



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 27 November 2024

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 27 November 2024

The Speaker, **Ms O'Byrne**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

The SPEAKER - Before we start the rest of it, the most important thing today is the presence in the gallery of students from Zeehan Primary School, grades 3 to 6. We are really excited to have you here today, so thank you very much for joining us.

Members - Hear, hear.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Unanswered Questions on Notice

The SPEAKER - The other issue I wish to mention is that ministers might want to pay attention to the number of unanswered questions tabled on the notice paper that are now over date. I will draw ministers' attention to any that are not presented tomorrow in order to have those managed.

QUESTIONS

The SPEAKER - With that, I call on questions.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - For those who do not know, we have all been at a breakfast this morning where we were asked to work well together. I am not sure how that is going so far, but it looked like a good start.

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - In the spirit of that, I also welcome the presence in the gallery of Alderman Andrew Palmer and the two sons of the Minister for Education because it is her birthday today. It is lovely that you get to see her at some level today.

***Spirit of Tasmania* - Berthing in Scotland**

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.03 a.m.]

Can you confirm the *Spirit of Tasmania IV* will leave RMC (Rauma Marine Constructions) this weekend and transfer to the Port of Leith in Scotland? If so, an agreement must have been reached with that port by now. Will you finally reveal how much Tasmanian

taxpayers will have to fork out for our ships to be hidden away in Scotland? Do Tasmanians not deserve to know?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. When we have that information we will present it to the Tasmanian people. I will refer to our minister -

Mr Winter - Now is a good time.

Mr ROCKLIFF - What we have always said is that we will sort the *Spirits*, we will fix the GBEs, and we will back our tourism industry.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, I am finding it hard to hear the Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is clearly evident with our intervention when it comes to the two new ships and the Moloney-Gemell report that we are sorting the *Spirits* situation. It is clear via discussion paper that we are fixing the GBEs and it is evident with our over \$25 million of investment in the tourism and hospitality industry that we are backing our tourism industry. We have always said we will ensure, as we transition to the new ships, that we will have Tasmanian taxpayers' interests at the forefront of our minds. Tasmanian taxpayers deserve no less. Tasmanian taxpayers will be disappointed and let down where we find ourselves with the two ships and the required berthing infrastructure. However, we are moving forward from that.

Member - To Scotland.

Mr Willie - Answer the question.

The SPEAKER - Stop interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will always be open and transparent with the Tasmanian people, as to the expenditures that we incur when it comes to the leasing arrangements and the like, notwithstanding our confidentiality clauses. We have to be mindful of those matters. Importantly, we will be open and transparent, and get value for Tasmanian taxpayer dollar.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - The question was: how much will Tasmanian taxpayers have to fork out to berth our ships in Scotland? That is the only question I asked. I wonder if the Premier could answer it.

The SPEAKER - Premier, I will draw you to it. I understand you indicated you will update at some stage, but it is Question Time now, so I will call you to that question, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As was announced by TT-Line on 29 October, *Spirit IV* will be temporarily moved from Finland to Leith in Scotland later this month. With icepack conditions expected towards the end of November, the move is necessary to ensure the vessel's safety and preservation. TT-Line will continue to expedite potential leasing or chartering options during this time. TT-Line have secured a berth in Leith port for *Spirit IV*, and are working through a formal agreement. Overall rates and required services for the layup at Leith are still in the process of being negotiated.

Mr Winter - What? It is about to leave to go there?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Once confirmed, as I have said, I will share as much as possible with Tasmanians as I have previously committed.

Ms Finlay - Such a great negotiator. So responsible.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass. If anyone was wondering, the goodwill and good behaviour that we were entreated this morning lasted to the first question.

Spirit of Tasmania - Local Content

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF, referred to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ

[10.08 a.m.]

I hope the Premier has more of a handle on this answer. You have been promising since 2021 that your government would deliver \$100 million of local content for our new *Spirits*. Recently you have been telling Tasmanians that, 'Most of the local content has now been installed'. Given the *Spirits* have never been to Tasmania, it is difficult to believe you could have delivered on this promise. How much has been spent on local content for the new *Spirits* to support local jobs?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I remind the member of our commitment of up to \$100 million -

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - in local Tasmanian and Australian content for our new *Spirits*. Thanks to this, we are delivering for dozens of Tasmanian businesses, as I am advised, which have been awarded contracts to provide goods, services, or content for the new vessels. That is the commitment that we have from TT-Line, and that is the commitment we expect TT-Line to deliver.

The honourable minister might have some more detail with respect to the question.

The SPEAKER - You are referring the question to the leader of business and Minister for Transport?

Mr ABETZ - Honourable Speaker, as indicated previously to this House, this is an ongoing matter for the TT-Line to liaise with the shipbuilder. The second vessel is not fully completed as yet. For example, Hydrowood was able to supply celery-top pine to the manufacturer of the vessel, which was taken from Tasmania to Finland to be installed. Guess what? We have transportation mechanisms, Leader of the Opposition, that enable Tasmanian products to be shipped over to Finland to be included in the fit-out, providing dollars for the Tasmanian businesses. That has previously been pointed out to the Leader of the Opposition. I point it out to him again.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my left, you can do a supplementary question or a point of order if you wish.

Mr ABETZ - It makes very good sense that when you are building something as complex as a ship, that there will be components that will be required to be taken to the manufacturer or the shipbuilder to ensure they are fully part and parcel of the ship. We stand by that.

As to the actual amount, as was announced back in 2021, before I was here, it was up to \$100 million. I have asked TT-Line to get as good an oversight of that as possible and to inform me. That is underway. We might have something available by GBE scrutiny next week. We will see. These are all matters that are still in play at the moment because the second ship has not been completed as yet. Of course, you will say, 'This is the dollar figure, but only so much has been spent'. Guess what? There is still some time to go in completing the second vessel.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - The minister talked about the transfer of Hydrowood to Finland, for example. Have any Tasmanian tradespeople been transported to Finland to complete any work on the ships?

The SPEAKER - That is an in-line question as it arises out of the answer given by the minister, so it is in order.

Mr ABETZ - What I do know is that the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has had a lot of people sent over to Finland to check out the boat and to ensure they are fully acquainted with a vessel. In relation to tradespeople, I do not know whether specialists were required to go over, for example, to fit the celery top pine or whether others could do it.

Mr Winter - Could you come back to the House with the answer?

Mr ABETZ - In relation to the products that may or may not be used on the vessel, the important thing is that there were tradesmen in Tasmania, or workers in Tasmania, that harvested the Hydrowood, prepared it and then enabled its shipment to Finland. I would have thought as the leader of the party that champions workers, he might have been gracious enough to say, 'Isn't that a good thing?'

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass and member for Clark, I know there is a bit of edginess in the building today and I do not really understand it. However, we are not going to have this kind of behaviour. I am going to draw members to speak and ministers to answer questions, and I am going to ask you not to interject as much. That is the deal.

Sardine and Small Pelagic Fishery - Bass Strait

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER FOR BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ

[10.13 a.m.]

The architects behind the *FB Margiris*, the supertrawler that was defeated a decade ago, are back, this time with a plan to net the sardine and small pelagic fishes of Bass Strait to be made into, of all things, salmon food. These are fish that have migrated south seeking refuge in cool waters because of human-induced climate change. In what world do you think this is sustainable fisheries, looting a wild population trying to survive to gift to big salmon in a feed bay. Minister, have you learned nothing from the supertrawler debacle 10 years ago?

Mr Jaensch - You do not want fish farming either; you do not want wild harvest either.

The SPEAKER - Order. The Minister for Community Services will be joining my warning list very soon.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. What I have learnt, as a former federal fisheries minister and now as a state fisheries minister, that the best way to deal with our wild sea fisheries is to listen to the science and not the Bob Brown Foundation. What the science has taught me is that if you have the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) on board, our world-renowned institute just down there on the wharf, they will provide information to us. In the Budget, we allocate a \$250,000 for the exploration of the potential for this fishery, something that was promoted to me whilst I was in the Senate I think nearly 10 years ago.

Very careful studies have been undertaken and IMAS has now indicated that there is a substantial biomass or population of sardines which would potentially allow a harvest. We are still awaiting that information. As the science comes in, I will be making more announcements. There is the possibility of the sardine fishery. We want to explore that.

If we have a wild sea fishery, we want it to be sustainable. However, as is the wont of certain people in this place, unfortunately, when there is something new, something that might create jobs, something that might create wealth for the Tasmanian community, the answer is no. I say, let us explore. This government says let us explore. Let us see what can be done in a responsible, sustainable manner. That is what we are going to do with this potential fishery. In relation to the scaremongering of a supertrawler, I advise the member that I doubt very much - indeed, I think I could be confident enough to rule out that we would have a supertrawler situation in Bass Strait.

What we want is a good, sustainable fishery. That is what we are waiting on: for the science to get that completely locked away. If the science says yes, then we, as a government, will say yes. If the science says no, then we will say no, but we know that no matter what the science says, the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation will say no. We are driven by the science with hope and looking to the opportunity to create extra jobs, extra wealth and, might I add, a good potential fish product for the benefit of humankind.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary from the Leader.

Dr WOODRUFF - The minister referred to a sardine fishery, and I asked the question about a sardine and small pelagic fishery. Does the minister confirm that it is not possible, according to the science, to net just sardines and not net other small pelagic fish at the same time, which are fish about plate size and smaller?

The SPEAKER - I am happy for the minister to address that, but given that he has already said that he is waiting on evidence -

Mr ABETZ - In relation to most fisheries, there will nearly always be a bycatch. In relation to sustainability, what one seeks to do is to minimise the bycatch and say, rather than just trawling through the sea, what you can do is purse seine netting - if I have that terminology correct. That is, you find where the school might be and then you shoot a net around a certain amount of that population and drag it in.

Dr Woodruff - The science will show that that is not possible.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr ABETZ - Purse seine fishing has occurred all around the world, but according to the Bob Brown Foundation, it is not possible.

Dr Woodruff - Yes, and bycatch is a direct result.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr ABETZ - Can I tell you it is possible? It happens as you sit here. As real as it is that you sit here, I can tell you that purse seine fishing occurs around the world. Yet again, I indicate that the best possible practice will be undertaken to ensure the sustainability of this fishery, should it go ahead.

The SPEAKER - The minister's time has expired. I will warn the leader if she keeps interjecting.

TasNetworks - Contracting Policy

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[10.19 a.m.]

TasNetworks recently announced a major change to their contracting policy that would, in effect, give all the company's distribution, transmission and infrastructure work to a mainland company. This will have a massive impact on local, medium-sized contractors.

I acknowledge that you have intervened and sought a review of that decision. However, it has been relayed to me that TasNetworks are openly telling people that they are just going through the motions on the review, that the review is immaterial to their decision making, and that they are going to stick to their original plan no matter what. So much for respecting their shareholder.

How much more pushback are you going to accept from TasNetworks? When will you start reining in this recalcitrant organisation to ensure it is acting in the best interests of Tasmania?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in TasNetworks. Delivering safe, secure power for Tasmanians is very much at the forefront of what I am seeking to do as Minister for Energy and Renewables. As has been the focus of quite a bit of discussion in this place in recent times, we want our GBEs to act in the best interests of Tasmania with their decision-making, and certainly in the case of TasNetworks I am very focused on making that organisation think about the customer in terms of decisions that it makes.

It is also important that TasNetworks continues to deliver good value for Tasmania, because ultimately we all carry the cost of the work that TasNetworks does through our power prices. It is important that TasNetworks continues to deliver an effective and price competitive service and looks for opportunities to deliver a more streamlined and better service for Tasmanians. It is also important that they continue to work with Tasmanian contractors, and that is critical in this case now.

For a long period of time, TasNetworks has contracted out some of its tier 1 work to a panel of two, sometimes three tier 1 contractors. What they are seeking to do is look at that again. They say that that is potentially not the best way for them to do things. They are looking for more of a partner delivery model where the contractor would share some of the risk of delivering some of those very large projects. That will continue, and I have asked that we look at the probity and timeliness of that process. I have intervened to ask them to pause that procurement process while we provide an independent examination of whether that process is a good process. I will take advice on that and I will make a decision if I need to. What is really important to understand is that TasNetworks will continue to have the same amount of work that is not tier 1 work delivered by either TasNetworks staff on their own or in conjunction with Tasmanian contracting businesses - those smaller contractors who I believe you probably seek to represent. That will not change. There will continue to be the same split of works.

The tier 1 work will go out to either a single partner under the proposed model or a panel partnership under the existing model, but the rest of the work - the amount and volume of work that remains available for Tasmanian businesses, and this is another important function of TasNetworks - will remain unchanged.

In terms of what I will do, I have already stepped in and said we need to look at this process that has been raised by members of the industry.

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

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr O'BYRNE - In the minister's answer, it sounds like he is essentially supporting the decision by TasNetworks. I ask that if the review is genuine, and if the minister is aware of the comments by TasNetworks that they are going to ignore the minister, will the minister intervene? Will the minister ensure that TasNetworks are taking this process seriously?

The SPEAKER - I will allow that part of the question because it comes from the answer that the minister gave.

Mr DUIGAN - I have intervened. I have suspended the process while an independent review of whether that process is fit for purpose and as good as it can be is conducted. I expect that review to be finished by the end of the month and then we will look at it and I will take some advice.

***Spirit of Tasmania* - Berthing in Scotland**

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF, referred to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ

[10.23 a.m.]

This morning, you have admitted that there is still no agreement with the Port of Leith, despite *Spirit IV* being about to depart for that port, and you cannot say what it will cost. It appears from your earlier answer and that of the Minister for Transport that the local content promise will not be delivered either. In 2021, your government told Tasmanians that -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. I am going to ask you to repeat that part of the question because I could not hear you over the interjections on my right-hand side.

Mr WINTER - It appears from the Premier and the Minister for Transport's answer that the local content promise will not be delivered either. In 2021 your government told Tasmanians that, 'Penalty provisions are included in the contract in the event local content

provisions are not satisfied'. Can you confirm that you have waived the penalty clauses relating to local content from those contracts?

The SPEAKER - I remind minister Ellis that he is not to interject on questions.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I appreciate the question. It is an operational matter for TT-Line, but we will seek some answers to your question and provide an answer to the House.

The SPEAKER - The Premier was taking the question on notice and will deliver an answer back. Interjecting on that does not make much sense. I will note that that is on notice for today.

Mr ABETZ - Honourable Speaker?

The SPEAKER - If the Premier wishes to pass the question to you, yes.

Mr ABETZ - Very briefly, and thank you for the indulgence. I have just been advised that those clauses are still in place.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - Can the Minister for Transport indicate whether any of those penalty clauses have been activated by the government or through TT-Line?

The SPEAKER - It is on the same matter. If the Premier is happy to throw to the Minister for Transport again and he is able to add to it, that would be okay - thank you. It is difficult when the question has gone to one person and been thrown to another, but I am pretty sure I am allowed to give a supplementary to the minister who then answered it.

Mr ABETZ - Honourable Speaker, those of us who know something about penalty clauses know that you can only assert that a penalty needs or should be applied when the deal is near completion. As I indicated in the previous answer, there is still building going on and therefore a final figure will not be known until such time as the second vessel is completed. That is when you do all the additions and that is when you find out whether or not -

Ms Finlay - You do not know the cost of sending it to Scotland because you have not completed the deal yet, and the ships are on their way.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass.

Mr ABETZ - somebody is in breach of that particular part of the contractual agreement.

The SPEAKER - Minister, I will stop you because I am going to warn somebody. The member for Bass is warned. The constant interjections have to stop.

Mr ABETZ - I have concluded my answer.

Salmon - Imported Products from Chile

Mrs PENTLAND question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ

[10.27 a.m.]

I again ask about the decision by the federal government to allow the importation of salmon products from Chile. It is clear that you share my concern about what this decision could mean, both environmentally and economically, for our state, but beyond the politics, what will you do to safeguard Tasmania? Will your government take steps to keep salmon from Chile out of the state? Will you stand up to the supermarkets if they plan to stock their shelves with inferior, cheaper products?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I was just handed a very handy brief on matters to do with gaming, but I am not sure that is necessarily relevant to the very real and important question asked by the member for Bass, Mrs Pentland.

I fully agree with the member's concerns in relation to the importation of Chilean salmon. It looks as though a bit of paper is coming my way, which I will have a look at. The important thing is to protect our fellow Tasmanians' jobs and the sector. If disease comes into Tasmania, all those jobs are potentially compromised, either through disease or because of the treatment required, which will increase the cost of production, making the product much more expensive on the market and therefore subject to competition, especially from cheap, inferior product coming in from Chile.

I was seeking confirmation on somebody with a longer memory than mine; possibly Mr O'Byrne can indicate to me, but as I understand it, Mr Llewellyn, a former Labor minister, stopped the importation from another country into Tasmania to protect Tasmania's salmon sector.

The SPEAKER - Yes. New Zealand, I think it was.

Mr ABETZ - I am assuming, but I will come back to the House if that protocol or that regulation is no longer in place. People with a longer memory might be able to nod a head or so around the place, but none are forthcoming.

What I will do for you, Mrs Pentland, is check up to ascertain whether that protocol regulation is still in place and if it is not I will see what we can do and we will move faster than greased lightning to ensure that this inferior, diseased product cannot enter our state and prejudice the livelihoods of the thousands of Tasmanians who rely on this industry.

I congratulate the member for her genuine concern in this area. Literally thousands of our fellow Tasmanians rely on this industry for their livelihoods, to put food on the table, pay the house mortgage and look after their children.

The SPEAKER - I think visually, so when the minister mentioned greased lightning, I now have an image of him doing a John Travolta dance. I may need to leave the Chair for a few minutes.

Mr Abetz - I trust counselling is available for you.

The SPEAKER - We have an employee assistance program for members who require it.

State of the Environment Report - Government Response

Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for the ENVIRONMENT, Ms OGILVIE

[10.31 a.m.]

Honourable Speaker, I share your pain.

The State of the Environment report was tabled 10 weeks ago. It painted a devastating picture of decline across Tasmania that must be stopped. This week, independent auditors found that the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the report's author's work was robust and thorough. So far, there has been deathly silence from the government on a response. Minister, your predecessor was noncommittal and apathetic. As the new Environment minister, will you be the change that is needed? Will you use your new position to implement the State of the Environment report recommendations in full and push your colleague, Mr Ellis, to publish a response to this report before parliament adjourns this year?

The SPEAKER - I will call the Minister for the Environment and remind people that parliament ends tomorrow for the year, which makes today the penultimate day for Mr Casimaty.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, it is nice to get an environment question from the Greens; thank you so much. Our government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future outlines our commitment to protecting our state's much-loved environment. Our natural environment is very important and on this side we recognise there is so much to be proud of in Tasmania. We have just over 50 per cent of our land under reserves and we have one of the world's largest temperate wilderness areas, covering almost a quarter of Tasmania, more than 1.6 million hectares. We were the first Australian jurisdiction to achieve net zero emissions, which has been maintained for the last nine years. These achievements should not be dismissed. They need to be celebrated.

The State of the Environment report is an important means of documenting baseline data, trends and risks across our state. The report makes 16 recommendations across a range of areas, including managing our waterways, protecting threatened species, fire management and biosecurity and invasive species. Our government recognises that this is a significant body of work and I think that is recognised around this Chamber as well. We are committed to sustainable management of our environment whilst also continuing to pursue economic development opportunities, ensuring Tasmania remains the best place to live, work, raise a family and enjoy our beautiful state.

I have said and am on the record that we are currently reviewing the report. I have had a series of meetings with stakeholders and I am sure some of those conversations have filtered back to the Greens, happily. The report is broad ranging in scope, significant in length and highly technical in nature. It touches on many areas of government, industry and community responsibility. That is why we are taking it very seriously. It is critically important that it is properly considered. Advice is being sought and a measured and consolidated response to the report will be delivered. We have said we will do this before the end of the year, before Christmas, and we are working on that. I am very happy to be in dialogue with everybody in Tasmania who loves our environment as much as we do. We take the report seriously and you will get that response.

Dr Woodruff - So not before parliament rises?

Supplementary Question

Mr BAYLEY - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary and remind the Leader of the Greens to not interject.

Mr BAYLEY - It is welcome to hear that there will be a response before the end of the year but the question was about whether it would be done by the end of the parliamentary year, so by tomorrow. Is there anything that can be done by the end of tomorrow?

The SPEAKER - I will not allow the supplementary. It may not have been the answer you wanted but she did answer the question about when it will be delivered.

TasNetworks - August-September Severe Weather Event - Independent Review

**Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES,
Mr DUGAN**

[10.35 a.m.]

On 11 September, this parliament moved a motion calling on you to establish an independent review into the TasNetworks response to the severe weather event a few weeks earlier. Noting this review is due shortly after the parliament returns next year, can you inform this parliament whether you have received the TasNetworks review, and will you be releasing it when you do? Can you also indicate who will be conducting the independent review for the government and what the terms of reference for the review are?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question and reflect on what a difficult time that was for Tasmanians in the height of that storm. I understand a substantial amount of work is being conducted by TasNetworks as it has been looking into its response to that storm, noting that 20 per cent of the state's distribution network was damaged and some way affected through that substantial weather event. A great deal of work went into getting the network up and running and bringing people back online.

At the height of it, I think 47,000 customers in Tasmania were without power, so it is really important that we understand how we responded in that circumstance and what opportunities there are for TasNetworks and the wider emergency services to do a better job in future.

I thank the TasNetworks staff, our first responders and government, both state and federal, for the supports it has provided to people who were materially affected through that process.

I acknowledge your motion and a letter to me requesting an independent review. The government is in full-throated agreement that this is something we should do. I commit to that review being completed by the end of March 2025. The terms of reference are being finalised over the coming months. I am happy to keep you in the loop with that. As I say, TasNetworks is also at the final stages of its internal review. That is expected to be completed before the end of the year. There has been a great deal of work examining that storm event and the learnings from it. I think we will have the opportunity, via the TasNetworks internal review and the broader review instigated by yourself, to look at the opportunities for us to respond in a better way going forward.

Potholes - Quality of Resurfacing Work

Mrs BESWICK question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[10.38 a.m.]

Anyone travelling to the state's west coast, as I did recently, would experience road conditions well below par. Potholes continue to be a blight on our roads. While the Premier did his best to fill one, thousands more pose safety risks to drivers. Does it concern you that our roads often require maintenance fairly shortly after being resurfaced? Have you demanded answers over why our roads are notwithstanding conventional use? Will you assess whether the current tendering process is serving the state well? What is your message to Tasmanian drivers who feel unsafe?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question to get me off the back bleachers. It is good to be here looking at everybody. Over my short time - I am nearly five weeks old today in the ministry, I thank everybody from all areas of the Chamber for their support and encouragement for my two ministries. It has given me confidence to make sure I bury myself into the positions and do them as best I possibly can.

The pothole blitz around the state has been fairly significant. You cannot hide it and we do not want to hide it. It is there for us all to see as we move around the state. If you look at the west coast, I have travelled down that twice recently. As of 18 November, 355 holes were identified and 346 have been filled. That is an immediate reaction to the potholes.

Over the last few weeks, we have also been working closely with the department to identify, with upcoming budgets starting to be worked through, what we need to do about reseal programs or reconstruction work on various sections - whether a reseal will fix some of the

situations or we have to go further. This is a normal process, which a lot of people in this room would have been involved with through coming up through the ranks of council.

I have also been talking to explosives experts who blast the gravel in quarries, quarry operators and grader contractors who do the work on the road to find out how the grading of a road and the mixing of the top layers of the road can make a difference to potholes. I have been talking with civil contractors and anybody who has anything to do with roads to find out about not just fixing the potholes, but what we have to do over the years to come to make sure our roads are better. I do not have the perfect answer at the moment. I do not think there is a perfect answer. However, I am working through all those issues.

I do not want to pay the rate the Premier charges to fix a pothole. I would not like to take him away from Question Time here. However, we are working through that on a daily basis with the department and the contracts.

Members - Hear, hear.

The SPEAKER - Rarely do people clap answers.

Spirit of Tasmania - New CEO Work Location

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.42 a.m.]

Can you confirm your recruitment process for the new CEO of the *Spirits of Tasmania* company has provided applicants with the option of being based in Geelong? After everything that has gone wrong so far with a lack of oversight and accountability, is it not essential that the new CEO of TT-Line is based in Tasmania and not working from the mainland?

The SPEAKER - Great question.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Our expectation is that we have a CEO based in Tasmania -

Mr Winter - It is being advertised as a job in Geelong.

The SPEAKER - Order, you have asked the question. You may take a point of order if you wish.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You would be aware of our discussion paper when it comes to Tasmanians on government business or state-owned company boards, and that can be improved. Albeit we need the best people for the job, they are instructed on behalf of the Tasmanian people. We have to get the right skills mix across all our GBEs, conducive to the charter they have for the Tasmanian people. My expectation is that we would welcome a CEO of any business to be based in Tasmania. The TasPorts CEO is based in Tasmania, and others.

The recruitment process is at arm's length from me. That will be undertaken and the new person will be announced when they are ready.

Ms Dow - How are they going to be able to see the berth from Geelong?

The SPEAKER - Before I call the supplementary, deputy leader, your voice is softer but your interjections are pretty persistent.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - The Premier said in his answer that his expectation is that the CEO is based in Tasmania. Why, then, is TT-Line advertising the role to be filled by someone either in Tasmania or Geelong? Does this not outline the lack of oversight the Premier has had on this entire project for a long time?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the member for his question. Either in Tasmania - I have just put my expectation out there.

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We would welcome a CEO from Tasmania, but we want the best person for the job first and foremost. We will allow the recruitment process -

Ms Finlay - Tasmania is the best place to live.

Mr ROCKLIFF - to go through. It is a very important process.

The SPEAKER - The member for Bass, you have been warned. If I have to draw my attention to you again, you will be leaving the Chamber. The Leader of the Opposition can take a point of order if you would like to.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Naturally, as Premier, I approve and finalise the recruitment, which I look forward to.

Spirit of Tasmania - Berthing in Scotland

Mr JENNER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.45 a.m.]

Following up on my question of last week, many Tasmanians are baffled as to why we are spending tens of thousands of dollars daily on maintenance and to berth the new *Spirits* in Scotland, especially when you have a perfectly adequate port here at home and we could be using them for the Hobart to Sydney runs.

Whilst the Infrastructure minister refuted the idea that berthing here would be free due to the fact that daily maintenance needs to be carried out on these ships, surely it makes more sense to pay Tasmanian workers to maintain Tasmanian ships rather than spending taxpayers' dollars to prop up a Scottish unemployment market. If you are doing what you say, Premier - what is best for Tasmanians - then bring them home.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. The temporary berthing in Scotland for *Spirit IV* provides the best opportunity to secure a charter and access the best markets, delivering maximum benefits for Tasmanian taxpayers. I have always wanted to ensure we maximise the benefit for Tasmanian taxpayers.

I understand the emotional argument around bringing the *Spirits* to Tasmania, but it would be a huge cost to Tasmanian taxpayers to have the vessel brought to Hobart only to return overseas for a potential lease.

These are the things we are working through and that is the reason for it. I understand it.

Mr Willie - You are hiding them there.

Mr Abetz - That is just silly.

Mr Willie - You do not want them here.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark, you are also warned.

Mr ROCKLIFF - My advice is that for *Spirit IV* to sail from Finland to Tasmania and back, for example, would take approximately three months and be at least three times more expensive than the estimated cost of berthing the vessel in Europe.

As I have previously advised, work on potential leasing and chartering options are being worked through as quickly as possible, and we will inform the honourable member and Tasmanians when those arrangements are finalised.

***Spirit of Tasmania* - Oversight of New Vessels Project**

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.48 a.m.]

Your lack of oversight over the *Spirits* project has been staggering. As of this month, all but two of TT-Line's Board members will have resigned or seen their terms expire. Is the company currently operating or soon to be operating without a quorum on the board? Is the *Spirit of Tasmania* company effectively rudderless and operating without proper oversight in one of the most important moments in its history?

Mr Abetz - He wanted us to get rid of the board; we are now replacing it.

The SPEAKER - The Leader of the House can join a warning list if he would like.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I reject the premise of the question. I commend the acting Chair, Damian Bugg, and other board members - Yvonne Rundle is one of those who is doing a tremendous job in very difficult circumstances, as you would appreciate.

We are working very closely with the TT-Line board and our shareholder ministers, being the Treasurer and minister Abetz. We are having regular meetings with the TT-Line Board - or Chair, at the very least, and its acting CEO - to work through a very complex set of circumstances.

As I have said many times in this place, we find ourselves in a situation that should never have happened, but nonetheless, we are working through these very complex and difficult matters. We will get the job done, despite your incessant negativity. We will get the job done and we will do it where we are in the best interests of Tasmanian taxpayers.

We have learnt a lot, and we have learned a very hard lesson when it comes to where we find ourselves with the vessels and indeed the berth. Thinking about it keeps me awake at night, because we want what is in the best interests of Tasmania taxpayers. That is why, with the very hard lesson we have learnt, we are instigating a considerable reform process. On the table we have the idea for further discussion of a merger.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Speaker. The question is about the board members on TT-Line. I draw the Premier back to the question.

The SPEAKER - Premier, Standing Order 45, relevance, I draw you to the question. We might need a towel.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe I answered the question. I am advised that we will not lose quorum.

Members interjecting.

Mr Winter - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - Sorry, I did not hear the last part of the question because of the noise. You are advised - sorry, I cannot rule on a supplementary question if I did not hear the answer. I am sorry.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe I have answered it. I am advised, but I will check, that we will not lose quorum as per members.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I do not know yet. I will hear it.

Mr WINTER - It was a point of order before. The Premier talked about the current board members. Can the Premier explain who the current board members on TT-Line are, and whether any of their terms have been extended, or any new appointments made?

The SPEAKER - I will ask the Premier if he wishes to add to that answer. I am not sure if it is borderline a new question. I will give you the option of answering it if you wish.

Mr Rockliff - I will ask the Minister for Transport.

Mr ABETZ - Thanks for the memory test, Premier. There is Damien Bugg KC, the acting interim Chair, former chancellor of the University of Tasmania, former Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

We have Yvonne Rundle, Richard Burgess, and we have another name that currently escapes me. Having said that, they are all on the public record. There is a quorum of board members that are operating. I thought previously there were calls by certain people in this place, saying that we needed a good turnover of board members and refreshing of the board. Guess what, that is exactly the process that we as the government -

Mr Winter - Have any been reappointed?

Mr ABETZ - are currently engaged in. Whilst doing so, a quorum will be maintained.

The SPEAKER - Leader, you have the opportunity to ask another question in your entitlement.

Dial Range - Logging

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ

[10.53 a.m.]

Last week, Central Coast Council voted eight to one in support of a motion that Forestry Tasmania immediately pause logging plans in the Dial Range and establish an evidence-based formal position.

Mr Ellis - Vica Bayley supported that coupe.

The SPEAKER - Minister Ellis will allow the question without interjection.

Dr WOODRUFF - Hundreds of local residents, businesses, and recreational groups have been pushing back against ludicrous plans to log this iconic forest. The Dial Ranges have massive natural, economic, and recreational values for this region. At the same time as the community have made their views clear through a council vote, you have handed out \$15 million towards a loader at Bell Bay specifically to export woodchips. Why are you doling out public money to accelerate native forest destruction? Will you heed the overwhelming call from local residents and council, and instruct Forestry Tasmania to withdraw coupes DLO11A and DLO11C from their wood production plan?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I start by apologising to Helen Galloway, who was the other TT-Line board member. Apologies for overlooking that name.

In response to the Leader of the Greens, I indicate that in relation to any forestry operation, there has to be a forest practices plan. There has to be the consultation et cetera that is gone through in relation to these matters. As I understand it, the Dial Range has been a productive forest area for quite some time. Indeed, the Dial Range is an area of some 6000 hectares and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is responsible for only 300 hectares. What is that, about one twentieth? It is five per cent.

This is, I suppose, indicative of the approach that certain people take. The concept of balance, that we might be able to harvest a bit of our forest, keeping in mind that over 50 per cent of our land mass is locked up in World Heritage National Parks, et cetera, then having that balance for wood production.

When you talk about housing affordability, guess what you have to think about? What are the products that go into building the houses? When you close down native forestry as Victoria and Western Australia have done, what happens? The need for wood product remains. It comes into Australia from South America, with all the bunker fuel that is burned and belched out into the atmosphere because there are certain elements who want to virtue signal and place their hand on their heart and say, 'Look, we are not cutting down trees in Tasmania'. By doing that what they are saying is that they prefer the hardwood to come from South America where the forest practices are not half as good as they are in Tasmania.

You asked about DLO 11C that is listed on the Sustainable Timber Tasmania three-year wood production plan and the harvesting -

Dr Woodruff - DLO 11A, too.

Mr ABETZ - Yes, and that forest coupe is listed as well on a three-year reproduction plant. That one is a 25-hectare native forest regrowth coup. The one that the honourable Leader of the Greens just interjected to point out is a 25-hectare regrowth coupe.

The SPEAKER - The minister's time has expired.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary from the Leader of the Greens.

Dr WOODRUFF - The question I asked was about whether you would heed the call of the Central Coast Council - by no means a bunch of greenies - and the local community and instruct Sustainable Timber Tasmania to withdraw those two coupes from their wood production plan, because the council has questioned the quality of the forest practices plan, and they want evidence-based assessment.

The SPEAKER - That was the original question, so I will call the minister.

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, there were a whole host of questions that the member asked, and I accept that I did overlook that particular one in the maze of questions that were peppered at me.

In relation to the local council, of course we take those into account and of course we respect them as a government. But at the end of the day, issues of forestry are determined by Sustainable Timber Tasmania and the independent forest practices plans that have to be developed before a coupe - and might I add, this is a regrowth coupe. In other words, it has already been harvested and regrown. It is an indication of how well we do forestry in Tasmania -

Mr Bayley - How shonky your definitions are.

Mr ABETZ - that a regrowth coupe is now seen as pristine and worthy of protection.

Dr Woodruff - It just shows how bad the evidence and quality of the forest practice plan is.

Members interjecting

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens, I am going to have to warn you. You cannot keep interjecting on answers. Deputy Leader of the Greens - I can tell it is you even with the mask. You will be warned next if it continues. Ms Johnston, the member for Clark, has been incredibly patient. She has the call.

Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism - Funding

Ms JOHNSTON question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

[10.59 a.m.]

Hundreds of vulnerable Tasmanians who are in care and at risk of being treated badly have no one looking out for their welfare because your government has underfunded a vital human rights watchdog. I am talking about people in aged care or disability support services in secure mental health settings, or people in custody. The newly created Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism (NPM) needs \$2.8 million to do its job properly, but you have only given it \$300,000.

The watchdog has been legally empowered to examine the treatment of these Tasmanians, but it does not have the funding it needs to prevent abuse. It issued yet another plea for funding yesterday. Attorney-General, I know you say keeping Tasmanians safe from harm is your number-one priority. It is time to put your money where your mouth is. Will you commit to properly funding the NPM watchdog and bring it on as a supplementary appropriation bill as soon as we return to parliament in March?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question, her ongoing interest in this matter and her support for vulnerable Tasmanians, and likewise, we take it very seriously as a government. I am very pleased to acknowledge the work of the Ombudsman,

Richard Connock, who has done an incredible job over a long period of time together with his team. He has written in today's *Mercury* about his thanks to the Tasmanian government for taking a nation-leading role in protecting vulnerable Tasmanians. I am pleased and proud of this government for taking a leadership role when in 2021 we passed legislation to establish arrangements that would provide independent oversight of those places in our state like our prisons, our detention centres and our health facilities for those with mental illness.

I indicate that we take it very seriously. Preventing torture and ill treatment in Tasmania is important to us and that is why we took that nation-leading legislative initiative in 2021. I quote from the recent report, where Mr Connock writes:

In Australia, Tasmania is currently the only state jurisdiction where the legislation has provided the Ombudsman with the power to visit all places of deprivation of liberty, incorporating the broad interpretation provided by the subcommittee and aligning it in that sense with the provisions of the optional protocol.

It was noted in the *Mercury* newspaper today by Richard Connock himself, where he says:

Recently, the Tasmanian government reaffirmed its commitment to OPCAT and the Tasmanian NPM by accepting all related recommendations made by the commission of inquiry and the disability royal commission.

We take it really seriously. This is really important.

With respect to the funding question the member asked, I draw members' attention to Mr Connock's comments today, where he says:

I want to thank the Tasmanian government for its commitment to strengthen and upholding our rights by creating this new office. As a state, we have much to be proud of in relation to OPCAT. Tasmania has a unique opportunity to establish itself as a leader in Australia in relation to oversight and the prevention of abuse.

I am pleased and proud of that. We have provided funding support for the Tasmanian NPM and we are backing it in.

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Ms JOHNSTON - The Attorney-General referred to the comments of the Ombudsman in his response. I again draw his attention to the question. Will you introduce appropriate funding so that Mr Connock can do his job? Yesterday, he indicated quite strongly that he has inadequate funding. Will you bring on a supplementary appropriation bill in March next year so he can do the job that you have given him the powers to do?

Mr BARNETT - I draw the member's attention to the funding support in our Budget. Our government has invested and will continue to invest in the office of the TNPM. I note Mr Connock's comments in the inaugural report that:

... funding provided in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 budgets reflected what I requested.

In this year's 2024-25 Budget, \$300,000 of ongoing funding was made available to the NPM on top of the \$400,000 over two years to enable the Custodial Inspector to increase monitoring at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

Our government will continue to work with the TNPM to ensure we are fulfilling our commitments under OPCAT. We are committed to it, we are funding it and we will continue to provide support.

Treasurer's Reserve - 2024-25 Drawdown

Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr BARNETT

[11.04 a.m.]

How much has been drawn down from the Treasurer's Reserve this financial year?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, in terms of the Treasurer's Reserve, last year we ended up with a surplus. As to the ups and downs, there is underspending and overspending. There are quarterly reports through the year. We have the Revised Estimates Report in February and we will have more to say when the reports are due.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. It is a very simple question. If the Treasurer has no idea, he should take it on notice.

The SPEAKER - Treasurer, it was, bizarrely, a very simple question without any preamble. I will ask you to come to the question if you can, or take it on notice if you are not in a position right now.

Mr BARNETT - I am answering the question, Speaker, and I would like the opportunity to continue to do so. The *Financial Management Act* provides for the Treasurer's Reserve, which is a legislative contingency fund that enables the Treasurer to manage the budget during the year in response to emerging needs. It is a prudent measure that provides the Treasurer with a degree of flexibility in managing the budget. Government did not overspend the Treasurer's Reserve in 2023-24, which is a point I made just a few moments ago. If Labor understood the *Financial Management Act* they would know that you cannot overspend the Treasurer's Reserve and in fact there were surplus funds remaining in the Treasurer's Reserve at the end of the 2023-24 year which were retained in the Public Account.

The Treasurer's Reserve combines an amount that is appropriated in the budget and additional receipts generated in a financial year, excluding Commonwealth revenues. Under section 21 of the FMA, the amount of the Treasurer's Reserve is not fixed. It is automatically

appropriated with the additional receipts up to the legislative cap of 2.5 per cent of the total appropriation for that year.

The 2023-24 cap imposed under the *Financial Management Act* was calculated at \$189.2 million. The 2023-24 funding of \$160.9 million was approved to be applied from the Treasurer's Reserve in accordance with section 21 of the *Financial Management Act*. The supplementary funding was critical to ongoing public administration, including \$30 million for out-of-home care. Is that something you support? Let us wait and see. If Labor had bothered to provide an alternative budget rather than just 'Look at me with my dot points', which are not new, they would certainly understand more about the *Financial Management Act*.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WILLIE - I will ask the question again. How much has been drawn down from the Treasurer's Reserve this financial year?

The SPEAKER - The first was a point of order; I am following what is going on. It is a supplementary question so it is in order. It was the original question. I call the Treasurer.

Mr BARNETT - I have already answered the question twice.

Mr Winter - Shame. This guy is in charge of the finances. Honestly.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The House will come to order.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Speaker, on relevance. He has not answered the question. He should take it on notice if he has no idea.

The SPEAKER - The Treasurer has resumed his seat, so you cannot take a point of order once he has done that. The point is well made, though, and I have been quite heartened by the process of taking questions on notice to further advise the House. I encourage ministers to do that whenever they can. It is very hard to control the House when we get answers that increase the level of frustration in this room.

Climate Change Act - Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plans

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.08 a.m.]

Last week, 500 polar experts met in Hobart, concerned about melting ice sheets in Antarctica and global sea level rise. They issued an emergency statement calling for urgent action on climate change. Your government's first sectoral emissions reduction and resilience plan for the transport sector was released 10 months after its legal due date. When we saw it,

the lack of commitment for genuine initiatives makes it crystal clear that your government has no intention to take the actions we need to combat climate change. The remaining sectoral emissions reduction and resilience plans are mandated by the *Climate Change Act* and are due to be released by 30 November, this Saturday. Will you comply with your government's obligations under law to release these plans on time? You could table them in the House today. Will these plans create any actual emissions reductions, such as ending the annual emissions from native forest logging?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Yes, we will comply with the law. I note the preamble to your final question about Antarctica which is an extraordinary opportunity for Tasmania in terms of the investment we have in Hobart as the Antarctic Gateway. We were very pleased to be able to secure the \$188 million from the federal government when it comes to berth 6, but also how important Tasmania is in a geopolitical sense, when it comes to attracting research and development capability here with climate change.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. It is beyond sickening to hear the Premier start to talk about investing in a question on climate change action. Will you please -

The SPEAKER - I need a point of order that is related to the Standing Orders, and you being nauseated -

Dr WOODRUFF - I thought I said Standing Order 45, relevance - that it is beyond sickening for the Premier to be talking about investments when we are talking about action on climate change. I draw him to the question: will there be genuine action on climate change in the plan that will be tabled?

The SPEAKER - Relevance applies. I will call the Premier to that second part of the question, which was about the actual efforts within the plans, noting he answered the first one by saying he would comply with the law.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, we will comply with the law, thank you very much.

I take offence that - you are not the only ones who are concerned about climate change and the environment. You think you are the only people who care about the environment. I am sure most of us, if not all of us in this Chamber, care about the environment and the effects of climate change and what we can do to mitigate those circumstances. I reject your question.

I was going to speak of the importance of research and development, and how important the Antarctic is in a geopolitical sense in terms of that research and development about climate change, the salinity effects and how the water down there is becoming less saline because of the melting of the ice, and all these really important discussions.

We are so blessed in Tasmania to have the highest number of scientists per capita, with many of them in southern Tasmania.

That is why we support renewable energy development. That is why we cannot understand why the Greens do not support wind farms, because it is about renewable energy. You are going a bit skew-whiff here, and Tasmanians do not understand your position. We have the opportunity to invest billions of dollars, if you like, to not only maintain but increase our renewable energy capacity in Tasmania - double it, in fact, over the next 15 years.

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

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Dr WOODRUFF - The question that I asked was: will there be any actual emissions reductions, like ending the annual emissions from native forest logging, in that plan, and will you table it in parliament today? If you are going to table it by Sunday, why not do it today?

The SPEAKER - You cannot sit down and keep talking, leader. You have already been warned. We only have to get through a little bit of time for people to survive Question Time. Premier, I will draw you to that part of the question. It was the second part of the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Honourable Speaker, I believe I have answered it in saying we will comply with the law. You wanted us to table the report on the day it is due. Now it is 'today'. We will comply with the law. Once again, the Greens are shifting the goal posts.

Our climate change action plan includes practical actions that will improve information and knowledge about climate change, reduce emissions and build resilience. There is enormous opportunity here to build a very strong economy about these concerns and about renewable energy. That is why we are investing in renewable energy training in the north-west of Tasmania, where we can lead the world in research and development.

You are against wind farms and we know you are against Hydro storage. I am not sure what you have said about solar, but I am sure you are against that as well. When I travel across -

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

Treasurer's Reserve - 2024-25 Drawdown

Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr BARNETT

[11.14 a.m.]

In your inaugural speech, delivered just after your government had inherited zero net debt from Labor, you said:

There is a budget blowout, which we know to be in excess of \$1 billion over the forward Estimates: an irresponsible mortgage on our children's future ...

That number, of course, was completely fabricated. There was zero net debt.

Given your budget contains \$8.6 billion of actual debt, will you now admit you are the one who has taken out an irresponsible mortgage on our children's future? How much has been drawn down on the Treasurer's reserve this financial year?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, is this coming from Dr Doom or Mr Gloom today? We do not know, because this is from a person who has not delivered an alternative budget.

The SPEAKER - Treasurer, I have worked really hard to stop the name calling in this place. I cannot stop it in the press releases, but I will not have it in this place. I know it is a little bit witty, but no, it has to stop. You will refer to members by their name or their title.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much, Speaker. The member is relentlessly negative. Knock, knock, knock; criticise, criticise, criticise. It is time to get on the train. We are growing our economy. We have unemployment at historically low levels. It was nearly double under the Labor-Greens government. We have created 45,000 new jobs. We are getting on with the job. We are about growing our economy and working shoulder to shoulder with business to provide a future for our kids, unlike the Labor-Greens government, under which our economy lost 10,000 jobs. They went out the door backwards and we went into recession.

You are crying out for a recession on the other side. Guess what? We hit a record last year - \$40.6 billion gross state product, which is a record number. Where was the congratulations from state Labor? You were sitting on your hands criticising.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Speaker, relevance. My question was whether the Treasurer thinks he has mortgaged the future, and what has been expended from the Treasurer's reserve this financial year?

The SPEAKER - I took note of the question. It was to do with the comments before about irresponsible mortgaging and also about the Treasurer's reserve. Treasurer, I draw you to the question.

Mr BARNETT - I advise that no funding has been approved by the Treasurer's Reserve so far this year.

With respect to the shadow spokesperson, where is your alternative budget? It is time to step up and get on the train. Wages are at the highest level. We have real wages in Tasmania higher than the other jurisdictions on the mainland.

We have low unemployment; 45,000 new jobs. We are growing the economy and getting on with the job. We will not give up. We will not relent. The relentless negativity on the other side - as I said last week - what was it? I am not name calling. I am just saying you are all sook, no substance. You are the chief sookmasters for Australian politics, and it is time to step up, support and be more positive.

The SPEAKER - It was not funny in the press release the first time. Question Time has ended, but the minister would like to add to an answer.

Answer to Question - Salmon - Imported Products from Chile

[11.19 a.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - If I may, honourable Speaker, in response to the member for Bass, Mrs Pentland. I confirm there are strict rules in place that prohibit importation of uncooked salmon and based on available information, Chile does not have sufficient biosecurity approvals to get product into Tasmania.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Driver Mentoring Tasmania - Long-Term-Funding

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ

[11.18 a.m.]

I ask this question on behalf of Gary and Tanya at Driver Mentoring Tasmania, the peak body for driver mentoring training programs based in Derwent Park. The driver mentor programs through volunteer driver mentoring assist people to gain lifechanging independent transport access. They are for people on low incomes in regional communities and connected to neighbourhood houses so that so that they can get to jobs, appointments and social activities.

They also serve the growing populations of migrant workers who do not have a licence. Currently, programs have to reapply for funding every 12 months. This uncertainty makes it very difficult to maintain their staff and volunteer network. Will the government commit to longer term funding for these programs so that these communities retain access to affordable driver mentoring?

Ice Sports - Government Support

Mr BERAHAKIS question to MINISTER for SPORTS and EVENTS, Mr DUIGAN

[11.19 a.m.]

My question is on behalf of many constituents in Clark. Tasmania's ice sports community has been without somewhere to train in place since the Glenorchy Ice Rink closed in 2022. What is the government doing to help the ice sports community fill this void and support the next generation of figure skaters and ice hockey players?

Longford Grand Prix Expo - Cancelled Event Funds Recovery

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SPORT and EVENTS, Mr DUIGAN

[11.20 a.m.]

One of my constituents in Lyons is concerned about the potential loss of taxpayer money following the cancellation of the Longford Grand Prix Expo. At the time the event was cancelled, the government said it would attempt to recover the money granted to the event's organisers. Can you outline how much of the \$450,000 has been recovered?

Renal Patients in Northern Tasmania - Facilities

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mrs Petrusma

[11.20 a.m.]

My question is from a constituent in Bass, Mrs Gutteridge. She has deep and real concerns - and I understand you have had a phone call with her - about the condition for renal patients in northern Tasmania. She is particularly concerned about the impact of the facilities on their mental health as they are undergoing treatment. The proposed improvements to the Kings Meadows Health Centre, as an example, provides for 18 renal patients, but only has five windows. Mrs Gutteridge is particularly concerned about the impact on nursing staff and patients. She wants to understand whether you will meet with her and what you will do to appoint a renal dietician and a renal psychologist.

Sardine Fishery - Impact on Tasmanian Fisheries Industry

Mr FAIRS question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ

Recently, there has been some media in relation to the possibility to develop a new sardine fishery in Tasmania. Whilst on the face of it this presents a great opportunity, we need to be careful not to adversely impact other imported fish species in our waters. How will you ensure that Tasmania maximises its return for Tasmanian businesses and commercial fishers while maintaining the right balance for recreational fishers in any commercial sardine fishery?

PETITIONS

Okines Beach Tickleberry Flat - Access

[11.22 a.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour of bringing up a petition from approximately 180 residents of the Southern Beaches drawing the attention of the House to the works at the Lewisham foreshore by Parks and Wildlife that have removed access to Okines Beach Tickleberry Flat without any community consultation. The petitioners ask the House to call on the government to restore a third access to the Okines Beach Tickleberry Flat so that residents and visitors can safely access the beach.

Petition received.

Renewable Energy Zones - Community Support

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour of bringing up a petition signed by approximately 282 petitioners and an e-petition signed by approximately 721 petitioners drawing the House's attention to renewable energy zones being proposed and wind farms approved without the full consent of all communities impacted. The petitioners request the House to call on the government to immediately stop renewable energy zoning and approvals, construction of wind power projects and infrastructure, including Marinus Link,

retrospectively where necessary; and thoroughly research the negative, not just positive, effects of wind projects beyond economics, including all environmental effects, for example, on threatened species, vegetation, erosion, local weather changes, fire hazards and other disasters; all forms of pollution including BPA, other toxins, noise frequency and visual shadow flicker; loss of tourism; agricultural productivity; jobs; groundwater effects; and community health and wellbeing including loss, devaluation of homes and farms, Aboriginal cultural heritage, FIFO jobs, housing pressures, blackouts, energy grid, decommissioning costs, turbine disposal, foreign ownership and control, wealth transfer by energy certificates, closeness of companies' relationships with government representatives, greenwashing, the implications of becoming a battery rather than a food bowl and tourist destination; and ensure these findings are compared with other energy alternatives and provided in an open, honest, accessible way to all Tasmanians, along with a genuine process for voicing their decision on all major energy developments, unlike current public consultation methods.

Petition received.

TABLED PAPERS

Questions on Notice - Answers

[11.26 a.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA (Franklin - Minister for Health) - Honourable Speaker, I table the following answer to a question on notice.

No. 28 - Birth Trauma

Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mrs PETRUSMA

See appendix 1 on page 139.

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Attorney-General) – Honourable Speaker, I table the following answers to questions on notice.

No. 29 - Anti-Protest Laws

Dr WOODRUFF question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

See appendix 2 on page 142.

No. 35 - Criminal Penalties - Fines and Enforcement

Dr WOODRUFF question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

See appendix 3 on page 144.

No. 39 - Right to Information Requests

Dr WOODRUFF question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

See appendix 4 on page 146.

No. 40 - Integrity Commission - Investigations into MPs

Dr WOODRUFF question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

See appendix 5 on page 150.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Questions on Notice - Overdue Answers

[11.27 a.m.]

The SPEAKER - I could be wrong and I stand to be corrected, but on my reckoning we are overdue for the following answers to questions on notice:

- No. 5 from Ms Haddad to the Attorney-General;
- No. 10 from Ms White to the Attorney-General;
- No. 11 from Mr Garland to the Minister for Justice;
- No. 14 from Mr Garland for the Minister for Housing, Planning and Consumer Affairs;
- No. 15 from Mr Garland to the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources;
- No. 19 from Ms Rosol to the Premier;
- No. 20 from Ms Rosol to the Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation;
- No. 21 from Dr Woodruff to the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources; and
- No. 22 from Mr O'Byrne to the Minister for Education.

I am really hoping we will see these tomorrow. Otherwise the question process becomes quite flawed.

**FAMILY VIOLENCE AMENDMENT (PROTECTING PEOPLE
AND THEIR PETS) BILL 2024 (No. 38)**

Bill agreed to by Legislative Council without amendment.

MOTION

**Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health and
Perinatal Mental Health Services in Tasmania - Reporting Date**

[11.28 a.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark)(by leave) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the reporting date for the Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health and Perinatal Mental Health Services in Tasmania be extended until 19 August next.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Stadium Costs

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: stadium costs.

There are so many costs associated with this stadium and I will do my best to run through some of them in the time I have. Of course, topping the list is the actual taxpayer cost, the cost to us as Tasmanians. We know that the Premier, without consulting his Cabinet, without consulting the Treasury, without consulting the Tasmanian people, signed us up to a dud AFL deal that had us on the hook for every single dollar of cost overruns when it came to the stadium. That is taxpayers' money that is going to have to go to that.

According to the deal, \$460 million comes from the Tasmanian taxpayer, AFL pay for \$15 million and we know the federal government has contributed \$240 million, but with the prerequisite that the wharf upgrade is undertaken, which we have heard there has been additional money sought and received for, and that housing would be delivered via that money.

It is infamous now that the Treasurer of the day failed to ask for a GST exemption when it came to that \$240 million, so that is an additional cost to the Tasmanian taxpayer. This will cost us very dearly and that is on the basis that this is a \$715-million project. We know that the stadium will cost way more than that. There is not a single person in the state, apart from those on my left, who believe this stadium can be built for \$715 million, not least because the government has now dropped its assessment documents on the table, submitted them to the Tasmanian Planning Commission for assessment, and it is very clear on day one at a quick glance that the costs have already escalated. We are up to \$830 million now for this stadium

according to the documentation. That does not include significant elements of unfunded infrastructure projects - critical enabling bits of infrastructure.

The Collins Street Bridge is \$50 million to \$60 million. There is a Domain coach pick up and drop off area that they have not started working on. There is the Northern Access Road and then there is the car park. This thing is going to cost us cold hard dollars and we have not seen the end of it yet. We have not even seen full transparency on how much it is going to cost us in terms of the actual taxpayer dollar.

It will cost us more because of the opportunity cost. We could be spending that money on the essential services that Tasmanians need and the health services that Tasmanians need, so that we do not need vacancy control. We could spend it on the housing services that Tasmanians need, so we do not need to fudge the figures and see waiting lists go through the roof, or the education needs of Tasmanians, so we do not need a 4 per cent loophole, and our kids do not have to wait for a year for professional support services like speech pathology.

We have an environment that is in decline as per the State of the Environment report. We need to invest in that. We will have a UTAS situation debated in this House at some point soon. The reason the government is in such a crisis in that regard is because it is not willing to put money on the table to support UTAS and its STEM facilities.

Finally, our bus system is in crisis because we are not able to invest in it properly.

There is also the opportunity cost on the site. This site had a fully developed alternative development plan that the government itself - the now Treasurer on 20 June 2022 - said that was estimated to be worth \$1 billion and will support almost 10,000 jobs during construction alone. That was a fully developed proposal for housing and a truth and reconciliation park. There was a master plan developed. That is an opportunity cost.

There is also a significant community cost. There is division being driven by this stadium and the Premier knows it. The Premier knows it, because when he was negotiating for the team, he was telling Tasmanians that the build will not include a stadium. That is still up on the AFL website today. The bid will not include a stadium. The Premier knew all along that putting a stadium on the table would create division, and it has fundamentally undermined the future of the Devils footy team - the women's and the men's team. In the future it will cost us money. It is a loss-making venture with an annual deficit of \$2.14 million in the core operating scenario.

Fundamentally, it will cost public confidence because - and I am glad the relevant minister is still here - we still do not have a ministerial statement of expectations. The last one dropped critical elements, including that it needed to be carefully costed and managed and that it would be competitively neutral. I would love to hear from the relevant minister about how he will deal with this issue.

Time expired.

[11.34 a.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Honourable Speaker, rather than dividing our community, the stadium has united the community because the Australian Labor Party have come across to join us. We now have unity in this place, and

I would have thought that the Deputy Leader of the Greens would have been able to compliment the government on being able to get that unity across the Chamber.

Let us deal with this issue very clearly. The stadium is something that the Greens oppose, so they will pluck at anything to run a negative argument. We know that the Greens are relentlessly negative. It is no dams, no forestry, no fish farms, no mining, no wind farms and no stadium. What was their argument last week? A stadium of 50 metres height would be an outrage that would - what was the terminology? - impact the reverential ambience in the place.

Mr Bayley - That is what the RSL says.

Mr ABETZ - Of course, eight years earlier they were championing the Eden Project, which was exactly the same height.

Dr Woodruff - It did not exist.

Mr Bayley - Not true.

Dr Woodruff - Show us the picture.

Mr ABETZ - Oops, somewhat of an embarrassment for the Greens, as it should have been and it continues to be. When you speak with forked tongue, when you speak out of both sides of your mouth, the people will detect the opportunism that arises.

If the height was the problem last week - and that was comprehensively dispensed with by this House, thank goodness -

Mr Bayley - How happy was the RSL with that?

Mr ABETZ - we now have to find another reason. Today's reason is cost. If you want an insight into the way the Greens would do budgeting, they would spend the money for this stadium on housing, education, health, UTAS, public transport, and so the list goes on. What they do, very opportunistically, is talk to the health sector and say, 'We would spend this money on health'. They then turn to the education sector: 'We would spend it on education'; the public transport sector, 'We would spend it on public transport', forgetting the fact that you can only spend this money once.

Mr Bayley - A billion dollars goes a long way, minister.

Mr ABETZ - To put this into context, in very rough terms, a stadium would last, I would assume, minimum 40 years. The state government contribution to the stadium represents about 40 days' worth of health expenditure. Therefore, over the life of the stadium, the cost is one day's health expenditure per year.

What the deputy leader was unable to say because of the negative approach taken by the Greens, is that this stadium will be an economic driver for tourism. It will enhance our cultural and sporting experiences. This will be a transformative, iconic gateway to the city of Hobart. It will add to the ambience - not necessarily reverential but, nevertheless, ambience of the city of Hobart as a wonderful gateway to our great city.

We, as a government, support this multi-purpose stadium. We believe it is a good investment of taxpayers' funds because it will help generate a lot of tourism. It will help generate extra sporting capacity for our state. It will enhance the development of tourism facilities and the viability of existing tourism facilities around the greater Hobart area. This is a project deserving of support.

I encourage those who are grasping around for any reason to oppose this to take a clear look at the proposal, see the benefits of it, what it will do for jobs, tourism, the cultural sector, the sporting sector. Overwhelmingly, this is a good project. To try to attack it on the basis of height is flawed, just as today's new argument on cost is fatally flawed.

[11.39 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak on this matter of public importance. My views are well known. I have been very critical of this project over the journey. There has been a failure of governance. The feedback I am getting in the community at the moment, as I am sure other members are, is there is great scepticism about this government being able to deliver anything in the wake of the *Spirits* ferry fiasco. A lot of people who are really passionate about football are now doubting this government's ability to deliver anything.

This is no reflection on you, Deputy Speaker, but you only have to look at the mess on the other side of the river when it came to the high-performance centre. We are not even at the starting gate. You cannot facilitate a project like that without dividing the community, putting them through a \$200,000 elector poll, then staying mum on it for a number of months. Everybody knew you were going to move it to Kingston but you would not tell the community and be up-front about it. Now, it is down at Kingston. I have heard there might be some issues with the cost in terms of blowout. That is the sort of stuff I am hearing in the community.

There has been a failure of governance when it comes to this project. We had the Premier standing in this place, I believe it was in September 2022, saying that the stadium was not part of the deal. I know from evidence at the Public Accounts Committee that was not true. The government had signed up to 11 workstreams with the AFL. One of them was the stadium. He stood in this place and said the stadium was not part of the bid knowing full well the state government had signed up to 11 workstreams with the AFL, one of them being the stadium.

Not only that. The Premier did not even take the AFL agreement to Cabinet. A complete failure of governance on that side. Senior ministers should have been saying: 'This is the biggest agreement the state has entered into. Can we see it, please, Premier? We are making collective decisions here and we want to hold you accountable as well.' They did not ask for it, did not see it, and did not ask for Treasury's advice on what it thought of the AFL agreement.

That said, it has happened. I do not think the Greens can maintain their position that they support a team but cannot accept this proposal now.

Dr Woodruff - We have always maintained it.

Mr WILLIE - We have had an election and the timelines in the agreement are clear: this term of parliament will have to deliver that project for us to have the teams. You cannot maintain the position that you are against the stadium but for the teams. It is a complete fantasy.

Dr Woodruff - You can just grow a spine and stand up to the AFL. We have two stadiums.

Mr WILLIE - I am glad they are not in a position to form government. This project has been divisive.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, please.

Mr WILLIE - This project has been divisive. There is no doubt about that. However, there is a rigorous Project of State Significance process, an economic, social and environmental assessment. However, we had the Greens come into this place last week and try and undo that rigorous process because they had an agenda.

Mr Bayley - At the request of the RSL.

Mr WILLIE - You talk about the heights and your concerns, and you came into this place and talked about veterans and your concerns about heights, and things like that. I have never heard Greens do that before. I will prove the point. Yesterday, there was a briefing from veterans. The RSL was here yesterday. How many of the Greens showed up to that? Last week they were very important to you. How many of you showed up to the briefing yesterday?

Mr Bayley - We have met with them on it. We have already been briefed.

Mr WILLIE - Dropped them like a hot potato this week.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Willie, through me.

Mr Abetz - This an untidy family spat.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - I need you to make your comments through the Chair, please, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Deputy Speaker, not only do we have the project of state significance, which the Greens have tried to undermine. We have Nicholas Gruen, a respected economist, conducting a review. He is going to provide that report to us and the public, in January, I believe, yet we have the Greens trying to pre-empt that.

This will be a fantastic thing for our state. It will be difficult in the short term, but we have a rich history in Tasmania of AFL football participation. Not only do we get an AFL men's team; we will get an AFLW team. I cannot wait for that to happen. It will give us something to unite around. It is going to be a difficult journey to get there. Potentially, the Greens will unite with us when this team eventually runs out in the park.

Time expired.

[11.44 a.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about the stadium costs as well. It has been interesting to have this discussion and hear some of the comments made by Mr Willie. He was on the money asking questions of the Premier today about what reserve funds have been made and questions around the budget, because the budget is quintessential in

this argument. We have had reports from Wells and Lawrence, and an analysis from Saul Eslake in relation to too much infrastructure spending, the way the money is being spent by this government, those priorities and what the stadium represents.

The minister, Mr Abetz, was talking about how the stadium will be the gateway to the city. I beg to differ. This is going to be a blot on the landscape as you come into the city of Hobart. The scale is completely not correct for our city - our small city, our boutique city. Not only is it a blot on the landscape, it is a blot on the financial undertakings and dealings of this state government as well.

The opportunity costs are huge as well. We know that the BCR (benefit-cost ratio) for the stadium does not deliver for Tasmania. It certainly does not deliver for those outcomes that are so important for our Tasmanian economy, being a robust health system, robust housing and housing for all - we are falling well short when we monitor that - and education as well. Tasmanians deserve better, but here we have this project which was ill considered right from the start. We know what happened. A sweetheart deal was done that does not benefit Tasmania. These stadium costs are going to be costly for this government in more ways than one. It is something that is impacting and will continue to impact on the economy for a much longer time as well.

The other thing it impacts on is grassroots sport. Grassroots sport is going to miss out because there is so much money spent on elite sport in Tasmania. The stadium will not be accessible for community groups. The costs to access PW1 are prohibitive for many community groups. I went to Diwali recently and they struggled to get government support to put on their project. How will that translate to putting on anything in a stadium? Those things are huge costs to the Tasmanian economy. It is a huge cost to the Tasmanian people. To not think that the stadium will have a considerable ill effect on our economy is folly.

[11.48 a.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, what an untidy family spat we just witnessed here between Labor and the Greens. Another day, another hypocritical Greens stunt. The party that is perennially and perpetually addicted to higher taxes, more government spending, socialising large swathes of the economy now pretends it is concerned with the cost of infrastructure. For the Greens, there has never been a problem with spending other people's money, but apparently there is today.

Why are they opposed to this stadium at Macquarie Point? It is not because they are opposed to development at Macquarie Point. We all heard recently about them backing the Eden Project and the 50-metre tall plastic bubbles being erected on the same site with the same or higher physical impact. They were falling over themselves to support that construction, at what cost, I wonder, and what visual impact, about which they are so concerned. I did not see them marching and protesting in opposition to those.

As we know, the Greens are always enthusiastic backers of more government spending when it aligns with their extremist ideology. This is another case of the Greens throwing the proverbial at the wall, throwing whatever they can at something that they are against just to see what sticks. It was the height, even though they supported the Eden Project, which was the same height. It is the cost, even though they support government spending and taxpayer money being spent on all their own little kid projects but not this one. The only consistency here is that something is being proposed that will not just deliver a team, but build our economy and

build jobs. The Greens' initial and perpetual response is to oppose, because that is what they do.

We heard from - I was about to call her the deputy lord mayor out of habit - the member for Clark, and it takes me back to council as if I never left, sitting in a chamber and debating with the Greens against development. Perhaps what really bothers the Greens about the stadium is the thought of 23,000 people turning up to cheer for the Tasmanian Devils AFL team, enjoying themselves and spending money in their local community.

As the Greens know, the deal with the AFL means no stadium, no team. The Greens' ideology simply cannot bear the thought of so many everyday Tasmanians having a good time and cheering on their very own AFL team. The Greens cannot bear the thought of our waterfront having a world-class stadium, hotels, restaurants and bars being enjoyed by locals and tourists alike, when games, concerts and events are being held at the stadium.

Their opposition to the stadium is simply the latest in a long line of attacks on the jobs and livelihoods of everyday Tasmanians. Their mantra is anti-forestry, anti-salmon, anti-racing, anti-tourism, anti-mining, anti-cable car, anti-development, and if you look at their colleagues on the council, anti-housing as well. Whatever would grow the Tasmanian economy and improve the livelihoods of Tasmanians, you can be sure the Greens will oppose it. That is their instinct and that is the one consistency in the arguments they make. It is not the reasons why not, they are just against it.

Last week in this place, the Greens cynically put up their Cenotaph bill in a transparent attempt to block the stadium. That attempt was comprehensively shut down. Now, we have another stunt, another attempt to try to stymie development. When will the Greens admit that what they are really opposed to is having a stadium at all, having any development and any change in Hobart or in Tasmania?

They would happily spend government money to lecture and hector everyday Tasmanians, but if this spending is going to result in an AFL team, a world-class stadium, increased jobs not just in the construction but ongoing, and economic development for Tasmania, you can be sure they would oppose it. Their attempts are just cynical moves to delay and stymie development of the stadium, trying to escalate costs and halt its development altogether. As we know, the longer this gets delayed - and any day longer to build what we all know needs to be built should be built - the costs will be increased. The Greens know that.

This government is very proud to be supporting Tasmania's dream of having our own AFL and AFLW teams. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our state, one that generations of Tasmanians have waited decades and decades for and have now embraced. The football club already has over 200,000 founding members, with more than half of those memberships purchased in Tasmania. I am excited about the positive impact the Tasmanian Devils will have on grassroots participation in sport and the opportunities that will be created for young Tasmanians.

Importantly, the government recognises the economic, cultural and social benefits that will be realised from this project. Once again, none of that will change the fact that the Greens, by and large, in every single case, whenever there is a development like this, will oppose it.

[11.54 a.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I rise with a northern perspective on the MPI this morning about stadium costs and would like to talk about the York Park stadium in Launceston. We have just heard from the member for Clark, Mr Behrakis, who said that the Greens do not support crowds attending events and having a fabulous time. I am here to say the Greens do support crowds attending events and having a fabulous time. We just think that the stadium in Hobart is a waste of money and we have a perfect alternative already available in the north of the state.

Members interjecting.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, members on both sides.

Ms ROSOL - York Park stadium in Launceston provides a sensible alternative option to a stadium down here that is too expensive and not wanted by many Tasmanians I have spoken to. I have spoken to lots and lots of people over many campaigns and have heard from almost nobody who supported the stadium in that time. York Park stadium is a perfect place to go because it has already had a \$130 million upgrade committed and agreed to, with funding from both state and federal governments. It is a beautiful ground. I have been to games there on a number of occasions and it is such a pleasant space to be in and is well supported by the local community in Launceston.

York Park stadium has a long history of successfully hosting cricket and football games. Since 2001, Hawthorn games have been hosted there, St Kilda played games there between 2003 and 2006 and the largest crowd that attended the stadium was over 20,000 people, which is more than the number of people who have attended a game in Hobart, I might add. With the upgrades that are planned for York Park stadium, the capacity of the grounds will grow by another 2000 seats, meaning that the stadium will have the capacity for 22,000 people. Imagine 22,000 people in the north of the state supporting our beautiful AFL team - that the Greens do support - watching a game of football, having a fantastic time and knowing that we did that without sending the state into further debt, without taking money from services where it is needed. The AFL has a long history at York Park stadium. It is a proven successful location.

As I was saying, there is a lot of opposition to the Macquarie Point stadium in the north of the state. People resent that so much money will be poured into a stadium down in Hobart while services in Launceston are lacking. It is a misuse of our state's money to be pouring it into a stadium that is not supported by people around the state when they want to see the services they need being funded - health, education, housing - services that are essential for everyday life for Tasmanians.

The touted benefits of the Macquarie Point stadium can be achieved in a much more cost-effective manner by basing AFL in the north of the state, where the history of AFL has been based in Tasmania for many years. We can have the AFL team based at York Park stadium, long a centre for AFL, and have much more prudent use of our money in this state so that we have all the benefits: an AFL team, with crowds enjoying wonderful sport and having a great time together watching their team, and not frittering away our money and throwing it to the wind but having it available to put into services.

[11.57 a.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I am not agreeing, but I do have serious reservations about the stadium, and not only myself, but so do my constituents. I am also not against development, but I am worried about the height of the building. Mr Willie, I did go to the RSL and spoke to the CEO and he said 85 per cent of the RSLs were against the stadium being there.

I am also concerned about the money being spent. There does not seem to be an end line to it. You would not run a business like it, yet we keep writing this never-ending cheque of \$350 million, \$700-and-something million, now something-billion, and it keeps going out. There have been issues with the parking, the traffic, and that is all I ever come across from my constituents. They are concerned. We do not have good finances in this state. We have just been handed down a budget that strips away the essential services and we have seen a number of community support groups go unfunded. This government has clearly been spending beyond its means. As a result, we have a sharp increase in debt. With Mr Eslake's predictions that the current trends will continue with our debt and go to \$16 billion within a decade, the annual debt servicing that will be \$730 million in interest.

The bottom line is we are not in a position at the moment to spend billions on a stadium at the demands of the AFL. Mr Willie, I think you will know that when Labor was campaigning in the state election against the AFL stadium in Hobart, they pointed out that the trade-off against \$750 million could buy you either one stadium or 10,000 nurses, 9000 teachers or 3000 homes. Not surprisingly, Labor then - and I wish they would now - thought the building of the new stadium was a massive cost and a wrong priority for Tasmania.

Mr Willie - We are not in government to renegotiate. That is the reality.

Mr JENNER - Yes, but I think it is going up, is it not?

Mr Willie - The timelines are what they are; you can be against the team all you want.

Mr JENNER - You can flip it. I am just saying what you said when you were running. I cannot think of a better way to put it.

Dr Woodruff - Yes, they tend to change their minds.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Members on my left will allow Mr Jenner to speak in silence.

Mr JENNER - We have hospital systems under strain, massive housing shortages, and education systems that are failing Tasmanian kids, but clearly these are not a priority for our government. We will be spending millions of dollars servicing an AFL team that will likely only draft two Tasmanians a year. It seems we are not just building the stadium; we are also footing the bill for empty seats. Apparently in Tasmania, even silence comes at a price. I am against the stadium because of the price and the debt it is going to put on Tasmanians for future generations.

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I will use the few minutes that are left in this debate to go through some overview. The Greens want to talk about cost. I would talk about the opportunity cost that will be lost if this team does not go ahead. It is a once in a lifetime

opportunity for AFL football in Tasmania to take the next step to rejuvenate country football and to get more people involved in sport to create a healthier lifestyle through the aspiration of the young people getting up and wanting to achieve their best in AFL football.

I had the advantage last year of going on my first European trip. One of the places I visited was the Welsh Parliament. They have a big stadium in Cardiff, a 2000-year-old city with a roofed stadium in the middle of it. While in Cardiff, I took the opportunity to ask a couple of MPs about the stadium, and they said that Cardiff is an ex-coal mining city that is transitioning. They told me that the roofed stadium was the number-one economic driver for the city at the moment. That is not me saying it; it is them.

There are certainly opportunities, whether it be an AFLW team or an AFL team or a VFL team - there are three teams out of this - for Friday night football being broadcast live over a season. We might get one or two Friday nights and maybe a Saturday, but it will be broadcast right across Australia on Channel 7. I talk about opportunity costs lost - how much is that three hours of advertising worth to the state when you have Tasmania's AFL side playing Geelong, West Coast or Queensland teams? It is worth millions, and that is an ongoing process.

They talk about football in *The Age* and they talk about the Tasmanian team. We are going to be talked about in AFL circles, and that will bring visitors down to the state. If we are not on TV then you get 35,000 or 40,000, and if it is a Collingwood game you might get 80,000 or 90,000 people, coming and witnessing Tasmania's AFL team.

Again, what is that worth in advertising to get those people talking about Tasmania? I have talked about the aspiration of our young people. We have seen it with the Jack Jumpers. People are calling it the 'Jack Jumper' effect. We support the team and the stadium because there is no team without the stadium, and it creates this effect where you get more people playing footy. As well as that you create a situation in the state that we do not have at the moment. You have a \$50-million AFL team, or around that - you can work out the figures.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 51)

Second Reading

[12.04 p.m.]

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

That the bill be now read a second time.

I rise today to introduce two simple and hopefully uncontroversial amendments to the *Family Violence Act 2004*. The amendments address two issues that Tasmanian Legal Aid and other organisations who work with victim/survivors of family violence have told me create significant further harms to victim/survivors: circumstances for granting an extension of a family violence order, and the awarding of costs.

Before I get on to the substantive details of the bill, I want to give some context which will be familiar to many of you in the Chamber that merits stating, especially today, three days into 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and I note the government's intention to move a motion to acknowledge this in the House tomorrow.

We all know family violence is a serious and widespread issue in Tasmania, as it is in Australia and indeed around the world. Here are three statistics to remind us of the scale of the issue. Two in five women have experienced violence since the age of 15. On average, one woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner. Research shows that about one in four men in Australia aged 18 to 45 say they have used physical and/or sexual violence against an intimate partner. They are sobering statistics.

We know the impacts of this spread far beyond the perpetrator and the victim/survivor alone. Domestic or family violence is a leading driver of homelessness that is putting pressure on an already overstretched housing and crisis support system. It contributes massively to mental and physical health costs for governments. It has an impact in workplaces through staff retention, presentation, absenteeism and morale, and undermines productivity. Because children are often involved as witnesses, the impacts become intergenerational, affecting children's wellbeing, their schooling and their likelihood of being perpetrators and/or victim/survivors in the future. Despite how devastatingly common it is, it is often under-reported, hidden behind closed doors and not always addressed as urgently as it should be.

I am pleased to say that the Tasmanian government, with the support of everyone in this place and the other place, acknowledges the seriousness of the issue and in recent years in particular, they have introduced a range of legislative policy and funding measures to prevent family violence, address offending, ensure justice is delivered to perpetrators, fund crisis counselling and support services and deliver support to victim/survivors.

With major drivers of family violence being gender stereotypes and attitudes towards women, we know that change will not be immediate. This makes it all the more urgent that we do whatever we can now to change the systems and processes that inflict more harm on victim/survivors. That is why I am introducing these amendments to the *Family Violence Act*. There is low-hanging fruit we can address now while we wait for the outcome of a broader review of the act, which I am pleased to say is currently being undertaken by the department.

To my amendments. The first amendment addresses the unnecessarily complex process of seeking an extension to a family violence order. Orders typically are in place for 12 months. Currently, to be granted an extension of an order, the applicant needs to demonstrate a substantial change in relevant circumstances since the order was made or last varied. Courts have largely interpreted this to mean that a breach of the order has occurred. The problem is, though, there may have been no breach precisely because the order was successful and had done its job. Just because no breach has been reported or substantiated does not mean there has not been one. There are all sorts of reasons why this can occur, fear and manipulation of the process being two common ones.

At the 12-month mark, often when Family Court proceedings are underway, tensions are high and women in particular are at high risk of harm, it is more important than ever to ensure victim/survivors are safe, without having to add to a very stressful and anxious time by applying for extensions to orders. To put this in perspective, in some Australian jurisdictions such as

Queensland and Victoria, for example, orders are made for a minimum of five years and do not have an end date. The onus is on the alleged perpetrator to apply for the order to be amended or revoked.

Organisations who work with victim/survivors have told me that the difficulties of being granted an extension put women in grave danger. Knowing there has to be a substantial change or a breach of an order, many women will wait for the next incident so they have something more recent with which to persuade the court. That is tragic. As well, we know when we watch the news that all too often that one last incident might be the last and it might be deadly. To redress this, my proposal is to allow the extension of family violence orders without a substantial change in circumstances since the order was made or last varied. The court will be required to take into account the same risk factors as when the initial order was granted.

The second issue my bill addresses is the awarding of costs in order to address abuse of the family violence order process by perpetrators. Under the current act, there is a presumption that each party will bear their own costs. The problem is, we know that perpetrators of family violence who are subject to family violence orders often manipulate the family violence order process as a means of extending their coercive control, for example, by making vexatious or frivolous applications to vary a family violence order, or by making repeated applications that are then withdrawn, or unnecessarily prolonging proceedings. Victim/survivors are then forced to pay to challenge these manipulative actions.

This can mean victim/survivors are subject to time-consuming and costly court processes, often extending their trauma or retraumatising them in new ways, adding more financial stress when they are often already in a highly precarious financial position and generally adding stress and complexity to their lives when they need the opposite. Worse, the current practise of awarding costs has a chilling effect on victim/survivors, who unable to afford costs, do not continue with or withdraw a family violence order application. Tasmanian Legal Aid say this is as much as 50 per cent of women. Even more, about two-thirds do not pursue extensions to a family violence order unless brought on by police where the party does not bear costs.

As well as bringing an element of fairness to the issue of costs, it is hoped that knowing costs could be awarded against the perpetrator will act as a deterrent for some, at least, who may consider manipulating the family violence order processes. My bill starts to address this issue by legislating the assumption that each party bears their own costs, except in the following circumstances as outlined in section 34 of the bill and the clause notes. The amendment reads:

- (a) whether the liable party has made the application, objected to the application, or withdrawn the application -
 - (i) for the purposes of controlling or intimidating, or causing mental harm to, or apprehension of fear in, another party to the application; or
 - (ii) for a purpose, or in a manner, that is malicious, frivolous, vexatious or in bad faith; or
 - (iii) in a manner that has an unreasonable impact on another party to the application;

I note this has been based on existing provisions in section 45 of the *Magistrates Court Administrative Appeals Division Act of 2001*.

- (b) whether the liable party has been responsible for prolonging unreasonably the time taken to complete the proceedings;
- (c) whether exceptional circumstances exist.

As to the section 34(2)(a)(iii) amendment reference to 'unreasonable impact', after discussions with the Attorney-General and his department yesterday, I note their concerns regarding this so I acknowledge the Attorney-General may speak to that later. I will explain why it was included originally on advice from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. It is intended to cover actions that may fall short of a legal definition of malicious, frivolous, vexatious or in bad faith, but may still have an unreasonable impact on another party. For example, the liable party may have provided documents in connection with the application in a format that creates an unnecessary burden on another party. Think thousands upon thousands of pages of single-sided, hard copy documents when those had been provided to others in PDF format.

Perhaps the liable party may wait months to withdraw an application, which may result in another party paying unnecessary legal costs, even though the liable party had told the other party that they were never going to proceed with the application. In some cases, the court may consider such actions to be malicious, frivolous, vexatious or in bad faith. The proposed new section 34(2)(a)(iii) allows the court to make an order for cost without having to make a definitive decision as to where the actions are malicious, frivolous, vexatious or in bad faith.

It is also important to clarify that proposed new section 34(2)(a)(iii) must be a result of the manner of how the application is made, objected to or withdrawn. It does not relate to an order or a condition of an order that may result from the application. In other words, it applies to the process of how an application is made, not to the substance of the order. I note again the Attorney-General's concern about this and indicate a willingness that, should that concern continue, I would be open to amendments in the other place to address that.

I said earlier that my bill starts to address the issues relating to extensions and costs because, as victim/survivors have said over and over, as have those organisations who work day in and day out to support them, the family violence order process provides some protections but is in desperate need of an overhaul. I will have more to say on that shortly.

The bill was drafted in response to Tasmania Legal Aid (TLA) and other organisations raising issues based on their unique and experienced insights into the operation of family violence orders. I take this opportunity to thank the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for drafting the bill. I thank Katherine Woodward and TLA director Kristen Wylie for their work with me to ensure this bill achieves its purposes. I also recognise my staff, Charlie, Bella and Paul, in this regard.

I have consulted widely on this bill over several weeks and there is universal support for it in the family violence sector. Amongst others, it has support from the Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance, especially the Women's Legal Service, Laurel House and Sexual Assault Support Service, organisations that work with both victim/survivors and perpetrators, Relationships Australia and Positive Solutions, and community legal centres.

I circulated the bill to all House of Assembly members at the start of this month and provided a briefing on the bill two weeks later. I thank members for attending that briefing. There has been broad support in this place. Yesterday, I had a productive discussion with the Attorney-General. I believe he and his department support the intent of the bill and, hopefully, he will vote for it today.

I note their intention to consider minor amendments in the other place if needed, after consultation with magistrates in the coming months. I acknowledge their desire to get the bill right, but their concerns could have been addressed in the last month. I will share the words of one organisational leader who works tirelessly in this space, on hearing that there might be a delay, 'I guess it means that women continue to be at greater risk while we continue to wait. I don't mean to sound ungrateful; I'm just disappointed'. I join her in hoping, for the sake of the women and other victim/survivors of gender-based violence - and we are all wearing orange ribbons today - that any delay will be as short as possible. I note the Attorney-General's assurance about that.

I am confident that passing the bill in this place today will still have a significant effect in that it signals to magistrates and other relevant players in the justice system that women, in particular, are in urgent need of greater protection. They do not need to wait for legislation to change their responses in family violence orders.

I say there is wide support for this bill, but it comes with one important caveat. While these two relatively minor changes are absolutely necessary to reduce the further harm to victim/survivors when perpetrators abuse the family violence order system, this is a two-decade old act that has only had incremental reform in that time. It is in desperate need of the overhaul that is now underway.

I will flag a couple of areas I hope the review will address. In the 20 years since it was enacted, we know much more about family violence, including recognising that it is not just intimate partners, but children and other family members who can be perpetrators. Therefore, expanding the definition of family violence is an urgently needed reform.

We also know that perpetrators are cunningly adept at working around each reform, not just to avoid prosecution, but to actively manipulate family violence orders and the family court to continue their harmful coercive behaviours. The act needs to allow authorities to be responsive to these changing behaviours. Without trying to make light of a very dark issue, it is like playing a game of whack-a-mole. Perpetrators find whatever loopholes they can to inflict harm on victim/survivors. We need legal and policy settings that reflect this.

I could go on with the work that still needs doing, not all of which is legislative. We know changes to policing practices and perhaps the court offices are needed. Much more needs to be done on the prevention side of things as well. However, today I will focus on these two very simple, hopefully uncontroversial changes we can enact today so that victim/survivors have a safer tomorrow. I commend the bill to the House.

[12.20 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her commitment on the issue of family violence and prevention of family violence. I congratulate her on bringing forward this bill on this important topic in this place. The government will be supporting the bill.

I have had a very good working relationship with Ms Johnston, particularly in recent times, on this bill. I also recognise the commitment of members in this place to preventing family violence. There has been mention of the orange ribbon, which I wore yesterday but missed this morning getting to the parliamentary prayer breakfast. Hopefully, tomorrow I will have that opportunity, and again on Friday, when that important cause is supported wholeheartedly, as it is today.

The numbers are chilling. My latest advice is that one woman a week is killed by their partner across Australia. It is an awful statistic and something we should be ashamed of. We should redouble our efforts to combat that, to provide an environment where everyone feels safe, particularly women in their own homes. We should create an environment in which we not only feel safe, but women and young women, in particular, can prosper and reach their full potential to be the best they can be in that safe environment. I commend the member. She is totally motivated in the right space and doing a wonderful job in bringing this bill forward.

This government took a nation-leading initiative in 2015. I commend former premier Will Hodgman for bringing forward the Family Violence Action Plan in 2015 with \$100 million to support it. I was there and felt proud of that initiative. Will Hodgman led the charge across Australia with it. As a government, we want to continue to build on that commitment he provided for us and the nation. We want to continuously improve and implement measures to combat family violence and implement legislative reforms to strengthen the state's legal responses and the environment more generally in terms of family and sexual violence.

I had the honour of progressing, in the most recent budget, the Healthy Families Initiative, a \$1.2 million initiative to support women through the Tasmanian Women's Legal Service, particularly in rural and regional areas of the state.

As I have mentioned, survivors are at the centre of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027. The plan allocates \$100 million over five years to 38 actions to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in Tasmania. It is clear that preventing and responding to family violence remains a top priority for our government. We remain committed to doing everything we can to ensure all Tasmanians are safe, respected and free from all forms of family and sexual violence. As Attorney-General, I will continue to drive the government's reform. I acknowledge the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, Jo Palmer, Madeleine Ogilvie before her and others as well on this important cause.

Before I turn to the amendments and share a few remarks, last Friday I was at the Standing Council of Attorneys-General in Melbourne with all my colleague attorneys from around Australia. Family and sexual violence was front and centre of our agenda. We discussed the National Access to Justice Partnership, and our government provided support for that on the day. Subject to the signing of that partnership agreement, it will be released and made available. The key part of it is addressing the scourge of family and sexual violence across Australia. I thank the federal Attorney General, Mark Dreyfus, for his initiative and support on behalf of his government to provide that funding support. There is always more to do, but I think you will see, when that document is released, that there will be good funding support for that across Australia, including in Tasmania.

Turning to the amendments, in terms of amending the *Family Violence Act 2004* to allow for the extension of a family violence order without a substantive change in circumstances

since the order was made or last varied, and the assumption that each party to a family violence order application bear their own costs unless the process is a coercive, frivolous or vexatious manner or in a way that has an unreasonable impact on the other party.

I thank my Department of Justice, represented in the Chamber today, because the department was already progressing similar amendments to costs for family violence order applications based on the same Supreme Court decision that highlighted the need for this change. I also note it was a recommendation of the recently released Anglicare report into family violence in north-west Tasmania, Unsafe and Unhoused.

We understand the need for these amendments and fully support the policy intent behind them. While I acknowledge that the member consulted with and has support from many groups for those amendments, including Tasmanian Legal Aid whose support and active involvement in this legislative initiative I acknowledge, I indicate from my point of view as Attorney-General that I am keen to get the feedback from the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court. I think that is an important part of the process. We have had initial discussions through my department with the Magistrates Court and there are other statutory holders such as the Director of Public Prosecutions, court administrators, the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court.

We have also had feedback in correspondence from certain community legal centres, and I acknowledge and note their support. We would like to get feedback from the Tasmanian Bar, the Law Society, potentially the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute if they have views, and other relevant family violence stakeholders if there are any. As a government, we like to have broad consultation. I also recognise the timeliness, the point the member made, to try to progress this as soon as possible. Here we are in the last week of parliament, the second last day, and all being well, if the bill does progress today, it cannot pass through the parliament because it has to go to the other House. There will be a summer period where, in my view, there will be merit in having that consultation. I have talked to the member about the merit of getting that feedback if there are any further tweaks or amendments we can make.

The member made reference specifically to clause 34(2)(a)(iii), which talks about the unreasonable impact on another party to the application and it is linking in with other parts of the bill. That is an area we discussed and I will not go into the detail, but we want to get clarity and confirmation on that from the Magistrates Court. We would like to get assurance in terms of the legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose. The policy intent is 100 per cent. We want to support it today, but we think over the summer period, over the coming months, we can have that consultation and get that feedback. Any amendments, if they were required or necessary, are something that either the government or the member herself can put to the upper House and hopefully positively considered.

I look forward to working with the member, my department and others, such as the Magistrates Court and other key stakeholders over the summer break. We will be supporting this bill today, subject to those provisos, as a show of good faith not just to the member but to victim/survivors of family and sexual violence. I have often talked in this place about collaboration and goodwill. As a new parliament that is exactly what we can do and grasp today and progress this legislation. This is how this parliament is working and it is an excellent example of how the parliament can work.

I stand to be corrected, but would this be the member's first bill? I believe it is; yes, I have a nod. I pass on my congratulations to the member for bringing forward her first bill. Any first bill is terrific, particularly if it can be passed. I remember Tabatha Badger's begging bill earlier this year, the first bill for the Greens member for Lyons. I think I congratulated her very shortly thereafter on her success. It is always good to have one under the belt.

I think it is a wonderful opportunity on the back of the parliamentary prayer breakfast this morning where there is lots of goodwill, unity of purpose and where we are working together for the best interests of Tasmania. It is a team Tasmania approach and I acknowledge that. Again, I thank the member and will leave hopefully enough time for other members to share their remarks.

[12.31 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute on the Family Violence Amendment Bill 2024 brought in by the Independent member for Clark, Ms Johnston. I indicate the Labor Party's support for this measure and thank her very much for the opportunity to speak on this issue and to also make improvements that can assist to make our community a safer place.

I want to talk about this in a broader context and note the rise of the trends online of the phrases, 'Your body, my choice' and, 'Get back in the kitchen', which started to be quite active on social media within about 24 hours of the election of President Trump. The rise of rhetoric of men's control over women's bodies or autonomy should alarm us all. The pressures on young men to behave in a way that perpetrates old and dangerous stereotypes of misogynistic attitudes to women through social media and podcasts should make us all stand up, listen and where we can, act.

These toxic attitudes that denigrate women, belittle their choices and even attempt to remove their choice requires a response. This hate and harassment towards women online is only one feature, of course, and we know that the terrifying figures of violence against women in our own country tell us that, sadly, too many of these instances transfer across into violent crime of a physical nature and deaths, and the member spoke to some of those very sad figures in her second reading speech.

As men become more emboldened to publicly state their feelings towards women, and not good feelings, the concern I have is that we will see a rise in violence against women in this country, when we already know the current levels of violence against women are far too high. I was alarmed to hear reported that in Australia, upon the result of the American election, there were already impacts of that on our society. I heard reported that there was a media organisation doing a live cross as part of their coverage of the US election and they showed a room of young men in Sydney who were celebrating and breaking out in chants of, 'Grab them by the pussy'. I am sorry if that is not parliamentary but it is a direct quote from the media reporting. How is it that the most notable and celebrated phrase of the incoming President of the United States is one that encourages the violation of women? I think the question we have to ask ourselves is: why have young men in Australia been adopting this attitude and how can we as a society address it so that we take action to change this behaviour and these attitudes?

As a society, intimate partner violence in Australia is something I would expect all of us to be united in fighting against, and I know in this parliament we certainly are, but I worry that the task ahead of us is much larger than we might want to realise. We have to face up to the

fact that words matter and language such as, 'Your body, my choice' or 'Get back in the kitchen' can have a very pervasive impact on the psyche of our nation if we let it go unchallenged.

This legislation today is welcome. It recognises that we can do more to keep people safe from family and sexual violence, particularly women. Abuse can take many forms, including coercive control and intimidation, and these changes are welcome because they add strength to Tasmania's current laws. There is more work to do and I am sure others have heard from people in their electorates who have had terrible experiences or really struggled to navigate the police and justice system in trying to find ways they can be safer or to protect their children so that they can be safe.

It is essential for us to make sure that we continue to update existing acts and I give my full support to your department, Attorney-General, because I understand you will be undertaking a comprehensive review of the act - I hope so anyway - to make sure that the *Family Violence Act* is fit for purpose in Tasmania. There are flaws within it.

These changes are very welcome today, and I acknowledge that your department had commenced some work to make these improvements yourself, but I recognise the work of Ms Johnston for bringing it to this parliament this year, particularly through the consultation she undertook with Legal Aid in Tasmania to understand some of these challenges. This will make it safer for women in particular to make sure that they can have the protections against somebody who might be inflicting violence upon them, or has done in the past, and they want to make sure that does not happen again in the future.

You have my full support if it is the case that your department is undertaking a comprehensive review of that act, because we all have a responsibility to make sure our community can be as safe as it possibly can be. In the context of that broader social change in attitudes towards women, I do not think we can do it soon enough. It is not just coupled with changes in legislation, but coupled with education, research, and a program that understands why young men are behaving in such ways, so that we can prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

These changes today are about making sure violence does not continue to be perpetuated against somebody who has been an intimate partner relationship that has violence as one of its features. Fundamentally, I want to live in a country where we do not need these protections in law. I would like for women to feel safe in their own homes and for children to grow up with people who love them and do not hurt them. I would love that for all people, not just women, acknowledging that men are victims and survivors too.

I feel like, sadly, we are very reactionary at times, and there is an enormous body of work and research that exists that demonstrates to us that if we are not swift in our actions to address some of these challenges, they are going to get worse. That is why I shared those remarks that I did at the start of my speech, because I think that there has globally been permission granted now, unfortunately, for people to speak hurtfully. It does not take long for that hate to transcend just words and become actions.

I support the bill. I encourage the government to work with the honourable member to make the improvements that you think will strengthen it further, but to do more than that too. You have my full support for that.

[12.38 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I thank Ms Johnston for bringing on this bill and all the incredible work that she has done for it. The Greens will fully support it. This is an objectively straightforward legislative amendment compared to what we have to do in reforming the *Family Violence Act* in Tasmania and contemporising it. It is a small amendment, but it will result in great, positive change for Tasmanians who are seeking to leave unsafe relationships and to obtain family violence orders (FVO) without the fear of the related costs being weaponised by the perpetrator, or those for whom an FVO is possibly financially unattainable.

It is too common for women fleeing domestic violence to have abuse prolonged through former partners wrongly using the legal system, for example, deliberately running up legal costs, delaying legal procedures and vexatiously applying an FVO to harass or intimidate the victim/survivor.

It was back in July 2015 that the Women's Legal Service Tasmania produced the report *Their Stories, Our Lives: Tasmanian Women's Experience with Family Violence Orders*. This report was compiled with both the experiences of women who had been affected by family violence as well as the experiences of solicitors of Women's Legal Service Tasmania. The report provided a snapshot of what they could see on a daily basis and the barriers to achieving just outcomes for those affected by family violence. One of the barriers highlighted in the report was the problems extending to the duration of family violence orders due to the requirement that there must be a substantial change in circumstances since the order was made or varied.

The report identified that if the perpetrator had not breached the order and had therefore not committed any family violence during the life of the order, it was unlikely that the application for the order to be extended would be granted. However, the victim would still feel at significant risk and is still placed in an unfair situation of having to wait for family violence to be perpetrated again before they could do anything about it. In the words of one of the Women's Legal Service Tasmania solicitors, 'It is very difficult to tell a frightened woman that they have to wait for something to happen before they can apply for another order'. That report is now nine years old, but it speaks to the amendments that are being debated here today. I acknowledge - and we hope - that the wide-ranging review of the *Family Violence Act* is currently underway as Ms Johnston and Ms White have outlined. These two amendments proposed in this bill will address two issues as soon as it goes through, and they are a relatively simple fix. They can be amended now to make our legal system safer, so we should get on with it.

The amendment for the extension of a family violence order eases the complexity of the FVO extension process. Presently in Tasmania, as has been outlined, orders are generally for 12 months and the extension is only granted if the applicant demonstrates substantial change in the relevant circumstances. That requirement of the substantial change in relevant circumstances has often been narrowly interpreted by the courts as meaning the breach of an order. This fails to recognise circumstances where there is no breach or where victim/survivors do not report breaches due to the fear of the consequences of reporting.

We do not want women waiting for the breach of an order before requesting an extension, because every breach means more violence and more threats, even the risk of more deaths. Looking at other interstate FVO comparisons, everyone does these differently. No other jurisdiction appears to have such a high bar for requesting an extension, as is the case presently

in Tasmania. For some jurisdictions, requests for extensions are not so much of an issue because they have longer timeframes for the original domestic violence orders. For example, in New South Wales, the standard length of their equivalent to an FVO is two years. In Queensland, orders are made for minimum of five years unless the court is satisfied that a shorter order can be made.

In the Northern Territory, they have DVOs (domestic violence orders) and there the law is absolutely explicit that they do not take into consideration if domestic violence has been committed over the course of the DVO. Rather, for an extension, courts consider what is reasonably fair regarding whether the victim/survivor feels that there will be ongoing abuse or if there is any ongoing perceived risk. We therefore support amending section 20 of the act so that an application for the extension of an FVO would not require a change in the relevant circumstances.

We also support the new clauses regarding the awarding of costs in section 34 of the *Family Violence Act*. It is unthinkable that presently lawyers have to advise their clients to be cautious when applying for an FVO that could very well save their lives. The new clauses will turn the tables on the misuse of the costs associated with FVOs as a form of control or as a threat by providing the court the power to award the costs, or part of, to the liable party objecting to the application, or by withdrawing an application that is made 'for the purpose of controlling or intimidating, or causing mental harm to, or apprehension or fear in, another party to the application', or 'for a purpose or in the manner that is malicious, frivolous, vexatious or in bad faith'.

This is contemporising our legislation to reflect our greater understanding of how our systems can be misused by abusers. It will make an extraordinary difference for Tasmanian women. I also want to thank Tasmanian Legal Aid for all their work over many years on this.

Again, thank you to Ms Johnston for making it happen, and to all your staff who did such a tremendous job in organising all the briefings and having ongoing, open and collaborative conversations to make these much-needed changes.

The Greens support the bill.

[12.45 p.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, the amendments the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, has put forward are extremely important steps in order to protect victims of family violence in Tasmania. The amendments Ms Johnston has proposed address two critical issues within the current legislation: the process of extending family violence orders; and the awarding of legal costs in family violence orders proceedings. Whilst the whole bill really needs to be completely reviewed, the impact of these specific amendments on the safety and wellbeing of victims of family violence cannot be overstated.

Family violence is a pervasive and deeply-rooted issue within our society. The member for Clark did a great job in reminding all of us about the gravity of family violence in our society. In Australia, one in four women have experienced emotional abuse from current or previous partners; one in six women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner; and one in six women have experienced economic abuse by a current or former partner. As the member for Clark has already tragically stated, on average, one Australian woman dies every nine days at the hands of a current or former partner. These

figures are nothing short of horrific and paint an incredibly grim picture of the prevalence family violence has in Australian society.

Tragically, many victims of family violence are reluctant to pursue family violence orders due to the significant flaws in the process. Quite frankly, the process is broken. The court system can be intimidating and emotionally taxing, leaving many victims fearing the psychological distress they may endure while seeking protection. This broken system repeatedly deters those who need it the most for their support. The fear of psychological and emotional stress is just one of a multitude of barriers that face victims. Legal proceedings are quite often expensive and for victims who rely on their abusers for financial support, this legal help can be almost impossible.

As a magistrate in the United Kingdom for over 25 years, I have seen firsthand the extra stress it puts on victims. We also have to remember - and I have been on plenty of courses for this - that when a woman comes into the court for an order, it is usually after six to 10 attacks previously. It is not the first one. I have seen how this works in real time.

These amendments will make real difference by helping to remove some of the barriers many victims face when entering legal proceedings. Victims of family violence already endure immense hardships and the process of obtaining or maintaining a family violence order should provide relief, not additional stress. It is essential that the system is streamlined and supportive, ensuring that victims feel empowered and protected rather than overwhelmed.

As a parliament, we have the opportunity to help turn these statistics around, and today we have the opportunity to do just that. These amendments will make a real difference to the lives of victims of family violence, which is why I will absolutely support the bill.

[12.49 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank everyone for their contributions on this bill. I note the common theme through all the contributions is that spirit of collaboration and unity the Attorney-General talked about, which was certainly a feature of our morning parliamentary prayer breakfast.

We all recognise that there is an urgency to review the *Family Violence Act*, and there is significant goodwill and good faith in this place to work together to achieve that as a matter of great urgency.

It is important to recognise once again just why we are here, and the real risk faced by women. I recognise in the contribution of the member for Lyons, Ms White, her acknowledgement that the greater global context of which we are having this discussion is certainly having an impact in Tasmania, and is only a further reason for the urgency of this particular matter.

I recognise that there is much more work to be done. I acknowledge that the Attorney-General will take time over the summer period between this place and the other place to consult more widely. I am pleased that we are not letting the perfect get in the way of the good, because we have women at significant risk right now. As I said, we are three days into the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and I think this is the perfect way to mark day three. I am looking forward to what we will do on day four, day five, day six, day seven, day eight and

day nine because we cannot stop working to end gender-based violence against women. It is something we should be doing every day of the week.

I conclude by reflecting on the urgency of this particular motion. I cannot wait one more day, or let one more day go past than is absolutely necessary that a Tasmanian woman puts herself and her children at risk of serious harm because we have a system in place that does not protect her. It is chilling to me that service providers are telling us that women are fearful and are choosing - rather than using the court process to protect them - to risk one more incident to be able to demonstrate to the courts that they are at risk. We know that that one more incident might be their last. I commend this bill to the House. I thank all members for their contribution today.

Bill read the second time.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 51)

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms Johnston, you have time remaining. Are you happy to cede the rest of your remaining time?

Ms JOHNSTON - I am absolutely happy to do that.

MOTION

Spirit of Tasmania - New Vessels Delivery

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 42, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes the new *Spirits* project has become the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmania's history.
- (2) Believes it is extremely important for the government to deliver its promise that \$100 million of local content will be included in the fit-out of the new vessels.
- (3) Believes the Premier, Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP's proposal to merge TT-Line, TasPorts and TasRail represents a significant undertaking and carries potentially serious risks, and that public

and parliamentary debates on such significant proposals should be kept informed by as much advice as possible.

- (4) Orders the Premier, the Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP, to table by 5 p.m. on Thursday 28 November 2024:
 - (a) a list of local content spending to date for the new *Spirits*, and the total value of those purchases; and
 - (b) an unredacted copy of the 2015 Treasury review of the potential merging of TasPorts and TasRail.

SPEAKER - Do you require a vote?

Mr WINTER - Yes, I would like a vote.

In the brief time I have before lunch, I will commence my contribution about the seriousness of this issue. We have spoken at length about the *Spirits of Tasmania* fiasco over the last six months or so, but it becomes clearer and clearer every day that the government is still covering up key elements of this project.

I have been staggered, frankly, by the response to some of these questions. It really struck me last Wednesday, when we debated a motion surrounding the *Spirits of Tasmania* and the need for oversight, the Minister for Transport said:

I have spent some of my time looking into what went wrong, but can I tell the Leader of the Opposition I very quickly decided that was a waste of my time.

It was a waste of the Minister for Transport's time to find out how we got into this position, where we have almost a billion-dollars-worth of ships that should be here and that are now about to start heading towards Scotland instead of Tasmania in the complete wrong direction. We have a Minister for Transport whose response to all that is to say, 'What a waste of my time to get to the bottom of what happened'. It should not be a waste of any minister's time to want to understand what went wrong, because that is how we get better.

The hallmark of this government is that it has been getting worse over time. You would have thought the injection of minister Abetz into this portfolio might have provided some additional oversight, some additional level of accountability for those who have clearly stuffed this up by having somebody who was not there when the stuff up was coming up through the entire system, someone there who would say, 'Right, I need to get to the bottom of what happened'. Instead we have someone who says it is a waste of his time.

This is an extraordinary statement for a minister to make - that they are not interested in finding out how the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmanian history happened. Not interested: 'Just wondered whether we could all move on'. We cannot move on until this project is finished and all those Tasmanians who were promised these new ships finally have what they asked for, when we have our *Spirits of Tasmania* in our state doing what Tasmanian taxpayers pay for.

I have heard minister Abetz many times talking about how it is not the government's money, that it is the taxpayers' money and 'We are just spending it on your behalf'. I have heard this speech many times. The Deputy Speaker might have heard it as well. Nothing could be truer when it comes to this project, because it is not their money that the government has blown up the wall, it is Tasmanian taxpayers' money. When I see our new ship, the *Spirit of Tasmania IV*, about to leave RMC in Finland and head towards Scotland of all places, I wonder how much it is going to cost. I wonder how much accountability this minister and this Premier take for this decision.

We asked questions about this. How much is it going to cost? Today, maybe two days before the ship leaves, the government cannot tell us how much it will cost to berth our ships, our *Spirits of Tasmania* in Scotland, because they still have not signed an agreement. The ship is about to leave Finland because it has to, because of the ice pack that is forming, and they do not have an agreement with Scotland to berth it there. They cannot tell us how much it will cost.

At the same time as they say they cannot tell us how much it will cost, they also tell us they are doing this in our interests. It is for us - for the taxpayers - that they are sending these ships to the Port of Leith. What a ridiculous decision. When you think about the inputs into this decision, how much is it going to cost? TT-Line estimated about \$1.2 million a month. The Minister for Transport was aghast because we had been saying the ships would cost \$40,000 a day. I do not want to put words in his mouth, but his argument was that that is only if two ships are in Leith. If it is only one, then it is only \$20,000 a day. If they do not have a full handle on what the costs are going to be in Leith, then how are they making this decision?

Is the question here for the government not so much about what it will cost taxpayers, but what it will cost them in publicity? Is this entire ridiculous charade that they will send these *Spirits* to Scotland because it will be easier to lease because they do not want these ships sitting in Hobart where Tasmanians can see exactly what this government is all about? The ineptitude and the incompetence.

The only decision factor I can see for any government making the decision that they are making is embarrassment and hiding the ineptitude, incompetence and performance of this government. They are not going to the cause of the problem and not going to the biggest issue of how did we get here. They are saying it is a waste of time to look at that. This government's number one priority at this point in time is not the taxpayers, not Tasmanians, not the freight sector, not tourism, not Tasmanians who want to see the rest of Australia - it is themselves. It is this minister and this Premier's reputation. That is the number one decision-making input for them. It is all about their reputation, all about the publicity and the negative attitudes, not of the opposition, but of Tasmanians.

Get out and hear what they are saying for yourself, Minister for Transport: the embarrassment of Tasmania hitting national and international headlines. I had a former premier of another state ring me the other night and say, 'I am in Melbourne; I have just heard this incredible story. Is it true that your government has bought a billion dollars' worth of ships and there is nowhere to park them?' I said, 'It is true'. He said, 'But how could this happen?' I said, 'It is quite incredible that it has happened'. This is all over the country, all over the world, the BBC, the news out of Scotland because of this government. You have the approach of the Minister for Transport who does not want to know about it, who says it is a waste of his time to deal with the problem.

Today, we come to the House asking for the House to deal with one of the key promises out of the *Spirits of Tasmania* fiasco: that is the government's promise that they would spend up to \$100 million on local content. The question we asked today was not answered. What has been spent so far? We have one ship finished and about to head to Scotland -

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

MOTION

***Spirit of Tasmania* - New Vessels Delivery**

Resumed from above.

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, before lunch, I was speaking about the lack of accountability and oversight -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, if I could have some silence so that Mr Winter can be heard, please. Chatting in the Chamber is pretty unparliamentary as well.

Mr WINTER - I was talking about the lack of oversight by the Premier in particular, but also by the Minister for Transport. This morning, we asked the government whether it was true that the new CEO of TT-Line was being advertised as a position either in Tasmania or Geelong. Since Question Time, the government has confirmed that the person will need to be based in Tasmania. In the job ad by *Spirit of Tasmania* for their chief executive officer, under location, it lists Tasmania, preferably northern Tasmania. Good. Or Geelong. This is about the lack of oversight. This is what I mean when I say they need their hand constantly held; they need constant supervision. If we had not asked that question today, presumably the new CEO could have potentially been based in Geelong - the *Spirits of Tasmania* in Scotland and the CEO in Geelong. That is the level of oversight by this government.

It took one question from the opposition today for them to, effectively, pull their job ad for the most important position at TT-Line - a position critical for tourism and freight in this state, critical for every Tasmanian who wants to go and see the rest of Australia, to travel. All this put at risk by a government that now has a long history of lack of oversight on this project, a government that did not realise they needed to build a new berth in order for the new ships to be there. They did not realise the expectation would be that if we have a Tasmanian owned government business called the *Spirit of Tasmania*, the CEO should be right in this state. If we had not asked the question, presumably the ad would have kept going.

Now, what do they do with this job ad? Are they going to pull it? Are they going to go to Victorian applicants who have applied, thinking, 'That looks like a good job for me, I could do that out of Geelong!'. They occasionally might venture to Devonport and see if a port has been built yet, the sort of approach that the Minister for Transport and the Premier have taken. The lack of oversight from a government that says they are not interested in looking at what went wrong and proven today to not be interested in what is going on right now either. Both of those things are true, apparently. It is left to this place to hold the government to account. It is also left to this place to, hopefully, support this motion today.

The motion outlines that the *Spirits* project has become the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history. I have not heard a coherent argument against that from anyone in this place or anywhere else. It says it believes it is extremely important that the government deliver its promise of \$100 million - the Premier says 'up to' \$100 million - of local content to be included in the fit-out of the new vessels. The motion, therefore, asks for a list of local content spending to date for the new *Spirits* and the total value of those purchases. This is not top secret. It is only holding the government accountable to the promise it made.

When Peter Gutwein decided to tear up the memorandum of understanding he had with RMC (Rauma Marine Constructions) and go to market to try and build a ship in Australia, he backflipped on that position. He came back and said there would be up to \$100 million of local content embedded in these new ships to be built in Finland. Our job in this place is to hold them to account.

The parliament has a choice to make today about whether it wants to know how much local content is included in those new ships. I have heard some excellent questions, particularly from the member for Braddon last week, on this exact point. I heard great questions today from the member for Lyons, Mr Jenner, regarding the *Spirits*. If we want our questions answered, it is clear the answers are not coming from Question Time. However, the parliament has the power to ask the government to table the information today. It is not difficult, it should not be top secret and it gives the government until tomorrow afternoon to table that information.

We need to hold the government to account and I think it is important that Tasmanians have the ability to contribute to this ship.

Whether it was perception or reality, when these ships were being built and I listened to Peter Gutwein and then Jeremy Rockliff and Michael Ferguson, I understood that the ships were being constructed in Finland and then coming to Tasmania to be fitted out. I spoke to a contractor who told me he was expecting to be on the ship in January this year doing the fit-out on our new ships. However, something has happened and I have not got to the bottom of exactly what has happened in terms of the government's policy on this.

The Minister for Transport proudly talked today about Hydrowood being sent to Finland and he is right about that fantastic timber being sent to Finland for the fit-out. However, my expectation and, I think, the expectation of many others was that the fit-out was going to happen in Tasmania. If that was not the case, I am happy to hear the reasons why, but we expected that the ships would be brought back to Tasmania, fitted out here by local tradespeople using Tasmanian products, all the products that we could, and that would total up to \$100 million.

If the ships are not here, it is difficult to understand how the government is delivering up to \$100 million of local content onto those new ships. This motion, particularly this component of it - I do not understand, and I have not heard from the government yet. I do not know why they would object to this. This is only asking them to be transparent, and 'transparent' is a word the Premier has continued to use over this project. He keeps saying, 'We are being completely transparent about this'. Prove it. Vote for the motion. Table the information. The government can table the information today. They could have answered the question this morning. We want to see the list of local content. We want to understand exactly what has happened.

Part of the government's response to this ferries fiasco, the *Spirits* debacle, whatever you want to call it, has been the attempt to deflect using a proposal to merge TT-Line, TasPorts and

TasRail. That is part of a list of GBE reforms that represents a huge risk to this state. I think the idea of privatising a bunch of GBEs because the government could not oversee TT-Line properly does not make sense. The list of GBEs in the report to include potential privatisation did include Hydro Tasmania, TasNetworks and Aurora. The Premier immediately ruled that out as soon as he stood up at a press conference an hour later. He would not be selling Hydro. However, the other GBEs and state-owned companies remain on the chopping block for privatisation.

Businesses like TasRacing are now being investigated for potential privatisation through this report. It is quite remarkable that there would be some kind of attempt to privatise Tasracing. The minister is looking a bit shocked by that, but that is what is in the report. These are a list of government businesses that could be privatised, including this proposal that TT-Line, TasPorts and TasRail be merged. We have serious concerns about the potential risks in terms of competition, governance and oversight that would carry.

I am not sure the skill set is the same for somebody who is focused on tourism and marketing, and getting more people to come to Tasmania for a holiday, as I think is part of the role at TT-Line, as there is for someone at TasRail, who is focused on making sure we have good transport links within the state. These are very different businesses. The reason you do not have large businesses covering huge territory in terms of a breadth of things in the private sector is because businesses want to specialise. We should have businesses that specialise as well.

It was not really a new proposal. One of my colleagues pointed out that almost at the start of this government 10 years ago, the government announced it was going to have a look at merging TasPorts and TasRail back then. At that time the government spoke about the potential benefits of a merger between TasRail and TasPorts. They commissioned a review about the potential benefits and risks associated with such a merger. The review was conducted by Treasury and in April 2015 the government announced that the merger would no longer proceed. The then minister, Rene Hidding, told the GBE hearing in December that year:

The net result of the findings were that while there would be benefits, they would not be particularly dramatic.

He said:

There are some benefits in staying the way they are and some going the other way.

In other words, it was pretty evenly balanced as to whether it needed to happen at all.

In recognition of that and of the destabilising nature of having a report hanging out there with that matter unresolved, the government took the position that there was not enough motivation from that finding for us to move to combine the companies into one company.

In the context of the destabilising nature that the minister outlined at the time, I want to talk about how destabilising it will be, and is, for TT-Line, TasPorts and TasRail to be considering their futures through a potential merger at this point in time. The same people who have been tasked with saving this project and getting the berth finally built for our new *Spirits* are now having to write reports and respond to a government that is talking about potentially

merging them. Is that really the right environment for the business to finally get its act together and deliver on the port? I argue the answer to that is no.

I want TT-Line and TasPorts to focus on their number one job - in fact, their only job at this stage - which is to get that berth built. We need TasPorts to focus on getting berths and wharf infrastructure built all over the state. We still do not have anywhere down south for the *Nuyina* to properly refuel. Burnie Port is falling apart. There are issues in the Mersey which have been well outlined. At Bell Bay we have the opportunity of a lifetime for this state to be a leader in the development and maintenance of an offshore wind sector slipping through our fingers because we are not grasping it. Those organisations need to focus on their core business, and the government's attempt to deflect from very serious issues and very serious political problems with this merger attempt is causing them to be diverted from their key role. We have a premier and a minister who are not interested in accountability and holding them to account, and we have the people inside the businesses who are having to deal with this potential merger at the same time.

We have asked for this information. I know that many people have asked for the report that is referred to in the motion, an unredacted copy of the 2015 Treasury review of the potential merging of TasPorts and TasRail. I do not understand why the government would not allow this to be tabled. I hope that today the minister will simply support and table the report. He could table it today. It would outline some of those risks and in fact may ease some of the concerns within the sector about this. It is not exactly the same as what the government has announced, but it is very similar.

Some of the risks of merging TasPorts and TasRail are worth us having a very good understanding of at this stage of the process. At some stage, if the government goes ahead with any of the reforms listed within that GBE report and the work that is ongoing, they will need the support of this House to make it happen. They cannot dispose of government businesses or state-owned companies (SOCs) without the support of the parliament. In the spirit of being transparent and explaining what they are planning to do, they should provide this House with all the evidence that is required for them to make any sort of decision.

Perhaps I am wrong and there are no competition issues with TasPorts and TasRail operating together. That might be in the report. Perhaps that is a better idea than merging those two organisations with TT-Line, but the House deserves to have the information and has the power to get that information today. The House has an option. It can either choose to have all the information about the government's approach to government business enterprise mergers, or it can choose not to, but why would the House choose not to want this information? Why would the House choose not to know how much local content has gone into our new *Spirits*? There is no reason for us not to know this information. It is not top secret.

I have concerns about the merger of TT-Line into a TasPorts/TasRail entity. When those new ships were brought to Tasmania in 2002, the vision of those ships was about our tourism and hospitality sectors. It was about Tasmania being seen and experienced by anyone in the world, and particularly in Australia, and that these ships represented a Tasmania that was changing, a Tasmania that was positive, a Tasmanian economy that was thriving and growing, and it was. They were the pride of Tasmania and they are still the pride of Tasmania, but somewhere along the line there has been a real loss of focus on tourism within TT-Line.

One of the policies we have announced about this is that a Labor government would ensure that there is always somebody from the tourism industry on the TT-Line board to make sure there is always that level of communication and expertise on the board so that we have that sort of skill set there so there is a focus on tourism. Yes, the *Spirits* have been about freight and they have been about Tasmanians wanting to go and see the rest of Australia. It has been about that, but at its core it should be about tourism, and the risk of merging this entity with TasPorts and TasRail is that it loses that focus even more. It loses focus on the very thing that brought it to Tasmania, the very vision of it in the first place, and I do not want to see that lost but I think there is a real risk in merging it.

There is also competition risks when you have TT-Line operating freight competing against, for example, SeaRoad and other freight organisations in the same ownership group as TasPorts. There are competition risks there that are pretty obvious and would need to be managed extremely carefully, if they could be managed at all, and I am not sure they could be. These are serious issues and risks to the private sector, to Tasmanian freight and competition. We do not want to see a situation where we build a monopoly GBE that is crowding out competition, because competition across Bass Strait is good. We already know we have an extremely expensive piece of sea for Tasmanian exporters to get across and the last thing we want to do is inhibit growing competition from the private sector. We want the TT-Line to be complementing what is already there.

We have a choice today. The House has an important choice to make. Does it want to know what is going on with the *Spirits of Tasmania*? Does it want to know how much local content is going into these ships? I think we should want to know. I think it is our job to know, to ask questions and get as much information as we can. I am not asking for anything that should be top secret, I am just asking for the truth.

Paragraph (4)(b) asks for an unredacted copy of that 2015 Treasury review into the potential merging of TasPorts and TasRail. You have to ask yourself: if the government does not want to release this report, why? This report is about a very similar proposal to what we are dealing with now. Any merger proposal will require the approval of parliament and decision-makers in this place so we should have every piece of information that is available to us.

As I said at the start of this, we have a government and a minister who clearly are not interested in accountability. They have chosen over the course of the last six months to deliberately withhold the truth. Let us not forget that the Premier of Tasmania knew that these ships would not be operating this summer as early as 22 April this year and did not tell anyone and I suspect the Minister for Transport knew at a very similar date and did not tell anyone - did not tell the freight sector, did not tell his stakeholders, the industry and the people who were desperate for the new ships. The Premier did not tell the hospitality sector, the tourism sector, any of his stakeholders, anyone on the north-west coast for months, even though he knew those new ships were not coming, so we need to extract every piece of information we can out of this government.

Unfortunately, today it has to be by ordering the tabling of papers. I wish we did not have to do that, but if the government does not answer questions in Question Time it leaves us with very little option. I commend the motion to the House and I hope they will, as so many of the members of the House have talked about, vote today for transparency and getting all the information that is needed for Tasmanians.

[2.49 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Transport) - Honourable Speaker, yet again, a diatribe of negativity, which I think only surpasses the previous negativity from the Leader of the Opposition. Instead of providing us, in the 30 minutes or so that he had, with a pathway forward, it was just relentless negativity and accusations and assertions that indicate to the Tasmanian public that he has no solution. What he has is a capacity to wallow around in a situation that all Tasmanians accept is completely unacceptable. It is a terrible situation that we find ourselves in.

What the Tasmanian people need to ask themselves is, given the situation we find ourselves in, would you prefer Mr Winter and Ms Brown to deal with the situation?

Mr Winter - Yes.

Ms Brown - Yes.

Mr ABETZ - Or Premier Rockliff and minister Abetz to deal with the situation?

Ms Brown - No.

Mr Winter - I am not sure you want to ask that question.

Mr ABETZ - The only person to say yes was Ms Brown - not even Mr Winter was willing to say yes to that.

Members interjecting

The SPEAKER - I hope you are not encouraging interjections there, leader.

Mr Winter - By interjection - for the record, I did say yes. Just for the *Hansard*, Speaker.

The SPEAKER - Noted, Mr Winter.

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, concerned as I am about the blood pressure of the Leader of the Opposition, I can - and this is going to debunk all the conspiracy theories - table the investigation into the better alignment of TasRail and TasPorts final report from December 2014. Look at that. The blood pressure has gone down already for the Leader of the Opposition. With the approval of the House, I would seek to table that.

I understand it may have been made available to the leader already via RTI, but whether that has occurred or not -

The SPEAKER - As a minister, you do not necessarily need to seek leave to have it tabled; you can just table a document.

Mr ABETZ - Good, and I have done so. Thank you for that, Speaker.

Paper tabled.

The SPEAKER - Indeed. Nicely done.

Mr ABETZ - As a result, part of the motion is already otiose. It is already superseded; it is not needed.

I say to this House that what we are seeking to do as a government - and look, I was criticised for not wanting to wallow around in the past. We do have to find out what occurred and we have good people dealing with that. I, as a minister, am charged by the people of Tasmania to seek to get the best possible outcome in relation to the future, and that is what I am focusing myself on and what the government is focused on, to ensure that we can get the best possible result.

I believe there is some sort of misunderstanding by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the contractual arrangements that have been entered into. First of all, this motion mischievously refers to \$100 million, whereas all the public announcements were 'up to \$100 million'. Those important word games are indicative of the deception that is being undertaken by the opposition in this debate. They are not willing to quote exactly word for word, and then imply that, somehow, we are dishonest or keeping information.

If you want to make that claim, you have to come to the game with clean hands. When you say 'misquote' and 'distort' - that which was originally and initially said - you lose the opportunity to present yourself in a debate with clean hands. Indeed, when you have to rely on misquoting, that is when people should be put on full alert to know that political and very lazy games are being played, because you just get rid of a few words out of a sentence to make it look different, and then it is easier to attack but it is not integrity, it is not honesty and it is not robust.

What I would say to the Leader of the Opposition is that we need complete clarity in relation to where he stands on these issues and what his solutions are. Today, in 30 minutes, not one offer of a solution or suggestion was put to us.

The member for Lyons, Mr Jenner, asks genuine questions. What happens with the warranty? Genuine issues without all the derogatory introduction that the Labor Party has with their questions, just a straight-out question: what is the factual circumstance? What is more, he is getting the factual answer, as I was able to provide.

In relation to local content, as I understand the situation - and I will get it absolutely clarified for the GBE scrutiny next week - it is part of the RMC contract that avails itself of up to \$100 million of local content. Until such time as the full construction of the two vessels has been completed, RMC is not able to indicate, even if they could do under the commercial terms - and that needs to be checked out as well - how much of the up to \$100 million has been achieved. One of the vessels is still being built as we speak. There are some things, for example - and this is where it gets difficult.

I will pick on a random issue: mattresses. It makes good sense that the vast majority of mattresses be put on board in Hobart. However, the crew sailing out the vessel deserve mattresses to sleep on; we might be all agreed on that. Only a component of mattresses, as I understand it, from a Tasmanian supplier, have been provided to Finland.

You can understand the complexity and the nuances of contracts that we need to be dealing with, and that not everything has been provided as yet. Some of the items can be installed - another example I would imagine would be the crockery plates and things like that.

We would all be agreed that the people bringing the vessel out to Tasmania deserve to eat off plates, but do you need all the plates already sent over? No, we do not.

Ms Dow - He does not care about Tasmanian content unless it is Tasmanian pottery.

Mr ABETZ - It is nearly always the ignorant who laugh when facts are being put on the table. We may well be getting a display of that in this House this afternoon.

Mr Winter - You are talking about plates.

Mr ABETZ - If they do not understand the complexities, the best offence is to laugh and pretend there is no argument to be made.

Mr Winter - You are talking about the cutlery on the ships.

Mr ABETZ - It is a sad reflection. Allow me, Speaker, to read a message that I have just received from the interim chair of TT-Line, a former distinguished chancellor of the University of Tasmania, a former Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, who might know a little bit more about these things than those who think that they can be smart by having a little giggle during this debate when facts are laid on the table. He said:

I understand the details of the local content component and cost for the new vessel bill are being sought as a matter of urgency. The responsible entity for achieving the up to \$100 million local content component in the construction of the two new vessels is Rauma Marina Constructions (RMC), and the end date for determining that actual figure is, as I understand it, the end of the warranty period for both vessels.

As we know the second vessel is not yet complete. Therefore, the figure as at today is one which our company does not have, and the disclosure of any aspect of this figure is one which, because of commercial-in-confidence restrictions, we cannot make without legal advice from the solicitors in London who settled the contract we hold with Rauma. We would also likely need approval from RMC to release this information.

There you have it.

Mr Winter - Case closed.

Mr ABETZ - It is in fact case closed, Leader of the Opposition. You can suggest that you somehow know better than the former Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and chancellor of the university and that you are willing to match your intellectual capacity against his. Good luck, but I would say to you that when you have an interim chair of the nature of Mr Bugg KC, I am more than willing to listen to his considered advice. We cannot seek to use the forms of this parliament to seek an organisation to breach commercial in-confidence matters and also to provide information which is not in the possession of either myself as minister or TT-Line as we speak. That is where you need a full understanding of all the issues and a mature approach devoid of political opportunism. That is what I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite to consider in this debate.

As I understand it, the penalty clause which was asserted earlier today is in place and we will need to consider at the end of the two vessels being completed as to what, if any, underspend there has been on local content.

The Leader of the Opposition went into quite some considerable time discussing the proposed GBE reforms. Some of the comments made by him are valid and that is why we have bounced the ball for a consideration of the desirability or otherwise of mergers and other aspects of GBE governance. To seek to criticise or come to a conclusion immediately on some of these matters is, once again, to be politically opportunistic and lazy. Surely you can have a mature, serious, considered discussion as to how GBEs can be improved. One day they want everybody sacked and the next they complain that there might not be a quorum present. As we were able to point out in question time today, there is a quorum, and what the Leader of the Opposition and many others have called for, a refreshing of the board, is exactly the process we are engaged in today and will continue to be engaged in, without putting the GBE into administration. How would things be progressing if you sacked the CEO, the board and everybody else? You would not be progressing the matter.

Mr Winter - You are the one who sacked the chair. Who do you think sacked him?

The SPEAKER - Leader of the Opposition, you were heard in silence. I have to ask you to cease your interjections.

Mr ABETZ - The hapless Leader of the Opposition interjects that we sacked the chair of the board of TT-Line. You know what? If we had not asked for his resignation - which he abided by and we thank him for that - the Leader of the Opposition would be criticising us for not having done so. This is the opportunism of the Leader of the Opposition who has only one consideration and that is politics. Politics is the only game in town for him, rather than a mature consideration of the matters we need to deal with.

What I would say to him, the Labor Party and anybody who has a genuine interest in the issue of GBE reform, is put all the issues and concerns on the table and let us marinate them. Let us see what a mature consideration will lead to. There is no difficulty. I understand that competition may well be an issue that needs to be fully considered and fleshed out in relation to any merger proposal, but that does not mean there might be a problem, therefore we do not look at it. No, we as a government are willing to say there are issues, so let us put everything on the table and see what can be achieved for the benefit of the people of Tasmania. It may well be that at the end of it we do not have a merger of all three, or we do. Let us wait and see what all the evidence, consideration and mature reflection provided to us as a community and as a government before being wholesale critical without being concerned about the best possible outcome.

Speaker, last week, if I recall correctly - it seems like an eternity ago - this House clothed the Public Accounts Committee with further powers. It is the proper committee to look at these things and there is no need, with respect, for this particular motion, albeit that we agree that some of the clauses in it are sustainable, albeit we would have different wording, and I will in due course be moving an amendment to the motion currently before us. I am aware that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts recently wrote to my ministerial colleague, Mr Vincent, asking for a number of issues to be dealt with and clarified and that is what he will be doing. The Public Accounts Committee is the appropriate vehicle for us to deal with those matters.

The local content I have dealt with. There is up to \$100 million of local content and there are penalty provisions included in the contract in the event these local content provisions are not satisfied. There are also other issues we can deal with at some later time in relation to the contractual arrangements, but this is an important transformative project for the people of Tasmania. I am sure somebody in this House who has been here longer than myself will be able to confirm this, but if a certain Labor Party had been elected, and I forget which election that would have been, they would have scrapped the whole proposal for new vessels coming to Tasmania. We as a government took on the task. We knew it would be transformative, we knew it would be difficult, and we are working through the issues to the very best of our ability.

As to saying that the TT-Line has let us down in relation to certain matters, all I will say at this stage is that things are still being looked at and investigated and I will await the outcomes of all that before I make further comment. In the meantime, I am projecting forward to ensure that we get the best possible outcome, especially at berth 3, and get that happening as soon as possible for the benefit of the people of Tasmania.

The SPEAKER - Minister, are you tabling or moving that amendment now?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, I was just about to get onto that, Speaker; you pre-empted me. I will move the following amendment and I have copies for the benefit of members. That is the amendment and that is how the motion would then read once amended.

The SPEAKER - To move it you have to read the amendment.

Mr ABETZ - Yes. I move the following amendment -

That we remove paragraph (1) -

Mr Winter - You are going to remove paragraph (1)? You are denying it.

The SPEAKER - Are copies being circulated to members? Normally, we would have the copies circulated to members as you speak to it.

Mr ABETZ - Yet again we have certain elements not even waiting for the rest of the sentence but making cheap political commentary. The amendment would be:

To remove paragraph (1) and replace it with -

- (1) Notes that the Public Accounts Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into the TT-Line *Spirits* project and that the House last week resolved to write to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee to request that the committee's current TT-Line *Spirit* project inquiry be expanded.

Insert a new paragraph after paragraph (1) -

Notes the significant impact that has resulted from lack of adequate berthing facilities at the Devonport port to support the arrival of the new *Spirits* vessels.

Leave out paragraph 1 and insert instead:

Agrees it is extremely important for TT-Line to deliver its commitment for up to \$100 million of local content to be included in the fit-out of the new vessels.

In paragraph 2, after the words 'carries potentially serious risks', insert the words 'and opportunities'.

In paragraph 4, replace 'orders the Premier, the Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP', with 'calls on the government'; and remove clause 4(a).

Add after paragraph 4:

Calls on the government to provide by 5 p.m. on 10 December 2024 a list of local content spending to date for the new *Spirits* and the total value of those purchases.

That is the amendment I am a moving for the reason that there are aspects here that have already been resolved -

The SPEAKER - Minister, you are now starting a new 30-minute debate on the amendment. I do not know, though, whether - have you tabled the 2015 unredacted copy of the Treasury review before?

Mr ABETZ - Have I tabled the report? Yes.

The SPEAKER - Would you then have to also move that you would note that an unredacted tabled copy - because otherwise you are calling to do something you have already done. Do you want to make an amendment to that? I am happy to leave it as you want but it becomes -

Mr ABETZ - It can remain in as is because it has already been done, honourable Speaker. What we as a government are seeking to do and encourage the House, especially those on the crossbench, to consider is the very considered advice from Damian Bugg KC, who is the interim chair of TT-Line, who has indicated the difficulty in even complying with the request by 5 p.m. on 10 December. To demand this information basically by close of business tomorrow will simply not be possible because the information is not in the hands of myself, the department or the TT-Line. It is in the hands of the Finnish shipbuilder on the other side of the world. To try to get this information, even if it were available - and given that the vessels have not been fully constructed, it is a very difficult bit of information being sought, I doubt it can be obtained within 24 hours. The interim chair has indicated that this information is not within the possession of the TT-Line at this time and, therefore, a better time would be 10 December, which would allow the information, if available, to be provided.

I say to the House with great respect, if you were to carry a motion with deadlines, knowing that the deadline cannot be achieved, not through any want of trying or seeking to hide information, but because it is impossible practically to achieve, then I think you do yourselves a discredit by seeking to make possible the impossible. That is where, in these debates, you need to be reasonable and sensible. That is my appeal to the crossbench, even if

that approach does not suit the political game-playing of the Leader of the Opposition. To request things you know are unattainable is to do yourself, the House and this parliament a disservice.

The local content is something that is vitally important. That is why the government sought, with TT-Line, to negotiate that with RMC. As I understand it - and I will stand corrected on this - RMC, the shipbuilder in Finland, then contracts directly with the local Tasmanian supplier, not through TT-Line. However, I will get absolute certainty in relation to that, and am more than willing to stand corrected and come into this place if I need to correct the record on that.

There are many issues here. As a relatively new minister trying to get his head around all the issues, whilst noting that other people are doing work behind the scenes to ascertain what went on and why it went on, my focus and absolute commitment is to move things forward, especially with berth 3.

In relation to local content, I think everybody would accept that we all try to outdo each other as proud Tasmanians and that every single one of us in this Chamber would like to see as much Tasmanian content, as much Australian content, as possible in *Spirits IV* and *V*. There is no game-playing to be had by saying one person is more Tasmanian than the other. I think that is one thing, despite all our differences, that unites us, that we do want the very best for Tasmania, for the people of Tasmania. Part and parcel of that is getting the very best out of the situation we find ourselves in - a situation the Premier has acknowledged we should not have found ourselves in. More will, undoubtedly, be said in due course about the circumstances that arose, who had oversight of what, and what was said to whom, all those sorts of things. Other people are working on that. I am focusing on the future -

Mr Winter - You are interested in that now? You were not last week.

Mr ABETZ - This is where the Leader of the Opposition cannot help himself and interjects yet again. You can say that I am focused on the future, whilst knowing there are other people dealing with what has occurred in the past and getting that underway. You can walk and chew gum at the same time, Leader of the Opposition. Sometimes you can delegate work to other people to ascertain things for you.

In summing up, I commend the amendment to the House and again appeal to those on the crossbench especially. I do not think you do the House or yourselves a great service by insisting on something you know cannot be done. The best endeavour will be made for 10 December. However, if commercial-in-confidence and other considerations from RMC come into play, that will be reported to members as soon as I possibly can. With that, I commend the amendment to the House.

The SPEAKER - To advise the House, we can put the amendment now or we can speak to the amendment. I will allow contributions on both the substantive motion and the amendment, if you wish. You, as the mover of the amendment, might want to take the opportunity, but I know that the member for Clark wishes to speak. We could put the amendment and then deal with either an amended or unamended motion. I will allow flexibility to speak. Ms Burnet, you can speak to the combined motions in your contribution.

Mr WINTER - I will try to stick to five minutes, because I know others want to speak as well.

The SPEAKER - We have 32 minutes left of the debate, roughly.

Mr WINTER - We do not support the amendment brought by the Leader of the House. Mr Abetz read some advice from Mr Bugg. It would be helpful if the minister tabled that advice from the acting chair of TT-Line in order for the House to understand the veracity or otherwise of that advice. It does feel like Groundhog Day because I remember these excuses being given when we wanted the information about Marinus. We had all these letters read out to us about the reasons why it could not happen. When we interrogated the letters, they did not say what the government claimed they said. In fact, I cannot go too much further into it because it happened in the Privileges committee, but the House at that time was concerned about the veracity of those letters, and I want to see the advice. If that is what the leader of government business is relying on for the House not to support the original motion, he should share it with the House. I think that would be fair enough for him to do: that is the advice from Mr Bugg.

The SPEAKER - You can request that of that minister and he can choose to do it or not. The only other thing to do would be further amend the motion to order him to table the documentation.

Mr WINTER - I believe the message has been received. I think we are okay.

The SPEAKER - I will seek some advice on that to give you an update on what is possible at this point.

Mr WINTER - There are other concerns I have with this motion. The first is that by deleting point (1) - 'notes the *Spirits* project has become the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmania's history' - the government wants to delete that, which is like deleting history. I challenged the Minister for Transport at the start of this debate to explain why that is not the case. Tell me, what is a bigger infrastructure stuff up in Tasmania's history? Name one. I have not heard anybody make an argument that it is not. It has to be. The government wants to delete it anyway.

It is true. It is the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmanian history. Over the course of six years it will cost our economy \$3 billion and cost Tasmanian taxpayers \$500 million. It is the biggest infrastructure stuff up, yet the amendment from the Leader of the House and the Minister for Transport is to delete it. Delete a fact, without any evidence, without any retort, without any debate - just delete a simple fact that is true. It is the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmanian history. It has been proven and it is right, so we should not delete that part of the motion.

Point (3) says 'agrees it is extremely important for TT-Line to deliver its commitment for up to \$100 million'. It was not TT-Line's commitment, it was this Tasmanian Liberal government's commitment - Peter Gutwein's commitment, in fact. TT-Line did not want to rip up the MOU with RMC. The chair at the time said it was a stupid idea. He said it could never happen. He said you could not build the ships in Australia; it was never going to happen. It is not TT-Line's commitment. They wanted to stick with the original plan.

The commitment of up to - if that is what it is - \$100 million is this Tasmanian Liberal government's. The amendment is inaccurate. It is not TT-Line's commitment; it is yours. Your government's commitment is exactly this. On this, I had a quick search as I listened to the Minister for Transport speaking about what the commitment was, and I went back to the *Hansard* from the GBE hearing last year on 24 November and then Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Michael Ferguson. He said:

Construction of our two magnificent new vessels continued during 2022-23 along with TT-Line entering into contracts with an extensive list of Tasmanian businesses to supply the new vessels as part of RMC's commitment to deliver at least \$100 million in local content.

'At least'. I went to the Legislative Council *Hansard* as well and found that he said exactly the same thing. It is written in the notes. Saying that the commitment was always 'up to' is not accurate. At various times the government has said \$100 million and they have even said 'at least'. To say that the original motion is incorrect is to say that your minister for Transport and Infrastructure was incorrect, and all the other times that I heard Peter Gutwein, Jeremy Rockliff, Michael Ferguson say the commitment. Tasmanians expected \$100 million worth of local content. They expected local contractors to be on those boats, and you know what they really expected? The ships to be in Tasmania where they belong. They did not expect them to be still in Finland, they did not expect them to be in Scotland, but that is where they are because this government has overseen the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmania's history.

I will leave the advice from Mr Bugg there. If the minister wants to share that with the House, I am happy to read it, but I have not been convinced by the arguments of the minister about why he cannot produce this evidence. I think the House should order the minister and this government to table all this advice by tomorrow at 5.00 p.m.

Members - Hear, hear.

The SPEAKER - On indulgence, minister. You cannot have the call, but on indulgence I will let you respond to the request.

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Transport) - Yes, if I may on indulgence: I am more than happy to table the email forwarded to me by Damien Bugg, interim chair of TT-Line, which I read out into the *Hansard*, which was forwarded to me at 2.34 p.m. this afternoon.

The SPEAKER - Further speakers on the amendment? I will allow conversation on the motion given the time limitations for the debate.

[3.25 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak first to this amendment. It seems to be a pattern of the government with amendments and how they are presented, because with a previous amendment to a motion last week, we considered it was effectively a gutting of the original intent of the motion. I believe that is what I am seeing here. As Mr Winter has said, this has completely changed the tone of the motion.

Is it reasonable to consider having more time to table this by December? That is a question, but it is not an amendment that I would support. The motion in its tone - and I will go now to the original motion - is in two parts. We have the information in relation to the new

Spirits and the project of the new *Spirits*, and we have the prospect of a merger of TT-Line, TasPorts and TasRail. I will discuss those separately.

The information that has been put forward by the Minister for Transport both in this debate but also earlier today in relation to the information that we should be provided, as the House, is flabbergasting. There is no clarity or transparency, and it looks like there is something to hide. It is not something that we should expect from this government. We should expect clarity rather than burying what is possibly another chapter in the travesty that is this story and this debacle of TT-Line.

At the heart of all our decisions is a responsibility to the Tasmanian people. What we are seeing instead is a cover up, a lack of clarity, and no answers to the probing questions that this motion tries to get to. It is trying to tackle some of the issues that we see in relation to the *Spirits*.

The answers from minister Abetz about the fit-out this morning were very loose. There was not much detail in how much of the fit outs were complete, or where and when that might be happening. To be honest, rather than feeling comforted and pleased with the answer given to the opposition's questions this morning, there were more questions raised for me. Having this motion to debate today has given me a chance to think about it with greater clarity and greater concern for how Tasmanians' money is being spent.

We have had this \$1-billion disaster with ferries not delivered yet and ferries berthed in Scotland. We do not know whether they are going to be leased. We know that the infrastructure has not arrived here and has not been built. There has been a lot of misinformation in relation to when the board of TT-Line might have delivered that, so there are huge questions that arise from this ferries fiasco.

Going to the heart of the questions, if we are looking at up to \$100 million of local content, I think from Estimates last year, which is probably the most accurate we have heard today, but some of the companies listed on the TT-Line's *Spirit* story that are quoted as doing some of the fit-out are Fairbrother, who are making 300 tables from Tasmanian oak, Huon pine and laminate; Benchmark Agencies in Launceston to supply carpets for all cabins; Van Pod Vending from Launceston, who back in 2022 was providing youth arcade game machines; Chalice Water Systems, providing water filling stations; Handmark Gallery in Salamanca was providing art; CBG Systems Tasmania was installing fire safety measures; Hype TV was making a documentary; Waverley Mills doing the throw rugs; and Hydrowood, as has been talked about.

I wonder how many other companies are involved, whether that makes up to \$100 million or \$100 million of Tasmanian content, or whether there are more questions to be asked about this. In the back of my mind is a feeling that there is more to this story.

This is a cover-up. Trying to amend a motion so that it is virtually unrecognisable I think speaks volumes as to what this House is expecting. We should be seeing greater transparency. We should be seeing the House working together, but it really does beg the question as to what we are seeing.

I will go to an article on the ABC website from 25 October with the headline, 'How can they be leased if they haven't been fitted out yet?':

TT-Line has engaged a broker to check if there is any global interest in leasing the ships ... This assessment is expected to be completed as quickly as possible, but the ships still need a significant fit-out after the government promised up to -

'up to' has crept in there -

'\$100 million in local content'.

The Tasmanian businesses involved have not been fully disclosed. The government might have planned to use each of them for photo opportunities as the items were completed.

It talks about Fairbrother, the mattresses, as Minister Abetz has talked about, and the plan was to have the six-week fit-out completed in Tasmania - not going to happen - during the final testing stage. If the vessels are leased elsewhere, these items might need to be packed up, shipped off and fitted inside the vessel somewhere else. That is what we are considering at the moment or the travellers can just eat without tables, maybe without crockery as well. Who knows?

As to the second point of this motion, unamended, about the merger of TT-Line, TasPorts and TasRail and that consideration, I think it is screamingly obvious that at the moment we should not be talking about any sort of merger of TT-Line, TasPorts and TasRail. We are not seeing a great deal of competency in delivering projects here, are we? We have a billion-dollar project, it is overdue, has not been delivered, does not have the infrastructure in place, and now we are talking about a merger of three GBEs? Unbelievable. It is just incredible that that is even considered at this point in time. It beggars belief and it is certainly not delivering for Tasmanians.

I welcome the motion. The Greens will be supporting the motion unamended and I look forward to seeing more information in relation to this rather than it being buried, which we have seen today. We have seen it buried away as much as possible and we do not have that clarity or oversight. I look forward to GBE scrutiny.

[3.35 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, when I first saw the motion and the key aspects of it - essentially the information about the spending to date on the new *Spirits* and the total value of those purchases, and the unredacted copy of the 2015 Treasury review of the potential merging of TasPorts and TasRail - I was not against it. There is a real deficit of trust in the community about the government's ability to deliver on these things, hence there is a need and a want for more information and more transparency. We have had a number of debates in this House on how that has worked.

Last week we referred a very important - I will be a bit cheeky, I saw the press release from Labor on the Thursday or Friday after the debate that we had.

Mr Winter - You liked it?

Mr O'BYRNE - I thought it was lovely, considering you voted against the motion. No, it was very good; I will give you full points for that. Well played.

On this matter, there was talk of an amendment and I was very concerned about that in terms of the principal aspects of the motion, I think it is important that we get an update on the progress of the investment and the accountability measure around the Tasmanian and local component of the spend. That is crucially important. Prior to being made aware of Mr Bugg's email, I was not wanting to compromise on that. I will touch on Mr Bugg's email in a minute.

In terms of the Treasury review - let us get that out there - and your amendment to include opportunities as well, if you asked me today if I would be in support of a mega-merger, I would say no. When I was infrastructure minister, there was lots of discussion about a potential aligning of the work of TasRail and TasPorts - Logistics Tasmania, I think people were talking about. There were some merits to it, but in terms of their regulatory functions, their market exposure and competition issues, they are of great concern. If we are making an assessment on that kind of decision, it would be stupid to just look at the risk. You need to look at both sides of the ledger, and it would be up to the people of Tasmania and, through them, us, to look at the pros and cons of any sort of decision. I think including opportunities is a sensible amendment and I would support that element of it.

In terms of the removal of paragraph (1), the opposition and the leader have done a very good job in making sure that when people think of TT-Line and TasPorts, they think 'stuff-up'. I think they have achieved that so it is gratuitous to include it, and it was a trial. It is our responsibility in this House to try to strip a bit of the politics away where we can, noting it is a political environment. The government has acknowledged they have stuffed up.

Mr Winter - What is a bigger stuff-up?

Mr O'BYRNE - It is a moot point. There is a whole lot of stuff you could list and it is in the eye of the beholder, I would say, Leader of the Opposition. The government has acknowledged it has been a disaster. We are in a terrible spot; the government acknowledged that, so let us not poke people in the eye. They have acknowledged that the Public Accounts Committee are working through their process. I think that is a sensible acknowledgement. They have also acknowledged the significant impacts, so they are stripping out the politics of paragraph (1) but including the acknowledgement of the concern, which I support.

The only issue I would have is with the correspondence - and I understand you have shared it - where Mr Bugg says that the entity responsible for the \$100 million is not them, it is RMC. I am not sure if that is a lazy or poor use of words, but that concerns me because it is the government's and TT-Line's responsibility to ensure that there is local content and that they meet that. RMC have a role to play; RMC have an obligation. They have signed a contract - that is true - but at the end of the day it is TT-Line and the government that are responsible.

We probably will not have time during today's debate, but I would be really comforted if there is an edit or an acknowledgement from TT-Line that they have a role to play, because it says in the email that it is not their responsibility, and I think that is potentially part of the reason why we are here, if that is a firm commitment from Mr Bugg. It may just be a poor use of words. I will give him the benefit of the doubt and I am sure next week in hearings he will clear that up, hopefully at length.

I would have assumed that, given the public interest and the concern for this issue, all stops would have been pulled out to ensure that the government and the departments had all the information. I would have thought that if there was a concern and if people were blaming

TT-Line for a lack of effort, people would be bending over backwards. You would think that if there was a question - and you could have predicted the question and the request for an update on expenditure - they would have already been working on that, to ensure that when the minister asked in the regular monthly meetings or the post board meetings, 'I want an update on the figures', this information would have already been worked out, particularly given the hypersensitivity around this issue.

I was not necessarily going to be supportive of an extension of time. Looking at an email from Mr Bugg, I am less than happy to accept an extension of time, because it is concerning. Hopefully at the hearings next week Mr Bugg will be able to provide an update.

I would have much preferred to have this level of information heading into those scrutiny hearings. That would have been my preference, but you have committed to provide it. It will be an incomplete figure. Mr Bugg's email talks about legal advice and commerciality. I would think that loaded up figures, or figures that do not identify certain aspects or companies, would satisfy me that investment is being made, but we need those figures. I think the government in normal circumstances would probably not feel the need to provide this kind of information, but given that we are where we are -

Mr Abetz - It is not normal.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, it is very unusual and hopefully it is one of the few times that the state is in this kind of environment. The minister would not be surprised that people are questioning the government's commitment and wanting to see information that tests the veracity of your words, and the words and the activities of TT-Line.

Whilst I think that the original motion, even with the politics, could have been supported, I understand the argument that has been provided to the government from TT-Line. There is no edit to the Treasury document; that is out there in full view. That is good. You have committed to providing that spending and the total value of those purchases regardless of the advice that will clearly be received from Mr Bugg. I am concerned about the timeframe, but as long as we get it, that is the most important thing.

At the beginning of the debate I was not open to the amendment, but working through it and listening to that email from Mr Bugg, I will support the amendment.

[3.44 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I want to contribute to the discussion. Given that I resigned from Cabinet on the basis of what can only be described, frankly, as a terrible mess that has occurred with the delivery of berthing infrastructure at Devonport for this very significant ship purchase, I want to be very careful not to use the brief time available to in any way attempt to rewrite history or defend myself, because I have taken ministerial responsibility on the matter. I want that matter to sit on the record without what I am about to say being made to appear, by others, as Michael Ferguson trying to be defensive about those issues. I want to put a couple of points on the record which I believe are very supportive of minister Abetz's amendments.

First of all, I remind the House of something I said last Wednesday on a private members' motion, where I made the point that any time we have a motion before the House that orders a minister - in this case the Premier of Tasmania - to provide documents that he is not legally

in possession of or not legally able to provide into the public sphere, you are setting that person - in this case the Premier himself - up for an impossible choice. You are setting them up to fail.

I believe it is very dangerous politics that is being played and the worst I have ever seen it done was in this place with minister Barnett, where the House passed a motion ordering minister Barnett to table documents he was not legally allowed to, not to mention that the House gave him all of half an hour to do so. That put him in an impossible position. I believed then and I believe now it was deliberate; it was to force him into a position that he could not break commercial law and put the state into legal jeopardy. Then, exactly as predicted, what happened next was that the same people who voted for that motion then sent that minister off to the Privileges Committee, which is precisely where this goes.

If this House stands for anything, particularly in relation to treating people decently, it ought to take heed of the good sense here. We cannot be ordering a minister, or for that matter any other member of the House, to be doing something that they are not legally able to do. I believe there is a risk here, and I believe that Mr Bugg's own email, which has been helpfully tabled, helps to articulate why it would be legally perilous for the Premier to do that. By the way, I do not believe he has that information. He would have to ask for it.

I feel that the amendment deals with that, and it also appropriately commits the government to provide that information properly on a bona fide basis - that the information will be sought, to the extent that particular details are provided by 10 December. I also mention the obvious point that we have GBE scrutiny next week, which is a perfect opportunity for any member of this House, not just members of the committee, to sit at that table and ask those questions, and allow the company to either provide that information or explain why they cannot. That is only a few days away.

It was mentioned earlier by the Leader of the Opposition that I had used the words 'over \$100 million'. If that is the case, I can only say I would have misspoken.

Mr Winter - You said it twice.

Mr FERGUSON - I have a very clear memory of this. The position was up to \$100 million, and it would be in any number of media releases. However, I also add the point that the CEO, in a GBE hearing last November, made it clear that it will be multiples of the \$100 million when you take into account the additional purchases that the new ships will lead to within Tasmania over the life of the vessels. I do not want to split hairs here. The clear position in my mind has always been up to \$100 million.

I want to close in the few moments I have and point out to the House that on Friday 24 November last year, Ms White was pursuing this particular line of inquiry with the chair, who said:

There's certainly no intention to dodge the question at all because we're very proud of what we're doing with Tasmanian companies, but first and foremost, it wouldn't be appropriate to mention a company's name without their permission. As you said, companies have already been announced by press releases. They have given their permission for that. It's not our position to disclose what those contracts are worth. It's just not appropriate to do that.

Ms White:

I am not asking you to do that.

Mr Granger:

Well, you are.

Ms White - I was not. I was asking for the cumulative total that had been spent.

Mr FERGUSON - I hear you; I am just repeating the transcript, and I got the reaction I was looking for.

Ms White:

I was asking you to provide a cumulative total because there are at least three here. There are others that have been announced, so it would not be possible for anyone to determine what the individual face value was for each of those contracts, and I respect that your company is one that is involved in this too. I understand what you are arguing, but -

Mr Granger:

I'm not arguing. I'm just stating fact.

Ms White:

I do not think there's anything preventing the public from being able to test whether the government has actually kept its commitment.

Mr Granger:

I do not have any doubt at all that the government's commitment will be realised. I do not have any doubt about that at all. I am sure that we can take that question on notice and provide you with as much information as we can, but we are confident the government's commitment for that up to \$100 million will be realised.

It goes on. Mr Grainger, in fairness to him, later on says:

We will be back here in probably four years' time and still will not be able to give you that final answer.

He then goes on to say:

It's a cumulative thing but it all adds up. [TBC]

I just make the point that Ms White followed this line of inquiry and I had earlier said that we would take it on notice and provide everything possible, but you can appreciate that there are some commercial confidential matters to be considered.

I conclude my remarks, Mr O'Byrne, to deal with your comment as well. Although I am not in the portfolio to double-check this, I also understand that the contract obligation here sits with RMC. Of course, we should all insist that it be upheld, but to further round the matter out, it was the government's strong preference - and it was something that TT-Line did - to employ a specific person within TT-Line to drive that local purchasing, to network across businesses in Tasmania and perform that service as the go-between or the broker between potential bidders for work and RMC, who were in the market looking for the supply.

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Street) - The time for debate has expired. The question is that the amendment to the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 17

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis
Mrs Beswick
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Ferguson
Mr Garland
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Jenner
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton (Teller)

NOES 15

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Burnet (Teller)
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Rosol
Ms White
Mr Willie
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

PAIRS

Mr Wood

Ms Finlay

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING (DONATION DISCLOSURE)
AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 55)**

Second Reading

[3.58 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Speaker, I indicate that a vote is required today. I move -

That the bill be now read a second time.

Almost every voter walks to the ballot box with a set of interests guiding their decision to vote. That is normal and there is nothing wrong with it, but people have different interests when they are walking up to vote. Some people are voting for a functioning bus service or a hospital bed when they need it, or to protect our glorious Tasmanian environment.

The problem with donations being made in secret to parties or candidates is that voters have no idea which companies and individuals are paying to give their own interests a leg-up above everybody else's. There is no denying the facts. Donations are made with the intention of getting policy outcomes. Secret donations are secret because the influence they are buying is unpalatable and on full display, it is a naked reveal of influence at work to distort or pervert government processes. Just last week, the government was fast-tracking planning approvals but would not say whether the developers for Stony Rise had donated to the Liberal Party, which is a shame.

The Greens have published the details of donors whose total donations to our party were \$1500 or more in a financial year. However, when they have been asked whether specific donations have been made to their parties, both the Liberal and Labor Party members refuse to answer those questions. Instead, they respond by declaring that they do what is required by law. The law still only requires parties and candidates in Tasmania to work under federal election disclosure threshold laws. These laws allow any single donation below \$16,300 a year to remain secret. Multiple donations can be made below that amount if a donor chooses to keep large sums secret.

In the 2018 election, we saw a huge fight played out across the state to control the legislation-making powers of the incoming government to favour Tasmania's major gambling players, Federal Hotels and the Tasmanian Hospitality Association. The money flooded into Tasmania in that election. We understand the Liberals received at least \$4.167 million, but only declared the donors of \$925,000 of that. After that election, the \$900,000 spent by the Tasmanian Hospitality Association to campaign against the Labor Party and the Greens was rewarded by the Liberals in government with a \$15 million donation. This is the same party that has now abandoned its nation-leading pokies reforms. We will never know how much the influence of donations played a role in that recent decision and how much of it was pressure from an industry lobby group. Pressure, persuasion: they both have the same effect.

In the last reporting period, the Liberals declared \$2.4 million in donations, but they only declared the donors for \$420,000 of that. The Labor Party has been just as secretive. In the 2018 election, Labor reported receiving \$1.128 million but declared the source of just \$245,000 of that money. In the most recent reporting period, Labor received some \$1 million in donations, but only revealed the source of a tiny part of that.

Next July, the disclosure threshold for donations made to candidates and parties will drop to \$5000 per financial year or reporting period. Even so, it still leaves Tasmania with the second highest threshold of any state or territory in the country. It will also still only require annual reporting timeframes for parties to disclose where their donations have come from.

What we have seen as a state over many decades is millions of dollars flowing into the Liberal and Labor Party coffers without the majority of the funding sources ever being revealed to Tasmanians. Most people in the community agree that is not providing a fair playing field for all candidates. It encourages deals that favour donor interests over the public interest.

This bill has a long and extended history. It started life with the government's legislation that passed late last year with Labor's support. When that legislation comes into effect from 1 July 2025, it will still leave Tasmania with the weakest electoral disclosure and funding laws in the country. Since 2018, Victoria has reformed its laws, as has New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. All those jurisdictions have passed reforms that enhanced their political donations and expenditure framework and have made them more publicly accessible.

During debate on the legislation last year, the Greens introduced a range of amendments in an attempt to strengthen the government's legislation. We moved to have expenditure limits and expenditure periods, to have donations caps, a reduction in disclosure thresholds and an increase in the reporting period times. We moved to have real-time disclosures during the end of campaigns, truth in political advertising and limitations on who can make political donations. Both the Liberal and Labor parties voted against these reforms.

On the back of community concern at the Liberals' obvious policy shift on pokies in the March state election that the Greens made a commitment to try again to improve our state's woeful electoral laws. In June, we introduced the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Amendment Bill with a similar range of amendments to those we had previously introduced in an attempt to amend the government's legislation last year. During the debate on that bill in June, the Labor member for Lyons, Ms White, moved for the House to refer the Greens' bill to the Standing Committee on Government Administration B to have an inquiry into the matters and report back to the House.

The committee was tasked with taking evidence with the aim of making recommendations that the parliament might adopt to improve the functions of the act. A range of submissions was presented to the committee, including from legal and psephological experts, community advocates, political parties and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. Their evidence stands as an important contribution to advancing debate about what is healthy for Tasmania's electoral laws, what is administratively possible, what is reasonable and what the wider community expects. There was a clear theme amongst those who presented for improving the transparency of donations laws in Tasmania. As a result of that inquiry, the committee made a number of recommendations for areas of reform it believed would have majority support among members in parliament. These were:

- That the House agree to amendments to the principal act that provide for a reduction in the threshold for a reportable political donation from one of \$5000 or more, to one of \$1000 or more.

- That from the commencement of an election period until seven days from polling day, a reportable political donation is to be disclosed within seven days of the donation being received.
- That outside of an election period, a reportable political donation is to be disclosed within 28 days of the donation being received.

The Greens' amendment bill today is the Electoral Disclosure and Funding (Donation Disclosure) Amendment Bill. In this bill, we include these recommendations from the standing committee.

Our bill lowers the donation disclosure threshold from \$5000 to \$1000. New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT have a threshold of \$1000, and Victoria has a \$1040 threshold, just \$40 higher. The Northern Territory has a threshold of \$1500 and Western Australia sits at \$2500. South Australia would be the only Australian jurisdiction to have a similar threshold to the one Tasmania will have next year of \$5000, subject to indexation. If this bill passes, Tasmania would no longer be at the bottom of the pack in Australia when it comes to donation disclosure thresholds.

A considerable number of submissions to the government's draft bill last year included those from the Integrity Commission, Tasmanian Election Inquiry Ltd., the Human Rights Law Centre, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australia Institute Tasmania and a campaign email sent by an undisclosed number of people. All these individuals and groups advocated for this \$1000 threshold.

Regarding the second recommendation the committee made on reporting times, our bill increases the reporting timeframe outside of election campaign periods to monthly, whereby each month we will be required to report on the previous month's donations. Previously, the bill we tabled in June had required that disclosure be made every seven days after a donation was received outside of an election period. There were a number of submissions to the committee's inquiry and witnesses who advocated for this position, and that is a more stringent position of a greater period of transparency and reporting every week after a donation was made outside of an election timeframe.

However, we recognise that overall, much of the feedback that was given to the committee was that a longer timeframe outside of election periods - that is, of a month and one that is fixed in time - would be more manageable, more administratively reasonable and importantly, in our view, the transparency advantages that would be provided through having disclosures made every week compared to every month would be minimal. As a consequence, we have chosen in the bill before us to require that disclosures be made monthly outside of an election period.

As I flagged, there is a number of reforms from the original Greens bill in June that the committee felt needed to have further work so they would land in a place where reform could be broadly supported across the House. These include ensuring a fair playing field for all candidates by creating a cap on spending; a cap on the donations that can be received; to have public funding of election campaigns; to make sure that political advertising during election campaigns is truthful and we have a system capable of combating disinformation; and banning donations from for-profit corporations.

The Greens do not read these comments from the committee - and we certainly do not believe - as in any way diminishing the importance of pursuing these reforms. How we read the report and as we understand from talking to members across the Chamber, it recognises that in this current moment in the parliament we have more consultation, and possibly research is required to make sure there are no unintended consequences to introducing these reforms and, importantly, to getting agreement for broad support on any one of those I have mentioned.

The Greens remain committed to improving our electoral donations and funding laws so that, to the best of their ability, they can help ensure politics is free of corruption in all its forms. We have been campaigning on these matters for decades. We have a proud policy platform which is available to anyone to look at and see what our policy positions are. People can see we have had these policy positions for a long time, so we are certainly not going to let go of working towards advocating and fighting for having stronger electoral donation and disclosure laws. In this power-sharing parliament with a minority government situation, it is a tremendous opportunity to make other changes that we are able to make here now.

What we have before us in this bill is a nugget of gold that has weathered the test of time. They are modest reforms that have been very well aerated in debates on previous bills, in the amendments we made to the government's legislation last year, in the debate we had and the bill that we introduced in June, in the committee's process and the wider views of the witnesses and submissions that were made to that hearing. What I see before us is an improvement and I understand all members of parliament - the crossbench, the government and the opposition - have indicated their broad support for the changes we have in this bill. This is a very important step for democracy in Tasmania for increasing transparency and accountability and fairness in the conduct of elections.

I thank all the members of the House that I and my office staff have been working with for many months now. It has been the better half of seven or eight months we have been working on the reforms that we have before us today in this debate. I thank members for having worked in good faith and given their feedback and had the opportunity to use the committee process. It has enabled us to be in the position we are in today of finding these things that we can agree on, I hope and expect.

The Greens will continue to fight for the bigger suite of reforms, but we feel very confident that having a reduction in the disclosure thresholds to \$1000 and the increase in the reporting times outside of election periods will mean that, unlike the current situation where we often do not know where the majority of donations made to major political parties come from, Tasmanians will have the opportunity to understand that when they go to cast their vote in an election and that is a really critical step forward for our democracy.

I commend the bill to the House and I look forward to hearing members' views.

[4.17 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Labor Party to indicate our support for the bill brought in by the Leader of the Greens, the Electoral Funding (Donation Disclosure) Amendment Bill 2024. This is a debate that was commenced in this parliament earlier this year, and while we were very supportive of a number of the measures in the bill the Greens brought to the parliament, at that stage it was agreed to send that bill for examination by Committee B.

The leader has spoken about that process to some extent, but as the chair of that committee, I want to take the opportunity to thank everybody who participated and thank everybody who provided submissions and gave evidence to the committee. I found it to be a very constructive process. There certainly were different views shared, both in presentation of information, submissions and evidence and as committee members, but there was never a harsh word said and indeed, I think at the end we came to broadly agree on what we would like to see Tasmania's electoral framework look like in the future, although there are differences as to how we might do that.

I note there was a dissenting report to that committee and members who are members of that committee may have an opportunity to speak on this bill today and at least present the reasons for that, but it has long been the Labor Party's policy to lower the donation threshold to \$1000 and to increase the frequency of disclosure donations. This bill before the House reflects the majority of Committee B's work and the recommendations that came from that committee, and I thank the Leader of the Greens for acknowledging that and bringing forward a bill that reflects very accurately the work of that parliamentary committee.

I think this bill is an example of the parliament working well together in being able to refer something where there is not necessarily agreement in this Chamber to a committee to undertake some further research and come back with a recommendation, which we now find ourselves debating in this Chamber. Perhaps that sets an example for us when it comes to other legislation we debate in this House, where instead of voting down something that has merit because there is a bit of disagreement on the day, we can instead refer those issues to a committee for further examination and try to reach a consensus position.

I think it has been a very mature process and a collaborative one and I am pleased to be able to stand in support of the bill that is before the Chair today. There is certainly no issue from the Labor Party about the amendments that have been put in this bill. I understand that there may be some amendments that the government may wish to move on debate of this bill. In light of the fact that I may have to speak to those and we have a short amount of time, I do not intend to take up much more time today, except to say that I hope that this is the start of further reform.

Whilst there was not a consensus view on some of the other matters that were in the Greens' bill, there is a shared agreement broadly across the parliament that given that there is now public funding provided for Tasmanian election campaigns, there should be a cap on expenditure too. This recognises that we should not be in a circumstance where we are publicly funding campaigns that potentially have no cap. I think that fails the public interest test. We are seeing a debate happening in the federal parliament this week about some similar issues like lowering the threshold for donations, and introducing caps on expenditure in electorates and across election campaigns by political parties.

It is interesting that we now have a state-based regime, because if we did not, this parliament would be subject to the federal laws once they are agreed to, because they were the hallmark and in fact, the framework against which we operated. The legislation that this parliament has agreed to pass and that will be enacted over the coming six to 18 months may be weaker than if we had done nothing at all and just subjected ourselves to the federal laws, which is quite ironic. I believe this is just the next iteration of improvements that we will need to make to Tasmania's laws for elections in this state, and I am very happy to support the amendments that are before the Chair.

[4.22 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to share some remarks on the Electoral Disclosure and Funding (Donation Disclosure) Amendment Bill 2024 brought forward by the Leader of the Greens. I acknowledge the remarks of my counterpart on behalf of the Labor opposition and note the bill proposes amendments to the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*.

The amendments are primarily aimed at reducing the reportable political donation disclosure threshold under the act from \$5000 to \$1000, and setting more frequent reporting timeframes outside of the election period. It also makes an amendment, as I understand it, to the definition of 'party subscription'.

The *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* was one of the two bills that were passed by parliament late last year that delivered on our government's commitment to introduce a fairer, more transparent and more modern political donation disclosure scheme in Tasmania. The new scheme introduced by the act will increase transparency while ensuring that the public continues to have confidence in the outcomes of elections into the future by providing for the disclosure of political donations, as well as reporting of electoral expenditure and public funding at an appropriate level for both administrative and per vote funding.

Importantly, it also brings Tasmania into line with other jurisdictions that have state-based requirements for disclosure of political donations and expenditure. A significant amount of work went into the act. I acknowledge and take this opportunity to thank the Department of Justice for delivering on that legislation. They do a lot of work behind the scenes, and I acknowledge the department and all their efforts on an ongoing basis, not just to support me but also many others across this parliament.

The amendments in this bill were originally part of the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Amendment Bill 2024, which was referred for consideration to Administration Committee B, chaired by Ms White. I have the report in front of me. My government gave a submission and presented to Administration Committee B, and that report is quite lengthy. There were a lot of submissions taken and consideration was given to the legislation before the committee. I commend them on their efforts and thank them for the report. It fills out more information and background on the work before us. I thank the members of the committee for their work in preparing the report and the opportunity to appear before it.

The government provided a detailed submission, which is publicly available and which supports our legislation as it was passed last year. We believe that the *Electoral Disclosure Funding Act 2023*, as it was passed, struck the right balance between the threshold for disclosure of donation and reporting timeframes. Our government does not consider there is any need for further amendments in that respect.

In relation to the reduction of disclosure thresholds, our government considers that the current disclosure threshold for donations of \$5000 is measured and appropriate. The \$5000 threshold in the act provides for transparency of electoral donations while also ensuring that the act does not undermine the ability for people to engage with the electoral process. A lower threshold may have the effect of discouraging people from participating in the political process by means of donations, which is their right and an important aspect of freedom of political expression. We often talk about freedom of speech.

It is noted that the lowering of the threshold likely means that a much larger number of donations will need to be reported, and the amendments therefore represent a significant increase in the administrative burden of that reporting. That needs to be represented in this legislation and taken into account. I will come to that very shortly.

In relation to the amendments to the timeframe for disclosure, the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* as passed aims to balance transparency and accountability with preventing unnecessary administrative burden, taking into account that administrative burden is at the forefront of our mind as a government in the transition from where we are now to where we want to be by 1 July next year. Under the act, the party agents and official agents have a regular six-monthly reporting requirement. That is the current arrangement. I hope that is noted. At the end of the financial and calendar year, all disclosable donations are to be compiled and reported to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

The proposed amendment in the bill requires monthly reporting and thereby creates a significant additional administrative burden, without clear evidence that such a burden is warranted or beneficial. I wanted to foreshadow an amendment at the committee stage that relates to that and takes into account the additional administrative burden that will be created if the act is amended by the bill accordingly.

Despite the view of the government that the amendments proposed by the bill are not necessary and that the existing act strikes the right balance, it is prepared to support the bill if the government's amendments are accepted in committee. I am happy to flag that amendment further, which I do not have to hand just yet, but it is not far away. That is something that will need to be addressed in committee.

The bill last year delivered on our commitment to introduce fairer, more transparent and more modern political donation disclosure schemes in Tasmania. The new scheme increased transparency while ensuring that the public continues to have confidence in the process. That is important for the outcomes of elections going forward. We had an election earlier this year. Democracy has had its way and we now have a minority government and a collaborative crossbench and parliament, more so than perhaps we have had in the past. We must act, as the Premier said, on the interests of the Tasmanian people - to put their interests first and do what is best for them. We all have a responsibility to do that across the parliament. That is exactly our ambition. It is the Premier's ambition, my ambition and the ambition of everybody on this side, to work together in a collaborative way, so I hope that is acknowledged. I think we have come a long way since the election in terms of working together. It is a new approach, a new way of doing things, and I think we are getting the feel of it now. I know it is the last day tomorrow for this parliamentary sitting year, with GBE scrutiny next week which is a very important role for all of us, ministers and others in this Chamber and across the parliament, so we are looking forward to that, but tomorrow will be the last sitting day.

In terms of the disclosure of political donations, reporting of electoral expenditure and public funding at an appropriate level for both administrative and per vote funding, the legislation last year brought Tasmania into line with other jurisdictions which had state-based requirements for the disclosure of political donations and expenditure. A significant amount of work went into those bills and that legislation, as I noted earlier. I thank the department and others who had input to that. There were a lot of stakeholders who had input to that; they expressed their views. There were different angles on it, from the university right down through

to the various community service organisations, business groups and others as well. It is a democracy. People are absolutely entitled to that view. I think that is really important.

I want to address the parts of the bill that I want to make a significant comment about where I think there could be improvement, and that relates to the lowering of the threshold, which means a much larger number of donations will need to be reported. The amendments represent a significant increase in the administrative burden of reporting. I also noted earlier that under the act currently, the party agents and official agents have a regular six-monthly reporting requirement. That is the status quo of the current arrangements. Under the proposed amendment bill of the Leader of the Greens, it will require monthly reporting. That is six times more than what is happening at the moment and it certainly creates a significant additional administrative burden, without clear evidence that such a burden is warranted or beneficial. If this were to progress, I would certainly want on behalf of the government to encourage positive consideration of an amendment to part 12 of the act to in part address the cost of those administrative burdens on parties and independent members.

Under the current act, from 1 July 2025, part 12 provides for parties and independent members to make a quarterly claim to the commission up to a maximum amount for administrative expenditure they incur. Under the act it says that maximum amount is currently set at \$33,054 to a party with six or more Assembly members, \$19,282 to a party with five or fewer Assembly members and \$9641 to parties with one or two independent members. Those amounts were set within the current compliance framework of the act. I just draw your attention to that.

That foreshadowed amendment, whether it is here or upstairs, would provide for a one-off payment on the commencement of the act on 1 July 2025. I think that amendment would recognise in effect that parties and members are already incurring administrative expenditure in preparation of the commencement of the act, both in this quarter and in the first two quarters of next year. That is what you would consider transitional arrangements to prepare for 1 July next year. Everybody involved - the key stakeholders, the political organisations - need to prepare for this new arrangement, this new legislative framework, so there is what you call a transitional period between now, or indeed when the legislation was passed last year, through until 1 July next year.

Speaker, I will check if I have that foreshadowed amendment. I will just be one moment.

Statement By Speaker - Committee of the Whole - Process

The SPEAKER - While the minister is seeking advice, I will provide some advice about how the Committee stage works for these bills now, if that would be useful for members. If we are in the Committee stage when the time for debating this bill has expired, we will then pause the bill and come back to it for an hour-and-a-half at the end of today's session. If you have an amendment and you are still negotiating that, there is some flexibility in managing that timewise. However, if we have not gone into Committee and the full process of the bill has been completed, then the full process of the bill has been completed. I hope that gives some insight into how the day works.

We have effectively created a mandatory gag on bills that are done during private members' time by saying that there is an additional hour-and-a-half of the Committee stage at

the end of the day. That would mean at the end of private members' time we would come back to this bill if it was in the committee stage.

Dr Woodruff - Is it an hour and a half, or an hour?

The SPEAKER - You have an hour and a half. At 5.29 p.m. we finish debate on this bill. If the House is in Committee, we go to Mrs Beswick's private members' time, the Liberal private members' time, and then we come back to an hour and a half to complete the stages of this bill. Because you have asked for a vote today, it must be voted on within that window, so either by 5.29 p.m. tonight or within the hour and a half extra time, but only if you are still in the process of the bill. The bill must be completed within that time.

Dr Woodruff - What do you mean by 'still in the process of the bill'?

The SPEAKER - While he was getting information, I just thought I would update the House. Because you have asked for a vote, the bill must be voted on today. If you have amendments that you are moving in Committee and Committee is continuing, that is your other window to fully pursue those, but it is only an hour and a half. Then, no matter where you are up to, there will be a vote on the bill.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much, Speaker. As I indicated, I have expressed those thoughts and views in terms of the administrative requirements. I am now currently circulating those amendments and am happy to speak to those in Committee. I thank the House.

[4.38 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I will expand my comments beyond purely the amendment. I support reform in terms of expenditure, and it is a continuation of the work that was undertaken last week. It has taken a long time for us to start to get our heads around donation and political donation reform.

The stripped-back amendment bill as circulated by the Greens is something I support, in terms of the caps and the reporting. They are reasonable. It is important that people have confidence that, if there is an allegation of significant bankrolling of certain campaigns, people will see who they are and how they are donating in political campaigns, so I am supportive of the original bill.

In relation to the amendments, I am still getting my head around them. To be honest, I am probably a bit different from a number of people in that I have never supported public funding. I know I differ from other people on that. I do not think Pauline Hanson should be getting hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Australian taxpayer. Philosophically, I do not support politicians receiving taxpayer funds to run campaigns. I know there is a whole range of arguments for and against that. I have never been a fan of it, but this House has made that decision and determination.

My concern about the amendments is the significant increase that has been proposed, triple as I understand it. That is a big jump and I want to hear from the minister in the Committee stage about why that figure is to that point, considering my starting position is taxpayers should not be paying people to campaign.

[4.40 p.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, as Ms White, the member for Lyons, noted, the Government Administration B (GAB) committee did some very productive and collegial work on this. We did hear a wide range of views and the GAB committee is keeping to what we said at the beginning of this parliament about working collaboratively and collegially in all the inquiries we do. I wrote, with Mr Wood, a dissenting report to the committee.

I am glad that what we have in front of us is better than what we had a few months ago. I think that is a reflection of the work the committee did. We had some concerns about many aspects of the original bill, not just issues where there might be a difference of opinion or principle, but also some of the unintended consequences. Even with what we have in front of us, I do think, borne out by what I saw in that inquiry, that this bill is attempting to solve a problem that does not exist. Through the bill that passed the parliament last year, we do have reporting. It is yet to be borne out whether elements in the act we have only recently passed had the intended improvements and effects. I think it is counterproductive to good policymaking to start amending the same act again before we even see the effect of what has already been passed. It is trying to solve a problem that does not exist, especially in a timeframe that is not necessary.

I do not think the bill is necessary, but we will wait and see how debate goes. We will be proceeding with amendments, as the Attorney-General said. I just thought I should note the work done in the committee and reflect on the fact that this is better than what we had before. However, I think it could be better still.

[4.43 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, it is fantastic news to have support across the Chamber. It is a momentous thing. We are so pleased at the work and the collaboration of members. I am hearing in real time what the government's amendment is proposed to be and we will go into Committee to discuss it. I think we need to be careful about making any hasty decisions on these things. It is slightly ironic that the government comes in at this point in the day, on the very hour beforehand, and dumps what appears to be a substantial amendment down after all the work the Greens have done, and so much commentary and pushback about what we considered to have been very well-understood amendments that we have been going to make for a long time. Members feel rushed and this is not leading by example.

Let us go into Committee and hear the position of the government, because I just want to sit and celebrate the support of the members for the Greens' bill because it will be better for our democracy. We look forward to 1 July next year.

Bill read the second time.

**ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING (DONATIONS DISCLOSURE)
AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 55)**

In Committee

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 -
Commencement

[4.45 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT - That first amendment, on page 3, says:

First amendment

Page 3.

Leave out "This Act commences".

Insert instead: "(1) Except as specified in subsection (2), this Act commences".

The second amendment, same page, at the foot of the clause, insert the following subsection:

Second amendment

Same page, at the foot of the clause.

Insert the following subsection

(2) New Clause A commences on 1 July 2025.

Then I will speak to new Clause A to follow clause 14.

New Clause A

To follow clause 14

A. Section 155A inserted

After section 155 of the Principal Act, the following section is inserted in Division 3 of Part 12 -

CHAIR - We are only on Clause 2. We will get to the next amendment when we get to that clause.

Mr BARNETT - Okay, I am foreshadowing that the purpose of that amendment in clause 2 is to set up the opportunity to amend and insert a new clause A. I can speak to that further if you would like.

Dr WOODRUFF - I want to understand what the foreshadowed clause is about before we make a decision about whether we insert something in the bill.

DEPUTY CHAIR - When we get down to that you will have to move that, but you can speak to it now.

Mr BARNETT - Okay, let me speak to it.

New Clause A

To follow clause 14

A. Section 155A inserted

After section 155 of the Principal Act, the following section is inserted in Division 3 of Part 12:

155A. Certain amounts payable on commencement of Part.

(1) In this section -

"commencement day" means the day on which this section commences.

"relevant implementation amount" means -

This is the key point.

- (a) \$396 650 - for a registered party with 6 or more Assembly Members on the commencement day; and
 - (b) \$231 385 - for a registered party with more than one but not more than 5 Assembly Members on the commencement day;
 - (c) \$115 695 - for -
 - (i) a registered party with a single Assembly Member on the commencement day; or
 - (ii) an independent Assembly Member on the commencement day.
- (2) On the commencement day, a registered party with at least one Assembly Member is entitled to the relevant implementation amount that applies to the party on the commencement day.
- (3) For the purposes of determining which relevant implementation amount applies to a registered party under subsection (2), the Commission is to determine the number of Assembly Members endorsed by the relevant registered party on the commencement day.

- (4) On the commencement day, an independent Assembly Member is entitled to the relevant implementation amount that applies to the Member if the Commission is satisfied that the Member was not endorsed by a registered party on the commencement day.
- (5) A payment under this section -
 - (a) is to be distributed from the Administration Fund; and
 - (b) is to be made within 3 months of the commencement day; and
 - (c) is for the purposes of covering the initial administrative expenditure of a registered party, or Assembly Member, that may be incurred as a result of the commencement of this Act.

In terms of transition funding, I think it has always been understood that this is very important for the registered political parties, and obviously the independents and the JLN, or whoever it is. They need to prepare their IT and software systems, add staff to prepare for 1 July next year, and look at getting legal advice, because the consequences, unintended or otherwise, if there is any contravention of the legislation, are very serious indeed for the registered organisations and their directors or presidents, or the official representatives of those various political parties. They may get other advice, for example financial advice, to prepare, and of course there is training, education and preparation for what you call these 'onerous' electoral disclosure and funding disclosure arrangements.

That is what it is designed to do: to ensure there is a smooth transition as we prepare for the legislation to commence and come into operation mid next year. There is a lot of work to be done and that is very important. I might leave it there and I am happy to have any feedback accordingly.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is a massive introduction into this bill while we are in the middle of debating it. I do not know why you did not work this out before and share this amendment more broadly beforehand. In the principle of the matter, we recognise that this has more administrative burden - of course we do - but this is an ambit claim. There is no evidence that you are giving for why you have come up with this figure.

We are talking about just signing off, on the spur of the moment, a one-off payment of up to \$400,000 for the Liberal and Labor parties to undertake implementation. There is no evidence that this is proportionate to the work that needs to be done. As I understand it, this is providing that sum as a flat, one-off amount?

Mr Barnett - Yes, a one-off.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is a one-off, and there is no determination that needs to be made about how it is to be used.

Mr Barnett - It is based on feedback from the Department of Justice with the various political parties.

Dr WOODRUFF - Which political parties?

Mr Barnett - The various. I do not know. It is based on feedback on consultation in preparation for the implementation of the bill.

Dr WOODRUFF - Are you saying that up to \$396,650 could be provided to the Liberal and Labor parties, or \$396,650 would be paid?

Mr Barnett - And the Greens, yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, we do not have six or more assembly members.

Mr Barnett - You have five.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is right.

Mr Barnett - It is \$115,000 for less than six.

Dr WOODRUFF - Regardless, do there have to be receipts provided or evidence given of the amount of the money that is to be claimed or is it just, 'Hi, I am in the Liberal Party; I am the Liberal Party secretary here. Can we have that money please on 1 July?' What would happen?

Mr BARNETT - That is a fair question. My understanding is it is a one-off payment for the transition to prepare for next year.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay. What happens when another political party comes into the landscape? If they do not have elected members then they do not get anything, even though they might be collecting donations and being required to report monthly? Until they get elected members they do not get any administrative support? What would happen if another political party came into the landscape or independents got elected? What would happen to those people, because this is a one-off payment?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. First, in terms of the question about new parties being entitled to any funding, they would be entitled to the ongoing funding that is already provided in the act for administrative funding. This is for the transition to next year, so this is a separate and totally different amount. My advice is that would be for any new parties that have access to the administrative funding that is already in the legislation.

It has been drafted as a one-off payment that does not require evidence of expenditure. The significant consideration in drafting that was the impact on the TEC. That is the advice I have, and it is based on advice from the department.

Dr Woodruff - Can you repeat that?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, this has been drafted as a one-off payment that does not require evidence of expenditure. A significant consideration drafting was the impact on the TEC because they have to prepare as well for 1 July next year.

Mrs BESWICK - You have just created this one-off payment for something that was expected already to be implemented. We are just adding a requirement for a more frequent

report. Instead of being one six-monthly, you are doing it monthly. It is the same number - well, it is probably slightly more transactions because it is a lower field.

A couple of years ago the government created the Waste and Resource Recovery Board and the waste levy, and in implementing said waste levy, all our waste sites have an enormous amount of reporting that they have to do, and we have been rolling out some grants to support them in doing that.

They have to apply for a grant, tell the government exactly what they are going to spend it on, why it is going to work and then maybe get \$20,000 if they are lucky. I do not even get electoral donations. I do not need \$115,000 to set up a system I do not need. This is ridiculous. We would never allow anybody else in Tasmania to just get a random amount of money for no reason.

I am sorry that this is not really a question, but I do not see how you can possibly justify this at all. Please feel free to argue a justification. That is my vent.

Mr Bayley - Keep the change.

Ms WHITE - In your response to the leader of the Greens, you mentioned that it was also based on the fact the Electoral Commission has to get ready for the implementation, but there is no provision of funding for them contained within this. I know they have had an uplift in funding in the Budget, but I am curious as to why you use that as an explanation for this amendment.

I am also interested to understand the methodology for calculating these amounts, and wonder whether or not you want to seek some advice from the department about that. Certainly, the amounts that were circulated prior to this amendment being moved were different, and the methodology for how they were going to be administered was different than a one-off lump sum payment to.

Perhaps there has been a misunderstanding about what the Office of Parliamentary Counsel was drafting, because we are surprised at the amount of money that is contained within these amendments for the political parties and independents to have access to.

Whilst I am confident the acting secretary would be very happy to receive an uplift in funding like this, it is incumbent on all of us to spend public money wisely, and Mrs Beswick's point is quite valid that there has not really been a clear justification from you about the methodology used to arrive at this figure. I would be grateful if you could elaborate.

Mr BARNETT - In terms of Ms White's query about the TEC funding, the TEC funding for this is reserved by law. I think we have shared that before in second reading speeches and elsewhere. In terms of the TEC funding, they do not require additional funding to be legislated. That is just to be clear about that, but there will be a workload impact on the TEC in terms of the costs, which is sought to be addressed for and on behalf of the various organisations, political parties that are preparing to transition to this new political regime in terms of electoral laws and disclosure of political donations.

By 1 July next year, the laws will be different. They will be very strict, they will be arduous, they will be comprehensive, and they will have very strict penalties for any of the

people and organisations, and the people within those organisations, on 1 July next year: very strict, and it will apply across the board. In terms of preparing for that, there are software changes, computer systems upgrades and IT upgrades. There will need to be staffing upgrades, legal and financial advice will need to be taken, and there will need to be training and education.

To the member for Braddon, in terms of your queries, that relates to the ongoing administrative burden, not the transition. We are talking about the transition through to 1 July next year. You were asking about the reporting going from six months back to monthly. That is a separate matter. This does not relate to that in any way, shape or form. This relates to the transition from now through to 1 July next year. The organisations are already preparing for that. This is all based on feedback and consultation from my department with the various organisations, based on that feedback, based on that advice and that is why I am providing that advice to the parliament.

Ms White - You did not answer my question.

Dr WOODRUFF - The way you are talking about 1 July next year sounds like the way people talked about Y2K. What we are talking about is a continuation of something. We did not make this the six-monthly reporting requirement; that is already in the act. We have just changed it to be monthly. You have to do it anyway and be on top of all that stuff. You have to know all the stuff. It is your responsibility to do it. It is the Greens, Labor Party, independents - we are citizens and we read the law and abide by the law. This is not rocket science.

Let us put on the record that the Greens do this now. It is not easy but it is also not impossible and not the end of the world as we know it. I fully support the comments of Mrs Beswick. Community organisations do an incredible amount of work and they never get a shekel for doing this sort of stuff.

The principle of there being a bit more work to do: yes, we support the principle, but this is just an ambit claim that has not been substantiated and has just come out and it is literally been changing while I have been sitting in the Chamber. The amendment we got when I sat in the Chamber an hour ago was different from what we have now - totally different. We are talking about something that you and your office have cooked up in the last 30 minutes, because it changed.

I recommend that you take a leaf out of your own book and for Ms Johnston's bill. You said that you would be working and you would take those amendments that you foreshadowed to that bill upstairs and speak to the Legislative Council, lay out the case and talk to them about it. I do not think this amendment will be looked upon very kindly by the Legislative Council. I do not want to speak for them, but there is no evidence here to back it up.

You need to go and talk to them and do a proper job of it, because it has nothing behind it. It is a fat amount of money to just hand out. It looks like snouts in trough, and we do not want to support that. This is a great piece of legislation. The principle of there being a little bit of extra administrative work we accept. However, we cannot accept the amendment that you have included in this form.

Ms WHITE - You have a problem here. The amendment you presented is very different from the one that was communicated and circulated. I also believe you are misleading the

House in suggesting that the department has consulted with all the relevant parties on this amount of money, because that is not true. I suggest that you withdraw the amendment and move the one that you circulated, which has our support, because we are sympathetic to the need for transition funding, recognising that there is a lot of work for organisations to be properly prepared so we can be compliant with the law from 1 July.

It is important that we get this right and we have an opportunity to do it. The Legislative Council will not be able to consider this bill until next year if we pass it today. Perhaps it is wise to withdraw this amendment and we can come back either to this place next year and continue this debate in the committee stage with the amendment that you socialised outside of session, or we can deal with it in the Upper House once you have done some further consultation over the summer break.

If you cannot justify the methodology you are using to arrive at the figures that are in this amendment, I do not think it will get through the upper House. You cannot just hope you will win another seat in the May elections and then stack the numbers. That is not a good way to deal with progressing legislation. We need to have a strong evidence base that we can explain to the community why we are asking for public funding for transitional arrangements. On the basis of the arguments you presented, I do not think you have them. That is not to say we are not sympathetic or supportive but, on face value, these amendments appear like they are not going to be supported here. That means the risk is we end up with no transitional funding and I think there is a need for transitional funding.

Let us get it right. If you need to withdraw these amendments, you can come back to this at a later date. You should do that because the parliament as a whole will not progress this bill this year. There is no urgency for us to deal with this in this committee stage if we do not need to.

Mr BARNETT - I withdraw the amendments on the basis that -

CHAIR - You need to seek leave.

Mr BARNETT - Okay, I seek leave to withdraw the amendments.

Leave granted.

Mr BARNETT - There is wisdom in the points made about having further consultation over the summer period. I shared that view earlier with respect to Kristie Johnston's bill brought before the House. I will take my own advice and do that, take further advice from those in this Chamber and others who are relevant. I will also ask my department to consult further. I think that is wise. If you want to progress today, we would need to address these matters in the other place in the first quarter of next year when we come back, after that consultation and feedback. That is my indication to this House.

Amendments withdrawn.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 15 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

**ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING (DONATION DISCLOSURE)
AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 55)**

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME

The SPEAKER - We still have some time in the Greens' private members time. Do you wish to bring another matter on, or would you like to waive your further time?

Dr WOODRUFF - We will waive our time, thank you.

MOTION

Support for Tourism Industry in North-West Tasmania

The SPEAKER - Is a vote required?

[5.14 p.m.]

Mrs BESWICK (Braddon) - Yes. Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House: -

- (1) Acknowledges the critical importance of tourism to the economic and social fabric of Tasmania's North West and that: -
 - (a) according to Tourism Tasmania, the tourism industry in Tasmania directly and indirectly contributes around \$3.47 billion or 8.6 per cent to Tasmania's Gross State Product annually; and
 - (b) tourism directly and indirectly supports around 43,000 jobs in Tasmania.
- (2) Notes that the significant delay to the arrival of the two new Spirit of Tasmania ships will have a tangible impact on the State's tourism sector due to lost opportunity.
- (3) Further notes businesses in the North West will be particularly impacted by the delays, recognising that some invested with the imminent increase in visitation in mind.

- (4) Recognises the State Government has announced an additional support package for the tourism sector in response to the delays.
- (5) Calls on the State Government to deliver funding promised to attract events in the North West as a matter of urgency.
- (6) Urges the State Government to follow the advice of tourism leaders on the ground in the North West as a matter of urgency.
- (7) Further urges the State Government to improve the promotion of the region's airports as a gateway to the North West and West Coasts.
- (8) Calls on the State Government to consider additional targeted initiatives to support the tourism sector in the lead-up to the *Spirits* operating.

It fills me with great pride to be able to speak about my part of Tasmania and its thriving tourism sector. Tourism is a critical industry in Tasmania, including on the north-west coast. While other parts of the state rightly receive worldwide acclaim for what they offer visitors, when it comes to variety, there are few places that can rival the north-west and the west coast. From the wildest adventures to the most decadent experiences, there really is something on offer for every taste. While we are blessed with spectacular coastline and rugged beauty, it really is the people and their skills that drive the region's visitor economy.

Just the other day, I was speaking to another member of our House about the view of Bass Strait as you drive down the hill towards Lillico and the little penguin sanctuary. That moment when you look out at the sea - a different vista every day - you cannot help but feel the peace of God's creation. This is what tourists come to see.

It is hardworking people, like the Robinson family, who have recognised this breathtaking view and established The Cove, and industry stalwarts, like John Dabner from Tall Timbers, who combine innovation with great customer service to deliver memorable experiences for visitors from all over the world.

It is also the businesses that do not automatically spring to mind when you think about tourism, like Kerryn Duncan and Mark Vernon from Devonport Tenpin Bowl, who rely on families holidaying. These less-recognised services support the full experiences of our visitors. They help fill in the start and end of days, and they make sure that there are activities for the whole family to enjoy.

It was a widely felt sense of disappointment when it was confirmed the two new *Spirits* would be badly delayed - again. Whether you were in the tourism sector or not, you knew the impact it would have on those who rely on visitors to make ends meet. You knew that it may delay your own holiday plans, precious trips to visit families across the Bass Strait, or adventures you were looking forward to - starting on the new ships. You knew that people who had invested hard-earned money to prepare for the influx would need support.

I am pleased the government has responded as it should with a support package for the sector. This motion is about making sure that the support does not end there. I am putting forward this motion to send a clear message to the north-west and west coast that the parliament

of Tasmania recognises their enormous contribution to the state's economy and that the region is worthy of ongoing support.

Of course, tourism operators in every single part of the state are deserving of the same recognition, but I believe, in light of the delays to the *Spirits*, it is important that the north-west and the west coast are a focus in the short and medium term. That does not mean the region gets support at the expense of other parts of the state; it just means that the commitments and promises that have been made are followed through on. We cannot afford funding commitments to stall, or decisions we put on hold. The vital period is the next two years before the new *Spirits* come online.

This funding package includes vouchers for Tasmanians to spend in Tasmania, reviving a great system which was instigated through the pandemic. There were some teething problems back in 2021, so, I am hoping that we have kept our notes and make sure it is rolled out smoothly at the best time of year for business owners and families to make the most out of the slower seasons.

A \$5 million *Spirit* preparedness fund will support tourism businesses and councils in preparing for the arrival of the new ferries. We are told the *Spirit* preparedness fund will encourage the development of new products, enhancing existing attractions, and funding council projects like signage and charging stations, all on a fifty-fifty co-contribution arrangement.

I urge the government to share this around the state, but I am keen to make sure the north-west gets what it deserves. I am confident that there are dozens of great local ideas ready and waiting for support. I look forward to the announcements of projects and seeing them come to fruition.

I am personally very keen to advocate for continued work on the coastal pathway to get as much completed as possible in the next two years. We have recently had an opening for a significant stretch of this infrastructure, and the reception has been incredibly positive. It is already popular, but you can see how much this will be used in the future, providing opportunities for tourism providers. I am excited that maybe one day we can hire bikes, book hotels and travel from the Devonport airport or even Port Sorell all the way through to Smithton without using a car.

We know how high-quality events drive visitation. I was pleased to see we had a delegation of business event organisers checking out the opportunities in the area just last week. Business tourism is often a forgotten opportunity when it comes to tourism grants. I know there are some great ideas out there that only need a little bit of help to get off the ground. Stimulating and supporting new events is part of the government's promise to the north-west. It is critically important that ideas like Illuminate the Coast are given the green light.

Speaking of, I am pleased that Targa will be returning to the state next year. I applaud organisers for the safety changes they are implementing following the deaths of four competitors in 2021 and 2022. I appreciate that these tragedies eroded confidence in the event, but I am confident the significant safety changes being implemented will provide for a successful future. Targa provides a significant economic stimulus to both our population centres and regional parts of the state. I am doing all I can to urge organisers to make the north-west and west a significant part of future touring routes. The influx of drivers and their

support teams would make an enormous contribution to the region's economy, and we all know that there are a lot of car enthusiasts on the north-west and throughout the state.

While there has rightly been a huge focus on the *Spirits*, the airports in the north-west also play a vital role as a gateway to the region. While the challenges facing Rex and changes to the services offered by Qantas have caused concern, the future of both Devonport and Burnie airports remains bright. It is time they receive the prominence they deserve when it comes to advertising our state to the rest of the country and the world.

I do not mean to leave King Island off the list, but too often the north-west airports are literally left off the map when it comes to tourism promotion, including by official channels. They serve as important gateways to the north-west and should be promoted accordingly. While we do that, we need to improve transport to and from the airports for travellers. There is nothing worse than arriving late and finding yourself stranded with no way to get to your accommodation.

While my focus is largely on the Braddon region today, it is true to say every single tourism and hospitality business in Tasmania has a stake in the future of the *Spirits* and will lose opportunities due to the delays. This motion certainly is not advocating for support for the north-west or west coast at the expense of anywhere else in the state. I am simply urging the state government to follow through on what it has promised.

It would be a cruel irony if the support package promised to offset a delay was also plagued by holdups, but while there will be lost opportunities across the state, in the north-west, the future of the *Spirits* is by far the hottest topic of conversation. It is partly because many residents noticed there was a problem on the Mersey before the government, TT-Line or TasPorts admitted so publicly. People knew the clock was ticking and the lack of progress on the new berth and terminal was obvious.

It begs the question as to why the alarm was not raised earlier by TT-Line management based in or visiting Devonport. I know the government has proposed a merger between TT-Line, TasRail and TasPorts, but no matter what the eventual outcome is, I would advocate strongly for a greater presence of senior management in Devonport. Devonport is the home of the *Spirits* and really should be home base for the majority of senior staff.

I know plans for new Devonport headquarters have been proposed in the past and put aside. I am arguing strongly for a greater presence into the future. Not only does it make sense to be close to the *Spirits'* home port, but high-paying jobs in the region would also have a positive economic impact. In fact, I encourage this government to put the regions at the heart of as many decisions as possible.

I want to finish where I began, and that is by reflecting on the diversity of tourism experience offered in my part of the state. Since being elected in March, I have had the honour of attending many wonderful local events, from the tulips of Wynyard to the celebrations of our mineral sector on the west coast - such a visual contrast, but both memorable. I have been fortunate to try some delicious food.

I think all of us here recognise the importance of keeping energy levels up when you are on the road, but there is something truly special about the produce in the north-west. To watch it being grown in the rich soil as you wind across the region and then getting to eat some when

you stop for lunch is something I will never take for granted. I am a little confused about whether it is called the Tasting Trail or the Forage Trail - perhaps we can make the marketing clearer but we really have some of the best fresh produce. I must admit, when I lived in Canberra, I could not wait to get home to have some.

We should be enormously proud of the quality of our fruits and vegetables, meats and cheeses, wine, beer and world-class spirits. Tasmanians have created a culinary experience that can go up against any other on the planet. Restaurants and cafes in every corner of our state are turning out dishes that fondly stay with diners long after they have cleaned their plates. As we want as many people as possible to try them, it is vital that we properly support this sector.

I urge this House to support this motion to send a strong message of support to tourism and hospitality providers right across Tasmania, but particularly in beautiful Braddon.

[5.25 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Bass, Mrs Beswick.

Mrs Beswick - Braddon.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Braddon.

Mrs Beswick - He knew what he wanted to say.

Ms Finlay - The colour red is appropriate. It is all across your face. You are redder than I have ever seen you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank Mrs Beswick, the member for Braddon, for this motion. I appreciate it very much and concur with her very well-articulated points on a range of matters - some of the challenges we are facing in the region now with the arrival of the two new *Spirits*, but also the many opportunities within the region as well, including celebrating the many events that are very popular, like the Tulip Festival. Also, the wonderful and fine produce which our hardworking farmers, horticulturalists, distillers and viticulturists are so clever at producing.

Tourism is one of Tasmania's oldest and most important industries - of course I would say that as Minister for Tourism - but the statistics and the data that back up those comments certainly demonstrate that. The industry supports our economy, businesses and jobs, local services, infrastructure, trade, innovation, recreation and lifestyle, and has been doing so for well over a century. It is also the backbone of the Tasmanian brand and helps us to promote and protect what makes Tasmania special. It also proudly drives innovation and extends opportunities for Tasmanian businesses and entrepreneurs.

As has been reflected in the member's motion, in the year to June 2024, Tasmania welcomed 1.3 million visitors, who contributed some \$3.48 billion to the state economy by spending their funds in cafes, bakeries, restaurants, petrol stations, supermarkets, accommodation, transport, tours and attractions. The expenditure benefits more than 6600 Tasmanian businesses, and one in eight Tasmanian jobs are supported through our visitor economy.

Since 2018, the state's tourism businesses have grown by 11 per cent, with more than 90 per cent being sole or small traders with fewer than 19 staff - a fantastic example of our wonderful small businesses. The sector is Tasmania's only industry that benefits most if not all regions through jobs and flow-on contribution to the economy. One in two jobs on the east coast, for example; more broadly, I have mentioned one in eight. There will be pockets of the regions - and we are very passionate about the regions, Mrs Beswick - that the tourism industry contributes to significantly. For every tourism dollar invested in Tasmania, 83 cents of additional benefit is generated for our state's economy.

I concur with you that the north-west is full of incredible tourism businesses offering world-class products and experiences to visitors from around Australia and overseas. Recently, Devonport was proudly named Top Tourism Town 2024, and Stanley won silver for the Tiny Tourism Town, which is fantastic. At the recent Tasmanian Tourism Awards, four businesses from the north-west took out gold awards, with two silvers and three bronze. The north-west has much to offer to the world, and we will continue to support our tourism industry.

Today your motion calls on parliament to support the region. To support the industry while we wait for the arrival of the new ships, we have announced a \$28-million tourism and hospitality package to support the industry. It is about boosting visitation to the state, supporting our local tourism and hospitality sectors and making life more affordable over the coming 24 months. There is \$6 million to subsidise passenger fares on the *Spirits* to boost demand and provide for additional day sailings; half a million dollars on top of an existing \$5 million aviation fund to increase aviation capacity across the state to attract more visitors; \$500,000 for air and car hire packages to encourage those arriving by air to get out and enjoy the wonderful regions. You have mentioned the \$5 million Spirit Preparedness Fund, which will support the development of new products and offerings, enhance existing attractions and support councils to deliver key infrastructure such as signage and charging stations. The 100,000 \$100 vouchers under our Eat Local Stay Local scheme to encourage Tasmanians to travel and eat out and our \$5 million Events Tasmania Attraction fund will be available to secure more events and business events for the state.

We have also added 28 additional sailings for the *Spirits* over the peak and shoulder seasons and will continue to respond to demand and, importantly, drive demand. A tourism and hospitality working group has been formed to provide advice to government on the design and implementation of this funding package. All these initiatives will benefit the north-west region and west coast by driving increased visitation to the region, especially over the coming off seasons.

This package is in addition to our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, which includes a \$50 million regional tourism development loan scheme, which will provide regional tourism projects with loans of between \$100,000 and \$3 million and the \$500,000 Regional Hospitality Revival Fund, which provides grants to support hospitality businesses in regional Tasmania and, as announced before, the \$12 million for the Visitor Economy Strategy, which will provide more funding for *Spirit* preparedness.

Marketing is so crucial, and I know the member for Bass, Ms Pentland, has mentioned marketing before as well when it comes to Tourism Tasmania, and we will continue to support the north-west with marketing and promotion. Of course, I am talking about Tourism Tasmania. I commend West by North West for their work in this particular area. and I have mentioned Gabby in the House, I think, last week as well if my memory serves me correctly.

Regional tourism experiences, including businesses on the west coast and north-west coast featured widely in off-season advertising and marketing activity, including in Tourism Tasmania's highly successful Odd Jobs campaign, which reached a global audience of more than 1.3 billion people in 21 countries, in actual fact.

Mr Winter - Very good.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. Four out of the ten operators featured in Odd Jobs were located in the West by North West region, Gunns Plains Caves, West Coast Wilderness Railway, Little Things Farm and Truffle Door. Tourism Tasmania also works with airlines to promote experiences across the state, including experiences from the north-west featuring in in-flight magazines, websites, e-newsletters and social media, and it recently partnered with Qantas to promote the state through the cooperative marketing activity, featuring 214 Tasmanian operators.

A third of operators featured across the campaign were from the north-west, and almost half the operators featured in the Qantas in-flight magazine feature were from the north-west as well. A recent hotels and holidays campaign with Qantas allowed customers to earn triple Qantas points when booking a Tasmanian hotel or stay-only luxury holiday at north-west coast businesses, the Novotel Devonport and Peppers Cradle Mountain Lodge.

I commend Tourism Tasmania, which has also worked very closely with cruise lines and major shore excursion operators to bring down key decision makers to introduce them to new Tasmanian tourism products to build relationships and those opportunities. This familiarisation visit showcased Tasmanian experiences around Burnie, providing opportunities for 36 tourism operators to have individual appointments with cruise lines to present their products.

I will quickly go to events. I am mindful of time and members wanting to speak, and I believe there is an amendment to be moved so I want to provide opportunity for other members to speak as well.

We are also really keen to invest in events across the state, including the north-west, and we have a \$5 million Events Attraction Fund, and we have supported events such as Permission to Trespass in the Wynyard and Table Cape regions, Devonport Jazz Festival, the Tulip Festival, Mural Fest, the Tasmanian Masters Games and the Burnie Ten, which have driven large visitor numbers to the region in recent months, which is fantastic, getting people into Tasmania out amongst the regions.

We will continue to support events throughout the region over the next 24 months with guidelines for the additional \$5 million in events funding to be released before the end of this year, I am advised. This fund will support new and existing events across the state including in the north-west.

Tourism Tasmania will work to promote these events and will continue to work closely with regional tourism organisations - and I have mentioned one, West by North West - and the industry to highlight experiences and events across the region.

I will come to aviation. We have committed \$5.5 million to an aviation fund with guidelines to be released by the end of this year. We work closely with airports and airlines through its access team to monitor seat capacity and demand to support opportunities as they

arise. The north-west and Devonport airport are also featured and promoted widely through Tourism Tasmania's programs and features as key access points with travel trade companies during training, webinars and major international trade events. The region is promoted widely through its digital channels, PR content and other campaign activity, including information on getting to the north-west by air through the Devonport and Burnie airports and indeed by sea on board the *Spirit of Tasmania*.

In September and October, Tourism Tasmania led these familiarisation visits with trade companies through Devonport airport, showcasing Devonport, Stanley, Spreyton, Mole Creek, Sheffield and Cradle Mountain. There is a fair bit going on, but I do appreciate the member who has raised these very important issues. I empathise with a number of the people who had prepared for the arrival of the *Spirits* sooner. Thank you for mentioning that in your motion today.

The industry contributes so much to our economy. It promotes our brand. There are huge opportunities to further leverage off other investments, of course, infrastructure, Cradle Mountain master plan. I could mention quite a few which we want to continue to invest in and indeed partner with the federal government and private sector to support those investments as well. Thank you for your advocacy for the Rhododendron Garden recently - a wonderful exhibition of hard work of many, many volunteers over 40 years. We appreciate that and are pleased to be able to - through your advocacy and the support of minister Jaensch - support the rhododendron gardens and ensure that they can continue to be an attraction as well within their own right and with small work to do there with the organisation.

I appreciate your advocacy for the fantastic industry, Mrs Beswick. We will support the motion, member for Braddon, and I wish you well for the rest of the discussion.

[5.39 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for bringing this motion on this evening. It is a good opportunity to speak about tourism more broadly, but particularly in the north-west. I will start by thanking Amy Hills and the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT) for allowing me to join them in a bit of a tour around north-west tourism businesses not so long ago, including Anvers - seeing Igor at Anvers there up in the north-west in a magnificent chocolate establishment there.

I have visited Kim and Bruce Robinson at The Cove, Don River Railway and caught up with Lynn Laycock, former mayor of Devonport, and shout-out to West by North West - Gabby and the team there - about not just what is happening in the north-west but also all the great things that are planned going forward, proposals that we have seen around Dismal Swamp, which has been supported by the Australian Labor government. It is fantastic to see that going forward. It is good to see that the north-west tourism industry has its act together and has a big vision for not just what it is, in supporting the businesses there, but what it could be as well. There is a lot of positivity going on about what could happen all the way down to the west coast and the West Coast Wilderness Railway. We know there are some challenges there with the need for some serious investment in the track. However, I am hoping to see that able to continue to support tourism on the west coast.

I agree with the Premier's comments about the Odd Jobs campaign. It is an incredible campaign, something that became visible. Tourism Tasmania does not have the big budget of tourism bodies in other states or other countries, and it is in a competitive market, so it needs

to innovate. The Odd Jobs campaign ticked the box of being very much on-brand with the work all the people at Brand Tasmania are doing, which is incredible. You see Tourism Tasmania really jumping on that Tasmanian brand and bringing something uniquely Tasmanian to an international market and a national market. Even though the actors were not Tasmanian, the idea was, and it was very good. I personally congratulated the Tourism Tasmania CEO on that at the awards night not too long ago.

There are a lot of good things going on in the north-west when it comes to tourism and hospitality. However, the elephant in the room is the *Spirits*. There is an entire industry there that has been built up around looking forward to one big moment. It is not often any industry gets an investment of almost a billion dollars into it and looks forward to it for so long. The new *Spirits* have been planned since before this government. They have been planned for years and years. Industry has not just been delayed on this occasion but on a number of occasions. This has always been off on the horizon, but they finally thought they had a date and that was the end of 2024 for summer 2024-25. It did not arrive and that has been devastating.

Every single one of those businesses was told to invest. They went to the Tourism Tasmania workshops and Tourism Tasmania was there saying, 'This is serious, this is exciting, we have these new ships coming, which means more people, but it is not much good unless we have the businesses like yours ready to go. Spend up, get ready, take risks, be a part of something that is going to be transformational for our entire Tasmanian economy'. This business did just that: the Latrobe Caravan Park spent hundreds of thousands of dollars getting ready. Businesses as small as Foodworks at Devonport responded: John went and bought a new coffee machine because he thought he was going to have more customers coming through. They never arrived. That letdown needs to be acknowledged.

What I cannot get over is that they have known since April at least. Some of them knew a lot longer. I spoke to one businessperson this morning at the prayer breakfast. I said, 'How long have you known the ships were not going to be operating this summer?'. He said, 'At least a couple of years'. He has known for a long time. I assume TasPorts knew. The former minister knew last year that there were serious issues.

We know the date the Premier knew. He knew on 22 April this year because he said so in an answer to a question on notice out of Estimates. He knew on 22 April that those new ships will not be sailing up the Mersey this summer. He had a choice. He could own up and tell Tasmanians, tell the north-west tourism and hospitality sector: 'There is a big problem here and we are going to have to do something about it, and we are not going to have the ships ready,' or he could cover up. He could not answer questions for six months, and choose not to tell that industry. He could choose to allow those businesses to continue to invest and take on more on more debt, knowing the ships were not coming or he could choose to tell the truth. He made a choice and the only choice he really made at that time was whether to tell the industry, as the Minister for Tourism, or not.

He chose not to tell them and, while the Premier knew the ships were not coming, the industry was investing. Tourism Tasmania was getting ready. They found out on the news. They were watching the news that night when it came on: 'Oh, the ships are not coming. The entire thing we have been getting ready for, telling our entire industry to get ready for this moment, and they are not coming.' That is how Tourism Tasmania found out. Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT), I believe, found out in a similar way. I know how West by North West found out: I told them. I had to tell them across a coffee table on the north-west

coast. I had to tell them, 'I am sorry, they are not coming. They are not going to be here this summer. That just cannot possibly happen.'

I appreciate this motion and we support it. However, when we talk about supporting the industry with words such as we heard: words are great, but it is actions that are most important. We heard about that this morning as well. Actions are important, and when the time came to choose, the Premier chose not to tell the industry, not to tell his community on the north-west coast.

Time expired.

[5.46 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I thank Mrs Beswick for bringing on this motion. It is incredibly important and I am always proud, having grown up on the north-west coast, to stand up and talk about how extraordinary it is there. Tourism is essential to Tasmanian industry and the economy, and particularly in the north-west there is so much untapped potential we can build on.

We have seen over the last couple of years how much new life tourism has given to the region through events like The Unconformity on the west coast. The fact this event is held in the shoulder season of the traditional tourism season brings visitors into the area at times they otherwise might not have been there. Wynyard has the Tulip Festival, which has just passed for this year. I have seen how much that festival has grown in my lifetime, how many more people are coming from right around the world to be part of it, and I am certain it is only going to continue to go from strength to strength. We also have niche festivals like the Tasmanian Craft Fair in Deloraine, which brings people from all around and showcases some of the very best of not just what the north-west of Tasmania has, but the entirety of Tasmania.

What we have not spoken about enough is future proofing our tourism industry after COVID. We saw how vulnerable it is and that we need to make changes. We have seen other destinations around the world look at some new models. We hear a lot about regenerative tourism. It is a shame to hear that is classed as a buzzword in Tasmania because there is a lot of potential there. The north-west coast could play a pivotal role in regenerative tourism, regenerative agriculture, agri-tourism. There is enormous opportunity there.

However, where there is the most opportunity is in the Tarkine. It is a global gem, it has outstanding universal value. It is something we have been talking about in Tasmania for a very long time. That debate about takayna and its natural values always seem to end up in some kind of war of conservationists versus industry. It does not have to be that way. This would be an enormous asset to north-west Tasmania if we could have the proper nuanced debate that area deserves. I am going to move the motion now, then stay here and speak to that motion.

The SPEAKER - You want to amend the motion?

Ms BADGER - Yes. I am just going to value-add, as we should do in all good tourism ventures. I move -

That the motion be amended by inserting the following clauses after Clause 8:

- (9) Calls on the government to:
- (a) work toward establishing a takayna/Tarkine World Heritage-listed national park with indigenous ownership within this term of government.
 - (b) Fund the proposed trans-Tarkine track in the 2025-26 budget.

The SPEAKER - Have you got copies to circulate to members?

Ms BADGER - They all have them.

The SPEAKER - Your time starts again. You have 30 more minutes of your allocation, but this debate does finish at 6.14 p.m., and Mrs Beswick will obviously want an opportunity to respond.

Ms BADGER - I am conscious there are other tremendous members for Braddon who want to speak as well.

On the first part of the amendment: creating a takayna/Tarkine National Park is not just about recognising the natural and cultural significance of the area, it also makes economic sense. We know how much Tasmanians and those visiting our state love to immerse themselves in our national parks. The latest Parks data on visitors to selected parks and reserves show that visitation was up 4 per cent last year alone to 1.42 million visitors.

Back in 2008, there was an extraordinary report done by the Cradle Coast Authority, Tarkine Tasmania: Tarkine Tourism Development Strategy. Credit where credit is due, I believe this was done at the time when Roger Jaensch was heading up the Cradle Coast Authority as well. It is a great report about the holistic values of the Tarkine. I want to point out the projected modelling for the yield of promoting that area as a holistic destination, not just specifically as a national park. It says:

Modelling suggests that by 2017, the Tarkine has the capacity to generate \$58.2 million in tourism spending per annum and support approximately 1100 jobs. [TBC]

Those coming specifically to see the natural values of the area - as it was called then, the 'nature enthusiast segment', would generate \$22.3 million. For comparison with Tourism Tasmania's figures, in 2017 there was a \$2.26 billion spend from tourists holistic into the state, and in this last financial year it was \$3.48 billion. On the projections from 2008, tourism projections for the economy did come true. If you look at what it is worth now, we are missing out on a huge amount of money that we could have with more concentration in the Tarkine.

That is incredibly important for regional and rural towns around that area in the north-west. When the *Spirits* finally get here, we will absolutely be seeing more people coming here, which is why we need to make sure they have more things to do in the north-west, particularly in the nature space that we know is so popular, to make sure that they stay and spend their money in that regional area to help prop up that economy and create new jobs.

Then there are the environmental values of having that area properly protected. I will read a quote from Forestry Tasmania at that time. This is about the destination as a whole, not just specifically the national park, to be clear. It says:

Forestry Tasmania agrees that the Tarkine's unique mix of rainforest, river and coastal wilderness, outstanding cultural heritage and proximity to established icons like Cradle Mountain, Strahan and Stanley could see the project develop into Australia's premier nature-based travel destination.

That is absolutely still the case and I hope that industry would still support it.

When we are talking about this national park proposal, to be clear, before anyone gets concerned, the boundaries are not including any of the currently operational mining sites. Specifically for Mr Garland, I would like to read something very special from this report:

The Tarkine was or is the last known habitat of the Tasmanian tiger and now provides a sanctuary for endangered Tasmanian devils.

That was in 2008.

The SPEAKER - I am seeing a bit of a tiger theme happening in these conversations.

Ms BADGER - It must be the last week in parliament.

To the second part of the motion, it talks about the trans-Tarkine trail. This is an incredible walking track and it should be the next iconic walking track in Tasmania. It has a social licence. It goes through some extraordinary vegetation that we can share with everybody from right around the world. It has a lot of nooks and sections that are far more accessible for a variety of people than the Tyndalls; it is supported by Tasmania's Aboriginal community; and, most importantly, it is not going to impact on sensitive sub-alpine vegetation in the way that some of the other proposals will. I hope all members will see that it is beyond time, given that this report came out in 2008, that we seriously tapped into the potential that is takayna/Tarkine.

The SPEAKER - We are now on the amendment. I do not know if Mrs Beswick wants to take some time to respond, because it is an amendment to her motion.

Mrs Beswick - I am happy for other people to keep talking.

The SPEAKER - Because it is an amendment to your motion, knowing how you feel about the amendment normally gives a bit of guidance to people; that is all. I will call Mrs Beswick very quickly on the amendment.

Mrs BESWICK - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for bringing this possible amendment forward. I personally do not know an awful lot about these projects, and the particular motion that we have is less specific than this. I have been very positive about wanting to do some work on the coastal pathway and to get these grants and things moving. I am not overly against it, but I feel like it is a bit too specific for the particular motion.

The SPEAKER - I will call the member for Bass, Mrs Pentland. Given the time limit, you may speak to the original motion plus the amendment if you want to - a flexibility that is not allowed in normal debates, but given the time constraints of these.

[5.57 p.m.]

Mrs PENTLAND (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I express my full support of Mrs Beswick's motion and I thank her for bringing it to the House. It calls for urgent action on sustained support for the tourism sector in Tasmania's north-west. Tourism is one of the most vital pillars in our economy, not only in the north-west but across the whole of Tasmania. As Mrs Beswick has highlighted, tourism contributes an impressive \$3.48 billion annually to Tasmania's gross state product, making up 8.6 per cent of the total, and supports approximately 43,000 jobs throughout the state.

These figures represent much more than the numbers on the page. They represent people whose livelihoods are tied to the success of the tourism industry. This is not just an economic issue; it is a social issue that affects families and communities throughout the north-west and beyond.

However, as we all know, the tourism sector is facing significant challenges, particularly with the delays in the arrivals of the two new *Spirit of Tasmania* ships. These delays are more than just an inconvenience. They represent a tangible loss of opportunity for businesses in the north-west, many of which were gearing up for an increase in visitation that the new ships were expected to bring.

The impact of these delays will be felt across the region. Local businesses had invested heavily expecting an uptick in visitors, and now those plans are at risk. The tourism sector, like many others, thrives on planning and certainty, and these delays threaten and disrupt that stability. However, I am encouraged by the announcement of the additional support package for the tourism sector in response to these challenges.

It is a necessary first step, but as Mrs Beswick's motion clearly calls for, we must now follow through with even more targeted action and investment. The electorate of Braddon has so many delights in its region, from the rugged beauty of the west coast to the vibrant cultural offerings in towns like Burnie and Devonport, but I will take a moment to shine a light on the stunning beauty of the region in my electorate of Bass.

Launceston and surrounding areas are integral to Tasmania's broader tourism story and the opportunities to grow here are immense. It is not just my city of Launceston. The other beauties of Bass stretch far and white, and the livelihoods supported by tourism are everywhere. They include the winemaker who proudly welcomes guests to taste world-class wines along the many scenic wine routes across the state to the food vendors, the butchers, the bakers and the craft makers at the lively Harvest Market every weekend.

The SPEAKER - I am going to delicately draw you to the motion, which is specifically about the north-west. I love talking about Bass, but although there is flexibility to allow you to talk about the amendment and the substantive motion, but the motion before the House is a north-west one. I apologise. Any other time, you can just go for it.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thank you, Speaker.

I also emphasise the social benefits of investing in tourism, especially on the north-west coast. Currently, 11 per cent of Tasmanian women aged 15 to 24 are not engaged in work or study. The tourism and hospitality sectors offer these young women pathways to employment, skills development and economic independence. By creating more jobs and training opportunities in these industries, we can help break the cycle of disadvantage and build a brighter future for the next generation.

Imagine the impact of a thriving tourism sector on these young women. It is not just about earning a wage; it is about gaining confidence, building a sense of purpose and contributing to the vibrancy of our community. The government must consider initiatives that specifically target this demographic, ensuring they have the tools and supports they need.

I will touch on the amendment. I think that Miriam's motion was broad. It is highlighted that there is going to be support there for the north-west, and I would really like to see that motion get up today. I think the amendment that Ms Badger has put forward today is quite complex, and I think it needs more consultation. At this stage, I will not be supporting the amendment, because I feel that there should be more time given to the amendment.

The SPEAKER - Member for Braddon, Mr Garland. Is this going to be about tigers as well?

[6.02 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Maybe not. Honourable Speaker, the tourism opportunities on our coastline are unlimited. We have the Aboriginal pathways that stretch right along the coast around to Cape Grim. We have their meeting place, which was Robbins Island. We even have a cave named after the architect who designed this building here, the Lee Archer Cave at Sisters Beach.

The SPEAKER - I went there the other week.

Mr GARLAND - I think there are amazing opportunities for the Aboriginal community to get on board to highlight, promote and protect these areas, and provide sustainable access.

The other thing I will talk about is what is big in the north-west. We have the biggest King George whiting in the country. We have the largest freshwater crayfish, *Astacopsis gouldi*, in the world. We have the largest population of shy albatross on the planet. The Tarkine Wilderness Area is one of the largest tracts of temperate rainforest left on the planet. The fishing that is happening there at the moment: we have kingfish, snapper, sardines, whales. We have the birds that feed on them: the gannets, petrels, albatross, terns - it is nature unbounded.

The Arthur and the Pieman Rivers: The Arthur River is the longest undammed river left in Tasmania. I might mention the tigers that are out there. I might even mention the devil - I was parked on the side of the bank there one day in my canoe, having a smoke, and the devil came across the other side of the river, swam across, walked up alongside me, shook itself off, gave me a sniff, and sat there for 10 or 15 seconds, no more than a foot away from me. That is tourism. You can go into that bush there. You do not have to have Toy Town or anything else. It will come to you if you spend the time there.

The north-west is untapped as far as what is there on offer for the community. It is all about providing access in a sustainable way and promoting it. We can look at the *Spirits* not

being here for a couple of years as a bad thing, but we could also look at it in the good sense that it gives us time to prepare for when they do get here. Instead of coming off the *Spirit* and turning left coming down to Hobart, let us highlight what we have in abundance down that end of the state. You can turn a negative into a positive, and I think that is what we need to do.

We have 10 or 11 major river systems. It is unlike anywhere else in this state. All those rivers are full of trout, blackfish and the giant freshwater crayfish. We have a rail system that has gone; the pathway is there. We have ripped it up and put a pathway along the coast right now, but we could extend that all the way through to the Smithton and Stanley area. At Smithton, they need access to the beach. We need a link up. The Aboriginal community - I think they are one of the most done-over communities there is. I think this is an amazing opportunity for them to be involved in highlighting, promoting and protecting those areas and providing access.

I might mention that the fish trap at Wynyard predates the pyramid. The fossils at Fossils Bluff - you could just go on forever. I have had the good advantage of living there my whole life and being immersed in it and tried every square inch of that area. I support the motion from Miriam. I also support the amendment by Tabatha. This is forward thinking. We need to be thinking of those who need a bit of a leg up, and we need to highlight what we have. We do not need \$1 million. All those assets, all that wildlife, all that bush is already there. Those pathways are there - the pathway from Valentine's Peak to Tamar Harbour, that is already there. All it needs is reopening. Thank you, Miriam, for bringing this on, because it brings the north-west into the spotlight.

The SPEAKER (Ms O'Byrne) - Before calling the next person, if there is another one, I will remind members that it is appropriate - and a number of members have not done it in this debate - to refer to the honourable member for Braddon, Mrs Beswick, and the honourable member for Lyons, Ms Badger, rather than first names. It is a piece of House etiquette that also makes sure that when we are in less pleasant debates, there is a level of protection provided to people through their titles.

There being no one else to speak on the motion, I will put the amendment as moved by Ms Badger.

The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 7

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Burnet (Teller)
Mr Garland
Ms Johnston
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff

NOES 25

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis
Mrs Beswick
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs

Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Jenner
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland (Teller)
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Willie
Mr Winter

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME

The SPEAKER - Mrs Beswick, you still have a very little bit of time. You have one minute left of your private members time. Would you like to bring on another matter or would you like to defer?

Mrs BESWICK - I am happy to waive that, Speaker.

MOTION

Salmon Farming - Support for Industry

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a letter from Mr Wood indicating that he is unwell and that his wish is that the House transfer the Notice of Motion No. 90 in his name to Simon Behrakis.

[6.13 p.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes Salmon aquaculture in Macquarie Harbour is critically important to the West Coast community, and directly supports the livelihoods of almost 400 Tasmanian families across the West, North West and Northern Tasmania.

- (2) Further Notes all levels of Government, the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) and industry are having great success in their joint efforts to secure the future of the Maugean skate, including -
 - (a) independent analysis by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) showing dissolved oxygen levels in the Harbour are the best in more than a decade;
 - (b) IMAS population sampling showing the skate's population in the Harbour has stabilised;
 - (c) the IMAS skate captive breeding program at Taroona is working; and
 - (d) the 18-month trail of the Macquarie Harbour Oxygenation Project is proving the help regulate the varying oxygen levels in the harbour;
- (3) Further notes the Federal Government's recent \$28 million investment will further improve the health of the harbour and future of the skate.
- (4) Further notes the uncertainty created by the Federal Minister for Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) review process is having a real-life impact on the mental health of many salmon farming workers, their families and the wider community.
- (5) Calls on the Federal Minister for Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP to immediately end the EPBC review process and allow salmon aquaculture to continue in Macquarie Harbour.

Deputy Speaker, I am moving this in on behalf of Mr Wood. There might be a very Bass-heavy focus for a member for Clark but I will proceed anyway.

As part of the government's Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we are backing in the salmon industry 100 per cent to ensure job security and continual investment in vital job creating projects around our state. All three salmon companies, Tassal, Huon and Petuna, demonstrate impressive innovation in producing one of the most sustainable and healthy forms of protein available to Australians, something they and our state should be very proud of.

The Tasmanian salmon industry is the state's largest primary industry and is part of Australia's most valuable seafood sector, worth \$1.36 billion. The industry is responsible for 86 per cent of Tasmania's total seafood production and continues to ensure that our wild fisheries can be managed sustainably without causing any localised depletion of commercial species.

The Tasmanian salmon industry employs clear of 5100 people, with nine out of 10 of those jobs in key regional areas. This is a very important note that these salmon jobs pay up to 70 per cent more than the average job in these regions, which reflects the relatively higher skills and productivity of workers in the industry.

Without the jobs, without the investment that the salmon industry provides, there would be a significant impact on small regional communities across the state. Importantly, of these salmon jobs, 91 per cent are full time. The state average is about 64 per cent. The industry is dedicated to locking in Australia's food security producing a high quality, highly nutritious, sustainable protein. Salmon has one of the lowest carbon footprints of any livestock industry.

In terms of carbon emissions, ocean-based salmon farms emit less than half the emissions of land-based protein. Salmon produces 2.2kg of carbon dioxide for every kilogram of edible fish produced. By comparison, land-based farms produce 5.1kg of carbon for every kilogram of chicken, 6.4kg of pork, and 37.2kg for beef.

This industry also contributes through other means. It supported three significant wild rescue missions on the west coast in 2020-22 and another just a few weeks ago: the significant marine rescues of recreational boaters, fishers, divers and surfers; ongoing sponsorship of the wonderful Stay Afloat Program dedicated to improving the mental health and wellness of the Tasmanian seafood industry and significant contributions to schools, community groups and sporting clubs. Beyond this, these companies are also investing significantly in their own people, with 55,000 hours invested into staff training annually.

I want to draw a focus on salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour. The federal Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek, is currently the decision maker on whether to allow the salmon industry to continue in the harbour. Her delays are causing severe angst amongst the workers, not only in Strahan but across a large spanning network throughout the state. I will draw to these connections shortly.

The recent cash splash of \$28 million from the federal government is welcomed by many. However, it does nothing to provide certainty for the hundreds of families whose livelihoods rely on Tasmania's world class salmon industry. Unfortunately, with the federal election looming, the minister is playing politics rather than getting on with making the right decision and ending the uncertainty for so many.

We need to focus on the great work of our scientists rather than responding to threats and sensationalism from radical environmental groups such as the Bob Brown Foundation. Comprehensive analysis of over 30 years of Macquarie Harbour water quality monitoring data has shown that oxygen levels are at their highest levels in more than a decade and that two thirds of the harbour now has dissolved oxygen levels within the range observed from 1993 to 2009. This improvement is now being supported by the Macquarie Harbour Oxygenation Project, an innovative trial arising from a partnership between IMAS, the aquaculture industry and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

The Independent Regulator has reduced biomass in the harbour by over half since 2017 and the science shows that the system is responding and responding well. In correlation with improved dissolved oxygen levels, we have recently been advised that the Maugean skate population may be stabilising and can confirm there has been a successful recruitment event.

Salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour accounts for over 120 direct jobs and over 400 indirectly. Most households in Strahan have a salmon farmer or a direct relation to one. Members of these households educate the kids at the local school, or help run their local medical clinic or the pharmacy. Partners and children of summer workers in Strahan are running the supermarkets and hotels, and they are cooking meals and pouring beers at the pub.

If the federal minister makes the wrong decision on Macquarie Harbour, it will decimate the beautiful township of Strahan and the region.

This extends to the investment Petuna has in Tasmania, which is highly vulnerable. If the federal minister makes the wrong decision, a significant amount of employment is in jeopardy across the state, including in Petuna's factory in Devonport and their hatchery in Cressy. The impact of Macquarie Harbour salmon is extensive all around our state, with freight providers, processing plants, feed manufacturers and scientists directly impacted, just to name a few.

As a government, we implore the federal Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek, to reconsider her recent decision to kick this can down the road and prolong the decision until after the next federal election. A wrong decision would decimate the industry, but the worst thing is leaving these families and communities and this industry hanging because of a failure to make a decision and a failure of courage to make a decision. That is what the federal minister is currently doing. She is continuing to kick the can down the road until after the election. We say that the minister should listen to the science. She should not be pressured by radical environmental groups, like the ones we are so used to hearing, and she should listen to the people of Tasmania and particularly the people of the west coast. The time to end the uncertainty is now.

[6.21 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on this motion from the government about our Tasmanian salmon industry. I want to say from the start that being originally from the west coast and then growing up and now living in Kingborough, I know as well as anyone the positive impact of the salmon industry on regional communities - regional communities like Strahan on the west coast, down in Dover, down in Huon and where I am from in Kingborough, and also down on the peninsula and on the east coast. Everywhere that this industry has spread to has led to employment opportunities. It has led to a Tasmanian economy that is stronger and better for the existence of this industry.

Over the course of the last 40 years, this has been the most successful industry in Tasmania, without a doubt. It has grown from nothing 40 years ago to now being an industry that employs more than 5000 Tasmanians, which is testament to the leadership of people in this place - and we have spoken about that only recently - the leadership of people like the Benders and Mark Ryan. These are people who have grabbed this industry and invested and decided to make Tasmania a better place. Tasmania is a better place because of this industry and we should acknowledge that today. The government's motion acknowledges that and I am pleased to see it. Any opportunity that I get to support this industry I will take.

I know that there are towns in the electorate that I represent that would not exist without the salmon industry. These are towns like Dover, which are so reliant on having an industry that employs so many people, but then there are the flow-on impacts of that for bakeries, shops and the entire community, which is why the support for the industry is so strong in those places. It is no stronger than in the town of Strahan, where you find fantastic people doing fantastic things. They want to be able to continue to do that - to continue to work and do what they have been doing for a long period of time.

I have been lucky enough to be to be out on the water at Macquarie Harbour on four separate occasions over the last 12 months. I met Salty from Tassal, who moved to Strahan, married a local Strahan girl, had three kids and wants to continue to raise his family there. Salty

is a fantastic bloke. Linton, moved to Strahan from the Huon Valley with his family to run Huon Aquaculture's operations at Macquarie Harbour. His son has started working in the farms, and he told me last time he was there that his son wants to stay, but does not know if he should make the permanent move there because of the uncertainty about the position of Macquarie Harbour.

Neil, from Petuna - a great big Scotsman and a great man. He came to Tasmania specifically to work in the aquaculture industry. Why? Because we have the best salmon industry anywhere in the world, and he wanted to come and see how we do it here. He is thriving and loving work at Petuna. These are great people. They are working out on Macquarie Harbour. They are doing a great job and their only wish is to be able to continue to do what they are doing with certainty, and I am with them on that. I think they should be able to continue to operate with certainty in line with good regulation, which is what I believe we have in Tasmania.

Ever since I arrived here, the aquaculture industry and the salmon industry has been under threat. It has been under attack. I arrived in this place shortly after the release of the book *Toxic* by Richard Flanagan, which is a book of fiction that was designed deliberately to attack working people in this state and drive fear about this industry. It was a pathetic attempt to shut down an industry and shut down working people in Tasmania. It was a shocking attempt to undermine an industry that was and is a positive thing for Tasmania but it is not just the Bob Brown Foundation, the Greens and Richard Flanagan; it has also been the members opposite in the Liberal Party.

When I arrived here, with no warning whatsoever, the Liberal premier at the time, Peter Gutwein, announced that there would be a moratorium on the salmon industry. The night before, Frances Bender got a call to say, 'Tomorrow, we are announcing a moratorium on your industry. You cannot grow anymore. We are going start telling Tasmanians that you need to lift your game - that you are not good enough'. He called Mark Ryan and said the same thing: 'We are going to start saying that this industry is not good enough and it needs to lift its game, and we are going to put a moratorium on you until you do'.

That is what the government of Tasmania - the Liberal government of Tasmania - did. It was in majority at the time. There were no excuses. It just decided overnight to attack the most successful industry in Tasmania in the last 40 years. They put out media releases saying they are the strongest supporters of the salmon industry. What a joke. The attacks came from the government of Tasmania - the Liberal government - on this industry. Then they issued a Salmon Plan.

The minister responsible at the time, Jo Palmer, put an op-ed into the paper and said, 'I am not going to let the industry off the hook'. The salmon industry - the most successful industry in the last 40 years - has the minister directly responsible for overseeing it saying, 'We are not going to let them off the hook'. For what? For being the most successful industry in Tasmania in the last 40 years? You are not going to let them off hook for that? That is what they did.

The Salmon Plan includes shutting down the flow-through hatcheries that employ people in the electorates of Bass, Braddon and Franklin. That is what is in the plan, and it is still their plan. It says they want to send the salmon farms further out to sea. No consultation with the workers who work there every day. Go out further to sea. That is what the plan says - further

out. That is what this Tasmanian Liberal government did, and now they put out media releases saying, 'We are the strongest supporters of the aquaculture and the salmon industry'. They are not. They are frauds.

The only thing they can do with this motion today is try and play politics. When you have people on the west coast who are directly relying on this industry for certainty and the government wants to play politics with it, it is not good enough. It is not good enough to do that with the lives of Tasmanians.

When I saw the direct threat by the federal government and the decision that needs to be made, I was deeply disappointed. That is why I went to Macquarie Harbour and went out on the water the first time, and I have been there three times since. That is why during the year I took a delegation of Tasmanians to Canberra to meet with Tanya Plibersek, which is something the government had not done.

I organised a meeting with the Prime Minister for me and my deputy leader, Anita Dow, the member for Braddon, who represents those workers. I explained to him very carefully and calmly the serious risk that this decision places on those workers, the impact that it has on local schools and on those families, and the uncertainty for the west coast. I know the Prime Minister supports this industry, and since that - in fact, this year - he has been down and shown his support for the industry.

I took the industry to see Tanya Plibersek so that they could explain directly to her exactly what this means. I took them up there because I want to see results and I want to get the right decision. I will not be playing politics with it, but I will not be going soft on it either. We support this motion today because Tanya Plibersek should make the right decision. There is no excuse for her not making the right decision. She needs to make the right decision as quickly as possible for those workers.

The Labor Party in Tasmania is from the west coast. We are born from the west coast and we are there to support workers and we support those workers. The organisation in Tasmania, the political party that has always had the backs of these workers, is the Tasmanian Labor Party. There will be no stronger supporter than the Tasmanian Labor Party while I am the leader of it, and I will continue to do so. I will not be playing politics. We will be supporting this motion because we do support the aquaculture industry.

The media releases from the minister Eric Abetz in relation to this, trying to pretend as though Tasmanian Labor is not on board with the salmon industry, are ridiculous. They make no sense at all. If this minister and this Premier want my support, they should ask me for it. I am happy to go with them anytime. I am happy to support any action that brings the salmon industry more certainty - the certainty that those workers desperately need. They do not need media releases from Eric Abetz or Jeremy Rockliff. They need certainty and they need clarity. They need this federal minister to make the right decision.

As I have said publicly for a long time now, no decision is a bad decision. The \$28 million of support which was extracted primarily by Senator Anne Urquhart is very welcome. I think it was talked down a little by the member who moved the motion.

I acknowledge Senator Anne Urquhart. She has been acknowledged by the industry itself as a salmon champion. The very first person to be acknowledged as a salmon champion in

Tasmania was Senator Anne Urquhart, who has been doing absolutely everything she can to get the right decision to back those workers. She has already secured \$28 million and doing everything possible. She does not issue media releases willy nilly to try and make a political point. She goes and tries her absolute best for those workers because she believes in them and she backs the industry. The work that she has been doing has been extraordinary. It has been positive, it has been good, and we need to see a positive decision.

No decision is a bad decision on this. Uncertainty is not good for our industry. It is not fair on those workers and that is why we stand firmly with them. We do not need politics, we need outcomes. We need everyone in this place to do everything we possibly can to support these workers on the west coast.

I know that there will be people in this place and elsewhere who will try and shut this industry down, but this issue is primarily about people. I urge people who want to stand in this place and say that the industry should be shut down to go over and meet with people like Salty and Linton. Go and meet with people like Neil, who have made their life on the west coast. If you want to shut down an industry, go and talk to them. Explain your position. If you have a position that says, 'I want to end your job, I want you to have to pull your kids out of the local school, I want you to have to move out of your town', at least have the decency to go and speak to them because, at the end of the day, this issue is about people.

This issue is so critical to that area. This is an area which has been the economic engine room of Tasmania. This is an area that has seen the development of our hydro dams and has seen the ongoing support for the energy that flows to the rest of our economy which comes from the west coast.

The salmon industry is incredible, but the mining that has happened and continues to happen on the west coast from productive industries that want to be able to go - they are happy, they understand they need to be regulated, they understand that they should be backed by science, and they are. We have outstanding Tasmanian scientists at the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), who are doing the science here, who do the regulation.

I know them. I know them personally. I pick up the kids from school and talk to one of the scientists who monitors this. One of the scientists involved in this is involved with my local cricket club. The scientists are the ones who should lead this. The scientists, the Tasmanian scientists, who have been there, who regulate it, are best placed.

The Tasmania regulations on this industry have led to an industry which is world leading, world class, and is doing outstanding things. It does not require people from outside Tasmania to be coming down and telling us what to do.

What we require is the certainty of the right decision. I cannot force the minister to make the right decision, but I do plead that we do need a decision for certainty. No decision is a bad decision.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr WINTER - We need to back our Tasmanian scientists. We need to back the oxygenation program. It is working very well. We need to back the industry because there is

one thing for certain. If the industry leaves Macquarie Harbour, the science that has been done and led by the industry will no longer happen. There will not be the monitoring of the Maugean skate. The one thing that is certain is that if aquaculture is ended in Macquarie Harbour, all those jobs will go. The town of Strahan will suffer and struggle and the school and that community will suffer and struggle. There is no guarantee that the Maugean skate will continue to exist anyway. The only thing we need to do is provide certainty to this industry. That is what we are all about. That is the certainty that I offer to the west coast and will continue to offer going forward.

[6.36 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, it will be no surprise to people watching that the Greens do not support this motion, because this is a motion that is trying to rewrite the facts of what has been happening in Macquarie Harbour. I listened very carefully to the Leader of the Opposition's rewriting of the history of Macquarie Harbour. Let us just say that I have been in this place a lot longer than you and I was here through the times shortly after the senate inquiry into Macquarie Harbour, which found a gross misuse of intensive salmon farming and the impacts it was having nearly a decade ago on Macquarie Harbour.

The things that came to a light from that senate inquiry, and in the short years after that between 2015 and 2018, showed how the industry, the three salmon farms - Tassal, Huon and Petuna - at every step did everything they could and worked with the EPA, with the facilitation of this Liberal government, to find administrative loopholes and workarounds in the legislation so that - regardless of any damage and harm that was occurring, regardless of the scientists who were desperately trying to point out the changes that they were seeing in the harbour in the lower levels - they were able to continue operating.

What we saw was the use back then of Dorvilleid worms that were an indicator species that live at the bottom of Macquarie Harbour. At the bottom of the harbour, they were there and were used by scientists and by the EPA to make sure that there was no impact of salmon pollution on the lower levels. When Dorvilleid worms exist in the salmon excretion, that is an indicator of harm. That is an indicator of an oxygen-dead area. When that was happening, that was an alarm. The Dorvilleid worms were so successful that the companies successfully lobbied to make sure that they were removed as an indicator species, precisely so that the EPA, the regulator, would not be told pesky details about the fact that the bottom of Macquarie Harbour was losing oxygen at a rapid rate.

In the years from 2015, 2018 and 2020, what we saw in the hot summers was millions of dead fish - dead salmon occurring on a gargantuan scale. That was also a sign that there was not enough oxygen in the water at the top levels and we were getting scientists from IMAS telling us increasingly in the regular reports that the oxygen was going down-down-down in the lower waters to it being reported at zero per cent oxygen in the lower levels of Macquarie Harbour over years.

What we had in 2023 was the IMAS report that said this intensive salmon farming is the key issue, the key driver for the loss of oxygen that is continuing to occur in Macquarie Harbour. Unless salmon farming is removed, the Maugean skate will go extinct. We had scientists coming out and saying - putting it into real person terms - there is no time to wait: the salmon pens have to come out before next year. That meant before summer of last year. They were sending a warning on the basis of the science we had. Since then, what has

happened? No action, except that the salmon industry, backed by the Liberals and supported by the industry's champions, the Labor Party, has been going into overdrive, writing a false narrative about what is really going on. It has been trying to discredit the science that was done, trying to throw roadblocks in the way of the genuine solution needed to save a species from extinction.

The problem with the Labor Party's view of the world is that there should be no checks at all on using the environment, so that industry can go ahead.

Ms Butler - No, that is not true.

Mr Winter - We said the opposite to that.

Dr WOODRUFF - No limits for Labor. That is what the opposition leader just said: there should be no limits at all.

Mr Winter - I said they want regulation.

Dr WOODRUFF - How can you have people and life on the planet without having some limits on how we use the environment that sustains us? We live in a natural system. We do not control it. The patriarchy, Christianity, see the environment as being subservient to whatever they want to happen.

Ms Ogilvie - Hey, hang on, you are going a bit far there with that Christianity comment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms Ogilvie, please.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is exactly where this comes from. It is this idea that we can use nature for our purposes and it will be there forever, forever providing, there will always be wild fish in the sea and a harbour that can replenish and restore itself. It is not true. We are seeing the environment falling apart around us. The atmosphere is not coping with the amount of carbon dioxide we are putting into it. The fish in the sea around Tasmania trying to live where they have lived for millions of years are not coping with the level of pollution that salmon farming is putting into our inshore waters, into Macquarie Harbour.

As any recreational fisher will say, we are seeing a loss of flathead. We have already seen the loss of scallops in many areas. We are seeing the loss of seahorses and sea stars. We are seeing the loss of all the beauty of our rivers, the Huon River, the Channel. They are still coming for more by expanding into Frederick Henry Bay, Norfolk Bay and another huge expansion into Storm Bay.

The Greens are saying, along with the scientists, that there are limits. The problem with the Liberal and Labor parties' policies is that they see nature as something to be endlessly exploited and are even prepared to have extinctions on their watch. That is what we are walking into unless we pull salmon farming out of Macquarie Harbour.

Mr Bayley - Go to the State of the Environment report. It says it all.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, thank you, Mr Bayley. The State of the Environment report is devastating. It shows deterioration, with 55 per cent of indicators going backwards rapidly. We

have a government that, after stalling a State of the Environment report for over 10 years, is now stalling in providing their response. We know the government has had it for a long time.

Ms Ogilvie - Sorry, what are you talking about? We said you would have it by Christmas.

Dr WOODRUFF - They should have accepted the recommendations. When you see the State of the Environment report provided to us in parliament, the only sane thing to do would be to take stock of what we are doing, to stop it, and say that we need to respond to the environment that is the basis of all life and prosperity in Tasmania.

It is obviously the case that there is great work being done by scientists at IMAS and there is exciting work being done on the breeding program of the Maugean skate. However, there is no point having a captive breeding program if there is not a viable system to put our species back into. Otherwise, all we are doing is having an extinction in the wild and creating a zoo. What an awful tourism drawcard for Tasmania. We have made the species go extinct but here is a little zoo where you can come and look at them floating around in tanks. What an awful idea.

Ms Ogilvie - What are you talking about? Nobody has suggested that. It is just silly.

Mr Abetz - People will go to the west coast to see the Maugean skate.

Dr WOODRUFF - Why do the Liberal government and the Labor Party not put up propositional ideas for how to support workers in the north-west? Should that not be what they are doing? Should they not be looking at transitioning that industry, which is not sustainable by any measure?

Mr Winter - It is.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is not, because it is relying on having to use the waters and causing a species to go extinct to continue to operate at the level it is operating at. Why not move an industry out of that harbour, out of the inshore waters? This is what the Liberals promised to do five years ago: move them towards closed-loop and on-land systems. Why not move them towards sustainable feed? At the moment, what they are setting up is another plundering of wild fish through the small pelagic fish, including sardines. This is a new industry the Resources minister, Mr Abetz, wants to set up. That would go straight into salmon feed. That is plundering a wild species and putting it into farmed salmon, which through the way salmon-farming operations are run under the Liberals' regulations are designed to cause harm to marine systems in our bays. Long Bay used to be a beautiful pristine area. Now, it is full of green slime, it is full of brown snot, as is the Huon River. The Huon River is not recognisable as the place it was even five years ago, let alone 25 years ago.

Mr Winter - Honestly.

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Winter can moan, but he does not live on any of the bays I live near in the upper reaches of the Huon River. It is unrecognisable because it does not have the species that used to live there. It does not have the diversity and the beauty and the clarity of the water, and the joy of seeing surprising little seahorses and sea stars. It was just the other day that I went swimming and thought, I do not recognise this dead seascape. This used to be a different place and I have only been living there for nearly 20 years. I talk to people who have

lived their whole life there and they do not go swimming and they certainly do not go fishing there any more because it is unrecognisable.

We will move an amendment. I move -

That all the words after "the House" be omitted and the following words be inserted instead:

"supports transitioning the salmon industry workforce and removing fish farms from Macquarie Harbour to save the Maugean skate".

How long does this get?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Another 30 minutes.

Dr WOODRUFF - How long do we have in this?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - You have until 7.14 p.m.

Dr WOODRUFF - I will certainly be happy to hear other people's views on this. I think the Greens in the election -

Mr ABETZ - Point of order. This is a complete negation of the motion originally moved. I would ask for your ruling as to whether this is an amendment or a complete negation.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - The practice of the House is that it is an amendment, and so it can be accepted.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is not a complete negation because this refers to the motion, which is about what should happen in Macquarie Harbour and what should happen with the salmon industry. The point is that the salmon industry does need to be sustainable and that means that salmon workers need to transition out of operations in Macquarie Harbour.

Mr Abetz - You want to stop it.

Dr WOODRUFF - The industry there has to be wound up and there needs to be a plan to have salmon farming become closed-loop and moved onto the land. If the government had a mind to look into the future and what would really protect regional communities, you would be applying yourself to the sort of workforce transition that is needed for those people and those communities. The Greens did that. We had a go. We have been up and spoke to the West Coast Council and we are continuing to talk to people about this. You have to do the work, but it is the job of the government to do this work, to look at what we can do to both protect the Maugean skate - an incredible ancient species, older than the dinosaurs - and look at other options for employment in the north-west to support workers and to make sure that they have real and meaningful jobs, because there are plenty of other opportunities if the government puts its mind to it.

The Greens have a policy suggestion, and I would welcome people's input. We sought the views of the mayors and staff on the west coast, and we will continue to talk to people about how we can have better regional jobs that are sustainable and do not rely on causing a species

to go extinct. It would be a terrible thing for the Tasmanian salmon industry, but more importantly for the people of Tasmania, if a species went extinct as a result of an industry that the government so fulsomely supports.

We hope that members will support this amendment. It is the only sensible thing to do and it is fully backed by the science. We do not support Tanya Plibersek sitting on the decision. She should get on with the job that she has, which is to protect the environment and to set limits. The work of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) is to protect the environment and make sure it is not used to a point where it is broken and where species go extinct. We will continue to advocate, as Peter Whish-Wilson, Senator for the Greens, does in Canberra, for Tanya Plibersek and Labor to get on with making that decision.

We are dismayed that Labor have kicked that can down the road. For a minister who came in and said she would have no extinctions on her watch, she is getting very close to having one by her inaction. We hope members support our amendment and we look forward to the conversations.

[6.52 p.m.]

Mrs PENTLAND (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, and I will go into my contribution now. I thank the government for bringing this before the House and I intend to support the motion.

I want to talk about something that is important for the Tasmanian families and communities: responsible salmon production in Macquarie Harbour. It is an industry that supports hundreds of jobs and plays a key role in the future of these communities. It is a sector that directly supports nearly 400 Tasmanian families across the west coast, north-west and northern Tasmania, providing jobs, economic stability and a sustainable future for the communities that rely on it.

We find ourselves in a situation where the industry's future on the west coast is uncertain. This motion before us presents a clear case of why we must take action to protect the industry, not only for its contribution to the economy, but also for the sake of the wellbeing of all the people it supports. In late October, I had the opportunity to visit Petuna's operation at Rowella, and I was struck by the professionalism, dedication and innovation demonstrated at the facility and by its employees.

I have toured Huon Aquaculture and Tassal at Margate as well, and I can tell you firsthand that these operations are impressive. They are run by people who take their jobs seriously and care about the future of their industry. What impressed me most was the transparency with which they answered all my questions. They showed me respect without spin. They explained in detail exactly how they manage their farms, ensuring sustainability and minimising environmental impact.

The Greens would lead you to believe the salmon farming industry is guilty of all types of environmental wrongdoing. You would be led to believe these industries are being run recklessly by uncaring cowboys. None of the Greens' concerns that I have heard were backed up when I toured these facilities. They must be seeing something I did not see when they toured the facilities. Given the Greens' stance on salmon farming, I thought it was only fair to ask the facilities whether those members had done the same tours I have. Please correct me if I am wrong, but each of the managers of these facilities I toured confirmed to me that not one Greens

MP or their representatives have ever visited these facilities, despite being invited multiple times.

Dr Woodruff - That is not true.

Mrs PENTLAND - Do not shoot the messenger. I only asked the question and received an answer.

Dr Woodruff - I am not shooting you; I am just correcting you. You asked to be corrected.

Mrs PENTLAND - If that is indeed untrue -

Dr Woodruff - Yes, it is untrue.

Mrs PENTLAND - I find that appalling.

Dr Woodruff - That they have been misleading? Yes.

Mrs PENTLAND - How can a political party have such a constant negative narrative about an industry they have never visited?

Dr Woodruff - You can discontinue that because we have visited them.

Mr Abetz - Which ones?

Mr Behrakis - Holding a placard out the front does not count.

Mrs PENTLAND - How can anyone claim to know or understand the challenges and realities of the salmon industry without taking the time to see it for themselves? How can any political party stand up in this House and denigrate an industry they have never taken the time to understand? To me, that is simply bad politics and a disservice to the people of Tasmania. In my opinion, it is poor form and disrespectful to criticise an industry from afar. Go on site and see the work being done.

Like I said, if I have been misinformed, I apologise but, if it is the case, it does not pass the pub test for me, and it certainly does not serve the interests of hardworking Tasmanians whose livelihoods depend on this industry.

Equally, I believe it is important for those of us who support the industry to be clear eyed about the environmental impact. Salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour started in the 1980s, but in the early 2010s, they pushed too hard with stocking density, and it did have a negative impact on the harbour. Since then, salmon stock has decreased by half and IMAS has confirmed the health of the harbour has improved.

In response to fears over the future of the skate, the joint efforts of the state and federal governments, IMAS, and the industry itself are delivering tangible results. I had a briefing with IMAS today, coincidentally, and they confirmed the dissolved oxygen levels in the harbour are the best they have been in 10 years. The 18-month trial of the oxygenation project is proving

effective in helping regulate fluctuating oxygen levels. This is crucial for the health of the harbour's ecosystem and the survival of the skate. It is good news for salmon as well.

IMAS also confirmed the active breeding program is producing very promising results, largely thanks to one of the female skate's remarkable ability to produce eggs. I can relate to that skate.

Ms Ogilvie - I have visited them too. She is a good mother.

Mrs PENTLAND - This is environmental stewardship in action, and I have every confidence that this ongoing work will continue to safeguard the future of Macquarie Harbour and its inhabitants.

Salmon aquaculture is not just about fish; it is about people. The industry provides economic benefits to Tasmania, especially in the regional areas. According to research by Deloitte, the salmon industry accounts for 70 per cent of employment in the west coast and Latrobe local government areas. That is almost one in five jobs in these communities directly linked to salmon farming. Other parts of the state are equally reliant on the future of the industry.

These jobs are also well-paying jobs, with workers earning up to 73.9 per cent more than the average wage in these areas. If these jobs were to go, the impact on those west coast towns would be devastating. These are good jobs that provide stability, career opportunities and futures for the families in these regions.

For many, the salmon industry is the backbone of the local economy, and it is an industry that has long supported communities across the state. We cannot ignore the direct impact that the industry has on local businesses, contractors, service providers and other industries that rely on a healthy, thriving salmon sector. These businesses employ Tasmanians, pay taxes, and contribute to the local economy in a way that I believe to be sustainable and growing.

Beyond the economic impact, let us also talk about the nutrition and health benefits of Tasmanian salmon. I learnt during my recent visits that salmon is a high-quality source of protein compared to beef. The average serving of salmon contains about 22 to 25 grams of protein per 100 grams. This is on par with beef, which has between 24 and 27 grams of protein per 100 grams - but without the carbon footprint.

Tasmanian salmon is globally recognised as a leader in sustainable aquaculture, independently accredited by organisations like the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, Best Aquaculture Practices and the RSPCA. We should be proud of the quality of the product we are producing in Tasmania.

We cannot overlook the human cost of the uncertainty surrounding the future of salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour. These are hardworking people who deserve stability, not political posturing. They deserve to know that their industry can continue to thrive and their families will have secure jobs for years to come.

While I recognise the importance of protecting the future of the skate, I do not believe the evidence supports the end of salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour. Instead, we should

continue to follow the science and be ready to adapt when conditions change. I believe in a balance, not a ban.

I support this motion. I support the Tasmanians who earn their livelihoods from the salmon industry.

[7.01 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, no one is trying to shut the salmon industry down. The people in Tasmania just want it done right, plain and simple. The science that ticked off the expansion in Macquarie Harbour was from an overseas science company that spent two weeks on the harbour, and that is what created the problem.

The fishermen on the north-west - we were nowhere near the salmon farms, but they directly affected us. They started relocating seals onto our fishing grounds in the early 1990s and did not stop until 2017 to 2018. They basically shut down our fishery. What that did to those old fishermen in the area and their mental health was disgusting. The salmon farms lied to us. They said they would send their heads up to meet with us. That did not happen. They sent two juniors. They said they were going to compensate us for the loss of nets and the damage incurred. That did not happen.

We have no trust in this industry, and nor does any of the fishing community that I am involved with. I might add again, we just want it done right. Plain and simple. I asked Mr Abetz about this. The number of 400 families comes from the people employed indirectly and what have you within the salmon industry. I asked Mr Abetz about this figure in Budget Estimates. Mr Abetz said that there were 395 employees employed directly and indirectly. This was a figure, he said, that came directly from the business itself. We asked him for more details. He said, 'I can take that on notice to get the full details'. I have not received any further information from Mr Abetz on this claim.

According to the Australia Institute, the 2021 ABS census shows that 2177 people worked in aquaculture in Tasmania. This includes other aquaculture activities such as oyster, mussel and abalone farming. The Australia Institute estimates the number involved in salmon farming will be between 1100 and 1700. As for the west coast, the Australia Institute estimates the number of people employed in salmon farming in the north-west and west coast is between 110 and 170, and on the west coast alone, between 54 and 76. Those jobs are important, but you cannot overstate and misrepresent the people who are working there; you have to get it right.

I want to read from the report on the IMAS population sampling showing the skate population in the harbour, where it shows as stabilised. On page one of the report:

... the population does not appear to have declined further ... it is too early to determine what this levelling of the population trend and recruitment event means for the future population trajectory ... it is important to note that the Maugean skate population in Macquarie Harbour has not significantly increased since 2021.

The report further notes the federal government's recent \$28-million investment will further improve the health of the harbour and future of the skate. How can this parliament say it knows the outcome of that investment?

I agree that it would be desirable for the minister to decide as soon as she is able, but the motion is not calling her to get a move on and decide. This motion is calling on the federal minister to immediately end a statutory review process and make the decision it wants to see. This could be unlawful. The minister is required to decide under law in accordance with the evidence before her. This parliament, which makes laws, should not be calling on a fellow member of parliament, a federal minister, to depart from a statutory process. It should respect that process and call on the minister to follow that process.

I also want to call out the opposition leader's personal attack on Richard Flanagan. Before that book was released, it was checked by a quality controller for a couple of weeks to check for any inaccuracies and there were none found. Could you highlight the untruth that is in that book?

Mr Winter - I said it was fiction.

The SPEAKER - I am not going to have a conversation across the Chamber, thank you.

Mr GARLAND - If you could highlight the untruth that is in that book - you say it is fiction - I would be pleased to know so. Where is the rebuttal to the evidence Richard Flanagan assiduously researched and laid out in that book?

The salmon industry is blaming climate change, netting and hydro instead of owning up and facing up to the problem that they have created. Now, I might mention netting. I have been talking to a few of those netters in the harbour who have been there for 50 years. They have not been catching Maugean skate. We have recently disallowed recreational netting in that harbour. I have been talking to these fishermen and, being a fisherman myself, I catch a number of skate species in Bass Strait.

There is only one time in the whole history of my fishing that I have killed a skate and that was in a north-easterly storm and it got wrapped up in the end of the net. Gillnets do not trap the skate. Gillnets are designed to attach around the fish's gills and they cannot breathe. Skates just swim into the net and they will sit there until you roll them out, and that is a fact. I would also like to talk about the fishermen in Strahan, who I know very well, who have been there for decades and decades and fished that harbour for decades.

The tiddlies - the fish life - has disappeared right around the perimeter of that harbour. It is a disgrace and it has only happened since salmon farming escalated into that harbour. Nothing before, this is generations who fish that harbour with no change in the species they were catching or the productivity.

The salmon industry has to own up and take ownership that they have created this problem, and, I might add, it is absurd to kill off a natural environment and then pluck a species out and put it into captivity and say, 'That's okay, we can breed them in captivity.' It does not work, and I might ask the members in here to have a watch of *Artifishal*. It shows what the direct result is when you muck around with natural selection and do destocking and try and do it right. It is absurd that we are killing off the environment, killing off species and think we can raise them - much the same as the thylacine.

I do not think I have much more to say on that, because I want to give somebody else the opportunity to get up. I want to see this salmon industry regulated properly, and part of my

journey, why I am here today, is because we were directly affected by this salmon industry that did not give a damn about our fishery or we fishermen and to provide this furphy that it is all about jobs and they care about employment. They do not, they care about one thing only and that is profit.

[7.08 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Honourable Speaker, it appears as though the silly season has come upon us early in 2024 when you have the leader of the Greens claiming the patriarchy and Christianity are somehow responsible for salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour.

Mr Bayley - That is not what she said, minister.

Mr ABETZ - Next time I am around there I will be saying, 'Yes, I am a bloke, I am a Christian. You can praise me for the jobs and the livelihoods that you have'. I have got to say that I reckon - and the workers would be entitled to say, 'Well, Eric, that isn't something that we believe'. Similarly, they would not believe the nonsense that came from the Greens' contribution this evening.

I agree with Mr Garland when he says that we just want it done right. That is what I think we all want, other than Mr Garland and the Greens, because the amendment says removing fish farms from Macquarie Harbour, in other words, get rid of them. It is no longer about doing it right, it is about abolishing it. Indeed, I could not help but wonder at the tortured logic of the Leader of the Greens when she asserted that we wanted sustainable fish farming and that is why it needed to be wound up.

Dr Woodruff - From waters and put on land.

Mr ABETZ - If it is wound up, you no longer have any fish farming. Therefore, you cannot have it, sustainable or otherwise. That is clear logic and that is where, when the Greens hyperventilate with a hyperbole, they get themselves into that sort of logical difficulty as we witnessed this evening in their contributions. When you have mining issues, hydro issues and all sorts of issues on the West Coast, to try to blame one element of all the activities in Macquarie Harbour does not necessarily indicate a full assessment and appreciation of all the factors at play.

Let us keep in mind in relation to the science that the Maugean skate today is at the same levels as in 2014, a decade earlier. All this hyperventilation in relation to what salmon farming has done in Macquarie Harbour, the population level is the same as it has been for a decade.

Mr Bayley - Collapsed.

Mr ABETZ - Why was an insurance population sought to be obtained at great expense to the taxpayer? It was because some people believed that it was becoming extinct, courtesy of that which was being asserted at the time, and therefore an approach was taken: if this is true, if this assertion has truth attached to it, then it might make sense to try to breed it in captivity. The Maugean skate in the past used to be called the Port Davey skate. It used to be present at Port Davey, it used to be present in Bathurst Harbour and - what do we know? - it no longer exists in Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour: absent any hint of fish farming.

Dr Woodruff - Have you talked to the scientists about this?

Mr Bayley - There is an explanation for that, minister.

Mr ABETZ - Therefore, you might consider that the Maugean skate for whatever reason is having difficulties even in the pristine area of Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour and, similarly, potentially in Macquarie Harbour. The good news is that the population levels today are as high as they were a decade ago. They are the determinations by those who examine these things. They do not need to find these things out to raise money for IMAS or some sort of scientific body, unlike the Bob Brown Foundation that needs to preach doom and gloom for its funding purposes and therefore they can never admit or acknowledge that oxygen levels have increased, that the population level is at the same sustainable rate as it was a 10 years earlier, because that would not allow them to raise funds from the unsuspecting people in Melbourne and Sydney, in the inner suburbs.

The original motion, originally moved by Simon Wood and then taken over by Simon Behrakis, is a motion designed to give heart and support to the men and women who make their livelihood on the west coast from fish farming in Macquarie Harbour. Yes, I have seen what the Australian Institute has said in relation to the number of workers in Macquarie Harbour -

Time expired.

The SPEAKER (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 8

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Burnet
Mr Garland
Mr Jenner (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff

NOES 24

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis
Mrs Beswick (Teller)
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton

Mr Street
Mr Willie
Mr Winter

Amendment negatived.

The SPEAKER (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 24

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

NOES 8

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Burnet
Mr Garland (Teller)
Mr Jenner
Ms Johnston
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[7.25 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Tabled Paper

Question on Notice - Answer

Mr ABETZ - Honourable Speaker, I table the following answer to a question on notice.

No. 19 - Tasmanian State Service - Impacts of COVID-19

Ms ROSOL question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

See Appendix 6 on page 153.

Tasmanian Youth Orchestra

[7.25 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for the Arts and Heritage) - Good evening everybody, good evening music lovers - and I know we all are music lovers. Honourable Speaker, I will talk this evening about an amazing performance of the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra (TYO) that I attended and to acknowledge the great work being done by their board, their players and their parents. This group of young people is remarkable in what they do and in the musical delights they deliver on a statewide basis to so many kids and families. Quite incredible. I was happy to attend the performance. The Chair, Sally Chandler, is doing a fantastic job. Kyna Hart, who commenced in the role of general manager in 2019 and is now serving as the chief executive officer, is also doing an incredible job. You can see how warmly regarded they are with these events.

The concert was held in the Goods Shed. It was beautifully organised and decked out. Many families were in the room. We had the combined orchestra which included all the numerous orchestras that make up the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra and their chorale as well. The singing was beautiful.

We know the arts is a lifelong partner for many people, particularly for these young people who have an opportunity to engage with music and instrumental learning. It can provide a framework for understanding and a better way of engaging with the world and also their studies and learning. We know that learning a musical instrument also helps with other areas of learning and education, including mathematics, engagement and performance. So many good things can come from this. There is also making friends through music, and it was lovely to see those kids enjoying each other's company and having a great time but also being able to produce music at such a phenomenal level.

We are incredibly proud of the study of music and the musicians we are producing in Tasmania, and they are things we need to do more to promote. The professional pathways for classical musicians in Tasmania are really strong, particularly with the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. However, we need to do more. We have many kids who would like to have the opportunity to attend more performances, to study different instruments, to learn music, and I am not certain that everybody who wants to are

getting that chance. That is something, as the Arts minister, that I am leaning into to see what we can do about that. Working with these iconic organisations is one of those things.

I must concede - I think I have done it before, but just to make sure, I myself am an alumnus of the TYO. I am always very proud to go there and see what is happening in this more contemporary world. I did make a joke that I was there back in the Jurassic period and there was much giggling from the kids about that. That was the 1980s, for those who want to know when the Jurassic period was. They really responded to the fun that we were trying to provide to them.

These participatory art experiences delivered by the TYO have proved time and time again the positive youth development and improved motivation, engagement in academic and educational outcomes, and enhanced meta skills. These development outcomes are ones we know are delivered. I like to see the teamwork that goes on, the communication, not just within the orchestra as it plays, but with the kids and across the parents and organising that many people. How these families do it is quite phenomenal. There is the joy of achievement in music, which has impacts on so many areas of young people's lives.

This is all over and above being part of a community that celebrates music and ensemble practice, which I think we are, as a state. These practices have stood the test of time and formed a significant part of western history. That is part of the reason we, as a government, have been proud to support the TYO over many years, most recently with \$710,000 over four years as a multi-year recipient through Arts Tasmania together with \$9100 for more instruments. In the recent election campaign, they told me that there are some endangered instruments and one of those is the oboe.

Time expired.

Portable Long Service Leave

[7.30 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, tonight, I will speak about the portable long service leave roundtable that was held last Friday. On 22 November, I hosted a roundtable on portable long service leave on behalf of the Greens. The event was designed to give Tasmanian unions and workers an opportunity to share with MPs information about the concept of portable long service leave, and why introducing a scheme for workers in the disability and community services, aged care, contract cleaning and security sectors must be a priority. The event was also an opportunity to raise the profile of this important reform and to consider how the parliament can best collaborate to enact it.

The fact that workers who may move from employer to employer because of their industry structure cannot access long service leave entitlements is incredibly unfair. These workers, mainly women, are missing out. Those who attended last Friday's roundtable heard from representatives from the United Workers Union, the Australian Services Union and the Health and Community Services Union. We also heard from the CEO of TasBuild, Mr Mark Williams, about the success of portable long service leave in the construction sector since it was enacted in the 1970s, and the pitfalls and improvements that have occurred over time with the administration of this scheme. This is the envy of other trades. It has been

successfully implemented and is a great knowledge base for any future rollout to community services, aged care, contract cleaners and security workers.

You might remember that during the 2024 state election, the Health and Community Services Union canvassed political parties and candidates regarding a number of issues. This included a question about support for introducing a portable long service scheme for workers in these sectors. Encouragingly, this proposed reform received in-principle support from a majority of current MPs elected to this House of Assembly. Since the election, the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU), the United Workers Union (UWU) and the Australian Services Union (ASU) have stepped up their advocacy on this issue. Given the numbers in the House and the diversity of MLCs in the Legislative Council, there is real potential for achieving reform. I believe the best opportunity for realising this potential is through a collaborative approach that engages members from across this parliament.

This interest and sense of collaborative approach to fix the issue was clearly on display from those who attended or were represented. I thank Ms Johnston, Mr O'Byrne, Ms Webb, Ms Brown and Ms Haddad, who all attended, and I acknowledge those who would have made it if only they could.

We have many examples in other jurisdictions where portable long service leave has been introduced. The Australian Capital Territory was touted as a successful model, as well as New South Wales and Queensland, and South Australia's recent legislation has been passed. I ask those who are listening to think about signing the petition that the Health and Community Services Union is running on this issue and also follow their campaign. This could make a significant difference to the lives of workers in these sectors. I urge all of us to be involved in this worthy campaign.

No Prison in the Meander Valley Group

[7.34 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, yesterday, I was given the honour of tabling a petition on behalf of the No Prison in the Meander Valley Group signed by over 1000 people. The group have been working hard trying to ensure that the three prison sites that were proposed by the government over a five-year period at a cost of well over \$7 million - and that is just the cost that we know about - will not happen in the future. The angst that the debacle of those three prison sites and the \$7 million wasted created, the lack of community consultation - it was coercion, not consultation - and the dire consequences on that community, insofar as the way it divided that community over that time, were shameful.

This group has come up with this petition, which over 1000 people have signed. It says:

We, the undersigned citizens of Tasmania, draw to the attention of the House our opposition to the construction of a prison within the Meander Valley. Furthermore, the prison currently proposed for the highly visible Ashley Youth Detention Centre site would be an inappropriate development on the scenic Meander Valley Road, surrounded by working farms and less than two kilometres from the historic Bowerbank Mill entrance to Deloraine.

The near neighbours in the community of Deloraine and the Meander Valley, including service providers, small business owners, tourism operators, artists, residents and farmers, believe that the negative impacts of the prison cannot be mitigated. We propose subsidising transport for prison visitors from the north rather than duplicating a prison system in the north of the state located away from the courts, services, staff and accommodation that a major city could provide.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to call the government to cancel the prison proposed for a site in the Meander Valley and explore other options such as expanding the existing Risdon prison and reestablishing a prison rehabilitation farm.

Many people have questioned why the group proceeded with this petition after the minister had made the announcement that there will not be a northern prison. The reason why they decided to proceed is because they received correspondence from the honourable Madeleine Ogilvie, Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, that reads:

Thank you for your letter dated 17 August regarding the Northern Correctional Facility. On Friday 30 August 2024, I announced that our government would no longer proceed with the Northern Correctional Facility development.

From that, you would think it is all gone. The next paragraph read:

Our government will instead prioritise upgrading and enhancing Tasmania's existing correctional system, and invest in rehabilitation opportunities and reducing reoffending rates, ultimately contributing to greater community safety.

That still stands positive. Then it states:

Notwithstanding that significant change in approach, the government will explore the potential for the repurposing of the current Ashley Youth Detention Centre when it is vacated by the Department of Education, Children and Young People to hold lower security adult offenders. Further information on our government's investment into the Tasmanian corrections system was announced as part of the 2024-25 state Budget handed down in parliament on Thursday 12 September.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me and for your continued engagement on this important matter.

That reads as though there could still potentially be a form of prison or correctional service on that site. That is why the group proceeded with their petition and over 1000 people signed it. We are not opposed to the building of a prison. We are not opposed to that at all. We understand, and if you look at the state of the Launceston Reception Centre, that needs replacing. It is a terrible facility. It is woefully inadequate.

The problem is that there is no consent from the community of Meander Valley to have a prison in their community - \$7 million wasted, the huge angst caused for that community over five years, the community divided over this concept. I was more than happy to table this on behalf of the No Prison in Meander Valley group. They have a valid point. We hope that the government has finally listened and we do not have any more backflips.

Time expired.

Electoral Disclosure Bill - Comments of Mr Barnett in Committee Stage

Deloraine Show 2024

Tasmanian Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast

[7.39 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I will reflect on the Deloraine Show held last Saturday 23 November and also the Tasmanian Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast this morning. Before doing so, to clarify, during the Committee stage on the electoral disclosure bill, some of my comments may have been interpreted to suggest that the amounts set out in the amendments were amounts specifically advised by the Department of Justice. To make it perfectly clear, the amounts in the amendments to the bill were determined by the government, taking into consideration advice provided to the Department of Justice in the course of consultation with parties about the provision of transition funding. The department provided advice as to transitional funding arrangements in other jurisdictions, which were also in consideration when determining the amendments.

The Deloraine Show on Saturday was an absolute beauty. I was there with my granddaughter, Skye. She thoroughly enjoyed it. The highlight of the day for my granddaughter was the face painting. She was having the time of her life and really appreciated the princess colours and bits and pieces all over her face, which was absolutely brilliant.

It was a really special day. In terms of those who attended, I would say it was a bumper crowd. It was great to be joined by my colleague and friend, Mark Shelton MP, and also congratulations to Stephanie Cameron, Deputy Mayor of the Meander Valley Council, who officially opened the show. Likewise, congratulations to Merrilyn Young, who is the new president of the show society. A great job done there, because she is now the fifth generation of the Young family who have been involved in the Deloraine Show Committee. It was great catching up with Lexie Young, her mother, at the lunch - we are old mates from way back - and congratulations to her for all her community service over so many decades. The Four Roses Lady, as we know. It is just fantastic.

To the organisers and the volunteers who work so hard to help make it happen: congratulations, well done. It was an absolute blinder. The Tasmanian Whipcracking Championship was great in particular; I really enjoyed that with my granddaughter Skye. The sheep and cattle judgings are always great. The crazy bike riding is absolutely crazy - I love my bike riding, but I have never seen some of the bikes that I have seen at the Deloraine Show, and those that were successfully staying on top of their bikes and riding crazily around the arena. The woodchopping, of course. The main stage had the buzzing, incredible talent, including Indicator, Georgina Harvey and co, and other entertainers, bringing the best to everyone. I always enjoy the craft show. My wife and my wife's family are very much involved

in craft. Likewise, it was great to see Stephanie Cameron's kids involved there. Of course, my granddaughter Skye enjoyed that as well.

All in all, it was an absolutely ripper day, and I congratulate the organising committee and all those involved in helping make that happen. A big shout out to the Deloraine community bank, the Bendigo Community Bank Deloraine & Districts, for their continued support as the major sponsor. Of course, there are other sponsors and supporters, and they should be proud of themselves.

Obviously, I know many in the community well, having my office in Deloraine, but on a personal note, this is on the back of the Tasmanian Craft Fair just some weeks ago now, which I really enjoyed, and getting to know people on the gate with my wife. I enjoyed that tour through the Tasmanian Craft Fair - so good. So good for the area of Meander Valley, but also for Tasmania. It is part of the Tassie brand.

In conclusion, the Tasmanian Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast had its nineteenth year this year. Mike Baird was the guest speaker - former Premier of Tasmania. He received a standing ovation -

The SPEAKER - New South Wales.

Mr BARNETT - What did I say?

The SPEAKER - Tasmania.

Mr BARNETT - Tassie? Indeed, New South Wales. It was great to have him back in Tasmania. I served in the federal parliament with his dad, Bruce. I knew his late mother, Judy.

It was a wonderful address, sharing about key themes like the importance as a leader of authenticity, the merit of unity, having a voice for the voiceless and having grace. He shared about the parable of the forgiving father, which is another way to put it. Cecily Rosol shared, the Premier shared, and Dean Winter shared. It was a wonderful event.

Time expired.

Aquaculture - Effects on Wild Fish

[7.45 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I will address a false story that has been deliberately perpetuated by the Liberals on behalf of the three big Tasmanian salmon corporations. It is a narrative that pretends that creating, maintaining and stoking a Tasmanian salmon industry is somehow a virtuous and necessary alternative to depleting wild-caught fish stocks. Its most extreme version has Tasmanian salmon as the saviour of a wild-caught fish populations. Actually, that could not be further from the truth.

The impact on wild fish populations is significantly higher than has previously been reported. There is some good research done by scientists from the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric and Earth Sciences. That research uses a metric for measuring the efficiency of aquaculture, a fish-in:fish-out - FI ratio. The study has found that

wild fish inputs into aquaculture are between 27 per cent and 307 per cent higher than previous estimates. For carnivorous species like salmon, the wild fish used often exceeded double the amount of farmed fish biomass being produced.

That leads us to what is happening in Tasmania. Investigations have found that krill is used by the two major Tasmanian aquaculture companies, Tassal and Huon, and their feed suppliers. BioMar, located in Wesley Vale, Tasmania, uses 1200 tonnes of krill meal a year and that is particularly captured from the great oceans of the south. Ships spot whales and follow them, deliberately aiming to get ahead of the whales so they can scoop up the krill balls the whales are chasing to eat. They are literally stealing the krill from the whales' mouths.

BioMar is one of Australia's biggest users of krill. BioMar supplies feed primarily to Huon Aquaculture, which is now owned by international corporate JBS. Another salmon feed producer, Skretting, has been found to use approximately 200 tonnes of krill a year. Skretting has supplied feed primarily to Tassal, now owned by Cook Seafood, but claims to make feed using a zero-fishmeal product.

In relation to anchovies, fishmeal used in feed for the Tasmanian salmon industry comes from Chimbote in Peru. The Chimbote industry has decimated the wild anchovy stocks in Peruvian waters, polluted the waterways and coastlines, and caused massive health problems for locals. That is a very high price to pay for anchovy fishmeal that ends up being used by the industrial salmon industry in our feed here, then polluting our own waterways after it goes into the salmon pens. There is about 53 million cubic metres of sludge in the waters around Chimbote in Peru. That is residual waste from the fishmeal factories.

Peruvian fishermen slaughter thousands of sea lions so they can disrupt the natural food chain of the region. In other words, they kill the natural predators of anchovy populations in order to take the anchovies to put into the fishmeal that ends up in our salmon pens in Tasmania. You will not see these images on the glossy brochures of Tassal and Huon Aquaculture. However, BioMar still sources Peruvian anchovies to make its fishmeal.

In 2021, Tassal claimed it used 1.73 kg of wild fish to make 1 kg of salmon. There is something very wrong with that equation.

Elsewhere, there is huge murkiness around the West African fishmeal industry. What we know is that vast amounts of wild fish are hauled from waters by supertrawlers from Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania and other West African countries, and the resulting product most likely ends up in the Tasmanian industry. We know the West African fishmeal industry supplies vast quantities of fishmeal to salmon producers globally. A significant proportion of fish used for fish oil in salmon feed is sourced from food-insecure regions such as West Africa, where food insecurity is now at a 10-year high. A coalition of international organisations and academics has called on the Norwegian government to ban the salmon farming industry from sourcing fish oil from West Africa. The fish grown by companies in Tasmania is definitely not sustainable.

Time expired.

Lake Malbena - Halls Hut Repairs

[7.50 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, on 18 June 2024, I spoke on the heritage-listed Halls Hut. An RTI revealed the consequential paper trail between government departments and the current Halls Hut leaseholder, also the sole director of Wild Drake, who is in a court-ordered liquidation. The RTI paper trail reaffirms what I said in June. The urgent repair works on Halls Hut are not stalled by the ongoing EPBC assessment for the proposed heli-tourism standing camp at Lake Malbena. These works are stalled by the leaseholder.

The RTI also revealed slandering by the leaseholder about me and others to government departments. This is not acceptable behaviour from a so-called custodian of a World Heritage island. I will address the more civil claims from the leaseholder that I have launched misinformation without fact-checking or any due diligence by setting out some RTI-derived facts in lieu of any transparency around the Lake Malbena chronicle.

August 2016: the lease transfer over Halls Hut was being negotiated between Reg Hall's daughter, Liz McQuilkin, and the present leaseholder. I quote from the official transfer documentation:

Ms McQuilkin has agreed to transfer her licence over the island to Mr Hackett providing that the heritage values are maintained.

November 2021: Halls Hut was listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register. Repair and maintenance work on the hut had not been done.

May 2023: the leaseholder wrote to Heritage Tasmania with his account of advice provided to him by the federal Environment department and he claimed that he could not undertake repair work on the hut due to the EPBC Act (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act) assessment over the Lake Malbena proposal. The actual advice from the federal department was not supplied to Heritage Tasmania. Where is the due diligence there?

I outlined the preceding events on the Adjournment back in June. These events were facts. Facts cemented in an RTI letter from the federal Environment branch head Ms Short, 15 July 2024, explicitly advising that the Lake Malbena proposal EPBC assessment did not restrict the leaseholder from undertaking maintenance work on Halls Hut. Ms Short advised that the department never received any follow-up correspondence from the leaseholder since providing their initial advice back in April 2023.

In June, I also highlighted that Liz McQuilkin, who had trusted the leaseholder to preserve her father's hut, was misled. As outlined, Liz transferred the hut lease on the understanding that it would be cared for, that the Lake Malbena tourism proposal would be low-impact and respectful of wilderness, and that Halls Island and the hut would remain accessible to everyone. The fact is the project proposal is very different today to what it was in 2016. Liz voiced her anguish in a letter to the federal Environment minister on 26 June, 2022, saying:

I initially supported Dan's proposal. However, since 2018 his proposal has changed considerably and I have been alarmed by the dramatic increase of

helicopter flights and by the shutting off of access to bushwalking and fishing enthusiasts. I do not support the current proposal by Daniel Hackett.

To fact-check emails to my office from the leaseholder, from the 22 October 2024:

Tabatha, firstly and foremost, there is not a liquidation underway.

Later the same day:

Tabatha, please inform yourself of the status quo in regards to Wild Drake by contacting the liquidator who can confirm that the company is not currently being liquidated.

In fact, the current ASIC status of Wild Drake was and still is in liquidation.

The fact is you do not need a helicopter to fix a bit of guttering. There are entire huts that have been built and maintained in the wilderness without helicopters. Of course, I and others support work on the hut. That is literally what we are standing here calling for. It is because of the ongoing negligence from the state and federal government, who have let this shameful proposal proceed to this point, that Senator Nick McKim and I have written to the World Heritage Committee calling for action and accountability, to ensure that moving forward protecting the values of our World Heritage Area take precedent over pursuing degrading proposals like that at Lake Malbena.

This lease needs to be torn up and this saga has to stop. There are good people who are lining up to take care of this heritage hut as it deserves when it is returned to the public. It is not only a fact, but it is a promise that no matter how much slander, I, myself, the Greens and thousands of caring Tasmanians will not stop fighting for this magnificent wild place to be put back in the hands of all people.

**Closure of North-West Child Care Centres
Burnie - Old University Campus - Derelict Building
TASC Year 11 and 12 Exams**

[7.54 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about three issues I want to put on the record for the attention of our Education minister. The first is the pending closure of two childcare centres in north-west Tasmania. I have written to the minister about this, but I am yet to receive a response. These childcare centres are in Latrobe and in Spreyton, and each of the owners of those childcare centres have contacted me with their concerns about what the closure of those centres will mean, not only for the families who utilise those services, but also for the wider community where there are 400 children currently on a wait list across the north-west coast waiting for childcare.

I urge the minister to work with the federal government and with these local childcare providers to ensure that these centres do remain open after the new year. They are providing an invaluable service to our community, and one of them, Abracadabra in Spreyton, really did face the closure of their centre a couple of years ago, which was a pretty traumatic time for the

carers and everyone involved in the family. We really need a resolution and some certainty provided to these childcare providers, and I implore the Education Minister to do just that.

I also want to raise another issue, which is the old university campus in Burnie. Some may have noted that there has been some media coverage this week about this issue and the fact that this building is just left empty, quite dilapidated and overgrown. There is mildew growing on the bus stop outside, and it really looks derelict and terrible, and I think that it is, unfortunately, given the fact that I know that there have been representations made to the state government to utilise this facility for childcare, which, as I have said, there is a significant shortage of across our region in the north-west, but also to utilise the facilities.

We have got a housing crisis. We only heard during Estimates about the fact that one of the most significant barriers to getting TAFE teachers in the north-west is the lack of available housing across the community. We have got a hospital campus at the North West Regional Hospital, which is literally overflowing, and we have got the Parkside building, which is old and the government does not seem to have a concrete plan around that.

There has also been suggestions about moving some of the local primary schools into this facility to have more up-to-date facilities and to cater for growing school community population, such as Burnie Primary School. I want to put it on the record that that building sitting there empty is not sending a good message to the community about the priorities of this government and that, in fact, there needs to be some certainty provided about what the future use will be. There are plenty of opportunities to utilise that space, and I do not know why the government is dragging its feet on it and just does not get on and do something with the building but also maintain it.

In its derelict state, it is terrible in the community, and people who I speak to are very concerned about it. I want to put that on record as well, and I know that Burnie City Council has made a representation to the state government as well.

The last issue that I want to raise is about the TASC year 11 and 12 exams that were held across the state over the last fortnight, and the first thing that I want to put on the record is my sincere congratulations to each and every one of the students who participated in those exams across the state.

It is an incredibly important and very stressful time for our students as they approach their end-of-year examinations. There is significant pressure on them. I think it was so unfortunate that there were errors throughout the examination process in a number of the exams and these were in areas where students are vying for competitive university places.

They are subjects that students would be relying on getting high scores in to get into some very competitive courses, including courses like medicine and other science-based subjects around the state. I know that this is not the first time that it has happened and I put on the record that my daughter did her year 12 exams. We have got all year to prepare for those examinations in this state that are critically important. Young people are putting all their time, dedication and hard work into preparing for those exams and the least that we could do as a state is to ensure that there were not errors throughout those examination papers for those young people.

I hope that the Education Minister takes that on board. Obviously TASC has put out a statement, but really the government has not said a lot about this issue and I want to be reassured

by the government that for those students who are undertaking their exams next year that there will not be any errors in them. Congratulations once again to our students and I wish you all the very best for your bright futures.

Landcare Tasmania

[7.59 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to talk about Landcare Tasmania. I had the honour of going to their AGM last week and note that for the House that Landcare Tasmania is 30 years old this year and it was indeed the first independent peak body for land care in Australia. Congratulations and happy birthday to Landcare Tasmania.

What do they do? They operate under a vision that reads: 'All Tasmanian communities are empowered and enabled to care for the land and water of lutruwita/Tasmania'. They have a mission to build resilience and capacity to protect, restore and manage Tasmania's landscapes by connecting, supporting and educating the community. They have a purpose to represent, strengthen, support and grow Tasmania's community landcare movement. Their objectives are to promote community landcare, to represent community landcare as an advocacy body, to connect people and organisations with interest in landcare, to support landcarers with admin info and funding, and to establish and maintain a public fund. They do a really good job.

People might remember from back in 1996, one of their first actions, let us call it, was to paint a tree red in the Midlands to highlight the problem of tree decline in the Midlands. They have been around a long time and done a very good job.

I acknowledge the board in particular, because the board are volunteers, chaired by Bill Harvey and also Peter Voller, Melinda McHenry, Vanessa Bleyer, Rosemary Collins, Mark Harrison and Katrina Spark. They oversee the governance of this organisation. I give a shoutout to Peter Stronach, who is the CEO, and his staff. There are 22 staff at Landcare Tasmania. They have project officers, education officers and event managers, and they do a fabulous job.

At the end of the day, Landcare Tasmania are a member organisation. They represent the peak body for member organisations that are working in the landcare space. This includes landholders, farmers, schools, community groups and businesses. There are 313 groups that are members of Landcare. That is a 14 per cent increase over the last year or so.

To give you a sense, some of the Landcare groups in my electorate in Clark include Claremont Coast Care, the Derwent Catchment Project, Friends of Collinsvale, Friends of Knocklofty Reserve, nipaluna Nursery, the Taroona Environment Network, Hobart Rivulet Bushcare Group, Friends of Sandy Bay Rivulet and the Friends of Mount Nelson Bushcare Group: a great cross section of groups there doing fabulous work.

Nearly all those organisations are volunteer based. Obviously, the staff of Landcare are paid, but the real engine room of Landcare and its member groups is volunteers. They estimate that they have 7000 volunteers across that network of groups. They have come up with the figure of 177,000 hours of volunteer work that was delivered in the last year. We have just had our volunteer week and been recognised with some volunteer awards. That is an incredible

effort. If you cost that out at \$30, which is probably pretty cheap for someone working on the tools these days, that is \$5.3 million of work being put into our local environment in some incredibly important projects.

The programs they run are things like member support, where they execute projects, they engage with volunteers, they assist their groups with the administration, they upskill and train people to build capacity and they manage this great project called Project Bank, which is an opportunity, an interactive map that tells people where a whole bunch of projects are going on.

They are involved in landscape restoration. They give grants, they have active restoration projects on the west coast, the east coast and the Huon and Channel catchments. It begs the question of the establishment of a restoration fund in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Government can and should be funding to empower groups to do more in this space. We really do need to get a restoration fund up and running in this state.

They work on feral cats with information and workshops. They have a couple of pilot projects where they trap, dispatch and then monitor feral cats. That is happening in the Huon Valley and on the east coast. They are about communications and outreach. Last year they had 53 outreach events. They build capacity and they teach people about important projects such as the NRM South Swift Parrot Project.

Last year, I went to their annual conference at Spring Bay Mill. There were hundreds of people there who were sharing stories, sharing knowledge and making connections. Through advocacy in schools and local groups, they are building knowledge. In the last election, they engaged in advocacy to try to improve the policy space.

Congratulations to Landcare. Happy birthday.

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 8.05 p.m.

Appendix 1

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 28 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Ella Haddad MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Jacque Petrusma MP

QUESTION:

In relation to birth trauma:

1. Are any supports provided to women who experience birth trauma in Tasmanian hospitals, and if so, what are these supports?
2. Are efforts being made to reduce birth trauma, and if so, what?
3. Is any data collected on birth trauma, and if so, what is this data?

ANSWER:

1.
 - The specific management of physical and psychological birth trauma varies slightly across the regions due to the clinical service and role delineation profile for each region, however, the principles for supporting birth trauma apply statewide.
 - Regarding physical birth trauma:
 - Physical birth trauma relates to a 3rd or 4th degree perineal tear which occurs during birth, and which requires suturing post-delivery.
 - Any physical birth trauma can be case managed mainly by gynaecology and physiotherapy teams in the outpatient setting.
 - Women are reviewed by Obstetrics and Gynaecology Teams after the birth and prior to discharge.

- Extended Midwifery Services (EMS) or Extended Care Midwifery (ECM) are also offered after discharge and can be in place for up to 14 days for women with extenuating circumstances, followed by the commencement of Child Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS) supports.
- Support involves a combination of home visits and telehealth consults; midwives attend the visits and a 'birth debrief' of a family's birth experience is included as part of the support offered.
- The Department of Health (DoH) has also established a public Mother Baby Unit at the RHH following the sudden permanent closure of St Helen's Private Hospital in June 2023, to provide continuity of care and support for mothers experiencing mental health concerns such as postnatal depression and anxiety.
- Additionally, across THS maternity services, a wide range of external perinatal mental health and parental support organisations are promoted, where appropriate, with supporting printed information available for patients and their families.

2.

- The DoH recognises that women who experience consistency of care by the same providers present with the lowest rates of birth trauma.
- This is true for care provided by private obstetricians as well as through midwifery Continuity of Care models such as Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) and Maternity Antenatal Postnatal Services (MAPs).
 - The implementation of the MAPs model and the growth of the MGP model at Hospitals North is planned for 2025.
 - The MGP model can also be accessed in Hospitals North West.
 - Hospitals South is actively working on increasing consistency across team models and ensuring that women have a clear understanding of the health professionals that are part of their care, including:
 - Midwifery led maternity care across the antenatal, intrapartum, and postnatal period, for example;
 - Team models Know Your Midwife (KYM) and Team of Midwives (TOM)
 - The MGP model
 - Direct care Grade 3-4 midwife six-month roster allocation to antenatal clinics to provide consistency
- The THS also supports staff members to attend Trauma Informed Care workshops.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED


Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP
Minister for Health

Date: 26/11/24

Appendix 2

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 29 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rosalie Woodruff MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General
and Minister for Justice

QUESTION:

Dr Woodruff to ask the Attorney-General – In relation to anti-protest laws:

- (1) Since their commencements, have any people been convicted under section 14B (2AA) and (2AB) of the Police Offences Act 1935, and if so, how many for each offence?
- (2) Have any corporations been convicted under section 14B (2AC) of the Police Offences Act 1935, and if so, how many? (17 October 2024)

ANSWER:

- (1) Section 14B of the *Police Offences Act 1935* (the Act) provides that it is an offence for a person to enter or remain on land, building, structure, premises, vehicle, aircraft or vessel without the consent of the owner. This offence is known as 'trespass' and, on conviction, is punishable to a fine or term of imprisonment.

The data that is available in CRIMES relates to 's14B(1) – Trespass' and 's14B(1) and 2(A)(a) Trespass on land in possession of a firearm' and is outlined in the table below. All complaints related to persons, not corporations.

ptyType	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Person	732	654	695	968	334	3382
Section 14B(1) - Trespass	731	652	693	968	329	3372
Section 14B(1) & 2A(a) - Trespass on land in possession of a firearm	1	2	2	1	5	11
Total	732	654	695	968	334	3382

CA


Section 14B (2AA) and (2AB) of the Act further provides for matters the court must consider, when imposing a penalty on conviction under s.14B of the Act.

The Magistrates Court does not record data relating to the application of s14B 2AA and 2AB of the Act.

- (2) Section 14B(2AC) of the *Police Offences Act 1935* provides for separate penalties for the offence under s.14B, if the person convicted under s.14B is a body corporate.

As stated above in response to question (1), the Magistrates Court does not record data relating to the application of S14B(2AC).

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED


Guy Barnett MP
Deputy Premier
Attorney-General
Minister for Justice

Date: 25/11/24

Appendix 3

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 35 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rosalie Woodruff MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General
and Minister for Justice

QUESTION:

Dr Woodruff to ask the Attorney-General – In relation to fines:

- (1) Were any applications rejected, in the past three years, for the Monetary Penalty Community Service Orders, and if so, how many each year?
- (2) Is any data collected on how many people each year are charged with driving without a license or registration, after an enforcement action that cancels their license or registration, if so what is this data?
- (3) Were any people incarcerated last year as a result of a warrant of commitment for the non-payment of fines, and if so, how many? (17 October 2024)

ANSWER:

- (1) Under Division 3 – Variation of payment conditions of the *Monetary Penalties Enforcement Act 2005* an offender can apply to pay by instalments or to convert a monetary penalty to a period of community service (i.e. MPSCO).

The Department of Justice's annual report shows how many debts were finalised by MPCSOs.

A search of MPES's records has also been conducted which shows that:

- In 2021-22 one application was received and accepted by MPES. It was then initially rejected by Community Corrections in August 2021 and subsequently accepted in September 2021.
- Also, in 2021-22 three applications were rejected by MPES because each of the offenders had the means to pay. Subsequently, each were offered a payment arrangement, which were approved by MPES.
- In 2022-23 two applications were rejected by MPES as the offenders had the means to pay. Each were subsequently offered a payment arrangement, and these were approved by MPES.

DOC/24/141096

- No applications were received in 2023-24.

Under section 30 of the Act, an application for a MPSCO must be refused if the applicant has the financial means to pay the monetary penalty by instalments or otherwise.

- (2) MPES does not charge anyone for driving without a licence or registration. Data on what charges are brought would be a matter for Tasmania Police.

In 2023-24, MPES enforcement action resulted in 13,968 driver licences being suspended after failure to pay monetary penalties. In the same period, 12,495 driver licence suspensions were lifted. There were also 1,099 vehicle registrations suspended with 769 being lifted.

- (3) No person has been imprisoned as a result of a MPES applying for a warrant of commitment for non-payment of fines since the Act commenced in 2008.

When the Act was introduced, the second reading speech stated that 'While imprisonment will still be available under this Bill, it will only be used as a last resort, and only for those who will not pay, rather than those who cannot pay.'

 APPROVED/NOT APPROVED


Guy Barnett MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Justice

Date:

Appendix 4

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 39 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rosalie Woodruff MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General
and Minister for Justice

QUESTION:

Dr Woodruff to ask the Attorney-General – In relation to Right to Information (RTI's) requests:

- (1) In the last financial year, across government, what percentage of RTI requests were returned within legislative timeframes?
- (2) The Tasmanian Government has the lowest rate of RTI applications granted in full in Australia. The Commission of Inquiry recommended the RTI Act be amended to introduce a presumption that all information sought is disclosable, with the presumption rebutted only where the government is satisfied it falls into an exemption category so that victim/survivors have access to information. When will you make these amendments to the Act to ensure that the public has access to government decision-making?
- (3) In the last financial year, what was the average response time for external review by the Tasmanian Ombudsman of RTI's?
- (4) How many RTI review requests are currently with the Tasmanian Ombudsman?
- (5) What percentage of RTI decisions were overturned by the Tasmanian Ombudsman in the last financial year?
- (6) To address RTI backlog, the EDO recommended that the RTI Act be amended to require a review of disclosures to be provided within thirty days. When will the Attorney introduce these reforms?
- (7) The Integrity Commission report following its Investigation Gatehouse found that information was refused when it otherwise should not have been. The Commission made a number of recommendations to improve the RTI system, including that standardised RTI key indicators be included on performance agreements of principal officers. Has this been implemented?
- (8) Does the Department of Health still have an RTI panel? If not, when was it disbanded? (17 October 2024)

DOC/24/141101

ANSWER:

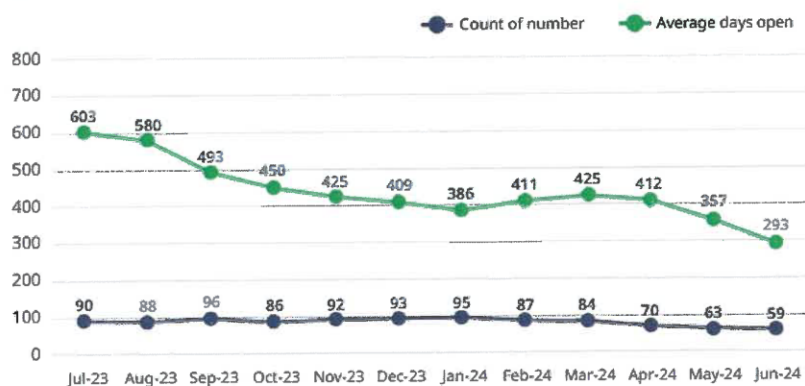
- (1) The Right to Information Annual Report for 2023-24 (the Annual Report) is prepared by the Department of Justice (the Department) in accordance with the *Right to Information Act 2009* (the RTI Act). The Annual Report is collated from figures provided by all departments, councils and public authorities. As all entities must be surveyed and statistics collated, this process is lengthy and often involves discussion after returns are lodged to address any obvious errors. At this time, statistical information is still being collected and the Department is unable to provide the percentage of applications responded to within legislative timeframes. It is anticipated that the Annual Report will be finalised and tabled in the first quarter of 2025.
- (2) Recommendation 17.8 from the Commission of Inquiry, relating to review and reform of the operation of the RTI Act and the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* will be fulfilled within the Commission of Inquiry's suggested timeframe, by 1 July 2026.

I note that the interactions between these Acts are potentially complex, and the Government will be taking a holistic approach that takes into account several important pieces of work that have already been undertaken, as well as others that are set to be delivered in the future. These include The Tasmania Law Reform Institute (TLRI) Privacy Review and the Integrity Commission's recent research paper, the RTI Uplift Project led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the RTI Review that was agreed with the Jacqui Lambie Network (JLN).

The Department of Justice is reviewing the current legislative framework against the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, the recommendations contained in the TRLI review and Integrity Commission paper and will provide advice. That advice may or may not lead to certain legislative reforms being progressed prior to the outcome of the JLN review or the timeframe for responding to the Commission of Inquiry recommendations, depending on any benefits identified in taking a staged approach to these reforms.

- (3) External review – average days open and active review by month:

Figure 3 – External reviews - average days open and active reviews by month



- (4) As at 11 November 2024, there are 58 open RTI external review requests with the Ombudsman Tasmania.
- (5) Right to Information external review outcomes:

Table 12 – Right to Information external review outcomes

Decision	2022-23	2023-24	Variance
Public authority decision affirmed	3	8	166%
Public authority decision varied	14	27	93%
Public authority decision set aside	5	4	-20%
Other outcome	57	58	2%
Total	79	97	23%

Of the 39 decisions issued by the Tasmanian Ombudsman in the 2023-24 financial year, 31 (or 80%) overturned or partially overturned the decision of the relevant public authority. It should be noted that variations to decisions can range from very minor in nature, with the bulk of the public authority decision being accepted by the Ombudsman, whereas others come close to fully setting aside the public authority decision. Decisions of the Ombudsman are published at www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au/right-to-information/reasons-for-decisions.

- (6) Recommendation 4 of a 2023 Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) report was that the RTI Act be amended to provide a review period of 30 days for external reviews. While the Premier provided a written response directly to the EDO in August 2023, it is clear that much has happened in this space since that time. As noted in the response to a previous question, there are several reports and processes that have led to recommendations in relation to the RTI Act, and each of those will inform the Government's approach to legislative reform.

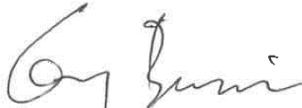
I note that the RTI Act provides that an applicant can apply to the Ombudsman for an external review either when the applicant is informed of the result of an internal review, or where 15 working days have elapsed since the application for internal review was made. The Ombudsman is to resolve an application for review as soon as practicable after receipt of the application.

- (7) The Integrity Commission's Report No. 1 of 2024 is an investigation into the management of a right to information request in the Department of Health, or Investigation Gatehouse. It made three recommendations. The Department of Health has accepted and acted on recommendations 1 and 2, relating to a disciplinary process based on the findings of the report and the disbanding of its Right to Information Panel. The third recommendation was for the Ombudsman to consider whether educational or other measures are needed to ameliorate the risks posed by 'right to information panels' in case they exist in other Tasmanian public sector organisations. I am advised that the Ombudsman supports that recommendation.

The Integrity Commission's related May 2024 research paper is titled 'Misconduct risks in Tasmania's right to information regime'. As noted in response to a previous question, the Government's approach to reform will be informed by the recommendations in that paper and other relevant reports and reviews.

- (8) The Department of Health RTI panel was disbanded in March 2024.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Guy Barnett MP
Deputy Premier
Attorney General
Minister for Justice

Date:

25 NOV 2024

Appendix 5

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 40 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rosalie Woodruff MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General
and Minister for Justice

QUESTION:

Dr Woodruff to ask the Attorney-General – In relation to the Integrity Commission:

- (1) Have any investigations been with the Integrity Commission for more than a year, if so, how many?
- (2) Have any investigations by the Integrity Commission been concerned with currently sitting Members of Parliament, and if so, how many?
- (3) Currently Members of Parliament and election candidates cannot be investigated during election campaigns;
 - (a) how do you justify sitting Members of Parliament, particularly Ministers, not being subject to Integrity Commission investigations during election campaigns? and;
 - (b) will you legislate to fix this issue?
- (4) When will you legislate to give the Integrity Commission the teeth it needs to investigate third parties, corrupt conduct and matters covered by parliamentary privilege? (17 October 2024)

ANSWER:

- (1) I am advised that there are three current open investigations with duration of more than one year. 'Open' refers to where the investigator has not yet provided the CEO with their report under section 55(1) of the *Integrity Commission Act 2009*. The duration of investigations is from the time of the investigator's appointment to the time they provide their report to the CEO.

DOC24/141136

- (2) The Integrity Commission has advised that it cannot provide any information relating to existing investigations other than what has already been publicly reported.
- (3)(a) Under the *Integrity Commission Act 2009* (the Act), complaints can be made to the Integrity Commission in relation to alleged misconduct.

Under section 4 of the Act, both 'misconduct' and 'serious misconduct' are defined by reference to specified conduct or an attempt to engage in specified conduct by a public officer.

Section 6 of the Act provides that a Member of Parliament is a designated public officer.

There is no reference in the Act to Ministers, however, they are covered by the Act by virtue of their status as Members of Parliament.

The Integrity Commission has advised that it does not have jurisdiction over Members of Parliament (including Ministers) during an election campaign period. This is because upon dissolution of Parliament a sitting member no longer holds their seat and ceases to be a Member of Parliament thereby ceasing to be a public officer for the purposes of the Act.

This issue did not become apparent until after the 2016 statutory review of the Act undertaken by the Hon William Cox AC, RFD, ED, QC (the Cox Review). Therefore, it was not considered by that review.

However, the issue was included in the 2022 discussion paper released by the Government as part of a consultation process on the outstanding Cox Review recommendations and additional potential reforms.

- (3)(b) The issue of jurisdiction in relation to Members of Parliament and Ministers during election campaign periods is being considered as part of the very large body of work underway on the broader reform of the Act and operation of the Integrity Commission.
- (4) There is a large body of reform work currently underway in relation to the Act. In addition to the Cox Review and 2022 discussion paper, there have been a number of other matters raised in relation to the operation of the Act. Some of these have been requested by the Integrity Commission. Others have arisen from recommendations made by the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* (the Commission of Inquiry) and the *Weiss Independent Review into Paul Reynolds Final Report* (the Weiss Review).

In addition, the Commission is to be reviewed by mid-April 2025, with a view to giving it greater capacity to conduct its work. This review was agreed as part of the Confidence and Stability Agreement between the Premier and the Parliamentary Members of the Jacquie Lambie Network. The commitment to undertake the review was continued under the agreement with now independent members Rebekah Pentland and Miriam Beswick. The Premier is settling the terms of the review.

It is anticipated that this review will build upon the prior analysis and consultation carried out in relation to previous reviews including the Cox Review and Commission of Inquiry and will feed into the broader reform work which is underway.

In relation to issues concerning parliamentary privilege, I am advised that the Integrity Commission has been exploring the creation of a protocol with the Parliament. This requires negotiation of the Integrity Commission as an independent statutory body with the Clerks of each House of Parliament and the Speaker of the House of Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council. The formal adoption of the protocol is then a matter for all Members of Parliament.

Protocols of this nature are made, at least in part, to respect the coercive powers of the Integrity Commission on one hand and the Parliament's right to protect its rights and immunities (such as parliamentary privilege), which are essential for it to operate effectively, on the other.

The Government would prefer parliamentary privilege to remain subject to the protocol of Parliament.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Guy Barnett MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Justice

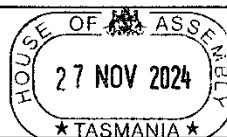
Date: 25/11/24

Appendix 6

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Question on Notice

House of Assembly



Question 19 (Ms Rosol):

In relation to Covid-19, has there been any staff personal leave during the 2023-24 financial year in the public service taken due to Covid-19 infection, and if so, what percentage?

Response

- Since October 2022, employees with COVID-19 access personal leave in the same way they do for any other illness pursuant to the arrangements in the relevant industrial instrument.
- Special leave is available for those employees who have exhausted their personal leave and test COVID-19 positive.
- The Tasmanian State Service does not distinguish between COVID-19 and any other illness that an employee may experience that requires them to access personal leave and as such we are unable to collect the data requested.
- This is the same for all agencies across the Tasmanian State Service.

(Premier)

27 November 2024

