



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 2 June 2022

REVISED EDITION

Contents

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS	1
QUESTIONS.....	1
GAS SUPPLY RISK FOR TASMANIAN INDUSTRIAL USERS	1
POWER PRICE IMPACT ON TASMANIAN EMPLOYERS.....	2
NDIS DATA BREACH - TASMANIANS AFFECTED	3
PUBLIC TRUSTEE - CALL FOR INDEPENDENT COMPENSATION SCHEME	3
INFLUENZA SEASON - PROTECTING TASMANIANS	5
NATIONAL ELECTRICITY MARKET - TAKING TASMANIA OUT OF THE MARKET	6
ENERGY BILLS - CAP ON INCREASES	7
WORKSAFE - REPORTS OF INJURIES CAUSED BY PROTESTERS	9
TASMANIAN ECONOMY	10
WATER RESOURCES - SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT	11
TASMANIAN ECONOMY	12
SOCIAL HOUSING - SOLUTIONS FOR EX-NRAS TENANTS	14
BUDGET 2022-23 - SUPPORT FOR ARTS SECTOR.....	16
TASMANIAN AFL TEAM - STADIUM REQUIREMENTS	18
RESOURCES SECTOR - JOB CREATION.....	20
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS	21
PETITION.....	22
HEALTH WORKERS - RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION	22
WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY AMENDMENT (SINGLE-USE PLASTICS) BILL 2022 (NO. 31).....	22
FIRST READING	22
MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	23
IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT	23
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS	27
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2022 (NO. 23)	32
SECOND READING	32
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2022 (NO. 23)	45
SECOND READING.	45
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.2) 2022 (NO.24)	73
SECOND READING	73
MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL	76
JOINT SESSIONAL GENDER AND EQUALITY COMMITTEE - ESTABLISHMENT	76
ADJOURNMENT.....	77
SOBER DRIVER PROGRAM	77
HIV SURVIVORS AWARENESS DAY	78
TECHNOLOGY SECTOR.....	80
LEVENDALE - CORRESPONDENCE FROM MR JOE BIRCH	82
NATURE CONSERVATION ACT 2002 - PROCLAMATION ON NEW RESERVE	84
ELECTRICITY PRICES - LIBERAL ELECTION PROMISE.....	86
ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE DAY	88
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY - BUDGET ALLOCATIONS	90
COMMENTS MADE BY MEMBER FOR BASS, MS FINLAY	90

ELECTRICITY PRICE CAPPING	90
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION SECTOR - TRIBUTE.....	90

Thursday 2 June 2022

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

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, we have more students in the gallery this morning from years 5 and 6 at the Goulburn Street Primary School. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Gas Supply Risk for Tasmanian Industrial Users

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.01 a.m.]

The Australian Energy Market Operator, which runs the power grid and gas markets, overnight has invoked an emergency gas supply mechanism for the first time. It has warned more than 100 major industrial users around the country that they might be required to cut gas use. You promised to deliver a gas strategy by 2021 yet it still has not even gone out for consultation.

Has your failure to deliver risked severe impacts for Tasmania's major industrial employers at Bell Bay as well as TasGas and Aurora Energy?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Government is monitoring developments in the national gas market closely and is aware of the gas supply shortfall trigger notification issued by the Australian Energy Market Operator on 1 June 2022.

We are in contact with the AEMO, which manages the markets, and with the Tasmanian Gas Pipeline. I have spoken to our Energy minister this morning about this matter and am advised that there is no imminent gas supply shortage in Tasmania.

I understand that the notice was a result of the administered market caps at trading hubs being set at a price lower than the export price of LNG. This, in turn, caused producers to not offer gas for sale to generators of electricity in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. I am advised that the Australian Energy Market Operator has activated the gas supply guarantee and it expects the market to respond by supplying more gas for sale.

The Government will be maintaining regular contact with the AEMO and TGP about the potential for supply shortfall.

Power Price Impact on Tasmanian Employers

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.04 a.m.]

I note that there was no answer about when your gas strategy would finally be delivered. Further questions about energy are also critical this morning.

The centrepiece of your energy policy before the 2018 election was to take Tasmania out of the national electricity market. You said this would reduce power prices by up to 10 per cent. Can you confirm that you did not deliver on this core promise and now, with that massive price shock about to hit the national electricity market, Tasmania's major employers have been left extremely exposed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. A 12 per cent wholesale increase in national energy prices has been speculated. If that price increase occurs, the federal government will have to respond.

Our Government is providing some of the most generous electricity concession programs, hardship provisions, energy-efficient loan schemes and winter payments in the nation. We do this to help those in the community doing it tough. We will continue to monitor and respond accordingly.

When the final increase in Tasmanian electricity prices is known in mid-June, and when the Tasmanian economic regulator approves the final standing of prices, we stand ready to assess if further concessions and supports may be needed in regard to any future energy prices.

I have spoken to our Energy minister this morning. I understand that Mr Barnett has spoken to Mr Bowen this morning about these matters as well. Our Government understands how important the cost of living is to Tasmanians -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker. The question is specifically about this Government's decision or lack of decision to go ahead with its policy to de-link from the National Electricity Market.

Mr SPEAKER - I will invite the Premier to resume his answer. With the relevance of the question in mind, the Premier is allowed to answer the question as he sees best.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The Government understands how important the cost of living is to Tasmanians. That is why we have worked to ensure our regulated energy prices for Tasmanians have remained the lowest, or among the lowest, in the nation. We recognise the wholesale price increase speculation of around 12 per cent and, of course, we will work with the federal government. It is important -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. You previously ruled that short questions -

Mr SPEAKER - I will accept the point of relevance. Premier, if you could continue. The Premier has concluded his answer.

NDIS Data Breach - Tasmanians Affected

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for SKILLS, TRAINING and WORKFORCE GROWTH, Mr JAENSCH

[10.08 a.m.]

Are you aware of the massive data breach of the NDIS client management scheme and out-of-home-care providers which has led to the widespread publication of sensitive personal information, including an apparently enormous volume of medical records, names and addresses, Medicare and tax file numbers?

We are sure you will agree this is deeply worrying. The platform hit by this hack is delivered by Australian software providers CTARS, which provides client management databases. Has this matter been brought to your attention? Are you aware of any Tasmanians or local service providers who have been affected, their private information made public, as a result of this major data breach? If so, how is government supporting those affected?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for her question. I am advised that the Department of Communities Tasmania was notified on 17 May of a cyber attack on CTARS, a client management system for one of their service providers. It subsequently became a data breach. I am advised that the Department of Communities has one contracted service provider affected by the CTARS data breach. Other states and territories have also been impacted by the data breach. It is currently not clear how many Tasmanian citizens are impacted by the breach. However, the department is working with suppliers involved to determine this.

The Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has been notified and CTARS has engaged IDCARE to support victims of the data breach. Our Government will be assisting as required to provide support to any Tasmanians affected by the data breach.

Public Trustee - Call for Independent Compensation Scheme

Ms JOHNSTON question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.10 a.m.]

Yesterday in response to your refusal to establish an independent compensation scheme, Advocacy Tasmania said:

Nowhere else would it be appropriate to make victims beg for compensation from the very same people who harmed them in the first place. Imagine asking someone who had survived family violence to go to their abuser and beg for compensation, then give their abuser the power to decide if they had

done wrong and how much it would cost to make it right. It is absurd and disgusting.

The people at the centre of these systems always get forgotten.

Over the last decades, we have supported hundreds of clients to try and get justice from the Public Trustee. Their processes have been consistently obstructive and they have sought to protect their own. People rarely felt heard, the processes could take years and even then, simple complaints were left unresolved. Yet now our Government believes the Public Trustee should consider their own victims compensation claims, the same organisation the Government's own independent review found to have genuinely misunderstood their legislative obligations for at least 26 years.

This is the wrong organisation to be making decisions about the harms it has caused and the amount of compensation to pay.

That is an extraordinary statement. Will you reconsider and establish an independent, fair and accessible compensation scheme?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. Can I correct her in the interpretation of what I said yesterday? It is not the Public Trustee that would determine the amount in an ex-gratia system. The reason I called for an independent review is so that someone independent of government and the Public Trustee, which is a GBE, could determine any likely failures or recommendations that needed to be made.

A total of 28 recommendations came out of that independent review by Damian Bugg AM QC, a very esteemed barrister and known to most of us. As I said yesterday, the independent review did not suggest that there were any fundamental failings or individual harms that would warrant an actual compensation scheme. I have accepted on behalf of the Government the 28 recommendations and so has the Public Trustee. In our 2022-23 state Budget we have provided significant funding, namely \$4.3 million, for the implementation of the recommendations. Separate to that, there is an additional \$4.3 million for the Public Trustee to carry out its community service obligations. That funding is necessary for the implementation of all of those recommendations.

Aside from that, I have said that this year I am introducing significant amendments to the Guardianship and Administration Act to change the way we deal with these matters. That is as a direct result of the TLRI work and now the independent review. Our Government is committed to the 28 recommendations, some of which will take a bit longer to implement but some of which are being dealt with as we speak. As I said, the second tranche to the Guardianship and Administration Act will be tabled this year. This is significant work. The Government will always consider appropriate ex-gratia payments in circumstances where there are incidents of actual loss.

I urge stakeholders to consider our absolute and total commitment to the 28 recommendations from this review. We have not resiled from any of those recommendations. It is important that we work our way through them.

I also ask the member for Clark that when ministers take time to provide an answer to her that she also provides that on her social media site.

Influenza Season - Protecting Tasmanians

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.15 a.m.]

As we arrive in the first days of winter, can you update the House on how our Government is working to protect Tasmanians from influenza in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for his question. The health and safety of Tasmanians has always been our number-one priority. We know how devastating flu can be. In 2017 and 2019 Tasmania experienced particularly severe influenza outbreaks that had substantial impacts on many Tasmanians and caused a significant burden on our health services. Our winter strategy, launched on 18 March this year, outlines our preparations as a health system to manage the additional pressures related to the return of the flu after two years of little or no cases alongside COVID-19 in the community. As part of the strategy we are expanding some of the tried and tested approaches that have served us well in managing COVID-19.

We have expanded the well-established and highly successful COVID@home program to care for patients with flu, to avoid hospitalisation and provide quality health care in the home. Vaccination, particularly of vulnerable Tasmanians, is key to protecting our community from the severe consequences of influenza and avoiding overwhelming our hospitals this winter, particularly as we are continuing to deal with COVID-19 cases while at the same time continuing with scheduled elective surgery and outpatient clinics.

We have worked alongside the Department of Health in the lead-up to winter to monitor influenza and promote vaccination. Our rates of influenza infection in Tasmania have remained low compared to those experienced in some of our mainland states, but we are now starting to see our flu rates rise. In the last week, the rate in Tasmania has more than doubled. In the week ending Sunday 29 May, 134 cases of influenza were notified to the Department of Health and, to put that into perspective, it is higher than at the same time in 2019.

I am pleased to report that our efforts and the efforts of the Tasmanian people to come forward for flu vaccination has been highly positive. Tasmania has delivered close to 200 000 flu vaccines this year, making us the most vaccinated state nationally as a percentage of the population at this point in time. Almost 70 per cent of Tasmanians over the age of 65 have already had their flu shot. We need to do more, we can do more and we will do more. The Department of Health recommends that we urgently lift flu vaccination rates. This is particularly important for the more than 30 per cent of over-65s who are yet to be protected and the 83 per cent of under-5s who have not received a flu shot and have not yet experienced a proper flu season.

That is why I am pleased to announce today that the Tasmanian Government will provide flu vaccinations free across GP clinics and pharmacies for four weeks from this Monday 6 June to 6 July. If you have not yet -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not happy over there again?

Ms Haddad - We are actually saying that is good, we are agreeing with you.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the Premier has the call.

Mr ROCKLIFF - done so, please make an appointment now to take advantage of the scheme to ensure GPs and pharmacies are able to order adequate stock. This program is an addition to our state-run flu vaccination clinics that will continue to provide free vaccinations. From this weekend children as young as six months will be able to be vaccinated against influenza at vaccination clinics across Tasmania.

The Department of Health is also in discussion with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to deliver flu vaccines to rural and remote parts of Tasmania via their mobile clinic.

As a reminder, free flu vaccines will be available for 10 years plus at participating pharmacies; six months-plus at GPs and state community clinics. Please do not forget, if you are due for a COVID-19 booster, you can have this on the same day as your flu vaccination.

National Electricity Market - Taking Tasmania out of the Market

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.20 a.m.]

The centrepiece of your energy policy before the 2018 election was to take Tasmania out of the national electricity market. You said this would reduce power prices by up to 10 per cent. Premier, did you do this?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. First, I note that under Labor, Tasmanians experienced a 65 per cent increase in power prices.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Do not come here crying crocodile tears and pretend to be concerned about Tasmanian consumers. You have form when it comes to energy prices with an increase of 65 per cent.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This Government has, and always will, do what we can to put downward pressure on energy prices. Our focus is putting downward pressure on power prices

for Tasmanians. I am advised that de-linking may have significant, unintended consequences for major projects, such as Marinus Link and private sector wind developments. These projects stand to deliver significant intergenerational benefits for Tasmania -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - create jobs and substantial economic benefits, and will put further downward pressure on energy prices.

A member - Such poor behaviour.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Perhaps those watching today will judge where the poor behaviour is.

This is a very challenging time in terms of energy prices for our nation. That is why it is important that the federal government takes responsibility, and it is why, in a cooperative way, our minister for Energy has spoken with the responsible Commonwealth Minister, Mr Bowen - today, in fact. We are working together to ensure that our energy price increase is minimised as much as possible for our consumers.

Energy Bills - Cap on Increases

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

[10.23 a.m.]

The Australian energy market is rapidly approaching a crisis point with soaring wholesale energy prices and looming gas shortages. This rapid and sustained increase in the wholesale energy price will inevitably drive up power bills for residential customers, businesses and our large industries as well. This is a cost of living and a cost of doing business issue. If retail electricity prices increase significantly, many Tasmanian householders will not only have to make the choice to turn off the lights, but some will turn off the power. Many small to medium-size businesses are immediately exposed to these price hikes as well, and if something is not done, businesses will close and jobs will be lost.

Rather than waiting for the axe to fall, you have the ability to intervene right now. Given our unique ownership position of our assets, will you today commit to providing support to those exposed businesses, and will you commit today to introducing a cap on the inevitable increases to household and business energy bills?

Members - Hear, hear.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question on this very important matter relating to the gas market across Australia. It is a very important matter. I put on the record my thanks for the cooperation and the communication I have had with the federal minister, Chris Bowen, in recent days.

In response to the first part of your question, Mr O'Byrne, I met with the Australian Energy Regulator yesterday, and we talked about the gas market at a national level. I made it clear that we are monitoring these developments very carefully, and there are no imminent gas supply shortages in Tasmania. We are aware of the gas supply shortfall trigger notification issued by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and my department has been in touch on a constant basis with AEMO. The matter is being monitored very carefully, but I can assure Tasmanians there is no imminent concern with respect to gas supply.

Mr O'Byrne - Medium-sized enterprises are already coping it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr O'Byrne - Already coping it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. You have asked your question, member for Franklin. Allow the minister to answer it.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a very important matter. The question about our future gas strategy was raised earlier by the Leader of the Opposition. She should already be aware, as should all members, that the Gas Strategy Discussion Papers were released in November 2021 for feedback and discussion with the key stakeholders. Be assured that we treat our major industrials very seriously, as well as the more than 11 000 residential gas supply customers here in Tasmania. The final strategy will be published later this year. I wanted to correct the record and make that very clear.

With respect to electricity prices, in the second part of the member's question, let me be clear that the Tasmanian Government knows how important cost of living is to Tasmanians and across the country at the moment, including electricity prices. There has been speculation about substantial increases in electricity prices, and there will be further discussions with not just the federal minister, Mr Bowen, but also with other colleagues in the energy ministers' meetings that we will no doubt be having in the weeks ahead.

However, we remember that last year was a 7.11 per cent reduction from 1 July 2021 for residential customers in Tasmania, and 11 per cent reduction for small business, which was referred to by the member for Franklin. Since we came to government, there has been an 18 per cent reduction in real terms for residential customers, and a 27 per cent reduction in real terms for small business.

It is not easy, particularly at the moment. In this national impact we would expect a response from the federal government regarding the headwinds at a national level. As the Premier has made clear, we all continue to provide support to our concession card holders, and we will continue to monitor and assess the further concessions and supports that may be needed regarding any future energy price increases.

This is fairly and squarely in the lap of the federal government. As a state government, we will be monitoring this very carefully, and we will assess what may need to be done in the future. We already provide record funding support for our concession card holders, with over \$300 million for rates for water and for electricity. We will continue to do that because we take this matter very seriously. We know how important cost of living is to Tasmanians.

I conclude with this point: under the former Labor government, there was a 65 per cent increase in electricity prices. That is your legacy.

WorkSafe - Reports of Injuries caused by Protesters

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for WORKPLACE SAFETY and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Ms ARCHER

[10.30 a.m.]

Yesterday, the Magistrates Court heard that WorkSafe warned an Exeter sawmill about its unguarded conveyor belts one month before a worker got his hand lodged in one of them for up to 10 minutes. He suffered severe injuries. The court was also told the employee received no training regarding the hazards of unguarded belts, had not been shown how to turn off the chipper room's belt, nor shown how the correct isolation procedure.

Since 2014, how many incidents have been reported to WorkSafe where protests have caused injuries to workers or protesters? In the same time period, how many incidents in logging operations or sawmills have been reported to WorkSafe that have caused injury to employees? Has your Government been so focused on vilifying environmental activists that the health and safety of Tasmanians have been put at risk?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Greens member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, for her question. In relation to that case before the Magistrates Court I know that the sentence is pending and it is not my practice to comment or reflect on a court decision, particularly as it is pending and not completely over.

The member in her question has referred to a number of matters. I do not have the data with me today but I am willing to either come back into the House if I have that information by the end of the day, or provide it to the member either next week at Estimates or in writing, whichever she would prefer.

Dr Woodruff - Into the House would be great, thanks, minister.

Ms ARCHER - As for the remaining part of the question that was loaded, I am not going to reflect on a debate of this House in relation to the workplace protections legislation and the Police Offences Act because that is not under my jurisdiction either as Attorney-General. What I will do is refer to her specific questions on statistics and get back to her -

Dr Woodruff - Today?

Ms ARCHER - I said if I am able to get those statistics today, I will, otherwise I will provide it to you at a later date, but as soon as possible.

Tasmanian Economy

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.33 a.m.]

State final demand figures released yesterday show that for the second quarter in a row, Tasmania's domestic economy shrank. Looking at the figures, it is pretty clear that the cost-of-living crisis which your Budget failed to address has forced households to tighten their belts. Household spending was down 0.5 per cent. Private capital investment was also down by a massive 16 per cent compared to September. Respected economist, Saul Eslake, has said Tasmania's economy has slowed and he also points out that Tasmania is the only state going backwards. Why is Tasmania the only state economy going backwards?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the House will come to order; the Premier has the call.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank, Dr Broad, for his question. I do not know why you continue to talk Tasmania down. We have had some challenging times over the course of the last couple of years. There has been considerable disruption and that has naturally impacted on business confidence. I am concerned that you would get up in this place and, as I understand it, speak publicly about 'technical' recessions or whatever you might have said recently, which is completely over the top and undermines confidence in the Tasmanian community and business community. Frankly, I expect more from you, Dr Broad.

Dr Broad - Are you saying that Tasmania's economy is not going backwards?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Tasmania's economy is in robust health. Retail trade is up, exports are up, unemployment is down, lowest on record -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am aware that in the March 2022 quarter, growth in state final demand has eased slightly, exactly as forecast, which reflects -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Braddon.

Mr ROCKLIFF - capacity constraints in the economy and a moderation in private investment. However, state final demand remains at near record levels with the third highest quarter on record and in the year to March 2022 was 8.5 per cent higher than the year to March 2021.

Dr Broad - What about other states? Why are other states going ahead and we are not?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad. Last warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Broad, that was your second question this year. I would have expected better from you. Do not talk Tasmania down.

Water Resources - Sustainable Management

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms PALMER

[10.36 a.m.]

We have heard a lot about water over the last number of days and weeks. Can you update the House on what the Tasmanian Liberal Government is doing to ensure the long-term sustainable management of our water resources?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Fresh water is arguably our most precious resource, underpinning the Tasmanian economy and environment and our way of life. That is why the Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to a balanced and informed approach to sustainable management of our water resources, both now and into the future.

Today I am proud to announce more than \$1.8 million in joint Tasmanian and Australian Government funding to deliver three freshwater science projects as part of the Rural Water Use Strategy. The 2022-23 State Budget allocates \$535 000 towards these projects which will focus on river health and support continued evidence-based policy and decision-making in relation to climate change, groundwater risk assessment and water use accountability.

As a global leader in renewable energy production and emissions reduction, it is appropriate that we ensure Tasmania's water management practices are informed by the latest climate change modelling and this is why we are launching the Catchment Yield Science Update project. This project will incorporate the most up-to-date predictions of climate change impacts which will support water managers, businesses and the community to make informed decisions regarding sustainable water allocation and planning for the future.

We will also improve water use accountability through the Water Accountability, Metering and Reporting Framework Review project. This project will employ contemporary policy settings for water use accountability and make recommendations for change that will support continual policy improvement to deliver sustainable water into the future.

Finally, the groundwater assessment project will enhance our understanding of the interaction between surface water and groundwater. This project will provide tools and data to support water management policy and water infrastructure planning. These science projects,

expected to be completed in 2024, will engage water scientists, experts, industry leaders and key stakeholders.

This Government acknowledges there are challenges in water management, and I acknowledge there are challenges in water management. We are getting on with the job of addressing them. Recent achievements in this space include: releasing the rural water use strategy and the implementation strategy; establishing the rural water roundtable; investing \$1.5 million to deliver initiatives from the rural water use strategy; and establishing the River Health Advisory Project, enabling the creation of three new, specialist water science positions within NRE Tasmania.

In addition: we have secured \$26.5 million in funding from the Australian Government for water infrastructure projects, that will deliver improved environmental outcomes for our waterways and make highly reliable recycled water available for irrigation; established the Water Managers and Data Custodians Working Group to enhance sharing of water information and monitoring; and creating a water management reference group to encourage alignment in resources and activities to improve outcomes in fresh water management.

Over the last two years, we have invested \$5 million into the River Health Action Plan, to improve water quality by keeping livestock out of waterways and better managing effluent within the Tamar estuary and Esk River catchments.

This has delivered real actions, including installing 254 km of fencing which is protecting 1100 hectares of waterways, with contracts in place to deliver 437 km of fencing. We also have contracts in place to improve effluent management across 2500 hectares of milking platforms. Once all currently contracted works are complete, it is estimated that 1200 cattle, 190 000 sheep and 1500 dairy cows will be kept out of waterways, resulting in a significant improvement in water quality and ecosystem health. We are getting on with the job.

Tasmanian Economy

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.42 a.m.]

Not only is Tasmania's economy going backwards for the last two quarters but Tasmania's population has also gone backwards for the last two quarters. Young Tasmanians are once again leaving for the mainland seeking better pay, better opportunities and cheaper housing. You have wrecked the Budget, and now you are borrowing \$3.5 million every day for the next four years, on the way to a record debt of \$5.2 billion with next to nothing to show for it.

Tasmanians will be forced to fork out more than \$600 million in interest payments, business confidence is down, consumer confidence has taken a battering and building approvals are down a staggering 43 per cent compared to this time last year, with building companies going bust seemingly every other week. You went to the last election promising strong economic management. Where did it all go so wrong?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Broad for his third question of the year. If young people were listening to you, they would flee Tasmania in droves after the way you present an incorrect picture of Tasmania. The shadow treasurer gets up and talks down the Tasmania economy like that. Frankly, it is a disgrace. We have had some challenges. You might have noticed the pandemic that has been across the globe, Dr Broad.

Dr Broad - What about other states going ahead?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You have mentioned a lot of things there - population, which I will come to, and debt. We have had to borrow to support Tasmanians through a pandemic, to keep people employed, and to keep people safe. We have had to borrow to renew and to build intergenerational infrastructure -

Dr Broad - And your keeping on borrowing off into the distance.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Braddon, order, if you continue to interject you will leave the Chamber.

Mr ROCKLIFF - that was neglected for 16 years across a range of areas of Government, including health and education. I was appalled. I could not believe in my first year as minister for Education, travelling around Tasmania and you should be ashamed of yourselves for the state of repair that you left -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Dr Broad, order, you have been warned.

Mr ROCKLIFF - our schools in. Absolutely appalling, in fact one -

Ms White - The outcomes for our students were better back then. They have gone backwards under you.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I know you are sensitive about it because you left the state of infrastructure and education and health in an absolute mess and we have across various responsibilities -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Premier, if you would not mind - just a few seconds to calm down. When a question like that is asked the Premier is going to push back. It is a question that covered a lot of areas. I will allow the Premier to continue, giving the Opposition a few moments to settle down. I do not expect any interjections from this moment forward. Dr Broad, you have been warned. You asked the question. Now I expect you to listen to it in silence.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will not incite interjections either, Mr Speaker, but I will just correct Dr Doom over there, because in April 2022 -

Mr SPEAKER - Premier, if you could just retract that. We should refer to each other by either electorate, or to identify members from the same electorate and their names.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I agree with your ruling, Mr Speaker and I withdraw.

I was referring to Dr Broad talking down the economy. In April 2022 there were 260 700 Tasmanians in work, including 124 000 women. The employment participation rate decreased by 0.8 per cent, understandably, to 60.2 per cent in April. The unemployment rate is 3.8 per cent below the national average of 3.9 per cent and equal lowest on record and 17 000 jobs have been created. Our unemployment rate has halved since March 2014. I remember March 2014 very well because there was a change of government in March 2014, and since that time the unemployment rate has halved.

Job vacancies are 129 per cent higher than before the pandemic. Exports are at a record high of \$4.6 billion in the 12 months to March 2022 and 24.5 per cent more than the year before. I have mentioned retail trade -up 5 per cent over the year to reach \$679 million. Retail trade - 17.6 per cent higher than before the pandemic. The economy grew by 3.8 per cent in 2021, the second fastest growth rate in the country and our fastest economic growth in 13 years.

Dr Broad focused on a range of areas, but when it comes to population growth, the pandemic and the border closures impacted on population growth across Australia in the September 2021 quarter, with all but two states seeing their population decline. Importantly, over the 12 months to 30 September 2021 Tasmania's population has continued to increase, 0.03 per cent, including close to 6000 births in the year. We have set an ambitious target of 650 000 people by 2050 and we have achieved our first milestone of 530 000 Tasmanians by 2020. We achieved that in early 2018, I am advised.

I suggest that any young person who may be listening to parliament in question time today not focus on Dr Broad's negativity but on the very positive facts that Tasmania has when it comes to growth in our economy, our unemployment, our retail spending, our exports, which is very positive.

Social Housing - Solutions for Ex-NRAS Tenants

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

Six brave senior citizens facing an anxious fight to avoid homelessness sat in this Chamber yesterday as representatives of how, on your watch, Tasmania has ended up in an unprecedented housing crisis. For the past 18 months we have been writing to your successive housing ministers again and again, asking your Government to help them, along with hundreds of other Tasmanians with nowhere to live and nowhere to go. None of those ministers ever did anything. Yesterday, they chose as a last resort to come here in person to ask you for help. All that stress and anxiety could have been avoided if your Government had only acted a year ago when you were first asked.

They are not alone. There are other people, like Stewart Mansfield, who have already been evicted into homelessness. Can you guarantee a solution will be found for each of them and the more than 100 NRAS tenants facing this circumstance this year? Or do they each have to come in here, put their struggles on the news for everyone to see and effectively beg for help before you do anything?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Again, I acknowledge the stress and concern this matter has caused residents involved. I spoke to a resident of Redwood Village this morning. I want to assure them, as I assured the person I spoke to this morning, that we are doing everything we can to ensure they are assisted and not forced into homelessness. As the minister committed to the residents of Redwood Village on Monday night when he met them, the department has been working to look for solutions as a priority.

Today, we can update the House that the department has advised, after assessment under the expanded Private Rental Incentive Program, funded through the State Budget, all residents in Redwood Village are eligible for the scheme. Housing Connect has been communicating with those residents, as I understand it, over the past 24 hours. That is very pleasing.

I heard a 'yay' from Mr Winter with respect to the Private Rental Incentive Scheme, which Labor said was ill-advised, poorly conceived, a landlord incentive full of holes. He said that in 2018 when we introduced it. Once again, you have been found out as being complete and utter hypocrites, opposing a scheme that you came into the House yesterday wanting us to support the Redwood Village residents. Once again, you come in full of hypocrisy and crocodile tears.

The department is now in negotiations with the private landlord about their willingness to be part of the Private Rental Incentive Scheme, ensuring those residents can stay in their homes. I stress that our Government does not own these homes. They are owned by a private landlord, managed by Community Housing Ltd and operated under the National Rental Affordability Scheme. We will do all we can to support our residents across Tasmania. We hope to have a further update to residents by the end of the week.

In relation to all those residents who have recently exited the NRAS scheme, we have asked the department to make contact with them if they are known, and if they have not been able to obtain other accommodation, ensure that they are aware of the support available to them.

We are working closely with a group of residents in Perth in northern Tasmania to assess eligibility for the Private Rental Incentive Scheme and to see what other support we can provide.

On Tuesday, we announced an expansion of our Safe Spaces in Launceston, Hobart and Burnie to provide a further 22 spaces statewide during this winter. This includes 11 spaces in Launceston, five in Hobart and six in Burnie. Funding for this initiative is coming from the department's 2022-23 Budget allocation and will provide more shelter for Tasmanians over winter.

We will be doing all we can. We will not be playing politics like you have been playing and, frankly, being found out. We are working with the federal government as well. I understand our minister for Housing has reached out to the new federal housing minister. We will see when that call is returned and ensure that both state and federal governments work together with respect to this matter.

Budget 2022-23 - Support for Arts Sector

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for the ARTS, Ms ARCHER

Can you outline how the Tasmanian Government is delivering in the 2022-23 state Budget for our dedicated local arts and cultural sector?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his interest in the arts and our cultural and creative industries. Our local art sector is fundamental to our Tasmanian life and vital for our economy. As minister, I remain strongly focused on sustaining support for our diverse arts sector. This is reflected in the 2022-23 state Budget with strong investments to build our reputation in the arts, and support local jobs. This includes supporting and securing the future of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, TMAG, as -

Members interjecting.

Ms ARCHER - Mr Speaker, they really do not want to hear about our arts sector which, as Minister for the Arts, I take seriously, as do my colleagues in Government behind me -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms Archer has the call and she should be heard in silence.

Ms ARCHER - Dr Broad, we have provided record funding to our arts sector. What I am explaining to the House is the continuing funding we are providing to our arts sector.

The TMAG is custodian of our state collection and is a critical centre of education and discovery that tells unique Tasmanian stories and connects art, science, culture and our environment.

TMAG is vital for our economy, especially our visitor economy. I am extremely pleased about our targeted investment to future-proof the TMAG with \$1.3 million in additional funding across the forward Estimates. This includes \$100 000 towards the development of a TMAG strategic vision to progress plans for a reimagined cultural and art facility, and support crucial partnerships with local Tasmanian communities as part of our commitment to TMAG's future and its sustainability. The TMAG vision is critical for securing the future of TMAG to ensure it continues to play a leading role as a globally significant cultural centre and is able to forge a reputation as a museum and art gallery of international prestige.

The TMAG vision will progress the development of a comprehensive plan for a cultural precinct, in partnership with the City of Hobart, and set new goals for TMAG's future direction as a sustainable cultural asset for all Tasmanians.

The TMAG vision will also prioritise strengthening partnerships with Tasmanian communities including the original custodians and First People of lutruwita/Tasmania, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and driving our Government's pathway to truth-telling and treaty in the arts.

In the 2022-23 Budget we have also committed \$250 000 annually across the forward Estimates in operational support to ensure TMAG continues to play a vital role for research, culture and the arts now and into the future. Additionally, we continue to support TMAG in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 with \$200 000 in this Budget to ensure services are able to continue to be delivered in a COVID-safe way. As Minister for the Arts, securing a sustainable future for TMAG for the benefit of all Tasmanians is one of my key priorities and I have fought hard to ensure our Government is able to deliver effective and critical funding through these important initiatives.

Today - and I am getting towards the end of my answer here but this is a very important announcement - I am thrilled to be able to launch the inaugural Tasmanian Literary Awards, replacing the former Premier's Literary Prize, with an open invitation for entries. Our Government has invested more money, namely \$115 000, across more categories, namely seven categories, reflecting the strength, depth and diversity of the Tasmanian literary sector and providing direct support to Tasmanian writers.

I have provided funding across a number of different and diverse arts sectors and this is another sector that has been crying out for funding and this is what we have done. We have increased the categories and the prize pool. These new awards provide an opportunity to honour the achievements of our local writing community, raise the profile of Tasmanian authors and foster emerging literary talent in our state.

In closing, but importantly, this Budget provides consistent core funding for both Screen Tasmania and Arts Tasmania and sees the continuation of our effective COVID-19 initiatives including the \$2 million Live Performance Support Program. There is further investment through our \$3 million Screen Innovation Fund which is being delivered over two years - it has not been cut - and a very welcome \$1.2 million uplift in annual funding for arts organisations now built into the forward Estimates.

It appears, Mr Speaker, that members cannot read the Budget. This Budget delivers consistent and targeted support for our diverse -

Mr SPEAKER - Please wind up, minister.

Ms ARCHER - and vibrant arts sector. I look forward to seeing further growth and sustained momentum over the coming year as a result of our Government's investment.

Mr SPEAKER - I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Archer - Gee, Arts has had record funding and you do not like it. I cannot believe it.

Dr Woodruff - You are kidding.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms Archer - Record funding - \$13 million over the last two years.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker. It appears that the minister can interject as much as she likes. Are you going to call her to order?

Mr SPEAKER - Do you have a point of order?

Mr WINTER - Yes, that is my point of order. I am asking you to maintain order.

Mr SPEAKER - What is it? What number? Please sit down. The Leader of the Opposition has the call. Everybody else should be silent.

Tasmanian AFL Team - Stadium Requirements

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.03 a.m.]

All parties in this Chamber have given tripartite support to an AFL bid. You would know that the 2019 AFL Taskforce report outlined a model for AFL in Tasmania which would see the blockbuster matches played at a revamped UTAS Stadium and the matches with smaller clubs played in the south. Can you confirm that with your \$750 million floating stadium for Hobart this will no longer be the plan? You would have also seen AFL Taskforce chair Brett Godfrey's comments to the ABC yesterday that the new stadium is not integral to the licence bid. Can you also confirm the \$750 million floating stadium is not part of the bid for a Tasmanian AFL team and never has been?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I also thank the member and the Leader of the Greens for their tripartisan support for our AFL bid as well, and significant investment and a very strong bid at that.

Ms Finlay - Thank you for acknowledging our support.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. The feedback I have had from the AFL initially is that it is indeed a very strong bid indeed and very much signals to the AFL that we are serious.

Ms Finlay - That's not the question.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The member mentioned the stadium. Now, more than ever before, it is important to plan for the future, to be ambitious, to set long-term goals that underpin our

aims, but also demonstrate to the rest of the country that we are on a pathway where young Tasmanian women and men can aspire to be the best they can be right here in their own state.

A southern stadium supports the aspirations for Tasmania securing its own AFL team and will be able to host regular rectangular sporting codes that will support ongoing discussions with the A-League football team, but it is more than just a stadium. It is about urban transformation, urban renewal and delivering a world-class multipurpose venue that maximises local economic and social benefits. It also builds on our Government's significant investments in the plans for existing major facilities such as MyState Bank Arena and the UTAS Stadium in Launceston, as well as Dial Park at Penguin.

The stadium will put Tasmania on the national and international stage both for sporting and entertainment events at a scale that simply has not been possible in the past. It will be an important part of the state's sporting and entertainment evolution, growing and supporting Tasmania's visitor economy and inspiring infrastructure and transport systems to support industry, business, community growth, filling the city -

Ms Finlay - Simple question, yes or no?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass. If you continue to mumble under your mask I will ask you to leave and it will not just be for the rest of question time. It will be further into the day.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and the state with accommodation, hospitality and retail activity. It is more than just the context of an AFL team, it is an enabler in many respects and that is important to recognise. The only funding for the stadium in the Budget is \$1.25 million for a feasibility study so we can do our due diligence on what is a significant piece of infrastructure.

My message to Tasmanians is clear. We need such critical infrastructure for all the reasons I have just outlined and we can have that as well as continue to invest in critical infrastructure right across -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The question was whether it was part of the AFL bid to have the stadium included. I ask you to draw his attention to that, please.

Mr SPEAKER - There was a significant amount of preamble in your question. I believe the Premier has been covering the relevance issue well and truly through his contribution. However, I will ask the Premier to stay relevant to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Absolutely, I will. It was a very free-ranging question which I think I have covered very well. We can have critical sporting infrastructure and a very clear plan as we move forward but also invest in key areas such as our schools, our hospitals and in public housing as well in terms of our \$1.5 billion investment -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - including \$538 million over the course of the next four years when it comes to supporting housing. Those opposite might like to make comparisons for their political purposes but Tasmania can be very proud of our success on the national sporting stage over the course of the last 12 months, in particular with the JackJumpers. It shows we can match it on the national stage. The AFL bid is a strong bid, which demonstrates that we are very serious about our right to have our own AFL and AFLW teams and it would not be a true national competition until there is an AFL and AFLW team from Tasmania.

Resources Sector - Job Creation

Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr BARNETT

[11.10 a.m.]

Can you outline to the House how the majority Tasmanian Liberal Government is delivering our plan to secure Tasmania's future, especially in the job-creating resources sector which is important for my electorate of Braddon?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I know of his very strong support for the resources sector, particularly on the north-west coast, and his commitment to it. I thank him for that.

There is no greater friend to the Tasmanian resources sector than a majority Rockliff Liberal Government. The renewable, sustainable forestry sector provides wood - and wood is good, it is sustainable and renewable, and it builds our homes. The building and construction sector needs it. It is well regulated, it is world leading, and in terms of the mining and mineral processing sector, that likewise is well regulated and world leading, and it provides us with the minerals that we need for our renewable future.

In terms of mining and mineral processing, Tasmania is delivering. More than 60 per cent of all our exports come from the mining and mineral processing sector. We are proud of it, it is 10 000 jobs right across the state, in all those rural and regional areas, and millions of dollars in royalties, fees, and other payments. That helps provide for the essential services - health, education, and keeping the community safe. The Budget has committed \$1 million in new funding to the sector, and that is backing in more jobs in regional Tasmania. We have \$800 000 over four years to ensure that Minerals Resources Tasmania delivers for the industry, to streamline the process, provide those enhanced services, and to deliver the support for the strong growth that is planned for the sector. It is in a growth phase, and we are going to support the sector to grow.

We have \$200 000 to help address the emerging national wood supply issues. It is tough at the moment to build our homes. There are challenges out there. We have funding to help support get that sustainable wood into the system to build our homes. We are not leaving any stone unturned. In addition to that, \$1 million extra of the \$2 million that we are providing to upgrade the power network infrastructure and support for the Dolphin Scheelite mine on King Island. I was there earlier this year, with member for Braddon Felix Ellis and Gavin Pearce, the recently returned and excellent federal member for Braddon. I wish them well with their plans for that expansion on King Island.

All those commitments are on top of the millions we have already provided in the election platform - on-island processing for the forest industry; millions of dollars to the geoscience initiative; further efforts in terms of exploration drilling grants for the resources sector that is so important; the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board; and diversity action plans. The state Budget has delivered on that.

What did the industry say, Mr Speaker? They are very supportive. The forest industry said they welcome the Budget commitment. It was a crucial time, particularly in terms of housing supply, and they look forward to further work with the state Government on these important matters.

Here is a quote from the Tasmanian Forest Products Association -

Critically, the government has also recognised the urgency of ensuring domestic supply, including softwood framing and hardwood timber for floors, doors, and windows through their \$200 000 investment in resource security in the forestry sector, designed to inform the government's strategic approach in achieving long-term sustainable resource sector.

That is what it is about, and we are delivering on our commitments. I will conclude by noting that in the Opposition Leader's Budget reply, when it comes to mining and forestry - those two key productive industries - not one word. Not one word about the resources sector.

Mr BARNETT - Not one word, about the resources sector. That gives you an indication of Labor's response. Then the Shadow minister, with 40 minutes of rambling and a couple of hundred words right at the end. At the end of the day, no policies, no plans, a big bagel with a big hole - there is nothing there from the Labor Opposition.

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

Mr BARNETT - I say thank you to the Greens for putting forward an alternative Budget. They are backing their convictions, and they are courageous. However, it was both a kooky budget, and a destructive budget, in terms of impact on the economy and jobs. It is trying to kill the goose that has laid the golden egg - our productive industries. Why do they do it? The only way those policies can be implemented is under a Labor-Greens government and let us hope that never happens.

Time expired.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome the second group from Goulburn Street Primary School, from years 5 and 6. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

PETITION

Health Workers - Recruitment and Retention

Dr Woodruff presented a petition signed by approximately 2404 citizens of Tasmania requesting that the House call on the Tasmanian Government to immediately implement measures to support the recruitment and retention of health workers.

Petition received.

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

First Reading

Bill presented by Dr Woodruff and read the first time.

SITTING DATES AND SITTING TIME

[11.21 a.m.]

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

- (1) the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 14 June next at 10 a.m.
- (2) for this day's sitting the House not stand adjourned at 6 o'clock and that the House continue to sit past 6 o'clock

Just very briefly for the benefit of the House, I communicated this morning with the two independent members and Mr Winter and Ms O'Connor to let them know that the Government's intention is to sit until Appropriation Bill (No. 2) is completed this afternoon. With the timing the way it is there is a couple of variables in terms of how long the remaining speakers will all speak in terms of their 30 minutes each, but I think we will probably finish before 6 o'clock.

I wanted to lift the adjournment so if there are multiple speakers on Appropriation Bill (No. 2) that take us past 6 o'clock we have that bill completed. It is not our intention to bring any other bills forward after we have finished the budget bills today.

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the House for his communication on this and we will support it.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we are very pleased that Mr Street has taken such a collaborative approach to his role, with the exception of the gag on the police offences amendments. I am quite comfortable and so is Dr Woodruff with sitting late. We enjoy your company so we look forward to sitting tonight.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Importance of Infrastructure Investment

[11.23 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Motion) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: importance of infrastructure investment.

I am delighted to talk about the importance of infrastructure investment, particularly with the young people in the Gallery up there. This is who we are investing for. Every time we look at our kids or the kids who come into this place, it is about building the roads of the future to make sure that when they get their Ps they can drive on the new Bridgewater bridge, or they can go along the Bass Highway and be safe, or they are going out through to Marrawah. It is to ensure that the ports they potentially will work at or utilise as consumers will be efficient and well managed, and if there are any farm kids in the Gallery or right around our state, the transformative investments that this Government has put into irrigation infrastructure that will last 100 years and more will transform not only their job opportunities in the school holidays, potentially picking crops and fruit in new areas that have been opened up through that, but also if they want to own or manage a farm, to do that is transformative.

I want to reflect on the absolute shambles we have seen from the other side of the House in this process. We had a budget that was delivered on Thursday and the only person who has had a worse week than the Leader of the Opposition with her insipid, uninspired, carping and complaining budget reply speech that featured no sign of an alternative budget and delivered no idea to the people of Tasmania of what Labor actually stands for, is the shadow treasurer who was not even able to ask a single question about the Budget all week. He got two today because he was so embarrassed that he has been running and hiding - and I see him walking out the door as I speak. He has been put in the freezer. I do not know whether it is because of his relentless negativity as Dr Doom or just because he has no idea -

Mr SPEAKER - Order; you will refer to members by their official title.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Speaker, I accept that. The shadow treasurer clearly has no idea and perhaps no interest. We know he was a former leadership aspirant and they only gave him the job of shadow treasurer to keep him quiet and stop him attacking the school bus bullies that run the toxic culture of the Labor Party. We have not heard anything from the shadow minister for finance and it is simply a rabble on the other side of the House.

We are very proud of the infrastructure investment that is contained in this Budget because it is going to set up future generations. It is going to provide job prospects and opportunities. The safe infrastructure will mean that young people in Tasmania know they have a bright future here. The Budget includes total infrastructure funding of \$5.6 billion, an increase of about \$1 billion from the 2021-22 budget. This single year increase is unprecedented both in dollar terms and in proportion to the prior year. It is a step change in infrastructure investment in Tasmania.

When we came to government in March 2014 we inherited a crumbling state of affairs. The Midland Highway was a goat track, there were head-on collisions on a regular basis on

that very dangerous stretch of road and there were very few parts of that road that even achieved the three-star AusRAP safety rating. The investments we have put in there, \$585 million as part of this Budget to deliver that safe highway, is transforming the Midlands and our state.

Infrastructure investment on this scale gives business confidence to invest themselves as well to employ more people, more apprentices and to underpin the services that Tasmanians rely on. The investment in this Budget will build our critical infrastructure, not just roads, ports and bridges, but hospitals, schools and community facilities that help Tasmanians to prosper and stay connected.

It is notable that Treasury forecasts above-average economic growth, and that will continue in 2022-23 and 2023-24. Investment by the Government in our infrastructure supports economic growth as well and the jobs it will create. Infrastructure investment across the general government sector alone will exceed \$4.8 billion over the next four years.

That means fantastic opportunities for the next generation of apprentices as well. Mr Speaker, I know you have done an apprenticeship; I have done the same. For the business owners that take on these young people, to know that they have a record pipeline of infrastructure investment gives them the opportunity to take on those young people for four years to pass on the skills held in their hands to the next generation.

The 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates also include infrastructure investment outside of the general government sector, through government businesses and other entities, supported by government equity contributions of \$736.9 million. The GBEs we have in Tasmania are doing an extraordinary job in terms of building our future, whether it is the next generation of Hydro investments through Tarraleah, the Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation Scheme which is doing so much to improve the mining resource and general freight industries in Tasmania, or TasPorts with a generational investment into the ports of Devonport and Burnie, Tasmania's two largest ports.

The Treasurer and Infrastructure minister will no doubt speak about the unprecedented investment in roads and bridges in his contribution, but the Budget also includes an additional funding of \$447.7 million over the course of the Budget for the delivery of new infrastructure projects.

To support the housing needs of Tasmanians, the Government has announced a 10-year \$1.5 billion commitment that will deliver 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032. The funding commitment will be delivered by our new housing authority, an innovative piece of government administration. The 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates include an initial allocation of \$35 million towards this commitment.

I spoke before about the Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation Scheme. There is \$229 million for projects including tranche 4 of that important scheme and \$202 million for the Tasmanian Irrigation Scheme for tranche 3 of irrigation projects and energy for on-farm initiatives. We are investing in the infrastructure for the future.

[11.30 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to the MPI on infrastructure today. I must say that was a pretty strange contribution by the member who has just resumed his seat. He spent the first part of it on his strange obsession with

Dr Broad, talking about him, which was an odd rant, hardly said the word 'infrastructure' - finally came to it in the end. What most offended me was his lack of sensitivity towards people who are involved in serious car crashes on our roads -

Mr Ellis - Excuse me? What?

Ms WHITE - You spoke about head-on collisions on the Midland Highway. We should not be politicising serious crash incidents on any of our roads, particularly given that the road toll this year is greater than it has been for a very long time, which is incredibly sad. We should be able to work together to sensitively and appropriately address matters like this, not use them in a debate like they were just then by the member for Braddon, Felix Ellis.

The member who resumed his seat comes in here - Mr Ellis is a bit like their attack kitty. He comes in here and gets his claws out. The member who was not even elected, got in on a recount, because guess who did not get elected properly? It was Adam Brooks. Remember him, Mr Speaker? What a shame it is that the Liberal Party endorsed somebody like that. Mr Ellis is in here, the attack kitty for the Liberal Party, on countbacks from Adam Brooks, who is a disgraced former member of this place, and thinks that he has a contribution to make when most of the time he only comes in here and obsesses about Dr Broad.

Let us talk about this Government's record on infrastructure and failure to deliver infrastructure. I spoke about this as a key part of my Budget reply because this Government makes a lot of announcements. Mr Ellis spoke about some of the announcements again in his contribution, but they fail to deliver time and time again. They talk about investing in critical infrastructure projects but they never deliver them.

Because it takes them so long to get started, the costs blow out. There is no certainty for those contractors waiting for these tenders to be delivered because they never get put out the door in the timeframe they were expecting to see them. When they do, then they are faced with challenges about how they deliver for the budget the Government has allocated for the project. It is very difficult.

That is why we have seen budget blowouts by this Government, with a debt forecast at \$5.2 billion. In large part that is because of the failure of this Government to get infrastructure projects out the door in the timeframe they had anticipated when they first announced them. The failure to deliver is costing Tasmanian taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars, let alone the failure to actually upgrade and improve the services that Tasmanians depend on.

Things like the Glenorchy ambulance super station, which was promised two elections and three premiers ago, with a black-and-white commitment that it would be completed last year. Just this week they have identified a site. It took a while. We still do not know what the designs are for that project. We will wait and see. All the while, Tasmanians are dying while they wait for an ambulance.

We saw that in the north-west, where a Burnie superstation was promised with a black-and-white commitment that it would be completed last year. The project cost has doubled, work has not started yet, and ramping is much worse than it has ever been.

It is a terrible indictment on this Government that they make announcements election after election, premier after premier, but they never deliver on them. When they finally get around to it, the cost has doubled.

Cosgrove High School, promised in 2018 - they still have not even done the designs. Macquarie Point - do I need say any more than that? What an embarrassing disgrace, a lack of delivery that is an eyesore for everyone to see. The Next Iconic Walk, announced when Will Hodgman was still the premier - still nothing to show for it. The Cradle Mountain Cableway, again announced under Will Hodgman, even earlier than the Next Iconic Walk - nothing delivered. Project X in the Huon, something that the Government promised would be operational this month - nothing to see, failure to deliver.

The biggest failure of all, as I said earlier in the week, is the failure to progress the Launceston General Hospital stage two redevelopment. This was promised at the last election, promised they would secure federal funding, and promised they would deliver for the people of Bass and northern Tasmania. The \$580 million is not in their Budget.

You look across all the different agencies. In education, projects are 16 years behind cumulatively, whether it be the Glen Dhu pool, Hobart City High School, Legana Primary School or Mt Nelson oval. I could go on. There is a list here as long as my arm.

I need to get onto health because there, cumulatively, they are 10 years behind in their infrastructure delivery program, including Mersey capital upgrades and Royal Hobart Hospital Redevelopment Stage 2.

Justice: cumulatively three years behind on the projects, including the Burnie Court, where we still have not heard from the Premier an emphatic decision to rule out moving it to the residential site, Mooreville Park, as opposed to maintaining its presence in the CBD. What is going on there? We know the project has essentially doubled in price because of the delays and the poor execution of that project by this Government.

Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania: cumulative delays of 14 years for projects within that agency. Different infrastructure projects, including the Freycinet Peninsula wastewater upgrades, which we know are necessary. We recently saw more sewage outflows into the Coles Bay area, an iconic part of our state. Devastating for our brand and terrible for the residents who live there and love that place. Two years behind.

Cumulative delays of five years in Police, Fire and Emergency Management, including a four-year delay on infrastructure needed to crack down on anti-social driving. Three years' cumulative delays for TasTAFE upgrades, including the Water and Energy Trade Centre of Excellence. Two years behind on that project alone.

This is a government that fails to deliver on infrastructure. It is costing the taxpayer millions of dollars more because of their incompetence and it is a disgrace that they even think to bring this on and that it could be something positive for them to talk about.

Time expired.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, we have the third group of grade 5 and 6 students from Goulburn Street Primary School. Welcome. I hope you are enjoying your tour of parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

[11.37 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I congratulate Mr Ellis for bringing forward this matter of public importance. Infrastructure is so important for our state and, I emphasise, across the portfolios,. In Mr Ellis's contribution we heard about the historic investment that is occurring in infrastructure across government, across every region of this incredible state we get to call home. This Government took an important decision in 2019 to double down on our infrastructure program.

We are delivering for Tasmanians. I encourage anybody unfortunate enough to have to hear Ms White's contribution to not listen to that misinformation, or even that disinformation to try to create a set of alternative realities. We are delivering. In fact, we get criticised by the Opposition at times, much as Ms White would like to distance herself from the now-infamous James Kitto article in the *Mercury* a number of years ago, where, at the RACT forum, she called on the Government to spend less on infrastructure and more on services.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your advice about this because in the past when these issues have been raised and I have provided points of clarification to you and other speakers, you have made a ruling about that. I would like to know how the minister can keep raising things that are proven to be untrue.

Mr SPEAKER - You have had an opportunity to make a contribution. The minister is making a contribution. We have adjournments at the end of the day where any member can stand up and add something.

Ms WHITE - I have already done that many times, which is my point to you. He is not telling the truth.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, I do not think Ms White has attempted even once to have it corrected in the *Mercury*. I will continue.

The Budget I released last week - and I am grateful for the positive feedback the Government has received as we moved around the state on Friday. Very strong support for the decision we took in 2019 to spend more on infrastructure in advance of the pandemic that we did not see coming, but we wanted to borrow to build. We chose that path deliberately. We picked up a situation when there was a change of office where infrastructure investment across government over four years under Labor was \$1.3 billion delivered. We are now looking at doing nearly that, every year, going forward. In the financial year that we are coming out of right now, the Budget papers that Ms White has obviously failed to read indicate that Treasury

forecasts that across Government we will deliver \$851 million in 2022-23, and that is astonishing delivery.

Our partners that are building this infrastructure for us have very full books. In some cases, we are finding that with one or two tenders no one is applying for them because the contractors are so busy. That is a good story for Tasmania. It is just as well as we doubled down on our infrastructure program. We took it to \$3.6 billion in 2019, a lot more than Labor's \$1.3 billion. The current Budget papers illustrate \$5.6 billion.

Quorum formed.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, that was a pretty low act, an underarm ball just now, by Ms White. That just shows the shallowness of this Opposition.

I was about to explain how we have gone from Labor's \$1.3 billion to the Liberal's \$3.6 billion in 2019 and to \$5.6 billion in this year's Liberal Government Budget. It seems that the truth really hurts.

Ms White - You never deliver, it's the biggest con job ever.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White, you have made your contribution.

Mr FERGUSON - In fact, we are delivering. It is very interesting that Ms White has nothing to offer the people of Tasmania, at all, such was the most insipid and unsubstantial Budget reply that I have ever listened to in twelve years in this place. We are delivering. I note that Labor has played merry hell and politics on the fifth lane on the airport interchange; on the Burnie court; and on the Tamar River bridge. We are delivering fantastic outcomes on the Great Eastern Drive; and the Perth Links Road, which is the largest single task in the Midland Highway action plan, delivered nearly a year early.

The Southeast Traffic Solution, which should interest Ms White, is delivering fantastic outcomes. Have a look at Midway Point and what is happening there. It is not just the infrastructure but also those beautiful, artistic renderings that have been constructed there to try to make that cutting blend into the natural environment. It is a credit to Fulton-Hogan, the work they are doing there. Davey Street is another one for southern interest.

In the north, the Bass Highway and the West Tamar Highway projects are on track, on time, and delivering safer roads for Tasmanians. The Midland Highway has been so important, in partnership with the Federal Government. We have taken that from \$500 to \$565 million and delivering a much safer highway. We are working to virtually eliminate the risks of head on collisions and bring that highway to Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) three-star rating, and we are doing that as we are now approaching the final stages.

In conclusion, we see this as so important to the economic success of Tasmania. It is working right now. As a result of our decisions we are seeing strong employment in Tasmania - \$276 000 Tasmanians in work - and full-time employment being set at record levels. We will continue to deliver, despite the negativity of the Opposition who has proven again today that they have nothing to offer Tasmanians.

[11.44 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the matter of public importance today on infrastructure. I listened very carefully to what the minister said when he was taking a broad sweep of the infrastructure projects that he wanted to highlight and he is clearly most proud of. Every single one he talked about, towards the end there, was a road project.

We have a state Budget that gives 54 per cent of the total infrastructure spend to roads and bridges. In this year, it is \$712.5 million. In contrast, hospitals and health are 9 per cent of the infrastructure budget. Schools, education, and skills are 7 per cent. Human services and housing are just 15 per cent.

There is some very interesting research about how the priorities that are within a Budget can be gendered, and we have here an infrastructure budget which has a very masculine lens applied to it. The research tells us that if you have more women around the Cabinet table, discussing infrastructure priorities, you will have a stronger focus on social infrastructure. You will have investments in homes for people, in better hospitals and schools.

While I agree, Ms White, in part, that the redevelopment of the LGH should be a priority, in our view the most important infrastructure this Government can make right now is into the social infrastructure of housing, and that is where we have seen such manifest failure. The Budget papers do not lie. The numbers we laid out in this House this week are based on the Budget papers and data from the Report on Government Services through the Productivity Commission, which shows eight years of over-promising, underdelivering, of broken promises, and dashed hopes for Tasmanians living in housing distress.

On page 109 of Budget paper number one, the only new money going into housing is the new housing package, and it does not have funding allocated for next year. For the following three years of the forward Estimates, it allocates \$35 million of a promised \$1.1 billion spend to deliver 10 000 new homes - as we must - within the next 10 years. \$35 million is about three per cent of \$1.1 billion. We stand by the numbers that we laid in this place earlier this week.

I acknowledge that under this minister, there has been an improvement in our road infrastructure. Some of it is overdesigned and overconstructed, but we can acknowledge that, at least on roads, this minister is delivering. However, that is not enough. We have a shortage - right now - of 11 000 affordable homes, according to the stakeholders who presented to the Housing Affordability Inquiry that was established by this parliament, with the former member for Franklin, Ms Standen as the chair. That should be the Government's number one infrastructure priority.

If people do not have a home, they do not have a foundation of security. It is very difficult to access education, training, employment, and good things in life. On behalf of Tasmanians living in housing stress, people who are facing soaring rents, and young people who no longer dream of owning a home, I condemn this Government's inaction on housing. We are seeing the human face of that as recently as yesterday in question time, with the tenants who are currently in National Rental Affordability Scheme homes, whose tenure in those homes is coming to an end. Right across the island, there are individuals and families who do not know how they are going to keep paying rent, as well as put food on their tables.

There are young people who have saved up what two years ago would have been enough to put a deposit on a home, whose dreams have been dashed. In one example I know, this young woman is going to spend her deposit travelling the world, because she has given up hope of owning her own home. This is core business of government. It is not good enough that more than half the infrastructure budget is allocated to roads and bridges while we have people sleeping underneath those bridges, and that is what is happening. The word 'crisis' is often overused, and particularly in politics, but it is no understatement to say that Tasmania is in the grip of a housing and homelessness crisis and it should be something that as a parliament we can acknowledge and help to drive delivery on the part of government.

I encourage this minister to understand how important social infrastructure is to the fabric of our community but also to our economy. It is critical. I have always thought that Mr Barnett was a terrible Resources minister and I am so glad he has had Primary Industries and Water removed from him, but I really hope that the zeal he invested and continues to invest in environmentally damaging endeavours he can invest in making sure this Government prioritises investment in social and affordable homes.

Yes, we need to support the community housing sector to build more homes, but we also need to make sure government is doing that too, because within 30 years, those community housing sector homes may not be available, so again it will fall back on government to provide the homes that people need.

Time expired.

[11.51 a.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I want to reflect, first, on the two contributions by the Government on this matter of infrastructure investment. I said in my Budget contribution yesterday that often I am appalled and surprised about the behaviours in this place. To have a member of the Government stand for less than a minute and reel off one or two items of infrastructure, and not necessarily talk about how bold or appropriate or about how productive that infrastructure is, and then go on a rant to speak in a really negative and vulgar way about people in this place, we should expect and require the Government when they are having their meetings for members to reflect on their behaviour in this place, because it is appalling.

I have never seen anything quite like it where you want to stand up and speak positively about infrastructure, clearly have nothing to say, and so just roll out what I think our Leader referred to as an 'attack kitty'. I quite like that because I had written at the same time that they just roll out their horrendous, appalling attack dog when they have no record to stand on.

As to the record of infrastructure investment just from my area of Bass - and we have the local member here in the Chamber with us - there was encouragement for years in the community to get behind the idea of a Tamar bridge. This Government makes infrastructure announcements that they never have any intention to deliver, and in fact now I am starting to question whether have any capacity to deliver. They just throw these balloons out and put these carrots out into the community to attract votes and support by raising infrastructure expectations in a community that they never intend or are unable to deliver.

Although it is not infrastructure, it is a bit like the conversation around the last election - not this one just gone, but the one before - around dredging. There are people in the community who feel deeply about such issues but they trust and want to believe a government that raises

these issues time and time again. I spoke yesterday about the announcement around the Launceston General Hospital, the \$580 million that our community expected that this Government would invest in a timely way to respond to the ever heartbreaking realities of the lack of ability for the great people working at the hospital to deliver care for our community in a way that they have trained and dedicated their careers to. It is just not right.

We had the Treasurer stand up and talk about truth. This is a conversation about infrastructure investment. Our Leader has outlined how this Government not being able to get the basics right and not being able to deliver on investment is just so obvious and so repeated, but I want to take the Treasurer up on his comment about truth. He talked about truth in announcements. They want to come up and talk about infrastructure announcements when we know that they just throw those out without any intention to deliver.

I want to go back to a time when we were together in Launceston, minister, and you stood and made an announcement to the public. You might remember your colleague and friend, the Australian Ombudsman for Small Business, was in town and you made an announcement that you would implement small business-friendly councils. You were the Minister for Local Government at the time. There have been lots of ministerial changes. You might not remember that but I remember it. We actually captured it on video. You made an announcement that you never intended to deliver. In fact, I joked at the time with you and said, 'Don't say that, you can't say that if you don't intend to do that'. You were just standing up and directly lying to the community.

Mr FERGUSON - All right, that will do. Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - You do not need to make a point of order. I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, I will address it later on in the day if time permits, but I simply will not tolerate that. I will correct the record later and thank you for asking her to withdraw.

Ms FINLAY - I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. I would love to see the implementation of small business-friendly councils because the first speaker this morning talked about business confidence and employment. The way you support your businesses is by telling the truth to them, Mr Speaker.

As to infrastructure investment, you talk about historic infrastructure. Labor stands proud on our history of delivering productive intergenerational infrastructure to this community. We were the people that delivered the Hydro, we invested initially and made the announcements about irrigation, we were the people that made announcements about the replacements of the *Spirits*. How did your *Spirit* replacement process go? How did your announcement and then withdrawal and then backflip go on the *Spirits*? How is delivery on that going?

Our Leader, quite rightly, pointed out that if you have a decision that you announce and then you have a piece of infrastructure that you want to try to deliver but you do not really know how, you delay it so much that it costs the Tasmanian people extraordinary amounts of inflated prices once you actually get to the point to start. What about the pet project of the Treasurer, the Midland Highway? He has been working across and attempting to deliver that for so long that those rollouts mean you have to roll through the potholes. I know that he

probably travels that road as many times as I, probably more, so he will be well aware of his ability to attempt to deliver infrastructure so poorly.

Mr Street - What are you talking about?

Ms FINLAY - The poor state of that road that had to be delivered and then redelivered. This Government cannot stand up this morning on this matter of public importance and stand on a record of infrastructure investment. This Government should be ashamed of its inability to invest in infrastructure -

Mr Street - Remember the goat-track you left behind? Try to keep up.

Ms FINLAY - because it cannot deliver, it does not know how to deliver. I had an interjection from the sports minister - they are in trouble so they are just trying to distract. I will not go to the Commonwealth Games but I will go to a piece of infrastructure, the floating stadium in Hobart. This Government was scratching up some prices on the back of an envelope. They say it may be \$750 million but now they say they are going to do a feasibility study so they know the actual costs if they ever intend to deliver.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

DUTIES AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 18)

LAND TAX RATING AMENDMENT (FOREIGN INVESTORS) BILL 2022 (No. 16)

LAND TAX AMENDMENT (FOREIGN INVESTORS) BILL 2022 (No. 17)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2022 (No. 28)

Bills agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2022 (No. 23)

Second Reading

Continued from 1 June 2022 (page 105).

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, picking up on where I was before, on the investments in capital improvements for our Service Tasmania shopfronts, much has changed in contemporary customer service and the way our Service Tasmania shops work. The initial set-ups do not necessarily reflect best practice any more. We have seen investments in places like Huonville, where people are able to sit down and remove the barriers with our fantastic customer service team. We are looking to roll that out around the state.

I was in Smithton at their Service Tas and they do a fantastic job there. It will be a big boon for the area to provide infrastructure that is much more contemporary, comfortable and better suited to the collegiate decision-making process we want from our customer service team. People have seen our flagship project at the Paranal Centre in the north west. The Service Tasmania there is second to none. We want to make sure that more people are able to access the government services they need in a setting that encourages them to do so.

The other area I want to touch on in terms of my parliamentary secretary role to the Premier is rural and remote health. This Budget is a credit to the Treasurer in the way we are rolling out health infrastructure and health services to the most rural and remote parts of our state.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that where you live in the north-east and in similar places to where I live, health infrastructure is so important in those communities. As the Royal Flying Doctor Service says, they want to provide the best care in the furthest corner. That is very much a part of our goal as well.

Regarding digital health transformation for our health system, telehealth is effectively enabling specialist services, information and knowledge to be transmitted to those on the ground who are able to provide the care that people need in their communities. To be able to give that higher level of detail and knowledge to make sure that people have the best possible care is part of a \$150 000 allocation over four years to commence the Department of Health's 10-year digital health transformation strategy. It is an investment in ICT infrastructure and driving adoption of digital health technologies, which are about improving clinician, patient, and support staff experiences. It will increase the care provided in-home, particularly across Tasmania's geographically dispersed population, whether you are on the west coast, the east coast, on your Bass Strait islands, or the far south.

The strategy is about addressing unique challenges that Tasmania will face over the next 10 years. It outlines a statewide roadmap to empower our health consumers and healthcare workers to get those better outcomes that all Tasmanians deserve. It is anticipated that more than \$475 million will be provided to this project over the next 10 years.

Regarding our rural hospitals, there will be an ongoing funding boost provided in 2025-26 to permanently boost staffing at rural hospitals around the state. New Norfolk District Hospital, the West Coast District Hospital - I was only there the other day, St Helens District Hospital, May Shaw at Swansea and the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital at Scottsdale. We know the fantastic work the people who work in those hospitals do caring for people in our rural and remote areas, who are some of the most productive in our state and provide so much of the wealth of Tasmania. It is important that when they are working on those farms or in those mines, those forestry coups that are producing the economic future and the tax revenue for Tasmania, that they can also receive the healthcare they deserve in their community.

Safe staffing model for Tasmanian district hospitals: \$4.5 million per year ongoing funding to make sure that we get a net increase to staff statewide in our health system, as well as to increase the mix of skills for those seeking care in regional locations. District hospitals are a key part of what we do to provide healthcare services. The THS has 13 that we are going to providing additional staffing resources for.

There is also an equipment boost for our rural hospitals. Healthcare is changing. Technology is improving. That is enabling us to drive better outcomes for people right around the state. Making sure that some of that equipment comes into our remote and rural hospitals is important. Funding includes \$600 000 each for the New Norfolk District Hospital and the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital; and \$400 000 each for St Helens District Hospital, in your neck of the woods, Mr Speaker, and the West Coast District Hospital in mine. Additionally, funding of \$2 million - \$200 000 per hospital - has been provided to purchase new and upgraded equipment at our regional hospitals and health facilities.

There are also major upgrades to our ambulance stations. We have spoken about Burnie a lot this morning but in our remote areas as well. Funding of \$250 000 allocated to upgrading works at the Emergency Department, the West Coast District Hospital, to supplement the CHHP funding, and \$450 000 even to the North West Regional Hospital. There are major innovations at Mersey Community Hospital with our Rural Medical Workforce Centre, major funding of \$1 million per annum from 2025-26 for operational funding. That will enable more rurally focused medical professionals to get the training they need and to provide the care that our communities deserve.

Importantly, particularly on this very significant week for Aboriginal people, implementing of the action plan for improving Aboriginal cultural respect across Tasmania's health system. Cultural factors can be a big barrier for Aboriginal people to access health services. My mum is a remote-area nurse. We grew up in Aboriginal communities. That mission to provide the best care in the furthest corner applies even more so to Aboriginal people. The department has allocated funding to help build a culturally respectful health system that supports improved health outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people. The department has developed an Improving Aboriginal Cultural Respect Across Tasmania's Health System Action Plan, and making sure that the care and the services Aboriginal people receive in Tasmania are culturally respectful and also encourage them to front up and get the care they need.

I mentioned the Royal Flying Doctor Service's creed before. The service's regional oral healthcare support - I know many people on King Island and the west coast have benefited from the care of the Royal Flying Doctor's service. Funding is provided in 2022-23 for the RFDS to extend their current oral healthcare program in regional Tasmania. The program is conducted alongside existing oral health service programs. We know that dental can be a major challenge for Tasmanians from many walks of life but particularly in rural and remote areas, it can be difficult to access those services close to home. To be able to bring those services to people wherever they live in Tasmania is so important to get on top of some of those oral health challenges and just stop the cascading effect that can often happen when there are poor outcomes.

I also give a big shout-out to an organisation I have a huge amount of respect and time for and that is New Mornings, which is based in Ulverstone: \$340 000 of funding is provided over four years to support the grief support services of New Mornings, which is a not-for-profit mental health service supporting the north-west Tasmanian community. I am very proud of the work they do and to be able to advocate on their behalf for that funding. I am always struck by the care and diligence those wonderful people bring to their role in reaching out to people suffering a tough time in their lives. They go above and beyond.

I will now turn to some of the support for our resources sector, which is important for the job prospects particularly for people in my electorate of Braddon, the north-west, the west coast, and King Island. The resources sector provides 60 per cent of our exports. This Government is investing new money to back this sector to support jobs in our rural and regional areas. There is \$800 000 over four years to support Mineral Resources Tasmania to provide enhanced services and information to the minerals and construction sector. There is \$200 000 in the timber space to address emerging national wood supply issues. A project which I am very proud to support because of its sovereign military capability which enables the restart of the King Island Dolphin tungsten mine; the remaining \$1 million of our \$2 million funding commitment to assist the completion of the power network infrastructure upgrades that come down to Grassy to support the reopening of the mine on King Island; as well as major grants for on-island processing; \$2 million for a refreshed geoscience initiative that will provide the jobs and opportunity of the next generation of young people who want to get into the mining sector.

We know that some of the grants that have been provided for exploration have helped existing mines, such as the Henty gold mine where I recently saw the way they are reimagining the geology of that resource, as well as new prospective areas which we are now starting to see opening up. There is also \$450 000 for diversity action plans in the mining and forestry sectors. Mining and forestry jobs and the opportunities they provide are for everyone. It is very important to give people, particularly young women, a sense that they can take part in those industries and those well-paying jobs. We want there to be equal opportunity for people to take part in that industry, and that is what those grants are delivering.

In terms of my particular neck of the woods there are some major projects that are just so important. There is \$8.63 million to complete the new Burnie ambulance station and \$9 million towards the \$10 million acute care facility at the North West Regional Hospital. There are major upgrades to the maternity services at the North West Regional Hospital. That is where my baby was born and if we are lucky enough hopefully there will be some more on the cards. To know that women on the north-west coast and the west coast and King Island can get the best care with the best facilities is important for the future of our region.

There are major upgrades to our health facilities in Burnie, including a new mental health precinct. We know that there are major challenges in our society continuing to emerge with some of the difficulties that our young people are facing, so to invest in those facilities is very important. We are addressing the scourge of cancer in our society, with \$9.2 million for ongoing operational funding to staff a second linear accelerator at the north-west Cancer Centre. I pay tribute to the north-west's own Dale Elphinstone. Together with the Government, Dale has been one of the major funders of facilities there. The Elphinstone family is a credit to the north-west coast and the care that they give to our people is so important. There is \$7 million towards the redevelopment of the Montello Primary School, a school that really deserves it - a wonderful community - and we are looking forward to completing the build of the new K-12 Penguin School.

Penguin is a growing area. The construction work has been going ahead well, and I know that community is excited to see those new facilities delivered. I have spoken with the principal, Mr Grining, about the important opportunity that it provides for young people to go right from the start of their schooling through to year 12, with modern contemporary facilities.

There are new child and family centres statewide. Two of those will be in my neck of the woods, including West Ulverstone, and I know some people are very excited about that - I was as getting some very happy text messages earlier - and Waratah/Wynyard as well.

There is new classroom upgrade funding, particularly for places such as Havenview Primary School, as well as sporting funding.

There is \$25 million to upgrade the Dial regional sport complex in Penguin. The Penguin Two Blues are coming back to be a real powerhouse. They have one of the best playing surfaces and one of the best geographic locations in the north-west coast in terms of centrality, so putting that additional funding into those facilities will mean that we will be able to host an even higher standard of games than the mighty NWFL and potentially really looking forward to picking up some elite sport coming to that location.

There is \$10 million for the Stanley highway tourist road upgrades. We say tourist road, but it is also a critical piece of infrastructure for that community. As we know Stanley is out on the peninsula; there is one road in and one road out. It is also a major port for the cattle coming back from King island, some of the best in the world. Those trucks can meet head on with a caravan coming past a curvy bend around the Stanley peninsula and we want to make sure that it is widened and that it is safe, and \$10 million will go to upgrading that.

There is also \$25 million for the Cradle Mountain to Devonport road upgrades. It is a road I know well. I used to live on that road. I am very pleased to see that our tourist infrastructure, which is also used by our community, is made safer. Those rural and regional communities know well the havoc that can be played when you have large tourist buses and large caravans going along those roads, as well as all the productive vehicles, such as tractors and major freight logistics carriers.

It is important we upgrade that as well as looking at the \$280 million investment in the Bass Highway, Launceston to Marrawah. The amount of work that is going on there at the moment is phenomenal. There will be even more to come and starting to shift to the east. Much of the investment has been in Waratah/Wynyard and Circular Head; we will start seeing that shift particularly to Devonport through to Deloraine. That will be a major upgrade and a piece of generational infrastructure that we are very pleased and proud to be supporting and delivering.

In terms of the west coast, there is \$1 million for the upgrade of the Rosebery Police Station; \$43.8 million for the Murchison Highway upgrade; and \$18.8 million for the upgrade of the Lyell Highway, Queenstown through to Strahan.

We were there on the Public Works Committee in Queenstown, discussing the need for that road, whether it is in terms of our aquaculture, or our tourist routes, or in terms of plumbers on the west coast, who probably drove that road far too often and often in pretty precarious conditions. The west coast is a tough place to get around. It is very hilly. There are many rivers and valleys and a lot of rain and snow. It is great to make those infrastructure upgrades to improve the safety, the productivity and the standard of living for people on the west coast. There is \$2 million to construct a new ambulance station in Queenstown as part of the \$10 million regional health and ambulance funding facilities and, as I mentioned before, \$400 000 for the new and upgraded equipment at the West Coast District Hospital.

Turning to one of the most remote communities in our state, King Island. During the pandemic it was an opportunity in many ways, as difficult as it was with the borders closed, to reconnect our Bass Strait islands with the rest of mainland Tasmania. I was very proud to advocate for \$1 million for the underwriting of regular passenger flights from Hobart to Flinders Island and King Island, to make sure that our islanders feel connected to the rest of our state. I was also pleased that initiative, brought in during COVID-19, is continuing to be supported by this Government. This is a Government that wants all Tasmanians to be connected and supported wherever they live.

I have spoken about the major upgrades to the King Island scheelite mine. There is \$74 000 for Phoenix House, the Neighbourhood House Men's Shed and Community Centre, on King Island. They do wonderful work and we are very pleased and proud to support them. This is a Budget that delivers for Tasmanians. It is about making their priorities our priorities and I am very proud to support the work that has been done.

Time expired.

[12.18 a.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget. It is an honour and a privilege, as a new member of parliament, to be given this opportunity. I commend the Treasurer for overseeing the preparation of such an important fiscal management tool. I also recognise the contribution made by all the public servants who have contributed to the preparation of this Budget, working, I have no doubt, until late hours. Having been involved over the years in the preparation of many budgets, on a significantly smaller scale, I appreciate the effort and the work involved in bringing such an important document together.

Since the Treasurer presented the Budget last week, there have been many positive reactions and comments from business leaders and organisations recognising the importance of several commitments made, to ensuring the confidence in Tasmania's future continues. Many have recognised that the challenges are not over and we have to build on the gains that we have made.

There are many areas of this Budget that I would like to talk about but I have chosen to reflect on some aspects which I consider are vitally important to highlight and explain why the measures and investments announced are forward thinking.

I will start by highlighting the important announcement around funding in this Budget for digital health. Why is digital health so important? According to a number of peak health consumer organisations including the Consumer Health Forum or CHF Australia, who have been advocating since way back, pre-pandemic, for introducing digital health in our health care, it is fundamental to ensuring a patient-centric care approach.

The Tasmanian Government has set aside \$150 million in its 2022-23 Budget to modernise the state's Public Health IT infrastructure, including a single electronic medical record. The funding to be provided over the next four years will allow the Department of Health to commence a 10-year digital health transformation program set out in a new digital health strategy. As much as \$475 million is expected to be allocated to the project over its lifetime to drive further adoption of digital health technology to improve patient, clinician and support staff experiences.

Digital health will allow for increased care to be provided at home and across Tasmania's geographically dispersed population. It will deliver a fully integrated patient-centric health care system that will simultaneously share critical health information across clinical and organisational boundaries. The initial \$150 million funding would be used to procure and trial a new centralised electronic medical record system. The first will see a new integrated electronic patient care record at Ambulance Tasmania and a statewide patient record viewer that connects all public and private healthcare providers. Upgrades to existing to virtual care technologies, including telehealth, to enable more patients to receive care in their home in their community, and advanced data analytics capabilities are also on the cards.

This digital transformation will deliver a range of benefits for patients, including access to convenient health care in local communities, and improved communications about appointments, reducing waiting times for services and less duplication of care and forms. It would also prevent unnecessary hospital visits, helping to keep people out of hospital when they do not need to be there. Importantly, upgrading our digital technologies will benefit our health professionals by providing them with the right data, in the right place at the right time, to enable them to make the best decisions on patient care.

From a personal experience, when I have been involved in aged care, many times transferring residents to and from aged care facilities to hospital involved a lot of paperwork and it was quite often very difficult to follow back and forth that transfer of information as well as on return of residents receiving treatment from hospitals, following up on medication and all other changes that had occurred to the medication chart. This is why digital health is so important, to streamline many processes including this one I have referred to.

Digital health technologies have the potential to support active self-management of chronic conditions via education, monitoring and support, timely feedback and remote access to health professionals. When designed and implemented successfully, digital health interventions offer an opportunity to support the quadruple aim of health care by improving health outcomes, increasing patient experience, reducing healthcare costs and improving clinician satisfaction. There is no doubt patient-centred care is supported by digital health.

A document I will refer to which was released by CHF Australia in March of this year and is entitled 'The Future of Healthcare in Australia' - designed for consumers, enabled by digital and accessible for all - identified that 70 per cent of Australians are willing to use virtual healthcare services and 80 per cent are ready to share their health data in a digitally enabled health system. These are some of the findings of a survey of nearly 2000 Australians and this was one of the largest consumer surveys on digital health since the pandemic.

Another paper I will refer to, 'Australia's Health Reimagined', is the result of a partnership between Deloitte, Curtin University and the Consumer Health Forum of Australia through a digital health CRC project. This paper calls for a reimagined health system to address growing health inequity and improve system sustainability through a purpose-driven, digitally-enabled health system. It also found that while there is strong support for virtual health, support is the lowest from groups with the most to gain, with education background separating individual users of digital health. Digital health is extremely important.

Deloitte has also identified that healthcare organisations around the world share a common problem, which is managing the surge in costs of care which we have been talking about extensively, while supporting the health and the wellbeing of an increasing and ageing

population. We know we have a problem around the ageing population in Tasmania. This is significantly impacted by lifestyle-related non-communicable diseases or NCDs. NCDs can range from heart disease, cancer and diabetes to mental health conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and other chronic conditions.

We recognise that we have an ageing population in our state and many clinicians in Tasmania have identified that reducing heart disease and diabetes in our state is an important issue. In many public health systems, timely access to care is a significant issue. Access may be limited by too few providers, overreliance on physicians versus alternative care providers, geographic distances and other factors. Fragmented data, a lack of an interoperable system and outdated business models have limited the ability to understand and act on underlining patterns and trends in people affected by NCDs.

The increasingly complex needs of the healthcare communities are quickly overtaking the capabilities of traditional health delivery systems and approaches. Today we have the technology available to empower individuals, communities, countries and states but we are struggling with the pervasive problems of non-communicable diseases. Applying technology advances and analytical insights in a small healthcare community setting could be a game-changer and a lifesaver. For this approach to succeed, individual health care and the industry need to transcend transactional approaches and collaborate within an informed network of analytically enabled relationships and mutually beneficial interactions. This is why this announcement about digital health is very important.

Elsewhere in the Budget, the Government has provided a further \$12.2 million to replace the Department of Education's ageing student and schoolbook administration systems. The funding, which falls under phase 2 of the Student Systems Renewal project, will go towards a new case management platform. In addition, the Department of Justice will meanwhile receive \$8.7 million over four years to invest and uplift ICT systems, technology, service capability and governance. Talking again about the importance of IT and support infrastructure, a further \$6.2 million will go toward replacing the Department of Police, Fire, and Emergency Management's automatic vehicle location system, which will reach end of life when Telstra closes its 3G network. These are all important investments that need to be highlighted and we should not be dismissing them.

We can look down to the tip of our shoes, or look forward and embrace the future of health care, community safety and education. We can argue that the only way to improve outcomes is by taking a piecemeal approach, allocating more money sometimes to a system that functions in silos and not recognising that we need to invest in critical infrastructure in order to move forward. This is why I think it is so important that we do not view investments in critical infrastructure, including technology infrastructure, through a negative lens.

Generally on the topic of infrastructure investment, the question is, why is this a good thing? There are many minds around the world advocating the importance of infrastructure investment by governments. Most recently, the OECD's International Transport Forum identified in March 2021 that experts agree that investment in infrastructure can provide a boost to economic activity. This was one of Keynes' main policy measures for recovery from the Depression of the 1930s and was adopted as one of the cornerstones of the New Deal in the United States.

Following the experience of this century's global financial crisis, the result is now a widespread consensus that austerity measures in the aftermath of a crisis are counterproductive. If a country can borrow, or in this instance, Tasmania can borrow, on the financial markets to re-start the economy with public investment, it should do so. These were key messages from the annual World Bank and International Monetary Fund meeting in October 2020.

The OECD report identified also that the immediate economic boost from infrastructure investment comes through spending on construction activity, and that every dollar spent, generates additional economic activity. To quote: 'Infrastructure investment is a tried and tested way to successfully stimulate economic activity following a crisis'.

Infrastructure investments such as investment in education, health and community safety are of great significance. The 2022-23 Budget allocates \$250 million in infrastructure investment for new and upgraded schools around the state. Specifically, I would like to mention projects such as the one in Bass for \$11 million for the redevelopment of Exeter High School and \$22 million for the new Legana Primary School.

The Budget also delivers on critical investments to support community safety, allocating \$50 million to establish multidisciplinary centres.

Quorum formed.

Mrs ALEXANDER - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Budget also delivers on critical investments to support community safety, allocating \$50 million to establish new multidisciplinary centres to ensure victims/survivors of family and sexual violence receive immediate and integrated support. In addition, there are significant investments in Police infrastructure, which includes, for Bass, \$6 million to refurbish the Launceston Police Station.

Of significant importance is the inclusion in this Budget of \$654 million investment over the next four years for upgrades at all four hospitals, and investments into rural hospitals and community health services - including the Launceston General Hospital.

Pivoting back to health and the very important issue of mental health, it is important to highlight the Budget provides \$20 million to continue the implementation of the recommendations of the Roy Fagan Centre Review to further improve residents' care through Older Persons Mental Health Services. Having had quite a bit to do with the Roy Fagan Centre through my previous experience, I have to highlight how important this investment is and the significance for the delivery of improved care for residents in that particular facility.

In the area of mental health, I highlight the important investment of \$2.6 million for a new Safety and Quality Team to improve clinical outcomes and \$6.5 million for the continued delivery of the Mental Health Reform Program, including the rollout of adult acute care and continuing care models in the north and the north-west.

Whilst the economy is strong, we also know that many Tasmanians are still doing it tough and there is more work to do. In fact, the work never stops as international uncertainties continue to impact Australia and our beautiful state. Therefore, the Government is implementing the most comprehensive and ambitious affordable housing strategy in Tasmania's history. Through this Budget the Government will invest up to \$538 million into social and affordable housing.

There has been some commentary around the level of borrowings and debt levels. I note that the Treasurer has tasked the department with providing advice on strategies to ensure our debt levels remain within manageable limits into the future so we can, again, use our balance sheet to shield Tasmanian jobs and families should external shocks to our economy occur in the future.

In conclusion, I can recommend a number of studies and papers that have been produced post-pandemic, in relation to recovery and what is best for governments and states, if people would like some further information,. They provide quite a strong support for infrastructure development, for managing debt - which is what we are doing - and especially involving developments in the area of IT and technology, as a way forward, as it has been recognised that the way we used to live our life has fundamentally changed.

[12.37 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to speak today in response to the Tasmanian Liberal Government's Budget. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Premier, Mr Rockliff, for his strong leadership, as he continues to put the interests of all Tasmanians first, listening to them and working so hard to ensure Tasmania continues to go from strength to strength.

I also congratulate our new Treasurer, Michael Ferguson, for handing down his first Budget, one that is focused on Tasmania's priorities and taking us forward, based on sound and sensible principles. I congratulate the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, for his commitment to his new portfolio and to the people of Tasmania.

Mr Ferguson - Thank you.

Mr WOOD - It has been said that 'a good road map will get you to your destination' and I believe that this is exactly what the Rockliff majority Government is doing for the state of Tasmania. This Budget has outlined those next steps in our road map to Tassie's success.

We are taking action on the cost-of-living; keeping Tasmanians safe; investing more into health and mental health, education and housing, more so than ever before. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tasmanian economy remains strong which gives us an incredible platform to build on what this Government has already established in previous years. It is critically important to this Government to secure a positive future for all Tasmanians.

We want our state to be a place where everybody can feel supported, included and encouraged to be the very best they can possibly be. We have listened to what people are saying. We have listened to industry, small business and stakeholders and we have sought to implement solutions to their concerns in a positive way. It is important to us that they know that we are absolutely committed to building stronger public services.

It has been said many times in this place that we know there is always 'more to do'. As part of that desire to do more we are seeing record investment of \$11.2 billion into health; \$8.5 billion into education, skills and training, and \$538 million into housing and capital services. This is all part of our record \$1.5 billion investment over the next 10 years. It is heartening that many organisations, both private and non-profit and particularly individuals, have already indicated their support and approval that we are addressing the important areas of public concern in this Budget.

I am proud of the state in which we live and could not think of a better place in the world to live, a point particularly driven home to me over the course of the last couple of unprecedented years. Right up there at the top of the list for beautiful places in Tasmania is my electorate of Bass. Bass, as we are all aware and pride ourselves on, is indeed the engine room of our economy. Small business in the north of the state has bucked the trend against the nation's economic indicators and flourished in some of the most difficult circumstances our country has ever experienced. That is why I am pleased to see such significant benefits from the 2022-23 Budget brought forward for Bass.

Before I talk about some of these commitments, I acknowledge the hardworking and dedicated staff in the health and allied health sectors. They are the greatest asset we have and we thank them for their compassionate and unwavering service to the sector and to our community. A major focus of the Government is on recruiting and maintaining health staff across the state to ensure that our hospitals and health facilities are well equipped to deliver a quality health service to the community, and we have been seeing that in the north of the state.

Here are some of the ways that the north of the state will benefit from this Budget in Health. There will be \$38.24 million towards the \$87 million Launceston General Hospital stage 1 redevelopment; \$50 million towards the \$580 million LGH stage 2 redevelopment including the important mental health precincts; \$2.5 million to improve the Respiratory Unit capacity at the LGH; and \$9 million towards the \$10 million acute care facility at Kings Meadows Community Centre, a great achievement.

In Education, this Budget is about making Tasmanians' priorities our priorities, and that is why we are adding to our significant track record of investment in Education. We are committed to developing projects that ensure schools across the state have high-quality educational facilities that support improved learning and increased student engagement. Some of the ways that the north of the state will benefit from this budget in Education are \$6.95 million towards upgrading outdated classrooms at Mowbray Heights Primary, Glen Dhu Primary, South George Town Primary, Port Dalrymple Primary, Lilydale District School and Ringarooma Primary. This will result in better learning environments for some of our youngest students in order for them to excel.

There is \$10.9 million towards the Exeter High School redevelopment. This will be fantastic as many smaller outlying towns such as Beaconsfield, Beauty Point and Greens Beach rely on the Exeter High School. This will also be of benefit to the broader community. There is \$21.9 million towards the construction of the \$24 million new Legana Primary School. This will be an incredible game-changer. Legana is booming at the moment, with lots of young families buying or building new homes there. Many of my friends are doing just so. They are doing it because they want to enjoy the safe and idyllic lifestyle the suburb offers, and it is expanding so very quickly. The Government recognises the need for Legana to have its own primary school as a necessity to meet the growing demand, and it will be of huge benefit to the families and to the social fabric of Legana because, as we know, schools are the beating heart of any community.

There is also significant investment in lowering the cost of living and increasing emergency housing, and we are doing a lot of work in that space. We are listening to Tasmanians, which is why we take the cost of living so very seriously, and that is backed up by our actions. We understand the pressures that too many Tasmanians are facing as the weather gets colder and winter sets in. This means helping people experiencing homelessness

to find secure and stable housing. This would place them in the best position to improve their health and wellbeing and their educational and economic outcomes. There is \$305 million in concessions so that essentials like water, electricity and rates are more affordable.

In order to end homelessness, a coordinated systems approach is needed. This approach requires using local data to inform decisions about how to most effectively allocate resources, services and programs to best address the needs of those experiencing homelessness in our community. This is a combined approach by state and local governments, coupled with stakeholders to look at the building and construction sector, homelessness sector and community services. This will require constant wraparound services and a unified approach by both tiers of government. This Budget allocates a further \$6.9 million to continue to provide Safe Spaces across the state, but specifically \$1.9 million for Launceston's Safe Spaces.

There is \$3 million to complete the \$5.2 million youth housing and homelessness initiatives around the state and there is also \$15 million towards the construction of two new \$20 million supported accommodation facilities for older Tasmanians in the north and north-west. This is really necessary to assist our ageing population.

These are just some of the ways the Government is addressing and delivering on these vital services that every Tasmanian deserves. The Premier and Treasurer promised a budget with heart and you can clearly see that reflected in their desire to deliver safe and affordable homes and safe spaces for everyone.

Regarding Police, Fire and Emergency Management, this Government has a strong track record for rebuilding our police services. In this Budget we are investing in a further 21 additional police officers, meaning we are now recruiting 329 new officers. This is a 31 per cent increase in policing numbers since we came to government and means that Tasmania Police will reach a historic establishment of 1449 police officers by July 2026. There is also \$7 million to complete the refurbishment of the Launceston Police Station and \$7 million for operational funding for additional paramedic crews in Launceston. There is \$3.25 million for new and upgraded police housing statewide. That includes in the thriving tourism town nowadays of Derby in the north east.

Tasmania faces increasing climate-related threats and challenges. This is why we are readying ourselves in preparation by providing over \$120 million across the Forward Estimates for bushfire and flood prevention. We are also investing in our fuel reduction program with \$11.95 million annually for fuel reduction.

The beautiful Tamar Valley is set to benefit with \$2.8 million for the Tamar Islands Wetlands boardwalk replacement; \$100 million for upgrades to the East and West Tamar highways; \$75 million for the Launceston and Tamar Valley Traffic Vision, including improvements to the Invermay junction, upgrades to the Batman Highway, Frankford Road, Birrallee Road and planning for a new Tamar River crossing.

The north-east of the state will see \$70 million towards a \$120 million project to improve the Sideling section of the Tasman Highway between Scottsdale and Launceston, a project that will be a great benefit to the region, particularly in enhancing freight and tourism opportunities.

I mentioned also previously the refurbishment of outdated classrooms in Ringarooma and Lilydale. That is something all the students are looking forward to.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it may come as a surprise to you but I am a keen snow-skier. My family and I have enjoyed many winters on Ben Lomond. It is where my parents taught me to ski and where I taught my children to ski. It is a thrilling place to be but it is underutilised. I have often thought that we need to encourage year-round activities on the mountain to enhance and cement Ben Lomond's place as a premium tourist destination in northern Tasmania. Excitingly, there will be \$2.8 million to deliver a contemporary management plan for the Ben Lomond National Park, focusing on year-round activities. We have some world-renowned walks in Tasmania. I believe Ben Lomond will become a real walker's destination as a result of this plan, unlocking the mountain's full potential and tourism opportunities in northern Tasmania.

There is \$465 000 for upgrades to infrastructure in north-east parks and reserves and \$650 000 for the Victoria St redevelopment in Scottsdale, which will help particularly with ease of access when you need to purchase an award-winning scallop pie from the Cottage Bakery, which I am sure you have done.

Just on a side note to that, it is Bridport's Scallop Fiesta on Saturday 31 July. It is important to get tickets early as there will be no gate sales on the day. Get along if you can. It is a fantastic opportunity for people to come out of their shells, pardon the pun, and enjoy the wonderful sights and flavours of the region during these colder winter months, sampling some of Tasmania's famous seafood and enjoying good food, wine and entertainment beside the beautiful beach at Bridport.

I recently visited Flinders Island and you will not believe what an amazing place it is until you have been there yourself. I highly recommend to anyone that they take a trip to Flinders Island. The views are incredible and the community is warm and welcoming. They have a fierce sense of community spirit that is to be envied. My electorate officer came with me on the most recent visit and she decided, only having been there for a matter of hours, that she wanted to live there. In light of that, I will not take her there again as I do not want to lose her.

Flinders Island is set to benefit from a share in the \$1.3 million package to support full-time biosecurity officers on King and Flinders islands and to construct purpose-built wash-down facilities to protect. There will be \$900 000 for the Flinders Island camping ground upgrades and RV access. The views from those campsites rival any in Australia. They are breathtaking.

There is \$825 000 in the Budget to complete the \$2 million upgrade of the Palana Road, which runs along the spine of Flinders Island and connects the majority of the communities on that island. They will also see their share of \$1 million for the underwriting of regular passenger flights between Hobart and Flinders and King islands. This is an exciting development. These are some of the ways that this Budget benefits the beautiful electorate of Bass.

I am invested in Bass. I know the Premier and the Treasurer are invested in Bass. The Treasurer should be congratulated on his first Budget. He poured a lot of commitment and time into it. I thank him for his dedication to the role. Well done. The Premier has already shown great leadership and bravery in his new position. I take this opportunity to congratulate him. I appreciate working with him in a government that is courageous, accountable, listens to Tasmanians' needs and, particularly, delivers on its commitments.

Tasmanians were promised a Budget with heart. I believe that what we have here encompasses that sentiment, strengthening our communities, building on our economic success and providing the right environment for Tasmania to continue to flourish.

Quorum formed.

[12.58 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on the Budget. It has been referred to a lot as the Ferguson Budget but we should probably acknowledge that, while I am sure you had a fair bit of input as a minister in the previous incarnation of this Government, most budgets are basically 90 per cent done a month out from the delivery.

This is a Jekyll and Hyde budget potentially.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2022 (No. 23)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, before the break I spoke about the 'Jekyll and Hyde' budget and minister Ferguson, by interjection, asked who Jekyll and Hyde were but we all know Jekyll and Hyde is the same person.

What we know about this Budget is that in the shadow of the budget speech and delivery, the then Treasurer and Premier decided to walk away from the job for the reasons he provided. That meant that the word 'aspiration' had to be removed. There would have been around 100 to 200 references to 'aspiration' in the Budget itself across the many draft press releases that each department had pushed through their departmental processes. The word 'aspiration' was taken away and in fact they are running away from that word like vampires running away from garlic. No longer is this Government aspiring to do anything.

Mr Ferguson said, 'How about we have a heart?', and that is a novel idea for this Government, but this Budget is on life support, because Mr Ferguson as Treasurer had a choice. It probably would have been accepted by the public if he had said, 'I have inherited this six weeks out. This has been the work of many hands over a period of time. I will put my mark on it as best I can but this is a budget of many colours', but he has chosen to own every bit of this Budget.

When you look at it, it is a classic Liberal Gutwein budget with lots of spending, increased debt, no major reform, a couple of shekels to keep certain groups happy and plug a couple of political holes, do the pea and thimble trick with Treasury with regard to the forward Estimates and the expected revenues and expenditures, but effectively not much to show for it in terms of the critical work of a state government and its responsibilities. Particularly coming off the back of COVID-19, I think many people gave the Government a big licence and scope to do some things not only to respond in the immediate terms but in the big picture as well.

The Opposition I was a part of with the Greens and the crossbench basically gave tremendous support to the Government to respond to those needs, but essentially the goodwill that was given to the Government is now starting to dry up because they are not actually reinvesting in health, education and housing. They are continuing the pea and thimble trick and the bright, shiny announcements to distract -

Mr Jaensch - You've just got political again. During COVID-19 it was all matey and now you've got nasty again, that's what's changed. You have reverted to type. It was beautiful there for a moment but it has all gone.

Mr O'BYRNE - We gave you a chance and you blew it, Mr Jaensch. We gave you opportunity and gave you scope, but I have to call it as I see it. This could be the budget that breaks the heart of those critical public sector workers who deliver essential services to Tasmania. It is interesting that instead of owning the aspiration word, Mr Ferguson has run away from it, removed it from the text and removed it from any dictionary in his office. He has replaced it with 'heart' but there is no evidence of that.

Over the last two years of the pandemic, the Government has relied on the goodwill of frontline health workers to see us through and there is nothing in the Budget for them, no increase in hospital beds, no wage increases that will keep up with the cost of living, and no policies to attract and retain new staff. In a classic approach from this Government over many years to their budget management and fiscal policy strategies there are threads and, if you pull on those threads, it unravels. Public sector wages is a thread. If you pull that, the thing unravels. Look at housing and delivery of housing. Pull the thread, it unravels. Look at the almost negative or neutral budget in terms of Education. There are no major initiatives to respond to some of our challenges in that area. If you start to pull the threads it comes apart. The critical services that the state Government is responsible for and delivering are starting to unravel.

This ninth Budget will plunge the state into a forecast of over \$5.2 billion of debt by 2026, with not much to show for it. There is so much-needed improvement to health care and education and housing. The pandemic has changed people's view on debt, but if you do not have anything to show for it, if all you have is more debt, that is a major problem.

We are seeing public debate and the prime example is the issue around the stadium proposal. It is a classic effort of this Government. Off the back of the Commonwealth Games announcement, the Premier and Treasurer at the time threw the proposal like a dead cat on the table in his state of the state speech to distract from the fact that he did not have a forward vision for the state. I think one of the journalists recently wrote an article about this, saying this is why we cannot have nice things. If you look at it in isolation, the idea of a stadium starts to stack up in terms of what it can bring to the state, but if you cannot put a roof over people's heads, if you cannot deliver essential health services to people, if you cannot have a functioning education system, if you are pushing away the responsibility of housing to an arm's length statutory authority so you have someone to blame and not take responsibility, if you have all of these crises occurring in your day-to-day job, that is the reason we cannot have nice things and things like stadiums become controversial.

These ideas should be an opportunity for the state to come together and celebrate and push through. Other states have these facilities and we deserve the same, but as a government, if you use it politically and do not put out a business case, do not do the work to convince the

Tasmanian community of its merits and do not do all the wraparound work required with it but just throw it on a table on the eve of the state of the state speech, no wonder people get upset and angry. No wonder people say, 'How can you be focusing on this thing with the shiny wheels on but you can't even do the basics, you can't even put petrol in the car?'. That is the frustrating thing. Then what happens is you put the whole thing at risk because now it has become a political football and it is just so unnecessary.

In terms of the Budget papers, one of the most interesting elements I always look at, which is crucial, is the risk portfolio. This is the Treasury department saying, 'We're going to list a number of risks to the Budget that we probably disagree with the Government on but we can't actually say and we won't agree necessarily with their press releases but we will flag them as risks', and they are not insignificant.

There is the GST distribution, a deal that the former premier and treasurer and this Government signed up to. Marinus and green hydrogen are listed as risks by Treasury. Treasury has identified the only key signature, big-vision announcements or ideas from this Government as risks to the Budget. Again the Government cannot say when and how much. Now that there is change in federal government we might get some coherent national energy policy from the new minister and government coming in, because I know from what you read about Angus Taylor and some of his views on wind and gas, and the confused national energy policy coming out of Canberra with the change of government, maybe it will take a federal Labor government to save this State Government from itself.

Two other key issues are public sector wages and debt servicing. I will touch on debt servicing later in my contribution but by the end of the forward Estimates, it is getting close to half a billion dollars in debt servicing - over 6 per cent of our revenue. That is not insignificant. That is a major risk and Treasury is calling it out in their risk profile.

In terms of other risks, I will touch on public sector wages because that is essential; making sure that services are delivered. It is not just about a wage increase; it is not just about the payment to an individual or a class of employee. It is about how you value those workers and how you value the essential services they deliver to the Tasmanian community. If you cannot keep pace with the national rate, or even within cooee, all of a sudden your retention and attraction policies collapse. You cannot get good people in.

If you start penny-pinching on wages, if we have the lowest paid nurses, firefighters and health professionals in the country, you threaten the service delivery to the Tasmanian community and it ends up costing more. It is a false economy. If you think you can scrimp and save on wages and think it makes the bottom line look good, go under the surface: services collapse, delivery is inefficient, costs increase, turnover and the churn of staff increase. At the end of the day, the services the Tasmanian people need to be delivered in a high quality way rely on good quality people. I value the staff and the work they do. They are our greatest asset. If you do not pay them a fair rate, if you are not even within cooee of the market, you are not valuing them, and that has consequences.

There is a strong history in this because the Labor government around 2004 had to play catch-up from the 1990s. There were wage increases of up to 30 per cent in some classifications across the public service just to get them within the market. They were not the highest paid in the country by any means, but to get close to the lower comparative rate for those classifications was a massive effort by the government of that time.

They had to pay off the debt of the Groom-Rundle years from when they took government in 1998, had to turn the ship around, pay off the Liberal debt, like Labor did after the 1980s. Then they had to significantly invest in playing catch-up because services were at risk. We could not fill the positions; we were not valuing our public servants.

The sustainability of the broader Budget is not as strong as you would think. This is a Government that relies on the GST windfalls and on the raiding of the GBEs. Budget sustainability reports and fiscal sustainability reports from Treasury have time and time again called out this Government over their fiscal management.

Heading in everyone said, 'Oh, COVID, COVID, we had a COVID pandemic'. People are getting some scope to respond to that. Even heading into COVID-19, you were heading towards over a billion dollars of net debt. The net debt in this Budget balloons to just under \$3 billion by the end of 2022-23, to \$5.2 billion by mid-2026. Borrowing costs blow out. A \$1.1 billion cash deficit by the end of this Budget. Again, the ballooning debt. The cost to service that is 6.3 per cent of government receipts in the 2025-26 year.

What was also interesting about the Budget is you assume a reduction of expenses next year and again in the year after. You say, 'Oh, the long-term average is around 4 per cent and we think we can go from 4 per cent to zero' but the problem is, if you look on page 38 of Budget Paper 1, the fiscal strategy, it basically takes that back to 1999-2000. The general government revenue and expenses, and the average, increase. There are two periods where the Budget does not grow to 4 per cent. It grows a lot slower. The two Labor government periods between 2001-02 to around the 2006-07 or 2007-08 period, the GFC hits so, obviously, expenditures increase. Then the Labor years between 2011 and effectively the end of 2014. The incoming Liberal government inherited a Labor government. Some tough decisions in that time but, even then, there was an increase in expenditure.

After that, when you look at from 2015-16 through to pre-pandemic, a massive increase in expenditure by this Government, close to 8 per cent increased growth. Then, you expect anyone to believe in the forward Estimates that you will have less than zero per cent expenditure growth. It has never happened. It is just not plausible. The Budget is a house of cards.

It is a nice aspiration to say that you are not going to increase expenditure but you are not going to achieve it. The plausibility of that assumption is more than questionable. You keep on a classic Liberal state government, 'Oh, but we have surpluses coming forward'. When you look at the net underlying operating balance, when you take out one-off capital payments from Canberra for infrastructure, when you start to strip out a lot of those significant investments from the Commonwealth Government, you are in strife.

I will focus on a couple of elements of the state government budget - lots of graphs, lots of numbers, all that sort of stuff - but at the end of the day, it is about ensuring that you can deliver on those public services and you can do it in a sustainable way.

There has been a cumulative impact on the public sector workforce, the people who deliver our essential services. They have been under enormous pressure during COVID-19. If it were not for them, where would we be? The fatigue, the cumulative pressure is significant and should not be disregarded. The nurses and staff at the testing centres, the emergency departments, the vaccine clinics, the contact tracers, the border staff, the teachers facilitating

remote learning - public sector workers have stepped up over the last couple of years and they have been working in the toughest of environments.

There has been wage austerity for many years. Now, with the cost of living going up significantly, the CPI in Hobart area over 5 per cent, inflation is a challenge. Yes, it is a national challenge but it is a reality for many people. Their take-home pay is not keeping up with the cost of living and they are getting hit and hit and hit. At some stage, our public sector workers need to be rewarded for all their commitment and work over the last few years.

We also know that public sector wages and public sector wages policy is good economic policy. The Tasmanian government is the biggest employer in the state. If you invest in your staff, if you give them more reward for the work they do, they spend that in the local community. It is about ensuring that consumer confidence can be lifted and those people who get the wage increases can increase. A strong wages policy that keeps up with the cost of living is good economic policy. They will spend it in the local community.

Sadly, this Budget does nothing to address the core issue that is crippling our hospitals and our workforce shortages. The AMA, the ANMF and HACSU have all called for an investment in the health workforce. Unfortunately, these calls have fallen on deaf ears. The Treasurer has instead budgeted for a pay cut in real terms for all Tasmanian workers, particularly our public sector workers.

Under questioning, when you look at the risks flagged by Treasury, they claim public sector wages are a risk to the Budget. You have the 2.5 per cent allocation - a real pay cut. Then you have the Government saying, 'Oh well, we will negotiate'. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say '2.5 per cent is our assumption', attack people for attacking that because it undermines the Budget then say, 'Well, you know, we will negotiate in good faith'.

That is not negotiating in good faith because we know our hospitals are in crisis without enough staff; there are hundreds of vacancies across the health workforce today; nurses are currently taking industrial action against the Government due to their pay and conditions and being overworked; and many in our health workforce are fleeing to the mainland for better pay and conditions. There is nothing in this Budget that sends a message to them, a genuine thank you for your work over the past two years. It says we are not going to value you in the years ahead. When you have this concern churn, this constant vacancy, and this interruption to delivery, you have a diminishing workforce that basically gives up and opts out, and that is not sustainable for our public sector workforce.

Not to mention firefighters, correctional officers, and a whole range of key employees across our public sector that are our greatest asset, who are crucial to delivering government services, who need to be respected and rewarded for the work that they do. It is good policy as an employer - because you are in a marketplace and you do need to be sustainable - it is good economic policy for a state and an economy that is heading into rough waters.

Another key issue is housing. I assume every member has had a long queue of people waiting at their door, seeking assistance to get access to housing. When the Liberals came to Government in 2014 there were 2183 priority applications on the list; there is currently 4382. From an average in 2014 of approximately 26 weeks, it is now taking an average of 90.8 weeks to house priority applicants. As I have said in this place on a number of occasions, straight after the 2018 election, even before parliament was recalled, the then Premier - three Premiers

ago - Mr Hodgman convened a Housing Crisis Summit to respond to the crisis. It is now 2022, and it is demonstrably worse. Some of the stories that we are hearing across our state are nothing short of heartbreaking. It is a disgrace that in a state like Tasmania that, not only do we allow it happen, but over the last four years our policies and the work of Government has actually made it worse. This Government has to take responsibility for the disaster that is happening across suburbs and across our community in housing.

In the Budget, \$1.1 billion of this Government's housing commitments are not even budgeted for; they sit beyond the forward Estimates past 2026. The Government has failed year in, year out on most of their social housing targets, and in their ability to deliver homes on schedule. They keep on referring to 'we have created this statutory body which will be focused on delivering outcomes for this'. To me, that is an abrogation of the Government's responsibility. A lot of commentators in this space across the country are saying the major problem in housing at the moment is that some state Governments are ignoring their constitutional responsibility to provide housing. They are hollowing it out.

This statutory authority - we do not know the scope, we do not know the responsibility of it - many people are seeing this as the Government saying housing is a real problem for us, we will create the statutory authority at arm's length. Do not come to me as minister, do not come to us as Government, go to the authority, so you have someone to blame rather than take responsibility yourself. Again, when you have limited resources, if you focus them on a bureaucratic reorganisation, they are going to be doing a lot of work on that. Unfortunately, they are dragged away from the important work of having a functioning public housing system that delivers for Tasmanians.

Obviously, we work in a bigger market and there are factors like unaffordability, rental availability. In the Anglicare Housing Snapshot from a weekend in March, there was not a single rental property that would be affordable for a family on Centrelink. For an individual on JobSeeker, only two rental properties were affordable in the whole state, both in regional areas of the north of the state.

This has been coming for years - a crisis in 2018, and that was off the back of 12 months community campaigning when we saw people out at the showgrounds in houses. We know that the Tasmanian private housing sector is experiencing market failure. The establishment of the arms-length housing corporation is a flawed model. It fails to recognise that they have a direct responsibility to act when markets fail or become distorted.

The Liberal Government's latest housing policy avoids this responsibility. They misdiagnose the problem and they will not improve housing affordability either for first home buyers or for renting. I believe that continuing to provide public subsidies for both the supply and demand side of the private market is a recipe for further fuelling rises in rents and prices, and will do nothing to reduce the social housing waiting list. There has to be a new approach.

Increasing the supply of private housing stock, as the Government says is the answer, can play a role in moderating prices and rent increases but there are limits to this approach, given the structure and dynamics of the private housing market. Not all demand for housing comes from would-be owner-occupiers. A significant segment of demand is driven by investors seeking capital gains or rental yields. Amongst the \$6.2 billion in Tasmanian home sales over the last 12 months, there were around 1800 first home purchases, but there were more than

2300 investment purchases. There is often competition between the interests of these distinct buyer groups.

The history of the housing market cycle suggests the market will retain the price levels achieved in its boom period in the face of increases of private houses. The recent and expanded initiatives - cash initiatives for first home buyers, stamp duty concessions, low income rental subsidies, land tax reductions and shared equity in private housing purchases - have failed, and will fail, to moderate rising prices for first home buyers and low-income renters. They are beneficial for those people who do receive them, and paradoxically they will continue to add to rising prices in the private market.

I believe we need an interventionist policy by Government. We need to reinvigorate our public housing stock and the role of Government. We need to reinvigorate and re-establish a functioning State Housing Commission, updated for contemporary needs and fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. We need to support the community sector in owning their houses and providing their element of the market; but the state needs to re-engage in housing. It is a fundamental job and without it, the fabric of our society unravels, people will not reach their full potential, and families will break up. The cost of not fixing houses in Tasmania is fundamental, and more of the same simply does not cut it.

This is not a Budget that delivers for the Tasmanian community. It has zero aspiration and has no heart. Whilst there are some initiatives in it we welcome - it is not all bad and we, as in the community and the parliament, should welcome some of the initiatives - but it goes nowhere near dealing with some of the fractures in our society. It goes nowhere near repairing our health services, the delivery of essential services that is the fundamental role of the state Government to deliver to the Tasmanian people and that Tasmanian people expect and deserve.

A rubbish wages offer and a Government that has continued in this ninth Budget, another budget of spin.

[2.59 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I acknowledge and pay my respects to the First Peoples of this island, lutruwita Tasmania, the palawa pakana. For tens of thousands of years they have lived with wisdom and in harmony on this land, land that has never been ceded and I commit to truth telling, treaty and justice.

Our natural world is the source of all life. Our wild forests and grasslands, rivers and oceans are home to an extraordinary biodiversity. They provide clean drinking water, they pollinate our crops, and they make our soils and crops abundant. Nature provides us, for free, an extraordinary stable, abundant and liveable island. The Greens listen to and respect the wisdom of indigenous knowledge and we understand we cannot take nature for granted. It is our priority to cherish, protect and restore the functioning of these natural systems.

The influence of young people was palpable this federal election. They used their voice to demand a government that will take urgent strong action on the climate emergency and on integrity and inequality. The Greens listened and the increase in our vote nationally and in Tasmania shows that. The voices of young school strikers for a safe climate, our 16-year-old leaders of the near future, pulled no punches in describing the calamity that faces us all from global heating. We know the solastalgia and climate anxiety that grips young people. We see the mental health impacts among them when they look with intelligent clarity at their probable

future. There is a resounding call for politicians to listen to the science and take strong and rapid action. When it comes to the impacts of extreme climate change, every day matters, every tiny fraction of a degree matters and every tonne of carbon dioxide that continues to be emitted into the atmosphere matters. The Greens will back young people all the way in their pursuit for a safe climate future.

We elevate the responsibility for climate action to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and provide additional funding to develop and monitor compliance with the emissions abatement provisions of a new safe climate act. We fund guidelines and programs for farmers, including the meat and dairy industries, to transition to low emissions. Businesses that proactively employ climate-friendly practices will receive government support.

Our alternative budget invests in a Tasmanian carbon bank project, a finance model to encourage carbon sequestration. To back this we establish an ongoing soil carbon monitoring program and develop targets and incentives for farmers to restore the level of soil carbon on agricultural land. We will turbocharge electric vehicle uptake and infrastructure by requiring new government car purchases to be electric, as well as waiving registration fees for all electric vehicles that are sold before 2030. We will reduce the registration cost for the life cycle of electric trucks and provide grants for companies to trial electric truck technology.

Tasmania's rooftop solar rollout has languished under the past eight years of the Liberals in government. We will increase the current annual rate of new photovoltaic system connections to over 4000 every year by mandating that 6-kilowatt systems must be placed on new public housing properties and by progressively retrofitting existing public housing stock and will subsidise low-income households and rental properties so that they have cheap power through renewable rooftop solar.

The sixth IPCC update from global scientists of the climate emergency is crystal clear. The most pressing duty of governments for their citizens is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Deforestation on the planet must end.

In Tasmania we will end the logging of native forests. This will keep our existing forest carbon dioxide stores intact and will also importantly reduce bushfire risk to neighbouring communities. The science is in. Intact native forests are a lower bushfire risk than plantation or regrowth forests for local communities. The extreme floods in New South Wales and Queensland and the 2020 Black Summer bushfires across mainland Australia, which caused such loss of life and mass destruction of homes, can no longer be called unprecedented. They are just a taste of what the future holds if we do not immediately cut our emissions and adapt to our changing climate as best we can.

It is critical that we keep abreast with the impacts of our fast-changing climate, and we need the best minds and the cleverest communication and modelling tools working to minimise the damage to lives, wild places, infrastructure and housing and supply systems from natural disasters. That is why we fund a comprehensive state climate adaptation plan and provide advice and support to councils as they urgently develop their own climate adaptation plans for their communities.

We respect the wisdom of the bushfire royal commission and the scientists who tell us nowhere will be safe from increasingly extreme natural disasters, with the climate heat that is

locked in already. They tell us that the safest place to live in Australia in our changing climate is where there is the strongest community.

Tasmania is a great place to start. We fund \$20 million into community resilience hubs across regional Tasmania to improve community connectivity and response capacity for all types of natural disasters. We will support people who put their lives on the line to defend us from dangerous fires and who are there to save us from floods and storm damage. We recruit 30 extra rapid response remote area firefighters. This will help better protect our parks and reserves in a warming climate and reduce the risk of bushfire spread.

We also support the training and wellbeing of SES and TFS volunteers with extra funding and provide \$10 million to upgrade critical emergency infrastructure for volunteer brigades. We will end the political and unscientific prescribed burning targets that are now totally out of date. We will make sure the necessary fuel reduction burning takes account of the evidence from recent bushfire royal commissions and considers the protection of life and the ecological integrity of identified areas.

There has never been a more urgent need to revive damaged ecosystems than we have now. In this UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, we stand with the scientists, conservationists and indigenous communities in our collective aim to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of all our life-supporting systems. In a century of great climate challenges Tasmania needs to aim higher to conserve and enhance nature. That is why our alternative budget commits \$2 million towards developing a biodiversity strategy for Tasmania, with the critical biodiversity maps and monitoring that will be needed to back it. This significant body of work will involve widespread consultation with Tasmanians and employ the Job Guarantee workforce and citizen scientists to assist with data collection.

In the meantime, hundreds of Tasmanian animals and plants are hanging on by beak and claw, perilously close to extinction. Forestry Tasmania and mining corporates like MMG smash up irreplaceable habitats and our planning scheme has been written to allow developments to slice and dice landscape connectivity. Global heating, with the onslaught of feral species that out-compete or predate on Tasmanian native species, adds to these pressures. None of this is news to hardworking conservationist Landcare volunteers, ecologists, and Threatened Species Unit staff. It has been the Liberals' program of sometimes casual and sometimes wilful destruction of our environment which is best epitomised by its failure to produce a legislated state of the environment report.

Ms O'Connor - Shame.

Dr WOODRUFF - We fund the work that they refuse to do so that we can take stock of the challenges ahead of us and develop a plan to help. We will further elevate the central importance of functioning natural systems through the creation of a standalone environment department and fund an annual program of grants for ecosystem restoration. We commit \$8 million to restore funding to the Threatened Species Unit's important work that was slashed by the Liberals and we include advanced recovery plans for all at-risk Tasmanian species.

We will give more money to support the vital conservation work of Wildcare, Coastcare and Landcare volunteers. To help relieve the daily killing of native birds, reptiles and mammals by cats, we will bring in mandatory cat confinement laws that the Liberals squibbed on at the last minute and we will resource community education and council enforcement activities.

We reject the Government's failure to regulate our bloated salmon industry and its expansion plans in the north-east and north-west waters. These are yet more untouched marine jewels, unprotected sanctuaries for marine and birdlife. We stand with coastal communities who see the dramatic loss of marine diversity that has come from Big Salmon dumping swimming pools of fish waste everyday into drinking water catchments and inshore waterways. With them, we are outraged that the Government has rolled over and welcomed the arrival of JBS to exploit our public waterways.

The Brazilian butchers are convicted of crimes against the environment, failure to pay tax, and gross workplace harms. They are on the record confessing to bribing Brazilian politicians to raise the money that they used to buy our cheap marine real estate. It is our failed regulatory system that greenlights environmental harm. The Labor and Liberal unity ticket hobbles the Environment Protection Authority, and focuses it on smoothing the waters for big industry instead of looking after our natural places.

Instead of protecting the environment, decades of inaction from the EPA has irreparably damaged wonderlands in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Macquarie Harbour, Long Bay and the Huon River. It has given us mass seal deaths, frightening levels of plastic pollution and green slime. We call the latest attempt to spin the EPA as being independent for what it is - a lie. The Greens will do a proper job. We fund a new statutory authority that removes the EPA.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Speaker, a point of order. The use of that word is unparliamentary. I ask the member to withdraw it.

Dr WOODRUFF - I was not accusing anyone of lying. I was talking about the attempt to spin it. I am not calling anyone a liar.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a prohibited word. In order to prevent confusion, it is always best, and I am sure, everybody has the capability of wording such statements in a different way so as not to call on the Speaker to adjudicate on whether it should or should not be used. And so, you cannot accuse anybody of presenting a lie, or lying.

Dr WOODRUFF - I actually did not, but I take that in mind for future. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Greens will do a proper job. We fund a new statutory authority that removes the EPA from Government and industry influence, and increases its core responsibilities to monitor and enforce compliance with the rules. All new fish farms will be closed-looped and land based. We fund a review of stocking levels and environmental licence conditions and enforce strong compliance against plastic pollution and wildlife harm. In order that damaged marine diversity has the best chance to recover from overfishing and feral species, and to increase resilience in warming waters, we fund a minimum target of 10 per cent of Tasmanian waters becoming no-take marine protected area reserves.

The Greens for many decades campaigned with communities to bring beverage corporations to heel for their packaging waste and its environmental harm. We welcomed the Liberal's belated environmental awareness about drink container waste, and we support the container recycling scheme. We know there is so much more to do. We are running out of time to deal with our waste. It is over flowing from landfill sites. Birds and fish are riven with

microplastics. Plastic ocean gyres threaten shipping traffic and whale migration, and every one of us, is now a walking microplastic petri dish.

Plastics are insidious in our environment, but they need not be as ubiquitous as they are now. We can turn this around, and for Tasmania that starts with our bill to ban single use plastics. Removing single use plastics from the waste stream would save the lives of tens of thousands, even millions, of invertebrates, fish, and bird life. By extension, it would prevent the flow poisoning by plastic of all species throughout the food chain, including humans.

We fund the education and support that is needed to implement a ban on single-use plastics. It extends on Hobart City Council's successful ban on single use take away plastic packaging, and makes it a state wide one. In Hobart alone, the Council expects it to remove 600 tonnes a year of waste from landfill. It is past time we have a circular economy, and legislation like this helps reset community expectations about resource use.

Along with our unique wild places, our Aboriginal and built heritage, the bush and character of our cities, towns and rural places are what makes lutruwita Tasmania a place of wonder for all of us who are lucky enough to live here, or to visit. Communities are passionate about defending our place, but under the Liberals, they are pitted in an unfair battle against developers with deep pockets. We need an even playing field.

In our alternative Budget, the Greens fund a Queensland-style tribunal appeals process for planning decisions. It is informal, makes decisions in plain English and prohibits legal representation unless exceptional circumstances exist or both parties agree to waive that right. The Liberals' statewide planning scheme has gutted meaningful community engagement in resource management and planning. It gives a red carpet to big developers and is a recipe for protracted, bitter disputes.

We will amend the act to make planning decisions independent of a minister, to protect local character and to enshrine real community consultation on developments instead of the current cynical box-ticking exercise. Tasmanians want confidence that the final decisions made about planning, that can forever have consequences for the places they love, will be independent and fair. We return full decision and policy making powers to the Tasmanian Planning Commission and we resource them to perform their vital functions.

We will update existing state policies and develop six new essential items to guide planning decisions about climate change, settlements, transport and infrastructure, the management of biodiversity, public consultation processes, health and wellbeing and our cultural preservation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally reshaped the way of life for people all over the planet. Our systems of supply, communication, travel, business, the supply of goods, food production and health services, have been fractured or disabled. What will never return are the lives that have been lost from COVID-19, and what cannot be undone are the potential infections that have occurred. Although most people recover from COVID-19 acute symptoms, we do not yet fully understand the long-term impacts of COVID-19 infection on the body.

What the research tells us is that some people will suffer long-term, disabling and life shortening effects. The jury is in. Avoiding infection in the first place and being fully

vaccinated is the only way to avoid the potential for this virus to damage organs, our mental capacity and immune system. Instead of doubling down with public health protections that matched the extra risk of Omicron contagion, COVID-19 disease and death, Australian Governments went weak during the federal election. Since our borders opened, more than twice as many Tasmanians have been infected - 144 000 so far - than the Government's modelled maximum of 70 000.

Tasmania now has a world high COVID-19 infection rate and the virus is the number one leading cause of death in Australia. OzSAGE, the independent public health experts and epidemiologists, are ringing alarm bells at the failure of governments to protect citizens during this wave, or to prepare for future variants, reinfections and the burden of long-COVID-19.

The Government's lack of leadership and confused messaging about the importance of COVID-19 protections since our borders opened, has spawned misinformation and unfounded concerns in the community. It has led to a reduction in the minimal protections like mask wearing that should be employed. There has been an utter failure of leadership from the Premier in this regard. Parents and people who are immunocompromised or living with a disability want the risks of COVID-19 infection to be treated seriously and the Government to reinstate a collective responsibility for essential protections, like mask wearing and ventilation.

Our Budget reflects the science and our alternative Budget takes concrete steps to keep people as safe as possible in the evolving global pandemic. We have put additional resourcing into COVID@home and research into long-term COVID-19 complications to inform our health system responses now and into the future.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Government's Budget has dealt a serious blow to nurses and ambulance workers. They were holding out hope a new Premier and Minister for Health would invest more in people instead of focusing on new buildings. They were cruelly disappointed. It is hard to overstate the low morale of paramedics and ambulance operational staff who face unfilled weekend shifts and all-night ramping. Knowing there are dangerously ill people who cannot get an ambulance when they need it, damages the mental health of ambulance staff.

We have seen the deadly result for patients. The Government's too-little too-late health investments in nursing and midwifery recruitment cannot keep pace with the loss of staff to retirement or to the mainland for better pay and conditions. The health data confirms what staff and patients waiting to get a bed know, that Tasmania is the bottom of the nation in timely access to care and elective surgeries.

The goodwill of nurses and paramedics has too long been taken for granted and we respond with the respect that these champion carers deserve. We address the nursing shortage by adding extra \$140 million to employ 600 new graduate nurses, 120 permanent pool staff nurses and midwives, and 10 more psychiatric emergency nurses. Recruiting new graduates is not enough if you do not provide ongoing support and training. We fund 25 clinical educators and 50 clinical coaches and bring back the important role of the statewide executive director of nursing and midwifery. Instead of putting new paramedic graduates onto casual contracts without security of employment and moving them around like pawns on a chessboard, we will fund an additional 224 full-time staff into Ambulance Tasmania on top of the Government's paltry spend, including into non-operational staff and a standalone rostering unit.

Despite the 2019 ambulance review in Tasmania that recommended new ambulances and stations, the Government has repeatedly failed to prioritise spending on this. On their watch, things have become dire. Our budget provides 34 new ambulances or light vehicles and new stations at Rokeby, the Channel, Ouse and Legana. The signature health policy when the Liberals came to government in 2014 was to have been that we had the nation's best health by 2050. That chimera has long been dumped, but what we have not lost sight of is the need for preventative health services and the impact of addiction and trauma on Tasmania's health and wellbeing.

The need for more support to recover from alcohol and drugs is extreme. Our alternative budget invests \$16 million in new public alcohol and drug treatment facilities, establishes an alcohol, tobacco and other drugs unit, increases the beds for withdrawal management to 23 and establishes 40 new public rehabilitation beds. To keep young Tasmanians safe from harm when they party, they need information and education. We continue to fund targeted pill-testing services at events and festivals and everyday testing in main population centres.

The mental health pressures on the poorest Tasmanians facing housing and security, the cost of living debts and unaffordable, unavailable health care has become even more severe. Young people face additional anxiety, depression and eating disorder risks from the uncertain job and climate futures. We welcome the Government's investments into mental health but we must do so much more. There is nothing like the number of expert mental health staff to meet the demand. We fund an additional \$5 million every year into staffing recruitment and retention initiatives.

Quality and equal access to the justice system are core principles of the Greens and at the moment the Government is failing to ensure everyone, regardless of wealth, can access legal representation when they need it. We increase funds for all seven community legal centres including the Environmental Defenders Office by an additional \$400 000 a year. In recognition of the massive unmet need for women leaving abusive relationships, we fund the Women's Legal Service an extra \$400 000 on top of that. Legal Aid's critical services are also supported with a baseline funding increase of \$2 million every year.

The current evidence from the overflowing Risdon Prison, with increasing prison assaults and criminal reoffending, shows just how bad this Government's approach to justice is serving us. To have a safer and more humane society we need to pivot to restorative justice programs that help inmates successfully integrate into the community and not reoffend. We have a number of initiatives including a bail hostel and restorative justice programs and policies divisions to implement that.

During the last two years of the pandemic, it was the creative arts industries that united us, made us laugh and took our minds to lighter places, but the federal Liberals gave them nothing when events, productions and retail collapsed, and the current Budget has been another harsh demonstration that this Government wants the arts industries to keep the after-dark economy alive but will not invest in them or nurture our island's creative culture. We restore the \$26 million of vicious cuts that the Liberals make to arts development and screen funding in their budget. In addition, we will establish an emerging artists grant program to encourage a new generation of artists and a program for small and medium community arts organisations. We recognise the richness and critical importance of fostering Tasmanian voices telling Tasmanian stories. Our stories bind us together as people, so we support Wide Angle Tasmania to produce and market films each year and employ trainees.

Mr Speaker, our alternative budget shows how the Greens would prioritise spending Tasmanians' hard-earned taxes. We fund what the overwhelming majority of people say they want from their government - strong action on climate, an ambulance and a hospital bed when it is needed, an affordable secure home and protection for the character and wild places that make lutruwita/Tasmania special in the world. We show what is possible with the limited resources our state has.

There is no doubt the challenges of the present are enormous and those ahead can seem insurmountable, but collective action is the antidote to loneliness, anxiety and hopelessness. Our alternative budget fundamentally aims to strengthen communities and to promote respect and inclusion. In a rapidly changing climate and a sometimes frightening world, when the cost of living is spiralling out of control for many, strong communities are our greatest resource. I am proud to represent the people of Franklin and to continue my work on the collective life-affirming vision articulated in our fully costed Greens alternative budget.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

[3.27 a.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I have listened carefully to the contributions of members this week and have been struck by how little concern some here have for the plight of marginalised and vulnerable Tasmanians. These are people who come to my office every day in desperate need, people for whom the system works against, not for, people who are confused and intimidated by modern society, internet forms, impenetrable bureaucracy, hoops to jump through and just the daily grind to survive in a society where they feel invisible and abandoned. Many are in poor health, both physically and mentally.

You do not have to look far past the glossy brochures and government rhetoric to see that this Budget does very little for homeless, vulnerable and socially isolated Tasmanians, those who live week to week and often do not know if there is a bed or meal for them at the end of the day. In my response to the budget here today, I want to say a few words about these people, and how, as a caring, civil society, we must do more to bring all Tasmanians together.

Nothing highlights the plight of those at the bottom of our economic-focused society more than the crisis in housing. In fact it is not a crisis, it is a disaster. Let us face it: the soaring house prices and private rental market have been hard enough on many who would normally be considered affluent, or as we used to say, the middle class. We all know young couples who cannot get a start on the property ladder or have found their rents rising to unsustainable levels, but those doing it really tough are the ones I want to highlight today.

I constantly hear from people who cannot keep up because the cost of private rental has skyrocketed. People live in fear of rent increases that are coming in the hundreds of dollars. I hear from people that rent takes so much of their income there is nothing left at the end of the week to save for a house deposit, let alone anything else. They are trapped in poverty. Nothing in life is more heartbreaking than listening to those who are sleeping rough, couch-surfing or being shifted around from shelter to shelter with seemingly no prospect of a home. These are people who are not just feeling the pinch, they are just about down and out. Sometimes it is a sudden health issue, a loss of a job, a rent increase, domestic violence, family breakdown or addiction that leads them to homelessness and utter despondency.

The ripple effect of homelessness cannot be understated. Someone who is homeless is more likely to have poor health, is less likely to engage in education and training and is more likely to be caught up in the criminal justice system. This all takes taxpayers resources, and is entirely avoidable.

This Budget should have prioritised social housing. Treat it as a community problem, not an economic one. The Budget could have included commonsense measures, like limiting short-stay accommodation to rooms in the owner's principal place of residence; or an empty house tax to incentivise property owners to either sell or rent their empty homes. I have said it before and I repeat: this is an initiative that has been adopted in cities as diverse as Vancouver and Melbourne, where homes left empty for more than six months, without a reasonable excuse, are charged 1 per cent of the value of the property.

The Tenants' Union Tasmania recently released data that identified 192 residential properties across the Hobart City Council municipality that had a high chance of vacancy; 115 in the neighbouring Glenorchy City Council; and 256 in Launceston City Council. That is 563 inner-city residential properties that sit empty during a housing disaster. If you were to conservatively extrapolate these numbers across the state, there are potentially around 2000 homes sitting empty right now. Imagine what that would mean to our public housing waiting list. As I said, if you look at housing solutions from a social perspective the opportunities start to open up.

I will say a few brief words about some of the housing initiatives in the Budget that are doomed to make the situation worse. The First Home Owners Grant is simply economic stupidity, and in this Budget the Government has piled mistake upon mistake by extending the \$30 000 grant for another year. As any economist will tell you, these types of incentives do little more than inflate property prices by the amount of the grant. In other words, such schemes will make housing less accessible, not more; the exact opposite of an affordable housing strategy. As respected Tasmanian economist, Saul Eslake, said recently:

First home buyer incentives do nothing to increase the home ownership rate but inflate the price of existing houses and end up in the pocket of either vendors or in the profit margins of builders and land developers.

In short, the real failure of this Budget and of previous budgets from both Labor and Liberal, is that there is insufficient investment in social housing. There is not enough to assist renters and slow progress on building new homes. The housing waiting list will just continue to grow and grow.

While I am on waiting lists, let us touch on hospital and dental waiting lists. It is those on the bottom rung of society who feel the deficiencies in our health system the most. Regarding the dental waiting list, I note the Budget funding for 5350 dental appointments across emergency dental, general dental care and denture clinics using graduate dentists and graduate oral health therapists. As far as I can see, this is just for the next two years with nothing for years three and four in the forward Estimates. I hope this program works, but I fear it will treat just the tip of the dental crisis in Tasmania.

We know that regular dental visits can tell a lot about your overall health, including whether or not you may be at risk of chronic disease. Research suggests that when your mouth is healthy this is an indication of good overall health. On the other hand, if you have poor oral

health you may have other health concerns. Dental health intervention can prevent general health problems from getting established. For example, gingivitis, an early stage of gum disease, is extremely common among individuals. Such mouth infections can affect the heart, which may become inflamed by bacterial endocarditis, a condition that affects people with heart disease or anyone with damaged heart tissue. Likewise, digestion begins with the physical and chemical processes in the mouth, and problems here can lead to intestinal failure, irritable bowel syndrome and other digestive disorders.

Clearly, an investment in dental care is an investment in reducing other chronic health problems in the future, thus relieving the burden on our health infrastructure and services. It is an investment in the future. I am not confident that the Budget or Government health planning overall sufficiently takes this necessary, preventative approach.

I will also touch on elective surgery waiting times, where it seems Tasmania is amongst the worst-performing states in the nation. I am told 19 per cent of elective surgery patients in Tasmania are waiting more than a year, compared to 11 per cent in the next highest jurisdiction - New South Wales. Further, more than 90 per cent of urgent category 1 patients are seen on time in Victoria, New South Wales, ACT and Queensland, whereas more than a third of category 1 and nearly two thirds of category 2 patients and category 3 patients in Tasmania are not seen on time.

Mr Speaker, I note some of the programs in this Budget, such as funding for acute care, birthing suite upgrades and community centres in the north of the state, and an eating disorder clinic in the south. These initiatives may improve waiting times, but I suspect only at the margins. I saw little in this Budget that would bring waiting times down to anywhere near the rest of the country. There are many other shortfalls in the health budget, but time prevents me from going into detail on all of them here.

Briefly, there is not much for easing the shortage of general practitioners in our suburbs. Have you tried to find a GP who will take on aged care residents? Heaven forbid if Dr Don McLean in the northern suburbs decides to retire anywhere; we will have an absolute disaster on our hands. A constant and persistent complaint I receive in my electoral office is people simply cannot afford GP care. What do they do? They suffer. Their illnesses grow and get more complex until they are forced into our hospital system at great cost to the taxpayer. If the state and Government can fix just one thing in health, fix the accessibility of GPs.

There is no plan to mandate two-person crews for all ambulance call-outs, something the paramedic profession has been calling for. Single person crews are simply not always safe. Our ambulances regularly have to attend potentially dangerous situations, often where people are violent and affected by drugs and alcohol. Surely, our first responders deserve our protection. The Government commits to two person ambulance crews. We all know that Ambulance Tasmania is under pressure, and matters are not helped by ambulance and their crews languishing while ramping at our overloaded hospitals. There is clearly a long way to go.

Health is a bigger and more complex debate than can be allowed for here, but suffice it to say there needs to be increased focus on community health so that people can be treated in their own home and in their own community. This means promoting wellness, allied health, after-hours GPs, mental health services, addiction counselling; that is, putting people at the centre of health policy. One area of health policy in the Budget I will highlight is the apparent

recognition that mental health needs a bigger investment and bigger focus. I note the array of programs contained in the Budget, including mental health funding for Correctional Primary Health Services, extension of the Emergency Mental Health Co-response model, and additional funding for Rethink 2020-2025, Tasmania's overarching mental health plan, among other projects and programs. I do not know if these programs and funding will make a difference. Time will tell. However, I do acknowledge their inclusion in the Budget and give credit where credit is due.

Mr Speaker, in my contribution today I have tried to highlight the problems facing poor and marginalised Tasmanians - those who find accessing services a confusing exercise in frustration and disappointment - by touching on two of the fundamentals for human existence: health and housing.

I give a big shout out to the not for profit community service sector. The challenge of properly funding community services over the long-term remains, and I do not see a great commitment in this Budget for the sector. Make no mistake, the not-for-profits do much of the Government's work for it, on a shoestring budget and with a large dose of goodwill. As I have pointed out in this place many times, community service organisations play a crucial role in keeping people safe, supporting people through hardship, and ultimately helping communities thrive. Organisations like St Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, City Mission, Loaves and Fishes, and many, many more are stretched to their limits; they are exhausted. They have more and more people seeking help who are crumbling under cost of living pressures such as soaring rents, and they tell me their workers and volunteers are at their wits end. There is not much in the Budget for these groups.

I accept that budgets are all about priorities. There is no magic pudding, so the Government has to put its money - our money - where it can do the most good for the most people. There are so many places in this Budget where the Government has got it so wrong. Where do I begin? For a start, this Government refuses to acknowledge the social and economic harm that the rampant poker machine industry causes in this state, and factor that into this Budget and the forward Estimates. Let me be clear: without real and effective harm minimisation measures, the poker machine industry in Tasmania is not sustainable, either socially or economically. The social cost of pokies-related problem gambling certainly exceeds state revenue from EGM gambling taxes and fees, with the Government collecting just \$50 million a year. Independent analysis estimates the economic cost to the state would be twice that figure, if not more, but unfortunately, Government does not properly account for the social cost of poker machines in our society.

We know that a social and economic impact study of gambling in Tasmania put the social and economic costs of problem gambling including prison, bankruptcy, depression, violence and productivity loss, at up to \$144 million every year. This is a dreadful return on an investment for the Tasmanian taxpayer and there can be no doubt that costs far exceed any benefits, meaning that the poker machine industry in Tasmania is neither economically or socially sustainable.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Ms JOHNSTON - While the Government refuses to adopt real and effective harm-minimisation measures, the impost on those least able to pay will continue and returns in the gaming industry will not be shared appropriately. The licensing tax and fees regime for the

industry can only be described as an absolute sweetheart deal, a disgusting thank you for bankrolling the Government's election campaign.

The Federal Group benefits from a significant tax cut on their casino poker machines, and hotels and clubs have received a windfall gain in the capital way of their business via the machine licences granted. There is no doubt our state would be better off without these rapacious machines.

We also would be better off without greyhound racing in Tasmania. Although it is not clear in this Budget, I understand the Government provides approximately \$10 million annually to prop up the cruel and barbaric so-called sport of greyhound racing. The Tasmanian public overwhelmingly wants to end the public funding of greyhound racing. Tasmanians have clearly demonstrated their repulsion to their tax dollars going to an industry where hundreds of greyhounds are either maimed, injured or killed each year.

The Government is blind to the fact that around the world many states and countries have either banned or are in the process of banning dog racing. It has all but died in its country of origin, the United States. No amount of sugar-coating and spin around the supposed job and economic benefits can justify why the Government openly supports and contributes to greyhound racing in Tasmania.

I will now turn to some of the large spending items in the Budget. There is the new Bridgewater bridge, the perennial funding announcement for state and federal governments for decades, an eye-watering \$786 million commitment over four years. I note that when it was announced in the Hobart City Deal it was only about \$570 million, but the price tag continues to go up and up. We know the budgets for these big projects always blow out anyway; pencil in a billion dollars for this folly by the time the final cement truck leaves. I am not convinced we need to spend anywhere near this amount of money on the Bridgewater bridge. There is a perfectly serviceable causeway that can be widened to four lanes and a new life span added to replace the old. That is hundreds of millions of dollars saved that could be spent on housing and health.

I see that there is \$1.25 million allocated in the coming year for the stadium feasibility study, but nothing for construction on the stadium itself over the forward Estimates. For goodness sake, let us keep it this way. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that if you talk to someone sleeping in their car, or waiting years to see a medical specialist, a billion-dollar football arena is definitely not a priority. Nothing demonstrates how out of touch politicians are or how warped their priorities can be than this proposal for a pie-in-the-sky football stadium. I am all for Tassie getting an AFL team, but certainly not at the expense of vulnerable and needy Tasmanians.

I will wind up my contribution on that note, the need to put vulnerable people at the forefront of all government activity and decision-making, including and especially in this Budget. I have focused on a few key areas where policy reform is needed - the housing shortage, homelessness, dental care, surgery waiting times, GP access, the ambulance crisis, mental health and wastage on overblown infrastructure programs.

Of course there is much I have not been able to cover that is in desperate need of reform and refocus by this Government. There are necessary reforms to institutions such as the Public Trustee, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming

Commission and the Integrity Commission. There is a much-needed shake-up of transport policy including the re-establishment of light rail on the existing Hobart northern suburbs corridor, universal free bus travel and a focus on integrated transport solutions.

There is much more I could have said about health services including nurse recruitment and retention, addiction treatment and counselling services, youth mental health, rehabilitation and convalescence services and better coordination and cooperation between the public and private health providers.

We see consistently over many years a chronic underfunding of public education. We cannot even fully fund the Schooling Resource Standard. That is not a gold standard, that is the bare minimum requirement and we do not even meet that. It is hardly surprising, then, that we have such poor literacy and numeracy outcomes.

What I have managed to cover in my contribution today is nowhere near the end of the conversation. There are many more problems we face that desperately need government attention, including dysfunction in the aged care and disability sectors, gender equality, election donation reform and the too often hidden tragedy of domestic violence.

I have made the case that through underfunding and inefficiencies, this Government - and to be fair, its Labor predecessors - has allowed too many Tasmanians to fall off the economic bandwagon. Regrettably, this Budget is largely an opportunity lost to recognise the plight of many Tasmanians who struggle to get by. My plea to this Government is that in your quest to build the Tasmanian economy, please understand that many need your help right now. Please do not leave them behind.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear - good contribution.

[3.46 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I thank all my parliamentary colleagues for their responses on the Appropriation Bill (No. 1). It has been a terrific debate around the Chamber.

I will say from the outset that it has been a great honour to bring forward the 2022-23 Budget as Treasurer. It is a budget I am very proud of and a budget that I know our Government is very proud of, despite the difficulties and challenges that we have come through as a state, particularly emerging from a pandemic. It is a budget that has been deliberately comprehensive. As I have hinted at before, there are levels of detail and analysis in the papers that are new to people who have been looking at them for many years and they will notice that. It is also a responsible budget that is appropriate for these times and it is a budget that shows in detail that we are able to have policy and a budget with heart and one that is looking after the state at this crucial time in our history.

Without a doubt, and we have been upfront about this, it is a budget that is about strengthening Tasmania's future, delivering on our vision for Tasmania to be a place where everyone is encouraged to be the best they can be and we deliberately harness our comparative advantages. The Budget is an important way the Government can fund initiatives, existing and new, so that there can be more opportunities for Tasmanians and to maintain a robust economy, which has again been demonstrated with the recent release of data that we are doing extremely well.

Our strong financial position and the strength of our economy has enabled us to deal with the challenges of the pandemic while delivering on the commitments that we have made to the Tasmanian community. The Budget invests in our future, uses our strengths and builds on the strong foundations we have established since 2014. We have turned this state around in many positive ways.

Across the Budget and forward Estimates, as we have previously outlined, we will invest \$11.2 billion into Health, \$8.5 billion into Education, Skills and Training and \$538 million into Housing; that is half of the longer-term \$1.5 billion investment into 10 000 new social and affordable homes over 10 years.

The Budget also provides something I am particularly proud about looking ahead, which is a \$5.6 billion investment into our social and economic infrastructure providing the hospitals, rail, irrigation, housing, roads and bridges, energy assets, schools and digital infrastructure. These are the infrastructure investments that Tasmanians need and deserve.

Mr Speaker, before I go too much further, I will take the opportunity to speak in a little more detail about some of the Budget initiatives in my other portfolios of Infrastructure, Transport and Planning.

In the infrastructure space, it does not happen very often in this place but I will acknowledge one thing Ms O'Connor said this morning during the MPI, where she acknowledged that we are delivering on our commitments on roads and bridges. I do not want to overlook that because praise in this place is usually fairly scant. It is -

Ms O'Connor - You can stop now.

Mr FERGUSON - but I want to grab it and say thank you for noticing. Ms O'Connor was making a broader point that she wants to see delivery across social infrastructure. I endorse that point of view. I will grab onto the acknowledgement that we have delivered in spades on our roads and bridges program, and the profile is being delivered upon. Some members opposite said it would not happen. It has happened.

My department has worked blooming hard on this. In my regular meetings with them it is something we are constantly reviewing, and doing what I must do as a minister. That is pressuring the department, scrutinising my own department and ensuring that where concerns are raised, that we tackle them and that I give my department the support they need to deliver on the investment priorities of the Government. That has been a massive effort. In fact, I just walked into the Chamber having left a meeting with my department where we discussed the increased maintenance spend the Budget provides for.

We did not commit much time in the Budget speech last week, we crammed so much into it, but we are increasing maintenance funding around Tasmania by more than 20 per cent over the next four years. It is a massive lift in maintenance. Members will be aware that as a new minister, I said I would be making that a priority. I have been doing that but this is the biggest hit of funds added to the Budget for maintenance around the state.

Funding for roads and bridges in the 2022-2023 Budget and forward Estimates represents a major step-change in transport infrastructure investment. We see it increase to a massive

\$2.7 billion, up from \$2 billion in last year's budget papers. This huge funding boost includes the largest transport infrastructure project in Tasmanian history.

I beg to differ with one thing Ms O'Connor said this morning. She said my pet project was the Midland Highway. I do have a lot of affection for that 10-year action plan. My pet project is, in fact, the Bridgewater bridge. Ms Johnston is acknowledging that as well; we have not always agreed on that.

I see it as Tasmania's bridge. Being from the north, I said to northern stakeholders last Friday, 'It's our bridge, it connects our city to our capital'. I am so pleased to see that project at \$786 million. It is going ahead after receiving its planning approval, the first major planning approval that has occurred under our new legislation. That streamlined assessment process recognised and regarded all of the usual rules, which were not changed, but allowed them to be considered in parallel. It saved a lot of bureaucratic time. Like anyone else, I was watching it very closely and hoping for the right outcome.

The project team I put together - and across government we have had an incredible executive steering committee - is led by Ben Maloney. With me, he built the new Royal Hobart Hospital and has done a splendid job. I cannot tell the House how proud I am of Mr Maloney and his team. They are sensational public servants.

The Bridgewater bridge is by far the largest single investment. There are many critical investments happening around the state. This includes the continuation of the \$565 million Midland Highway Action Plan, the \$350 million South East Traffic Solution between Sorell and Hobart, the airport interchange - not a roundabout, the Midway Point duplication, with that incredible cutting that has taken place through there, duplication of the causeways, the extra overtaking opportunity on the Arthur Highway and the bypass of Sorell. That is a phenomenal joint-funded initiative between the Tasmanian and Australian governments, and it is going extremely well.

The \$120 million project to improve the Sideling section of the Tasman Highway between Launceston and Scottsdale: thank you, Mr Wood, for acknowledging that in your contribution. You will be pleased to know that we have signed the first contract for stage 1 with Fulton Hogan in recent days and work will be underway as soon as they get their work crew together.

There is \$280 million for works on the Bass Highway between Launceston and Marawah, where we have made the priority of the first of those funds to be west of Wynyard.

In the north-east, I have already acknowledged the first \$70 million for the Tasman Highway between Scottsdale and Launceston. There is \$1.9 million toward the contemporary management plan for Ben Lomond National Park, focusing on year-round activities. There is \$465 000 for upgrades to infrastructure in north-east parks and reserves; and \$650 000 for the Victoria St redevelopment in Scottsdale.

On Flinders Island, we have provided \$2 million for the upgrade of Palana Road, at least a partial upgrade of that council-owned road. Mr Wood was there recently and residents are already enjoying that. We would like to see the federal government step into that space as well. Unfortunately, there were no commitments prior to the federal election but that does not mean

that we should give up. There is \$825 000 for the Flinders Island camping ground upgrades and the recreational vehicle access.

This unprecedented investment in Tasmania's road and bridge infrastructure follows a record \$317 million investment in 2021. I have described that achievement alone as being 245 per cent more than in the last full year of the former Labor-Greens government, to give some perspective on that.

The Budget also contains an extra \$81.5 million for infrastructure maintenance to deliver a stronger and more resilient road network. This will lift total investment in road maintenance to a record of \$388 million over the next four years. This record investment will grow capacity to keep our roads and highways to a high standard.

The investment in the Budget and forward Estimates needs to also be put into context to understand just how far we have come. The Government has allocated more than \$700 million in the next financial year for construction of roads and bridges. This is almost double what will be spent in the current financial year, which is already a record. Even more extraordinarily, it will be nearly six times the amount spent by the previous government on roads and bridges in its last full year in office 10 years ago.

There will be a further \$284 million over the Budget and forward Estimates for Tasmania's freight rail infrastructure. I thank Mr Ellis for raising that in his contribution. That has been a game-changer for the rail sector in Tasmania. It has taken rail from being an embarrassing story to a story we can be very proud of. Heavy rail haulage in Tasmania has been plagued with problems for generations. It was not long ago where you saw derailments happening on a monthly or fortnightly basis at times. While derailments are always a risk, right now they are very few and far between. Such is the case that TasRail today is hauling more than 3 million tonnes per year - record volumes - and even drawing a small profit.

Even more from that will be the connection of the Bell Bay Line to the wharf, which I am particularly keen to see achieved, as well as investment in the Melba Line Bulk Minerals Rail Hub, which is a phenomenal project for the north west coast.

I was glad to have the new tranche of the freight rail revitalisation program committed to by the federal government prior to going into caretaker. We moved and were able to achieve an 80 per cent contribution, which was fantastic and far better than has been the case in the past.

With the investment I have described, it is quite extraordinary that the shadow treasurer would persist with the claim he made in his unfortunate contribution in this House that the Government had under-delivered. The record tells a very different tale indeed.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is also embarking on the most progressive agenda for public transport in decades and we are investing in a range of initiatives to boost patronage and bust traffic congestion. In 2022-23 the Budget includes \$18.9 million to secure an ongoing ferry service between Hobart and Bellerive. The members for Clark and perhaps Franklin will be perhaps most excited about this.

Ms Ogilvie - Very happy, minister, thank you very much.

Mrs Petrusma - Most excited.

Mr FERGUSON - The trial only commenced last August. I did not know what the demand would be, but we said, 'Let's give it the best chance of success', and the people of southern Tasmania have really spoken with their feet.

The funding in the Budget is to allow for the design and construction of a floating pontoon at Bellerive, infrastructure to protect the passengers from poor weather and a general upgrade of the wharf area. There can be no doubt that the Derwent ferry service has been a huge success. Labor said we were setting it up to fail. We set it up to succeed and we have seen 81 per cent of the daily more than 500 passengers saying that they would have driven over the Tasman Bridge at peak hour if it were not for the ferry. It has been really pleasing for me as Transport minister to see that occur, because we had not had a ferry of that kind for many years, I think decades. It is good that will be locked in with better infrastructure and certainty going forward.

The Budget also provides \$8.3 million towards bus stop upgrades and \$17 million towards three new park-and-ride facilities in the south. Bus stop upgrades will provide comfortable modern shelters in priority locations to enhance the passenger experience and we will be working with local government in relation to that. In addition, there are equity contributions for Metro Tasmania to assist with the implementation of the common ticketing solution, which we are making progress on and I look forward to discussing that at Estimates, as well as \$5 million for Metro to undertake a zero-emissions bus trial. All members will have an interest in this but perhaps Greens members more than others. I am very excited about this and the expressions of interest process has already commenced on that. We will see a trial in the north and south, one with hydrogen and one with battery-electric. That is what we are asking the market to respond to.

To make the most of our infrastructure investment and to relieve traffic congestion, it is critical that we improve public transport by making it faster, more efficient and a more attractive choice for Tasmanians. That is exactly what we are doing. We have already introduced new bus services to increase capacity from the Huon and Kingston to the city, integrating with our new park-and-ride facilities at Huntingfield and Firthside. We have implemented improved bus networks right around the state, leading to faster, more frequent and more direct services, and in some areas Sunday services for the first time.

I briefly acknowledge that changing bus timetables is never easy. There has been a bit of chatter about tax reform during the last few days, but any reform is challenging and buses are no less the case. There is always politics played and, sadly, if you want to get a service that is providing the most support to the most people, for some people it is a disappointing outcome. It is a real puzzle. It is not possible to run a bus down every street if you want to have an efficient transport network. My department, prior to me becoming minister and since, have now gone around the three regions, the south, north and north-west, in that order. It has been really difficult for them but the changes that have been made have been in direct response to what customers and potential customers have said they needed and we have responded to that.

We have also completed the \$45 million modernisation of the Metro bus fleet and I am pleased to be able to say that more than 100 new low-emission buses are now on the run, built here in Tasmania, resulting in one of the youngest fleets in Australia, and I hope that members are enjoying catching the occasional bus that has been built in Tasmania.

In the Planning space, the Tasmanian Liberal Government continues to deliver on planning reform to ensure that we have the most effective, strategically well-informed and efficient land use planning system in the country. As we deliver, we are creating new ways to unlock more land in Tasmania to help people realise the dream of home ownership.

This Budget includes \$2.5 million over the next two years for the continuation of the regional land use strategies election commitment. We have already made changes to the southern strategy to allow land adjacent to the urban growth boundary to be considered by the commission for residential development in certain circumstances, and that was not the case prior. In the northern strategy, we made changes to allow land already identified for potential urban growth, to be similarly considered.

It is the case that councils are approving record numbers of housing proposals and the industry has told me they have more planning approvals and permits for housing in place than they currently have the capacity to build. That certainly is a response to the state and federal home builder initiatives, the First Home Owner Grant and a growing population. Councils are approving more DAs than ever before. In 2021, there were 11 500 compared to a little over 9000 the previous year and less than 8000 the year before that. We are committed to making housing more affordable and providing greater housing choice for Tasmanians.

Our Housing Land Supply Act has proven to be effective in providing a more direct and efficient process for the rezoning of suitable government land for residential development, including social and affordable housing. This is allowing more houses to be built for Tasmanians than ever before. I am pleased that from time to time in my role as Minister for Planning - and the previous minister, Mr Jaensch, in this space - being able to lay before the House housing land supply orders. They have all been ultimately supported by both Houses.

We had a lot of politicking around Huntingfield, which was the first test of the legislation, but that succeeded. We had a lot of politicking on that played by members opposite. Nonetheless, that is an innovation of this Government that came from the housing summit in 2018 and it is working for our state, although no doubt there is more to do.

On any assessment one thing we can agree on - or at least many of us around the Chamber - is that the budget replies from the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer and shadow minister for finance were perhaps the most disappointing contributions made in response to any budget ever in this state. The budget reply from the Opposition Leader was 40 minutes about nothing. I was genuinely surprised at that because after eight years of being in opposition and three election losses, I thought perhaps Labor would want to put pen to paper, get the calculator and the spreadsheet going and put some policies forward.

Ms O'Connor - You're dreaming.

Mr FERGUSON - I am dreaming, I was dreaming, but I thought they might have been prepared to do the work of the official Opposition, but it turns out that they are only the technical Opposition. There was no plan, just a lot of grizzles. There was no alternative budget and nothing of substance in the contributions from the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow treasurer, who has been very scant around the House this week. The Labor Opposition has now had nine chances to produce a properly costed and funded alternative budget.

I remember a couple of years ago Labor put forward what they said was an alternative budget, but as members here may remember, it did not even provide changes to the budget year we were even debating. It was more of a photo album. They have not even tried that this year. They have failed nine times so the question arises: how can the Opposition ever be taken seriously as responsible budget managers? Bizarrely, Ms White said in her reply that she would lead a delegation to Canberra to present Labor's policies to the new Prime Minister. If such a delegation were to go, what are they going to present? They have no policies. I thought I might be mistaken - surely the Opposition has some policies.

I had a look at their website to see if I had missed anything, even their old election policies, but there was nothing there, completely bare. If Ms White will be travelling to Canberra to present a blank piece of paper to Mr Albanese, I would not be surprised if Mr Albanese was very disappointed. Will she be asking the Prime Minister instead to tell her what plans the state Opposition should have for Tasmania, asking Mr Albanese to do the work for her, just like Ms White had to ask Mr Albanese to help her sort out the Dean Winter fiasco in the lead up to last year's election.

Once again, the Budget reply from the Opposition Leader was not the response to a Budget of an alternative government or an alternative premier. Dr Broad's response was even more bizarre. I will try to be gentle here, but it is very difficult to see what Labor stands for, when in one breath of air they will say 'the Government should spend more money' and with another breath of air they will say 'the Government should have less borrowings'. Dr Broad rails against Government borrowing and having a sustainable level of debt, but then he has said and I am able to quote him, I am sorry if you find it difficult to hear your own words -

Dr Broad - No, just you.

Mr FERGUSON - You said, 'debt used to fund investments that will save money in the long term is good'. You also went on to say, and I quote, 'we are not arguing that the Government should not have spent the money it did protecting the state from COVID-19, we are not complaining about the \$1.5 billion that was in the Budget for COVID-19', but that is exactly what the Labor Party has been doing. They have been complaining about borrowings when I have been very direct in public and in parliament about the fact, in part, our borrowings are a reflection of the deficits that we incurred, and by consensus in this House during the pandemic.

We spent a lot of money protecting Tasmanians, and we used our balance sheet to shield businesses and jobs and people's health. We agreed on that at the time. That is exactly what Labor has been whingeing about. Dr Broad has walked it back.

Dr Broad - That'd be right.

Mr FERGUSON - I've just read you back your own words.

Dr Broad - Yes, you are not listening, you are making it up.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'Connor - Oh that's rubbish. You put it out in your media release today. You should be embarrassed.

Dr Broad - I'm not.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, let us log in the World Heritage Area.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The Treasurer has the floor. No-one should be interjecting.

Ms O'Connor - You are a disgrace.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. If the discussion could take place between other members, then it can be outside. Order.

Mr FERGUSON - The Labor Party is really caught out here. Ms Dow and Ms White and, I think, also Dr Broad have been trying to say that Government wage policy should equal inflation. Surely, that is calling for more spending. I mean, if they would not be prepared to acknowledge that I would be surprised.

If Dr Broad interjects, it is about priorities. If that is Labor's position, then they should place that dollar amount in their alternative Budget, if they are serious. Or are they just dancing a merry dance with the unions? You cannot have it both ways. Life is not like that. I agree with Dr Broad, it is about priorities. Priorities lead to choices, and choices have consequences. If your choice is to spend more money, that can be your legitimate choice but you cannot then complain that there is too much borrowing. You cannot have it both ways.

If you believe debt should be reduced, perhaps you should explain what services you would cut in health and education and housing, such as you did when you were last in office. What critical hospital infrastructure projects would you stop? You certainly did seem to do a good job of stopping the Royal Hobart Hospital when you were in office. What roads will not be improved or repaired? Or, if you would like to increase revenue, what taxes will you be increasing? Dr Broad is not able to have it both ways, and Ms White is not able to have it both ways. However, we should not be surprised by any of this.

Mr Winter's contribution was not much better. There was nothing new, nothing insightful provided by the shadow finance minister. He spent most of his time criticising the Leader of the Greens for actually producing an alternative budget. It was an unattractive display, to say the least. At least the Greens had a go. I do not agree with the priorities of the Greens and the choices they have made and some of the consequences they would have, but they have had the courage of their conviction to commit it to paper, to get their spreadsheet fired up and they have been prepared to lay it on the table of the House.

When Ms O'Connor said, by interjection, during Mr Winter's contribution, 'What would you do differently?', we still do not know. There are no answers from anyone in the Opposition. When that question is asked, they seem to be offended that they have been invited to produce an alternative to the Government's Budget. Despite being in Opposition for eight years now, they still have no plan and that has been the consistent feedback around the community, when the subject has come up.

Here is a wake-up call for the Opposition. Their financial management credibility is in tatters, because members opposite took promises to the last election - they have taken them from their website now - but those commitment or promises totalled \$3.4 billion - commitments that would have taken the state budget into much bigger deficit for much longer, and deeper into borrowings, which, as we know, they have been complaining about. Labor's election

promises would easily have cost the budget an extra \$2 billion. Where is their accountability for that? That was only 12 months ago.

Instead of committing it to an alternative budget, they have deleted it from their website. Do not forget that the same Opposition failed to provide any of its major election policy commitments to Treasury for costing. The Budget is over \$8 billion. At the election, which was only one year ago, Labor put in costings on policies worth \$7 million in a \$8 billion budget. They had \$3.4 billion of promises, but did not have them costed. They got \$7 million of policy commitments costed. Labor was also late to submit its fiscal strategy statement to Treasury, as required under the Charter of Budget Responsibility Act. I suspect that was deliberate. When they did submit the statement it was a big disappointment. It was a fiscal strategy statement that did not meet the requirements of the act.

I will say under the Labor Party the Greens deserve that much credit. Every year they turn up with an alternative budget, and they have far fewer resources than the official Opposition. They are prepared to be criticised for their alternative policy. Indeed, I think the Labor Party did have a crack at your alternative budget -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, it was great.

Mr FERGUSON - but if you are not prepared to have one of your own, you do not have the right to criticise the Greens'. The offence is apparent. They are aware of it. They are verbalising a fair bit, but if only they would actually do their job.

The Budget, I am proud to say, was a big effort. I acknowledge the previous Treasurer, Mr Gutwein, for his work. I certainly did not do this on my own. We worked as a team. I thank everybody who has contributed and supported us, in particular the phenomenal staff at Treasury and Finance, who have assisted me and in only seven weeks between my swearing-in and last week's Budget. I threw myself to the task and I had a lot of support to get a level of understanding and briefing on the Budget and the parameters that we needed to assess and make decisions on. I am very grateful for that. I am also very grateful to all my ministerial colleagues and members of the backbench who made different contributions to assist us in the lead up to last Thursday.

We are focused on what matters for Tasmania, and those priorities are health, education, housing, and building safe communities. We understand the pressure that Tasmanian households are feeling with their own budgets at this time. We have provided support, and we will continue to provide the support required, particularly for vulnerable Tasmanians. The Government intends to closely monitor retail electricity prices, taking note of the national challenge and the national pressures on wholesale electricity prices, which have been widely speculated upon. If those materialise it will affect the whole country, and we will expect the federal government to play a role in supporting households if required.

Our Tasmanian Government will also be closely monitoring this area, and as the advice is provided to us, we will give close attention to what role we may be able to play to support people on low or fixed incomes.

I am very pleased to assure the House - despite the rubbish media release from the Opposition yesterday - Tasmania's economy is in robust good health. Retail trade and good exports are at record highs. At 3.8 per cent our unemployment is the lowest level on record; it

should be celebrated. Treasury forecasts in the Budget that unemployment will continue to remain low, reflecting the confidence in the community that members opposite must protect, our economy is expected to grow by more than 3 per cent, 3 and three quarter per cent in 2021-22, well above the long-term average.

We will expect that to moderate. In 2022-23 it is forecast to grow by a further 2 and three quarter per cent with growth continuing to moderate, but still growing. When you have seen some of the numbers such as this week, it is wrong for the shadow treasurer to make claims such as he had and to grab those headlines he achieved today. All he has done is undermine the very good story in Tasmania. I can assure members of this House that business confidence is something we are all responsible for. It is hard fought for and easily destroyed and members opposite need to cease and desist. They have even been ridiculed by respected economists for their appalling statements of yesterday.

As our economy continues to strengthen, population growth is also anticipated to increase to around the long-term average, noting our migration patterns have been significantly disrupted in the last two years. Again it surprised me this morning, Dr Broad in one of his only two questions this week - not on the Budget, mind, but on the economy - would choose to bring up population, even though our population has grown to some 540 000 people.

Responsible budget management has been the hallmark of this Government and we will continue to manage in that way. We will return the budget to net operating balance surplus in 2023-24, our borrowing levels are very manageable, and we will maintain the lowest net debt of any jurisdiction in Australia. If you look at the data per capita, we are the second lowest in the country behind Queensland. As Treasury notes in the Budget papers, the net interest cost ratio will be 2 per cent by 2025-26. As Treasury also notes, a ratio of 2 per cent is considered low and indicates that estimated borrowing levels over the forward Estimates are manageable.

We are responsibly using the strength of our balance sheet to invest in intergenerational assets. I will point this out again, as I did this morning: when Labor and the Greens were in office over four years, their delivered investments in infrastructure was \$1.29 billion in four years. Compare that with the Budget and forward Estimates; we are nearly looking at that every year. That is a decision we have taken. It has been a prudent decision and the right one which was welcomed in Hobart, Launceston, and Burnie and I say that with confidence. Dr Broad will agree with me - he will not be allowed to say it - but he was there and also saw the very positive feedback. We did make that decision.

These will be assets with us for generations. We are spending a quarter of a billion dollars on new and expanded schools for our children, for our learners. I was a school teacher and I used to have to carry around a plug-in heater to my classrooms. Those days are gone. That is their workplace and they deserve to have modern, contemporary learning facilities.

In conclusion, we have a clear plan and the confidence that this provides to consumers and businesses alike is plain to see from all the major economic indicators. The Budget delivers on all our commitments that we have made. We are a Government, led by Premier Jeremy Rockliff, with integrity and heart; one that is courageous, accountable and delivers on its commitments. With that objective firmly established, this Budget delivers on the ongoing commitment to strengthen our beautiful state, a place which the most incredible people on earth call home and it is about strengthening and protecting their long-term interests.

I again thank members for their contributions around the Chamber to the first Appropriation Bill for the 2022-23 Budget.

Bill read the second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No.2) 2022 (No.24)

Second Reading

[4.25 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be read the second time.

This second appropriation bill recognises the unique role of parliament and independent statutory officers in Tasmania's parliamentary and democratic system. This bill appropriates \$43 203 000 from the public account in 2022-23. I commend the bill to the House.

[4.26 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, of course the Greens support Appropriation Bill (No.2). It provides an allocation of funding to integrity bodies - the bodies that are foundational to our democracy, including the House of Assembly and Legislative Council, the Integrity Commission, the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the office of the Governor, the office of the Ombudsman and the Tasmanian Audit Office. This appropriation bill, while it does not have the same level of funding attached to it, ensures that our integrity bodies and this parliament can continue to function.

I have a couple of questions for the Treasurer in relation to some of the allocations. One of these questions we have asked in previous years. It always stands out that the appropriation to the House of Assembly in section 5 of the bill of \$3.557 million is significantly lower than the appropriation to the Legislative Council, which is \$4.331 million. This House, our Chamber, has 25 members. The Legislative Council has 15 members and yet, for some reason, costs around \$800 000 more to run. Perhaps, the Treasurer could enlighten the House as to what those extra costs incurred by the Council are and why there is such a significant difference between the allocations to the two Houses, particularly given there are 10 less elected representatives in the other place.

I also acknowledge the funding allocated to the Integrity Commission of \$3.559 million and -

Ms Archer - It is an increase.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I understand that, it is an increase and that is very good. I want to raise the issue raised in the commission of inquiry, which is the fact that in 13 years of operation Tasmania's Integrity Commission has not held a public hearing. This is in contrast to integrity bodies, whether they are the Crime and Misconduct Commission, or the ICAC in New South Wales, in other states and territories who understand in order for justice to be done it has to be seen to be done in some cases and obviously, that is not always going to be appropriate.

It is very difficult to understand and not just from the Greens' point of view, but other advocates for stronger democracy, greater transparency and integrity in government, continue to ask that question about why it is the Integrity Commission seems so hesitant to hold a public hearing. I do not buy the excuse of the former premier, Mr Gutwein, that it is because there is no corruption in Tasmania. No one is thinking that, Mr Deputy Speaker, really thinking about it, and believing that to be true. That would mean we are very different in governance and structure and character from other Australian jurisdictions where corrupt conduct has been revealed, and public officers or elected officials have been held to account and, in some cases have served time, as a result of the work of their integrity bodies in exposing corruption within government agencies and other public entities.

Earlier today I was looking at the Integrity Commission's website as I am preparing some correspondence to send to them, and it struck me again that the board of the Integrity Commission is all male; that the Chief Commissioner, Mr Greg Melick AC, obviously is a male and the CEO Michael Easton is also a bloke. I think this is problematic. In order to have organisations, whether they be in the public or private sector, make good decisions that are nuanced and brave, you need to have a good gender mix in those organisations. We will continue to argue that there needs to be more gender diversity on Tasmania's Integrity Commission.

I can flag that because the correspondence we are preparing to write to the Integrity Commission relates to the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Bill 2022 and the Electoral Matters (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2022 which were tabled in the House of Assembly this week. We have noted with some disappointment that the Integrity Commission did not make a submission to the draft bills, which mirror almost exactly the legislation that was tabled this week.

The Greens did make a submission, along with a number of other stakeholders. Our proposals to strengthen the donations disclosure framework in Tasmania were thoroughly ignored as were the proposals put forward by other stakeholders who are determined to see more transparency, integrity and good governance in Tasmania. We are asking the Integrity Commission why they did not make a submission to the Government's process on donations disclosure reform.

We welcome the Integrity Commission examining lobbying oversight but we are baffled as to why the commission would look to advocate for reforms to lobbying oversight but remains silent on the Electoral Act Review, which involves the matters of how much lobbyists can pay to political parties during election campaigns and the rules of transparency that are applied to these donations. The commission's research report on lobbying states: 'It is widely acknowledged that political donations have the potential to exert improper influence or to facilitate improper access'.

We, as a party, one that advocated fiercely for an integrity commission before it was established, and as a newly elected MP, I made a submission to the committee that was established by the parliament to examine the need for and what the structure might be of an integrity commission, would like to understand why the commission has chosen to talk about lobbying but has not provided any guidance to government, made a submission or indeed any comment at all on the need for electoral reform in Tasmania and what best practice might look like.

The Integrity Commission did not properly examine the 2018 state election campaign, which was bankrolled by the gambling industry. The commission owes Tasmanians an explanation for not participating in the consultation process that went on for four years. There were plenty of opportunities for the Integrity Commission to have a say here and they chose, for some reason, not to. As a taxpayer-funded body, tasked with ensuring integrity in government, we think they owe the people of Tasmania an explanation. If the Integrity Commission had weighed in at any time in the past four years on the matter of donations reform, electoral expenditure, how you get transparency around the money that sloshes around during election campaigns that might have helped the Government to deliver a stronger piece of legislation.

We will be sending that correspondence off to the commission this afternoon and very much look forward to the response because we are baffled. We are disappointed and, frankly, we feel that the parliament and the people of Tasmania have been let down by the Integrity Commission's failure to participate in this debate over the legislation that was tabled in here this week.

With those few words, I can indicate that of course we will support Appropriation Bill (No. 2) of 2022.

[4.35 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to give a very short contribution on the Appropriation Bill (No. 2). As the Leader of the Greens has stated, in a fashion, this is the price we pay for democracy and monitoring and integrity. The appropriation deals specifically with the House of Assembly, the Integrity Commission, the Legislative Council, Legislature-General, important functions like the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Governor, the office of the Ombudsman and the Tasmanian Audit Office.

It was good to see that there have been some increases in these areas, especially in the Audit Office that we deal with as part of the Public Accounts Committee. I am interested to hear why the appropriation for the House of Assembly is less than the Legislative Council. I am not sure why that would be the case - whether some of the costs of something else allocated to the Legislative Council instead of us, I am not sure. This is a small amount of money to guarantee democracy and to help provide oversight and integrity. We will be supporting it.

[4.37 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Ms O'Connor, I do not have the answers that you seek. I will take them on notice and I will ensure that you are provided with that advice. I have asked for the advice as to the differential between House of Assembly and Legislative Council. The only update I am able to provide to the House immediately is that it is consistent with current operational expenditure. However, I accept the equality of the Houses' argument from the outset. I note the difference in membership might have suggested that the House of Assembly would in fact cost more given that we have 25 members to their 15.

Dr Broad - Could it possibly be because the ministers are covered by DPAC or something?

Mr FERGUSON - I do not believe that is the case. I believe that ministers are paid out of the House of Assembly budget. It is a very good question. The Estimates process will

provide the detailed way of exploring those but I will not make you wait until Estimates. I will find that information and write to you outside of the Chamber, if that is agreeable.

Ms O'Connor - Yes.

Mr FERGUSON - In relation to the Integrity Commission, I recommend you raise those questions when the opportunity presents at the Estimates committee next week.

I do acknowledge and thank Ms O'Connor and Dr Broad in relation to their comments generally. The second budget bill is always uncontroversial as necessarily is the case. You will note that a number of integrity bodies have received a significant increase in funding to allow them as, in the case of the Integrity Commission, to provide further resources for more capability in educative space. The Ombudsman's Office, which includes a range of services under its umbrella - Health Complaints Commissioner, the Ombudsman themselves and Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services - has been provided with additional resources to allow it to better meet the needs of the community through various appeal mechanisms that are considered there and the investigations that the office provides.

I thank members for their contributions and their support for the Appropriation Bill (No. 2).

Bill read for the second time.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Joint Sessional Gender and Equality Committee - Establishment

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read:

Mr Speaker,

The Legislative Council having this day agreed to the following Resolution now transmits the same to the House of Assembly and to request its concurrence therein -

Resolved - That a Joint Sessional Gender and Equality Committee be appointed with the power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of either House and with leave to adjourn from place to place to inquire into and report upon -

- (1) (a) Any Bill referred to it by either House in order to examine gender and equality impacts and any such Bill so referred shall be reported upon within 10 sitting days of its referral by report back to the referring House;
- (b) Any matter related to gender and equality referred to it by either House; and

- (c) Any matter related to gender and equality, initiated by its own motions; and Uncorrected Proof
- (2) That Notice of any own motion Inquiry shall be reported to both Houses within two (2) sitting days of the Committee's Resolution; and
- (3) That the number of Members to serve on the said Committee on the part of the Legislative Council be four.

Signed C.M. FARRELL, President.

Legislative Council, 2 June 2022.

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

That the message be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Sober Driver Program

[4.42 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon to highlight the hard work of our Community Corrections staff in helping to make our roads a safer place through the delivery of our Sober Driver Program. This is particularly important following Road Safety Week recently.

The Sober Driver Program is an educational and skills-based group program designed for repeat drink driving offenders who are over the age of 18, have been convicted of two or more drink driving offences in a five-year period, are subject to a community-based sentencing order and are directed to attend the program either as a condition of their sentencing order or by their supervising probation officer.

As Attorney-General and Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, I am and always have been, strongly committed to reducing the rates of reoffending by providing those who offend with opportunities for rehabilitation. Our Community Corrections area is no different. It is an area that is often overlooked, but most of our offending behaviour and sentencing falls under the jurisdiction or realm of our Community Corrections system and our hardworking Community Corrections staff. I like to give them a shout out at every opportunity.

Each program that I have referred to is conducted by two training facilitators and addresses issues such as the consequences of drink driving on the person offending and others, the demands of safe driving, the effects of alcohol on driving, managing drinking situations to avoid the risk of driving and relapse prevention and stress management. The program includes 18 hours of face-to-face sessions in a group environment as well as individual homework tasks between sessions.

Homework tasks include the completion of a drinking diary that helps participants to understand any patterns in their drinking behaviour in order to better prepare and plan for their transport options when they are drinking. Program participants are also provided a program workbook which contains - amongst other things - information in relation to safe drinking levels.

The Sober Driver Program has a flexible delivery model to maximise a participant's ability to attend. Sessions typically run over a six-week period. However, there is a three-week condensed program available for those who live in remote rural areas and have limited access to transport, or those whose employment would be significantly impacted by attendance at the longer program.

Studies conducted in New South Wales found that offenders who completed this program are over 40 per cent less likely to reoffend within two years of completion than similar offenders who received sanctions alone. Since its introduction in Tasmania, 148 individual programs have been delivered, and as of 31 March 2022, a total of 1337 offenders have graduated from our program. This program has an exceptionally high completion rate, with 81 per cent of offenders who have commenced the program going on to complete it.

Again, I thank the dedicated staff at Community Corrections who work tirelessly to deliver the Sober Driver Program, and many other programs, often with little public recognition, as well as other criminogenic programs that they deliver that support the rehabilitation of offenders and reduce future reoffending.

HIV Survivors Awareness Day

[4.46 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Sunday 5 June is International HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness day. It is an annual event to honour people who have been living with HIV/AIDS since the onset of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, when I might note, quite of a few of the Gen Xers in here were growing up and going out into the world. We remember the terrifying spectre of the 'grim reaper'.

Tragically, HIV/AIDS claimed millions of lives across the globe. Since 1981, according to the United Nations AIDS agency, 78 million were infected and an estimated 39 million have died of AIDS-related illnesses, and it is not over. In 2020, according to UNAIDS, 1.5 million people became newly infected and 680 000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses.

Today, many people in our community are long-term survivors. Around the world, 37.7 million people live with HIV, and 1.7 million of them are children. The 2022 theme of HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day is, Mobilize to Thrive: Prioritize Quality of Life. It is a call to action to prioritise and improve the quality of life for long-term survivors and older adults with HIV. There are a number of these people in Tasmania, who I have had the privilege to meet.

HIV Long-Term Survivors Day is an opportunity to raise awareness that leads to action and this is from survivors themselves. I am reading this statement:

We do not have the luxury of time to wait for the Government to do the right thing. We are tired, we are old, but we can still kick arse. The selection of June 5 for this annual observance coincides with the anniversary of the first official reporting of what became known as the AIDS epidemic on June 5 1981, when the Centre for Disease Control in the US first reported on five cases of a mysterious disease affecting young gay men. June 5 1981 is considered the start of the AIDS pandemic.

Today, HIV Long-Term Survivors represent a diverse group of people, diagnosed with HIV before the advent of highly active antiretroviral therapy in 1986. We make up about 25 per cent of all people living with HIV and AIDS: 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the US alone. That makes about 300 000 long-term survivors, defined as individuals who acquired HIV before 1986 and the introduction of the retroviral therapy.

Often overlooked, long-term survivors include people born with HIV or who acquired the virus as babies and are now in their thirties and forties. There are also people who are living with HIV and AIDS for more than a quarter of a century.

We are developing a social media campaign and tangible calls to action to improve the quality of our lives. It is up to us, they say, to set our action plan, addressing the present-day and future needs, issues and challenges facing people living longest with HIV/AIDS.

Long-Term Survivors Day is not a time to look back at our traumatic pasts. Our goal over the coming months is for you to set our agendas and priorities for moving forward and to take action to make changes. People living with HIV/AIDS deserve to age with dignity and some priorities that have been listed, making the quality of life for long-term survivors and older adults ageing with HIV and AIDS a true priority. Demanding universal treatment access to help end the HIV epidemic is the message of undetectable, untransmutable, prioritised, culturally-aware mental health care and overcome the challenges of poverty and economics insecurity to fight discrimination and invisibility which discriminates against older adults with HIV and AIDS. It is called ageism and we will not condone it.

A report by the national association of people living with HIV Australia, HIV and Ageing in Australia - The New Frontier, which was put out in April 2019 - finds that the vulnerability of long-term survivors, people with a longer duration of HIV infection constitute the most vulnerable sub-group among all people living with HIV who are ageing.

A study carried out by Guaraldi et al, in 2015 found that the prevalence of co-morbidities and age-related chronic diseases was significantly higher amongst HIV positive groups compared to the general population: amongst HIV positive groups, duration of HIV infection was associated with an increased risk of multi-morbidity. Put differently, the time with HIV infection is a greater contributor to morbidity and lower quality of life than chronological age.

Increased time, living with chronic disease, health and social implications, including younger age of HIV diagnosis, in effects of prolonged HIV treatment, or the effected longer

time with untreated HIV infection. A study by Date in 2018, writes that many of the longest-term survivors from the pre-retroviral therapy era continue to be impacted by the legacy of the early years of the epidemic. She suggested a diagnosis of complex post-traumatic stress or even a distinct aid survivor syndrome may be more accurate than that of a post-traumatic stress disorder in accounting for the psychological and psychiatric symptoms seen in some long-term survivors.

I acknowledge the great work of the organisation known as Positive Lives Tasmania which is a community organisation established to provide advocacy, support and connections for long-term survivors of HIV in Tasmania. I know, for members, that organisation is doing outstanding work. On behalf of the Greens, I acknowledge the lives, the struggles and the courage of long-term survivors of HIV and will mark Tasmania's first celebration of HIV Long Term Survivor's Day this coming Sunday.

Technology Sector

[4.52 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Science and Technology) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight as Minister for Science and Technology to talk very briefly, but in glowing terms of our fantastic technology sector and all those who work in it. We know the value of investing in science and technology and recognise that all service-delivery is now underpinned by technology. Of course, we understand the importance of ensuring technology is up to date and provides benefit to the Tasmanian community.

Never have we seen this more so than during the pandemic times when we flexed to a much more digitalised economy from payment of funds through to shopping, to delivery of goods, everything became very much about digital technology.

I would like to briefly reflect on that and recognise the work the tech sector, our IT professionals and everybody did during that time was really quite remarkable. It took us a step change in capacity and how we engaged with each other as we needed to, whilst we were either isolated or working remotely, or living remotely. In Tasmania, we know that we did not do it as hard as other states and territories with those long lock-downs. Certainly, I would like to commend our tech sector workforce for what they do.

Our Government has invested a total of \$287.2 million in ICT over the forward Estimates. It is quite a big and substantive investment. Those investments, which are new and ongoing include \$150 million to commence a 10-year Digital Health Transformation strategy; \$46.1 million for Project Unify, which is replacing a number of disconnected and ageing ICT systems that support policing operations; \$4.3 million over four years to begin development to our digital services Tasmania portal, one of my favourites; \$21.6 million for the modernisation of health human resource systems, a very important project; \$4.9 million over four years for a whole-of-government security uplift program.

Investing in forward-looking research and development and entrepreneurship can generate new industry and boundless new opportunities. It is important that we recognise the role our government workforce plays in this, being such a large employer of tech and IT professionals, and that many in the sector move in and out of these roles and are connected in an ecosystem in the tech sector.

One of the areas we are very focused on, a passion project of mine, is the space domain. Our Government recognises the incredible opportunity offered to our innovative Tasmanian businesses by the space industry. This industry is expected to grow to \$12 billion and create 20 000 jobs across Australia by 2030. By keeping our eyes on that horizon, we can see the opportunity that growing our space sector presents to our state through future economic growth, attraction of STEM skills, workforce development, investment infrastructure and the opportunities offered through collaboration between research, science, innovation, commercialisation and the entrepreneurship of industry.

We have already seen the benefit from the Team Tasmania MOU between our wonderful University of Tasmania, particularly the school of astrophysics and engineering, the Tasmanian Government and Hensoldt. Hensoldt's Hobart facility will be a leading centre for Australia's space-to-moon awareness capability. It is expected to stimulate local innovation and create new opportunities for both defence industries and civil space applications. It is all about telecommunications, communications and telemetry.

The facility currently employs 10 FTEs with plans to double this by the end of the year. In this Budget we have allocated \$500 000 to the Space Technology Seed Fund to support Tasmanian businesses to extend, adapt or develop products or services for the space economy. We are talking R&D, we are talking small businesses and we are talking about the tech sector, engineering, science R&D that can be engaged in the spend now happening in this new domain. Our tech and advanced manufacturing sectors are global leaders. We want them to have access to a greater diversity of markets and we are actively looking for those all the time.

The Space Technology Seed Fund will allow businesses to break into the space sector and grow Tasmania's market share of space sector investment. I know it has been very popular and I am looking forward to seeing what the outcomes of that grant program are. The first round of this program closed on 31 May with eight applications received. I have no doubt they will be of a very high quality and I am looking forward to seeing the innovation, the R&D, the commercialisation coming out of Tasmania in this area.

Since signing a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Space Agency in 2019, our industry and capabilities have continued to grow, from space domain awareness through to space medicine. We have the hyper- and hypobaric chamber at the Royal Hobart Hospital. It is currently the only one in the southern hemisphere. It is in high demand and we are fortunate to have it. The Treasurer, the former minister for space and technology, invested in that asset. It gives us a strategic advantage and it is good for health. I am speaking in very positive terms about that asset.

I look forward to learning of the details of the successful applicants of our Space Technology Seed Fund and the innovative projects that will take our Tasmanian space industry to new heights.

It was on my first day back in parliament a few years ago when Will Hodgman was about to sign the memorandum of understanding with the space agency and in a very kind gesture, he included me in that day. I remember that very fondly and I am very pleased that we did that because it has kickstarted an entire new industry.

Time expired.

Levendale - Correspondence from Mr Joe Birch

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I have recently received correspondence from a Mr Joe Samuel Birch of Levendale, who wrote to various members of parliament to raise his experiences as a young person growing up in Levendale.

He has asked that I read his letter into the *Hansard* this evening. It is important for us to always remember that our job is to represent our communities and his letter raised lots of interesting issues. He is a young man. He is 16 years old and so, with your indulgence, I would like to read this into the *Hansard*:

Dear Madam

My name is Joe. I am 16 years old and I live in the rural town of Levendale, Tasmania. I live with my Dad and my siblings on a small hobby farm of around 75 acres. We run a few cows and some chickens on our farm and we often sell swedes and potatoes.

In the past years I have had intensive commitment to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's Youth Ambassador Program as a youth ambassador. I am not currently heavily involved due to just starting a full-time traineeship as a trainee administration clerk at the local conveyancing firm in Sorell and I am studying Certificate III in Business.

I have a passion for speaking out on issues that impact citizens of our communities, including young people. I write this letter because I want to advocate for the small country town that I live in. I want a better and brighter future for our Levendale.

Levendale is a small rural town in the Southern Midlands municipality with a population of over 200 people and there are around 40 families in the area. Levendale is home to some deep history from the olden days gone by. Levendale used to have a thriving sense of community up until the Levendale Primary School closed in 2013. Levendale Community Centre, formerly Levendale Primary School, did run Edmund Rice camps utilising the space but now the site is not used and is left to deteriorate. The Levendale site hosts huge potential with an office, fully fitted kitchen, classrooms and amenities. It could become an amazing community hub.

We also have the Levendale Community Hall which is used on a regular basis for community groups and luncheons. I also feel that the hall needs upgrading and there are some young people on the committee. Because we are not in Oatlands, Kempton or Bagdad, I feel the council really aren't interested in investing for Levendale. Levendale has never even had mobile coverage in the area, which means our mobile phones do not work in the area and are unreliable at best. I feel it is absolutely appalling that in the 21st Century not all parts of Tasmania have reliable and efficient telecommunications. We can only rely on landline phones in the area, which even sometimes do not work as they have outages which can sometimes go for days as the exchanges are well and truly out of date and need upgrading.

Back in November 2021, I wrote a letter to Telstra communications, which I quote some of below:

'I decided to write to Telstra after all my family received text messages from Telstra saying that work crews were going to be updating a Telstra communications tower on Mt Rumney in Tasmania. I immediately thought it's all right for you to upgrade a tower at Mt Rumney but we really do need one that can provide Levendale and surrounding areas with mobile coverage.

'My dad, Rick Birch, is a brigade chief for the Runnymede Fire Brigade and he knows all the areas around that are suitable for communication towers to go. One of the areas that would be an amazing spot and geographic location to build a mobile phone tower would be Mt Hobbs, Tasmania, which is not far away from us. On Mt Hobbs are the fire tower and several other communication towers.

'To give you an idea of what Mt Hobbs is, it has an elevation of 748 metres and is situated southeast of Woodsdale and southwest of Joe's Hill. Putting a mobile phone tower on Mt Hobbs would be such an amazing and innovative idea to give our area a much-needed mobile coverage as in our area we can only rely on landline phones and some of the time the landline service crashes and we are left with no ways of communication. -

Mr Barnett - I have been up the fire tower at Mt Hobbs and I have banged my head.

Ms BUTLER - I will let Mr Birch know.

'Communication is important for my family as myself and siblings have asthma, so if we turn ill we have no way of communicating help. We are listed as "medical priority". We have occasionally lost landline services for around a week and we have had several conversations with Telstra about the need for mobile service and a tower on Mt Hobbs. We have also had several occasions where we have to reach out to local members of parliament to get some advocacy. I cannot understand why, in the twenty-first century, we don't have reliable forms of communication in Levendale and surrounding areas, considering that the Hobart CBD is only 50 minutes' drive from Levendale.

In the area, we have unreliable internet services and have to rely on satellite, and none of the providers provide unlimited internet coverage in the area, so therefore we cannot watch videos too much and we cannot all be on our devices at once. We deserve to have reliable phone and internet coverage like other locations around Tasmania.

In our part of Levendale, we also have no mail delivery so therefore we must rely on getting our mail at the Sorell Post Office every day. Runnymede gets mail delivery and Runnymede is only 10 minutes away from Levendale. Levendale isn't serviced for deliveries of essentials so therefore we cannot get groceries delivered. When people come to the area, they don't even know where it is and they use their GPS which takes them further up the road as

they do not work because there is no mobile coverage. We also have no public transport in the area which would be awesome if we had it.

Though Levendale may not be a big bustling area like Sorell, we deserve to be treated as if we are in the twenty-first century, not back in the olden days. We deserve all the necessities that all the other parts of Tasmania get. I honestly would support and happy to see Levendale, Woodsdale and Runnymede become part of the part of the Sorell Council division as I feel we would get more done in the area with the Federal election days away in Australia.

I would love to be able to have my say on matters that impact rural and regional Tasmanian communities like Levendale, but because the legal voting age is 18, being under 18 am unable to vote. I am a big believer on the voting age being lowered to 16.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Nature Conservation Act 2002 - Proclamation on New Reserve

[5.06 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens were pleased to hear this morning that the Minister for Parks, Mrs Petrusma, made an announcement when she tabled a proclamation under the Nature Conservation Act 2002 to proclaim a new reserve status of 25 400 hectares of so-called future production forests inside the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). This is unfinished business, a decade after the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement was signed and the TWWHA was extended under the Labor-Greens government as the result of the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement. The Liberals have formally protected those threatened forests inside the TWWHA boundary.

Imagine our surprise when we heard comments from Labor's Dr Broad in the Chamber, protesting, scoffing, scorning, cat-calling to the minister for this proclamation. What a shock to see his press release which he hastily put out shortly afterwards. I will read bits, because people should know what Dr Broad has said. He said -

The Minister for Parks has today effectively locked up 22 500 hectares of the Liberals so-called 'wood bank'. That has left the Liberals no more lock ups commitment: a smouldering wreck as a big chunk of the Future Potential Production Forests become reserves, conservation areas and national parks.

Shock! He said -

This is rank hypocrisy by a government that has campaigned over three elections now on a 'no more lock ups' commitment only to now try to sneak it in to Parliament without debate or consultation with the timber industry.

Yes, he would not want us to talk to anybody else except the timber industry about protecting reserve status forests that are now in the Wilderness World Heritage Area. He is priming the bulldozers to go in there, because what he says is-

This lock up is happening before the Rockliff-Ferguson Government completes its sustainable wood supply assessment due this year.

Dr Broad is outraged that more forests will not be bulldozed. He wants the bulldozers, essentially, to be able to go into the Wilderness World Heritage Area. This is a dangerous man who does not understand that the climate is heating, and we have a solemn duty to young people to do everything we can to protect carbon stores. This is a member of the Labor Party which in this recent federal election lost ground, had a swing against them in Tasmania - the only state in Australia that Labor had a swing against them. They want to have a good, hard look at themselves.

Why is that? I will tell you why. It is because they are so out of touch with young Tasmanians. Climate deniers, like Dr Broad -

Mr Winter - He is not a climate denier.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, he is.

Mr Winter - He is not a climate denier.

Dr WOODRUFF - He would actually sanction -

Ms O'Connor - He absolutely is.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, he is. He would actually sanction taking bulldozers into the Wilderness World Heritage Area, he is outraged that we are protecting forests, and at time of galloping, accelerating climate change, he would prefer that instead we just mowed down every stick of wood that we can see.

Dr Bob Brown put out a statement and made the very good point that the premiership of Paul Lennon was the last time that a shadow treasurer like Dr Broad catapulted past the Liberals; he has gone further right, and is taking the Labor Party in Tasmania further to the right in advocating forest destruction. Where is the Leader of the Opposition? Where is she? Why is she allowing rogue statements from a member of her PLP, instead of calling him into line? She ought to be able to see that what Tasmanians want is an opposition with a vision for the future that first of all, understands and commits to urgent reduction of carbon emissions.

Why can our children even think of voting for a party which is doing nothing to turn back emissions in Tasmania; which is actually trying to accelerate the destruction of biodiversity; trying to speed up the emissions of carbon that has been stored in the ground, sometimes, for thousands of years. We would really like to understand what is going on in the Labor Party, because Tasmanians deserve to have an opposition which is really going to scrutinise the government on the issues that matter to Tasmanians. They are not showing any difference between the Government on salmon farms, on mining, on climate action, on planning schemes, forestry, and especially on anti-protest legislation. They caved on anti-protest legislation.

The Leader of the Opposition started this when she backed down on the anti-gambling laws. It is because of the repeated failure of Labor in Tasmania to stand for anything except for trying to out-extreme the Liberals. This is a pathway to doom for the Labor Party. Tasmanians deserve to have an opposition that has something to give us, some vision, a vision

that is positive for young people, instead of destroying everything, burning everything, and heating the planet.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Electricity Prices - Liberal Election Promise

[5.13 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I would love to get into that, but I have something else more important to say than that garbage.

I stood up today to talk about the abandonment of the Government's - the Government we are here to scrutinise - now broken promise from their policy from 2018 of the lowest regulated electricity prices in the nation. This is a policy that was taken to the Tasmanian people with a promise that the Tasmanian Liberals and the Liberal Government would de-link - break the link - with the mainland when it came to the national electricity market.

Today during question time, it took two questions for us to get the answer that industry has been seeking for my entire time as shadow energy minister; is the Government going to continue on with its promise to de-link Tasmania from the national electricity market? That is the question they have been asking me, and I understand they have been asking the minister for Energy as well.

Today, it was not announced that the Government is dropping the policy. Rather, it was admitted - under heavy questioning from the leader of the Labor Party, Rebecca White - that because of considerations around the Marinus project, the Government is no longer proceeding with its stated policy to de-link Tasmania.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to read from that policy document. It says:

As part of our Tasmania First energy policy, we are committed to delivering secure and reliable electricity supply for lower power prices. We have already set a target to have the lowest regulated electricity prices by 2022.

It goes on to say:

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal government will undertake a NEM exit to set wholesale contract prices based on the Tasmanian system cost, which will lower current wholesale contract prices. This will de-link the prices Tasmanian customers get from the volatile Victorian market, and enable us to target the lowest prices in the country by 2022 by setting them ourselves.

That was the promise to the Tasmanian people and to Tasmanian industry. That is the promise that they had abandoned today. They have broken their promise, not just to Tasmanian households, but to Tasmanian employers and Tasmanian workers: workers at Bell Bay who produce such a huge amount of Tasmania's exports that the minister loves to talk about. These are critical jobs and a critical industry that has been calling for this policy, that was the driver behind the policy, and has provided submissions about this.

On 8 April 2019, the Tasmanian Minerals Manufacturing and Energy Council put a submission to the Department of Treasury and Finance, with feedback on the Energy Market - Consulting Associates Options Paper, Phase 2 review of the Tasmanian wholesale electricity market regulatory price and framework. I will read an extract from that. I think they are referring to is the gradual claw back from the policy that was announced a year before. It says:

The introductory comments in both this paper and the prior paper were quite explicit from the start. This project was about identifying mechanisms which de-linked the Tasmanian wholesale price from the Victorian price and drove a price structure based on Tasmanian systems costs. See these sample quotes ...

It quotes from this document:

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal government will undertake a NEM exit, and set wholesale contract prices based on the Tasmanian system cost.

It goes on:

TMEC is also concerned that any analysis of potential impacts of the potential additional generation and transmission capacity to bolster the NEM have been overlooked in the analysis.

They called it out that they were walking away from their policy back then, and it has taken until today, 2022, for them to finally admit that they have dropped their energy policy. Just like the last Liberal Coalition Government in Canberra, that had no energy policy for nine years, this Government now has no-energy policy at all. We are about to enter a national energy crisis, and this Government's energy policy is now in tatters. It does not exist anymore. It was dropped this morning. The Premier finally admitted something that the Minister for Energy would not answer at Estimates last year. I specifically asked him about this policy - are you going ahead with the de-linking?

The minister did not seem to know much about it. He did not admit that he was dropping the policy, or the policy had been dropped. It may be at that stage that the former premier, Mr Gutwein, was running the energy policy, I am not sure, but that is the history of this. We are now in a situation where we do not know what the Liberal Government's energy policy is - apart from the fact that they will do anything to build project Marinus even if it means selling out Tasmanian industrial employers, selling out Tasmanian households. They will do anything for this Marinus project. The Marinus project that remains unfunded after six years of negotiations with the former coalition Government. Marinus is still unfunded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, \$3.5 billion-worth of who knows. Who knows where the money is going to come from for this project? Who on earth spends six years campaigning for a project without the ability to pay for it? Hundreds of millions of dollars now, either spent or committed to a project with not a cent available to spend on it. The only thing this minister cares about is building project Marinus. He will sell out anyone else. This is a policy -

Mr Barnett - Do you support or oppose Marinus Link?

Mr WINTER - This is the policy.

Mr Barnett - Yes or no? Support or oppose?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - In a media release by Guy Barnett, minister for Energy on 4 February 2018 it says that prices:

... will drop by up to 10 per cent under a re-elected majority Liberal government as part of our plan to achieve the lowest power prices by 2022.

They have now dropped the policy.

Mr Barnett - You don't say. You don't have a position.

Mr WINTER - I will tell you who does not have a position: it is the Energy minister of Tasmania who now has no policy, no idea and no money for his pet projects.

Royal Flying Doctor Service Day

[5.20 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Australia's money may not be the subject of too much speculation amongst the general public, but I rise tonight to speak about the man on our \$20 note and the amazing service he founded in 1928, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). It was established on 17 May 1928 by the Reverend John Flynn, in an extraordinary act of love and compassion for people who live in the most remote parts of our country, including in Tasmania.

The aerial medical service was inspired by the tragic circumstances of a Kimberley stockman, a man in Halls Creek by the name of Jimmy Darcy whose horse fell in a stampede of cattle. In an episode which gripped the imagination of what was then a very young country, his life at the time was saved by the Postmaster-General of Halls Creek using Morse code, a pen knife and a whole heap of morphine.

Sadly, Jimmy Darcy was to die later of malaria, but the episode which so gripped the imagination of the young country of Australia reached the ears of the Reverend John Flynn, who set about from there, raising a substantial amount of funds to make sure that people right around the country, and particularly in those remote areas, would have access to the best care that could possibly be provided. He was also the founder of the Inland Mission and left a lasting legacy.

I rise tonight to celebrate Royal Flying Doctor Service Day and encourage those who want to raise money for this amazing organisation which does so much work in our community. The Royal Flying Doctor Service has put out a call for a big birthday bash, for which details can be found online but can be held between Royal Flying Doctor Day, which is 17 May, right up to 30 June, which is the end of the financial year. It is a fantastic way to raise some money right at the end of tax time.

The RFDS operates seven entities around Australia: Central Operations, Queensland Section, South Eastern Section, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Operations. There are 23 air

bases including the base at Launceston, where I was only about a month ago. There are 79 different planes including the workhorse of the RFDS, the Pilatus PC-12.

In 2021, one of the pandemic years, 112 000 Australians were flown using the RFDS with 337 total patient contacts made through RFDS clinics, aero-medical transport and telehealth consultations. Things have come a long way from the Morse code back in Jimmy Darcy's day, but the tools that we use are still very much the same - getting the expertise and the specialist knowledge out into the remote communities where people are working so hard to build this country.

It is Australia's most trusted charity. I encourage people to step up and take the opportunity. I spoke about this in my inaugural speech in this place. I would not be here were it not for the RFDS because my mum, as a remote area nurse, was looking for some help from people at the pub in a remote Northern Territory town called Borroloola. My dad set up a whole heap of dolphin torches so that they could land the plane on the Borroloola airstrip at night. As things do in the bush, one thing eventually led to another.

It is not only my existence - I will not go into any more detail on me. When we were little kids growing up in Aboriginal communities north of Broome in the remote Kimberley region, one of my little brothers - and his name is Darcy - suffered a life-threatening medical emergency at birth and, in that very remote place, was airlifted by the RFDS to Darwin on the day he was born. They were able to save his life breathing with a bag so that, as a little baby, he could survive.

I was in the Northern Territory and went to the Royal Flying Doctor Service Museum on the wharf in Darwin. To see those little cribs these little babies are transported in, all those many miles with worried parents and with the finest care, is really an inspiring thing.

Here in Tasmania, the RFDS has done so much good work. It has operated permanently out of Launceston Airport since 1998. It operates the busiest plane of all RFDS fleets, a Beechcraft King Air, with seven pilots and Ambulance Tasmania paramedics. I know John Kirwan, the CEO of RFDS Tasmania. He does such fantastic work and he is a real evangelist for the amazing service they provide around our community - a total of nearly 2000 flights in 2020-21, including to King island, Strahan, Burnie, Wynyard, Devonport, Hobart and Launceston. They offer aeromedical support.

They also offer mobile dentists, health and wellbeing programs and health education. In this year's Budget there is substantial funding to increase that dental service which is doing so much good, particularly around some of the remote parts of my electorate, including the west coast and King Island. They also offer primary health care networks and service areas like the west coast. They provide 15 000 free dental treatments every year and they also offer scholarships and training programs for medical, nursing and dental students in Tasmania so that we can encourage the next generation to provide the finest care in the furthest corner.

I say thank you to the RFDS. I hope they have a very happy birthday and that a lot of money can be raised to look after our rural and remote Australians.

Legislative Council and House of Assembly - Budget Allocations
Comments made by Member for Bass, Ms Finlay

[5.27 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. I wish to add to the earlier discussion about the difference in funding provisions for the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly.

I am pleased to inform the House that the reason for the difference is that historically, or at least in recent history, the Legislative Council budget provides for its own electorate offices - that is, the physical offices around the state supporting MLCs - and also the provision of funding for their staff members, the electorate officers. That is resourced through the Legislative Council whereas, for the House of Assembly members, those resources are funded through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Also, briefly, in relation to an unfortunate matter that was raised by the member for Bass, Ms Finlay, during the matter of public importance. It ought to be Ms Finlay who is in here correcting the record but because of her inappropriate characterisation of a statement that I made on Friday 25 February where I agreed to appear in a video with the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, the excellent Mr Bruce Billson, and also Ms Finlay. We talked up supporting small business, and despite my initial hesitation about joining Ms Finlay for a video, which now has been borne out because it has been misrepresented, for the record I will inform the House that in that video I said in relation to the small-business-friendly council's initiative:

We support the initiative. It's a great idea, and we will be taking this up with our small business minister. It's important that small businesses are given very careful treatment and support before, during and after an emergency.

I wrote to the following small business minister because there were two reshuffles and I advised Ms Ogilvie of this conversation and an initiative that I had only just been informed about, which is not for the state Government to implement but for councils. I wrote to Ms Ogilvie and I am further advised through the day that Ms Ogilvie is currently engaged with a view to catch up in person in coming weeks with Mr Billson when he is visiting Tasmania.

Unfortunately, I will now be very reluctant to appear in videos with the member for Bass, Ms Finlay.

Electricity Price Capping
Building and Construction Sector - Tribute

[5.30 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak tonight in support of the building construction industry and some of the standouts in that industry. Before doing so, just to respond to member for Franklin, Mr Winter, who made some very curious remarks about the cost of living and electricity prices and the Government's policy to keep downward pressure on electricity prices.

I want to make it very clear that our primary focus is and always has been on putting downward pressure on electricity prices, and we have succeeded. I will speak more about that shortly. In 2018, following an election commitment, and during a period of volatile mainland energy prices, the Government fulfilled its promise and effectively de-linked from mainland wholesale market volatility through legislated, capped, regulated power prices and the commercial and industrial rebate scheme.

These measures ensured that wholesale impacts being experienced by the mainland customers did not immediately impact on Tasmania. This occurred over three years, mitigating the impact on Tasmanian customers. Following that period, wholesale electricity prices have stabilised, and the Tasmanian Energy Regulator has set the price for the past two years. What happened last year? The prices went down 7.11 per cent for residential customers, and regulated electricity prices went down 11 per cent for small businesses.

Since we were elected in 2014, what has happened? In terms of real terms, regulated energy prices have decreased by 18 per cent for residential customers and decreased by 27 per cent for small business customers.

We are at a historic period for the National Electricity Market with the retirement of coal, the disruption of war in Ukraine, and we must consider how we respond again to ensure we do not have any unintended consequences. Exiting the National Electricity Market would certainly erode investor confidence in the Tasmanian energy market and potentially jeopardise billions of dollars in current and planned future investment, including in Marinus Link, new wind, and the Tasmanian green hydrogen projects.

We have delivered on our renewable energy action plan, and our target. We are at 100 per cent; we are going to 200 per cent by 2040. We have big plans; we have a long-term plan. This is something that the member for Franklin, Mr Dean Winter, and the Labor Party would not understand because they have no policies, no plans. When in government, electricity prices went up, up, up, in fact 65 per cent. I want to make it very clear: the Tasmanian Government remains ready to assess further concessions and supports that may be needed in regard to energy price increases.

In the time I have, I want to pay a tribute to the building and construction sector, more than 20 000 workers and their families contributing big time - builders, electricians, plumbers, concreters, labourers, project managers and many more with unique and interesting skillsets. I am looking forward to hosting Ben Shaw and his team at the National Electrical Contractors Association in just a couple of weeks' time in this place to show off the wonderful work they do in the building-construction sector.

I pay a tribute to all those involved in signing the memorandum of understanding, working with the state Government with my colleague, minister Jaensch, and the collaboration and work that is appreciated. We will work together to improve the supply chain and get the job done; to build the infrastructure that this state needs, including our houses and homes. We have a target of 10 000 homes by 2032.

I pay a tribute to Luke Beardwood, a very good man from the north-west coast. He is director of Beardwood Pty Ltd, a hugely successful construction company based in Tasmania's north west, specialising in new home and commercial construction. They have recently been

awarded a provisional open builder's licence, joining an elite few in Tasmania who have achieved this momentous milestone.

Mr Jaensch - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the 'hear, hear' from the member for Braddon.

Luke began his life as an apprentice for his stepfather at the age of 16. A small team of two, they worked together and they continued on. I will not say too much more but they are employing nearly 50 people now. I recently caught up with Luke at the launch of further progress at Magnolia Place, known as the Launceston Women's Shelter, where Luke is the contracted builder. They do a lot of good work there, as part of our housing and homelessness strategy.

With Mrs Alexander, my parliamentary secretary, we caught up with the apprentice, Bonnie. It was good to see her enjoying the work. She took pride in what she was doing. This is a tribute to Bonnie as well.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to Royce Fairbrother. I had dinner with Royce last night. He is a foundation director and owner of Fairbrothers and stepped down just last year as chairman. He started as an apprentice. He is an icon of the building and construction sector in Tasmania. He has received many honorary awards for his contribution, not just to the building and construction sector, but for his commitment to education and training and putting back into the community. He keeps putting back. I am proud of him and I know so many in this place are also proud of him. I pay a tribute to him. I thank him for his service, his contribution and his input to this Government and to this state.

The House adjourned at 5.36 p.m.