords who do not want to see pets in rentals at all. We have certainly heard from them. There has been a very active campaign. We have all received hundreds of emails from landlords.

For my personal perspective, I was just doing a count in my head. I lived down in Hobart for about nine years and I lived in eight or nine rentals while I was here. Moving back to the coast, I probably lived in another three. I reckon I have lived in about a dozen rental properties over my adult life. It was a bit easier as a child coming from the farm and always having the farm as home and never moving, but when I was a student and when I graduated from university and then did my doctorate, I lived in a number of rental properties. When I moved back to the coast, before my wife and I built a house, we lived in rental properties. All through that, I had flatmates who had pets, I lived in rentals where pets were not allowed, I lived in rentals where my now wife and I had our own pets.

There is a wide range of landlords and a wide range of tenants. I have no rental properties myself so I am not coming at this as a landlord, but I can see that there are issues. It would be good for the issues that have been raised with me to have an airing. The best way to do that in this place, rather than a short sharp debate when a bill comes before the House and we debate it for a number of hours, is to give the parliament the time required to receive and listen to evidence, make a judgment and write a report. If there are people on the committee who do not agree with the tone of the report, they can put in their own dissenting report. That is the way the committee process works.

The way this is drafted at the moment it could almost let the government off. We should keep the bill as it was, so I do not think we will be supporting the amendment. We would rather see it go to a committee to get a proper airing because this is a contentious issue and a number of people feel they have not been heard. The best way for them to get the opportunity to be heard is to go through that committee process and give evidence.

There are arguments on both sides. The way that the bill is currently constructed, you have two dogs and four cats as a right, because that is what the councils allow, and an unlimited

number of other animals. Some landlords have questioned the appropriateness of any domesticated animal being in a rental property. I have had a look at what other jurisdictions do and there is a range of different options. The bill, as tabled, takes pieces out of what different states are doing. Having the committee gives the opportunity to look at that same comparison across jurisdictions and give it a thorough airing to come up with what could be better legislation.

This is a get-out-of-jail free card because the government could do whatever they want as long as it is further consultation. It is not defined, it is not specified, there is no action the government has to take. They just have to consult further. That could be getting on the phone tonight, calling the Tenants' Union of Tasmania and the Real Estate Institute of Tasmania as further consultation: job done.

**Ms Ogilvie** - No, we do proper consultation. We know what we are doing, we know how to consult.

**Dr BROAD** - This amended bill does not ensure proper further consideration and consultation, whereas the original unamended motion did. In my view, the original motion was better and the amended motion does not do enough. The member for Bass has listed a series of concerns about the bill which will no doubt get another airing when the bill comes before us for debate. However, if we want people to get their views on the record, a better opportunity would be to put it through a committee rather than just trusting the government to do further consultation.

[7.14 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this on. It is an important issue to the Greens. We have been championing some of these reforms for many years. The motion opens with the fact that it is National Homelessness Week. It is clear from the theme of National Homelessness Week, and as we heard from St Vincent de Paul yesterday at the Breakfast on the Domain, that it is time for advocacy to end - we need action now to help deal with the housing crisis. From our perspective, that looks broader than the bill before us. We will continue to prosecute the need for rent control measures, an end to no-cause evictions, minimum standards in rentals and reining in short-stay accommodation.

Premier Rockliff went to National Cabinet and signed on to A Better Deal For Renters, which included a repeal of no-cause evictions. We are going to keep pushing for that. We fundamentally believe we need action now. We also believe that these issues have been debated to death. We do have disagreement in the community, but that is normal with bills. It is our job as members to make a determination. It is their job as advocates and our job as members to listen to that advocacy, consider it and, ultimately, decide.

This bill has already been out for significant consultation. A whole range of different stakeholders were engaged in consultation and now it has been tabled. From the Greens' perspective, it is time to get this done and to finally afford renters the rights to have pets in their home and to finally allow for minor modifications. We have flagged and have already distributed a range of amendments to the bill when we get to it.

I note the correspondence from a range of different community stakeholders: the Community Legal Centres Tasmania, Council of the Ageing Tasmania, Shelter Tasmania, Disability Voices Tasmania, TasCOSS, Anglicare Tasmania, YNOT, the Tasmanian

University Student Association, the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, and the Migrant Resource Centre, who have collectively written to us on 5 August regarding the proposed amendments to the *Residential Tenancy Act* and they say:

We welcome the tabling of the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill and its recognition that renters should not have to choose between a place to live and the pet they love. We also support renters being able to make minor modifications to fix furniture to the walls. This reform will reduce the risk of harm, particularly to young children.

I acknowledge we have been getting a whole raft of different emails from the Real Estate Institute of Tasmania on behalf of, presumably, property owners. There is no way to verify whether every email we get is from a property owner, but I acknowledge that there have been a number of them. I acknowledge there is contention on this issue, but that is our job as legislators. Our job is to sift through the advocacy, understand the arguments, try to get them clear in our heads and ultimately decide.

As far as the Greens are concerned, we have a bill that has been consulted on. It is contentious but we will debate it and ultimately the parliament will decide. From our perspective, we do not support the amendment because it is ill-defined, as the member for Braddon said. We do not know what that looks like. We do not know how long that will last and so we do not support the amendment, but I do note that we also do not support the original motion.

We do not feel like there is need for additional inquiry and scrutiny into these issues. We do have our amendments. We do not need a committee process to inform us as to what amendments to move. We will distribute them, we will debate them, and they will live or die upon the numbers. Certainly, as is the theme of National Homelessness Week, it is time for action now. We have a bill before us. We think it is well drafted. We think it can be improved. We will seek to do that and we should get on with it. We could do it as soon as tomorrow.

I acknowledge the Jacqui Lambie Network's advocacy in this space and their concerns in this space, but I do recognise your commitment in the election campaign context to stand up for renters and be a strong voice for renters in this place. When this bill is in this House, I do urge you to support it. I believe we do not need more inquiry, whether that be through consultation or formal committee process.

It is time to get the job done to increase the rights of renters, to increase safety for renters, and to start to crack the seal, crack into the reforms that are needed in the residential tenancy space because they are certainly not limited to what is in this bill. We need to go further, but this is a very good start. We are ready to get on and support it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is -

That the amendment be agreed to.



**The House divided -**

**AYES 18**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis (Teller)  
Mrs Beswick  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Garland  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Pentland  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Mr Wood

**NOES 15**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Burnet  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms Rosol  
Ms White  
Mr Willie (Teller)  
Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is -

That the motion as amended be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 26**

Mr Abetz  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Behrakis  
Mrs Beswick  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs (Teller)  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne

**NOES 7**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Burnet  
Mr Garland  
Ms Johnston (Teller)  
Ms Rosol  
Dr Woodruff

Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Pentland  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Street  
Ms White  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter  
Mr Wood

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

### **WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME**

**Mr FAIRS** (Bass) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 4(d), I indicate that government private members' business is waived for this day's sitting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House does now adjourn.

### **National Stroke Week**

[7.33 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Deputy Speaker, I will share a few remarks about National Stroke Week. This is a very important reminder for Tasmanians, with our state unfortunately having one of the highest incidences of stroke per capita in Australia. I am sure people in this place, as well as many in the community like me, have family members who have been affected or impacted by stroke. My late mother was one of those, and a number of my grandparents as well, so I know it is a special week for many Tasmanians.

A stroke can affect anyone at any age. In 2020, 24 per cent of first-time stroke sufferers were aged 55 years and under. National Stroke Week 2024 is supported by the Stroke Foundation and aims to encourage the community to recognise the signs of stroke so they can save a life. I commend, congratulate and thank the Stroke Foundation for their advocacy and promotion.

I attended a particular conference many months ago now in Campbell Town promoting the merits of special education and awareness with respect to a stroke. We remember FAST and ask three simple questions:

- Face - Check their face. Has their mouth drooped?
- Arms - Can they lift both arms?
- Speech - Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?

- Time - Time is critical.

If you see any of these signs call 000 straight away. FAST. Remember, a stroke is always a medical emergency, being vigilant and acting fast could save a life. Our government is investing to reduce the impact of strokes with better treatment, support and recovery. The Victorian Stroke telemedicine service, which was rolled out into the Mersey Community Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital in October last year, has already allowed more than 75 patients to get faster, more accurate stroke assessment and treatment, potentially saving lives. The Victorian Stroke Treatment Service allows instant virtual consultations with experts from around the country, including specialised neurologists, saving vital time for the patient, reducing the impact of the stroke and improving their recovery. This team in Tasmania is working with the team Victoria, and I am very grateful for the support that they provide us in Tasmania through that service.

When you are having a stroke, almost 2 million brain cells die every minute, so every second counts. That is the advice I have. I am not a doctor, but I am basing this contribution on advice and I appreciate the support for delivering that advice.

We are also delivering a new neurology and stroke ward as part of our \$187 million upgrade to the Royal Hobart Hospital and that is a very much good news. It is part of our commitment at the state election, the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, \$187 million upgrade to the Royal Hobart Hospital in the years to come. The new neurology and stroke ward, will expand and improve the service already delivered at the stroke unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital, which provides Tasmanians with time-critical medical care, particularly for the treatment of acute strokes. This statewide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week service has a dedicated full-time team of skilled specialists providing critical and lifesaving treatment to patients.

Importantly, for many people who have had a stroke, it can be daunting to leave the safety and familiarity of the hospital to return home, particularly if they experience cognitive disabilities during their recovery. In an Australian first, the Royal Hobart Hospital Stroke Unit, Acute Rehabilitation Unit clinicians and the Digital Health Transformation Program are delivering the Going Home Plan, which provides tailored support and care to match individual patients' needs and circumstances as they transition to community care after leaving hospital. Therapists assess a patient's house, identifying any areas that can be modified to help the individual move around their home safely and comfortably. For example, an occupational therapist might prescribe special door hinges, called swing clear hinges, to allow room for a walker or wheelchair to be fitted in the bathroom, which can be installed by the patient's family, meaning the patient can return home sooner.

Supporting people who have had a stroke to return home with appropriate in-home care can be beneficial, helping patients regain the highest possible degree of independence and quality of life. Rehabilitation in the home from the hospital-based team can be beneficial in multiple ways, such as feeling safe and comfortable in the home environment and reducing emotional distress, thereby improving the rehabilitation outcomes of patients.

In conclusion, I again give a shout out to National Stroke Week. It is a very special week for many Tasmanians and an important reminder for Tasmanians that we can be aware that we can support the Stroke Foundation in their advocacy and in their work. Remember FAST: Face, Arms, Speech and Time.

**Heritage Briefings**  
**Beauty Point Tourist Park - Long-Stay Residents**

[7.39 p.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise about a couple of things this evening.

The first: yesterday, the Minister for the Arts stated that she appreciated the spirit with which the briefings had been taken up for the Historical Cultural Heritage Amendment Bill. She said:

I am always happy to offer these. I realise sometimes aligning diaries can be difficult. We have done our best with that.

That was a quote from yesterday. As a new member of parliament, I have quickly learned the value of briefings, but I was surprised and disappointed not to be offered a briefing on the amendment bill and would have taken it up if I had been offered one. We will follow up on that.

I rise this evening to speak about the ongoing mistreatment and lack of legislative protections for the long-stay residents of Beauty Point Tourist Park and indeed other long-stay residents across our state.

In Beauty Point Tourist Park, approximately 65 permanent residents aged between 55 and 94, many of whom are vulnerable and grappling with significant mental or physical health issues, find themselves in a situation that is impacting significantly on their safety and wellbeing. These home owning residents live under a constant fear of eviction without cause. New park rules implemented on 13 July were developed and enforced without consultation or agreement from residents, despite some residents having lived at the park for over 10 years. The rules are unfair and unreasonable, and they empower management to terminate without reason a resident's right to live at the park with just 28 days notice.

This arbitrary power strips residents of security in their own homes and causes stress and anxiety about potential homelessness during our winter months. The recent notice of planned evictions for three residents has sent shock waves through the community, with many others now fearful as they have nowhere else to go.

For these residents, their homes in the park are their sanctuary, a place where they have built lives and found a sense of community, and the threat of eviction disrupts their stability and causes immense psychological distress. Residents have spoken openly about how uncertainty and fear of losing their homes has led to heightened levels of anxiety, depression and even physical illness. Residents are trapped between a housing crisis and a seemingly uncaring park management. The harsh park rules continue. There are restrictions on guests and visitors, limiting the social interactions of elderly residents. We know that social isolation is a known contributor to mental health deterioration, and the inability to have family and friends freely visit can exacerbate a sense of loneliness and abandonment. Some residents require regular care and monitoring for serious health concerns which these rules prevent.

It is imperative that we take immediate and decisive action to address these issues. The current lack of legislative protections for long-stay residents in residential parks is unacceptable. The Tasmanian government must fast track legislation to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of these residents. We need robust laws that prevent arbitrary evictions, ensure fair treatment and hold park management accountable for their actions.

The Beauty Point Residents Association has set up a GoFundMe campaign to support residents but with a potential 65 vulnerable and elderly residents now at risk of homelessness, far more support is needed.

The Greens have written to the minister, Ms Ogilvie, about the plight of Beauty Point residents. In her response, the minister admitted to being aware of this issue. She advised that residents should immediately seek their own advice about issues surrounding eviction or enforcement of the park rules. We are in the middle of a housing crisis. If there are no protections for residents who can be evicted without cause from their own home in the middle of a Tasmanian winter, what advice can possibly help them? It is not good enough to merely suggest that they seek their own advice. Residents are seeking the government's assistance and they are seeking it urgently.

What is the government doing? There is a discussion paper to be released in August after this sitting but it seems there is no urgency from the government to help residents who are already impacted by these new rules. Earlier today, my fellow Bass MP, Janie Finlay, spoke of interim protective measures that the government has the power to move. Will the government do this? The Greens call on the government to do so. Other states have protective legislation in place, in some instances for close to two decades. Why is Tasmania so far behind in guaranteeing protection to residents against such unfair treatment? The government has the resources to urgently move legislation, and they need to.

This issue is not just impacting Beauty Point Park residents. We are now hearing stories of similar treatment, or fear of similar treatment, from park residents in Kelso, Ulverstone, Tomahawk, St Helens, Penguin, Devonport and Smithton. This is impacting the lives of people across the state. People are living in homes they own with no security, no certainty and no leadership or compassion from this government on this key issue.

The Greens are committed to fighting for the rights and dignity of all residents. The residents of Beauty Point Tourist Park deserve to live in peace and security without the constant fear of losing their homes. It is time for compassion, action and justice on their behalf.

### **Tassie Scallop Fiesta**

[7.45 p.m.]

**Mr FAIRS** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about a superb event that I attended last Sunday in my Bass electorate, together with the Premier, my Liberal Bass colleagues, Michael Ferguson and Simon Wood, and you were there as well, Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** - I was about to say.

**Mr FAIRS** - I left the best till last.

**The SPEAKER** - Noted. Well done. Mr Fairs rises up the list.

**Mr FAIRS** - The Tassie Scallop Fiesta was established in 2018 to celebrate fishing and the maritime heritage of Bridport in Tasmania's north-east, which is absolutely stunning. It is also to coincide with the start of the scallop season. I was worried early on with what the weather was doing because it did bucket down for quite a while, but thankfully, that cleared and the seventh Tassie Scallop Fiesta at Bridport was in full swing.

The event had it all. Some of Tasmania's finest produce was there to be had by all. Premium seafood, amazing wineries, juices, distillers were there as well. The scenic helicopter flights were also very popular from what I saw. The 2000-strong sell-out crowd, which is absolutely brilliant, were certainly enjoying what was on offer. Then you add the live entertainment, celebrity guests and the famous scallop pie competition. No, I did not get to sample any of that this time round. Disappointed, but there is always next year. The seventh Tassie Scallop Fiesta certainly had something for everyone.

The Tassie Scallop Fiesta is an iconic winter event in the state's north and we have proudly invested \$60,000 to support the event from 2022 to 2024. People travelled from all over the state to be part of this event. I am proud that the government supports it, especially in our colder months to not only boost the regional economy but also to get people out and about, which is great. It was wonderful to see and speak to those who travelled from places like Hobart to enjoy a great day out. In fact, one couple I spoke to made a weekend of it, touring around the north-east region. I am sure many others did likewise.

The program included a wine master class, a gin master class, live entertainment, as I mentioned, chef demonstrations, the scallop pie competition, which I mentioned, and a scallop splitters challenge. I do not know if you have ever tried that, Speaker, but it is not as easy as it looks. Special guest, John McFadden, who has been named the world's best seafood chef, and the west coast's, Josh 'Pezza' Perry, hosted chef demonstrations as well.

I congratulate Tony Scott and his events team for putting on another awesome job in pulling this all together. I know it is not easy putting on events, but they did it. I give a shout-out to the amazing sponsors, food and drink vendors and the awesome volunteers who rally year after year behind this event and make it a big success. I am well aware, without volunteers, nothing would happen in this state. I congratulate them all.

I certainly did sample quite a lot of scallops. I would have liked to have had a few more but there is always the Tassie Scallop Fiesta 2025.

## **Government Private Members' Time - Waiver**

### **Health - Cuts to Frontline Staff**

[7.48 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise on the adjournment a little disappointed that the government waives their government private members' time. I cannot count how many times that has happened in the six years I have been in this place where government backbenchers are put at a disadvantage from being able to raise issues that are of concern to them and their electorates when the government waives their private members' time. It is a disappointment. I was looking forward to hearing Mr Fairs' contribution.

I thought I might just share some of my views because the private members' motion that Mr Fairs was to speak about was about cuts - well, it was about frontline staff and I will talk a little bit about cuts to frontline staff, particularly in the health system.

As you know, we have been trying for weeks in this place to have the government rule out cuts to frontline staff. We have asked them to rule out cuts through Question Time, through the media. We have asked for definitions of what they consider to be a frontline staff in the health system. They have refused to answer those questions time and time again. We have asked for them to rule out cuts to nurses, midwives, pharmacists, radiology staff, dental staff, child health staff, ambulance staff, neurologists, and catering staff. They have refused to do that.

In fact, we know through leaked memos and through RTI documents that they plan to cut staff at every level of the health system. As we have heard from health unions and from health bodies like the AMA, you cannot cut anyone from the health system and successfully and safely run a hospital. You cannot cut what might be not considered a patient-facing staff member, like a pharmacist, a cleaner, or a catering staff member, without having an impact on clinical service delivery. This is a result of 10 years of budget mismanagement; 10 years of budget disaster from the Liberal Party.

What we have had from the government is disappointing, but it is not surprising. I will talk to you a little bit about what happened late last week. It was extraordinary. It was a rollercoaster for health workers and I will step you through it.

Last week, the government met with the ANMF and advised them that nursing and midwifery positions would be exempt from vacancy control cuts, something we have been trying to get out of the government for weeks in this place. The ANMF said that they received that commitment on Tuesday: that all nursing midwifery positions would be exempt. They were pleased to have received that and that common sense had prevailed. I cautiously welcomed that as well and put out a media release saying that I was cautiously welcoming that announcement, that the government had finally come to their senses and agreed at least to cut out staff cuts there. However, to everyone's surprise, the government's own department came out and directly contradicted the minister, saying these positions would not be quarantined. So, which is it?

You cannot say that they are quarantined on one day and the next day come out and say they are going to be cut. It became a war of words. When the union and health workers said that they were short-staffed at the LGH, the government said, 'No, you are not'. When the union and health workers said that they had to close beds at the LGH because of understaffing on shifts in the emergency department, the government said, 'No, the beds were not closed'. When the union and health workers said nurses are leaving at a rate of one a day, the government said, 'No, they are not and we are recruiting more'. That is no way to treat hard-working health workers. If it is a way for the government to try to gain trust in their health workforce, it is the wrong way to go about it.

Speaker, at the start of this process, I was extremely disappointed at how the government had conducted themselves. However, I have now moved beyond disappointment and I am angry. I am incredibly angry at the way this government is treating workers, as well as the unions that represent those workers. I am genuinely shocked and cannot quite believe just how dishonest the government is being. While workers and unions have tried to do all the things

that the government has asked of them, acted in good faith, sat down with them when given the opportunity, cooperated in negotiations, the government has basically now just thrown that all back in their faces and told them that they are liars.

The government has continuously shifted the goalposts more times than anyone could count, and they are swiftly losing any shred of credibility that they may once have had in the eyes of workers or unions. What has been laid bare very clearly through all this is that it is not workers or unions who are acting dishonestly, it is the government that has been acting dishonestly. It is the minister who been dishonest and should be ashamed.

### **Kunanyi/Mount Wellington - Dark Sky Tourism**

[7.53 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, before I start, earlier in debate today I read out a message that purported to be a tweet from the Leader of the Opposition, Dean Winter. At the time he contested that it was his. He came up to me in the Chamber afterwards and categorically denied that it was his. I completely accept that at face value. I withdraw that message and apologise.

I rise tonight to discuss one of the state's most treasured natural places, kunanyi/Mount Wellington. On 31 July, the Wellington Park Trust announced that an application for Wellington Park to become a dark sky park was accepted by the International Dark Sky Association and it could go on, if approved, to complement other applications for dark sky sanctuaries in the south-west and in the Tasman region.

kunanyi/Mount Wellington is one of the state's most accessible places to view our pristine southern skies. Hundreds of people flocked to the mountain on the night of 11 May to view the greatest Aurora Australis seen for over 20 years. Next week, during Beaker Street Festival, Theresa Sainty is hosting a sold-out event on kunanyi where she will share pakana stories of wurangkili liwari/night sky.

Tourism Tasmania is running an advertising campaign with an image of the Milky Way above Tasmania with the tagline, 'Lights You Will Stop For'. Dark Sky Tourism is on the rise across the country. It is clear that Tasmanians deeply value the unobstructed views of their night skies. The untapped potential is astronomical.

The Wellington Park Management Trust made the decision to prepare this application to become a Dark Sky Park on the back of consultation with the community. A number of survey respondents providing feedback on the Wellington Park Draft Values Statement identified that they deeply valued the view of the night sky from kunanyi, but felt it was inadequately protected by the 2013 Wellington Park Management Plan.

In response, the trust indicated that they would enshrine protection of kunanyi's dark skies in the next management plan and protect them into perpetuity through the declaration of a dark sky park. This is how a community-led consultation process should work. The community spoke, and the trust answered. I hope the Department of State Growth does listen to the community as they undergo their strategic review, as they said they will, because the community has spoken many times on the cable car, as has the Hobart City Council and the



Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. They have said no. It will impact on the special values of the mountain.

Perhaps the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources thinks that by rephrasing the question, by undergoing a strategic review rather than a review of the management plan, they may get a different answer to the question, but I suspect it will not.

When looking at the terms of reference for the Department of State Growth's strategic review, it is difficult to determine what this review will achieve beyond the already in-progress statutory review of the Wellington Park Management Plan that the Wellington Park Management Trust is more than halfway through completing.

The terms of reference say they will examine the Aboriginal cultural heritage and values of the mountain. By the time the trust has completed their review of the management plan, they will have engaged in a community-led consultation process with senior knowledge keepers across the Tasmanian Aboriginal community for three years.

The wider Tasmanian community will have had multiple opportunities over three years to contribute to the review of the management plan by providing comments on the park values, park zones, the Springs-specific area, the Pinnacle-specific area, the planning scheme amendments, and the final draft management plan. The minister says the community is invited to provide their feedback on the review, but he recommends waiting until after the discussion paper is released in October to provide feedback, giving the community less than six months to provide feedback into this review, which is due to be completed in mid-2025.

The terms of reference of the strategic review say that they will be looking at the fire management of Wellington Park. The Minister for Business, Industry and Resources notes that there is 'no proper fire management for Wellington Park'.

Once again, the trust is currently reviewing the Wellington Park Fire Management Strategy, supported by the Tasmania Fire Service and funded by a grant from the federal National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. It will be interesting to see what the Department of State Growth will find in less than a year: they have set out for their review beyond what the trust will find.

I will continue to go through the department's terms of reference for their strategic review with a fine-tooth comb, but I will wrap up with the final and perhaps most important issue the department will be considering in their review: planning.

The cable car has been found to be inconsistent with Tasmania's planning systems on multiple occasions. This is the eighth incarnation of a cable car up kunanyi. This government's track record on planning is clear. If a development they support does not fit the planning scheme, they simply get rid of the constraints in the planning scheme. They have done it with the Macquarie Point Stadium, they are trying to do it with the State Coastal Policy to facilitate the Robbins Island Wind Farm, and it is hard to see how the strategic review is anything other than an attempt to do it to the Wellington Park Management Plan to facilitate a cable car.

## **Fruit Trees for Brighton**

[7.58 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, this evening I will talk about a fabulous project that I attended on Saturday morning at the Bridgewater Parklands. It was an opportunity to see someone who comes to you with a vision and an idea, and help them turn that vision and idea into a reality. That is what happened with Michael Casey, a constituent from Brighton, who was backed by the Tasmanian Community Fund as one of their inspiring future leaders.

Michael came into the Bridgewater office about 18 months ago, and said:

I have been at the park with my young children, and they said they were hungry. I am from Queensland originally, and in Queensland, when you are hungry at a park, you turn around and you get a piece of fruit off a tree. We do not have fruit trees in our parks here, and I would like to plant fruit trees in our parks here.

We put him in touch with Brighton Council, Centacare Evolve, Land Care, and the Tasmanian Community Fund. Through that, funding was made available and support was provided. We planted the first eight trees. The project is Fruit Trees for Brighton. It is based on the idea that we plant peach trees, apple trees, orange trees - what else did we plant? There was a fig in park locations. A little bit of the fund goes into maintaining those fruit trees in the hope that as they mature, the community can have those fruit trees available to them. It is fantastic for people who are experiencing homelessness insofar as their availability to be able to use that fruit, but also for children and families who are attending those parks to be able to use those fruits.

There are a lot of people from the community who turned up to help. A big shout out to Landcare Tasmania - that was very well organised - Centacare Evolve Housing - extremely facilitative - and Michael Casey for having that vision, thinking, 'How am I going to get this done?' We do not see that many positive outcomes and it was wonderful to be involved in such a positive outcome. Well done Michael Casey, well done Landcare Tasmania, Brighton Council, Centacare Evolve and the Tasmanian Community Fund. Thank you.

## **National Science Week**

### **Tasmanian Science and Technology Advisory Committee - Proposal**

[8.01 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - National Science Week officially kicks off on Saturday and, as the House has undoubtedly noticed with the vibrant flags and lights outside, Beaker Street Festival is in full swing already. Beaker Street is a remarkable winter event that not only showcases the wonder of science but also promotes tourism during the off season. It promises to expand our minds while demystifying science with fun and engaging events throughout the state.

In my electorate of Lyons, events like Big Tree Biology with the extraordinary Dr Yoav Daniel Bar-Ness at Mount Field is a prime example of how we can blend science exploration with community engagement and climate awareness.

The Dark Sky Dinner in the Coal River Valley will feature a tour of the radio telescope and the Astronomical Society of Tasmania's observing sheds and equipment. There will be a variety of dark sky events throughout Beaker Street, and these celebrations of Tasmania's skies underline the importance of the commitment to making Tasmania a leading dark sky location. There could be no better champion of that cause than the spectacular Aurora which once again appeared in our skies on Sunday evening.

Dark sky initiatives have the dual benefit of preserving our internationally recognised pristine sky country and driving tourism in new and exciting directions, including to help mitigate the seasonality of the industry. I am absolutely over the moon that our shining star, the member for Clark, Mr Bayley, has already outlined and spoken about the Wellington Park process which is underway. I know it is late -

**The SPEAKER** - Is there a deal going on here?

**Mr Bayley** - We have each other's measure.

**Ms BADGER** - For the record, we do not write each other's speeches.

**The SPEAKER** - Not to reference Alice, but she is looking down right now.

**Ms BADGER** - Mr Bayley also made note of the South West Sky Country proposal to make Tasmania's first international Dark Sky Sanctuary. These are community-driven initiatives that show the potential for science to drive both tourism and environmental stewardship in our state.

However, while we are celebrating the scientific engagement in our community, I, as others have, express disappointment that our government is yet to appoint a specific minister for science and IT. It is deeply disappointing that in the midst of a climate and biodiversity crisis, our government has not prioritised the appointment of such a critical role. This oversight undermines our capacity to address climate challenges with the urgency and the expertise that they require. This is a significant missed opportunity for our state.

In light of this, and ahead of National Science Week, tomorrow I will be tabling a motion to call on the government to establish an independent Tasmanian science and technology advisory committee, or TSTC. Such a committee could comprise seven independently appointed senior leaders in science, technology and engineering, and could provide evidence-based advice to all MPs, ensuring that our decisions are grounded in the best available scientific knowledge. The importance of scientifically backed decision-making cannot be overstated. It is imperative that all members of parliament have access to independent expert advice on a range of scientific areas. This would both enhance our ability to address the climate crisis and to ensure that we are making well-informed decisions on myriad issues from renewable energy to biodiversity conservation.

This proposed TSTC would follow the model of the National Science and Technology Council. The committee would be supported by relevant departments, with members meeting quarterly and the Premier present for at least part of each meeting. Similar councils often convene ad hoc meetings as issues require it. Their charge would be to provide independent, innovative and evidence-based advice to inform decision-making on complex issues where science, technology and engineering have a major part to play.

The establishment of the TSTC is not just a bureaucratic exercise, it is a necessity for our future. The climate crisis demands that we plan for and respond to a multitude of complex and interrelated scientific factors. By ensuring that our responses are informed by the best available independent science, we can make significant strides toward mitigating climate change and protecting our environment.

Tonight, I urge the House to recognise the importance of scientifically backed decision-making and let us harness the power of science to guide our decisions, foster innovation and ensure a sustainable future for Tasmania.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **Women's Health - Menopause**

[8.06 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, last week, minister Barnett and I co-sponsored a forum at Parliament House on the topic of menopause. I thank the minister and those members and staff who attended. These included, among others, minister Ogilvie and Cecily Rosol, who both hold portfolios for women. Also attending was Deputy Lord Mayor and councillor Zelinda Sherlock, who recently introduced a motion for Hobart City Council to become a menopause and perimenopause friendly workplace.

Peta Titter, CEO of the Women's Health Education Network, presented to the forum on why we need to recognise the impacts of menopause. She also raised the issue of lost productivity in the workplace.

I will talk about the need for better understanding of menopause and perimenopause, the impacts on women and lost workforce productivity. There is ongoing stigma about the topic of menopause. This means that GPs are often under-educated on the topic. Just 21 doctors in Tasmania registered with the Menopause Society of Australia. Of those, five are in the north and just one is in the north-west.

For about 108,000 Tasmanian women in the age group affected by menopause and perimenopause, there are just seven specialists available for new patients. The pernicious idea that menopause is defined by hot flushes means misdiagnosis when unreliable blood testing of hormone levels is used. We learnt that the only way to reliably diagnose menopause is via reporting and monitoring of symptoms.

Menopause sees hormonal level changes responsible for a range of symptoms. That might include hot flushes, night sweats, weight gain, anxiety and depression - neurological and mental health impacts are often overlooked. Brain fog, cognitive issues, sleep disorders and dysregulated moods all compound the challenges and often lead to difficulties both at work and at home.

At the forum, we heard from a woman with a public service career before becoming the CEO of a health peak body in Tasmania. Despite being health literate and financially secure, she faced hurdles in seeking treatment for her menopause symptoms, and spent over \$10,000 over three years trying to treat something she was not able to fully understand nor was easily diagnosed by a number of different health professionals.

Menopause costs women across Australia an estimated \$15 billion in annual earnings and superannuation, and often means that women leave their employment earlier to manage symptoms. Almost 50 per cent of the Tasmanian workforce are women, and the careers of thousands of Australian women are affected by menopause.

If the symptoms of menopause in women in professions such as nursing were reduced, then there would be fewer women leaving their jobs early, reducing their hours and or not continuing their professional careers. Just think of the possible positive outcome for the health profession which needs to retain staff, not lose them prematurely.

Australian workforce productivity is an obvious casualty, and the Greens in federal parliament established an inquiry as to the impacts of menopause and perimenopause on women and the economy. It is due to report back later this year.

Women are suffering unnecessarily. Menopausal women have the highest rate of divorce in the country and the highest rate of suicide among women. It is Homelessness Week and homelessness among women over 50 is skyrocketing. The detrimental impacts of menopause should not be adding to the length of housing waitlists.

I am grateful to the minister, Mr Barnett, for co-sponsoring the event because until we get this on the agenda, nothing will change. There is an opportunity here for Tasmania to take the lead. If we take a preventative approach to menopause, increase education for GPs and perhaps use different care models in primary health, we can improve workforce equality and productivity, lighten the load on our stretched health system and reduce the impact of menopause for women across Tasmania.

**The House adjourned at 8.12 p.m.**

## Appendix 1

### QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Question No. 8 of 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



ASKED BY: Ms Haddad MP

ANSWERED BY: The Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP, Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs

#### ANSWER:

Due to the technical detail and enormous amount of data requested, the answers to questions 1 to 6 are included in the attached spreadsheet.

The information extracted by the Rental Deposit Authority and presented in the spreadsheet is subject to the following qualifications:

The number of days between a bond claim which is subsequently disputed, and the date the bond is eventually finalised and disbursed, is affected by the following considerations:

- statutory timeframes for disputing, determining and appealing a bond dispute;
- the time it takes the Magistrates Court to hear and decide an appeal of a bond dispute outcome; and
- the time it takes all parties to enter correct bank account information to receive a bond deposit.

Each of these factors extend the time taken between the date a bond is claimed and when that bond can be released. The figures provided do not necessarily reflect the time it has taken the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to investigate a particular dispute and decide an outcome.

- (7) On 30 September 2023 there were 3 bond claims which had been pending longer than 3 months, and 2 bond claims which had been pending more than 6 months.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Ogilvie".

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP  
**Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs**

Date:

16 JUL 2024

	North	South	West	Days Average %
May-19	NA	0	NA	
Jun-19	34	22	37	
Jul-19	36	51	35	
Aug-19	26	29	48	
Sep-19	3	37	36	
Oct-19	38	38	31	
Nov-19	48	NA	38	
Dec-19	54	51	52	
Jan-20	69	19	33	
Feb-20	44	20	NA	
Mar-20	81	33	58	
Apr-20	60	48	NA	
May-20	60	38	53	
Jun-20	34	49	59	
Jul-20	47	32	408	
Aug-20	22	38	NA	
Sep-20	39	40	21	
Oct-20	30	66	1	
Nov-20	16	14	44	
Dec-20	27	30	14	
Jan-21	30	30	57	
Feb-21	20	34	NA	
Mar-21	34	40	39	
Apr-21	53	74	67	
May-21	70	43	52	
Jun-21	73	43	26	
Jul-21	41	30	51	
Aug-21	NA	37	37	
Sep-21	35	42	64	
Oct-21	49	43	77	
Nov-21	49	60	54	
Dec-21	21	57	31	
Jan-22	44	30	63	
Feb-22	63	35	52	
Mar-22	59	39	27	
Apr-22	31	55	45	
May-22	41	60	24	
Jun-22	37	71	25	
Jul-22	61	60	62	
Aug-22	41	39	58	
Sep-22	44	46	43	
Oct-22	69	70	44	
Nov-22	62	27	60	
Dec-22	35	40	40	
Jan-23	41	23	48	
Feb-23	46	30	NA	
Mar-23	43	58	42	
Apr-23	48	45	1	
May-23	39	51	NA	
Jun-23	55	70	48	
Jul-23	63	595	23	
Aug-23	45	71	9	
Sep-23	79	90	49	
Oct-23	108	86	10	
Nov-23	56	88	104	
Dec-23	75	69	104	
Jan-24	63	88	121	
Feb-24	59	64	NA	
Mar-24	47	58	66	
Apr-24	79	95	78	
May-24	68	62	60	
Jun-24	72	45	55	

## Appendix 2



**Petition Number:**  
**Subject:**  
**Closing Date:**  
**Sponsoring Member:**  
**Principal Petitioner:**

Number of Signatories:

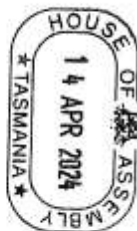
**TO: The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly**

544

Rochernea\_jallmark@bigpond.net.au

114-24  
Bring Back Social Poker  
4/3/2024  
Mr Dean Winter  
John Allmark

Parliament of Tasmania House of Assembly E-Petition



The petition of the de-signed citizens of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House that poker in Tasmanian pubs and clubs was suddenly deemed unlawful by the Liquor and Gaming Commission, leaving businesses, employees and social players unable to participate in the game they love. This format of poker creates important social networks, bringing people together in a safe and fun environment. There is no evidence of any harm being done to participants from the game of social poker in Tasmania.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the House to take all necessary steps to ensure that social poker can be conducted as a business and that players may pay an entry fee to play social poker.



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

PETITION NUMBER: 114-24

ASKED BY: Hon Dean Winter MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Nic Street MP

The petition of the undersigned residents of Tasmania draws attention to the House:

- that poker in Tasmanian pubs and clubs was suddenly deemed unlawful by the Liquor and Gaming Commission, leaving businesses, employees and social players unable to participate in the game they love. This format of poker creates important social networks, bringing people together in a safe and fun environment. There is no evidence of any harm being done to participants from the game of social poker in Tasmania.

Your petitioners therefore request that:

- the house to take all necessary steps to ensure that social poker can be conducted as a business and that players may pay an entry fee to play social poker.

Government's position:

- The Tasmanian Liberal Government has delivered on its commitment to enable genuine social poker tournaments without wagering but with low entry fees paid by players, as we committed to do in our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.
- Ministerial Direction (No.2) 2024 was published in the Tasmanian Government Gazette on 17 July 2024.
- This directs the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission to declare that social poker is an exempt game under section 3(8A) of the *Gaming Control Act 1993*.
- The Ministerial Direction defines the parameters for what constitutes a game of genuine social poker and outlines conditions that the operators of a social poker tournament must adhere to in conducting the exempt game.
- Small-scale social poker tournaments can operate in pubs and clubs subject to these specified conditions, including that players may pay an entry fee.
- The direction includes a requirement for the operators of a social poker tournament to undertake Responsible Conduct of Gambling training.

- The Government has worked with the operators of tournament poker in Tasmania to determine limits and controls which will allow genuine social poker tournaments to operate effectively and responsibly.
- Non-tournament poker, that operates like a casino table game, remains lawful only when conducted in a casino.
- Tournament poker is a genuine social activity for many Tasmanians.
- Under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we have delivered on our commitment to ensure Tasmanians can again enjoy a game of social poker.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Hon Nic Street MP  
**Minister for Finance**