

**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**  
**DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**DAILY HANSARD**

**Wednesday 20 May 2026**

**Preliminary Transcript**

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**Wednesday 20 May 2026**

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

**STATEMENT BY SPEAKER**

**Standing Order 144**

**The SPEAKER** - Before I give the call to the honourable Leader of the Opposition, I need to reflect on something that occurred yesterday. It's specifically in regard to the provisions of Standing Order 144, which applies to offensive or unbecoming words where a member of the House is personally the direct subject of the offending comments. The *Hansard* from Question Time yesterday records the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition making the following comment in relation to the Premier by way of interjection:

You're a liar and you're being known for it. You are being found out.

**Ms Finlay** - True.

**Government members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - I don't want any other comments. While I'm reading this out, I don't want any comments from either side. For the benefit of the House, I am now going to provide an educative ruling so that everyone is clear. No-one will make a comment while I make it, please.

In parliamentary debate, the word 'liar' is generally considered unparliamentary language and is prohibited. While members can question the correctness of another's statements or claim they are mistaken, directly calling another member a 'liar' is a personal attack and a breach of parliamentary etiquette.

As noted in McGee *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*:

It is a clear personal reflection to accuse another member of lying or of attempting deliberately to mislead the House. Accusing a member of lying [whether allegedly inside or outside the House] is something that is being consistently ruled out of order.

In accordance with these principles, the longstanding practice of this House is that a direct accusation that a member has lied is unparliamentary and in breach of Standing Order 144 and the Speaker would intervene even where no point of order is raised and ask the member to withdraw at the time the remark is made.

I remind members that an allegation that a member has lied may only be made by way of substantive motion. Standing Order 144(4) provides that:

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

The provisions of this Standing Order relating to 'unbecoming conduct' shall not apply where a substantive Motion on Notice brings a charge of misconduct against a member.

This is for the benefit of all members. All members in this House are reminded that the word 'liar' or 'lying' is not to be used in any debates, amendments, motions, unless you do by way of a substantive motion.

As I did not hear this interjection at the time, I was unable to ask the member to withdraw. Having reviewed the *Hansard*, I now ask the member to withdraw this remark in accordance with Standing Order 144.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, Speaker. I withdraw.

### QUESTIONS

#### TT-Line - Budget and Cost

#### Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.04 a.m.]

Honourable Speaker, before I start, I'd like to welcome State Emergency Service (SES) workers on State Emergency Services Day.

TT-Line's chair said that the *Spirits* waste has now hit \$717 million and counting. That's not to mention the \$500 million in lost economic activity for every year the new ships are delayed. Tasmanians have been forced to foot the bill for a half-billion-dollar bailout, on top of the \$75 million bailout in last year's budget. That means, going forward, Tasmanians will waste close to \$30 million every year on interest paying for the ferry fiasco - a *Spirits* tax. What jobs and services will your Treasurer cut to pay for the bailout? Can you guarantee that frontline workers won't lose their jobs?

#### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. I also acknowledge that today is Wear Orange Wednesday. It is a special day, as the minister has reminded me, of 50 years of the State Emergency Service. We thank you all for your service and all your colleagues.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In his question, the honourable member effectively misled the Tasmanian people, because he actually said that the chair of TT-Line said the word 'waste', of which he did not.

I notice that the honourable member refers to the last 13 years of our government in that context. Can I say that it has been 13 years where we have continually invested in services, in our schools, our hospitals, our police, and other essential services across Tasmania. I don't see an investment in the next 40 years of visitor economy and freight exporting infrastructure as

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

waste. I don't see a brand-new port in Geelong, a brand-new port in Devonport, and two brand-new ships in service for the next four decades as waste.

**Members** interjecting.

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

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I see it as opportunity. Opportunity for our visitor economy, jobs, our farmers, our primary producers that are exporting their hard-earned work across Bass Strait and further afield. I don't characterise an investment in a new Brighton High School as waste. I don't characterise -

**Ms HADDAD** - Point of order, 45, relevance. The question was whether he'll guarantee that frontline jobs won't be at risk in this week's budget.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, the only one who has the call right now is the Premier. Member for Clark, thank you. You've made your point of order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We intervened in the *Spirits*. We said we'd sort the *Spirits* and we will, and we have. They'll be in service in a matter of months and that'll be a very proud moment for all Tasmanians who understand the importance of brand-new and intergenerational infrastructure for the benefit of our children, future and economy. That's the focus of our government.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - After 13 years of Liberal waste, why should Tasmanians lose their jobs to pay for your bailout?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The honourable member, in his supplementary question, wants to talk about everything else but your addiction to higher taxes for Tasmania. It's the only plan you have. What we will deliver in our budget tomorrow by our capable Treasurer, the honourable Mr Abetz, is a strong, balanced budget, one that continues to invest in essential services and continues to invest in the enabling infrastructure that Tasmanians need - intergenerational infrastructure to set this state up. I don't see investments in hospitals, schools, Marinus, and our ships as waste. I see them as opportunities for Tasmanians for decades.

**The SPEAKER** - Just before I give the call to the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable member for Lyons, if you are asking a question today, you will need to go back to your other seat because you are unable to make a statement from that chair.

### TT-Line - Insolvency

**Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.10 a.m.]

The Auditor-General said TT-Line was insolvent. You disagreed and said his advice was just an opinion. Now you've announced a half a billion-dollar bailout for TT-Line because they can't pay off their debt. Isn't the bailout proof that the Auditor-General was right? Will you table all legal and insolvency advice the government has received saying he's wrong?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. We said we'd sort the *Spirits*, and we have and we are. They are intergenerational assets. We said we would support TT-Line, and we have. To your question, the Tasmanian Auditor-General is of course entitled to his opinion and commentary. The fact is that TT-Line is solvent and the government will ensure their continued trading and operation. We have been consistent in saying that we will always support our government business enterprises - in this case TT-Line - and ensure that brand new infrastructure is built. It has been built in Geelong, is being built in Devonport - brand-new infrastructure and brand-new ships to set this state up for at least the next four decades.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - The question is whether the Premier will table any legal or insolvency advice that proves that the Auditor-General was wrong?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My understanding is this is the subject of a motion later today.

**The SPEAKER** - Questions can be asked, just as questions can be asked on the budget. The anticipation rules are only in regard to amendments or motions.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you. TT-Line appointed expert advisors to work with them on the medium- and long-term financial outlook for the company. This work has been methodical and has taken time to get it right. The board has agreed on their position and the shareholder ministers were briefed by the chair, the CEO and expert advisors on Monday 2 March, I'm advised. In the 2026-27 Budget an equity injection of \$506 million will be provided to TT-Line over the next four years. This equity injection was approved through the budget process to allow TT-Line to reduce its debt and maintain a sustainable fiscal position and setting it up for the future. I'm proud of -

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Premier's time has expired.

### AI Regulation and Transparency

#### Ms BADGER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.13 a.m.]

You've said that you are fully embracing AI and you've certainly been embracing the rollout, but you're behind on the regulatory and transparency elements. Your own guidelines for the use of AI in the State Service committed to an AI initiative register. That was 18 months ago. Presently, there is no register for Tasmanians to transparently see what departments are using AI, what tools are being used and how. Such a register should also declare how much

money the government is giving to AI companies. Yesterday, the minister announced \$4 million in tomorrow's Budget towards expanding AI across the State Service. When will the AI initiative register be live? Will you guarantee there will be no expansion of substantive AI use across the government until the register is operational?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Firstly, can I say how incredibly amazed I was to visit Firmus the other day in St Leonards and see what an incredible investment that is; billions of investment in northern Tasmania and opportunities for more as well, bringing investment, bringing opportunity, bringing jobs for the future and -

**Ms Finlay** - How many jobs? What are the opportunities?

**Mr Ellis** - Are you opposed to it?

**Ms Finlay** - Yeah, I am, actually. Yes.

**Mr Ellis** - Really?

**Ms Ogilvie** - Oh, interesting.

**Mr Ellis** - That's on the record now.

**Ms Finlay** - It is.

**A member** - Oof.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Well done, team.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, Deputy Leader of the Opposition -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - All right - anti-Firmus.

**The SPEAKER** - All members, I ask the House to settle, please.

**Mr Abetz** - Anti-stadium, anti-Firmus.

**A member** - Leading with the mouth.

**Mr Ellis** - Wow. Gee whiz.

**Ms Finlay** - There was no suggestion of anti-Firmus, it was a question of detail: how many jobs?

**The SPEAKER** - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

**A member** - Digging a fairly deep hole.

**A member** - Can't wind it back.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Too late now.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That's very, very disappointing.

**Ms Finlay** - Says the Premier, that's funny.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Transparency and explainability is one of the eight principles outlined in Australia's AI Ethics Principles. This principle states that there should be transparency and responsible disclosure so people can understand when they are being significantly impacted by AI and can find out when an AI system is engaging with them. The Tasmanian government has agreed to align its internal guidance with Australia's AI Ethics Principles and the national framework for the assurance of artificial intelligence in government. Consistent with good practice, the government is moving toward policy that will require agencies to publish AI transparency statements to support public trust and provide greater transparency about how AI is used in government decision making and service delivery.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms BADGER** - Has your government walked away from the AI initiative register or have you just completely jumped the gun rolling out AI before you've put any guardrails or transparency measures in place to make efficiencies across the State Service?

**Ms Finlay** - Getting a bit red in the cheeks.

**Mr Ferguson** - She's a liability to her party.

**Ms Badger** - Sorry, she's what, Mr Ferguson?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition. All members, the only one who has the call right now is the Premier. I ask that he be heard, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The current AI guidelines recommend the development of an AI register to support collaboration and information-sharing between agencies. This recommendation reflected the evidence base at the time of its development as outlined in recommendation 7, I'm advised. The proposed register was not designed as a tool for risk management, compliance, monitoring or public transparency. However, following the release of the guidelines, the government undertook further work to develop a forward roadmap for the responsible and effective use of AI across the State Service.

**Members** interjecting.

**Dr Woodruff** - You're rolling out AI, you cut jobs and then you've got no governance. You've got no guidance, no register.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, Leader of the Greens. I remind all members of the House that you can ask further questions. The Greens still have a couple more questions to go. You have

other forms you can use such as a substantive motion and you have the Adjournment. There are other forms of the House if you do not agree with what is being stated.

### **Homelessness - Code Blue Protocol**

#### **Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT**

[10.18 a.m.]

I too would like to acknowledge the presence of SES volunteers and staff in the Chamber today. Thank you for your service in obviously tough circumstances.

As the weather cools, the suffering of homeless Tasmanians increases. For years, homelessness services and local councils have been calling on the state government to implement a code blue protocol for the safety of people sleeping rough. In other states this system ensures government agencies and the community sector are able to provide additional services to homeless people during extreme heat or cold. This time last year, I asked your predecessor to explain why the state government had not implemented this simple yet important policy response to the homelessness crisis. The former minister said he would seek advice. Almost a year on, there's still no sign of a code blue system for Tasmania. Will you be the one to finally make this change that homelessness services and councils have been crying out for?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I haven't even got a brief on that one so I've come up empty-handed. I must admit, amongst my discussions we talk a lot about homelessness services and, as you know, I meet with as many of the services as I possibly can. I haven't heard that subject raised in the specific form that you've raised it regarding the code blue policy. I'm happy to take that on board and do a bit of work and come back to either the House or yourself on where that might be. It is something I'll need to educate myself on and I'm more than happy to do that and come back to you with information when I have that in the next few weeks.

### **TT-Line - Budget Bailout**

#### **Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ**

[10.20 a.m.]

The *Spirits* replacement project is now at least \$717 million over its original budget. The Tasmanian economy is missing out on over half a billion dollars a year. Tasmanians have been forced to bail out the company to the tune of more than half a billion dollars to date. Can you guarantee this is the last *Spirits* bailout?

#### **ANSWER**

Speaker, the *Spirits* are going to be transformational for our economy. They will have a 40 per cent increased capacity into which our tourism and productive sectors can grow into over the forward decades.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

The counterfactual to the Leader of the Opposition's question is: confronted with the situation that we were, what would he have done?

**Mr Willie** - You caused it.

**Mr ABETZ** - Would he not be putting the money into the *Spirits*? Because you can't have it both ways.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ABETZ** - If he were in government, would he be saying, 'We want TT-Line to fail'?

**Mr Willie** - Labor delivered the *Spirits* on time and on budget.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, Treasurer. Members to my left, you've asked a question. If you're not interested in hearing what the Treasurer has to say, I'll move on to the next question. I ask that he be heard in silence. You're making it very hard for Hansard to even record what the Treasurer is saying. You have the opportunity to ask a supplementary and you still have another four questions to go, so I ask that the Treasurer be heard.

**Mr ABETZ** - Thank you, Speaker. The counterfactual - and that is why you get the noise from the opposition - because they know that the counterfactual would be the failure of TT-Line. Therefore, if Labor were -

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question is whether TT-Line will need further bailouts.

**Mr ABETZ** - The question was that, amongst other things, and what we have to do is establish and put what occurred into context. What we have said is we provided \$74.5 million in the last budget, in the interim Budget, and we've already announced that we will be putting \$506 million over the forward Estimates. That is to ensure that this vital piece of infrastructure is maintained into the future for decades to come. This is, if you like, a one-off investment to ensure that this tourism-enhancing, agriculture-enhancing, manufacturing-enhancing facility or infrastructure is there to service the tens of thousands of jobs.

I would have thought a Labor leader would have loved this sort of infrastructure underpinning the employment of working men and women throughout our economy. He cannot have it both ways and say, 'Well, I would put \$500 million into TT-Line, but I won't. Or I wouldn't and I'd spend it over here'. Life is full of choices and we have made a choice to ensure that TT-Line has the sufficient equity injection.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Treasurer's time has expired.

## Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - The Treasurer's going nowhere near the question. Can he guarantee that Tasmanians won't have to foot the bill for further bailouts for TT-Line?

**Mr ABETZ** - The very best of advice that we as a government received, and TT-Line availed itself of, indicated the figure that we have announced. Am I going to play this silly game? That is why one of my favourite sayings is 'never say never'. There is no anticipation at this stage that there will be the requirement for further equity injections. I'm not going to bind myself to a situation which might actually see the failure of TT-Line. Is that something that the Leader of the Opposition actually wants? In the event that something occurs, unforeseen, that requires a further equity injection, the Leader of the Opposition will say, 'But you ruled it out, you ruled it out'. We will always be agile. We will always react to the circumstances, but the best of advice is that no further requirements will be there.

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## Recognition of Visitors

**The SPEAKER** - I too would like to acknowledge the SES in the Chamber here today and congratulate them on 50 years.

Also, I'd like us all to please welcome in the gallery today, year-4 students from St Brigid's Catholic School. Welcome to parliament.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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## Forest Practices Authority - Fines

**Mr Di FALCO question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.25 a.m.]

After my question to minister Ellis yesterday regarding the excessive fine of \$100,000 to a family farm, I received overwhelming support and agreement from the farming community - farmers, I'm sure, that you know and respect. You said yesterday while speaking about insurance, that you listened to the community and acted. I agreed with you; insurance is out of control and needs urgent intervention. The farming community is saying to us that these forestry regulations are out of control. When will you act to support our farmers against this bureaucratic red tape and allow them to do what they do best?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and refer to the answer given yesterday by minister Ellis. But I do hear this a lot, and I hear the frustration of farmers; I hear it on King Island. I was with minister Howlett the other day on the east coast. I heard it there and a particular example was given. I am more than willing and open to take advice to see what can be done to ensure a common-sense position is taken where farmers are unfairly targeted and I believe there is a balance needed here. We need to back in our productive sectors, our farmers, to ensure that they have a fair legal regime, but an opportunity to ensure their land is as productive as possible.

I'm aware of other farmers across Tasmania who are utterly devastated about what they're hearing. These people go about their jobs wanting to make the best use of their land in a sustainable way and I want to make this very clear. There are farmers, a great majority, if not all of them, around Tasmania where it makes good sense for them to support and protect the natural resources which they have invested in and been given. Whether that be water quality, soil quality and other areas of strong management that they need to ensure that they can maximise - in a sustainable way because it's in their interest - to ensure that they can grow their businesses, employ more Tasmanians, and produce the wonderful produce that we all speak of in this room quite often and rightly so.

I am not across the intricacies of the case, but I am across the feeling, and the feeling from farmers is that they've had enough and they're frustrated.

### **Macquarie Point Stadium - Webuild Contractor**

#### **Ms JOHNSTON question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ**

[10.28 a.m.]

The honourable Michael Ferguson's advice about the ferry fiasco is a warning about the AFL stadium: ministers have to be sceptical about advice in a way that's proportionate to the risk to the public interest, check it with others and insist on evidence, he told parliament that the stadium's financial risk is huge. However, you refuse to answer questions about the process for shortlisting contractors. The problems with Webuild are well known.

Treasurer, you can't outsource your responsibilities as a shareholder minister to a probity adviser or a committee. The buck stops with you, just as it did with Mr Ferguson. Have you asked the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) if Webuild's submission to the expressions-of-interest process was conforming with the initial selection matrix?

#### **ANSWER**

Speaker, the honourable member is very well advised to quote the member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, but she's not well advised to misquote him or take him out of context, which she has. I wanted to get that out of the way.

I ask rhetorically, of course, what would the member for Clark be saying if I involved myself in the probity process and said to the probity advisor, 'Guess what? I know better. I think you ought to be doing this, this, and that'? She would be the first one to come in here with a motion of condemnation against me. That is where we are at the moment, in a no-win situation - damned if you do, damned if you don't. You either have a probity adviser to ensure that this is done at arm's length from government or you say you want the minister to be actively involved. I don't care what the choice is, but the overwhelming choice of the parliament which was carried was that the minister would be removed and we would have oversight committees, a probity advisor, et cetera. That is what we are relying on. Should you wish to move an amendment, member for Clark, to say, 'We want minister Abetz to control the whole show' - I bet you won't move it, and I'm not sure I'd vote for it either. I can indicate to the member for Clark that we have good probity advice, we have good quantity surveyor advice, we have exceptionally good advice in relation to this.

In relation to Webuild, as we've got an active procurement process underway, I'm not going to insert myself and say this particular builder is good, bad or indifferent. That was for other people to determine at the time expressions of interest were considered before determining which ones moved forward to the request for tender. We've now got two consortia involved in that. I'm not going to play favourites. I'm sure that as the two bids are sorted and considered, the matters you raised and the matters Ms Burnet raised yesterday will all be taken into account and then an ultimate determination will be made.

Does the member for Clark genuinely want me to be the decider as to which companies could move forward and then ultimately which company should be given the contract, or would she and the House prefer that it be a probity adviser and an oversight committee, et cetera? Some people might say from time to time I am overconfident, but on this I would prefer the others.

## Supplementary Question

**Ms JOHNSTON** - The Treasurer seems to be confused by my question. It wasn't a question about whether he would make a decision about Webuild. It was about whether he would seek advice, check it with others and insist on evidence. My question was: have you asked Macquarie Point Development Corporation if the Webuild submission to the expressions-of-interest process was conforming with the initial selection matrix? It's a question, not a direction to MPDC. It's surely a due diligence question you should ask as the shareholder minister.

**Mr ABETZ** - It stands to reason that the people we have employed to make these considerations would have taken all those matters into account to allow the expressions of interest for this particular consortia to move forward to the request for tender. Should you wish me to get involved, I've got to say that is something which the parliament determined should not be the case and that we should have other mechanisms for that. I think that was a good decision. That's why I happened to vote for it.

In relation to Webuild, the company provided a letter which was tabled yesterday in response to the member for Clark's question. Of course those matters are of concern to the public. I'm sure those involved in the decision-making will take these matters into account in determining who the final successful tenderer will be.

## Macquarie Point Stadium - Budget

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

[10.35 a.m.]

After multiple budget blowouts the price tag for building the stadium currently sits at \$1.13 billion, but even that figure is misleading. It doesn't include about \$100 million to build a car park for the stadium and it doesn't include a plethora of enabling infrastructure that's essential for a stadium to function. Under the original master plan for the site that you discarded, there was enough electricity available for that development, but building a stadium would mean extensive new energy infrastructure is required. Even though you pretend that spending on the stadium isn't an issue, we hear that senior government figures are worried about its cost. We understand the head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) met

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

recently with at least one public company and asked them to revise down their quote for their infrastructure on the stadium. Can you confirm this is true? If so, were you aware of it?

**A member** - Would you revise that up or down?

**Mr Abetz** - The Greens would have them up.

### ANSWER

I will seek advice. I don't anticipate I will be going to any meeting with any people asking for the price to go up. Seriously. Let's get that straight and let's just get back to some common sense questions, thank you.

What this is about is enabling infrastructure, just like the *Spirits*, just like Marinus, just like other enabling infrastructure to set this state up for the future. I won't be backing down on it one single bit because I can see the opportunity in young people's eyes right now here. They're excited about it. They can't wait for it. I expect scrutiny along the way, as should happen. I have said before that I expect for every single brick that is laid there'll be questions about it. I will not resile from the fact that this is one of the biggest opportunities this state has ever seen, and not only did we break through the barrier of having our team, a once-in-a-generation opportunity that we've been fighting for, but we broke through a significant psychological barrier that for once this state stood up and said yes.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary question? Thank you Premier, for saying that you will provide the House with advice. In that, will you also provide advice about whether the secretary of DPAC has authority to direct GBEs in how, if true, they would be revising down their budgets?

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, Dr Woodruff, but that is really a new path of inquiry.

**Dr Woodruff** - It would be good to know. I thought that was a ministerial responsibility.

**Mr Ellis** - 'Love your quote, double it'.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The only one speaking right now is me. Dr Woodruff, your initial question was quite broad, but the end of your question was very specific. You are now going into a different path of inquiry. The Premier's given assurance that he will come back on your actual question that was at the very end of your question, so I rule that supplementary out of order.

### TT-Line - Bailout

#### Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[10.38 a.m.]

Two weeks ago I asked you whether TT-Line had asked for a bailout. You said definitively that they had not. Later that day, TT-Line's chair gave an honest answer and

confirmed they had requested financial assistance. You also said Tasmanians would have to wait for the Budget to find out the extent of the financial disaster. When will you start being honest about this? Do you have any concerns about TT-Line's ability to trade its way out of this mess?

**ANSWER**

I have no doubt whatsoever that TT-Line can trade and trade effectively, and I will not adopt the language of the Leader of the Opposition asserting that it is a mess. In my answer - whenever it was, two weeks ago - I was exceptionally careful because I said 'bailout' in inverted commas was not asked for and there is no correspondence or discussion where TT-Line sought a bailout using that language.

**Ms Finlay** - Unbelievable.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, you've interjected a number of times this morning. This is your second warning.

**Mr ABETZ** - I have been upfront. The government, realising the anticipation was building to a level virtually intolerable for the opposition, thought we'd put them out of their misery by announcing before the Budget that there would be a \$506 million equity injection -

**Ms Haddad** - Bailout, okay.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable member for Clark, this is your first warning.

**Mr ABETZ** - I would've thought that somebody who trained as a lawyer would know the importance of accurate language so that things cannot be misinterpreted.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr Winter** - Somebody who was the Treasurer I thought would understand what a bailout is.

**Ms Haddad** - You are being loose and fast with the truth and you know it.

**Mr Willie** - Taking lessons from Trump.

**The SPEAKER** - This is your second warning. You've already had one.

**Mr ABETZ** - As I was saying, we wanted to put the opposition out of their misery, the anticipation -

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, Treasurer. I gave the first warning to the honourable member when she was talking. It's all happened in this same answer, but you interjected and I said, 'This is your first warning'. Then you kept on going with your next comment.

**Ms Finlay** - For clarification, yesterday you mentioned that we could interject twice in each question. I was just wondering if that was -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - A couple of interjections amongst the lot of you during the

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. When it is continuous interjecting, that is disorderly conduct in itself. I said a couple is alright, but not when it is continuous interjections. At the moment, it is impossible for Hansard to accurately record what is being said when there is continuous interjections. I can hear continuous interjections from a lot of members to my left, and I ask that honourable members be heard. You have other methods of this House that you can use. You can ask more questions, you have MPI, Adjournment, and substantive motions. A couple of interjections is okay - corporately, if that makes it easier for you to understand - but not when it is continuously, the whole time. And I suggest that everyone reads this book.

**Mr ABETZ** - Thank you for that, Speaker. I've now got three seconds left and I'll take my seat.

## Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - The question is when will the Treasurer start being honest about this and TT-Line's ability to trade its way out of the mess?

**Mr ABETZ** - I've already answered the last bit of the question in relation to TT-Line's capacity to trade. I assure the House that the board of directors, if they had any question whatsoever, they would be duty-bound to stop trading. That's the important consideration here - it is the directors who are bound by law not to trade with an insolvent company. They are confident that they are not doing so. If they were to trade with an insolvent company, there would be substantial breaches of the law that they would be engaged in with huge reputational and financial consequences. I have every confidence that TT-Line will continue to trade well for the benefit of our tourism and productive sectors.

## Building Tasmania - Infrastructure Assessment and Project Management

**Ms DOW question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT**

[10.43 a.m.]

Honourable Speaker, I welcome the SES and St Brigid's Primary School to parliament today. It's fantastic to have you here with us.

Minister, your government stripped the independence from Infrastructure Tasmania and rolled its functions into the Department of State Growth. Now, the Department of State Growth itself is being wound down and restructured. Tasmanians have already seen what happens when there is no accountability for major projects, government bailouts, delays, cost blowouts, lost economic opportunity and significant risk on very important government business enterprises.

Where will responsibility for independent infrastructure assessment and major project management and scrutiny sit under your government's latest thought bubble, Building Tasmania?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. Building Tasmania is certainly going to have a large focus on all those things that you raised. I can't correct all the mistakes of the past or cost overruns. What we can do is set up a positive structure that will deliver focus on achieving projects regardless of whether it's fire, emergency services, police, education, health, roads and bridges, and that's what we intend to do. By having the concentration of people that are able to work through those things, we will focus on making sure jobs are scoped correctly in the first place, costed through, then worked through the various departments to deliver as best as time, budget, and the economic conditions allow for at the time.

It's a big thing to bring everything together like that, and in business or in government, our main focus should always be making sure that we're looking at everything to make it more efficient. That's what I'm very dedicated to do over the next six to twelve months in Building Tas, and we bring those services into it.

As I said, it's not easy. There are a lot of different moving parts to government and you have to keep it all operating at the same time. What we have learnt out of the positive build of the Bridgewater Bridge and other major projects is that yes, we can get it wrong sometimes, but as a whole, when we bring it in and we scope the job rightly and work closely with our federal funding counterparts, when we work through that with professional project managers in place and get them in place early enough so that the job is scoped right, we keep the project online and moving through.

That's what Building Tas will primarily be there to do on behalf of all parts of the government. I am extremely confident we'll be able to do that with the people we have on board at the moment and other people we'll need to bring on board to make sure that's right. A big part of that is working closely with all the departments to make sure we scope projects correctly so that we can cost them correctly and bring them through the whole parliamentary system with confidence, and the confidence of delivery. I'm sure we'll be able to do that.

### Supplementary Question

**Ms DOW** - Can the minister guarantee to Tasmanians that they will not see more major project stuff-ups under your latest thought bubble, Building Tasmania?

**Mr VINCENT** - Thank you. I'd love to stand here and put hand on heart and say I can guarantee anything, but that would not be a sensible comment. What I can assure you is that the things I've just talked about will help us make every effort to ensure that everything falls into a systematic line of understanding the complexity of each job - and they are all different. All major projects are totally different. Even road projects are very different because of the geotech - but we will do the work properly to scope it. I can assure you that I will be doing everything I possibly can to make sure we save money out of Building Tas that we can put into more projects, and that we don't see leakage from any of these projects.

**Overseas Immigration - Liberal Party Support**

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

[10.47 a.m.]

Honourable Speaker, I also welcome the SES crew here today.

Premier, according to the last population snapshot published by State Growth from almost 12 months ago, the only thing stopping this state's population from declining is overseas migration - something federal Liberal leader, Angus Taylor, seems hellbent on cutting by up to 40 per cent, if he gets his way, to appease One Nation supporters. Noting the rising tide of One Nation support in this state from the latest poll, at the expense of support for your party, will you confirm your party's support for overseas migration and denounce any policy which might result in fewer overseas migrants coming to Tasmania?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for your question. What I do enjoy as part of my role, most recently with the minister for Multicultural Affairs, is to celebrate with multicultural communities. More recently it was the Nepalese community celebrating their 184th New Year, if my memory serves me correctly. That will always be the position of this government: we will welcome people from wherever they come from to Tasmania, because they enrich our lives, they enrich our community, they bring their skills. We do multiculturalism well in Tasmania, and I'm very proud of that.

You mentioned population. It was pleasing yesterday that we saw, and we will see in the Budget, evidence of growth in our economy. This is not dependent on excessive population growth, but rather a result of the clever people we have in Tasmania working day in, day out for our community, earning a dollar for themselves and their families, and creating opportunity for Tasmania. In fact, Tasmania's economy is forecast by Treasury to continue growing, in per capita terms, projections showing around 8 per cent growth over the next four years, outstripping population growth and continuing Tasmania's run of per capita economic growth.

What we also need to ensure, in terms of population growth, is that we are investing in housing and the supply of houses as well. That's why I was very proud to be alongside our minister for Housing, minister Vincent, just a few days ago, and the Prime Minister and the local mayor as well around the Dowsing Point opportunity. I was very proud of the fact that we have a very clear target on top of that for 10,000 homes by 2032. More houses, more supply, more roofs over the heads of Tasmanians and those who come here and contribute to our community.

**Supplementary Question**

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you, and I welcome, Premier, your comments about how important the migrant community is because they quite frankly need to hear that. What assurances are there that Tasmania will continue to have that flow of migrants we need to sustain our vital services, including agriculture?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We're not in a disagreement when it comes to our migrant community and those that seek opportunities in Tasmania, in seasonal ways in terms of our produce that's being picked; those are important and valued jobs, as our minister for Primary Industries would well identify with. They are important contributors to our economy and we need skilled labour within this community across a range of fields, whether it's our ICT sector, whether it's our health sector, whether it's our agricultural sector. We can only but encourage and ensure that, for migrants coming into this country, that we get our fair share of that opportunity to allow people to continue to come to Tasmania, to ensure that they are welcomed in Tasmania and contribute to our economy and our community.

## **Macquarie Point Stadium - Webuild Contractor**

**Mr BAYLEY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.52 a.m.]

Yesterday, your minister responsible for delivering the stadium said that he, as the government minister, is at arm's length from the probity on stadium construction contract procurement. He effectively repeated that again this morning. We now know dodgy international construction company, WeBuild, has passed through the gates into the tender process. WeBuild's letter, tabled yesterday, did nothing to address concerns about a string of major issues alleged on interstate projects, including attempts to gouge billions in taxpayer dollars.

The *Spirits* saga showed the risks of a hands-off approach as punctuated by the half billion-dollar bailout in tomorrow's Budget. Your government has promised the *Spirits* fiasco will never be repeated. What will you do to ensure there is public transparency and scrutiny over this huge contract? Will you release key details of the contract, particularly the price, before it is signed or will it yet again be 'sign first, explain later' at further unaffordable cost to the taxpayer?

## **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. The government's focus remains on ensuring a very rigorous, fair and properly governed procurement process, as the minister has said, as you'd expect, that delivers the best outcome for Tasmania. You are criticised when you intervene on matters, you're criticised when you're not intervening on matters, and you can't have it every single way. I'm afraid, honourable Deputy Leader, that rigorous governments and probity arrangements in place were a clearly expressed expectation of this parliament during the debate on the order and that will be continued.

## **Supplementary Question**

**Mr BAYLEY** - When it comes to being properly governed and I take that as being scrutiny, the question was explicitly: will you release key details of the contract, particularly the price, before it is signed?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We'll be going through a rigorous process that is consistent with other processes. That's the fact of the matter. I recognise this project will be scrutinised to the nth degree -

**Dr Woodruff** - You've got no oversight of the process.

**The SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - as it was scrutinised for the order. The project is significant. It is a tremendous project for Tasmania in terms of jobs and opportunity and what it signals to the rest of Australia and the world. I know you're disappointed, because for once in your life, you lost. You lost and you're bitter about it, because finally Tasmanians stood up and said, 'We want something and we want this and for heaven's sake, Premier, don't let the Greens win again'. That's what I got loud and clear, and that's what you got.

**The SPEAKER** - Time has expired. Next question, the honourable member for Franklin, Mr George.

**Mr GEORGE** - Thank you honourable Speaker.

### **Hobart Clinic - Staff Resignations and Discontent**

**Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER**

[10.56 a.m.]

Honourable Speaker, welcome to the SES, I hope I'm never going to need you, but I know if I do, you'll do a grand job.

Minister, you'll be well aware of concerning reports today about resignations and staff discontent at the Hobart Clinic, to which the government contributed \$2 million in support last year. Amongst the resignations has been that of respected psychiatrist, Hannah Lake, and other medical professionals essential to a mental health care facility. Will you inform the House where things stand with this crucial and only dedicated mental health care unit in the south-east of the state and whether its future is secure?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. Of course, the Tasmanian government is supportive of the continued delivery of sustainable mental health services at the Hobart Clinic. As you are aware, a \$2 million grant was announced in October 2025 to support service continuity during a six-month transitional period. The first instalment of \$1 million has been paid and the Hobart Clinic has recommenced service delivery. The funding is subject to conditions under the grant deed, including appropriate governance and reporting requirements. The Department of State Growth is currently considering matters relating to the Hobart Clinic's governance arrangements as part of its oversight responsibilities as part of that deed.

I am aware of recent media reporting regarding the Hobart Clinic. There has been an independent corporate governance assurance review commissioned by State Growth following concerns raised about aspects of the clinic's governance arrangements. That review is being

undertaken independently and remains ongoing. The department is currently considering the draft report and there have been no final findings made by the government at this time.

Importantly, the matters raised do not relate to patient safety, clinical care, or any identified misuse of grant funding. The grant deed contains governance and reporting requirements to ensure appropriate oversight of public funds. Any further funding remains subject to the department being satisfied that the relevant grant conditions continue to be met. We will continue to follow this issue.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr GEORGE** - May I just ask the minister, part of my question was whether the future of the Hobart Clinic is considered by you to be secure and that it will continue to operate?

**Mrs ARCHER** - As I said, it's very much our wish for the services provided by the Hobart Clinic to continue. We said that at the time that we extended the grant to the Hobart Clinic, but I also made it very clear at that time that this was a commitment that was made to the Hobart Clinic for six months for them to ensure their ongoing sustainability.

### ***Spirit of Tasmania V* - Cost to Berth in Scotland**

**Ms DOW question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ**

[10.59 a.m.]

We've asked you a few times now, but I'll try again: how much did you waste hiding *Spirit V* in Scotland and what was the final bill?

**ANSWER**

I'm not sure that I hid *Spirit V* in Scotland. As I was able to advise the member, we actually issued a press release saying where she was going. Trying to assert that we had hidden it there when we issued a press release saying that she was going there, as I said last time, reminds me of my grandchildren when they go off to play hide and seek. They tell each other where they're going to hide, which really spoils -

**Ms DOW** - Point of order, honourable Speaker, under Standing Order 45. This was a very short question asking for a very specific answer and the Treasurer has gone nowhere near answering it. I'd like an answer today, please.

**The SPEAKER** - I draw the Treasurer to the question but remind all members that the Treasurer has another two minutes to go. I cannot put words in his mouth and none of us know what the Treasurer was about to say.

**Mr ABETZ** - The assertion was made that we had hidden the *Spirit* there and I'm just pointing out that we were so anxious to hide it that we told everybody where she was going - hardly an activity of hiding.

In relation to having the ship at Leith, the costs associated with holding *Spirit of Tasmania V* in Leith have been finalised at about \$600,000 per month. This represents a saving

of \$250,000 per month compared to *Spirit of Tasmania IV* as a result of further commercial negotiations. At Leith, the *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels were in a locked harbour and the sea level does not change in that harbour, I'm told, so there is no wear and tear on mooring lines and no effect on the ship from swell or tidal movement. It's also a safer berth that requires fewer crew compared to a normal open berth.

The costs specific to storing *Spirit of Tasmania IV* at Leith was \$1.54 million from November 2024 to June 2025. The amount covers travel for crew because TT-Line had to rotate crew every six weeks. There were also port dues, fenders, mooring, pilots and other ancillary costs. An additional \$4.4 million in costs was incurred while in Leith, consisting of \$1.5 million for fuel and \$2.9 million for crew. These costs would have been incurred regardless of the ship's location.

Again, I indicate to the honourable member and to the House that this was not an exercise by the -

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Treasurer's time has expired.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms DOW** - What was the total cost of the storage for *Spirit V*?

**Mr ABETZ** - I'm not sure I have that specific figure in front of me. I do recall potentially having seen something of that nature and I am more than happy to supply it to the House. I trust I'll be able to do that after Question Time today or on the Adjournment this evening.

### **Foreign Ownership of Housing Market**

**Prof RAZAY question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ**

[11.03 a.m.]

Honourable Speaker, I also would like to acknowledge the SES volunteers.

Australia has long been recognised for its success in multiculturalism and its encouragement of foreign investment, with the real estate industry accounting for 11.8 per cent of Australia's \$4.7 trillion of total foreign investment in 2023. However, foreign investment has been called out as a contributing factor to the nation's housing crisis. Last week's federal Budget extended the ban on foreign purchases of established residential properties until 2029. In Tasmania, where housing prices have risen dramatically since COVID-19, what proportion of the housing market is owned by foreign investors, and are there additional surcharges or taxes applied to foreign-owned properties?

### **ANSWER**

Speaker, you've got to be careful what you wish for when you talk about multicultural activities and migrants to the country, because you get people like Professor Razay and Eric Abetz into the Chamber and I think di Falco and a few other names as well. What I think that indicates to the community at large is that it is a very embracing community and the people who come here as migrants have absolutely the same opportunity as anybody else. I think you,

Professor Razay, in particular, with your professorship and now being in this place, are a wonderful exemplar of that aspect of Tasmanian society.

Since white settlement, foreign investment has been part and parcel of the Tasmanian and Australian economies. It continues and we continue to welcome it. In relation to foreign investment in housing stock, that has been a matter of concern and there are Foreign Investment Review Board considerations. I remember in the Abbott government, on coming to power, there was the implementation of the requirement that if a foreign investor had not invested in his or her or, if it was a company, their residential property as required, we forced sales of those properties to make sure the requirements of the Foreign Investment Review Board were followed through.

In relation to Tasmania, there is an extra stamp duty surcharge and for those who have recently engaged in conveyancing activity - something you didn't have to do when I was doing conveyancing as a lawyer - you now have to show proof that you are an Australian citizen, otherwise there is that extra stamp duty surcharge and similarly in relation to land tax. I understand that as of 1 July 2026, our government will apply an additional foreign investor duty surcharge to purchases of residential and primary production land in Tasmania. The surcharge is currently 8 per cent of the dutiable value for residential property and 1.5 per cent for primary production property. In 2024-25, there were 61 transactions that attracted a duty surcharge totalling \$2.9 million in revenue. We also apply an annual foreign investor land tax surcharge -

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Treasurer's time has expired.

**Mr Abetz** - I'll give you the extra information.

**Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.07 a.m.]

The Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation, TASCORP, had already put a borrowing limit on TT-Line of \$1.4 billion. Without your \$506 million equity injection, TT-Line was at risk of breaching its loan conditions and blowing through that borrowing limit. That is a business that could not stand on its own two feet. After your half a billion-dollar bailout, can you guarantee TT-Line will make a profit after paying interest on its \$905 million debt, or will there be ongoing losses?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question, again a distraction he is putting forward because all he wants to talk about is higher taxes for Tasmanians. That is his plan. Quite clearly, tomorrow's Budget is about responsible economic management and Treasurer Abetz will lead that. The contrast is clear - a government with a plan or an opposition that will make Tasmanians pay more.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, Speaker, under Standing Order 45, relevance. The question is about TT-Line's operating position. He is going nowhere near the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It's worth pointing out that the honourable member has asked these questions in the context of the Budget and the opposition has not produced an alternative budget in the entirety of their time in opposition, except for their clear policy for higher taxes for Tasmanians. What you'll see in our Budget is concessions supporting Tasmanians, other cost-of-living initiatives, and no more taxes.

**Mr Willie** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Honourable Premier, I draw you back to the original question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'm very confident in the leadership of TT-Line company when it comes to Ken Kanofski, the chair, and Chris Carbone as the CEO, doing wonderful work and ensuring the sustainability of the operations of TT-Line. This is a huge opportunity for Tasmania -

**Mr Mitchell** - Every business would be sustainable with a million bucks given to it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - A brand new wharf - thank you, Brian - in Geelong, brand new -

**The SPEAKER** - 'Honourable member for Lyons', please, not first names, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Right. Was that your one interjection per question?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That's your one. I know you're ticking them off. It hasn't been a good Question Time for the honourable member for Bass.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable Premier, I'm on my feet. I ask all members of the House to respect the Standing Orders of the House and not incite interjections. I ask that the honourable member for Lyons should be addressed as 'the honourable member for Lyons'. I ask all members be cognisant of what they comment on. If anyone is to pull up people on interjections, it will be myself.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you for that ruling. I was just saying the honourable member for Bass has had her one interjection and has already stated that she's anti-Firmus today.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr WILLIE** - He didn't answer the question. It is: whether TT-Line will make a profit after paying interest on its debt or will there be ongoing losses?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Tasmanians would be most interested that when a company comes to Tasmania to want to invest, as I understand, up to \$4 billion, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is against that in her own electorate.

**Mr Mitchell** - Answer the question. This is ridiculous. He's going nowhere near it.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable member for Lyons.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will ensure that we will support TT-Line. We've demonstrated that: new wharf in Geelong, new wharf in Devonport, brand new ships for the next four decades.

### **Salmon Farming - Antimicrobial Resistance and Surveillance**

**Mr GARLAND** question to **MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE**, referred to **MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER**

[11.12 a.m.]

During March 2025, throughout the salmon mortality events and related parliamentary questions on 3 March, 11 March and 12 March, the government repeatedly reassured Tasmanians that existing food safety and antibiotic regulatory frameworks were adequate to protect public health. Since then, Monash University research has identified antimicrobial resistance genes in supermarket salmon products, while recent Environment Protection Authority (EPA) monitoring confirmed long-term persistence of oxytetracycline residues at salmon lease sites. Given antimicrobial resistance is regarded globally as a major public health threat, why does Tasmania still not require any routine surveillance of antimicrobial resistant genes in or around salmon farming operations?

**Mr PEARCE** - Speaker, I thank the member for his question about antimicrobial resistance, a human phenomenon and I direct you to the minister for Health. I don't deal with any microbial resistance in humans.

**Mr Garland** - This is to do with salmon. Dr Mark Veitch directed a constituent to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE) because he said it wasn't his remit. Where do I go?

**The SPEAKER** - The Clerk has given me advice: the honourable minister can redirect the question to another minister. For ease of amity in the House, if the honourable minister can please redirect the question to the honourable Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing.

### **ANSWER**

Thank you very much for the question. In relation to antimicrobial resistance, in relation to salmon, I'm advised that the ways in which antibiotic resistance develops and spreads between bacteria under sustained antibiotic pressure are complex. However, florfenicol is not used in human medicine and I'm advised that significance for human health for florfenicol use in aquaculture has not been clearly demonstrated.

We acknowledge that antibiotic-resistant bacteria is a serious contemporary health problem and that's why we're committed to addressing antibiotic resistance, working with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions as set out in Australia's National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2020 and beyond, and working together, we share a collective responsibility to use antibiotics only when necessary, and for clear medical and veterinary reasons.

**Time expired.**

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION**

**Member for Bass - Ms Finlay**

[11.15 a.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, under Standing Order 127, I'd like to make a personal explanation.

**Mr Ellis** - Oh, here we go.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The Clerk has drawn my attention that it did need to be raised at the time the comment was made, but I'll allow the personal explanation.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, Speaker. Given the way that the Question Time opened with me having to withdraw a comment about the Premier not telling the truth, I took a moment to contemplate whether I do Order 127.

The Premier has asserted today that I am anti-Firmus. That is not correct.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The only one who has the call right now is the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I ask that she be heard.

**Ms FINLAY** - The record will show that my interjection was: 'how many jobs?' A simple question for a response, in data, in fact, not an -

**Mr Abetz** - I thought she had her 'No Stadium' stickers over-printed to 'No Firmus'.

**A member** - No, it wasn't.

**Mr Ellis** - Quicker backflip than firearms.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The only one who has the call right now is the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I ask that she be heard in silence, please.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. Not an assertion on my position about that project. It's just another demonstration of the Premier saying things that are not true.

**Mr Ferguson** - The video won't be kind to you.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you. We now move on to Constituency Questions.

**Mr Abetz** - You haven't changed your No Stadium -

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Thank you, Treasurer.

## **CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS**

### **Margate - North West Bay River Bridge**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT**

[11.16 a.m.]

Multiple residents of Margate have contacted me about your stalled work on the North West Bay River Bridge in Margate and the increased safety concerns of pedestrians and cyclists.

Jane asked me to say: Margate has a growing population, but we need infrastructure to keep up with this increase. North of Margate, there's the train and the Kingborough Bowls Club, popular with locals. To access these, you have to drive the very short distance from Margate town as it's far too dangerous to cross the bridge on foot. Sheer ridiculousness. I'm a local resident and will enjoy walking to Hopfields and then continue to the Margate train. Many afternoons now sees traffic entering Margate from the queue backed up along the highway to the train and some cars attempting to turn into Hopfields Brewery, it's extremely unsafe and pedestrians and cyclists. Minister, please don't turn the project into a major logistical drama. When will you act on this commitment to add a footpath/cycle path to the bridge?

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable member's time has expired.

### **Jack Jumper Ant Venom De-Sensitisation Immunotherapy**

**Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER**

My constituent question this morning is from Terry in Youngtown. He has asked: what support is being given to people from the north to receive Jack Jumper de-sensitisation therapy? It requires several once-a-week trips to Hobart. When trying to gain more information with the Department of Health website he also found the page referral and clinic outpatients' page is no longer available. He's called a number of times and is keen for an update.

### **Police Presence in Hobart CBD and Salamanca**

**Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS**

My question is from my constituent, Bari. Bari lives in Hobart and like many young people, wants to be able to enjoy the city's nightlife safely. Bari is concerned about the apparent lack of police presence in and around the Hobart CBD and Salamanca precincts on Friday and Saturday nights. He has been advised by hospitality operators that proactive police patrols were more common prior to 2020 but have since ceased. Can the minister please confirm that proactive police patrols no longer occur on Friday and Saturday nights in Hobart's key nightlife areas? If that is the case, what police presence and supports are currently in place during these busy times?

**Police Exercise at UTAS Stadium**

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

My constituent Wendy from Launceston has asked about the recent high intensity police exercise held at UTAS Stadium. Wendy has asked about how realistic such scenario testing is and what information is provided to members of the public so they know what they should do if they ever find themselves in this type of situation?

**Greyhound Racing - Stand-Down Periods**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT**

My constituent asks in relation to the greyhound races on Thursday night where Jungle Boogie fell in race 4 and tumbled. My constituent asks: in the Northern Territory, any dog that falls in a race is required to have a compulsory stand-down period. Why is that not the case in Tasmania and will you look into that? Jungle Boogie raced again on Monday night, came dead last, and is clearly quite unwell from the race fall on Thursday.

**Tasmanian Social Housing Waitlist**

**Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT**

My question is from John - not his real name - who has just clocked up five years on the Priority 1 housing list. When will something become available for him and something that he can move into?

**Sport and Recreation - Community Participation Measures**

**Mr VERMEY question to MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUGAN**

We know members of the community in my area of Glenorchy are expecting some extra cost-of-living pressures and want to be involved in sports. The constituents are asking: given

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the impact of participating in sport and recreation activities, what is the government doing to support the wellbeing of Tasmanians and help them stay connected to sport and local clubs?

### Highland Lakes Road - Speed Limit Review

**Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT**

My question comes from my constituent Mark Rowlings of Bruny Island. On 30 April 2026, Mark and his wife were driving home on the Highland Lakes Road, about 10 kilometres south of Bothwell, when a car coming from the opposite direction crossed the double white lines around a blind corner and hit them head-on. Mark's wife spent several days in hospital with injuries from the crash. They were both lucky to survive. Inexplicably, the speed limit for this stretch of road is 100 kilometres per hour, despite it being known as an accident hot spot, as illustrated by the horrifying footage recently shared by the ABC of a large truck driving dangerously along that road. Will you review the speed limit for the dangerous stretch of road before more Tasmanians are seriously injured or killed?

### PETITION

#### Responsible Firearm Ownership and Oppose Caps

[11.22 a.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to be the bearer of two petitions which are similarly worded. A written petition signed by approximately 3280 petitioners and an e-petition signed by approximately 7905 petitioners. The petition conforms with the relevant standing orders and rules of the House. The petition requests that the House reject the introduction of a cap on the number of firearms a person can legally possess and prioritise policies that target illegal firearms and illegal criminal activity, rather than law-abiding licenced firearm owners/users.

**Petition received.**

### QUESTION ON NOTICE - ANSWER

#### No. 22 of 2026 - War Memorials

[11.24 a.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Arts and Heritage) - Honourable Speaker, I table the following answer to question on notice asked by Ms Butler to Minister for the Arts and Heritage: No. 22 of 2026.

See Appendix 1 on page x.

**Paper Tabled.**

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## RESPONSE TO PETITION

### No. 2 of 2026 - Greyhound Racing

[11.25 a.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Lyons - Minister for Racing) - Honourable Speaker, I table the Department of Natural Resource and Environment Tasmania's Response to Petition No. 2 of 2026 - Shutdown of Tasmanian Greyhound Racing.

**Paper tabled.**

## MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### Estimates Committees - Attendance of Ministers

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council desires to inform the House of Assembly that it agrees to the request of the Assembly in its Message dated 7 May 2026 and has given leave for the Honourable Member for Rosevears, as Minister for Education; Minister for Children and Youth; and Minister for Disability Services, and the Honourable Member for Windermere, as Minister for Energy and Renewables; Minister for Parks; and Minister for Sport, and the Honourable Member for Prosser, as Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; Minister for Local Government; and Minister for Housing and Planning, to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Estimates Committee of the House of Assembly in relation to the Budget Estimates and related Documents.

C. M. Farrell, President,  
Legislative Council, 19 May 2026.

### Estimates Committees - Attendance of Ministers

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council having passed the following Resolution now transmits the same to the House of Assembly, and requests its concurrence therein:-

*Resolved*, that the Legislative Council having appointed two Estimates Committees reflecting the distribution of Government Ministers' portfolio responsibilities, requests that the House of Assembly give leave to all Ministers to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Council Estimates Committee in relation to the Budget Estimates and related documents.

C. M. Farrell, President,

Legislative Council 19 May 2026.

[11.26 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Speaker. I move -

That the last-mentioned message be taken into consideration forthwith.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **MOTION**

#### **Estimates Committees - Attendance of Ministers**

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Speaker, I thank the House. I move -

That the resolution of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 20)**

#### **First Reading**

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

### **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

#### **Greyhound Welfare**

[11.27 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: greyhound welfare.

I rise today on this matter of public importance to highlight what seems to have been lost to many Opposition members - the welfare of greyhounds. The vision that Tasmanians have seen of the collisions and falls of dogs in the last few weeks on Tasmanian tracks has been truly jarring. Just two nights ago in Launceston, three dogs were recorded with post-racetrack injuries, including *Tony the Turtle*, who fell and has been stood down from racing for a further two months due to a suspected right shoulder muscle scapula injury. Plenty of dogs don't return to racing after their 60-day standdown.

This year alone, 73 greyhounds have been injured in Tasmanian tracks, and that was with a one-month suspension of racing. Eleven dogs have already died this year and it's only May. All while the most notorious of trainers, Anthony Bullock, once again won Tasracing's Trainer of the Year award - celebrated. It is truly sickening. For all the Tasmanians who care deeply about the welfare of greyhounds, it looks like this industry is carrying on with its brutal business

as usual, all while they claim to love their dogs, that it's just bad apples in the industry, that they've cleaned up their act and that welfare is at the heart of racing.

The Greens acknowledge the many empathetic Tasmanians who care about dogs, and it's been hard to see all of this, and they can't understand why legislation to ban this industry has been paused. I want to say, from our point of view, it's because of the welfare of greyhounds that we supported the government's decision to pause their bill. If MLCs need more information, we want to make sure they get it and take the time they need, because if this bill passes, it will save countless canine lives and it will mean that we don't see these beautiful dogs in their hundreds being pumped through and cast aside, broken by this industry.

We're very pleased to hear the Premier confirm that he won't be funding greyhound racing. It shows a real commitment to the policy and, in our view, is exactly why we shouldn't be funnelling public money during a budget crisis into what is a cruel 70 kilometre per hour game of Russian roulette for dogs. These gentle dogs deserve to be protected and safe from the unavoidable risk of every single race. Their welfare is central in our minds.

In the member for Franklin, Mr Winter's what's next whinge-fest last night on the adjournment debate, we never heard him mention greyhound welfare. Surprise, surprise. Mr Winter has claimed on the *Poll Position* podcast that the industry has cleaned up their act over the last decade and is full of good people who love their animals. However, Mr Winter is deliberately ignoring the welfare issues in the industry and the risk every race of dogs colliding and the injuries that result from that, as well as the fact that they grow up in shelters and end up with missing ears, and the fact that the most brutal of all trainers is being heralded and celebrated by the industry right now.

Mr Winter was asked about bad operators in the industry on the podcast, but he refused to engage with the question. It's true that Anthony Bullock has been investigated and done for cruelty and doping dogs. He didn't even have a kennel licence for a decade. What a surprise that we haven't seen any photos of the member for Franklin, Mr Winter, standing next to the celebrated trainer of the greyhound industry in the greyhound campaign - the fight back campaign - which is being spearheaded by a whole bunch of people who refuse to speak the industry's truth. The truth is that the honourable Mr Winter is being utterly dishonest with Tasmanians. He's refusing to call out the cruelty and bad behaviour of trainers like Anthony Bullock -

**Mr Winter** - Excuse me, who called out Ben Yole? Where were you?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Mr Winter, you will have your time in a moment.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - With all of his pro-racing rhetoric he has rightly condemned Ben Yole's practices, Ben Yole the harness trainer. He called Yole out on the *Poll Position* podcast, and Ben Yole, of course, is Anthony Bullock's good friend. He co-owns some of Yole's harness horses and turns them into dog meat when they've done earning money in horse racing. I look forward to Mr Winter jumping up today and calling out Anthony Bullock and the rank reality of greyhound racing.

[11.33 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, Tasmanians have made their views very clear on this. The welfare of greyhounds matter. The future of greyhound

racing in our state must reflect modern expectations and community expectations, which is why our government remains firmly committed to the staged and orderly phase-out of greyhound racing in Tasmania by 30 June 2029. This is a decision we have not taken lightly. It follows years of evidence, community concern and deeply troubling examples of animal suffering. It reflects a very simple truth: the industry as it currently operates no longer aligns with standards that Tasmanians expect.

The advice from the independent Racing Integrity Commissioner was that the best way to protect the welfare of dogs in the industry would be to legislate a ban and an orderly transition and support for participants, but most importantly, what cannot be lost in this debate is the welfare of the animals themselves. We have heard from respected experts, including Dr Alex Brittan, Chief Veterinary Officer at Greyhound Racing NSW, who stated that the industry operates at 'an unacceptable cost to each greyhound' and 'is incapable of meaningful change'. When experts, advocates, and everyday Tasmanians are aligned on this, all saying the same thing, we simply cannot ignore it as a government and, indeed, a parliament.

As the honourable member who raises this issue today says - and has also stated since announcing our position - we have continued to see injuries and on-track deaths in Tasmania. We know that poor data collection and inconsistent record keeping have made it even harder to properly track injuries, fatalities and welfare outcomes. This is not good enough. It is not good for the animals, the participants and the public, dare I say.

That is why the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 is so important. It ensures a managed, humane and enforceable transition, not an unmanaged decline that would leave both animals and participants worse off. We're doing this for the number-one priority, which is animal welfare. I'm also mindful of the participants as well to ensure we can support them in the transition because we are at a time when we are renewing the racing deed that was established in 2009, if my memory serves me correctly.

There is heightened expectation on all three codes of racing, but considerably on greyhounds, particularly in recent times, dating back to the 2015 example of live baiting in New South Wales, where this industry and this code was put on very clear notice. We will not be funding the greyhound racing industry beyond 1 July 2029 in terms of government funding, and the Labor Party has at least conceded that. You're reading the room slowly on this one.

I acknowledge there are members who are in the corner of the participants of the greyhound racing industry. I know for many of the Labor Party, the number-one priority of course is animal welfare, but if you're interested in the participants and animal welfare, then please get on board and change your position so we can have an orderly transition of phasing out greyhounds that is fair to participants and puts animal welfare as the number-one priority.

Honourable Speaker, Tasmanians are telling us it's time to draw a line in the sand, time to ensure an orderly and humane exit from greyhound racing and time to put animal welfare first. I've made my position and our government's position clear. We want to support the industry's transition. We believe it's in the industry's and the participants' best interests, but the number-one priority of this government is the welfare of the dogs themselves, which must be the highest priority.

[11.38 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Gee, the Premier's under a bit of pressure on this policy. He talked about a staged withdrawal and having looked at the evidence. The only evidence this Premier needed to take this policy position was that he needed the Greens and the Independents on the crossbench to form this government. He wrote a letter to the industry three weeks earlier giving them his full support, so in three weeks either he came to some amazingly coincidental decision that all of a sudden greyhound racing was no good and he cared about animal welfare, or he just wanted the votes of the Greens. That's what's happening, that's why this position has no legitimacy and that's why no-one believes him anymore.

The Leader of the Greens is totally consistent on this. She doesn't like greyhound racing; she's been saying that for years. She doesn't like thoroughbred racing or harness racing and she would like to shut them down. She also doesn't like rodeos and she'd like to shut them down. I assume there are some others as well in complete ideological consistency.

Labor has a consistent position, we support all racing, but the Premier's position is utterly bizarre because he just stood there for five minutes talking about injuries on tracks being not good for animals and not good for the public, yet he still supports thoroughbred and harness racing. How can this be consistent or true?

This is a premier who owns, I have to say, one of the best Tasmanian racehorses I've seen in a long time, Sanniya. He owns that horse and has profited tens of thousands of dollars from winning those races as he's watched the jockey whip the horse over the line, so ask yourself: is this consistent? Does this Premier believe in animal welfare or does he just believe in being the Premier? The answer is it's just belief that he should be the Premier. He was prepared to sellout those thousands of Tasmanian participants, and their mental health, for himself because he did not care about those people. Nor, by the way, did the Minister for Racing. I want to read today some of the statements that we've heard from participants:

I haven't slept well for months. When I do manage to get some sleep, I wake up several times through the night thinking I've heard noises. I wander through the house in the dark, looking towards the kennel block, watching for anything that should be there, lights or movements.

We are living in a constant state of fear and the only people we trust are our fellow participants, close friends and families. Exhausting both physically and mentally.

Another one:

The abuse, threats and harassment and name-calling coming from people who do not know us, from business leaders and even the Premier and certain politicians has taken a huge toll on my mental health. We have been made to feel worthless.

Steve, who the Minister for Racing knows very well as 'Badger' because he put up her election signs and other members of the greyhound community, as you know, his wife has dementia, which has been deteriorating rapidly with her speech, et cetera. The lack of certainty on where we're headed with dogs and the noticeable change in everyone's life can be tough at times, not only just for him but for everyone. His wife goes the races to socialise with other women, but

she forgets everything. She knows that Steve's distressed, due to the dementia she does not know why. Everyone is feeling the toll and it's affecting everyone's mental health.

He wants to know why the minister's not talking to them because she's not doing her ministerial role if she's not talking to the industry that's doing it tough. He makes the point there should be mental health support on the track for people right now and, I have to say, I agree.

Members on the crossbench I don't think have been - no, in fact, I know some members of the crossbench have been to greyhound racing. I know others haven't. But I went only a few weeks ago and I know how hard they are hurting. I am deeply, deeply worried about their mental health and health. For members here to talk exclusively about animal rights, I know you're passionate about it, but I'm concerned about the participants; about the people who rely on us to make the right decisions.

The decision by the Premier to pull the bill from the Legislative Council is hurting real people; real people who supported him only 12 months ago. It is shameful. It is going to cause serious distress and I can't say anymore without being inappropriate, but I tell you what, people are really hurting and they are going to hurt very badly if this isn't resolved. The worst thing this Premier has done is leave this uncertain. It must be dealt with. The bill must be brought to the other place so they can have certainty, so that they can have dignity, which has been taken away by this Premier and the Minister for Racing.

[11.43 a.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Leader of the Greens for bringing on this very important MPI on greyhound welfare. I think it's very telling that the contribution from the honourable shadow minister for racing was all about welfare of the participants of the industry and made no reference to actual greyhound welfare. I would more than welcome Labor to bring on an MPI on the welfare of greyhound racing participants and I'd be happy to get up here and talk about how we can look after that through a just transition process. But it's very telling that Labor have not even gone anywhere near the issue of greyhound welfare on this very important MPI. That's reflective of the way that their community views Labor at the moment: that they are absolutely missing the point on this particular one. They are deciding to die on the hill of greyhound racing, contrary to public opinion, the opinion of the Young Labor branch, the opinion of most of their members, that greyhound racing does not belong in Tasmania for animal welfare reasons.

Polls show overwhelmingly that we are a state that loves their dogs and that we want to see greyhound racing ending because it treats greyhounds, sentient beings, as commercial commodities for gambling purposes. There are inherent animal welfare risks with the greyhound racing industry, and they come in two key components.

The first is in regard to the terrible animal welfare outcomes from housing the greyhounds and the keeping of greyhounds for the purposes of racing. You only need to look at the examples of Anthony Bullock, Trainer of the Year, over and over again, continually celebrated by the industry, to show exactly what is wrong with this industry - dogs kept in tiny kennels without any proper bedding, parasitic-ridden dogs presented to races over and over again. A man who says this is his business didn't even know he needed a kennel licence to hold 96 dogs on his property in West Tamar. That's not looking after them at all.

When we see Mr Stringer presented by the industry to media in recent weeks, blatantly forgets or ignores the very telling footage from Animal Liberation Tasmania with regards to how his dogs are kept on his property in shocking conditions. With water that is filthy. With shelters that are barely a shelter. That are chewed you can see the distress on the dogs. Notably, he's gone very quiet in the last week, once that was repeated and circulated again - the very telling footage.

But of course, within the animal racing industry, the biggest inherent risk to greyhound is the racing itself. It cannot be made safe, and we see that time and again. These are incredibly fragile creatures. Their anatomy means they are fine-boned, thin-skinned. And whilst yes, they run very fast, because they're fine-boned and thin-skinned, it makes them incredibly vulnerable to catastrophic injuries. Absolutely catastrophic injuries. You can only look at the last three races, Thursday, Monday, last night in Tasmania to see what happens to these beautiful greyhounds.

Poor Jungle Boogie on Thursday night at Hobart fell catastrophically during race four. The vet noted in the steward's report that there were no abnormalities but yet raced again on Monday night came dead last. I've noted already in this House that, in Northern Territory, there are mandatory stand-down periods for any dog that falls. This dog is clearly distressed. That's not the only one to have fallen, and I invite members in this place and particularly members of the Labor Party to look at the footage of these dogs falling, of them tumbling with their gangly legs going everywhere, their necks bending, their backs looking like they're about to break and say that that's okay and that's a standard that Tasmanians will accept. Because it's not the standard that Tasmanians want in the state, a dog-loving state.

But, of course, you can't look at the footage of those particular races from Tasracing because it's hidden. Why is it hidden? The CEO clearly admits that it's too disturbing to repeat. Tasracing itself censures the footage because it's too disturbing for members of the public to look back and review the footage of these horrific, catastrophic, often life-threatening or death-resulting injuries.

I invite members of the Labor Party to perhaps go on to Twitter, there are some wonderful works, particularly I note that of Susan Metcalfe who diligently goes through and captures that footage for an accurate record of the cruelty that we inflict on dogs time and again in this state. It must end.

Animal for welfare matters, of course, raising participants, welfare matters. I welcome an MPI on that, to talk about how we can have a just, measured and appropriate transition. But Tasmanians love their dogs. It must end in Tasmania. No more cruelty to the beautiful greyhounds, these sentient beings.

[11.48 a.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** - Deputy Speaker, my strong view is that every injury or every fatality, be it on or off track, is absolutely heartbreaking and it comes at an unacceptable cost.

As we have said, the time has come to make a call on the future of greyhound racing in Tasmania. The time has come to draw a line in the sand and ensure an orderly exit from greyhound racing in Tasmania. Integrity and animal welfare is a bedrock on which the Tasmanian racing industry will grow and continue to make a positive contribution to the Tasmanian community.

To ensure full transparency regarding animal welfare, we made changes regarding Tasracing to provide information in their annual reports on equine and greyhound track injuries, euthanasia, retirement and rehoming statistics. We know, however, that the poor data and records kept by industry when it comes to injuries and fatalities puts animal welfare and industry participant outcomes at risk during this transitional period.

The decision to euthanise a horse or greyhound on course is made with the animal welfare as its highest priority. These decisions are undertaken by a suitably qualified, on-course veterinarian, with the welfare of the animal being paramount.

I note the comments from Dr Alex Britton, former Chief Veterinary Officer at Greyhound Racing New South Wales stated that from his professional standpoint that the industry operates at an unacceptable cost to each greyhound. Further, he observed an industry incapable of meaningful change. Every injury and fatality add to the community concern about the future of the industry and about animal welfare. Sadly, since the government announced our position we've continued to see injuries and on-track deaths in Tasmania. In April, we saw animal welfare charges of keeping a greyhound in circumstances which, in the opinion of the stewards, is or may be detrimental to the welfare of the greyhound. A person not ensuring that any greyhound in that person's care or custody is at all times provided with proper and sufficient food, drink and protective apparel.

The government's position has been clear and consistent. Greyhound racing will be phased out by 2029 through legislation that delivers an orderly transition, strong animal welfare protections, and certainty and compensation for participants. Now that there's been bipartisan support for that, greyhound racing will no longer receive public funding or government support beyond 2029. The need for a clear legislative framework to manage the transition is strengthened. Without the passage of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill, there would be no legislative transitional framework, no certainty for trainers or owners, and no mechanism for compensation for participants. Maintaining the status quo while defunding the code would leave participants and animal welfare arrangements in limbo. Whilst we are committed to continuing to work with members, what is clear is the overwhelming public support for this policy and the clear, deep division within the opposition.

I'd like to comment very quickly on the opposition's remarks. Tasracing and the commissioner have put in specific measures at both race meetings per week at Launceston and Hobart. They have councillors on course and assistance for the Employee Assistance Program services as well.

**Mr Winter** - How would you know?

**Ms HOWLETT** - Because I've put it in place, that's why I know.

Participant welfare is paramount and that's why Tasracing and the commissioner have put these in place for the participants.

[11.52 a.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, as someone who reported greyhound racing in Sydney in the late 1960s, it was a cruel sport back then and, unfortunately, it remains a cruel sport today. I recognise that greyhound races may love their dogs and argue that they care for them and tend for them as precious winners but also as pets. I understand their arguments. I disagree with them. I do understand that owners and trainers are confronted by the continued uncertainty of their survival, and I do understand that the industry feels deeply embittered by the Premier and the government and there is plenty of reason for them to feel embittered.

However, now is the time to end what is called a sport, but what is in fact the cruel use of animals for human entertainment and gambling. It is no longer socially supported or even acceptable. I can't express it much better than Mark Wild, CEO of Dogs' Homes of Tasmania, in his LinkedIn post. Mark is no one's idea of an activist or radical. He's a thoughtful and considerate person. I paraphrase him by saying that:

I honestly, the more I reflect on it, the harder I find it to understand how anyone can genuinely argue that greyhound racing is not an animal welfare issue. How can it not be? We're talking about dogs, beautiful, trusting, gentle animals, being pushed to run at speeds approaching 70 kilometres an hour around a track, often resulting in injury, trauma and death. To suggest that this can somehow ever be made completely safe is increasingly out of touch with community expectations and values. Dogs will continue to be injured. Injured dogs will continue to die. That is not emotion, it is an unavoidable consequence of the activity itself. What I find most difficult is not that people disagree. It's that legitimate welfare concerns are still being dismissed altogether, even after years of reform and promises of improvement, serious welfare concerns continue to emerge: injuries, deaths, neglect, disease.

I don't approach this issue from theory or ideology, I approach it from years of working directly with dogs needing rehabilitation, behavioural support and rehoming. I have seen the downstream consequences firsthand.

For me, this is an issue which is now much bigger than politics. It's about ethics and it's about morality, and ultimately it's about leadership. Real leadership is not avoiding difficult truths because they're uncomfortable or unpopular. Real leadership is having the courage to confront those truths honestly. As long as greyhound racing continues, dogs will continue to be injured and die.

That's the reality that members of this House need to confront.

[11.56 a.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to echo the words of the honourable Dr Woodruff earlier about animal welfare. It's worth reminding ourselves that greyhounds are sentient animals. They're not commodities and they're not for human entertainment and for gambling. They are animals that are beautiful. They feel pain, they love attention and affection, and you only have to spend a few minutes with them to see and experience that when you spend time with them. That's what makes what I'm about to share so shocking because this year there have been 11 dogs that have died on the racetrack in Tasmania, in this year alone.

Memphis Rains fractured his hock at Elwick on 9 January and was later listed as deceased. The devastating footage of this dog trying to finish the race was confronting and I say thank you to the people who do capture that footage and put it onto Twitter because we wouldn't be able to see it otherwise, but we can see that and see how horrific this is. Why on earth should a dog be euthanised for a broken ankle? Only in this industry.

Canya Breakout died in late January from gastric dilation, a condition that can be treated if observed early, but that's not what happens in greyhound kennels. They're left alone to suffer in pain. Hellyer Dougie broke both his legs in Launceston on 27 January and was killed at the track. Pappy Van Winkle and Faye both died from complications from kennel cough. Darryl's Luck and Frosty Lad both died from respiratory issues likely exacerbated by kennel cough.

Let's be clear. At our briefing on the kennel cough outbreak, Tasracing's own vet, Dr Martin Lentz, confirmed kennel cough spreads rapidly and affects dogs more extremely in greyhound kennels, not only because dogs are kept in crowded conditions, but also because they are more physically stressed as animals in that environment. Of course they're more stressed in kennel environments.

When racing resumed after the kennel cough outbreak, the deaths continued. Highgate Annie died from a twisted bowel in April. On the same reporting day, Why Sparky was recorded as deceased after severe temperature, a seizure and then a suspected intestinal torsion. Four days later Shima Time died from a suspected twisted gut, and last month two-year old Manila Dozer showed up as deceased after a trial. Despite our best efforts and those of the tenacious greyhound welfare champions, there's still no explanation for that one.

These are terrible things to be hearing about, terrible things that are happening in the greyhound industry. That's the deaths, but then we've also heard about the injuries here. Those deaths don't account for, at our count, 73 injuries this year in only five months of racing, with a month of racing suspended in that time due to kennel cough. That's a high death rate.

Despite whatever industry cheerleaders may be saying about the conditions these sensitive dogs are kept in, the very physics of racing are inescapable. When eight dogs run at top speeds of 70 kilometres per hour around sharp corners, chasing a lure, they collide. These dogs have thinner skins and finer bones than other breeds. They are, as the industry would tell you, bred to run fast. But what the industry doesn't say is that those same genetics mean they are fragile. It is, as Dr Woodruff said earlier, like Russian roulette.

It's good to see there is some slight difference of opinion within Labor on greyhound racing. The opposition leader's comments have been somewhat different to his predecessors. There's a little bit of a crab walk away from their unpopular and regressive position. Hopefully that's what we're seeing. Although we would say Labor leader, Josh Willie is either dreaming or being dishonest when he says a Labor government would help the greyhound industry stand up on its own two feet financially, he needs to explain how that would be possible. The industry can't survive without millions in public subsidies each year. By the time the racing deed expires in 2029, it will have hoovered up around \$100 million in public funding. It's time Labor read the room, reversed its unpopular, unethical position on greyhound racing, took into consideration animal and greyhound welfare, and actually spoke about that, because that's what's needed in this situation.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

The welfare of greyhounds is the reason we are here. It's because of the pressure of people who care about dogs that we're here. The polling shows the overwhelming majority of the public support the end of this industry. Anthony Bullock and terrible things happening in animal welfare are a true example of the industry and the Greens stand with the community who know that this industry needs to end and be banned.

[12.00 p.m.]

**Mr Di FALCO** (Lyons) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak on the matter of public importance, greyhound welfare, and the need to support a responsible, regulated and sustainable greyhound racing industry in Tasmania. I spoke in detail during the legislative debate about how we should not be demonising every trainer, every owner, every volunteer, every family and every regional club involved in greyhound racing. The overwhelming majority of people involved in this industry care deeply for their dogs. They feed them, train them, house them, transport them, socialise them, pay their vet bills and, in many cases, keep them as part of the family long after their racing days are finished.

Animal welfare matters. It matters to the public, it matters to parliament and it matters to the industry itself, but good welfare outcomes are not achieved by destroying an entire industry. The government has continually moved the goalposts. I am deeply saddened by how the industry has been treated. Tasmania has already moved towards greater reporting of greyhound breeding, injury, retirement and rehoming data, with reporting identified as part of the integrity framework. The Racing Integrity Commissioner's office also states that welfare and the integrity analysis is used to identify risks, support investigations and inform future regulatory action. This is the direction we should be building on, but do not punish the whole industry for the actions of a minority. These are real people. Their livelihoods and way of life should not be treated as collateral damage in a political argument.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

### **GRANGE RESOURCES (TASMANIA) PTY LTD (ALTERNATIVE APPLICATION PERIOD) BILL 2026 (No. 3)**

**Bill returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.**

### **MOTION**

#### **Government Transparency**

[12.04 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, a vote will be required today. I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges;

- (a) that public trust, governmental integrity, and confidence in democratic decision making systems in Tasmania are improved by timely, accessible, meaningful, and transparent disclosure of:
    - (i) ministerial diaries; and
    - (ii) gifts and benefits of hospitalities received by government ministers in the course of their official duties (hereinafter referred to as gifts disclosure).
  - (b) the submissions received by the Department of Premier and Cabinet during the December 2025 public consultation on the ministerial diaries discussion paper; and
  - (c) the current process for gifts disclosure in Tasmania is significantly less frequent than in other Australian states and is more akin to historical reporting than it is to a meaningful measure for accountability and transparency.
- (2) Calls on the Government to table in the House, by no later than 16 June 2026:
- (a) its formal response to submissions received during the ministerial diaries disclosure consultation process;
  - (b) the specific improvements it intends to make to the ministerial diaries disclosure process, including a definitive timeline for doing so; and
  - (c) advice as to whether it intends to improve the gifts disclosure process and if so, detailed information in relation to the process and timing by which this will be done.

This is a motion to support our democracy by committing to improvements to Tasmania's ministerial diary and gifts register system. It is a motion to strengthen transparency and public confidence.

Before turning to the substance of my motion, I seek to move an amendment. I move -

Paragraph (1), subparagraph (c):

- (1) Leave out the word 'significantly'; and
- (2) Leave out the words 'and is more akin to historical reporting than it is to a meaningful measure for accountability and transparency'.

The purpose of the amendment is for broader support for this constructive process and to focus the debate on practical steps forward.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Do you want to discuss the amendment now, Mr Garland?

**Mr GARLAND** - I don't have anything to add to what I've just said.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Mr GARLAND** - This amended motion is straightforward and it goes to the heart of the good government. I believe that a commitment to improve processes for transparency, accountability and integrity should be an ongoing priority. I commend the honourable Meg Webb MLC for her persistent work in the other place to keep this issue on the agenda. I commend the government for releasing a discussion paper on ministerial diaries disclosure and for the work it has done to date. Finally, I commend Kristie Johnston MP, the community organisations and the individuals that provided thoughtful feedback during the process.

I now turn to our disclosure system for ministerial diaries. Tasmanians wonder what happens behind closed doors. They want to see that ministerial decisions are informed by a fair range of voices, not disproportionately by those with the most wealth, the closest connections or the greatest lobbying power. Therefore, this motion seeks to give Tasmanians more confidence that the government is transparent, accountable and acting with integrity.

There is a strong case for diary entries to be released more promptly and with enough detail for the public to understand who had access, when they had it, and whether that access may have been relevant. There is nothing wrong with people in organisations putting their case to government. That is part of our democracy. What matters is that access is transparent, balanced and open to public scrutiny. Properly described diary entries released early would do four important things. They would encourage scrutiny, reduce perceptions of undue influence, strengthen public trust and help to level the playing field for access. If the government's improvements to ministerial diary disclosure requirements achieve these things, it will be a win for Tasmania.

I now turn to the gifts register. For the avoidance of doubt, when I refer to gifts I'm referring to gifts, benefits and hospitalities that are given to ministers and that should be declared. It is concerning that the total value of gifts declared in 2024-25 is more than \$130,000 and about 50 per cent higher than in 2023-24. It is concerning that in 2024-25, 199 out of 204 declared gifts were retained by the recipient. It is simply not good enough that the public may only learn about these things more than a year later.

Tasmania's annual disclosure places it toward the weaker end of ministerial gift disclosure transparency in Australia. Queensland and New South Wales are quarterly, Victoria is every six months, South Australia is monthly and Western Australia is annual. Quarterly disclosure would place Tasmania in the middle of the pack for ministerial gift disclosure transparency. It would allow the public to understand in a more timely and meaningful way the networks of access, hospitality and influence surrounding government decision-making.

The discussion paper and consultation process was useful in relation to ministerial diary disclosure, but I do not believe the same process is needed for the gifts register. We should simply get on with introducing quarterly reporting in order to bring us into better alignment with other Australian states.

In conclusion, for the parliament to uphold principles of open democracy, we should be consistently maintaining our commitment to improve these processes for transparency,

accountability and integrity. There is a range of practical, reasonable reforms and they could be implemented quickly if the will is there. The case for change is clear. Tasmanians deserve transparency that is timely, meaningful and real and I commend the motion to the House.

[12.09 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise today to support the motion from the honourable member for Braddon and thank him very much for bringing it forward today. This is an integrity issue, and it is a long-running one. The ministerial diary disclosure regime we have in Tasmania today is voluntary, is quarterly, and it's not enforceable. Even on its own modest terms, it is not always complied with, with disclosures often made late. When ministers do release their diaries, the level of detail is so thin that the published records are barely worth the exercise itself. This is not just my assessment. The Right to Information (RTI) independent review describes the schedule for publication of ministerial diaries as 'rather haphazard' and as part of an integrity system that is far too weak. When an independent review of our information laws describes a flagship transparency mechanism in those terms, we should be paying attention.

The motion rightly pairs ministerial diaries with another disclosure regime that needs attention: gifts, benefits, and hospitality received by government ministers in the course of their official duties. As the member for Braddon notes, the current process for gift disclosure in Tasmania is less frequent than in other states, and although the member has amended his motion, I agree with the original version's sentiments, that this looks more like historical reporting than meaningful transparency.

I acknowledge the work - as the honourable member for Braddon has - of the honourable member for Nelson, Meg Webb, who has pursued the issue of ministerial diaries with her characteristic persistence in the other place. It is a series of motions moved by Ms Webb that has brought us to where we are today, and that is in itself worth noting. It is many of the independents in both Houses who continue to drive integrity and transparency reform in this state, and I thank them.

I welcome the government's release in November last year of the discussion paper, 'Enhancing Accountability and Transparency: A Review of Ministerial Diary Disclosure Practices'. Putting a discussion paper out for public submission is a positive step. It opens the question up for us for more scrutiny and it acknowledges what should be obvious: that Tasmanians have a right to know who is in the room with the ministers making decisions on their behalf. However, the government's proposed approach in that paper has serious shortcomings. The Centre for Public Integrity has set them out clearly in its submission:

- The proposal does not put the regime on a statutory footing;
- It does not make disclosure enforceable;
- It does not lift the quality of information that must be disclosed;
- It applies only to ministers, leaving large parts of executive decision-making outside of the framework; and
- It has not been integrated with the other integrity reforms it depends on: lobbying code reform and the implementation of the Right to Information review recommendations.

While I welcome the government's engagement on this issue, the test is what comes next. I want to put on the record why this matters to me and why my constituents in Clark particularly care about it. One of the essential elements of rebuilding trust in government and institutions is greater transparency, and transparency works in two ways. The first is preventative: decision-makers behave better when they know their meetings, their access, and their influences will be on the public record. The second is accountability: when leaders fall short of the standard of integrity Tasmanians expect, the public can see it and they can act on it, as can integrity bodies. There's a long list of steps Tasmania needs to take to address undue influence and produce better decisions for Tasmanians. Ending the subsidies and grants that flow to well-connected mates and favoured industries is high on that list, but more transparent and more detailed records of who is meeting with the people who we elect to govern in our interest - that is foundational. You cannot fix undue influence if you cannot see it.

I support this motion and the specific calls it makes on the government and I urge the government, in its response to the review, to be ambitious rather than minimal. Put diary disclosure on a statutory footing, make it more frequent and enforceable, lift the quality of what is disclosed, extend the coverage beyond ministers, and bring it together with lobbying reform and RTI reform, because these things only work as a package.

I commend the motion to the House.

[12.14 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak to the motion moved by the honourable member for Braddon, Mr Garland. I thank him for bringing this forward and also acknowledge and thank him for the amendment that's been moved successfully with our support. I know others have as well. Thank you very much for doing that. Thank you for bringing these views and thoughts to the parliament, and to indicate, as a government, we will be supporting the motion, and to confirm our support for openness and transparency and reinforcing integrity and public confidence in public institutions. Democracy is a beautiful thing, but it's even more beautiful when it's proactive, when there's openness, there's transparency. That's what we want in a modern-day democracy. There's always an opportunity to improve, and continuous improvement is important. I think the themes and principles that have been shared by the honourable member through the motion are supported by the government, and that's in part of the government's ongoing plans to improve.

The honourable member for Clark, Ms Johnston, made reference to the RTI and made reference to the discussion paper released last December with respect to ministers' diaries. Now, in both instances, this is an effort, it's a proactive approach for and on behalf of the Rockliff Liberal Government to be proactive, to be upfront. The RTI Uplift Project took a long period of time and taxpayers' money and resources from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to deliver improved Right to Information outcomes. With respect to the Department of Premier and Cabinet in terms of the ministerial diaries discussion paper, it's been very valuable. We've received quite a bit of feedback on that, and I'll have more to say about that shortly.

In terms of the importance of strengthening transparency, accountability, and our integrity regime, we want to build public confidence in our institutions. Our executive and our parliament are two of our key institutions, together with the judiciary, and I often talk as an Attorney-General about the separation of powers and the importance of such. Those objectives are not owned by government. They're not owned by anyone in particular. They're owned by all of us, including everyone in this parliament. I appreciate the mover of the motion's intent

behind this motion, and that's why we will be supporting it. I want to make it clear - these responsibilities are on us all. We share the responsibilities as members of parliament to build up confidence in our institutions so that the public can be confident that we're operating with integrity, with respect, with openness and transparency. That trust in our institutions is hard won, and it's also easily lost. That transparency is a central pillar in maintaining that trust.

I will address those two key areas set out in the motion, firstly with respect to ministerial diaries and the second relating to the disclosure of gifts and benefits and hospitality received by ministers in the course of their official duty. On the first, as has been noted in debate already, there's been a discussion paper out, released in December last year for consultation. That process has been undertaken by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and all the feedback I have, and I'm advised it was very thorough, and genuine. The feedback is absolutely appreciated, and the government will be responding to that in the not-too-distant future.

In terms of ministerial diaries, it is appropriate, of course, for that visibility, appropriate visibility of ministerial engagements. That's something the government supports and transparency in this area contributes to accountability. It strengthens confidence in our institutions and, in this case, the executive and the role of ministers and how members of the public can better understand the role of ministers. That's all a healthy thing. It's an education and awareness on how ministers operate, and having those revealed through the appropriate process is definitely a good idea.

The submissions, I'm advised, have been thoughtful, detailed, and constructive. Many of them have raised questions about practical things, not just about whether disclosure's important, but how that disclosure is undertaken. They address matters such as useability, accessibility, timeliness and the administrative burden associated with different models. These are not trivial considerations, they need to be taken seriously and we are taking those things seriously. If disclosure frameworks are to be effective, they must be workable. They must strike a balance between transparency on the one hand and practicality on the other. They must deliver meaningful information to the public rather than simply generating volumes of data that are difficult to interpret or use.

As I've said and confirmed to the House, the government has carefully considered these submissions and that work's not been sitting idle. It's been active, deliberate and focused and as a result the government will shortly release its response. It has been directly informed by that consultation process and that feedback, and we'll be addressing those issues shortly. It will improve accessibility in terms of that response, ensuring that information is easier for the public to obtain and understand. That's why we do support that motion.

In turning to the second limb of the motion, as I've indicated in terms of gifts, benefits and hospitality disclosure: it's important again to consider that carefully and in context. There's been some suggestion, both within the motion and in the broader public discussion, that Tasmania is lagging behind other jurisdictions in this regard. It's important to approach such comparisons with caution. In fact, Tasmania is in a comparatively strong position. The current framework provides clear requirements for ministers to disclose gifts, benefits and hospitality received in the course of their official duties. It is structured, it's understood, it provides a basis for accountability and I believe the point that the Premier made in Question Time, importance of full disclosure, that point is absolutely well-made.

Acknowledging that strength does not mean standing still. As with all aspects of governments, there's always room for reflection and refinement and, as I said in my earlier remarks, continuous improvement. Indeed, community expectations and standards don't remain the same. They change over time. We've certainly learnt that in this place in recent 24 hours with the apology vis-a-vis Rodda and the Rodda Museum.

Let's note that in terms of the democracy and how it works, the government accepts the motion, the spirit of the motion, and it accepts the importance of continuing to examine how disclosure frameworks operate, including in relation to gifts and hospitality. The goal should not be to change for its sake, but the goal should be for improvement, targeted, thoughtful and proportionate improvement. It's a mature point.

In summary: first, transparency and integrity are fundamental to good government. They underpin public trust and they support confidence in decision-making.

Second, the government has not only recognised these principles, it has acted on them. We've acted on them. Consultation has been undertaken, submissions have been considered and reforms are well advanced, with more to say in the near future.

Thirdly and finally, supporting the motion is consistent with all of that work. It acknowledges the importance of the issues it raises. It aligns with the government's ongoing commitment to strengthen disclosure frameworks in a practical and meaningful way. We've got runs on the board as the government, as I said in my opening remarks; we will absolutely continue our efforts and ensure that democracy progresses in a proactive way with full support for openness and transparency as appropriate. I thank again the honourable member for bringing forward this motion and we look forward to supporting the motion.

[12.24 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I am glad to be able to make a contribution on behalf of the opposition to Mr Garland's motion to indicate that the Labor Party will support the motion, support your amendment as well, and I'm pleased to be able to put some thoughts on the record about this.

I believe it's important to note that those of us who are in these 35 seats now and our colleagues in the upper House, we all have the privilege and the honour of serving in Tasmania's parliament right now, at this point in time. We have a small window in our lives where we can contribute to the job that we have of representing our communities but also in representing the public institutions that make up the fabric of Tasmania's administration. We are doing this job at a time when public trust in politics and in the institutions of government is at an all time low and that's not unique to our state. That's being felt around the nation and indeed around the whole world. Trust in politicians, trust in politics, is at an all time low.

There's no one individual who's responsible or at fault for that. It's something that has been allowed to brew over decades, and it's incumbent on all of us as individuals to do what we can, not only to ensure that the systems that administer our state are robust, but that we do those things, that we as individuals are honest and transparent. But also, that we have the systems in place that ensure that government, the executive and the parliament is open, transparent and honest about the work that we do and how we do it, because we are all tarred with the same brush, whether we like it or not.

When people have a low opinion of one of us, they generally have a low opinion of all of us. Political parties, independents, government, opposition. As I've said in this place before, I think it's an honour and a privilege to do this job, but part of what comes with this job now is a responsibility on all of us to make sure that we do have robust systems in place to restore faith and trust in public administration for Tasmanians, for Australians, that's on all of us to do that. This motion goes to exactly that, and it's for those reasons that the Labor Party is very pleased to be able to support Mr Garland's motion.

Systems don't just need to be available to be seen to be transparent, they need to actually be meaningful. Transparency and accountability are fundamental pillars of a healthy democracy. As the Attorney-General said, expectations change over time. The systems and current arrangements that we have in place right now for the declaration of ministerial meetings and of gifts and hospitality do fall short of community expectations and it is important that - as we do with legislation - we make sure that the systems in place remain contemporary and remain meaningful to Tasmanians.

We do need to make sure that things like a register around ministerial diary disclosures are frequent, meaningful, and that the information contained in those declarations actually means something. I do agree with what the member for Braddon, Mr Garland, said about there being nothing in and of itself wrong with ministers meeting with people and people having the opportunity to put their views to ministers of the Crown, and to every member of parliament. Sometimes, I think there is an assumption in the community that if somebody has met with somebody that they're somehow being influenced unduly by that meeting and that person, and that's often not the case. Indeed, in my own portfolio areas and in my community, I try to meet with people on all sides of each debate so that I can hear people's views, and I think most people in this place do that.

All the more reason for those systems in place to disclose ministerial diaries to be meaningful, to have sufficient detail that actually gives the public information about the meetings that have been held. Also, to a certain extent, to protect the people who are making those disclosures - those ministers or other MPs, so that they can do their part in trying to restore public trust in politics, in parliamentary systems, and in the systems of government that govern us in Tasmania - by being very upfront and showing details of who they've met with and indeed, the second part of the motion, goes to gifts and hospitality.

I noted that my colleague, the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, quite rightly commended our colleague, the member for Nelson in the upper House, for pursuing these issues. But I do have a little disagreement with the implication that it's only independents in parliament who have been pursuing issues of integrity, because that's not the case. In actual fact, the Labor Party and for that matter the Greens, have been talking about issues of trust and integrity for a very long time. I believe that the electoral law reform that we saw presented by the former attorney-general Elise Archer wouldn't have gone anywhere near as far as it did had it not been for the Labor Party relentlessly pursuing that issue for many years with our own private members' bills and so on in the lead-up to that.

Indeed, after the last state election, during those weeks of negotiation, some of the things that the Labor Party put forward, as the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, quite rightly said, diary disclosures and gift disclosures need to not happen in a vacuum. It needs to be part of a system of integrity, and I completely agree with that. For that reason, I think it's worth

reminding ourselves of the things that the Labor Party had on the table after the election and during the election campaign, in fact, but during our negotiations with crossbench members. They included things like:

- further electoral law reform, including expenditure caps and truth in political advertising laws;
- further integrity oversight reform;
- reforming the Integrity Commission, recognising that it doesn't have the jurisdiction or the funding to do what Tasmanians expect of it;
- further RTI reform, implementing the recommendations of Professors McCormack and Snell;
- restoring trust and management in Tasmania's marine estate with an independent marine statutory authority, as well as further funding of other oversight bodies like the EPA and other regulatory bodies that exist already in Tasmania;
- assessing the role of the Ombudsman and the statutory office positions that are held by one person, with a view to strengthening those oversight bodies and also developing other independent statutory officer positions where those roles need to be separated out; and
- importantly, restoring the role of the Public Service Commissioner to stop the politicisation that has been experienced in the public service over the last 13 years of Liberal government.

That is evident across a range of areas, but nowhere more clearly is that politicisation of the public service evident than in the approach to RTI disclosures that we've seen really muddied over the 12-13 years of this government being in power. We've seen an increase in refusals of requests and increase in appeals for the Ombudsman, the vast majority of which are overturned, meaning the government was incorrect in the exceptions that they relied on to not release information in the initial decision. I saw that in my time in the public sector, in the first four years of the Hodgman Government. I saw the fundamental culture of the public sector start to change under the administration of the Hodgman Government, especially when it came to releasing information under RTI, and a real disregard for the spirit of the *Right To Information Act 2009*, which is to proactively disclose as much information as possible. Indeed, that's what led to many commentators in the public sphere reflecting on Tasmania as 'the secret state', the state that hides the most information. So it's a good thing that the government has put out this discussion paper.

I agree with the member for Braddon's request in this motion that the government release their responses to those public consultation papers. I think there were about 12 or 13 different organisations and people who submitted to that consultation process, and nobody was against the idea of further robust disclosure practices. The Centre for Public Integrity in particular, as well as TasCOSS and Equality Tasmania, made some really robust recommendations around what they would like to see in an improved system of disclosure. Many individuals, including MPs, made similar submissions to that process.

I finally reflect on the gift disclosure parts of this motion. I spent a little time last night, after this motion was tabled, looking at our parliamentary annual returns. That also has

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

a requirement to disclose gifts, and I scrolled through all of us, every single one of us in this place, and looked at everybody's returns. I noticed there was a bit of a disparity in who's declared gifts. The threshold is \$500. Some people had disclosed things like Qantas Club and Virgin Club memberships, which cost about that or a little more, but many others hadn't. It's important that we keep those up to date as well.

[12.34 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Mr Garland, member for Braddon, for bringing this matter on. It's an important issue that the Greens are deeply passionate about. I thank the other members for their comments and reflections on the way many of us in this place have been speaking on these issues. For myself as the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens in a long and proud history of holding a candle of truth to the activities of this government, or probably more accurately, attempting to put a blowtorch to successive Labor and Liberal governments and calling out the - let's name it for what it is, I think people are dancing around this - the soft corruption which happens in Tasmania. The corruption of processes, of decision making, of consultation processes, and of what should be properly independent processes undertaken at arm's length by independent planning bodies instead brought into the fold time and again when the government of the day and the big industry mates and the corporations they represent when they're not getting their way.

Then what we see is the governments of the day, Labor governments, Liberal governments we've had in place for the last 11 years, changing processes and bringing in special enabling legislation to get the outcomes they want. Outcomes they haven't been able to achieve because community pressure has stood against them and their own independence of the integrity bodies - the Planning Scheme, the Environment Protection Authority - all the other agencies, authorities and statutory bodies which, over years, the people of Tasmania have put in place to try and have checks and balances on the intimate connections in this small island. We are utterly rife for corruption in this place without those processes. These are the processes which have been eroded over time.

I want to run through a couple of examples of what we've seen in just recent times in Tasmania. I could go back into the early days of the Hydro-Electric Commission. I could go back into the whole sorry, disgraceful, shameful history of gambling legislation in Tasmania. Just looking at the recent past, we've seen Labor governments - under Paul Lennon as Premier - ram through special legislation to override the will of Tasmanians who utterly rejected the stinking, polluting pulp mill that was proposed for the north of the state. Against the will of the people, and against and overriding the Planning Commission, they brought in that enabling legislation and passed a pulp mill which Tasmanians did everything they could to stand against. That was successfully overthrown - not because of the politicians, the Liberal and Labor politicians of the day, but because of the people of Tasmania, who were utterly disgusted at what those politicians had done in their name.

We've seen a continued attack on wild Kunanyi from successive Liberal ministers, starting under Matthew Groom with his mate Adrian Bol, who was going in and campaigning for a cable car on Kunanyi. Then we had the Premier, even after TASCAT knocked off the third or fifth attempt for a cable car up to the top of Kunanyi when the whole of Tasmania roundly rejected that. The Aboriginal community rejected that. The people of Hobart rejected that. Nonetheless, the Premier went back in to encourage the Mount Wellington Cableway Company to have another go. Keep at it. Ignore the Planning Commission, ignore TASCAT,

ignore the Hobart City Council, ignore the Aboriginal community. The Liberals did bring in enabling legislation, against the will of the community, for a cable car up Kunanyi, and shame on them. The people will not stop fighting that.

We've seen recently with Stony Rise and Tipalea Partners in Devonport. What we found out - not thanks to Liberal ministers and members being honest - we uncovered the fact that there were donations made to individual Liberal candidates. What did it buy? What it bought was a direct intervention, by way of legislation, so that company could get what they wanted, despite it being against the planning scheme's recommendation. We've seen it again with minister Ellis and before him Planning Minister, Michael Ferguson. Going around the Clarence City Council and the whole of the Clarence community's rejection of Shandong Chambroad Petrochemicals, a foreign company which has done nothing on the Eastern Shore for over 12 years, but still wants to have a hold of that precious bit of land in Kangaroo Bay, in Bellerive. We've seen those two ministers sweep that company into a space where they've supported them to have a major project. It makes a absolute mockery of the planning scheme to imagine that it is a major project to have a hotel in Clarence when it is utterly rejected by the community and there is a legal process in place to buy the land back from the council.

At every step what we see is ministers doing the bidding of big corporations, doing the bidding of private interests, of mates. Let's not forget Daniel Hackett and his attempts, still trying to have and own that beautiful wild place, Lake Malbena, Halls Island. He does at the moment own it and it is a disgrace. The people of Tasmania who care about wild Tasmania and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) will continue to make sure that Daniel Hackett does not further abuse that land.

The whole expressions-of-interest process was about doing deals with mates behind closed doors, and it's exactly what Mr Garland is pointing to here, behind those pieces of enabling legislation, behind those interventions that ministers have made, money that has been spent, there have been meetings, and these meetings have been in secret. Tasmanians should know how many times Matthew Groom was meeting on the public purse with Adrian Bold from the Mount Wellington Cable Car. How many times the Minister for Parks was meeting with Daniel Hackett behind closed doors and all the other people who want a piece of wild Tasmania. We should know how many times they're meeting with developers, who want to cut and dice Tasmania's Crown land; who want to have a bit of what the Liberals would like to flog off to pay for their huge debt that we've got in the budget, to pay for a stadium that we don't want and don't need.

Let's not forget that bit of enabling legislation. A special deal for the AFL. A special deal for how many members of the Liberal and Labor Party have got a signed up stand that they'll be able to waltz into if that stadium is ever open, drink champagne, be there, watch the game? These are the sort of gifts and benefits we should know about. They should be open to the community. We should understand how many meetings people have had, who have put their name, their vote behind a stadium that's going to cost us billions of dollars. We should know which meetings they've had with which companies.

Let's not forget, we are only here because the people of Tasmania have voted for us. They vote for us to represent them and they expect to understand who we're speaking to in the work that we do. It is right and proper that the government should make the disclosure of ministers' diaries more frequent. It should be enforced, it should be reported in full, and it should be mandatory for all the meetings that they have. There can't be exceptions to that. Why wouldn't

we want to know, and why shouldn't we have a right to know who minister Ellis met in Canberra when he was talking about our Tasmanian forests? Our forests which this government would like to sign new contracts for to 2040 to continue native forest logging. These are matters of public interest. People have a right to know. There's been 11 years of the Liberals cutting money from integrity bodies and refusing to be transparent. They've talked a lot and they need to actually do the work.

**The SPEAKER** - Before I call the honourable member for Bass, I draw your attention to Standing Order 144, offensive words against a member. I was a little concerned during her speech about some of the motivations attributed to certain members. I draw your attention that:

A member shall not attribute directly or by innuendo to another member unbecoming conduct or motives.

I'll ask you to reflect on that for the future reference.

[12.45 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I was unaware, of course, that you would make that observation, and I appreciate you having done so and I respect your intervention. This is what bothers me about debates of this nature, that if I didn't happen to have my smartphone on my desk, and I didn't have the exact right keywords to search my own record, I wouldn't have been able to so quickly rise to defend, at least in my own case, an improper motive that's been brought up by the Leader of the Greens just now in relation to Kangaroo Bay.

It's disappointing because as colleagues in this place, we ought to be able to have debates on policy and procedure without putting another colleague in the position in the hot seat of having to either be embarrassed or defend themselves when you may not actually have the clarity of the historical record handy, as I just happened to have.

I support the motion moved by the honourable member for Braddon, Mr Garland, and I thank him for it. We so often look at the notice paper, and we find motions that really are designed to make Wednesday as uncomfortable for another member or party as possible, and I've been guilty of that. We all have been. There are no clean hands on that. We're here to make a difference and no doubt advance our independent members or party positions going forward, and then it's tested on the numbers on the floor of the House, totally proper.

In the case of this motion, I read it looking for some hooks and I couldn't find any, except for the areas that Mr Garland, the honourable Member for Braddon, has already removed through his amendment. The gentleman is acting very honourably; I will say that in putting this motion forward and calling on the government to do a range of things which the Attorney-General has already responded to and our government members on this side of the House are supportive of the amended motion.

But then I have to sit here and wait my turn to speak and listen to that negative, soft corruption language from the Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff. I just think, if you ever wonder why politicians have a bad reputation, it's because of contributions like that one and others where 'I'm holier than thou, but the rest of you are corrupt' style of speaking. It advances none of us and it advances our profession not a jot.

As it happens, and I wouldn't want my contribution to be taken up with the Kangaroo Bay matter, but given that it was specifically raised, I speak only of myself in relation to Chambroad and the Kangaroo Bay proposal. The government that I'm part of and was a minister of for a decade proudly stood behind that project year on year.

My ministerial role in relation to Kangaroo Bay was when they applied for major project status as Minister for Planning on 29 September 2023, I did not grant major project status, I declined its application.

**Dr Woodruff** - You also refused to give access to your diary and provide information about who you spoke to.

**Mr FERGUSON** - But you didn't say that, Dr Woodruff, now you're changing the subject. I declined. I refused as minister the major project application. Does that make me innocent? No. I don't care for your opinion to decide whether or not I'm innocent. If I'd have approved it, I would have done so on justifiable grounds. As it happens, I did not. In my role as a statutory observer of the law, in my role at that time, based on the information presented to me and the advice I was provided by my then department, I did not grant the major project status. It was refused.

Regardless of what my diary disclosure may or may not have satisfied with Dr Woodruff, it was refused. Why is it that ministers or non-ministers, government or opposition, have to suffer these kinds of puerile debates that advance the Tasmanian public not at all? I've expressed that disappointment right up front. I've been a member of this House for longer than nearly everyone here, and I can remember a time where as a member of the opposition, the Liberal opposition, I sat over there just in front of where Mr Garland is, and we had a Labor-Greens government. A lot has changed since those days, and it's an absolute case of continuous improvement. I don't want to use my remaining minutes talking about how bad the Labor-Greens government was in terms of transparency and disclosure. Let me just summarise it - they were garbage, they were terrible. There are still questions on the notice paper that have never been answered from 2010 to 2014. That's a fact. We've seen continuous improvement because as human beings, it doesn't depend on what party you're in as to how you can improve or recognise failures. We're all human and no doubt disclosure can at times be uncomfortable. It's been continuously improved, as the Attorney-General has outlined.

Regarding ministerial diaries, I don't think we disclosed them when I was in opposition and if we did, they were pretty minimalistic. I don't recall seeing ministerial donors, and if we did, there wasn't much information shared. Gifts and benefits have always been disclosed while I've been a member of this House, so I don't see that that's been a big smoking gun. I want to see gifts disclosed because if I was a recipient of, for example, a Qantas Club membership - complimentary use of their hospitality areas for people who are very often in airports and expected to be taking meetings while in transit - it's reasonable that if that same member of government or opposition were involved in supporting or opposing a decision by Qantas, that the gift be on the record. If any member wants to make a claim that a benefit of that value is going to be something they put their whole career on, you obviously don't understand politicians very well.

I'm glad that we live in a country where accountability and transparency is so highly valued. We've seen around the world in other jurisdictions where it isn't and people get away with, dare I say, murder. I'm being rhetorical, but people get away with murder, politically, for

the poor decisions they make which are not in their public's interest and they don't have the institutional integrity that our Australian jurisdictions have, given to us from the Westminster tradition, which I treasure. It then means that our biggest squabbles are usually down to matters of detail - 'Did you mean this or did you mean that when you said these words?'. The squabbles are down to a level of detail rather than just a rudimentary declaration that somebody is corrupt, or perfect, or innocent.

I appreciate the member for Braddon's contribution through this motion and I want to see - no doubt like others - a continued increase in integrity and fine-tuning these processes, because my party won't always be in government and the Labor Party may not always be in opposition. Don't we want a strong democracy? Don't we want a strong parliamentary system? You may wish to disagree with the government on a decision, but at least know that it's been taken on good information and with proper motive. That's what these measures progressively being improved over time are already providing.

I'll just take one final issue with the Leader of the Greens' contribution. I wrote it down at the time, so I quote Dr Woodruff where she said that 'processes have eroded over time'. I don't believe that statement can be supported by evidence. When a parliament, which is the people's House, overrides a decision or recommendation of another entity, you can't by that simple rhetorical claim say that that is soft corruption or improper. It is ultimately the test.

The Planning Commission, or any other commission, only has its head of power because it's been delegated by this House in the first place through a law that was made by the state. If a government or opposition wanted to upend, change or differentiate itself, those commissions usually say, 'That wouldn't be a matter for us, that would be a matter for the parliament'. The reason I say that confidently is because we're elected here by the people of Tasmania to make decisions, hopefully make wise decisions, and then be ultimately accountable for those decisions at the following subsequent election, where the people will, as they always do, have their say. and as they always do, get it right. I thank Mr Garland for his motion and contribution on strengthening governance in our state.

[12.55 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, When I first came into this place, it was pointed out to me by my advisor that this is very important work in here; we essentially make laws. When you put it in that context, you really have to be removed from any influence, just like the judges. I was talking to the Chief Justice the other night and was thinking, 'Would he take tickets to a basketball match or a football match?' They uphold the law. We make the law, and what I started to think, 'Which one is more important? The fellow who upholds the law or this parliament that makes laws?'

I guess the intent of this motion today is that basically, in life, if you're beholden, you're stuffed. You should not put yourself in a position where you're beholden. Always be square, leave nothing unpaid, so there's no debt. In this space, I noticed on the register of gifts and donations that it was all to ministers. There was nothing to backbenchers or crossbenchers. Really, if we're going to be on the money, it should be all for one and one for all. We should all be treated the same, and it just puts you in a terrible position.

I'll take the JackJumpers as an example. What an amazing job Scott Roth has done. He was given \$95,000 as an ambassador. That would have been all well and good and would have been justified on what he's done for this state and what he's going to do with that

ambassadorship, but then you look at the register and there were tickets given out to ministers, so in the public's eye, the perception - even if it wasn't untoward, even if it was justified - is that they've given that to the minister and then the minister's made this decision.

I understand it's a very responsible job being a minister and to be honest with you, I don't think I could handle it, but it puts them in a difficult position, I believe. They do an amazing job, and sure, a little benefit here and there doesn't go astray because of the amount of time and effort and stress that comes with that job, but at the end of the day, the public don't see that. All they see is tickets to a minister and then a \$95,000 ambassadorship.

In a perfect world. if they were going to donate tickets, they should do it for the whole parliament, not just the ministers, because it puts them in a position where I don't think they should be.

I'd like to thank everyone for their contributions today. We've got a bit of a track record in this state regarding perceived corruption and changing laws to suit developers while the community is left at a distance, while Aboriginal cultural values don't factor in. I commend everyone today, and thank you for the support for this motion. When it was pointed out to me that we are lawmakers, it was a lightning bolt moment for me. It made me realise just how relevant and how important our roles are in this parliament and if we can maintain the integrity of what a chief justice and the judiciary do, I think that would be great for everyone in this state. I'm trying to keep going until 1 o'clock but I don't think I can, so thank you.

**Time expired.**

**Motion agreed to.**

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

**MOTION**

**Firmus - AI Data Centres**

[2.30.44 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, this is a very important motion.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Is a vote required today?

**Ms BADGER** - Yes, it is absolutely required today. The motion reads:

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges the significant public interest in new AI and data facilities, the concerns over high levels of energy and water consumption, and that the speed of new facility development is outpacing regulatory and other capacity to adequately plan for it.
- (2) Notes:

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

- (a) the Premier announced support for Firmus Technologies' Project Southgate AI factory, declaring the 'world's first AI factory zone', on 1 July 2025, during caretaker mode, with no details of public commitments and process; and
  - (b) endorsement from the Tasmanian Government was central to Firmus' capital raising ahead of an expected ASX listing.
- (3) Highlights that Project Southgate plans to deliver 1.6 GW of capacity by 2028, noting Australia's entire current capacity is about 1.2 GW.
- (4) Shows concern that Firmus has been asked to remove the UN logo from its website having breached the protocols of its use.
- (5) Calls for transparency regarding any donations to the Liberal Party from Firmus or associated entities.
- (6) Orders the Government to table the following by 27 May 2026:
- (a) details of all Government commitments (funding and resources) made to Firmus to date;
  - (b) commitments made to projected expansions to 300Mw in St Leonards and other sites in Tasmania;
  - (c) any advice provided to the Government relating to endorsing Firmus' project;
  - (d) all details of the Premier's media appearances and meetings with Firmus; and
  - (e) water use annually at the St Leonards' site since 2020, expected usage under the first stage of expansion, and water consumption agreement details.

This is a motion about transparency on an issue that is significant not only for our state, but it has garnered national and indeed international interest.

Members in this place would remember that the Greens asked questions of the Premier about Firmus and AI data centres way back in March, and what exactly had been committed to Firmus. Now, we didn't get an answer; we got attacked. That comes after we also asked questions in Estimates in November last year of ministers from planning through to technology. We didn't get responses to our questions for those either.

We've put in RTIs, I know other members have as well. It is incredibly difficult to get information about what is happening here. That is incredibly significant and that is why we are putting forward this motion today, because Tasmanians deserve full transparency and evidence for the financial, the energy and efficiency claims behind this proposal that the government is backing.

Journalists across this country and MPs right across this Chamber are questioning what exactly is the Tasmanian Government's role in backing Firmus, and that has been especially heightened since an investor pitch for their global roadshow was leaked, that showed that the Tasmanian government's endorsement, and any potential promises that were made to the company, were central to garnering private investment for an ASX listing.

Any endorsement by a state government to a private company without transparency deserves scrutiny in this place, but that is particularly true when it is garnering billions of dollars of private investment for a public listing. The Tasmanian community, they have buy-in to this, it is their resources, it is their communities and they need and deserve answers.

This is all happening at a time, as the motion acknowledges, that data and AI facility expansion - not just in Australia but right around the world - is outpacing regulators' ability to assess the long-term impacts and create appropriate guardrails to protect communities, to ensure there are benefits to the communities, and to protect the local environment as well. That is why right around the world we are seeing states put up moratoriums on data centre expansion so that they can fully assess the impacts and ensure that they make the best of this and get benefits, not risks.

So let's be really clear, Firmus Technologies may well be a very genuine and incredibly transformative opportunity for our state. The AI infrastructure market is real, and the underlying technology of liquid immersion cooling has demonstrated value, and the company has attracted investors of genuine sophistication and substance. These things are all true. Scrutiny is not opposition to AI. It is the minimum that Tasmanians are entitled to and expect from their elected representatives.

Firmus, for members who might not be aware, is a private Singaporean-based company. It was co-founded in 2019 by Oliver Curtis, his cousin, Tim Rosenfeld, and his former brother-in-law, Jonathan Levy. Nicholas Curtis is Oliver's father, a mining and banking executive - people might find that name familiar. We know, and as has been widely reported, that Oliver Curtis has previously been charged and convicted with insider trading. I am acknowledging this, but I will leave that for the ASX as good fame test.

**A member** - Well, why bring it up then?

**Mr Jaensch** - Exactly, just roll it out there.

**Ms BADGER** - Firmus began as a Bitcoin mining operation in St. Leonards before pivoting to AI. The original centre -

**Mr Jaensch** - Under privilege. Shameful.

**Ms BADGER** - It's not privilege, it's public information and it's important.

**Dr Woodruff** - It's public knowledge. It's in the Australian Financial Review every day.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. Order

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr Jaensch** - You're protected by privilege.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. Member for Braddon, please.

**Mr Mitchell** - Give it a rest, Roger.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms BADGER** - The original centre was around 20 Megawatts, and, as we know, a deal was struck with Aurora for 104 Megawatts. In the future, there are plans for a 300 Megawatt expansion. Firmus own other sites in the state as well, not just at St Leonards. The question remains about exactly where these sites are. Will they be used to house more data centres or renewable energy or maybe both? What is the long-term plan?

To the 1 July announcement from Premier Rockliff, the endorsement of the project was made without detailing the specifics of any public commitments, fiscal, procedural, but certainly there was reputable endorsement. Despite asking for the details, we still don't know what support was given. We do know that there was media at the time, or perhaps there was a meeting with Firmus beforehand to set up what those details were. It's deeply concerning that when we look at the Premier's diary, they are omitted from it, which is why the motion is also calling for that to be updated.

We also don't know what an AI factory zone exactly is. As far as we're aware, there are no regulatory or legislative powers, so it just appears to be a marketing slogan. On 1 July, *Pulse* reported on the announcement.

While specific taxpayer commitments are still unclear, it is understood the Liberals would ensure the company has what it needs to grow the development.

It quoted Premier Rockliff:

This is about turning Tasmania's clean energy into opportunity.

On energy and opportunity: how does Firmus' energy access priority compare to that of legacy Tasmanian industries that were previously denied or struggled to get capacity? We all know that Boyer was trying to get around 50 megawatts to transition their coal boiler. That is an intergenerational employer of many hundreds of Tasmanians at any one time. Firmus has pledged 50 to 100 staff per 50 megawatts of capacity. I note that this is a figure doubted by AI expert Toby Walsh, who questions why a modern automated facility would require such labour. I wonder if the government has negotiated binding local job-creation and training commitments as now expected by the federal government. The Tasmanian 104 megawatt deal with Aurora lasts just three years, which is not long term certainty. So what happens after that and on what terms will the energy deal be renewed? I'll speak to that in a minute, but the Aurora Energy deal was being used to pitch the Firmus IPO.

What we still don't understand about this deal is also whether there are any community benefit obligations that have been accepted by Firmus or even asked of them, and on the basis of which Firmus was prioritised for energy and the conditions under which the agreement can

be terminated or renegotiated if, for example, construction of that centre isn't processed on time.

I note there is of great interest and RTI up on the Treasury website that is not my RTI, so I'm going to exercise every bit of self restraint I have not to mention it and leave it. I believe it's Labor's. I hope they will be speaking to it later. But that is an incredibly interesting read in regard to the business case that should have been needed to progress with the power deal.

Onto the technology. For some technology that might work in a 20-megawatt centre or a similar size facility such as that currently being operated by Firmus, it's not guaranteed that it could be scalable to the extent of 100 megawatts, and certainly 300 megawatts is an enormous leap. Firmus had boasted a power usage efficiency rating of 1.03. However, Firmus has since stated that that figure was a point of measurement from 2021 and had never been independently verified. For comparison, Google and Microsoft sit around 1.2, while Australian facilities typically operate between 1.4 and 1.7. This is important, because if Firmus cannot meet their power efficiency estimations, that means that more will be consumed from the centre. I wonder if the government received any independent technical advice on the efficiency claims and what are the terms of any agreement if the efficiency claims are not achieved? Verification of these claims is incredibly important and that's why we're seeking clarification and transparency, because the Tasmanian government has backed this project and it is Tasmanians and their resources that will suffer if these conditions are not built into it.

I want to briefly touch on the ASX listing and the finances, because the Tasmanian government has enthusiastically jumped on board. The leaked funding, as I stated earlier, shows that our state support, whatever it is, and the Aurora power deal, became central to Firmus' global investor roadshow, attempting to secure billions of dollars of private investment as they had initially intended for an IPO in July. I note that that global roadshow began days after Firmus announced their own deal with Aurora on ABC Radio Hobart. Project Southgate is a \$73 billion capex program. For context, that's roughly seven times BHP's annual capex, and they are the largest mining company in the world. It would be unprecedented in Australian corporate history, especially for a seven-year-old company with few employees, to execute that in about 36 months. That is not to say it is impossible, but it is extraordinary.

Roger Montgomery asked whether Firmus simply pivoted to AI, rearranging their Tasmanian bitcoin mining operation and bolted-on vendor financing to create instant on-paper billions. That question matters, because Tasmanians are entitled to know whether public assets are being used to underpin a pitch professional fund managers find unconvincing. Has the government seen Firmus' investor roadshow and have they received financial advice on the state's fiscal material or reputable commitment?

There are also concerns around the absence of escrow protections for early investors, risking retail exposure if early backers sell into the listing. I note that the ASX tilt has now been pushed out until September. That timeline is why it's important that we pass this motion today, because this will likely be the last opportunity this place gets to extract any information we can, particularly before the winter break and before Firmus possibly publicly lists. It will enable all members to fairly go into budget Estimates and ask appropriate further questions.

I also want to note recently, of international significance just this week, that Firmus was asked by the UN to remove their emblem from its website. The emblem was published on every page and it was there during the global investment roadshow. The UN emblem is one of the

most tightly protected symbols in the world. Companies are strictly prohibited from using it in any way that implies endorsement, partnership or official status. This is not about whether Firmus intended to mislead. Indeed, it is our understanding that under Australian law, intent is irrelevant. What matters is the impression it created.

The UN emblem incident adds another layer of concern and is the catalyst for deeper scrutiny and why it isn't mentioned within this document. People are sceptical of what this deal might be and things such as the misuse of the UN emblem when it is clearly known what the appropriate use of it is shows an extraordinary lack of very basic due diligence that can land people and governments in an extraordinary amount of trouble.

I want to thank members who had input to the motion. In paragraph (6) where it calls for transparency around whether any Liberal members had received donations from Firmus or another entity, there's a question coming from the community about whether any Liberal members had been promised shares in Firmus into the future. I will note, for the sake of the House, that the motion calls for transparency on these things. We cannot order that information from a political party, of course, but it's a very important question to be asking and reflects back on the need for that transparency that Mr Garland, the member for Braddon's motion, was talking about earlier as well.

None of what I've outlined just then means that Firmus will fail or that the concerns that we've raised can't be addressed. I'm simply highlighting the scale of what the state government has put the weight of our state and our reputation behind in backing Project Southgate here. I put these details on the record because it clearly demonstrates the need for transparency from the Liberals for Tasmanians and the need for great due diligence when backing a project of this size.

What the motion is calling for is really quite a basic level of transparency and/or clarification on the public commitments that have been made, be it funding or resources to Firmus to date, or indeed, the commitments of 300 megawatts moving forward. The Premier himself made note in the 1 July press conference that that expansion was going to happen. We wonder what work is underway for that expansion at St Leonards and indeed on any other sites Firmus has ownership to or use thereof, the advice that was received by the government in relation to endorsing the Firmus project fiscally and on the technical claims that have been made as well, and the details of the Premier's media and meetings with Firmus.

As I outlined, it's disappointing that they're not in the Premier's publicly available diary, unless of course the media didn't happen and it was AI generated. I don't know, but it's worth also checking other details of the Premier's diary and making sure that's up to date because it's incredibly important.

The final point talks about water usage at the St Leonards site. Other members may have had more luck than me, but I have asked ministers for this information, we've gone through the water bodies in GBE hearings, we've tried to put in RTIs, but we are told there isn't an open account under Firmus. There is water being used at the site currently. As I said, with the scalable nature of something such as hypercube technology, there are concerns that those technical claims haven't been verified at scale. If the efficiencies are not met, the centre will be using more resources such as water, so it's incredibly important that we have a baseline of those details from 2020, as the motion asks for, until present, and those projected as well.

Honourable Speaker, Tasmania is at the forefront of a \$73 billion national project. This government's endorsement was central to the Singaporean-based Firmus' private investment pitch for ASX listing. The level of national interest in a project of this scale is enormous, as is the risk, or conversely, the opportunity for Tasmania's reputation, for our investment here moving forward, for the local grid and for the environment, all of which have been invested into this proposal without any details being made public. For this to be an opportunity, there must be transparency for understanding and for social buy-in. This is a time-sensitive matter, as I mentioned, with a possible IPO listing in September.

With the growing community angst on AI and data centres, where locations are looking at moratoriums so regulators can catch up, it is imperative that Tasmanians have all the details around this Firmus project. That need is amplified given the government's endorsement.

I commend the motion to the House. I'm noting that there are apparently amendments coming to this that I haven't seen. Once we do, we will be making up our mind whether we support them or not.

[2.49 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy) - Deputy Speaker, my understanding is that amendments have been circulated that are supported. I believe copies have been circulated by email, but we also have hard copies which we will hand out now.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the central premise underpinning this debate, because this is not just about a single project. This is a discussion about the very nature of Tasmania's future. It is a discussion about whether we participate in the next wave of global economic transformation or watch it happen elsewhere.

We are at a turning point. Tasmania is entering a critically important phase in our economic development. We know that across the globe, advanced technologies, artificial intelligence, high-performance computing and digital infrastructure are reshaping entire economies and industries. We will not allow Tasmania to fall behind, and that is why we have developed the Advanced Technology Strategy in consultation with industry, designed to accelerate adoption of new technologies, lift productivity and strengthen a more resilient and diverse economy for Tasmania. We are investing in skills, we're working with the University of Tasmania, and building partnerships that support STEM capability development and innovation in Tasmania.

That is why we are supporting the type of infrastructure that underpins this new economy. It is part of the stack. It is a base level of infrastructure that we need to fully participate in the global digital economy, with our artists and creative people, our musicians, our screen innovators and our game makers. Without this infrastructure, there is no innovation economy. AI factories and advanced data infrastructure are not abstract concepts; they are the industrial enablers of the 21st century. Importantly and happily for Tasmania, they are not constrained by proximity to large cities.

Unlike traditional data centres, AI factories rely on compute power, not latency, which means Tasmania, with its renewable energy and cool climate, is exceptionally well positioned. This is Tasmania's natural advantage, and let us be clear about why companies like Firmus are interested in Tasmania. It is because of what we have - a predominantly renewable electricity

system, a cool climate reducing cooling costs, a stable investment environment, and a highly capable workforce. These are the exact conditions global investors are seeking.

This hasn't happened by accident. Our government has been working with industry, importantly the University of Tasmania, to develop skills and capabilities to deliver projects such as Southgate, and we should be proud that Tasmania is being recognised internationally as a place to invest. It's also important to recognise that this is not just a concept on paper. This project is already underway at St Leonards, where all Tasmanians can go and see construction activity, investment flowing into northern Tasmania, local contractors and businesses engaged in delivery. This is real economic activity. It's not hypothetical or just aspirational. It is happening right now.

With debates like this one, let's not lose sight of the fact that these projects deliver tangible benefits to local communities, local trades, local suppliers, local workers. This is economic activity that supports families and builds confidence across our broader business community. Confidence matters, because projects like this send signals - a signal that Tasmania is capable, that we are open for business, open for digital business. A signal that Tasmania can deliver complex, high-value projects. Greens, take note - this is how additional investment into Tasmania is attracted. Not through words alone, but demonstrated capability and delivery.

The economic benefit of projects like Project Southgate are significant. They include large-scale private capital investment, construction activity across local trades and suppliers, and ongoing high-skill jobs in digital engineering and technical fields. Beyond that, these projects create something even more important: they build confidence.

The new industry will build Tasmania's capability in high-performance computing skills, in emerging digital industries, and pathways into the global technology sector - and that all stays in Tasmania. There is another important issue here - that AI factories are not just energy users, they are drivers of renewable investment. As demand grows, so too does the need for new wind, new solar, new storage, transmission upgrades.

So, the question is not whether infrastructure will be built. It absolutely will be. The question is, where will it be built? If it is built in jurisdictions powered by fossil fuels, it increases global emissions. This is exactly why national policy settings emphasise that data centres should support clean energy development and align with broader decarbonisation objectives. Projects like these are not in conflict with climate goals. They are part of the solution, helping shift global compute demand from high-emission systems to low-emission systems, and that is a benefit for Tasmania and for the global environment.

Modern energy systems operate in a way that allow Tasmania to accelerate the use of our energy advantage. What we are doing is to ensure that as new demand comes into the system, new supply, new infrastructure and new flexibility comes with it. That's what our planning is about. That is national policy alignment, and that is how we secure our future.

Firmus' current project is approximately 104 megawatts delivered under a commercial arrangement with Aurora Energy. That arrangement does not impact other supply to other customers. It includes demand flexibility and load following capability. It reflects standard commercial practice for large industrial users. And importantly, the Tasmanian government is not party to that agreement. Our role is to ensure system stability, regulatory oversight and appropriate planning. That is exactly what we're doing.

As we know, Firmus' technology is designed to be significantly more efficient than traditional data centres. As with any major project, environmental considerations are assessed through existing regulatory processes. So this project is not happening in a vacuum; it is part of a coordinated policy approach to set Tasmania up as an innovation hub and an ecosystem where future industries and organisations seek to have a presence.

One might ask, what's the alternative plan that the Greens have for attracting large-scale private investment in future industries to Tasmania, if projects like Firmus are discouraged? If this project does not proceed, how many jobs do the Greens estimate would be lost? Given our renewable advantage, why shouldn't data centres be operated here, rather than in jurisdictions that are powered by fossil fuels? I'd love to hear an answer to that.

In the global context, around the world nations are competing for AI infrastructure. They are competing aggressively, because they understand what is at stake, and so do I. Economic leadership, productivity growth, future industries, jobs for the next generation of Tasmanians. This is more than about just one project - it is about building a diversified economy, a highly skilled workforce, a globally competitive technology sector and a future in Tasmania we can all be proud of.

We can already see the trajectory: Tasmania's tech sector generated approximately \$1.1 billion in revenue in 2024. That growth is not happening by accident. There is another important dimension to this. Advanced technologies like AI are not just new industries - they are productivity multiplied. They improve how businesses operate, how we deliver services and how economies grow. Access to this infrastructure matters. It helps local businesses to adopt and adapt to new technologies and underpins productivity gains.

In conclusion, at its core, this debate asks one very simple question: do we step forward into the future economy or do we stand still in time, as the Greens would have us do? Because that's the choice. It's a choice about confidence, a choice about ambition, a choice about whether Tasmania backs itself. Our answer is clear: we back Tasmania, we back our people, we back our industries, our scientists, our researchers, our engineers, the digital economy and our creative people. We back our future, and we will always work with industry to support innovation.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Minister, would you like to speak for your amendment and move it?

**Ms OGILVIE** - On the amendment, I will read that in. I move -

Point (6),

*Leave out* 'order the government to table the following by 27 May 2026'

*Insert instead* the following:

Orders the Government to table the following, but with the redaction of information that would prejudice commercial negotiations or contain commercially sensitive information, by 27 May 2026

**Ms Badger** - I think it's supposed to say 'point (7)'. There's just a mistake in the amendment, I think.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Oh, is there?

**Ms Badger** - Yes. It says point (6).

**Ms OGILVIE** - It should be point (7)?

**Ms Badger** - Yes, we might just get that amended, if that's alright.

**Ms OGILVIE** - We'll just confirm that. We're content at point (6)? Alright, I'll just complete that.

*Insert instead the following:*

'orders the government to table the following, but with the redaction of information that would prejudice commercial negotiations or contain commercially sensitive information by 27 May 2026, because we too value transparency and we would rather we work together on this.'

[3.00 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I'll speak to the substantive motion and the amendment at the same time, if I might. I rise to talk to this Greens motion and thank my colleague for Lyons, Ms Badger, for bringing it forward. It's a simple straight back motion outlined in the context around one of Tasmania's most rapidly emerging and significant investments that sits in a sector of the tech industry that is attracting significant state, national and global attention, and rightly so.

I acknowledge Ms Badger's lead on this issue on behalf of Tasmanians and note that her scrutiny on this has been well ahead of the curve.

In Estimates last year we asked a plethora of questions to try to understand the landscape this government was establishing to properly and transparently manage the community, power, water, planning and other issues the rapid expansion of the data industry presents to any jurisdiction. Very few answers. Ms Badger has followed this up with questions without notice in this Chamber. Similarly, obfuscation and non-answer to simple questions that are fundamentally in the public interest. Nothing again. Which is where this motion and the will of the whole House come in. Clearly, asking nicely for transparency and clarity will collectively get us nowhere on an issue of significant public interest globally.

Ordering the government to produce and publicly release a suite of information about its relationship with Firmus does appear to be the only way we, as elected representatives, can properly execute our responsibility to constitute constituents to scrutinise and understand the actions of government and the commitments it is making on our collective behalf - the policy commitments, the financial commitments and the public-relations commitments.

To reiterate, the call to action in this motion is an order to produce information. Funding and other public resources committed to Firmus' current and proposed developments in the state, advice provided to government regarding its active endorsement and promotion of Firmus

and its projects, including the Premier's public relations and private engagement with Firmus, and water consumption, past and projected.

Let me reiterate Ms Badger's clarification regarding the Greens' position on Firmus, data centres more broadly, and the tech sector. We're not trying to stop the Firmus project, the data sector and artificial intelligence per se. The prospects of benefits to Tasmania may well be live ones, but they come with a reliance on government commitments, the services of government businesses, and the imprimatur of government as a whole. As servants of the people, government has an obligation to be transparent about exactly what that support is and how far they are prepared to extend it, because they come with an impact on people. As government-owned businesses, the power and water provision to data centres and the terms around it could have a significant bearing on business-profitability and returns to shareholders - us the people of Tasmania. They may have an impact on other businesses' capacity to access those very same finite resources.

To turn again to the motion, I want to dwell on point (1) and the very real situation where the tech sector and the speed of its revolution and development requirements is radically outstripping our capacity to keep up with it, to ensure adequate guardrails manage it, and it is planned to be rolled out in a logical, supportable and sustainable way.

In March, the federal government published a set of expectations of data centres and AI infrastructure developers, and these contain some welcome principles, but they are not enshrined in planning principles and processes, development approvals or criteria to attract government support, and so at present they constitute aspirational goals as opposed to fundamental statutory requirements. These expectations are a good start, but they are not regulation or captured in legislation to be given genuine effect.

The five principles: prioritising Australia's national interest - tick. Supporting Australia's energy transition - it says:

New data centres and AI infrastructure should not place upward pressure on energy prices and should make a positive contribution to Australia's energy transition.

Sustainable and efficient water usage:

To minimise adverse effects, data centres should:

- cover their share of infrastructure and delivery costs
- build resilience into operations ...
- provide ongoing transparent reporting about their water usage and efficiency.

Which goes very much to one of the points in the order that we are seeking from the government in terms of water use. Expectation 4: investment in Australian skills and workforce:

Data centre operators should support Australia's economy by creating fair, safe, secure and well-paid jobs for Australian workers.

Expectation 5: research, innovation and local capacity. Amongst other things, data centres:

should deploy engineers and researchers in Australia. They should contribute to build local technical and innovation capability and invest in Australian supply chains.

They are those expectations and a little bit of content that sits under them and they are laudable, but they're not necessarily currently being met. Some of the information we seek via this information will help inform how Tasmanian legislation, regulation and other guardrails can help us meet the expectations being set at the national level, because it must.

The speed of data centre development has already outstripped its ability to earn and demonstrate a social licence. Nationally, it's already coming under significant scrutiny. The sector has already attracted national media attention, with the ABC's *Four Corners* recently highlighting the planning challenges surrounding massive data centre expansion interstate, and the social licence and other issues that flow. Earlier this month, *The Australian* published an article on Firmus itself questioning proposed South Australian developments and the resource requirements flagged necessary to operate them. It's an interesting story and I'll take the time to read some of it into the Hansard remembering of course that this is a conservative national newspaper.

Two small South Australian sheep grazing farms form the centrepiece of Firmus Technologies' \$7 billion intelligence data centre dream, as doubts rise over the company's ambitions to roll out a string of AI 'factories' by the end of the decade.

Land records obtained by *The Australian* reveal Firmus, headed by paper billionaire and former convicted insider trader Oliver Curtis, has in recent weeks shelled out \$10 million to buy empty land near Port Augusta and also Tailem Bend southeast of Adelaide. Firmus, which has South Australian government backing, has quietly purchased more than 1600 hectares of farming land in the two key regional areas where it plans to build AI powered by industrial scale volumes of renewable energy.

Overall Firmus has forecast 3.3GW through clean energy offtake deals across the country. In South Australia alone, Firmus expects to become a buyer of 2.3GW of renewable power by the end of the decade. Those volumes dwarf the 1.3GW average power needs of the state, raising doubts about its ability to procure one of the largest volumes of energy supply ever seen in the state.

Commitments regarding resource use are important ones to put on the public record, as will soon be seen the view develop that those centres are too big to fail. If water or power supply becomes constrained because of the climate crisis, because of existing demand or because of outages because of storms, floods or fire, a centre's capacity to scale down or stop, full stop, is seriously under question.

This motion is a really good one and it's very timely. We must have some clarity and transparency around the data centre demands on our public institutions, be they government-owned service providers or the government itself. This motion helps with that, but it's clear that the work of this parliament on this issue will not stop here. We need to sustain scrutiny, initiate

inquiry and establish the regulations and rules that can give the public the confidence that they are operating in the collective public interest and not simply the interests of the extraordinary wealthy tech giants, private equity and superannuation funds, and the infrastructure development companies.

On the amendment, I note that it enshrines into this motion information that would prejudice commercial negotiations or contain commercially sensitive information. I question this because the government retains the right to redact that kind of information in the first place, should it be in the documents that this order would produce. You would expect to see them automatically redact it out under commercial-in-confidence principles. I'm not sure that we necessarily need to be putting this kind of condition built into the order itself. I think it effectively signals a slight watering down of the intent of the motion. We know the government is very diligent when it comes to redacting commercial-in-confidence information and the like. I do question the need for this amendment. I'll allow Ms Badger to talk to it more fully and we'll resolve our position accordingly.

This is a good motion. It's insisting on transparency and on the basis of that transparency, we can start to work on the further implementation of guardrails in relation to this important industry.

[3.10 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to the amendment and to the motion in full. I don't think there are many Tasmanians that would question that I am pro-Tasmania, I'm pro-investment and I'm pro-jobs. I'm actually pro-great projects and I'm pro-Tasmania being seen and part of the global digital economy.

I want to make one reflection on this morning's contributions through Question Time. I've now had the opportunity to see *Hansard*, and where I asked the Premier about the number of jobs and the opportunities for Firmus in Tasmania, I understood that Mr Ellis had said, 'Are you aware of it?' and I said 'yes', because I know that a lot of the details about this project. *Hansard* has come out and said, 'Are you opposed to it?' My understanding was that all of the comments following on *Hansard* from me were in response to Mr Ellis saying, 'Are you aware of it?' I'll take up that matter later with Hansard. I have listened to the video; it's not clear to me that the capture in *Hansard* is what was said, but it definitely wasn't what I heard from this side of the Chamber.

For me in Tasmania, this motion that's been brought forward from the member for Lyons, and definitely Tasmanian Labor's position, isn't about anti-project and it's definitely not about anti-Firmus. What it is about is it's pro-transparency, pro-information and pro-putting Tasmania front and centre in the decisions that are taken by this government. We have record upon record upon record of this government not being able to manage projects particularly well, whether they be their own projects or projects done by others. Therefore, it is absolutely reasonable that this place, and Tasmanians, would expect great interrogation and great auditing of where the government is at with this project. I think it's really important, particularly when we're looking at future industries and new industries in Tasmania, that the government is held to account, to be answerable to this place and to Tasmanians.

It was, for instance, just out of the member for Lyons' questions this morning about the AI safeguards within the government, they're looking at making a whole new tranche of investment in how AI is used within government departments, but haven't done the basic work,

the foundations. That's what we see time and time again here, that this government talks a big game, but talk is not action and it is not protection of the Tasmanian people and is not about putting Tasmania front and centre. The questions that are raised in this motion, the documents that are required as a part of this motion, are absolutely reasonable, and fundamental to the trust and confidence of Tasmanians in projects such as this.

I want to speak a little bit about the amendment. I understand in the amendment that when documents are ordered to be tabled, they're not redacted, so I think that it is reasonable to consider an amendment that allows for redaction. Should there be any redaction in this amendment, Tasmanian Labor would be open to any redacted information being taken to a closed opportunity for members of this place to review that redacted information. Further, that any redacted details from the documentation are summarised and that there are reasons why accompanying documentation detailing why things have been redacted, because unfortunately, this government is operating in an environment where Tasmanians have no trust in this government anymore. We ask simple questions, they deviate, they don't answer, they don't tell the truth, and they intentionally try to hide information. If you are redacting things in documents, we believe there should be a summary associated with that that outlines why, and the opportunity should be provided to this place to actually have an in-committee update of those redacted matters following the tabling of the documents. We would be open to that being considered with the amendments today.

Back to the matter before us. What's being proposed by Firmus is massive in the scale of what already exists in Australia. It is ambitious, and I love ambition. I love innovation and I love Tasmania being in the centre of things that can happen globally. However, big ambition requires big responsibility, and is the government up to being responsible with this type of project in Tasmania? It's not the project that worries me here, but it's the capacity of the government to (1) manage, and (2) be honest about where they're placing Tasmania in this project.

We know also that caretaker can be used in all sorts of ways by this government. It was curious that this was announced through the caretaker period, where there is less scrutiny and less information available to the public and to the parliament. I believe it is appropriate that on the edges of accountability, the full elements of this motion are considered.

The other thing that is interesting, and it was raised with me - there is no doubt that the renewable energy capacity of Tasmania, it is precious and it is premium. There will be people all across the world looking at what Tasmania has and saying, 'We want to be a part of that, we want to have a little bit of that, we want to associate our brand with that'. I am keen to understand whether government has fully realised that premium, precious nature of the renewable energy we have here. Are they, accordingly, pricing our energy to international interests in Tasmania who are going to trade off the benefits of that offering at an appropriate price?

When you have Aurora making individual agreements - they call it a partnership in some of their communications - with a large project, or whether you have Hydro, ReCFIT, State Growth, ministers or departments individually, in silos, engaging with big projects - how do we know that Tasmania's best interests are being considered in terms of price, therefore investment and association? We know that big organisations like this will take the value benefit and the reputational benefit of Tasmania, and in parallel with big capital raising that's going on, that adds value to them. Is Tasmania getting the best value out of this at the same time?

It is reasonable for us to ask those questions, because what we know is historically in Tasmania, when Tasmanian businesses supporting Tasmanian jobs want to use this precious and premium energy in Tasmania, they haven't been able to. There's been the challenges of Boyer being able to get their 45 megawatts of power to change their coal-fired boiler and electrify. We know that there are hundreds of jobs at Boyer, so every megawatt hour invested in that site supports hundreds of jobs and all of the indirect jobs and supply chains that support a site like that.

We know that Bell Bay Aluminium have had a hell of a trouble trying to negotiate a new 10-year deal for power in Tasmania. This government couldn't get that together by last year, so who says they'd get this together? They needed a 12-month extension. We are now in May. No news. Crickets on their capacity to do that negotiation and bring a deal together. Bell Bay Aluminium, the power of the megawatt hour, investing in our local community and right across Tasmania. Hundreds of jobs on site, hundreds of businesses in the Tasmanian ecosystem supported by that site, and we can't have a government that can negotiate a deal for the power there.

There are lots of examples in Tasmania where the government haven't managed the available energy for Tasmania's best interests. How can we be assured that they're managing this magical energy? All of a sudden there's this 104 megawatts available for a data centre, and my interjection this morning I stand by, although maybe I misheard Mr Ellis, and I will accept that if I did. My interjection was: what jobs and what opportunity? For the megawatt hours being invested in this AI factory, what are the returns to everyday Tasmanians in terms of job opportunities, and what are the returns to the Tasmanian economy in terms of that associated supply chain, not just through construction, but when it's in operation? How does that compare to other megawatts being used in other sites across Tasmania? First and foremost, we must get the premium value for the energy that we have in Tasmania and it must be used in Tasmania's best interests to support our communities, to support jobs, to support families, to support the Tasmanian economy.

Tasmanian Labor - we are pro-Tasmania, we are pro-jobs, we are pro-investment, we are pro-Tasmania being part of the global digital future. What we are not is confident. What we don't do is trust this government to get it right, to do the hard work, to have the capacity and the competence to do the work required to protect Tasmania from any risks that might be associated with this, but we also don't trust this government to have done any deals that aren't in Tasmania's best interests.

What this motion calls on is to put it out, make sure that everyone is aware and can scrutinise and determine for themselves whether this is reasonable for Tasmania, and all the safeguards are in place. We recognise that papers that are tabled should be redacted if there are risks in terms of commercially sensitive information or commercial negotiations, but Tasmanian Labor would say that if there are redacted elements, summarise what they are and why, and for any redacted elements we should be provided an in camera opportunity to review those elements of the documents.

[3.20 p.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to address both the amendment and the motion brought on by the honourable member for Lyons, Ms Badger. In this debate, I have great sympathy for the 19th century's Ned Ludd, as the Industrial Revolution consumed British

society and reshaped an entire civilization. There are moments when I confess I would like to be a 21st century Luddite. I believe the new world industrial magnates, the 'tech bros', have little sense of history or the evolution of civil society since the Enlightenment, and if they did, they would spare little thought for it. I doubt they'd understand the irony of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, where he says -

How beauteous mankind is. Oh, brave new world that has such people in it.

I reckon that's how the tech bros see themselves, too wrapped up in their own egos to understand the irony of those words.

I rail against the new industrial magnates and barons with egos now so inflated they believe their economic power can, should, and must be turned into political power. For them, they see us as the peasants, the villagers, and the serfs of the 19th century to be harnessed to the 21st century's equivalent of the Industrial Revolution's cotton and woollen mills. That is surely why Forbes - Ford - sorry, oh God, I've forgotten the name, what's the name of the company again?

**A member** - Ford?

**A member** - Forbes?

**A member** - Shakespeare?

**Mr GEORGE** - No, the company up north.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Firmus.

**Mr GEORGE** - Firmus, thank you.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Oh my goodness, after all that.

**Mr O'Byrne** - The one you're very concerned about.

**Mr GEORGE** - Thank you, the one I'm concerned about - Firmus.

**Ms Ogilvie** - We're enjoying your passion, though. The Shakespeare was good.

**Mr GEORGE** - Good, I'm glad you liked that. That is surely why Firmus felt entitled to adopt and use the UN logo, a reflection of their self-entitled place in our global lives.

Does anyone here feel that Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* has taken a step closer to our way of life with AI? I do. In *Brave New World* there is a world order, a dystopian global state led by a remote leader known simply as his 'Fordship', after the 20th century industrial magnate Henry Ford. Perhaps that's what the tech bros have in mind, and they have an American president to oil the way for them.

**Ms Ogilvie** - There's girls in the tech sector.

**Mr GEORGE** - His Majesty Musk, maybe.

At the same time, while I may fear what AI could wreak on our civilisation as perhaps the biggest shift in society since the Industrial Revolution, I'm also an early adopter of this technology - well, at least relatively early. So, I'm conflicted. I have hopes for AI and I have fears of AI.

Like Ned Ludd and his followers in the 19th century, I'm partially tempted to tear down this edifice. Like the Luddites, I rail against the new barons of industry. Yet here am I, an early adopter with the son-in-law in Seattle who works in the AI industry and totally believes it to be of enormous benefit to the future of our society and our lives. Still, I am deeply suspicious of those who own this industry, the tech bros whose egos are now so huge they believe they have the right to drive the world towards their self-determined future, not just economically but politically.

All of this brings me to the honourable member for Lyons's motion. We must tread cautiously as we move ahead with the government's adoption of AI. There are not just incomprehensible amounts of money involved, but there is the security of information, the right to personal privacy, the need to prevent government authorities and businesses collecting ever more information about it and the vulnerability of systems, public and private, to malicious actors.

The government needs to move with caution, balanced with the need not to find itself left behind. I believe the honourable member for Lyons's motion is striking the right note. For a start, the government needs to do not just due diligence but a truly deep dive into what Firmus is planning and who is behind it.

I recognise that Oliver Curtis has served 12 months jail from a two-year sentence for insider trading a decade ago. This clearly does not automatically disqualify him for being a prime mover in the Firmus development, but his work in cryptocurrency, crypto-mining and now data centres shows a real willingness to pursue emerging and high-risk areas in business technology. NVIDIA and Blackstone are mammoth global organisations backed by major industrial and billionaire investors, many of them securely hidden behind firewalls of anonymity. Again, none of this necessarily means they are not welcome in Tasmania, but like the multinationals we have invited in to exploit our natural heritage, our waterways, our minerals, our forests and our pastures, we need to understand that their vested interests are not rooted in Tasmania. They are rooted far away in tax havens, global banks and private pockets, because that's where the major part of the profits will go.

Tasmanians must think carefully and tread cautiously when it comes to sharing our natural resources with leviathan companies, in this case our power, our water and our labour. The people who run these companies clearly see themselves as Aldous Huxley's 'alpha strata' of this dystopian brave new world, so we must be sure, before we embrace the AI revolution too comprehensively, that Tasmanians are not left to languish as Huxley's Epsilons, the men and women described by Wikipedia as mass-produced clones subject to oxygen deprivation and chemical interference to ensure they possess stunted intellects and physical traits perfectly suited for menial, repetitive labour.

This motion is the first step, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says, in building trust and confidence in this process. Frankly, Tasmania is hardly a blip on the horizon of the tech bros who bestride the globe with their arrogance of the barons of the Industrial Revolution.

We are not even a blip, so we need to step with caution as we climb aboard the AI wave, as it can easily become a tsunami that will swamp us.

[3.27 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to speak on this Greens motion. The Greens are on record in this parliament of asking questions about the future of AI industries, AI factories, AI data centres and AI use across Tasmania in terms of this new proposed development at Southgate, which is massive on an Australian and global scale, as well as the use by the government of AI across all agencies. We are yet to have enough information about what's going on, which is why we're here today. Ms Badger has laid out the case for the reasonableness of getting the information we have called for from the government to provide in this motion.

I want to thank the minister. There's been discussion with the minister and Ms Badger, Labor and other members talking about this amendment and how it needs to be framed and how it actually works in order to give the government the capacity to genuinely provide an update to members in the Chamber about what is going on.

I want to reinforce again some of the points Ms Badger made. This is potentially a scale of energy use and development that this state has never seen before. I use the word 'potential' because one of the things Firmus has done throughout their work over the last couple of years is make some very bold claims that are being questioned, challenged and scrutinised in the tech sector and the energy sector. It's been daily news in the *Australian Financial Review* and in *The Australian* newspaper on the mainland for a long time now, for many months. These claims are very big and so far not substantiated, as I understand. Big claims have been made about the water usage and the globally extraordinarily low levels of water usage that the HyperCube technology that Firmus say they have developed would be able to come in with extraordinarily low levels of water use. There hasn't been the information available to test the veracity of those claims yet. This is a process that is going on in terms of listing or not under the ASX, but we're in Tasmania talking about the interests of Tasmanians and the state government to date has given a full-throated endorsement to a private company and Tasmanians deserve full transparency about the financial, energy and efficiency claims behind the Firmus proposal.

I re-ask for the minister - bring your mind to the specific things that we've raised. Ms Badger had these things in her speech. We really need specific answers to some basic questions that are being asked by Tasmanians and by people who know a lot more about the functioning of big AI centres. Big claims have been made about the apparently 50 to 100 staff per 50MW of capacity. They've been widely questioned by AI experts because modern automated AI facilities don't ever anywhere else require such labour. What's the basis for those big claims of the numbers of people who would or would not be employed? Whether the government has actually negotiated some sort of binding local job creation requirements of the company? This is to be quite clear about the sort of things that members in this Chamber who represent communities across Tasmania -

**Ms Ogilvie** - You've got the right minister now. Happy to work with you.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - That's great to hear.

What are the commitments that Firmus has made to the government about local job creation, for example, and training commitments? These are the sorts of commitments that the

federal government now expects of AI companies, so we'd expect our government to have asked and received a substantial binding commitment for the full-throated support that's been given so far.

Then, of course, the 104MW deal with Aurora Energy, which is three years as it stands at the moment: what would happen after three years, and what terms of supply would be provided? What conditions would be made about renewal after three years? Are there any community benefit obligations that have been accepted by Firmus or even asked of them by the government? Have they been asked for CBAs? We do need to understand why it was that Firmus got this 104 Megawatt deal when other industrial energy companies have not been successful in achieving those energy deals. Boyer paper mill is obviously one there. We need to understand what is different about Firmus and what it's offered, and why has Hydro changed its mind for Firmus when it seems to have firmly shut the door to other Tasmanian companies for similar requests. What are the conditions under which an agreement could be negotiated, renegotiated or indeed terminated? These things which go to the long-term provision of electricity supply and electricity generation are really important when we're talking about other major industrials, renewable energy in Tasmania, the base-load power that's being used and how it fits into the whole scheme of energy use in Tasmania and importantly cost to Tasmanians.

On the matter of the business case: the business case has not yet been provided. We'd like to see it. That's what we need to see. We'd like to see the business case. We need to understand the justification for the finances for such large claims and a big move into Tasmania that has been backed by the government. Did TasNetworks not supply a business case or was it Firmus not having one to supply to TasNetworks to make it available? What's happened to Firmus' business case here?

Finally, on the very large claims of the \$73 billion CapEx program that Project Southgate is promising, which is out of step with anything else that's been achieved on the planet so far, but we'll never say new things can't happen in Tasmania. It could be possible that this happens in Tasmania with the company that's only approximately three years old. It would be extraordinary, as Ms Badger has said, and the question is: has the government viewed in detail the Firmus investor material and the claims behind this enormous capital expenditure program and indeed the possibility of that happening?

There are a lot of questions about Mr Curtis and his ability, and his history, and these are very fair questions to ask as part of scrutiny on behalf of Tasmanians on this enormous project.

We don't believe that Firmus would necessarily fail. We don't believe that there are concerns that we've raised that can't be addressed, but we do firmly believe that Tasmanians deserve transparency on this massive project. Humankind is moving into a vastly new area with AI, and it has, yes, opportunities that have been discussed endlessly by the government, but with every big opportunity comes very big risks, and we want to know what the government is juggling and on what basis they're making such important decisions for Tasmanian. We support the transparency, which is inherent in our motion, and having an opportunity to have a conversation in camera with appropriate MPs is what's being discussed, leaders, portfolio holders, members of the crossbench, so that there can be a proper assessment of these matters.

[3.37 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, we have quite a good arrangement here. I will be moving an amendment to the amendment. I'll just give a copy of that to the Clerks and then read it in. The amendment to the amendment moved by Ms Ogilvie. I move -

In paragraph (6):

*Leave out* the words: 'Orders the Government to table the following, but with the redaction of information that would prejudice commercial or contain commercially sensitive information by 27th May 2026'.

*Insert* instead: 'Orders the Government to table the following, but with the redaction of information that would prejudice commercial negotiations or contain commercially sensitive information and those documents be made available to Members of Parliament unredacted in confidence by 27 May 2026.'

This is an important amendment. Thank you to the minister and her team for helping us work on that. It's a complex space in terms of what papers and documents this place can order to be tabled, the legal requirements that are around it, and understandably, there is also a level of scrutiny that needs to be provided about what information is invaluable for members of this place who are making decisions on behalf of the state to have an understand.

Note, as Dr Woodruff touched on a moment ago, I'll do so formally now that we're moving the amendment, that that information being made available to members would be done so in the precedent that's been set in the past. That is members being relevant shadow ministers, relevant portfolio holders, interested independent members and, if interested, the Shooter Fishers' Farmers member as well be given that opportunity to see those unredacted documents.

The precedent has been set for this, certainly around the Marinus business case. We had the party leaders were able to see that in the past. The energy committee do as well. I don't want to bring this up in Budget week and curse us in any way, but Premier Rockliff has done this around the AFL deal as a part of the agreement with John Tucker and Lara Alexander to secure supply in the past. The precedent is there for this information to be made publicly available. It is incredibly important that it is for the reasons that members have outlined today. I want to thank members again. It's never fun moving, fixing up and drafting amendments on the fly on the Floor, so thank you to everyone who helped make that happen in time.

[3.40 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I want to acknowledge the House in working through this. It's really impressive and I thank everyone for that. We're obviously now in a place where the motion reads - and this is my understanding, so I guess I'm seeking clarification from you, minister - that it orders the government to table the information that is in the motion, but it may be redacted, and if it is redacted, the entire set of documents will be made available for parliamentarians, but nonetheless, the redacted documents will be tabled in parliament for all to see, obviously without the -

**Ms Ogilvie** - That's my understanding. I'll speak to the amendment.

**Mr BAYLEY** - If you could clarify that, it would be much appreciated, but this is a welcome reworking in the interests of transparency.

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy) - Deputy Speaker, on the amendment to the amendment, hopefully to bring this home, first I would like to say it has been genuinely good to work with everybody in the Chamber on this. I very much appreciate Mr Peter George's contribution, although I feel it might be a little bit like trying to mop the ocean back because technology is here to stay, but I genuinely appreciate the concerns that you raised. I was at the Professor Hinton lecture as well. As the minister responsible for this area, I'm genuinely very happy to work collaboratively. In fact, that's the only way we can move forward in this area. It is complex. I'm very happy to sit down with a group to work through perhaps even more of the strategy that we want to do.

In relation to the amendment to the amendment, my understanding is that the redacted documents will be tabled here. Nonetheless, unredacted documents would go to - I said the leaders, but I think it is portfolio leaders. I was concerned that we might have a new sort of parliament within a parliament, but a conversation with the appropriate people from the portfolio areas is right. I'm very happy to do that. The independents will work out how to work with them to do that as well.

I want to say that I'm really aware of the complexity of this area and the speed with which it appears to be coming and happening with us, but as a creature of the tech sector over many, many years, we have had these things happen before. We've had Y2K and other issues. This is another one of these where we feel like we're getting swamped, but our regulation and our controls are in place. I'm really happy to work with you if we need to do more. I understand that there may be concerns and I would love to communicate more about how we're regulating AI more generally and also within the government, and perhaps this meeting is a place to start that dialogue. With that, I'll say thank you very much for working with us collaboratively.

[3.43 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, perhaps this is a matter for Committee, and I don't necessarily want to go into Committee, but since minister Ogilvie just said, 'Please trust us, we've got regulation and controls in place for this', could you just outline what they are? I don't know how you do that now, but it was an interesting thing to assert.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I was hoping for a question in Question Time, as I would have actually responded about what we're doing, but why don't you come and have a briefing?

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm interested in a briefing, but I'm also interested that you asserted that you've got regulations and controls. Maybe somehow you could share that with the parliament.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I'm happy to, somehow. I think I've missed my chance to respond but I'm happy to share. We have internal policies.

**Amendment to the amendment agreed to.**

**Amendment, as amended, agreed to.**

[3.46 p.m.]

**Mr FAIRS** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to this debate on the notice of motion brought forward by the honourable member for Lyons, Ms Badger. This motion raises a range of issues about one project, but at its core it speaks to a much broader question, how Tasmania manages the growth of new industries, particularly those built on advanced technology.

It is important we ground this discussion in fact. First, on the issue of speed of development, yes, the pace of investment in artificial intelligence and data infrastructure is rapid. That is not unique to Tasmania, it is happening globally, but the regulatory frameworks that apply to these developments are not new, nor are they being bypassed. Projects like this are subject to the same planning, environmental, energy and infrastructural approval processes that apply to any major development in Tasmania. Those frameworks exist, they are robust and they are being applied appropriately. From a state perspective, we remain focused on ensuring that infrastructure development complies fully with established regulatory standards.

The second point relates to energy. There is no question that projects like this have implications for energy systems, particularly in terms of scale. This is not being approached without a plan. Tasmania has legislated renewable electricity generation targets to produce 150 per cent of its 2020 baseline demand by 2030 and by 200 per cent by 2040. That is a clear statutory commitment. In addition to that, there is a strong pipeline of renewable generation and storage projects in Tasmania. If delivered, that pipeline has the potential to exceed those targets, so rather than creating risk, there is an argument that increased demand from new industries can actually accelerate the delivery of new generation. That's consistent with the broader national framework, where large energy users are expected to contribute to and support the expansion of renewable supply.

In that context, it's also important to clarify the nature of the Firmus project. Project Southgate is not a standalone Tasmanian initiative. It is part of a national development program with sites proposed across multiple jurisdictions including Perth, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and here in Tasmania. The plan seeks to deliver up to 1.6 gigawatts of capacity across that network. The St Leonards facility is the flagship site but is part of a much broader investment footprint. To put that into context, while large industrial loads attract public interest, they sit within a much broader national electricity system that is already managing significant generation, storage and network expansion.

There has been reference to timing of announcements. My understanding is that the Premier visited the Firmus site in 2025 in advance of the planned announcement that was originally intended to align with an international delegation. As is often the case in commercial projects, the timing of announcements shifted to align with business and investor considerations. That's not unusual and does not alter the underlying process or approvals required for the project.

On the question of political donations, that is a matter for the relevant political party and the disclosure process that already exists.

The role of government in this instance is quite clear. It is not to enter into commercial arrangements or to negotiate business deals. It is to facilitate investment within the framework of existing policy and regulation. In this case, the Office of the Coordinator-General has provided support to the project consistent with its roles for many significant investments across

the state. That support is about coordination, facilitation and ensuring proponents can navigate the regulatory processes. It does not involve financial commitments or preferential treatment.

The government has not made any commitments in terms of funding or guarantees beyond that facilitation role.

In relation to expansion plans for the St Leonard's site, these are questions for the proponent. On water usage which has been raised as a concern, it is important to again deal in facts. Advice from TasWater indicates that the existing facility has been operating well within its approved water allocation. In practice, water-use has not been a material issue. Firmus has indicated that its closed-loop liquid cooling system significantly reduces water consumption compared to traditional air-cooled data centres. The design also incorporates rainwater capture and recycling, with much of the operational demand expected to be met through that system.

Water is only required for cooling during particularly warm conditions above approximately 26 degrees Celsius, and based on historical weather patterns in Launceston, that is limited to a small number of days per year. The evidence does not support the suggestion that this is a major water user.

Finally, it's worth noting what commitments have been made and by whom. Firmus has indicated that it will pay for its share of energy infrastructure upgrades, contribute to shared network infrastructure costs, pay market rates for electricity, work directly with landowners and comply with all environmental and planning requirements. These are the standard expectations placed on large-scale private developments. They are not exceptional and they are not unique.

When we bring all of this together, a clear picture emerges. This is a private sector project operating within established regulatory frameworks contributing to broader economic activity and aligned with long-term energy transition objectives. It is not without complexity and it is not without legitimate questions, but those questions are being addressed through existing systems and processes.

The challenge for Tasmania is whether or not to engage with these industries. The challenge is how to do so responsibly. It means maintaining transparency where appropriate. It means protecting environmental and community interests. It also means recognising opportunity because the reality is that these industries are growing. They are being built somewhere. Tasmania has genuine advantages that position it to participate in that growth. The question is whether we choose to.

[3.52 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, thank you to everyone who made contributions. I'd like to especially thank Mr Fairs because that answer was the most comprehensive that we've had all day. It is good to know that there were no other funding commitments made by the government outside of the OCG's support as it currently stands.

I'd encourage the minister, perhaps on adjournment, to come back and answer Ms Finlay's question in regards to the regulations, seeing a detailed list of the regulations that are in place and the controls, rather than just the overarching policies and guidelines which are quite publicly available, but they're not enforceable in the same way that regulations are. I think that would be of great interest to a lot of very concerned people at the moment. Indeed, to

answer the many unanswered questions that were raised in my contribution and that Dr Woodruff echoed, that we still need a response to.

I just want to touch on something that the minister said about what the Greens' alternatives would be, and priorities, and noting that it would probably be some sort of emissions fossil-fuel-based industry. I point out that we've still got Boyer on a coal boiler, so the question remains why this was given a priority? If energy isn't an issue then we could do both, and why haven't we?

Thank you to all the members. We look forward to certainly having that discussion with the minister in closed session to see those unredacted documents that have been put forward. The question also still remains around the business case that was supposed to be put to Treasury as well. I'm sure we'd like an answer about why it wasn't presented by TasNetworks, or if indeed it wasn't presented to TasNetworks to then be able to present to Treasury and whether they got an exemption for that as well.

It's fantastic to see that there is transparency coming on this incredibly important project that is of national, and indeed, international significance. That is incredibly important, but it shouldn't come to having to do a motion like this after a year of asking questions and getting nowhere. Thank you everyone for the collaboration on it and we look forward to seeing the documents.

**Time expired.**

**Motion, as amended, agreed to.**

**MOTION**

**TT-Line Equity Injection**

[3.55 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes that the Tasmanian Liberal Government has:
  - (a) wasted more than \$717 million on the Spirits replacement project to date;
  - (b) announced a \$506 million taxpayer-funded bailout for TT-Line, following an earlier \$75 million bailout and an increase in TT-Line's borrowing limit from \$990 million to \$1.49 billion;
  - (c) effectively admitted TT-Line could not sustain the debt associated with the Spirits project; and
  - (d) on 11 December 2024, responded to an Order of the House with a list of expenditure on Spirits IV and V which classified engines built

in Finland by Wärtsilä as 'local content', a false claim that has not been corrected.

- (2) Further notes:
  - (a) the Auditor-General, in his 2025 audit, formed the view that TT-Line was insolvent; and
  - (b) the 'ferries fiasco' is not only a budgetary failure but also an economic one, with each year of delay to the delivery of the new vessels estimated to cost the Tasmanian economy \$500 million, impacting freight, tourism, and hospitality sectors.
- (3) Orders the Treasurer, Hon. Eric Abetz MP, to table the following documents:
  - (a) TT-Line's request for the \$506 million equity injection; and
  - (b) all advice received by Government regarding TT-Line's solvency.

I rise today to talk about something that's on the lips of so many Tasmanians right now, and that is the extraordinary announcement that was made last week in relation to the *Spirits of Tasmania*, the ferries fiasco, that has continued to get worse and spiral for the government over the past two years that we've known about the situation.

From my perspective, this has been a project which has been not just poorly executed in terms of the berth, but right from the very start this is a project which has been botched and led us to the position we're in today, which is a position that hurts Tasmanians and is going to hurt them tomorrow when the Budget comes out.

The Tasmanian Liberal government made a decision that in 2020 it would scrap the MOU that it had with the German shipbuilder, Flensburger Schiffbau-Gesellschaft (FSG). It wasn't a decision that was forced on them; it was a decision that they made with full knowledge of the facts. At that point in time, they made a decision that they would spend a year wondering whether or not they could build our new ships here, they said locally, we think that meant in Australia. During that year they came back to the very starting position and that was that there was not the capacity in this country to build a ship for Bass Strait, something that members on this side had known for that entire time. Yet, a year was spent wasted as the government lurched around on something that turned out to be completely a waste of time.

The MOU with FSG was torn up and Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC) was engaged. During that time, we had the war in Ukraine which pushed up prices without the government disclosing the prices had pushed up, and then with the government not disclosing that they had bailed out a Finnish shipbuilder with \$75 million worth of Tasmanian taxpayers' money until it was asked in this place.

We wouldn't have taken those decisions that the government made and in fact, things would be entirely different if they hadn't torn up the first arrangement with FSG. There's a former senator here who might be able to shed some more light on that interaction that happened, I believe with the intervention of the Australian federal government. That decision

has led to more bad decisions, and the bad decisions being mostly left by government and mostly left to the board to decide with very little oversight, an oversight that's been continuing to unfold in front of us and one that I know has caused great concern to, not just members in this place, but members in the other place, and Tasmanians right across the state. We're worried about the level of oversight that's being put, not just on this GBE but on GBEs right across the breadth of the Tasmanian government.

The breadth of this has led us to a position where TT-Line has outlined that the project is now \$717 million over budget, and that's before the on-costs that Ms Dow asked about this morning. That's before they take into account the costs of hiding the ship in Scotland. I have time, so I will: when Ms Dow says 'hiding', and I've said it many times as well, the reason it was hidden there was because they didn't want Tasmanians to drive past it and see it as it sat there. It's all well to put a press release out, but the government's clear position was that they didn't want those ships sitting in Tasmanian waters because they didn't want Tasmanians to be reminded of what an incompetent government they had. That's why we say 'hiding'. Ms Dow's questions this morning were quite right to make that point and I'll continue to say 'hiding' in Scotland.

The motion also outlines the \$506 million the *Spirits* replacement project has now ended up costing the Tasmanian Budget with the taxpayer-funded bailout. That bailout goes on top of the \$75 million bailout from last year's interim budget as well as the increase in the borrowing limit that has now stretched well over \$1 billion towards \$1.5 billion. It is a staggering level of incompetence and waste that will cost Tasmanians every time they travel on the *Spirit*. More importantly, it will cost them in terms of the government's capacity to pay for schools and hospitals and the other services we provide. This is money that will now sit partly on the TT-Line's balance sheet, but it's also debt that will sit on the Tasmanian government's general balance sheet and will be around \$30 million per year just servicing debt from this complete debacle. Very rarely can you quantify costs like this, but this level of incompetence has cost Tasmanians billions of dollars in economic activity and hundreds of millions of dollars in terms of the Tasmanian budget and the TT-Line.

We talk about the financial black hole, and today, as I said, the government has wasted more than \$717 million on this project. That's money that could have rebuilt our crumbling regional hospitals, built thousands of social homes and properly staffed our schools, but instead has been poured into a black hole. The bleeding doesn't stop there. We've seen the bailout and the increase in the borrowing limit. By forcing these bailouts, the government has effectively admitted what they tried to deny for months, that TT-Line could not sustain the amount of debt associated with this botched project. They've broken the back of a proud state-owned company and are now having to dip into Tasmanian taxpayer dollars in order to prop it up. It was the Treasurer who effectively defended the solvency of this company by saying he would never let it fail.

**Mr Abetz** - That's right.

**Mr WINTER** - Well, comrade Abetz, I've heard words like that before but not typically from your side of politics. Their only defence appears to be, 'They're not insolvent because we'll continue to prop them up', and prop them up you have with half a billion dollars worth of taxpayer money.

**Mr Abetz** - And you wouldn't?

**Mr WINTER** - I wouldn't have got ourselves into this mess; that is the entire point. This is not caused by an accident, by a force of nature or anything like that. It's not caused by COVID. It is caused by your decisions, and not just your decisions, but decisions by your board which did not have appropriate levels of oversight, and I'll get to that a little later. This is the black hole and then there's the financial management.

One of the things in the last week in particular that hasn't been spoken about, and probably not in the last six months either, is the promise from the government, from former premier Gutwein and the former minister and Deputy Premier Ferguson, that there will be \$100 million worth of local content within this ship. It was a focus of an order of the House which was responded to by the then Minister for Transport, the honourable Eric Abetz, back in December of that year. Within it, the House was supplied with important information which was a list of Rauma Marine Construction's local content update from November 2024, in which they listed, amongst other things, the main engines from Wärtsilä. Where were they built, minister? They were built in Finland.

As far as I'm aware, that is not by anyone's definition a part of Tasmania, or even Australia or any of our nearby neighbours. It's the complete opposite side of the world, yet it was given in response to an order of the House and we were informed that engines built in Finland were part of local content. That has never been corrected by the minister standing up and correcting the record. It has never been corrected by anyone in government. In fact, when the ABC did an article about it, they were pretty defensive of their position. If you are prepared to say that engines built in Finland are part of local content from Tasmania, then you are literally prepared to say anything.

The local content promise was called out by Labor at the time - I think it was probably by Dr Broad - that it was never going to be delivered. We've said that the entire time, and yet the government continued to say it until I think recently, when there may have been some kind of shift where they finally admitted that like most things with this project, they got that wrong as well.

We've got the economic bleeding, we've got the lack of local content, we've got the fact that the ships have been left on the other side of the world, and then we've got the bailout. I think the Auditor-General deserves an apology from government because his position last year was entirely reasonable and the bailout from government actually proves the fact that they are insolvent, that they were insolvent, and that they were not able to pay their debts when they fell due. This was not a position that was one of opinion, as the Premier liked to say, it was actually formed by an entire team of auditors. It was checked, and they went through their analysis to the point where the Auditor-General of Tasmania made that finding, which must have been a big step to take for him. I'm sure Auditors-General don't like to move into areas where there's a lot of politics, but the truth had to be told and the truth was effectively admitted to by the Treasurer and the Minister for Transport when they approved the bailout for the company, because if the company wasn't insolvent, why would they have bailed them out?

The other point I wanted to make on that announcement last week is that, like most things, the person who has overseen so much of this project, the former Tourism minister, the former Infrastructure minister and now Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, was nowhere to be seen. The two people who had to carry the can for a project that was so far over budget, five years delayed, and had caused so much economic pain was the Treasurer, the honourable Eric Abetz, and the

Minister for Transport. Those two ministers weren't there when this debacle unfolded and yet they had to go and stand out and front this. I thought it spoke to the Premier's leadership when he was nowhere to be seen once again. He has been on this project from the start as Minister for Tourism and Minister for Infrastructure during parts of this. He likes to say that he's intervened, but I tell you what, he intervened on his own government that had stuffed this project up from start to finish.

When it comes to the GBE reforms, I wanted to make another couple of comments about this because I think it's really important. The changes that were made to the GBE legislation late last year require that TT-Line and other GBEs report their finances. I think there's a lot more work to do on this. The half-yearly report from TT-Line is minuscule and does not provide the information the parliament should be seeking. I know we have other ways to get information, but there should be more years of economic data and modelling for us to see because we need to have a very close eye on this and it wasn't present in the half-yearly report. We need to have a careful look as part of tranche 2 about whether or not the reforms that went through last year are actually delivering what we wanted.

I go again to the performance of GBEs, which is a part of this motion. I want to refer to what the Treasurer brought to this place on adjournment last night, where he said:

Earlier today I was asked by the Leader of the Greens, and the Premier agreed, to provide further information in relation to disclosure logs on RTIs.

A further answer is as follows:

On 14 April 2026, the Premier wrote to all government enterprises, GBEs, to remind them of their obligation under section 231A of the *Right to Information Act* to maintain policies and procedures in relation to the disclosure of information and to encourage them to amend their organisation's policies and procedures to ensure as much consistency as possible with the whole-of-government information disclosure policy and procedures.

The Treasurer went on to say that this included bringing their attention to the government's requirement to publish RTI disclosures within 48 hours and that as of yesterday, TasTAFE, Hydro and STT were publishing disclosure logs, and further, he advised that Tasracing, Aurora and the Public Trustee will introduce the public disclosure logs. But then he said: 'Frankly, I'm disappointed the remaining GBEs have not complied and have not indicated their intention to comply.' They said this, by the way, on behalf of the Premier. That means that Metro Tasmania, MAIB, Tasmanian Irrigation, TasNetworks, TasPorts, the Public Finance Corporation, TasRail, TT-Line, and the Port Arthur Historic Site have received the letter and decided to do nothing with it. The government's only response is they instructed the Department of Justice to examine what amendments to the act will compel the enterprises to maintain an active and up-to-date disclosure log. The GBEs pay no attention to what government says, to the point where they're now seeking to update the regulations or legislation to compel them to do what they say. These GBEs are out of control and they have been for years, with little to no oversight.

When I'm asking questions of ministers, and in particular last week, where minister Mr Vincent didn't seem to know the details about the \$717 million, I worry that he's not really

on top of this, because he really needs to be. When the Treasurer and the minister for Transport say that they have not seen the advice that TT-Line is relying on to say they are solvent, that is a huge red flag and worry for me. If we've learnt anything over the last two years, surely we've learnt that these companies need proper oversight. If these boards and CEOs are not going to take directives from the Premier when he writes them a letter, then they need to be moved on. There doesn't need to be a directive to the Department of Justice to make them legally comply. They just need to be moved on, because we have government businesses for a very good reason. They exist to operate to support the Tasmanian economy and the Tasmanian people. If we didn't believe that, we would just sell them, which is what the Premier was going to do 12 months ago. We actually believe they exist for a strategic purpose: to support Tasmanians and support the Tasmanian people. If they're not going to comply, then those boards and CEOs need to be moved on.

To wrap this up, I want to mention that within the motion itself, I've left blank the date in which the honourable Eric Abetz MP is to table the documents. The reason I've done that is so that I could discuss with the Treasurer today the appropriate date for that to occur. In other debates like this, we've spent half the time debating what date we'll actually bring it and less time on the substantive. The Treasurer and I have, I think, come to an agreement. He's going to move an amendment that also places - if it's in line with our conversation - some caveats around the order, and in particular the advice that's been provided regarding the TT-Line solvency.

I'm happy to be reasonable on this, but for the reasons I stated earlier, we really, really passionately believe that these GBEs, and particularly TT-Line and TasPorts, need to have full parliamentary scrutiny on them right now. I simply can't trust these GBEs to do what they say. This parliament has demonstrated a willingness to do that, and I appreciate the crossbench, the Greens, and at times the government as well for supporting motions, inquiries. The Public Accounts Committee is doing its work because this House referred it to them. It's important that we continue to do this work, because there is still a question about the solvency of TT-Line. Even with this bailout money, there'll still be questions about its finances right up until the old ships are disposed of and the new berth is up and running, and we certainly hope that happens.

I want to finalise this contribution by making the point that this project obviously has had incredible difficulties. It's been a calamity - but the outcome will be incredible. Those new ships are going to be pretty amazing. I haven't booked a ticket, but I certainly hope to get onboard one of those new ships, probably not at Dark Mofu, but hopefully in actual action. I do want to acknowledge - I'm glad I remembered - I went on the site tour a couple of weeks ago, as I know Mr Jaensch did, and the work in the engineering that is going on there, it's way too late, but I tell you what - it's pretty impressive what's happening on site. It's a credit to the team that's gone in to resolve the issues, the infrastructure issues, the people on the ground that have been a part of it. It is pretty impressive, the actual work that's going on there. It's a credit to those that got involved to rescue the project.

[4.15 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** - Acting Speaker, we can see the politics that's being played here. All the difficulties the TT-Line had to be visited upon the government. All the improvements that were just being lauded by the shadow treasurer is all because of the new team. Either you blame the government for the situation we found ourselves in, blame it and then credit the government for what's going on in Devonport. You can't have it both ways and say all the negative stuff

belongs to the government and all the positive stuff somehow belongs to the team that is now, as you describe it, fixing it, and if I might say, I would adopt that language as well.

This is a transparent government, so we support in principle the motion that if you get through the politics of the first two paragraphs - and I would invite the parliament to reject the first two paragraphs, because those two paragraphs indicate a desire to play politics, and to rehash that which the former leader of the Opposition, our Shadow Treasurer, tried to make part of his leadership whilst he was leader. That is, every single day criticise the TT-Line situation. How did that end up for him at that forced election, part of which was about the TT-Line? It was an uplift in the Liberal vote of 3 per cent and Labor suffering their worst-ever vote. It didn't work out too well. Yet here we are 12 months later with the same person trying to prosecute the issue yet again, when we are absolutely, well and truly on the road to recovery of the project. The ships will be plying the waters of Bass Strait within a matter of months.

The work, as the former Leader of the Opposition, now shadow treasurer, has acknowledged, is going exceptionally well in Devonport. The new chair, the new CEO, and the new management team are doing a fantastic job, in conjunction with the government. I'm absolutely pleased, as a former transport minister, having seen the new board appointed and dealing with the issues of that which the government inherited from the then-TT-Line board and CEO. It was a matter of great regret. It is a matter that is clearly a blot. The Premier has apologised, resignations have occurred, the interim chair apologised to the appropriate committee, and so the list goes on.

Labor seems to keep wallowing in the issues of yesteryear rather than dealing with the issues which are that we are on the road to recovery, well and truly on the road to recovery. The board at the time, with great respect to it, had no idea what was required in relation to the port facilities required at Devonport. No rational person today could look at the Devonport situation and say it could have been done for \$90 million. Just a ridiculous proposition. It's like saying, yeah, you can have a pushbike, when in fact you need a bus. Then say, well, the price difference between a bike and a bus is whatever it might be, and that's the cost blowout of the project. The project required a bus at the very beginning, but those in charge were not aware of the need, and thought that they could opt for a pushbike. So, there were real management issues.

In relation to the extra cost of the ships, this has been explained ad nauseam. The ship builder in Germany could no longer go ahead with the project. Therefore, went to market, went to Finland. The Finnish company was in financial strife. They came to the TT-Line board at the time and indicated they would need to charge more or they would go broke. If they were to go broke, we would have had a half-finished or not even that but Finnish ship in Finland from which we could get no recovery. We would have had to go back to the drawing board, start afresh in circumstances where, courtesy of Mr Putin, the ship steel making factory in the Ukraine, Schelling, saw the cost of ship steel escalating way beyond what anybody had anticipated. The Finnish shipyard was able to deal with that and, as an assurance, the Finnish government underwrote the Finnish shipbuilding company to ensure that there would be no more exposure for the Tasmanian taxpayer.

If the board and the government of the day would have ripped up the contract with the Finnish government and gone back to the drawing board, we would have incurred a cost a lot greater than \$80 million. To say that this is all part of the blowout, well, yes, we didn't control

Mr Putin very well. We didn't control the Finnish shipbuilder very well, but most objective people would say that those things were beyond our control.

Again, the nonsense of the solvency of the TT-Line has been raised. The Auditor-General has the capacity to provide an opinion, which he did. I respect the Auditor-General, but with respect, disagree with him and with his pronouncement. Under corporations law, it's never an Auditor-General that makes those assessments. It is the board of directors, and the board of directors would suffer criminal, civil sanctions, reputational sanctions, if they deliberately traded with a company that was insolvent. The men and women on that board have a commercial pedigree combined amongst them, that, with respect, overshadows the opinion that was provided. I have every confidence that the board of directors knew what they were doing in this regard, and we, as a Tasmanian government, and I stand by, would never allow the TT-Line to fail.

To allow it to fail would mean that our tourism industry would be denied about 10 per cent of the visitors to our state, and I'll be saying something about that in the Budget tomorrow as to the numbers that come across that straight courtesy of the TT-Line. We cannot allow it to fail. It is fundamental infrastructure underpinning tens of thousands of jobs in this state.

Getting rid of all the politics, as I said when I opened my remarks, we are a transparent government. We will agree to proposition No. 3 in the motion. We suggest to the House, get rid of the cheap politics in paragraphs (1) and (2), with the pejorative language, et cetera, but in relation to item 3, we are more than happy to provide the information sought with this proviso, and I now move the amendment -

Leave out paragraphs (1) and (2); and

Insert the following subparagraph following subparagraph (3)(b):

except where the information is commercially sensitive or protected by legal privilege, by 28 May 2026'.

That is, in a week's time. I've been advised by TT-Line that they hope that they would be able to have all that information available to the House by that day.

**Mr Bayley** - What day was it?

**Mr ABETZ** - 28 May, which is tomorrow week. In the event that they are able to get everything legal by that time, the information will be provided. If not, conservatively, information will be provided and then if more information can be provided, I would agree that that should be provided as well.

There's the cheap politics in it, but what does the parliament actually want? They want the information. We've got no difficulty with providing the information. The vast bulk of it has been provided in-confidence to the Public Accounts Committee. There are commercial-in-confidence considerations because they are in competition with the private sector, especially when it comes to freight. Those matters need to be considered exceptionally carefully for only one reason, the protection of the company, and who are shareholders in that company? Sure it's

the two ministers officially, but we are the stewards of the Tasmanian taxpayers in this, and we want to ensure that the Tasmanian taxpayer is protected as much as possible.

Criticism was made in relation to the minister for Transport and myself not seeking certain advice in relation to the solvency. We explained that at the time. We didn't see it but we were verbally briefed by the lawyers who had given the legally privileged information to individual board members because they had a right to have good, sound advice confirming that they were not trading with an insolvent company. To try to create the impression that the minister and the Treasurer didn't even avail themselves of the information is to paint the wrong picture. Unfortunately, I think it's nearly mischievously so, because we have put on the record that we got the verbal advice from highly credentialed individuals as to what the situation was, which gave us absolute confidence that the board was acting appropriately and within the appropriate constraints of the corporations law.

We also had the nonsense about hiding the ships in Scotland. How often do I have to explain that if the new board failed in anything it was in trying to hide the ships, if that is what they wanted to do. Each and every time, press release, public information advising as to why the ships were being held there. In relation to *Spirit of Tasmania IV*, originally because the advice at the time was that if we could lease out the vessel in the interim, the most likely market was in the Northern Hemisphere. Why would you spend millions of dollars in bunker fuel taking it to Tasmania only to then spend millions of dollars sending it back to the Northern Hemisphere in the event that there was that opportunity?

Further, we have indicated, and I read out an answer this morning during Question Time, that it was cheaper to hold the vessel in Leith as opposed to Australia. Do you really want the Tasmanian taxpayer to pay more dollars than necessary? This is what Mr Winter was basically saying in his contribution. He would have preferred to have the vessels in Tasmania so he could try to embarrass the government at an extra cost to the Tasmanian taxpayer. That's the cheap politics he's playing. I say to the people, especially on the crossbench, that if you want the information that is being sought, transparent, open, we are more than happy to provide it. But the time for this sort of cheap politics which, might I add, continually does reputational damage to the TT-Line because when a certain comment was made about solvency, for example - I have on good authority that a letter was written to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) about that to which ASIC has still not responded to the best of my information.

**Mr Winter** - We know that because the Premier said it in the House.

**Mr ABETZ** - So one wonders why, if this was a genuine issue, this matter hasn't been pursued.

That said, the reputational damage that is being done each time the TT-Line is denigrated and being 'bailed out' or 'can you guarantee that it'll be solvent in a year or two's time'. Do you know what that does to the customer? The customer wonders is it safe to book, is it safe to put a deposit on a ticket? That compromises the viability of TT-Line. This is cheap politics at the expense of the Tasmanian economy, the TT-Line and the Tasmanian taxpayer at the very end of the day.

We know what the problem was. The problem has been resolved. We have new governance laws coming in. There'll be another tranche coming in shortly. What we are doing

with the board and the CEO and TT-Line is getting things in place to ensure that in a few months' time, a handful of months, we will have the TT-Line with a 40 per cent increased capacity plying the waters of Bass Strait into which our tourism sector and the productive sectors of our economy can grow over the next decades. Keep this in mind. This is a one-off equity injection which will underpin the TT-Line for decades to come.

**Mr Willie** - You've had a couple of them.

**Members** interjecting.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ABETZ** - That is what the Tasmanian people want, and we were given the task at the last election to deliver in this area. The Labor party, having banged the drum without any solutions, saw an historic low in their vote. Our vote increased by 3 per cent and we are getting on with the job of ensuring that the TT-Line is operational with fantastic new ships within a handful of months and we're protecting the Tasmanian taxpayer to the very best of our ability, something which the Labor opposition continually seeks to undermine.

That said, the operational part of the motion we are more than happy to comply with in the circumstances. I understand Mr Winter accepts that it has to be commercial-in-confidence and legal privilege considerations apply, so I would invite the House to knock out the cheap politics, get on with the operational part of the motion and we can get on with business.

**Mr Bayley** - Do you have a copy of your amendment?

**Mr ABETZ** - It has been circulated.

[4.32 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the amendment. It's very interesting listening to the Treasurer talk about the expense to the taxpayer and trying to blame people for asking questions and holding a torch to this government, which is responsible for the cost to the taxpayer to the tune of \$717 million and counting, so it's a bit rich for the Treasurer to try and spread that around when it's his government that has been responsible for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history.

We don't support the amendment because it guts the motion. The Treasurer might like to hear this because I have an alternative amendment. He may withdraw his or we may have to vote against it and see what happens. We would like to preserve first two paragraphs of the motion. We acknowledge that the government has a right to claim immunity and I've spoken about that in this House before, whether it's Cabinet documents, commercial-in-confidence, those sorts of things. We respect that right as part of responsible government and Westminster principles.

This amendment that's being moved by the Treasurer is different to the one that was moved against the Greens' motion in the previous debate. This will omit documents, not redact them, so we will get no idea of the volume or what's there. I think redaction is far better practice so we understand, but I respect that they can claim immunity and for transparency's sake, if the House supports this alternative amendment, there should be a summary of arguments on why

they're claiming those immunities. That would be a transparent way to move forward, not gut the motion as it is, not omit documents.

I won't move our alternative amendment yet because the Treasurer may like to get up and withdraw his and then we can move this one instead, but it would be to insert the following subparagraph following subparagraph (3):

Except where information is commercially sensitive or protected by legal privilege, it may be redacted with a summary of arguments on why.

That would be a far more transparent way to go about this.

I'll just make some broader comments before I sit back down, because my colleague, the shadow treasurer, will move that amendment if it's agreeable and the Treasurer wants to withdraw his. Otherwise we'll just vote against yours and see what happens, and then we'll move ours.

**Mr Abetz** - Are you moving yours now?

**Mr WILLIE** - No, I'm saying you can either withdraw yours or we'll just vote against it, see what happens, see what the House decides, and then we can move this one if you're unsuccessful. I think this is a far fairer, more transparent amendment than the one the Treasurer is proposing. It preserves the motion as drafted, but it also respects the government's right to claim immunity. There's more transparency because rather than omitting documents, it will be a redaction with a summary of arguments on why.

We are in this place at this point in time because of this government and its behaviour. You saw in question time today the way the Treasurer responded to questions. You saw it last sitting when we were asking questions about the bailout and he hid behind semantics. He was evasive, he was deceptive and he said there has been no request for a bailout. I came back and asked the question again about financial assistance. He still refused to answer it that day, but we know the new chair, Mr Ken Kanofski, is an honest person. He often gets questions and he answers them.

When the Infrastructure minister should have been in this House, he was at Devonport doing media. On that same day, the chair was asked the same question and he said, 'Yes, we have requested financial assistance from the government'. Very honest, very different to this Treasurer and how he conducts himself in this House. We can ask questions in Question Time, but it doesn't mean that we get respectful answers or even an attempt to answer, so we're forced to try to order the production of documents.

We've got the Skills and Jobs minister in this House now too - he's just walked in - who takes the same approach. He gets repeated questions about TasTAFE, such as where are the course cuts, where are the job cuts, where are you going to save this \$45 million, and he has refused to answer over and over again. We table an order in this House, it's successful, and what ended up happening? He has to come back and actually give some answers to Tasmanians about the stewardship of TasTAFE and what's happening there. I've spoken to the staff there and morale is very low and they don't know what's going to happen in the future because there are more cuts to come, but it is how this government behaves. They have to be forced kicking

and screaming to provide answers to this House and if that means through orders and motions of this House, that's how it has to be.

The Treasurer can complain all he likes but his conduct in this House in Question Time, refusing to answer questions means that's where we are right now. To have the Premier and the Treasurer of the State of Tasmania just dismiss the opinion of the Auditor-General in the way that they have without giving satisfactory explanations on why I don't think should pass either.

**Mr Abetz** - Corporations law.

**Mr WILLIE** - We've had a verbal briefing on the advice but haven't seen the advice. Given the actual disaster of what's happened, you would think you would ask to see that insolvency advice rather than just taking a verbal briefing. This is how the former treasurer ran into the problems he ran into.

**Mr Abetz** - Spoken like a person who has no understanding.

**Mr WILLIE** - He took people's word for it. He didn't test that and he's ended up on the back bench.

**Mr Abetz** - We tested it with expert legal advice.

**Mr WILLIE** - You have lost the benefit of the doubt on this issue as a government, so we have to extract answers out of this government and hold them accountable because they refuse to provide Tasmanians with the truth.

This motion is really important. It orders the Treasurer to table the following documents: TT-Line's request for the \$506 million equity injection - noting that my amendment will allow any sensitivities or immunity to be redacted; and all advice received by government regarding TT-Line's solvency. We know there's more advice that's not in the public domain. It hasn't even been in front of the ministers. They've just had a verbal briefing. That is what they said.

We need this information around the \$506 million equity injection because the Premier and the Treasurer today were refusing to answer questions about TT-Line's operating position, whether it could make a profit, whether there would be ongoing losses, whether there would be further bailouts. We want to know what TT-Line said when they requested that funding, because we have had a government that has even refused to acknowledge that it's a bailout. They cannot meet their loan conditions. They cannot repay their debts. It is a bailout. It doesn't matter how you dress it up. It is a bailout because the company cannot stand on its own two feet.

We have a Premier and a Treasurer trying to wordsmith that it's not a bailout. That is why we are here. It's really important that we extract this information from the government because they refuse to give it to Tasmanians, and that's what Tasmanians deserve in the aftermath of this absolute disaster at Devonport, and the ferry replacement program.

I urge members not to support the Treasurer's amendment. I'm being reasonable here. We have an amendment that does effectively the same thing, but it's more transparent for this House. There'll be a summary of arguments on why things are being redacted. We won't see omissions of documents. We have no idea that they exist.

**Mr Jaensch** - You do.

**Mr WILLIE** - Sorry?

**Mr Mitchell** - If documents are omitted, we'll never know about them.

**Mr Jaensch** - The members of the PAC know.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. Mr Willie, you have the call.

**Mr WILLIE** - It doesn't gut the motion as drafted and the motion's pretty fair as drafted. The Treasurer can rail at the politics. It wasn't the other members of this House outside of the Liberal Party that stuffed this up.

[4.41 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for bringing this motion on. It's an important motion and I indicate upfront that we do support it. We support maximum transparency, as I know this House and Tasmanian people know. We read this motion as a series of statements of fact and a very logical order of the Treasurer. I acknowledge upfront as part of this debate Mr Winter and his tenacity on this issue. I do want to acknowledge that in this Chamber, as the Leader of the Opposition, he relentlessly pursued and uncovered this as an issue and then on the Public Accounts Committee he has that level of scrutiny and unpacked this issue further. I commend him on that. It is good work because this is a significant issue and it's a fundamentally significant stuff-up on behalf of this government.

No one argues that these *Spirits* are not needed or the berth is not needed. I've done a tour of *Spirit IV* - it must be, because *Spirit V* has only just got here - in the port of Hobart a few months ago. It is a truly impressive piece of infrastructure. It is a truly fantastic piece of infrastructure that will serve us well both in terms of passenger transport and also in terms of freight transport. That is critically important to the Tasmanian economy.

It has been a fiasco. This whole thing has been a fiasco. From our perspective, from the Greens perspective, and I know a lot of other people's perspectives in the Tasmanian community, in many ways it's a very embarrassing hallmark of what we think are things to come when it comes to the Macquarie Point stadium and I'll talk a little bit about that later on.

The \$717 million blowout is astonishing. It was the ship build, it's the ship storage, and it's the berth. It's interesting now to hear the Treasurer talk about no rational person being able to look at the \$90 million cost and think that that's enough and think that's enough to pay for a push bike when you actually really need a bus. I hear that. There're echoes of that when it comes to the Macquarie Point stadium, I have to say that, honourable Treasurer.

It has had an unprecedented impact on the Tasmanian economy. I know the motion mentions a \$500 million impact, including on freight and tourism and hospitality sectors, but really it is very hard to judge the impact of not having these ferries in service and the impact on the Tasmanian economy. Of course, a half-billion-dollar bailout is going to be in the budget tomorrow. It is quite remarkable. It's on top of the \$75 million bailout from 2025, and it's on top of the \$1.4 billion borrowings that was increased from a lower amount. It's quite a remarkable set of figures that underpin this motion and underpin this business. Of course with

our credit rating now reduced, our credit rating now downgraded, the cost of debt is going to be so much greater. The cost of debt and the cost of servicing that debt is going to be so much greater.

When we talk about the half a billion dollars that the government needs to borrow to bail out the TT-Line, servicing that debt is going to come at the expense of the general government sector. That's at the expense of funding of schools, building houses, supporting homeless people and community service organisations. These are the very real impacts of these really poor budget decisions and these poor management decisions.

There's been a fair bit of debate about the Auditor-General, about his determination that the company is insolvent. While I hear the treasurer and the responsibilities of the board members on the TT-Line, I think the half-a-billion-dollar bailout we're going to see in tomorrow's budget effectively vindicates the Auditor-General. It is really clear that the TT-Line could not have continued trading without that bailout.

Clearly, it was rejected by the TT-Line as perverse, but that's based on the assumption that the government would do exactly what it has done, bail it out. It's clear in evidence to PAC. The chairman said if the debt guarantee is exercised by TASCORP, the Treasurer pays the money to TASCORP, TASCORP are kept whole, TT-Line then owe the money to the Treasurer. The Treasurer has broad discretion then as to how to deal with that debt. Only the Treasurer decides to enforce that debt against the company.

Would you become insolvent in those services circumstances? Clearly the treasurer has decided when it comes to that debt simply to inject another half-a-billion dollars into the company to cover it, to deal with it. The chair of the board continued that in that situation Tasmania would lose control over the *Spirit of Tasmania* assets.

I don't think anyone is arguing that we want to lose control of those assets. What we are saying is that this is a huge bailout. It's coming at a huge expense to the budget on top of an expense to the economy. It is a serious problem. It's a serious concern. It also serves as a huge word of caution. In some ways *Spirit VI* is coming.

When it comes to the Macquarie Point stadium, we're already at a \$415 million blowout on that project. This debate has been talking about half a billion dollars and \$717 million in total. When it comes to the Macquarie Point stadium, we're already at \$415 million when it comes to blowout. To take the Treasurer's analogy, I think we're still treating that stadium as a push bike. They still haven't actually named it up and priced it out as the bus that it is, when it comes to the actual build on this stadium. It's not fully designed. It's a seriously constrained site. It's a contaminated site and tenders are only out. We've heard repeatedly that we're not going to know the full and complete cost of the stadium until that tender is delivered. But it's really clear from so many different people's perspectives that \$1.13 billion isn't going to be enough.

It's \$490 million worth of MPDC borrowings that will cost us upwards of \$40 million annually to service, again, from the general government sector. Then there's \$375 million of state borrowings on top of that that will be transferred to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

Under questioning from us and others on the crossbench, it is clear that the government is taking second best when it comes to the tenderers who are passing through the gates to actually offer tenders on the stadium. To have a company like Webuild who is alleged to be trying to gouge \$2.2 billion out of the New South Wales government over the Airport Metro project; it's unconscionable that we have this developer, this construction company in the mix.

I've got to say, the letter that the Treasurer tabled from Webuild last night, I believe it was, it's really not worth the paper it's written on in regard to the allegations and the concerns that have been raised. It's a significant concern.

If we think there's a problem when it comes to the *Spirits* and the *Spirits* saga, I believe we ain't seen nothing yet when it comes to the Macquarie Point stadium.

I think I express again the same disappointment that many people in the community have that the Labor Party aren't delivering the same level of scrutiny on that project as they have here with the *Spirits*. If we were, you wouldn't have supported it in the first place.

Let me talk quickly to the amendments. We're not going to support the Treasurer's amendments. We think the content in subsections 1 and 2 is important context to this motion, and losing it would do the House a disservice. When it comes to his amendment to subsection 3, 'except where the information is commercially sensitive or protected by legal privilege', I understand by that, that we may not get the documents at all if they're commercially sensitive. Going back to a previous debate in this place, we completely understand that issues of a legal nature or commercially sensitive information can be redacted and should be redacted, but this doesn't do it. However, I make the point in relation to what I've seen, and I may talk on it more, the motion that the Leader of the Opposition has flagged I think loses some of the potency of the opportunity here, which is to see these documents in camera. Fair enough - redact them in terms of what you lay on the table here in the Chamber, but at least give members of this House the opportunity to see them unredacted, as happened with the whole estate business case for Marinus, and as was committed in a previous debate in this House.

[4.52 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I must say, it's encouraging to hear Mr Winter and Mr Bayley, no doubt others who will speak, who have commented on the quality of the work that is underway at East Devonport and also on the quality of the ships that are now in Australian waters. I agree with them. I'm one of the people, like Mr Winter, who's had the opportunity of several visits to the site over the last year and more, and seen the pace of work that's underway. We understand there's a very low level of incidents or variations on that work. Also, to get regular updates that it remains within the approved budgets and time frames for this current parcel of work. So, I'm glad of that. I'm glad that the outcome is something that people seem to be looking forward to and happy with.

What I'm interested in is, which bits of it would they like not to have had? When the statements are made about \$717 million of waste, it implies that there's been money spent for no reason that we could've done without.

**Mr Willie** - If you managed the project better, you wouldn't have had to spend it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which aspects of the East Devonport berth - which as others and I think Mr Bayley has acknowledged and Mr Abetz spoke to - in terms of your \$717 million figure,

\$400 million of that is the difference between what we've got now and what we would've got for \$90 million at Berth 1 with the original plans for that site. Which is not comparing apples and apples at all. This is a radically different project to the one which was priced at \$90 million several years ago, and which would never have done the job that the new facilities that are being built right now will.

**Mr Willie** - I don't think you're right there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Information has been provided through the Public Accounts Committee and put on the public record in terms of the make-up of the \$717 million claimed cost overrun, \$403 million of which is attributed to the Devonport terminal. The cost difference between the \$90 million project originally proposed and the \$493 million project that's just about delivered now which everyone is so happy with.

**Mr Willie** - It's because TT-Line didn't scope the project properly there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is it a blowout or is it a different project?

**Mr Willie** - It's a blowout. They didn't scope the project properly in the Mersey River.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. The only person who should be speaking is Mr Jaensch.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, it's a completely different project. The point there is, which parts of this project that everyone is happy with and pleased with at the moment, and prepared to be proud of, would you have done without?

**Mr Mitchell** - When you're in a hole, stop digging.

**Mr Willie** - He only gets one interjection.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Unless he moves to a different chair, apparently, then he gets to do it twice more.

The project that's on the ground, that is taking shape now that everyone agrees is fantastic and will serve us well, is not the project that is your baseline for calculating your \$717 million. The other significant component of the \$717 million wastage spoken about is the vessel procurement process, which is mainly based on two instances of shipbuilders entering financial difficulties. They're not matters of choice. The original shipbuilder, FSG, entered financial difficulties and could no longer build our ships, and we had to go and find a new builder. A new builder was found, and when that shipbuilder entered financial difficulties halfway through the build of our ships, there were decisions taken to ensure that our ships could be delivered.

Without those decisions and without the costs that they incurred, we wouldn't have ships now. Without the \$400 million investment in a revised plan for the berthing facilities now being delivered, and without the \$280 million investment in the changes to the shipbuilders and the securing of the delivery of our vessels, we wouldn't have ships.

I believe everybody here who has visited the ships, and who has visited the facilities at Devonport, can see that they are quality items, and that they will serve Tasmania well for a number of decades to come. What I can't understand is how the members opposite, in framing

this motion, and those who intend to support it, count all of those costs as waste, at the same time as appreciating the quality and the value of the investment that's been taken.

While I'm on my feet, and I'm not quite sure which version of the Labor motion I should be referring to, I want to pick up on a couple of other points. There is reference in their original motion to 'each year of delay to delivery of the new vessels estimated to cost the Tasmanian economy \$500 million'. I haven't been able to find a source for that.

**Mr Mitchell** - Saul Eslake

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. Saul Eslake, on 22 November, published a report called Choices Have Consequences: Replacing TT-Line *Spirits of Tasmania*, in which he says:

Each year's delay in the delivery of the replacements for the *Spirits of Tasmania* compared to TT-Line's original intentions means up to 184,200 fewer visitors to Tasmania each peak season, which in turn implies potential losses of the order of \$350 million per annum to the Tasmanian economy.  
[tbc]

Now, Labor should -

**Mr Winter** - What year was it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I gave the date. Labor should remember this, because they paid for that report. They commissioned and paid for that report from Mr Eslake. He did the work for them. He discloses that in the opening statement on his paper. Seriously, Labor bought that number, and you own that number. You should remember what it was before using it in here, inflating it and misquoting your own number.

There were also the matters referred to that the Treasurer has ably commented on regarding the nature of the new capital injection, the needs for it, the reasons for it. That's been well rehearsed here and it was covered in Question Times as well. Also, there is the matter of insolvency, and the original motion asked to note the Auditor-General's opinion. In fairness also, for the record, readers to this and listeners should note the TT-Line board chairman's response and the other materials that have been tabled through PAC by him regarding the basis for their opinion there.

These matters have been well ventilated through a very long and continuing process of inquiry through the Public Accounts Committee, which I serve on, as does Mr Winter. I do note that minister Mr Vincent has, through PAC, offered and come good on his offer, for the TT-Line board and his office to provide detailed briefings and confidential briefings as well on commercially sensitive matters.

There has been an unprecedented access for members from across this parliament to information regarding the commercial decision-making that sits behind a lot of the numbers that we see here today. It's in full knowledge of that in which Mr Winter frames the questions he's putting here today.

I understand that there is discussion going on between leaders on the nature of mechanisms for releasing what information can be released safely. As Mr Winter would know,

because it's been raised in the confidential briefings held and the context of PAC, there are matters that the TT-Line board holds very sensitively given that they are operating in a competitive market when it comes to freight, for example, and have repeatedly explained to us why they are not keen to be as open and sharing about their projections for freight and their projections for revenue for freight when they're operating in a competitive market on Bass Strait, and we understand that.

The questions that have been raised in terms of the amendments that are being spoken about need to be able to accommodate those sensitivities adequately. They need to be able to be done and that information prepared, redacted, modified, explained in such a way that is feasible within the time-frames that they're being given to do it. I understand that's what the Treasurer is seeking to achieve in in discussion with the other parties.

I'll return to the top. I think we have here a project that Tasmania needs, that Tasmanians will be proud of. Those of us who've had an up-close look at the work that's underway and had the opportunity to ask lots of questions, have been very impressed with the competence and the discipline of the people who are delivering it. I can't understand which part of that claim considers to be waste that we could do without.

**Time expired.**

[5.02 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, when I mentioned in my substantive contribution that the Treasurer was going to move an amendment, I didn't expect to see that he was seeking to remove sections (1) and (2) in this version of the amendment, which I have to say I'm disappointed in because most of them are statements of fact. The \$717 million doesn't come from me, doesn't come from anyone other than the TT-Line chair who gave the information.

**Mr Jaensch** - You're the one that called it waste.

**Mr Abetz** - He never said it was wasted.

**Mr WINTER** - I just said it was the overspent on a bungled project. The \$506 million taxpayer funded bailout to TT-Line: that's happening. The government announced it. The interesting part, from my perspective, is that the Treasurer chose not to talk about the concerns regarding the local content that are listed in section 1 (d) and is in fact, rather than having addressed them on the floor, he's seeking to have it deleted from history. This section says:

on 11 December 2024, responded to an Order of the House with a list of expenditure on *Spirits IV* and *V* which classified engines built in Finland by Wärtsilä as 'local content', a false claim that has not been corrected.

It is a serious accusation to make, and I've made it in a substantive motion. I don't think just deleting it without speaking about it is appropriate, either.

The simple fact is this House was furnished with a document and a list of items that were supposed to be local content and that list includes engines built in Finland as local content. The House has been misled. It has been some time since it was misled, but the record should be corrected. I haven't done anything other than invite, through this motion, a recognition of the

House that we were misled, that the list we've ordered and was thankfully provided by the Treasurer, the then-minister for Transport, Eric Abetz, was false and the record still remains as it was. That document sits as part of the history and record of this House that the Tasmanian government delivered engines as local content when in fact, we know those engines were built in Finland.

What this amendment does is seeks to wash away the history and the truth, and the truth is the list was wrong, the list was false, the House was misled, and I'm simply asking through this motion for that to be acknowledged by the House.

The amendment doesn't just deal with this issue of sensitive or protected legal privilege; it actually guts history and the truth from coming out and I thought it was very telling that the Treasurer didn't speak about it. We'll vote against the amendment, as the Leader of the Opposition -

**Mr Jaensch** - Do we make those engines in Tasmania?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. Mr Winter, please continue.

**Mr WINTER** - Do you think those engines were built in Tasmania?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Through the Chair, please, Mr Winter.

**Mr Willie** - You were claiming it was local content

**Mr WINTER** - What happened was your government - you were part of it - there was this guy named Peter Gutwein, he was the premier and treasurer of the state and he thought he could do anything. The most arrogant man I've ever met. What he did was stand here and say that because his plan to build the ships in Australia couldn't work, he was going to make sure that \$100 million worth of content was built right here in Tasmania. He said it in this place.

Then we followed up and finally ordered the information on what local content was. In that list provided by the honourable Eric Abetz, then-minister, was a list of items which were not built in Tasmania, and one of those was the engine on the ship which was not built in Tasmania, it was built in Finland. That's not local content - that's the point. No, it can't be built in Tasmania. That's the whole point. All you needed to do is know that when the former premier, Peter Gutwein, was going through this one-year delay, that has caused a lot of this waste by pretending as though the ships could be built in Tasmania or in Australia, which they could not.

Before I was interrupted: we will vote against this amendment because it erases history and the truth, and we have an amendment - because I've already spoken on the substantive, the Leader of the Opposition will move - which will deal with these matters in a much more comprehensive and reasonable way where the House can have confidence that it is seeking and gaining the transparency that it wants.

**Amendment negatived.**

**Mr Jaensch** - The ayes have it.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Is a division required?

**Mr Jaensch** - You want to divide?

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr Abetz** - I'm trying to work it out. I don't want to waste the time of the House, that's all.

**Mr Mitchell** - Not a good week to get the numbers wrong, Eric.

**Ms Dow** - This project and numbers.

**Ms Haddad** - He just used the wrong terminology - language is important in this place, apparently. Someone trained as a lawyer would understand the important of accuracy of language.

**Mr Abetz** - Call it on the voices, we won't divide.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Yes, I called the noes because the noes were louder.

**Mr Mitchell** - Hear, hear.

**Mr Jaensch** - They were -

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Louder.

**Mr Jaensch** - Louder?

**Mr Mitchell** - Excellent Chairing, Acting Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Yes. No division required?

**Mr Abetz** - No division required.

[5.08 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - I don't know what's going on over there. They're arguing with each other, they don't know whether they want to call a division or not, which is -

**Mr Pearce** - We're supporting each other. We're trying not to waste the parliament's time.

**Mr Abetz** - Exactly. That's all.

**Mr Mitchell** - It's just habit.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's what they'll say, they're trying not to waste the parliament's time, but what they're really doing is trying not to show Tasmanians they're not in control of this House as often as often as people would think.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Mr Willie, and everyone in the House, I just remind you that debate will be finishing on this at 5.25 p.m., sum up will be at 5.20 p.m. We have a bit to get through, so, please.

**Mr WILLIE** - To anyone watching along, what is going on here is the Liberal Party is quite often not calling divisions these days because they do not want to reveal how many lost votes they are having on Wednesdays in particular. That is why they're not calling divisions. There was a bit of argument over there.

**Mr Abetz** - How immature. That is really what's going on.

**Mr Jaensch** - You want to spend ten minutes doing this?

**Mr WILLIE** - They got to the point where, 'We don't want to call the division', 'We're trying to save time,' is what they said.

**Ms Haddad** - You didn't even call a division on your own motion. You just don't want people to know you're losing votes in this place.

**A member** - It's listed; it's lost.

**Mr WILLIE** - I will move a new amendment, which is an amendment moved in my name. I move -

*Remove paragraph (3) and*

*Insert instead the following paragraph:*

- (3) Orders the Honourable Eric Abetz to table the following documents by 28 May 2026:
- (a) TT-Line's request for the \$506 million equity injection; and
  - (b) All advice received regarding TT-Line's solvency. Where parts of that information is commercially sensitive or protected by legal privilege, it may be redacted, along with a summary of the reasons for redaction.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Mr Willie, we will need a copy of that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, I will pass that one over.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The Clerks don't have one.

**Mr WILLIE** - This is an amendment that preserves the motion intact. It respects that the government has a right to claim immunity. This is a sensible way forward where the government can provide the information being requested by this House but protect commercial sensitivities and things that it's claiming. I urge Members to proceed with this motion which is a sensible compromise, and I'll put that to the House.

[5.11 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Treasurer) - Acting Speaker, Very quickly, for the record, for the smooth operation of the House, unless you want to make an absolute, principled stand on an issue, if you know you're going to lose the vote, my view is that there's no sense in dividing the House. It's on the record that a vote has been lost according to the call of the Speaker or Acting Speaker, so, to waste 10 minutes of the day just to do that has never been really in my consideration. Then with all of that, who was in a muddle in relation to his amendment but the Leader of the Opposition, which is one of the reasons why that old saying is you point a finger, there are three pointing back. I think that may have just happened to the Leader of the Opposition.

That said, we don't oppose the amendment. I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that the best endeavours will be made in relation to the reasons for the redaction and it may be in some cases that the explanation will be just 'commercial in confidence', 'legal privilege', but if further information can be provided, keeping in mind some of this information is the board's information and before it's released it may well have to go to a board meeting for approval for release and we're only given one week in this motion. We support the amendment. We are a transparent government; happy to provide the information that's been provided to PAC, which is the parliamentary authority, if you like, or the parliamentary committee appointed by the parliament to deal in these things in a confidential manner. I understand that PAC has been satisfied with all the information provided by TT-Line. That has happened from a government point of view. We're happy to comply, albeit on the caveat that I've indicated, which I had previously indicated privately to the Leader of the Opposition, but that's on the record and will support the amendment.

[5.13 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, we will support the amendment. Any increase in transparency is welcome and it acknowledges the need for commercially sensitive and protected legal information to be redacted and we accept that.

It's not well worded, but it makes sense and we accept the Treasurer's acceptance of this. I know the intent of it is going to be followed through with. It is a shame we're not also seeking to look at the unredacted documents in camera, as has been established in other motions in this place, including today.

**Mr Willie** - I won't say that on the public record. There are committees.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Acknowledging this a motion of the Labor Party and this is their amendment, we are willing to support it. We don't need to tie up the House's time any further. This is welcome. We'll back it in.

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, as per my colleague's statements before, we were prepared to support the amendment. Noting also that we need to be able to provide the owners of that information with the time and resources to be able to faithfully meet its intent, which gets more complicated the more that you ask for it to be full information redacted with explanation. That's a caveat that needs to be there. They need to be given the opportunity to do that to ensure the safety of their business as well as faithfully meeting the requirements of any order or decision of the House.

In saying that, I'd also note for the record that this is a little bit different to parliament requiring a minister to produce budget information relating to a government department under their control, which we've seen a fair bit of. We're getting a bit of practice in that. This is a company that exists and operates under different legislation - its own legislation - but also corporations law and other accounting and financial management responsibilities, which they need to honour under the law in doing their job properly. This is not the government with information that the government owns deciding what it wants to share with other elected people in this place, but it is about a company that Tasmania owns that operates in a market and has responsibilities under national law as well. They have to have the freedom to acquit their responsibilities to their shareholders, to their obligations under accounting law, under various other legislation, and statutory obligations that they have as an organisation. We need to respect and honour that when we put restrictions around their time frames, the manner of their reporting, et cetera, because with all the investment that we're making, how important TT-Line is to Tasmania as our connection to the mainland for transport freight, for visitors, and tourists alike, how important and irreplaceable it is to our economy. What we don't need is for it to fall foul of its corporate obligations and be thrown into another period of distraction or instability because of a legal matter created by an order from this place. We need to ensure that they're able to do that.

I want to again thank the minister, Mr Vincent, for the way he has made the board available to the parliament through its Public Accounts Committee, which is the right place for it to work. There are conventions there to deal with sensitive and commercial matters. I would like to have on the record in this debate that in meeting the requirements of any order or direction arising from this, that the PAC still exists as a backup. It has oversight and it has powers to provide the parliament with assurance on things that the parliament may not be able to see as well. This is not about replacing PAC's role. We need to be able to give the company freedom to protect its interests as a company that we own, which therefore are ultimately our interest, Tasmania's interests. The parliament can take confidence that for matters that are outside the reach of the parliament under those arrangements directly as a whole, that the PAC may have the opportunity to see the next layer of information under established protocols that we operate with every week on a whole range of matters. With that, I'll conclude my contribution and with the Treasurer and others, endeavour to make sure that we give the parliament what it's asked for.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I wanted to thank members for supporting the motion. This is been well documented and well and thoroughly gone through, but it requires it. I'm not going to take any further time because people can tell I had forgotten I had to do a summary. Thank you for supporting the motion.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Motion, as amended, agreed to.**

**MOTION**

**Mental Health**

[5.21 p.m.]

**Prof RAZAY** (Bass) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House:

- (1) Acknowledges that Tasmania is facing a growing epidemic of mental health disorders affecting people of all ages, with one in five Tasmanians experiencing a mental health condition in any year.
- (2) Recognises the importance of early intervention to support good mental health and quality of life.
- (3) Agrees that mental health is a priority public health issue.
- (4) Calls on the Tasmanian Government to:
  - (a) work to strengthen early intervention and prevention measures to address mental health challenges before they escalate into acute or long-term conditions; and
  - (b) work collaboratively across all tiers of government and the healthcare, business, education and community sectors to improve mental health outcomes.

One in five Tasmanians experience a mental health condition in any year. One in five. While we often talk about mental health in statistics, percentages, and waiting lists, we must not lose sight of the fact that behind every number is a real person, a real family and often real heartbreak. In Tasmania, too many people are falling through the cracks of a system that is simply not coping. Families are exhausted, communities are struggling, and vulnerable people are going without the care they desperately need.

There is a knowing sense of job insecurity, wealth inequality and housing unaffordability, with many Tasmanian's needing to work more than one job to make ends meet, leading to burnout. Our society seems to be suffering from the rushing syndrome: that state of always being in a rush with no time to chat or for leisure activities. The fact is, Tasmania is facing some of the most severe mental health challenges in Australia.

Here are some sobering statistics for you. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020-22 figures paint a shocking reality with 19.8 per cent of Tasmanians, that's 88,700 people, reporting a mental health condition in the previous 12 months. Between 2009 and 2022, the proportion of Tasmanian's diagnosed with anxiety or depression increased from 21 to 37 per cent. Sadly, the data indicate Tasmanians die by suicide at a rate higher than the national average, with suicide being a leading cause of death among Tasmanian's aged 25 to 44 years. Of the 693 deaths listed on Tasmanian Suicide Registry between 2012 and 2020, around two-thirds, 67 per cent, had at least one previous diagnosis of mental illness.

According to Anglicare Tasmania's 2025 Mind the Gap report, one in every two Tasmanians aged between 16 and 85 experiences a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime. That's one of the highest rates in the nation. The report paints a deeply concerning picture of a mental health system that is fragmented, under-resourced and failing many people with complex needs. The crisis is especially severe for Tasmanians experiencing poverty, housing insecurity, unemployment, social isolation, substance dependency, and chronic physical illnesses.

Mental and physical well-being are intimately related, with mental illnesses among the greatest causes of disabilities, decrease quality of life, decrease productivity, high morbidity and mortalities, behaviour risk factors like smoking and alcohol consumption, drug use and also physical inactivity. People living with mental illnesses are more likely to have physical health issues like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and arthritis, as their physical health needs are often overshadowed by their mental illness.

Compared to the general population, Tasmanians with mental illnesses are more than twice as likely to have asthma, 19 per cent versus 8 per cent; arthritis, 19 per cent versus 8 per cent; and almost twice as likely to have diabetes, 9 per cent versus 5 per cent, and are more likely to have heart disease, stroke disease or vascular disease, 7 per cent versus 4 per cent. Moreover, people with severe mental illness have a shorter life expectancy of 12 to 16 years less than the general population, often due to preventable physical health conditions going untreated.

While acknowledging that the delivery of mental health services to those in need of acute care is often overstretched and reactive in nature, it's equally important to highlight community-led initiatives that fosters preventive mental health habits before a crisis emerges. Grassroots programs, peer-support networks, local well-being groups and safe welcoming community spaces can play a vital role in reducing social isolation, encouraging help-seeking behaviours and promoting everyday practices that support long term mental well-being. By investing not only in acute intervention but also in prevention and community resilience, mental health systems can become more holistic, accessible and sustainable. This is why I believe we need to foster a culture of prevention.

The rise in mental health disorders is linked to a decline in physical activities. Research shows that regular exercise is associated with lower risk of anxiety and depression, and it improves stress tolerance and overall well-being. Movement is a powerful protective factor. Your mind and body are intimately connected. Research shows that movement helps in supporting mental health and indeed exercise is often used as adductive treatment for anxiety and depression as well as psychotherapy or medication. This is why I am reinforcing my message of the importance of government action in providing the necessary safe pathways and well-lit walkways for people to exercise. After all, it's free and provides a key early intervention because later involvement can cost not only individuals their quality of life but also the community millions through spiralling health care demands which we cannot keep up with.

The simple act of taking a daily walk can be powerful in improving mental health. Walking improves the mood by releasing serotonin, your natural mood stabiliser; dopamine, your brain reward chemical, bringing a sense of pleasure and accomplishment; and endorphins. Moreover, walking in a natural environment has been shown to reduce stress and improve cognition. Walking also encourages social connection, which is so important because loneliness is increasingly recognised as a significant mental health risk factor.

People who are more spiritual have also been shown to have better mental health. Longitudinal studies have shown that regular religious service attendance, compared to those who never attend religious services, have been linked with a lower risk of anxiety, depression, suicide, heavy drinking and all causes of mortality. Moreover, spirituality is becoming popular among young Australians, with 38 per cent identifying as spiritual. Religion and spirituality promote values like humility, kindness, love and compassion, which foster positive emotion and sense of purpose by encouraging a focus on the need of others rather than ourselves.

Seeking happiness is perhaps the main purpose in life, but many people find it hard to achieve genuine happiness. My first interest in happiness came in 2008 when I was on my sabbatical leave in Oxford. I used to go daily to Christ Church and enjoyed listening to the boy choristers singing. One day the Dean was preaching and said the most important teaching of Jesus was faith and love and hope. Then I thought about it and I said, 'But I always used to say to people, the most important teaching of Jesus was faith, love and happiness, so how come I changed the word 'hope' to 'happiness'?' I went to the Bodleian Library, one of the oldest libraries in the world, and spent the day writing my reflection on happiness through my life. When I finished, I realised that I had wrongly spelt happiness as 'happyness'. Then I looked at my misspelling and I said, 'But I like that misspelling, because it actually tells us the secret of happiness. 'I' means me, while 'Y' means you'. So, the secret of happiness is about giving and serving others.

Despite the stated growing mental health epidemic, no-one seems willing to address the deeper causes driving the overwhelming wave of stress and anxiety and hopelessness that is crippling our society. Across every generation, one factor keeps emerging - financial pressures. Young Australians today are experiencing some of the highest rates of mental health disorders ever recorded.

While modern life and social isolation play a role, there have also been profound economic changes over the past 30 years that have transformed the lives of young people. Previous generations could attend university without crippling debt, find secure employment and realistically aspire to buy a home and build a future. Today, many young Australians leave university carrying enormous debt, enter an insecure job market and feel locked out of home ownership entirely. For many, the dream of stability has become a source of constant stress.

Parents are also under extraordinary pressure. Families are working longer hours simply to keep up with rising mortgages, energy bills, groceries, transport costs and school expenses. Some parents I talked to say they feel they have been forced into financial survival mode, sacrificing time with their children just to stay afloat. Even our seniors, the generation that helped build modern Australia, are increasingly anxious about their future and too often they are treated as a burden instead of being respected as some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

One of the hardest things, I remember a few months ago I met a wonderful, retired lady in her late 70s, and she said to me, 'I'm really stressed if I live until 90, because I don't feel my super will last that long.'

At the centre of this crisis is the massive increase in personal debt, driven largely by the relentless rise in house prices over the past 25 years. Successive governments, supported by banks and the housing industry, have continued to adopt policy that inflates housing demand

while wages stagnate in real terms. Every slowdown in the property market has been met with more incentive, more borrowing and more debt. The result is a society where people are working harder than ever but feeling less secure than ever.

Anglicare Tasmania's broader research consistently demonstrates the connection between insecure housing and poor mental health outcomes. Tasmanians facing homelessness, rental stress, or unstable accommodation experience significant increases in psychological distress. When individuals are worried about eviction, sleeping in cars, or moving between temporary accommodation, recovery becomes almost impossible.

Safe and stable housing is not separate from mental healthcare. It is a core component of mental wellbeing. Therefore, mental illness does not discriminate. It affects young people and old, people in cities and regional towns, workers, students, parents, carers, veterans and vulnerable members of our community. Therefore I commend this motion to the House.

[5.37 p.m.]

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise today in support of the honourable member for Bass's motion and to highlight our government's ongoing commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

As you would expect, any discussion of this topic can bring up issues for some people and so I remind those present and also those who may be listening that if this discussion triggers any issues for you, please reach out for assistance through one of the many 24-hour supports available such as Access Mental Health on 1800 332 388, Lifeline on 13 11 14, or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the honourable member for his ongoing passion and commitment to the health, mental health, and wellbeing and happiness of Tasmanians. It's conversations like today's motion that can help us reduce the stigma that can be associated with mental health.

We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. Feeling well in our minds is just as important as feeling well in our bodies, and sometimes our minds get tired or unwell, just like our bodies do. Some people live with a mental illness long-term, just as some people live with a physical condition long-term. We know that around two-in-five Australians experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. We also know that poor mental health costs the Australian economy approximately \$220 billion per year.

Mental wellbeing isn't just about feeling happy or being free from illness. It helps us handle life's ups and downs, bounce back from tough days, and stay connected to our communities and the people and things we care about. Caring for our mental health and seeking and accessing help when we need some extra support helps us to engage fully in life. That's why our government will ensure that mental health and wellbeing will feature prominently in Tasmania's new 20-Year Preventive Health Strategy, The Health Revolution, a bold, long-term plan to place prevention at the heart of our health and mental health systems and communities.

Preventive health is something that I am confident that all members of this House can agree is vital. By shifting the focus from reactive care to prevention, we can work together to

reduce long-term pressures on our health and mental health system and build a healthier, more resilient Tasmania for generations to come.

The Health Revolution acknowledges that good health is shaped by far more than clinical care, but as the member said, it is also influenced by employment, education, housing, transport, food security and community connection. I'm excited to release the final strategy next month, with the first action plan to commence on 1 July 2026. A key goal of the strategy is for all Tasmanians to experience good mental health and wellbeing, feel connected, valued and hopeful for the future and can cope with life's challenges, build and maintain strong relationships and find meaning and purpose.

The health revolution will complement our ongoing work to ensure that mental wellbeing is actively promoted and protected and that people can access the care and support that they need, when they need it. Through our long term plan for mental health, Rethink 2020, our government has been making significant changes to transform Tasmania's mental health system. We're taking a best practice approach to building a contemporary integrated model of mental health care so that people can get more holistic support, with over \$564 million invested over the last decade.

We've worked to refocus mental health services from predominantly hospital based settings to now deliver supports that reach out to Tasmanians in the communities where they live. The mental health reform program commenced in 2019, implementing the 20 recommendations from the Mental Health Integration Taskforce to implement a range of new mental health services right across the state.

Working closely together with the Mental Health Council of Tasmania, Primary Health Tasmania, our community sector and importantly, people with lived experience, we've delivered initiatives that are making a real difference to Tasmanians, including the Peacock Centre, the Mental Health Emergency Response Service, Youth Mental Health Hospital in the Home, the Central Intake and Referral Service, the Lived Experience Training Hub and a rapid inreach service for residential aged care facilities in the North and North West.

The next stage of our plan, Rethink and Beyond, will build on these strong foundations while strengthening prevention and early intervention. Our government will continue to innovate with new initiatives to enhance integration, expand access to supports in each region of the state and build a sustainable workforce across the sector. Future priorities in the mental health and wellbeing space will also include better meeting the needs of specific population groups to ensure access to services and supports are seamless, affordable and equitable. Addressing stigma and discrimination, fostering connection and compassion through place-based initiatives and ensuring psychosocial supports are available, accessible and person-centred for all Tasmanians who need them.

While we can be proud of the progress made through Rethink 2020 and the dedication of our fantastic mental health workforce, community partners and Tasmanians with lived experience, we know that there is much more to do. Mental health affects every family, every workplace, and every community in our state, and it demands a shared commitment to prevention, early intervention, and compassionate care. I'm committed to engaging widely and meaningfully with the community to ensure the new mental health strategy reflects the needs of Tasmanians, and I encourage all Tasmanians to take part in the consultation now underway.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

More information is available on the Department of Health website. Thanks Professor Razay, member for Bass, for bringing this motion to the House.

[5.43 p.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this motion and to thank the member for Bass, Professor Razay, on an issue crucial to the future health of Tasmanians and Tasmania. If we are to truly care about improving mental health outcomes in Tasmania, we've also got to become equally serious about prevention and early intervention. We rightly speak of mental health as a crisis demanding urgent attention. The honourable member for Bass, Professor Razay, reports that one in five Tasmanians experience mental health issues. With the strain that puts on loved ones, parents, children, workers and older people, that figure multiplies that number many fold. In other words, mental health touches everyone who loves, cares for or simply knows a sufferer.

The causes are multiple and on going beyond cost of living, homelessness and life debilitating mental illness. The trouble is that we often only respond at crisis point. That means we're constantly trying to put out the fire when it's already taken hold, treating consequences rather than preventing causes. Preventative health sits at the core of my thinking and was a core of my campaign with my constituents about the health of the state and of its people. Prevention works. Simply promoting healthy eating and physical activity have an impact on our general health, as does screening for disease. The same logic applies to mental health. Early support, stable housing, social connection, school-based wellbeing programs, access to counselling, community engagement, and timely intervention all reduce the likelihood that distress becomes long-term illness. That makes capital and recurrent investment in early intervention for mental health issues a very good investment in our state's wellbeing and in our economy. Mental and physical health are of course connected. Poor mental health worsens chronic physical conditions. Poor physical health drains our mental resilience. Every single dollar invested in prevention and in early intervention, where appropriate, is money in the bank, metaphorically and literally. Crisis management is costly and is simply far too late.

Professor Razay calls for collaboration across government, healthcare, business, education, and the community sector. That is common sense. Those I speak to in physical and mental health professions unanimously agree that preventative care needs far greater focus from parliament, government and is chronically underfunded. They make the valid point that investment in preventative care will relieve the load down the line on emergency care that is far more expensive and a greater drain on health resources. A healthy future for Tasmania relies on caring for the mind and the body together, intervening early, and recognising that healthier communities are stronger, fairer, and ultimately more affordable communities for all of us. I support the motion.

[5.47 p.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to respond on behalf of the Greens to the motion brought by Professor Razay. I want to begin by thanking Professor Razay for putting forward this motion. I can indicate the Greens will be supporting it. Mental health is important on an individual level and at a community or society level. Every single person experiences emotional ups and downs, gets stressed, and can feel overwhelmed at times, and these are normal human responses to life. Good mental health provides the resources to navigate these normal emotions okay most of the time - to ride the wave so to speak and get through what needs to be done - learning, working, participating in the community.

However, we know a growing number of people are experiencing mental ill health in Tasmania and for them life is overwhelming and difficult and getting through each day is hard. Around 22 per cent of Australians have experienced a mental illness in the last 12 months, including anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and alcohol and other drug addictions. While almost 43 per cent of Australians experience mental ill health at some point in their life, in Tasmania those figures are much higher. We have the highest rate of mental illness in the country, with over half of Tasmanians experiencing a mental health condition in their lifetime. It is clear that mental ill health is a significant issue in Tasmania and the need for mental health services is large.

I want to comment here on early intervention for mental health. We know that early intervention is important. It involves identifying early signs and symptoms of mental ill health and providing supports and services that address these symptoms and prevent them escalating and progressing to more severe mental health conditions that are more overwhelming and difficult to recover from. Early intervention is about relatively small but meaningful supports and services that make a real difference. Whether it is early intervention for people with mental ill health or care for people with more severe mental health conditions, access to mental health services is critical and sadly what we hear time and time again is that services in Tasmania are not meeting the needs of Tasmanians.

I heard the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing list a whole range of services the government is providing. Like all of us in this room, I'm sure the Greens thank the many skilled staff who provide mental health services in Tasmania. Their work is important and highly valued. Thank you too to the community service organisations that also provide great support and care to people with mental ill health. I want to acknowledge the work of the Mental Health Council and the many organisations that come under their umbrella.

I also want to acknowledge here the families and friends of people living with mental health conditions, who offer care and informal but essential support and live with the impact of mental health conditions every day also. There are many good people doing good work in the mental health space and we all appreciate that work. However, it's unfortunate that mental health services in Tasmania are not sufficient to meet the level of need. My office receives many emails about mental health services, with people reporting a lack of services that result in them being unable to access the support they need. The stories are terrible and concerning, and particularly given the importance of early intervention - because if people can't access support early, then their needs can escalate and grow, and lack of services can exacerbate mental ill health and worsen people's mental health.

It's not just people contacting my office about the lack of services for mental health that highlight this problem. In September last year, Anglicare Tas identified many gaps in mental health services in their report, aptly titled Mind the Gap. They described services as fragmented and found that people have difficulty accessing and affording visits to GPs and psychologists. These are the very health professionals people would go to for early intervention, yet they cannot access them. The Anglicare report also highlighted the negative experiences people have with crisis intervention, including long waits in the emergency department at Launceston General Hospital and limited inpatient beds.

There is also a lack of psychosocial supports outside the NDIS, a situation that's only going to be exacerbated when the federal Labor government start throwing people off the NDIS in the very near future. For those people experiencing co-occurring mental health conditions

and alcohol and other drug use, which is many people, there is a lack of coordination between services and more gaps. I've heard from people who've not been able to access support from mental health or alcohol and other drug services and are instead bounced back and forward between the two.

There are other mental health service gaps. Right now, there is a severe lack of service in perinatal and infant mental health. I've heard of situations where mothers in need of crisis support have not been able to find any services specific to their needs. The lack of mental health support for adolescents is also something we hear repeatedly, and community-based mental health supports are severely lacking.

People with very real mental health needs are missing out on services, and this is leading to an escalation of their problems. As Professor Razay's motion states, mental health is a priority public health issue, or it should be. Unfortunately, the current lack of services suggests that it is not, and that's not good enough.

Too often we focus on individual actions that people can take to improve their own mental health, and there's no doubt that they can be helpful. In my previous role as a mental health counsellor, I taught people deep breathing, relaxation, mindfulness and self-compassion and encourage them to eat well, exercise and engage in social activities.

These are all useful tools that can make a real difference to a person's state of mind. However, in focusing so much on individual actions and responsibilities, we forget that mental ill health does not develop in a vacuum. It is not the result of individual weakness or failure. It is very much affected by what is happening around people. When circumstances are overwhelmingly bad, it is a normal human response to feel stress and distress, and you don't have to look far to see a whole range of current circumstances that are impacting on people right now. Cost-of-living pressure, housing insecurity, inability to access timely healthcare, poverty, climate change, racism, homophobia and transphobia, family violence, abuse, neoliberalism, global uncertainty, even the strength of our democracy and whether people think they are being heard or not: all these things play a big role in how people feel, whether they feel that they have value and worth. Each of these things impacts on stress levels and mental health and well-being.

I'll never forget working in mental health during the immediate period of COVID. I worked in a disadvantaged community where people daily struggled to afford the basics and were stressed and anxious and depressed. During COVID, in that initial period, they received all sorts of financial relief, higher social support payments and cost-of-living relief and it was transformative. I can remember one woman describing how much better she felt without the stress of worrying about how she would buy food for her children and fill the car with petrol. It's the perfect illustration of the way improving people's circumstances contributes to improved mental health.

People can feel disconnected from us here with distant policy decisions that are made and debates like this that we have, but decisions that are made in parliament and by governments can have a very real impact on people's lives. Adequate service provision is important, but focusing on supporting people to take individual actions to improve their mental health ignores holistic government actions that can support people to live happier, less stressed, more fulfilling lives.

As well as funding services and support to meet the current level of need, more housing, cost-of-living relief, prevention of family violence, and centering people in all policy and funding decisions - rather than being big business- and corporations-centred - are what we need to boost mental health. The Greens call on the government to do better at both service provision, centering people, and responding to holistic needs.

Thank you again to Professor Razay for bringing this motion forward today. The Greens support it and hope that it does contribute to improved mental health outcomes across our state.

[5.56 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, I understand there are other speakers who want to rise on this important matter, so I'll be brief. I congratulate Professor Razay for bringing this matter on. This is yet another example of where the crossbench is desperately trying to bring people together on matters of public importance and issues that confront the community we represent on a daily basis. Private Members Day, Wednesday, is when there are motions that are designed to divide us and it's good to see that there are a smattering of motions that are designed to bring us together. I commend Professor Razay for doing that, in essentially seeking all of us to collaborate across all tiers, all areas and facets of government activity and community, and how we can work together and collaborate to improve our community.

This matter is of deep importance to many Tasmanians. We've heard a number of contributions where people are talking about the increase and prevalence of mental health concerns. There's a metaphor I like to use when you think about preventative health. Instead of the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, how about we work together and build a fence at the top of the cliff so that people don't get into circumstances where they spiral down into greater and more complicated health issues for themselves, their families and the community. We all pay for that through increased services and the complex nature of people's health conditions.

Looking at the latest ABS data from 2022, 52.9 per cent of Tasmanians aged between 16 and 85 experience a mental health disorder at some point of their life. It's the highest rate in the country, and 10 per cent above the national average. It's a confronting figure that more than half of Tasmanians aged between 16 and 85 have experienced a mental health disorder at some point in their lives, and that amounts to approximately 237,000 Tasmanians.

Data also indicates that a significantly higher proportion of Tasmanians are living with a long-term mental health condition compared to the rest of the country. We've also seen a dramatic increase in the prevalence of depression and anxiety. Between 2009 and 2022, the proportion of Tasmanians diagnosed with anxiety or depression increased from 21 to 37 per cent. When you compare that with the general population, people living with mental health conditions are more likely to have physical health issues as their physical health needs are often overshadowed by their mental illness.

What is often lost when people talk about mental health is that they need to understand that compared with the general population, Tasmanians with mental health illnesses are more likely to have a stroke, heart issues or vascular disease, are almost twice as likely to have diabetes, and more than twice as likely to have arthritis. This means that our mental health, in many cases, is the key trigger; it's the key point where we can improve people's lives, improve people's standard of living, and improve the lives of our broader community.

These issues are complex, particularly when you're dealing with mental health for a range of community members and how they find themselves in circumstances where their mental health diminishes - and not only their mental health, but their physical health.

This motion is important because it comes from someone in the medical field who sees the importance of intervention by governments and preventative intervention by governments. We talk about it a lot. The front page of the papers with ambulance ramping and with all the crises that we see on a day-to-day basis - those issues are important, but rarely does mental health in terms of the preventative nature of our ability to help people out, reach the front page of the newspaper. I've had discussions with Paul Lupo from St Luke's. St Luke's are leading a community debate around preventative health, physical and mental. That's really important for a medical insurance company like St Luke's to lead that debate to improve people's health.

I've seen it in community organisations and the importance of connections. The investment of the Neighbourhood Houses network - it's crucially important for the ability of communities to connect for people in communities that are struggling, where local people can identify, reach out and seek support from networks such as the Neighbourhood House. The role community sporting organisations have in bringing people together to improve and support people's mental health journeys. The importance of connection for people, intervening and preventative health measures both clinical and community are so very important for us to improve the standard of lives of Tasmanians.

I'll finish there. Obviously, I support the motion. It's a very good motion. It's a constructive motion and it reflects very well on Professor Razay that his inaugural speech, when he talked about this as his reason for being in this place. He's continuing that. I urge the government, particularly in point 4 of the motion, to work to strengthen early intervention and prevention measures and work collaboratively with others to do that. I commend the motion.

[6.02 p.m.]

**Mrs GREENE** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Bass, Professor Razay, for bringing this motion on today about mental health before the House. Tasmanian Labour support the motion as well and it's been lovely to hear the contributions of all members in the House today. I think this is an issue that we don't want to be political about, that there's certainly bipartisan support.

I also acknowledge Millie and Molly who are up in the Gallery this evening. They're both two young women who deeply care about mental health and wellbeing of young people in Tasmania. I thank them for using their voices and for being here this evening.

Right now too many Tasmanians are struggling with their mental health. For those that are struggling, we know that they often don't know where to go to for support. Sadly we know that people who are experiencing mental health issues don't always get the right support or adequate support when they need it.

Around one in five Tasmanians experience poor mental health and behind that statistic are children, young people who are feeling overwhelmed, parents under pressure, carers running on empty, older Tasmanians and families desperately trying to navigate systems that are already stretched beyond capacity.

Tasmania is facing a growing mental health crisis at the same time as the workforce needed to respond is being pushed to breaking point. Demand continues to rise, driven by cost of living pressures, housing stress, trauma, family violence, social isolation and uncertainty about the future. While demand rises, vacancies across our public mental health and community services workforce remains stubbornly high. The government's own jobs website regularly advertises positions for psychologists, mental health nurses, youth workers and other allied health professionals. Many of those jobs remain vacant for months or even longer, particularly in regional Tasmania and that has consequences. It means that workers are carrying unsafe caseloads and I've spoken about that in this place many times before. It means burnout, it means exhausted staff leaving the sector entirely and it means that Tasmanians are waiting far too long for support or not getting support at all.

What we all know is that mental health support cannot begin at the emergency department door. If the only time we intervene is when someone's already reached breaking point, then we have failed. Prevention is smart policy and early intervention is key. Many of you around the Chamber tonight have spoken about that. It's also the compassionate thing to do because early intervention changes the trajectory of people's lives. A child who receives support early may avoid years of disengagement from school. A young person who can access timely counselling may avoid ending up in crisis care. A worker who gets support before burnout may stay connected to employment and community and family life. A family that receives practical help may avoid reaching breaking point altogether, with other services such as child safety becoming involved.

The best mental health system is not one that responds only after harm has occurred. It's the one that prevents crisis forever possible. That means governments must stop treating mental health as one department's problem. Mental health is shaped by housing and security, poverty, family violence, education outcomes, disability support, alcohol and drug use, employment conditions, social isolation and community connection. That means the response cannot sit in a silo. It requires a coordinated action across health, education, youth, housing, community services, recreation and regional development and government cannot do this alone. The response must involve frontline workers, schools, GPs, unions, sporting clubs, our councils, youth services, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, parents, carers and people with lived experience of mental health, because the people closest to the problem are often the people that are closest to the solution.

I particularly want to talk about children and young people in this state and the Tasmanian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service because they are under enormous pressure at the moment and I can tell you that with absolute certainty. I used to be their union organiser for close to a decade. I've heard the distress from workers because they know that the system is letting young people down. Families are waiting too long for support while workers are stretched beyond capacity.

When a young person is in crisis, families should not have to fight the system just to access help. A parent in my community contacted me today about her experience in this space and it was heartbreaking. She tried to access two other services, and she was bounced backwards and forwards over the last six months and now her daughter still hasn't received support. Another young man in northern Tasmania reached out to me today to share his story of having poor mental health which stemmed from relentless bullying in school which led to him dropping out of the education system altogether. Another constituent told me that in her son's case, mental health workers were on rotation so there was no continuity of care, which

meant he had to retell his story many times. Another constituent contacted my office around her own experience, and she said that the support when she was really very unwell was excellent, but then when she was improving the supports weren't there and she said:

I kept being told to reach out for help, but every door I knocked on had a waitlist. By the time I finally got support, I was already in crisis.

And she went on to say:

I spent more energy trying to navigate the system than I did trying to recover. We were told services were available, but nobody could tell us how to actually access them. I wasn't asking for miracles, I just needed someone to listen before things got worse.

I thank those people in our community today who reached out after I made a little Facebook post this morning. I think it takes a lot of courage for people to share their mental health stories, but it's those stories that are important for us to hear as decision makers in this space.

Long waitlists and workforce shortages must be addressed because it means that young people are struggling in Tasmania and not getting the support that they need during the most critical years of their development. That means that parents are sitting awake at night wondering whether their child is safe. That means teachers are trying to support students in schools without the resources that they need. It means being stuck on the waitlist for the Tasmanian Autism Diagnostic Service for two years. It means that workers inside Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are carrying those unreasonable workloads, which means that people are falling through the gaps.

Regional families face even greater barriers. Outside major centres, shortages of psychologists, psychiatrists and other allied health professionals make access significantly harder. Every child deserves access to mental health support, regardless of where they live or how much money their family has. If we fail to support young people early, we simply push more trauma and more pain and more pressure onto their families and schools, hospitals and the broader community later on.

I also wish to acknowledge carers in this state. Nationally, around one in every eight Australians are a carer, but in Tasmania it's closer to one in six. We have an ageing population and considerable disadvantage in this state, so that's not very surprising, I guess, but it represents 87,000 people. That's very significant.

We know that carers hold our communities together, but too often they're doing it at the expense of their own mental health. Many carers are juggling financial stress and endless appointments and constant worry while they're trying to keep their families afloat. They're experiencing burnout, anxiety, trauma, and isolation in those roles.

Over recent years, Tasmania has also experienced closures of the St Helen's Private Hospital, the threat of closure of the Hobart Clinic, and then the abrupt closure of Autism Tasmania in 2024. That's just a couple of examples. These experiences have caused significant service gaps and levels of stress, anxiety, and disruption for many Tasmanian families. When governments underinvest in disability support, aged care, and mental health services, the

pressure often falls directly onto unpaid carers. Far too many carers feel invisible until they have reached breaking point. Tasmania needs more respite care, stronger mental health supports for carers, and recognition that caring is real work.

I'm running out of time, so I might need to skip a page or two. I'll briefly mention that the federal Labor government has made some investments in mental health across Tasmania in recent years. That includes funding for the Medicare Mental Health Centres in Launceston, Burnie, Devonport, and outer Hobart, which is giving Tasmanians access to free walk-in mental health care without needing a referral or a mental health plan. Federal Labor has expanded Headspace services and restored bulk-billed telehealth psychiatric rebates to improve access for our regional and rural communities, which is very important.

I have had a number of people contact me about the cost of accessing mental health care because getting a mental health care plan often costs a bit more at the GP or requires a co-payment when you access other services, too. Every Tasmanian deserves support and we can all do better in this space.

[6.12 p.m.]

**Mr VERMEY** (Clark) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise today to demonstrate our government's support for the honourable member for Bass, Professor Razay. Member for happiness, I think. He's always been out there and pushed it from the beginning and it's a good breath of fresh air. It's great.

As the honourable minister indicated, we know that around two in five Australians experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. Sadly, we also know that around 60 per cent of these people will not seek help. That's why we need to prioritise more conversations like we're having today in the House.

This motion has given me the opportunity to think about the importance of mental health in our daily lives and the work we have been doing as a government to help reduce stigma around mental health in our communities. Every year, our government supports the Mental Health Council of Tasmania to deliver Mental Health Week through their core peak funding. This year, Mental Health Week in Tasmania is scheduled for 3-11 October. This includes World Mental Health Day, which is held globally on 10 October. Mental Health Week is one of Tasmania's leading mental health awareness events, aiming to reduce stigma, strengthen understanding, and promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

The 2026 theme for Mental Health Week in Tasmania is 'Appreciate the Little Things.' This theme is a powerful reminder that simple moments of connection and kindness make a big difference. It highlights that looking after your mental health doesn't always require a huge amount of time or effort. It helps us to appreciate the small things that can have a big impact on our wellbeing. It might be listening to your favourite song, having a chat with a friend, a walk in nature, or simply taking a minute to breathe.

Our government is committed to ensuring that people living with mental health challenges and their families and carers can access the support they need when and where they need it. As we heard from the honourable minister, over the past decade we've invested more than \$564 million to improve Tasmania's mental health system. We're very proud to continue supporting the Mental Health Council to provide small grants for Mental Health Week. These grants help local organisations to host events in every corner of our state. For example, last

year events included: Cygnet decorating the town with orange flowers, hearts and flags to raise awareness about suicide prevention; Wellways held an annual dog walk and lunch in Cornelian Bay; Ulverstone Neighbourhood House offered a pottery class; Low Head Community Garden offered flower arrangement shops; and the Tassie Mental Health Comedy Roadshow travelled right around the state.

These events create a feeling of belonging and social connection, the key ingredients for mental well-being. There is evidence that feeling connected improves our mood and lowers stress. Community-led incentives are especially important in creating inclusive spaces. Importantly, these events can also connect people with mental health services and support networks that people might not be aware of. They also help tackle the issues of social isolation and loneliness. Sadly, loneliness increases the risk of experiencing anxiety, depression and stress and reduces our ability to cope during difficult times.

I'm advised that the annual grant round for Mental Health Week 2026 will open next month on Wednesday 3 June. I encourage members to share details about the grants with any individuals, businesses or organisations in their electorates who might be interested. Details can be found at the Mental Health Council of Tasmania's website.

Today's motion has reminded us how important it is to talk openly about mental health and to support the well-being of every Tasmanian. While many people experience mental health challenges at some point in their lives, connection and understanding can make a real difference. Our government will continue working to strengthen mental health and well-being services and support community-led incentives like Mental Health Week. Together we can build a community where mental health challenges are better understood and supported. It doesn't hurt just to go down the street and smile and say g'day to people, even people you don't know, those little connections can go a long way.

[6.18 p.m.]

**Prof RAZAY** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I feel quite overwhelmed here today listening to all your contributions. May I thank you so much from the Health minister, Mrs Archer, honourable Independent member for Franklin, Mr George, honourable member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, honourable member for Bass, Ms Rosol, honourable member for Bass, Mrs Greene, and finally honourable member for Clark, Mr Vermeij.

I feel quite overwhelmed because I feel today that Tasmania has the foundations for an excellent approach to mental health. Listening to our Health minister, I feel more encouraged about the mental health strategy of this government. It's about emphasising prevention, early intervention and supporting services for people in the community. I recognise that addressing Tasmania's mental health crisis requires a coordinated effort from all tiers of government and the healthcare, business, education and community sectors.

However, prevention remains the most proactive way of tackling crises. Tasmania must strengthen early intervention measures and foster community-led prevention initiatives. It's far more effective to support people before they reach crisis point rather than relying on emergency departments and acute-care facilities as the primary response. If our focus remains on treatment alone, our health system will continue to be overwhelmed by demand. Tasmanian mental health care cannot be solved through reactive measures. Early intervention and prevention provide a proactive approach that can save lives and strengthen society as a whole. I would like to finish by stating the World Health Organisation saying, there is no health without mental health.

**Motion agreed to.**

**WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME**

**Mr FAIRS** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 42D, I indicate the Government Private Members' Business is waived for this day's sitting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

[6.21 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

**Provision of Answers to Questions on Notice**

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Deputy Speaker, if I may, briefly, two questions were taken on notice today, one by the Premier, one by myself. Regrettably, we don't have the answers available at this stage. We will hope to have, and best endeavours will be undertaken, to have them available after Question Time tomorrow, noting that given the Budget, there won't be an Adjournment debate tomorrow evening, but best endeavours for both members that ask questions will be undertaken. I hope to have those answers after Question Time tomorrow.

**School Crossings**

**South Burnie Bowls Club Annual Dinner**

[6.22 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I note the previous contribution of the Treasurer, and I look forward to receiving that information after Question Time tomorrow. I'd hate to think that you would try and bury that information on Budget Day, Treasurer.

The first issue that I want to speak about tonight on the Adjournment are school crossings in my electorate. At least a year ago, I spoke on the adjournment about the fact that Havenview Primary School and Cooe Primary School are having difficulty staffing their school crossings, with teachers having to fill the void of crossing guards. Havenview Primary School has no allocated crossing guard at all, with students daily having to cross a major road. I wrote to the then-transport minister, Eric Abetz, at the time, who committed to undertaking a study. I didn't ever receive an update on that study and so I'm calling on the minister for Transport, Mr Vincent, to provide an update.

The next item that I want to speak about on the Adjournment is an event that I attended a couple of weekends ago, and that was the annual dinner of the South Burnie Bowls Club, which was held at the Burnie Tennis Club. You might ask why that is, but that's because their club rooms are being redeveloped, which is an exciting project that the club have been working

towards for a very long time. I've had a long association with the club, right back to the days of when I was the mayor of Burnie and a councillor on the Burnie City Council. I've seen a lot of change during that time, but the one constant that remains at the South Burnie Bowls Club is the grit, determination and the ability to get things done. I want to congratulate the executive, president John Castles, Mark Smith and Laraine Spurr in particular, and all the members, on another successful year on and off the greens. The highlight of the year for the club was their outdoor bar that they pulled together because they couldn't use their club rooms. It was a raging success and I'm pretty sure it'll be a permanent fixture at the club in summers to come.

On the night, the South Burnie Bowls Club also received some additional good news from the Burnie City Council that will enable them to take over ownership of their club, the clubhouse buildings - something that they've been fighting for for years. They were thrilled to have that confirmation on the night. I want to thank the council for their ongoing support of the club. I want to thank the government for their support of the club as well. We both made commitments in 2024 to the redevelopment of the club rooms in recognition of the hard work and many years of dedication of that club and their need for upgraded facilities.

Finally, the heartiest of congratulations to Phil Prouse on his well-deserved life membership of the club. He's a club stalwart who's given years of his life to the club, and it was very well deserved, Phil. Well done. It was a fantastic night with a lot of laughs, and I want to congratulate everybody who received an award, and for their contribution on and off the greens throughout the season. I can't wait for the opening of the new club rooms. Congratulations to the South Burnie Bowls Club.

### **Tasmania's Growth Rates and Migration**

[6.25 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, today I asked the Premier in Question Time to acknowledge the importance of migration to Tasmania. I did so in response to the clear message from federal Leader of the Opposition, Angus Taylor, in his budget reply last week, which unveiled his party's plans to dramatically cut migration to this country. He calls it 'mass migration', as though it's out of control, and he says it's changed Australia for the worse. So I was very pleased to hear the Premier's response this morning rejecting that premise. He said, 'We will welcome people from wherever they come from to Tasmania, because they enrich our lives, they enrich our community, they bring their skills. We do multiculturalism well in Tasmania and I'm very proud of that,' the Premier said.

I want to read the government's 2024 population policy and it states:

Balanced population growth will see an increase in the proportion of younger families and working-aged residents, largely made up of international migration. Skilled migration matched to the needs of the workforce brings many benefits to our communities and the economy. This is also likely to support the rate of natural increase and will help to offset Tasmania's structural ageing, an issue experienced worldwide.

The facts are clear. Tasmania's population growth rates are the lowest of any state or territory, whether measured annually or quarterly. At just 0.21 per cent, we are well below the 0.48 or 0.5 per cent annual growth rate required to meet our 2050 population target. When we

look at overseas migration, the picture becomes even clearer. Net overseas migration contributed 228 per cent of Tasmania's annual population growth. The next highest state, South Australia, was just 93 per cent. Put simply, without overseas migration, Tasmania's population would not just stall, it would go backwards, and quickly.

Treasury has already warned of this risk. In last year's budget papers, slow or negative population growth was identified as a significant concern. It would reduce economic activity and exacerbate existing challenges around workforce shortages and an ageing population.

There is also a direct financial consequence. Our share of GST, our state's largest source of revenue, declines if our population grows more slowly than the mainland's, and that is exactly what is happening. In 2024, Tasmania's annual growth rate was just 0.21 per cent, compared with 1.5 per cent on the mainland.

If we reduce migration, the consequences are real and they are immediate. It means fewer doctors, fewer dentists, nurses in our hospitals, fewer disability support workers, engineers and aged care workers. Fewer fruit pickers and agricultural workers, fewer tradespeople, cleaners and hospitality staff. These are not optional roles - they are the essential workers that our state desperately needs.

It would also mean less GST revenue, as I said, less economic growth and, of course, less vibrancy and diversity in our community. So, to those in the community who might agree with Angus Taylor or One Nation and believe migrants are making life harder in Tasmania, I say this: the opposite is true. Migrants are the people caring for our parents in aged care, treating us in hospital, building the homes we need, and harvesting the food that comes to our table. Without them, Tasmania would be poorer socially, culturally and economically.

### **Personal Explanation - Member for Bass, Ms Finlay**

[6.29 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, I am unashamedly pro-Tasmanian, I'm pro-investment, I'm pro-jobs, and I'm pro-big projects and little projects for Tasmania.

This morning in Question Time, I asserted my support for jobs by interjecting on the Premier when he was speaking about Firmus. He talked about jobs with that project and he talked about opportunity. My interjection was how many jobs? What's the opportunity? I misheard minister Ellis and I thought he said, 'are you aware of it'? He said, captured by *Hansard*, 'are you opposed to it'? My continued interjections were along the line of me being aware of the jobs and wanting the Premier to put that on the record.

I am a big believer, unlike the government, that if you bugger up, you accept it, you note it and you move on. I accept that this morning I misheard minister Ellis. I've checked with *Hansard* and they've been able to isolate the audio. When I listened to the broadcast back, you can't tell what minister Ellis said. However, I accept that the *Hansard* said, 'are you opposed to it'? The *Hansard* continues to confirm my position in what I thought was said because I said, 'there was no suggestion of being anti-Firmus'. This was a question of detail, how many jobs, and later in Question Time I again asserted that the record will show that my interjection was

about how many jobs. A simple question for response in data, in fact, not an assertion on my position about the project.

I'm willing to accept that I made a mistake this morning. I want to put it on the record because no doubt the government will use this to their joy and delight, suggesting that I am both anti-Firmus and anti-development. That is not correct. I am pro-Tasmanian, I am pro-jobs, I am pro investment, I am pro big projects that add us to the digital global economy. What I am also pro- is this government being transparent, them being honest and them demonstrating a capacity to deal with big projects when they come into Tasmania.

I continue to hold questions about that. I would continue to question the job benefits of different projects and would love to have the evidence on the record so that we and Tasmanians can see that benefit. But let it be said when the government repeatedly raise that they think that I have made a statement, which I did, but not intended to be so, I love Tasmania. I love innovation and new industries. I love opportunities for our young people. I love opportunities for families and community. I am pro Tasmania, pro investment, pro jobs. I'm looking forward to the government tabling the documents that they've been required to do so this place and the Tasmanian community can make their assessments about that project.

### Women Speak Tasmania

[6.32 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, yesterday I asked the Premier about his commitment to standing with Tasmania's trans and gender diverse community against calls to weaken our anti-discrimination laws. His response was clear. He said -

We stand with all Tasmanians, irrespective of circumstances or background.

We have no plan to change the anti-discrimination laws.

I welcome this. The trans and gender diverse community welcomes this. Tasmanians overwhelmingly welcome this because we are an inclusive and respectful community. However, one group did not welcome it - Women Speak Tasmania, an anti-trans group claiming to be pro women but all they do is promote division and hate. Since my question yesterday, they encouraged their Facebook page to be a platform for spewing hate, factually incorrect information and threats of violence. For a group espousing women's rights and the importance of protecting women, I find it very disturbing they allowed a death threat against me to be published on their Facebook page.

Last night, a Facebook profile under the name of Michael Higgins, in reference to me, said, 'She needs a bullet'. This is utterly unacceptable, but Women Speak Tasmania encourage it with their rage-baiting hate speech. Women Speak Tasmania has invited members of parliament to pledge their support for changes to the law allowing discrimination against trans people and to stand with them for photo opportunities. This is not an organisation that any member of parliament should associate with.

Let me be clear, trans women's rights are women's rights, and I support all women's rights. I want to quote the words of Paula Gerber from an ABC Online article published yesterday in response to the giggle and tickle decision. Paula writes:

The judgement is also a victory for women's rights. Feminists have long been fighting against a patriarchy that perpetuates gender stereotypes around how we should look and behave. We know that that sort of scrutiny makes every woman more vulnerable to the policing of our bodies.

Women are stronger when we are united, and we should resist efforts to weaponise women's rights against some women. After all, rigid gender norms harm everyone. If trans women like Roxanne Tickle can lawfully be excluded from a site because they don't appear feminine enough, it is not difficult to imagine a time when there may be attempts to exclude lesbians who challenge the boundaries of femininity by rejecting feminine clothes, appearances, and mannerisms. It is vital that all marginalised women are welcomed into feminist movements seeking to advance gender equality.

If Women Speak Tasmania wanted to be genuinely a women's rights group, rather than an anti-trans group, they could be talking about a whole range of issues such as equal pay and the gender pay gap, reproductive rights and abortion access, affordable childcare, online misogyny and image-based abuse. I could go on and on, the list is as long as my arm.

I know Tasmanians want an inclusive state where everyone is respected and included. The growing success of the Pride march year-on-year demonstrates this, as does the broad cross-party membership of the Parliamentary Friends of LGBTQIA+ Tasmanians. I call on all my colleagues to stand together for inclusion in Tasmania.

### Queenstown Skyrun

[6.36 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, In Dorothea Mackellar's famous poem, *My Country*, the line 'I love a sunburnt country' was probably not written about Tasmania's west coast, but I like to think the line that goes 'Her beauty and her terror' probably was. It's a savagely beautiful landscape and has always attracted and produced people of strong character and connection to their rugged landscape. This, after all, is where they play football on gravel. It was appropriate on the first weekend in May, those west coasters hosted the first Diverge Skyruns event, a three-day festival of trail running and hiking in the mountains encircling Queenstown, welcoming another bunch of people who love to shed and leave their blood, sweat and tears in the landscape.

It was my honour to be part of the official opening on 1 May and to welcome some of the 1460 visitors it brought to Queenstown including 660 registered participants. The Diverge Skyruns program included five races from the 50 kilometre Mount Lyell Skyrun to the five kilometre Lynchford Express, which pitted human against machine as athletes took a ride on the West Coast Wilderness Railway and then tried to outrun the steam train on its way back to Queenstown. The demanding Mount Lyell course reached an elevation of 3000 metres, while the shorter 25 kilometre Mt Owen course peaked at 1500 metres.

Runners crossed alpine ridgelines, passed soaring waterfalls, and dodged their way through rainforests. Hobart musician, Dusty Rusty, played banjo trackside to give runners some encouragement and perhaps a bit of a distraction from their aching and bleeding legs. Cheerful volunteers at well-stocked aid stations made sure athletes could stay hydrated and it wasn't for the faint-hearted. Testament to that was the epic performance by former west coaster,

Alice McGushin, who ran 40 kilometres with a broken toe. Out on the trails, competitors were in good hands with four mobile medical response teams ready to spring into action, each team consisting of a doctor and wilderness first-aider.

The weekend wasn't just about the elite athletes though. Back in Queenstown, children had their own running events and there were families of trail runners there who were all entertained and catered for throughout the weekend, with trail running and related events, but also crafts, clay and water play led by trained educators. There were community treasure hunts and a craft session to make running-shoe bags from discarded materials from one of the outdoor clothing companies.

Long time locals gave talks about the region's mining past that set the scene for the terrain that the athletes would encounter over the weekend and the west coast community played a major role in the preparation of the Skyrun trails. Race creator and coordinator, Lincoln Quillham, from Hobart-based Trail Ventures, formed a team of workers who spent nine weeks reclaiming more than 20 kilometres of abandoned tracks and trails. The largest section of reclaimed track was the Lyell-Comstock rail line, a narrow-gauge tramway constructed by the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It was built to connect Queenstown with the Comstock Mine on the western slopes of Mount Lyell, but abandoned not long after without ever seeing a train run its length: All of this reclamation work will be of ongoing benefit to the west coast and the people who come there to adventure there. One bushwalking group reported using a reclaimed track for a recent weekend ramble and commented on the magnificent views of Lake Burbury that just can't be enjoyed from any other vantage point.

A Skyrun competitor was delighted that in reaching the summit of Mount Owen, he had racked up his 137th ascent of Tasmania's 158 mountain peaks, collectively known as the Abels. Skyrun entrants covered an astonishing 17,000 kilometres over the three days of the festival and the Tasmanian government is proud to have supported the delivery of the event in 2026 with \$250,000 through the Tasmanian festival and event support fund.

An early estimate based on participant surveys has shown that the festival brought \$750,000 in direct spending on the west coast alone and almost \$1.7 million across the state. I believe that makes it a fantastic investment, and I look forward to future west coast Skyruns.

### **Hamlet - 10 Years of Operation Celebration**

[6.41 p.m.]

**Mr VERMEY** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Hamlet on their ten years of impact and over the last 10 days or so they've been conducting lots of different things: free coffee, free cakes and it's a really good, feel-good place to be. I've known Emily since the start through my business and I've always been behind what they do, and they just do amazing stuff. I said to Emily, 'You've been going 10 years, what have you done, what's happened?' She told me, 'A couple of kids, marriage, everything else,' and she still kept this impressive place that is inclusive and supports so many community people. She's already on to the next thing, which is Next Shift, which aims to expand graduate pathways, helping participants and employees create inclusive and lasting employment outcomes.

Next Shift creates real pathways, real jobs, real independence and real inclusion. Occasions like Hamlet remind us that the community strength is measured by more than economic indicators. Community strength is measured by how well we support people to participate fully in work, life and our community. I congratulated Emily and her team, including the Hamlet board, staff, trainees, graduates, volunteers, partners and supporters on 10 years of meaningful impact.

Hamlet is a Hobart success story and - most importantly - a human success story. May it continue to grow, continue to lead, and continue to show us what is possible when community is placed within reach, an opportunity to move forwards with meaningful work.

There are many attributes that make Hamlet so special. I'd like to acknowledge CEO, Emily Briffa, for her extraordinary vision and determination. Emily saw two key challenges right here in our community; people facing barriers to work and the skill shortage in the hospitality and tourism sector. Hamlet was created as a practical and human response to both.

Emily's contribution has been recognised by being named the 2026 Tasmanian Local Hero through the Australian of the Year Awards, and rightly so. Through Emily's vision, disadvantaged and marginalised people have overcome employment barriers right here in our own community. Hamlet is a shining example of the impact that a business can have when it's driven by a purpose. Every coffee, every meal helps Hamlet create training, support and opportunity. This is the kind of Tasmania that we should strive to build, where Tasmanians are not defined by barriers they face but support to realise their strengths.

Hamlet's work matters because inclusion doesn't happen by accident. It requires leadership, investment, patience and community support. It requires employers who are willing to see ability, not disability. It requires workplaces that understand that people thrive when given the right environment and support. It's about dignity and feeling that you belong. It's about building confidence and self-worth. It's about independence and connection and knowing that you have something valuable to contribute.

Hamlet reflects a deep understanding of that reality. Hamlet provides real hospitality training in genuine workplace settings, the confidence that comes from being part of the supportive team and, importantly, participants gained the confidence to take the next step. Since opening in April 2016, Hamlet has a significant impact, providing over 60,000 hours of training, supporting 789 Tasmanians and has been supported through various training programs. Eighty-six per cent of graduates in the last financial year have secured employment and moved on to further education.

It's a registered charity and proudly Tasmanian enterprise that provides personal training, work-readiness programs and ongoing support for Tasmanians living with disability.

**Time expired.**

## 2026 Glenorchy Community and Volunteer Awards

[6.47 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, recently, I was delighted to attend the 2026 Glenorchy Community and Volunteer Awards. These are annual awards that recognise people who give their time and energy to make our community stronger, safer and happier. They are the people who quietly build the fabric of our society. This year, around 70 volunteers were acknowledged for their contributions across neighbourhood houses, sporting clubs, service organisations and many more. I can't name every individual tonight, but I do want to honour the collective impact of their work. Our community is better because of them.

I want to highlight the five outstanding community members who were recognised for the major awards: the Local Hero Award, Citizen of the Year, Senior and Young Citizens of the Year. Citizen of the Year went to Anthony Edler who dedicates his time to the Tasmanian Bike Collective, creating inclusive hands-on programs that help young people build skills, confidence and connection. He provides a safe, welcoming environment for vulnerable, at-risk young people, fostering a strong sense of belonging. Over his time with the collective, Anthony has mentored hundreds of young people and restored and redistributed countless bikes. His work builds resilience, teamwork and positive community connections.

Senior Citizen of the Year went to the delightful Jeff Bronstein who was recognised for his leadership of the Tasmanian Transport Museum, which I might add, is one of the most fun places you can visit in southern Tasmania. Make sure you go on a day that the steam train rides are happening. Jeff helped shape the museum into a vibrant, community-focused organisation that preserves, shares and celebrates our local history. Under his leadership the museum has become a place of learning and engagement, supporting volunteers, programs and events that connect people of all ages.

The Young Citizen of the Year award was given to Neil Richardson who was also recognised with several volunteer certificates that night, a testament to his commitment. As an emerging leader, Neil has played a key role in shaping the new Glenorchy Youth Hub by sharing his own story. He has strengthened understanding of the need for inclusive youth services, and his advocacy helped to secure the funding for the hub, which opened recently. Neil's courage, empathy and willingness to support others shine through in both his advocacy and his everyday actions.

This year's Local Hero Award was in fact shared by two remarkable leaders, Grace Cheer and Ben Wilson. Grace Cheer makes a meaningful impact every day by creating opportunities for migrants, young people and underrepresented artists to develop skills, confidence and connection. Through workshops, mentoring and inclusive events, Grace has reduced isolation and built strong networks of support. Her work has expanded opportunities for diverse voices and enriched Glenorchy's cultural landscape.

Finally, Ben Wilson, who is principal of the Indie School in Glenorchy, has supported countless students who had disengaged from mainstream education. Through Ben's leadership, students are encouraged to rebuild confidence, reconnect with community, and complete their education. He combines high expectations with genuine care, helping young people achieve positive, life-changing outcomes. All these award recipients remind us of something very powerful: community doesn't just happen; it is built day by day by people who choose to show up, lend a hand and look out for one another.

Before I finish, I want to add my support to the words of my Clark colleague, member for Clark, Kristie Johnston, on what she said about the *Anti-Discrimination Act* and the campaign by Women Speak Tasmania not only to change our laws to discriminate against trans people, but to use their platform as a place for online hate for many, including the member for Clark. I want to be clear that trans women are women and trans rights are human rights. The relentless, baseless campaigns waged against them, seeking to exclude them from already inclusive services, spaces and sports in fact hurt all women. In their attacks on trans women, anti-trans campaigners hurt all women, like women who don't conform to social expectations of how we are meant to present our clothing, our hair, our bodies. Distilling each of us down to our genitals is not only offensive, it's entirely illogical. These types of hate campaigns mean forcing bearded, muscular trans men into women's bathrooms, shelters and change rooms.

I also want to recognise the enormous damage that the recent high-profile court ruling and the statements from right-wing politicians on the mainland and around the globe are doing to people right here in Tasmania right now. I've had messages from trans women friends who said Angus Taylor's recent comments have made them genuinely fearful. One friend told me she doesn't even feel safe to leave her home anymore. We need to recognise that when attacks on trans women are whipped up in the media like they are being right now, and by groups like Women Speak Tasmania, they do real harm to real people. To trans and gender-diverse Tasmanians, please know, you are seen, you are known and you are loved.

### **Long-Term Native Forest Logging Contracts**

[6.52 p.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Deputy Speaker, as an Independent member for Franklin, I rise to warn in the clearest possible terms that the Tasmanian Government is walking into a serious financial and legal risk by pursuing long-term native forest logging contracts to 2040. The Commonwealth has legislated major environmental reform. The Regional Forest Agreement exemption will be removed from 1 July 2027 and the new national environmental standards are still being finalised.

There's no credible certainty about what volumes of native forest timber will be legally available beyond that point. On that fact alone, these contract negotiations should not be proceeding. It's neither prudent commerce nor responsible economic management. It's the opposite of good governance. Yet the government is seeking to lock in binding commitments before it can demonstrate that it has the timber required to meet them, and claiming supply certainty to 2040.

We now have independent legal advice, thanks to the Wilderness Society, that is explicit. There are 'significant and probable liability risks to Sustainable Timber Tasmania, the state and potentially ministers if these contracts are entered into before the impacts of federal reform are known'. It's not hypothetical. It is a clear legal warning about foreseeable exposure. We know what happens if supply cannot be met after 2027. Private operators enforce contracts. Compensation claims follow. The cost lands on the public balance sheet. This is the standard consequence of agreements entered into without secure supply.

Independent economic modelling now quantifies this risk, estimating potential exposure between \$155 million and \$300 million under moderate scenarios, higher if supply constraints

intensify. As Tasmania faces structural deficits and projected net debt exceeding \$10 billion by 2029, this is not a minor risk, and it's a significant and unnecessary liability.

At the same time, the industry these contracts are meant to secure is in decline. Native forest production continues to fall, with forecasts indicating a sharp reduction in available sawlog supply after 2027. Employment is substantially down. The trajectory is a shrinking resource base and a contracting industry. The legal advice also makes clear that force majeure clauses are unlikely to provide a reliable escape if supply becomes unlawful under future regulation, particularly where those risks were foreseeable at the time of the contracting. The state cannot sign first and rely on legal mechanisms to resolve the consequences later, nor can the government assume it will be shielded by the Commonwealth. There's no automatic indemnity and no guaranteed compensation pathway. Any suggestion otherwise is just wishful thinking.

This is where political rhetoric diverges from financial reality. The government speaks of providing certainty for industry, but certainty that shifts all downside risk onto the public is not certainty at all. It is exposure. If these contracts proceed and supply later becomes constrained or unlawful, compensation claims are not just possible, they are to be expected and they will fall squarely on the Tasmanian budget.

What's the strategy here? Faced with the declining industry, a diminishing resource and rising legal uncertainty, the government intends to enter commitments it has every reason to doubt it can fulfil and that's not a strategy, that is fiscal adventurism. It does nothing to provide genuine economic certainty, but it significantly increases the risk borne by the people of Tasmania. This is not responsible government. It's the creation of future liabilities dressed up as economic policy.

We have seen this pattern before. Long-term commitments made without accounting for regulatory change, followed by costly unwinding when reality intervenes. Each time the outcome is the same, the public pays. The position should be simple. Stop pretending the risks are hypothetical. Stop committing the state to long-term financial exposure before the legal and environmental framework is settled, because if these contracts proceed and the risks materialise there will be no ambiguity about who pays the Tasmanian taxpayer.

### **Macquarie Point Stadium - Webuild Contractor**

[6.57 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to clearly put on the record concerns about the Liberals tender process for the stadium. The government has selected two bidders to proceed to the stadium tender process - BESIX Watpac and Constructure Joint Venture. Constructure Joint Venture consists of three companies, China Construction Oceania, We Build SPA and McConnell Dowell.

Concerns stem from a plethora of reports on the poor practises of Webuild and it raises real questions about why the Liberals are allowing them to participate in the stadium process at all. Webuild have recently come under fire for its contractor future forms dodgy dealings in the Western Sydney Airport Metro. The NSW Transport Minister had to commission an investigation into the contractor which found suspicious underpayments, tax fraud and inadequate workers compensation. This has been referred to a number of agencies including

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

NSW Police and Webuild was ordered to fire the contractor. The letter from Webuild, recently tabled in this House confirms future form has now been terminated.

Earlier this month, Webuild's bad faith was alleged as the NSW Transport Minister claimed that he's seeking to gouge an extra \$2.2 billion from the NSW Government to cover cost blowouts. Adding pressure, Webuild would have put a slowdown on work on the project, effectively halving workers take home pay and risking delaying its opening.

Unfortunately, Webuild's construction on the Western Sydney Airport Metro project is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to their poor practices. The contractor has a bad record when it comes to managing projects within time and budget and looking after workers on projects across the country. On the Snowy 2.0 project, Webuild has been ordered to produce a comprehensive assessment of costs as the project is expected to further exceed its budget already blown out from \$2 billion to \$12 billion.

Productivity underperformance and work stoppages due to safety concerns are key reasons behind the blowouts. In one incident, a ventilation fan imploded and expelled metal shrapnel requiring the commissioning of an independent safety review. The company also had a number of serious safety incidents on the Perth Airport leak, which led to a \$350,000 fine and long delays.

The worst incidents involved the detachment of compressed air hose, which broke every bone in a worker's face. In other incidents, a worker's arm was crushed by a tunnel boring machine and another suffered chemical burns. Unions have accused the company of strategic underbidding without a buffer for economic changes of unexpected safety issues.

On the Victorian North East Link Road, which blew out from \$16 billion to \$26 billion, Webuild face questions about its response to alleged corruption and gangland infiltration on the project. On the North West Rail Link completed by Webuild then trading under another name more than 100 spans of the Skytrain section had to be replaced after they were improperly constructed. This range of construction problems, worker safety issues and cost blowouts that have been experienced on the Webuild projects is seriously worrying. Their letter tabled in this place does nothing to address this. It raises serious questions about whether credible due diligence has been done on this company.

Legitimate questions about Webuild have been asked in this place and not answered. How has it managed to pass through the gates of the EOI process and proceed to an approval to work up a tenure? Did Construction Joint Venture truly meet the criteria necessary to proceed to tenure or were the rules bent or a blind eye turned so as two tenderers could be announced and a semblance of competitive tension claimed? These are questions that clearly won't be answered.

Instead, we have the responsible minister taking a Spirits-style, hands-off approach on a project already proven to be underpinned by ignoring expert advice, active mismanagement and extreme cost blowout; \$400 million already and it won't stop there. The stadium is set to be a slow motion train wreck, suffering delays, cost escalation and compromised construction with legitimate costs shifted to the broader precinct or absorbed in other ways. Entertaining Webuild with its atrocious track record as a partner in this project does nothing to engender confidence already at rock bottom.

Tomorrow's half-billion dollar budget bailout of TT-Line should serve as a sober reminder of the cost of a hands-off approach and arrogant self belief despite poor process and even worse advice.

## Tasmanian Trade Strategy 2030

[7.01 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs) - Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak tonight on the Tasmanian Trade Strategy 2030 and beyond. Exports means jobs, and that's what Tasmania is all about and as a government we're backing in our exporters and, with the release of the Tasmanian Trade Strategy 2030 and beyond, we're so pleased and proud to work shoulder-to-shoulder with those in the sector who are making a difference in employing Tasmanians, growing our economy and creating more jobs.

The strategy released makes it clear that we remain committed to the long-term goal of \$15 billion in annual exports by 2050 and I'm pleased to report that in terms of support for our economy, the state exported \$6.06 billion in goods and services internationally, contributing 13.7 per cent to the gross state product and a further \$27.8 billion to Australian domestic off-island markets and these markets provide scale, stability and opportunity for Tasmanian businesses. I'm talking small, medium and large businesses right across Tasmania, our exporters.

I'm so pleased and proud to have led a trade and investment mission to Singapore and Indonesia in late April and I want to thank all those involved. I want to acknowledge the support of the Federal Minister for Trade, Don Farrell, an old colleague and friend who helped provide support and advice, particularly with the commissioner, Australian High Commissioner to Singapore, Allaster Cox, and of course the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Rod Brazier.

It is wonderful support for Tasmania. On that trade and investment mission, I had the opportunity to meet with the Singaporean trade and energy security minister, Tan See Leng, and obviously was able to talk about our fuel security in Tasmania and advance the cause for Tasmania, including meeting with our two major fuel suppliers to Tasmania, both Viva Energy and United Petroleum and Vitol Energy, who were part of the meeting with Viva Energy and likewise in Indonesia talking fertiliser with PT Pupuk which is part of the Indonesian-owned fertiliser manufacturer over there and, of course, appreciate the leadership here of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Gavin Pearce, who's working very hard to ensure support for our farmers. In terms of the trade mission, it was very successful.

The trade mission in Singapore, we had the opportunity, of course, with the leadership of Honey Fidden, our trade advocate and I want to acknowledge and thank all of our trade advocates across the globe in terms of representing our exporters. In terms of the commitment in Singapore, I just wanted to note that I did have the opportunity of meeting with Firmus Technologies, in terms of the artificial intelligence data centre, which of course they have a head office in Singapore - I toured that with the members of the delegation. Some weeks prior, together with the minister Ellis, I toured the St Leonards development of Firmus. It is obviously a multi-billion-dollar commitment with plans for Bell Bay and other parts of Tasmania. I say thank you to Firmus for that.

I was astonished and disappointed to hear the member for Bass indicate her opposition to that in parliament earlier today. Frankly, we are very supportive of growth, development, and jobs, and opportunities to grow our economy. It was excellent to be showcased through the headquarters of Firmus in Singapore.

In terms of the investment and trade mission: we had 19 businesses representing 30 participants who actively supported this mission on the ground, and it was great to be part of the Food and Hospitality Asia Expo at the time in Singapore as well. You can see TQM secured a four-tonne export of lamb directly as a result of the mission. Thank you for all those who were on the mission - Trade Tasmania, Department of State Growth, and Tourism Tasmania - for their excellent work.

### Tasmanian Agri-Food Scorecard

[7.06 p.m.]

**Mr PEARCE** (Braddon - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Deputy Speaker, just like the Deputy Premier, the minister for Trade, I'm excited also. I know you better than you know you and I know that you love Tasmanian produce just like everyone else in this place should. It's un-Tasmanian not to enjoy Tasmanian produce.

Today, I have some exciting news. That news is about our Tasmanian agricultural sector and its scorecard, which I released over the Agfest period, and it's good news. It's good news on all fronts of agriculture. Let me walk you through that right now.

Despite the conditions - and it's been an extraordinarily dry period leading up to the assessment period for the ag scorecard - our farmers work through that. It doesn't matter what you put in front of a Tasmanian farmer, they'll farm around it and that's exactly what they've done. In the latest Tasmanian Agri-Food Scorecard, it shows that during 2023-24, despite the dry conditions as I said, a tough season for many, our farmers had delivered a 15 per cent - the average is less than 6 per cent - 15 per cent we're up this year. That takes the total value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$2.83 billion. That's billion with a 'B.' I'm incredibly proud of them. This is an extraordinary effort and speaks volumes for the resilience, the innovation, and the sheer hard work, blood, sweat, and tears from our agricultural sector. We're farming the state through and through and I'm sure that you're sick of hearing me say that our farmers are the best on the planet, but I believe in that. Full stop. The end.

Agriculture puts food on our tables, it keeps thousands of Tasmanians in work, and it drives regional communities. When drought hits us hard, our government backs our producers and the results show that partnership is paying off. The scorecard highlights and strengthens that. It sets Tasmania apart from other states. Our climate, our soils, our biosecurity, our natural resources, and generations of farming know-how. These advantages are helping us drive the delivery of long-term goals, reaching \$10 billion in agricultural farmgate value by 2050.

There are some standout stories right across the board. Our wine sector has had a remarkable year. Our wine sector with farmgate value jumping 48 per cent during this period. Our wine sector is now worth \$62 million. Helped by strong yields, strong prices, and excellent vintages. Dairy remains our highest value land-based industry at \$678 million, closely followed by meat production at \$667 million. Fruit bounced back strongly at \$401 million thanks to improved data and great seasons from berries and cherries. Asia doesn't want Australian

cherries anymore, they want Tasmanian ones and we're right behind there. We produce the best cherries in the world. Go Howard Hanson. Our veggie sector delivered another powerhouse performance at \$631 million. But Rome wasn't built in a day and there were a few bumps along the way; our success and our industries weren't either. These results are thanks to constant planning, collaboration and continuous improvement. It's a true credit to our primary production sector and that's why I'm pleased to highlight the launch of the CalfWays Tasmanian Action Plan, the first in the nation that sets out a clear long-term pathway and improving management for non-replacement dairy calves. Tasmania is the first region in the country to tailor the National CalfWays Framework to local conditions, with \$70,000 in government support and the hard work of Tasmanian Farmers and Dairy Australia. This plan gives farmers the best practical guidance to lift productivity, to strengthen supply chains and to support long-term sustainability.

This work is just another example of our ag sector and how great they are, in this case in dairy being productive, getting a standard for their industry that meets public expectations too. As you can see, I'm incredibly proud of our ag sector, and I know that we've only got one place to go now and that's forward: \$10 billion by 2050. Well done, ag.

**The House adjourned at 7.11 p.m.**