



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 18 March 2020

REVISED EDITION

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The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

COVID-19 - Precautions

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before we launch into our sitting session I remind you of the health precautions we all need to take.

We will recognise the whole Chamber as the Floor. If members wish to sit in the President's Reserve or at the back of the Chamber rather than in their own seats, I will still give them the call to come to the lectern. Of course, members can speak from their seats where the microphone is provided. Obviously for other areas members will have to choose one of the lecterns.

The Chair of Committees will use this Chair when we go into the Committee stage rather than sitting between the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, to allow space for social distancing.

It is all about space and time. I encourage members that, if they do get a break from the Chamber, to make the most of that break.

Ideally if we can run with three members down each side that will create the amount of space we need and maintain our quorum.

I also remind members that we have put extra tissues, bins and bottles of hand sanitiser around the place. Please ensure used tissues go in the bins provided; we don't want them missing the bin.

[11.05 a.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, before we proceed with today's matters, I raise the issue of the coronavirus meeting we have at lunchtime today. I raised with you yesterday whether we might be able to convene that meeting during sitting times so all members will be there. The Public Accounts Committee has an important set meeting planned for lunchtime today. I understand and recognise people will want to go to the coronavirus meeting.

Mr PRESIDENT - I thank the member for Windermere. I have spoken with the Leader on this issue and was informed that while the time is admittedly very inconvenient for the Public Accounts Committee it is the only time the Director of Public Health can address everyone. The Leader also advised me it is intended the meeting will only go for 15 minutes or so.

Mrs Hiscutt - It will probably be very short, Mr President.

Mr PRESIDENT - It is difficult if we need to make other allowances for Public Accounts because it is a Joint House Committee. Certainly, the Leader is aware of the issue and the clash of meetings. We will ensure those issues are worked through more thoroughly before the next briefing because I imagine we will probably have more briefings in the future.

I understand how difficult it is, particularly with a Joint House Committee, to get everybody together, and is why that date was set. Because of the challenging times, that has been decided by the Government.

If members of that committee do not get a break for lunch, we can work through this as the day goes on. The Leader informs me she is not planning on a late sitting tonight so we can all have a break from the Chamber. We will leave the Chamber doors open as well to allow circulation of air. We are fairly constrained by the physical Chamber itself with airflow and space, but there are a number of ways we are trying to manage as best we can.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Message from House of Assembly

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I have received the following message from the House of Assembly -

In accordance with the provisions of section 4 of the *Subordinate Legislation Committee Act 1969* (No. 44), the House of Assembly has appointed the honourable member for Franklin Mr Street to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation.

Further, the House of Assembly has appointed the honourable member for Franklin Mr Street to serve on the Joint Committee of both Houses to manage the Library in place of the honourable member for Braddon, Mrs Rylah.

This message is signed by Sue Hickey, Speaker, House of Assembly, 17 March 2020.

SESSIONAL ORDERS

Government Administration Committee B - Resignation - Member from Prosser

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, for completeness of our official House records, I advise that on 19 February 2020, the member for Prosser tendered her resignation to me in writing from Government Administration Committee B as required by the Council's Sessional Orders.

PLACE NAMES BILL 2019 (No. 38)

DISPOSAL OF UNCOLLECTED GOODS BILL 2019 (No. 16)

Third Reading

Bills read the third time.

MOTION

Attendance of Legislative Council Members who are Ministers of the Crown at House of Assembly Question Time

[11 14 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That leave be granted to members of the Legislative Council who are Ministers of the Crown to attend the House of Assembly if they think fit, so as to respond specifically to questions without notice, seeking information of the kind covered by the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly.

Motion agreed to and message transmitted to House of Assembly.

DUTIES AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 56)

Second Reading

[11.15 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

Mr President, the Government introduced the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge in 2018 on acquisitions of residential and primary production property to address the increasing demand from foreign investors for Tasmanian property and to assist local buyers to remain competitive in the housing market.

A year later, the Government has undertaken a review of the definition of foreign person in the Duties Act 2001 as it relates to the surcharge to ensure that it is consistent with the original policy intent. As part of this review, the Government consulted with key industry stakeholders. The Government has considered the feedback provided and has agreed to amend a number of provisions relating to the definition of foreign person.

Mr President, this bill amends the Duties Act 2001 to better reflect the policy intent of the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge. It will help ensure that only persons, companies and trusts that are genuinely foreign are charged the surcharge.

The changes to the definition of foreign person will apply retrospectively to the start date of the surcharge on 1 July 2018. Taxpayers who are affected by the amendments and have previously paid the surcharge will have the opportunity to apply to the Commissioner of State Revenue for a refund.

Mr President, the first amendment to the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge provisions is to allow a discretionary trust to be retrospectively considered non-foreign for the purposes of determining a surcharge liability if the trust's deed is amended such that the trustee is not able to distribute 50 per cent or more of the trust's capital to foreign beneficiaries.

This important amendment will mean that discretionary trusts that inadvertently meet or have met the definition of a foreign trust, including those that have no named foreign beneficiaries, will have the opportunity to amend their trust deed and apply to receive a refund of the surcharge.

Mr President, I will be moving an amendment to draft in a clause 30HB(1)(d)(i) of the bill to provide more certainty to discretionary trusts. The intention of this clause is that discretionary trusts that have already paid the surcharge will have an opportunity to apply to the commissioner for a refund of the surcharge if, by no later than six months after this bill receives royal assent, they amended their trust deed to remove the ability to distribute 50 per cent or more of the trust's capital to foreign beneficiaries.

Mr President, the current drafting of the bill may be taken to imply that such an amendment to a trust deed can only occur within the window between the bill receiving royal assent and six months after the royal assent.

However, the intention of this clause is that the amendment to the trust deed can be made any time after the dutiable transaction occurs so long as it is made no later than six months after the bill receives royal assent.

The amendment that I will propose to the bill will provide more clarity on this issue.

Mr President, the bill also provides the commissioner with the discretion to determine that a person, who would otherwise be considered foreign, is not a foreign person and is therefore not subject to the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge. As part of these discretionary powers, the commissioner will have the authority to publish circumstances in which a person will not be considered foreign. A person who has paid the surcharge and who meets the circumstances published by the commissioner will be able to apply to be considered non-foreign for the purposes of a transaction and receive a refund.

This amendment will afford sufficient flexibility to the commissioner to ensure that the policy intent of the surcharge is achieved and buyers who should reasonably be considered as non-foreign are classified correctly. It is contemplated that this may include circumstances such as special category visa-holding New Zealand citizens who temporarily leave Australia.

Mr President, the bill provides that the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge is not payable by, or is to be refunded to, the foreign spouse of a non-foreign individual for the purchase of their principal residence home. A similar provision is also provided in situations where a foreign person and their non-foreign spouse purchase vacant residential land and establish their principal residence on the property. Both provisions are subject to eligibility criteria.

Mr President, the bill also allows a refund of the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge if a foreign natural person ceases to be foreign by virtue of becoming an Australian citizen or permanent resident within six months of a transaction for which the surcharge was paid.

This amendment will provide retrospective relief from the surcharge to persons who become Australian citizens or permanent residents within six months of incurring the surcharge.

Mr President, the bill also increases the rates of the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge to 8 per cent for residential property and 1.5 per cent for primary production property acquired by foreign persons.

The increased surcharge rates will apply to transactions entered into on or after 1 April 2020. However, for transactions that attract the surcharge and are entered into prior to 1 April 2020, the current, lower surcharge rate will apply.

The Government considers that these rates are fair, reasonable and are consistent with surcharges in other jurisdictions. While the Government welcomes foreign investment in Tasmania, it is important to ensure that foreign investors in Tasmania contribute their fair share and that the property market remains accessible to Tasmanians.

Mr President, I commend this bill to the House.

[11.21 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I support the overall intention, the introduction, as I did with the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge last year. We would not be here today if more notice had been taken last time of key stakeholders like the Law Society and others involved in discretionary trusts, who clearly identified these issues as a problem. We were in such a rush to ram the legislation through before 1 July that we did that, and here we are trying to sort out what some lawyers would describe as an unholy mess because they knew it was coming.

I tried my best to alert members to that, including raising the issues we are now trying to fix. There is a lot of catch-up to do. This issue of retrospectivity the member for McIntyre talked about in a question during our briefing was because we rammed the legislation through. That is why there is retrospective nature to this. Some people have been required to pay the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge when they were not likely to receive any financial benefit from a discretionary trust of which they were a member. Many of these discretionary trusts are so broad, they pick up almost anyone within a family. That could be anyone living outside Australia or New Zealand, or other charity organisations and things like that, which could be foreign-based.

Some people criticise lawyers quite a bit. The Treasurer had a bit of a whack at them when we raised this last year in budget Estimates, but they rightly picked up this problem. It was not only the lawyers, it was the accountants. The accountants deal with this all the time when advising their clients about their discretionary trusts, and here we are trying to fix an unholy mess.

It is going to take some sorting through. Having read through this legislation, I appreciate that the Leader organised a briefing for me on this last year. I felt I needed more time to consult with some of the others from the legal fraternity and accountants involved in dealing with discretionary trusts who raised these issues with me. Whilst they are content with this, because they were consulted this time, they were not last time. They were not consulted last year. I have a list of those who were consulted and it includes all these people who should have been included in the first round.

Predominantly, I believe they are reasonably confident this will address those issues and that, when people have paid a foreign investor duty, they will be able to apply and receive reimbursement. We heard in the briefing probably in the order of about \$420 000 will need to be repaid. It is not a lot of money in the big scheme of things but it is all work for the SRO. I do not imagine the SRO has a lot of spare capacity with the efficiency dividends that everyone had to comply with. I feel for the SRO, the State Revenue Office, and the Commissioner, because they are under the pump financially as well trying to manage within their budgets, and here we are saying, 'Here is some more work for you to do - go and sort this lot out.'. Perhaps they could have

reduced some of that by consulting when they looked at the legislation last year; that is a backhanded swipe the other way.

When I had the briefing last year, the member for Nelson joined me. We were informed that a total of 51 transactions related to discretionary trusts; 30 were residential, 18 were primary production; and two were both residential and primary production. One ex gratia payment had been made. It was commented that a couple of ex gratia payments may have been made in that period; perhaps the Leader could clarify that.

I understand the need for the provisions in the legislation to ensure those people received an ex gratia payment at the discretion of, I believe, the commissioner, not the Treasurer. Maybe the Leader could confirm who provided that discretion. The Treasurer paid it but did the commissioner make the determination as to how many there were? It is important they cannot come back and ask for a refund again, when they have already been given an ex gratia payment.

It is important that foreign investors are charged an extra duty. This is Tasmanian land and Tasmanian property. We know full well the pressure that there is on our housing generally, our public housing and our access to housing for Tasmanians. With COVID-19, I feel desperately for homeless people. How the hell are they going to self-isolate if they need to? Where do they self-isolate? It is separate to this bill, but these are the reasons I support this in principle and the need for this legislation to fix the problems created last year. It really is something we need to consider.

This bill will probably address the issues raised as a result of rushing it through last year, bringing in a sensible policy decision. Hopefully, it will sort it out completely. There will be some work to be done, but it will also require, as we heard in the briefing, that lawyers dealing with their clients with discretionary trusts make it clear and assist them to make sure their discretionary trusts are tight and do not necessarily drag them into this.

The other provisions relate to people who become Australian citizens or permanent residents within a six-month period; they can also apply for exemption from the duty or have it refunded. Those people may not be required to pay. Again, significant discretionary decisions can be made by the commissioner to address some of those matters.

I support the bill. I think it will achieve what it is intended to. The Leader is bringing in an amendment to try to further clarify a point, which is necessary. It is a lesson to us to be sure that we scrutinise things properly and listen to the key stakeholders who have more knowledge in these things than we do, or certainly more than I do. That is why they came to me to try to inform me. I raised those issues but they fell on deaf ears.

[11.28 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I hear what the member for Murchison said in regard to this legislation being passed in 2018. Was it 2018, not 2019? Was it only last year?

Mrs Hiscutt - The original FIDS commenced in 2018.

Ms RATTRAY - The review was undertaken 12 months after the legislation was put in place, wasn't it?

Ms Forrest - The issues were identified at the outset.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, that goes to the point that is being made. Obviously we do not always get it right first time around in this place but at the time we do the best we can.

I contacted the Leader's office because I always have some issues around the aspect of retrospectivity. I have been informed this is required because of people getting caught being required to pay the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge. I absolutely agree we should have this Duties Amendment Bill in place. I am not convinced we need retrospectivity for a couple of reasons. For a start, the money has been possibly spent out of a budget.

I posed the question to the people who presented my personal briefing earlier in the week: with the land tax applied as of a date, the annual fee does not matter. If you paid a week after the date, if you cannot move in to a place for one reason or another - such as a lease in place or something like that - if you are one week after, there is no discretion for land tax. Unfortunately, people at various times are caught up in the legislation in place.

I will be interested to hear whether other members support the retrospectivity aspect of this bill. Some might say \$420 000 is not a lot of money. About two weeks ago the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service had to find \$100 000 in savings as soon as possible, so \$400 000 is a lot of money. I am balancing it here between - this was the legislation passed, we have been told it was not absolutely perfect for everybody, but it is the way it was at that time. Again, I am interested to hear what other members think about the retrospectivity aspect. Obviously, if there is no support, I will not waste the valuable time of Office of Parliamentary Counsel in calling for an amendment to the bill, but I am interested in what other members think. Do we have to go back every time something is put in place where it catches people? With the land tax legislation now in place, you can fall out by one week and still be liable to pay that land tax. Yes, the following year you may not, but at that time it could be something like \$600, which is a lot of money for many people. I am interested in what members think about that.

I support the increase from 3 per cent to 8 per cent.

I recently received an email from one of my constituents asking me for some support in their opposition to foreign investment in this state. I do not support that. It is too late for that; we have gone past saying that as a foreign person you are not to invest in this state. I believe having FIDS is reasonable, as is increasing it to 8 per cent for residential properties and increasing it by 0.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent for primary production property. I would prefer that also went to 8 per cent; it might help our local farmers into some primary production property because nearly everything that sells around our state at this time is foreign investment.

Our locals seem to find it pretty hard to get into the market. I do not say that local buyers are not getting into that primary production property market, but it is getting harder to compete with people who have that foreign investment capacity behind them. Obviously, the Government has put in place what it believes is an appropriate percentage. At this time it is 1.5 per cent.

Those are a couple of issues I see at this time. I look forward to other members' contributions in regard to retrospectivity. Once you do it for one piece of legislation, how do you draw the line at the next piece and the next piece and the next piece? I expect this House will never put a piece of legislation in place that is perfect and suits everyone at every time. We will see.

[11.36 a.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I understand the intent of this particular bill. I, too, think when we see amendments coming through at the last minute it means that maybe things have not been dealt with as efficiently or, indeed, with the fullest knowledge available. When we look at bills we all need to make sure there are not any unintended consequences.

When I read through this particular bill and the commissioner's powers, I wondered whether or not the legislation ought to restrict the commissioner's actions a little more and not provide latitude. Why do I say that? The Leader might be able to explain to me why in fact the commissioner does not have that greater latitude. I welcome a response from her on that.

We have to make sure that the commissioner is not in a position to be compromised - that is important - in any way, shape or form. I would like to understand how the commissioner is supposed to operate - what the parameters of that operation are in terms of transparency and ensuring the commissioner is not open to any form of being compromised. I think that is important for the commissioner as much as anyone else.

I share the member for McIntyre's concerns with regard to retrospectivity. Why have these amendments been brought forward to us? Did a particular issue arise where it was found to be a problem? We have to be careful that we are not dealing with legislation that could be seen as something for a mate. I am not suggesting that is the case, but I would like to know what actually sparked the need for this particular amendment with respect to the retrospectivity in particular.

I share the concern. I will listen to argument from others as well as to why we ought to allow retrospectivity to occur, or vote for that to occur. It is always a dangerous path to bring something in retrospectively. As the member for McIntyre said: you do it for one, you have to do it for another. There are winners and there are losers every time we bring in a retrospective clause.

Ms Rattray - Through you, Mr President, there is already the capacity for the Treasurer to provide an ex gratia payment. What is wrong with that process? Everyone goes through that process. It has obviously worked for two at this time.

Mr VALENTINE - I thank the member for McIntyre for that comment. That is indeed an avenue people could follow through the Treasurer.

Again, I think it is important we have transparency wherever we are dealing with matters like this. I agree with the percentages going up; I think most people would. Many people in our community do not like to see Tasmanian land and property going to foreign persons. Many people say, 'We cannot buy property in their country. Why should they be allowed to buy property and the businesses in ours?' Quite often, it might be agricultural businesses, which can then end up not necessarily benefiting the state because everything is exported as opposed to going through the Tasmanian consumer landscape, if I can put it that way.

I agree with the higher percentages. Foreign investment generally is the domain of the federal government, and it is interesting we are dealing with the state taxes and charges here. Maybe the Leader could comment on why it is the states actually have this territory as opposed to it being a federal bill? It is a state tax, I suppose, but it would be interesting to know where the boundary lies between the state and the federal government in this regard. Is it simply that this is a state tax and therefore we are allowed to deal with that even though it is to do with foreign investors? That was a query I had.

I support the general intent of the bill, but I will keep an open mind and listen to debate on the retrospectivity aspect and any answers the Leader may be able to provide.

[11.42 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I speak briefly on the bill as I do not have any real concerns. I have listened to the member for McIntyre and while I understand what she is saying, I think land tax has always been an issue - we have all fought for constituents not to have to pay land tax.

Ms Rattray - To no avail.

Ms ARMITAGE - To no avail because it is simply the way it works, unfortunately. It is not a retrospectivity issue; it is just the way that it is with land tax.

Ms Forrest - It is giving effect to a policy intent that was supposed to be there at the outset.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is not something we can do anything about. I do not really see that it has any bearing on this bill.

Ms Rattray - I thought it was a very strong argument myself.

Ms ARMITAGE - I guess we all have our individual opinions, but to me - no, I do not see that as being a retrospective issue. It is important to ensure that Tasmanian legislation remains as current as possible and most accurately reflects the state of the investor markets. I note that the Duties Amendment Bill 2019 will also increase the FIDS on the proportion of the dutiable value mentioned in relation to residential property directly or indirectly acquired by foreign persons to 8 per cent and primary production property directly or indirectly acquired by foreign persons to 1.5 per cent. I do not have any issue with that.

I believe the Treasurer has had a great deal of feedback on the duty surcharge, with many people caught by this who should not have been caught. Various bodies have been consulted on the definition of foreign person to make sure we now have it right. To this end, the Government's review of the definition of a foreign person has been a good course of action because it enables the wider public policy surrounding foreign investment to be more consistent. The words to this amendment to the Duties Act will help ensure that only genuinely foreign persons, companies and trusts will be charged the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge.

Furthermore, I am pleased that taxpayers who have previously paid the FIDS will have the opportunity to apply to the Commissioner of State Revenue for a refund. While I am not fan of retrospectivity, this amendment aims to restore the original policy intent of the surcharge - that is, to give back the charge to those persons who are essentially Australian and should never have paid. I see this as fair.

It is extremely important that Tasmania and Tasmanian businesses remain attractive options for investors. This requires a legislative and economic climate that is conducive to fair and reasonable taxation requirements. We might actually mention that, member for McIntyre, to the Treasurer next time we speak to him with regard to land tax. That is an argument for another day.

For businesses that invest greater amounts, which can afford greater outlays and thus receive greater dividends for successful operations, it is only fair they can also afford to pay a greater

amount of taxes for the resources they use. When investors are foreign and taking more of the revenue made away from the country it, of course, makes sense for there to be a levy for this privilege. On the other hand, however, we cannot scare investors away. We must make it as easy and attractive as possible for investor dollars to reach our unique and boutique Tasmania-based businesses.

Not unreasonably, much attention is given to Chinese investment in Tasmania; however, we have to remember this applies to all foreign investment. To give clear and better definition to a foreign person, company or trust means the playing field will likely be more even and fair to investors from other countries that take an interest in Tasmania, including Korea, Japan, European countries and the Americas.

It is important no loopholes can be used to avoid paying the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge. It is not encouraging to know that in some instances offshore shelf companies make many millions of Australian dollars and their tax revenue is largely taken away from Australian shores.

I am pleased this bill affords clarity around the definition of a foreign person, company or trust. It is my sincerest hope that as a result we will have more transparent commercial transactions and taxation practices.

I support the bill.

[11.46 a.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I thank the department for the briefing this morning; I always appreciate the briefing being done in this form. I appreciate that the briefing sets it out and makes the points at issue fairly clear.

My view, which I have said before, is those briefing sessions should be recorded. The information from briefings does not get into this place unless we bring it forward here. Local government used to have meetings not recorded or open to the public, but many things have changed there now. We ought to consider this.

I understand the reason for wanting it to go through late last year was that those people - one reason, and the Leader will correct me if I am wrong - who will be entitled to a refund with retrospectivity now would have probably by this time have received that refund. So, it was about the people.

Mrs Hiscutt - Yes, it was, plus at Christmas time a lot of children are home and business is done within families over this time. We had hoped to have it done before Christmas for that very reason.

Mr DEAN - Yes. I did not see anything unreasonable with that at all in those circumstances. The amendment has been talked about. The amendment in this case is really a very minor amendment, and, as I said during the briefing, some would say there was no reason for it. Perhaps it does make it a little clearer, but had the bill gone through without that amendment, it would have made little or no difference. There is nothing in it.

My other point is the issue raised by the member for Hobart or McIntyre about the foreign investment in this state -

Mr Valentine - No, I mentioned foreign investment.

Mr DEAN - Many concerns have been raised with me about foreign investment in this state, how far it can go and how much land. There is a controlling requirement here as to how much land can come under foreign ownership.

Millers Orchard in my electorate has recently been taken over by foreign ownership. How far can it go? How much of our state will be owned?

Ms Rattray - Significant farmland has been purchased by foreign investment companies.

Mr DEAN - Yes. The member for Hobart commented that we cannot do that in other countries. We would not be allowed.

I do support retrospectivity in this instance. Paul Harriss used to always say, and you would have heard him saying, 'This Chamber allows for those who were here at that time', probably not many of us. He used to say that retrospectivity in every case was bad law and you needed to look at it closely, consider it, understand it and so on, but you should always vote against it, not support it, unless there was a strong reason to go the other way. The member for Rosevears -

Ms Rattray - There is another option - you can get an ex gratia payment if you are entitled to it.

Mr DEAN - You could do, but a cleaner way of satisfying that is by applying retrospectivity; those people would not have had to pay that money in these circumstances.

Mrs Hiscutt - It was one of the unintended consequences.

Mr DEAN - Yes, I was going to make that comment. It was not intended in the first place, when the legislation went through, for these people to be caught up in it.

Mr Finch - Unintended consequences - now you have my attention.

Mr DEAN - Yes, with unintended consequences - that is what retrospectivity is about.

Ms Forrest - We knew it was going to happen.

Mr DEAN - Yes, well. I did not pick it up at the time and I think others would not have done. If we had picked it up, we would have done something about it then, perhaps.

I support the bill and the retrospectivity clause in its current form. The bill increases the rates of the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge for residential properties. It increases it from 3 per cent, that is the current, to 8 per cent. In relation to primary production property, it increases from 0.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent. Those increases will occur for foreign investors. That is quite a big increase. We were told this morning, and the member for Murchison might have raised this as well, that the retrospectivity clause will require the government to pay about \$420 000 if all these people make that application. Once again, Leader, correct me if I am wrong.

Another point that came out in the briefing - the member for McIntyre raised it - was about the principal place of residence and the time limit. There ought to have been some clear direction on

the occupation of these properties. I understand that if it is the principal place of residence, it satisfies the criteria. There are questions about that from time to time. People, for instance, buy a property and they travel for the next two or three years or for the rest of their lives. Is that their principal place of residence under the definition and terms? I know of people with motorhomes who have a home, but are never really in the home. Is the motorhome their principal place of residence? I agree to some extent with the member for McIntyre in relation to that.

Ms Rattray - An identified date is what I was looking for.

Mr DEAN - Yes. The point was raised that the commissioner has the authority to publish guidelines. As I understand it from the briefing, those guidelines may go out for review or to the Law Society, for instance, to make some comment in relation to them. That would be a good move and it gives more credence to them. Any errors or points would be picked up by a lawyer, but might not be otherwise.

I certainly support the bill.

[11 54 a.m.]

Mr ARMSTRONG (Huon) - Mr President, I note this bill received tripartisan support in the other place. There was much debate about the level of foreign-owned land in Tasmania, but that is a separate issue.

The bill tidies up the definition of a foreign person. From my understanding of the definition, it is now fair. It also increases the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge, which I also deem fair. I support the bill, and I will continue to support policy that ensures that all participants in the property market pay their fair share, but at the same time preserve strong investment interests and allow local buyers to remain in the market.

It is interesting to listen to some of the debate on retrospectivity. I will listen to any other debate on this, but I am also interested in what the Leader has to say in her summing up. Thank you.

[11.55 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I thank members for their contributions.

My first response is for the member for McIntyre, but I will discuss her issues with retrospectivity towards the end of my contribution.

Why do actual persons get up to six months after a transaction to become non-foreign and be eligible for a refund under the FIDS when land tax is charged at a point in time and does not account for changes in circumstances after the fact?

The six-month period is a reasonable time frame to provide for circumstances outside a person's control that may affect when they become citizens or permanent visa holders. This reflects such persons cannot control how long it takes for the Australian Government to approve their permanent residency or citizenship. This differs from land tax, which is purposefully designed to be assessed based on the owner's usage of a property at a point in time, such as from 1 July to the end of each year. Thousands of properties change hands each year and many also change use, either to or from being a principal place of residence.

It is not feasible for the State Revenue Office to recalculate land tax in each of these cases without significant additional resources and changes to its information systems. In contrast, the amendment to FIDS provisions are expected to impact a much smaller group of taxpayers; therefore the processing of applications for refunds under this amendment is expected to be manageable within existing resources allocation. They expect to be able to handle it. Land tax has been mentioned by a couple of members and also in my office too. It is quite consistent.

Why has the Government chosen to allow trust deeds to be retrospectively amended? On this basis the proposed amendments to the FIDS provisions to allow a trust deed to be retrospectively amended strikes the right balance between providing opportunities for taxpayers to be considered not foreign while also maintaining integrity of the base of the tax base.

Further to this - as was mentioned in our briefings this morning - when it comes to the trust deeds papers, it is a template that covers everything. Many people have been caught up, as was mentioned this morning with other religious-type places where you could put your money. It has to give people the time to address this, because that was not the intention to start with and it certainly was not the policy intent. The retrospectivity is to correct an anomaly or an unintended consequence, as has been mentioned. It would be best it goes through like this because it was an unintended consequence, and it is going to put it back the way it should have been to start with.

This is for people who have been caught up and should not have been caught up to start with, so I hope I can talk you out of it.

Ms Rattray - I have been doing some numbers around the Chamber.

Mrs HISCUTT - It was an unintended consequence. It should not have been there to start with and this will fix it up. Back to the policy of the original policy intent -

Mr Valentine - What you are saying, Leader, is that it is a fair process and would be disadvantaging if it did not go through.

Mrs HISCUTT - It is something that should not have happened in the first place.

Member for Hobart, you asked: what is the commissioner's discretion to determine that a transferee is not a foreign person? The FIDS provision will be amended to provide the commissioner with the discretion to determine that a person who would otherwise be considered foreign for the purposes of determining a FIDS liability is not a foreign person and is therefore not subject to FIDS. As part of these discretionary powers, the commissioner will have the authority to publish guidelines outlining the circumstances in which a person will not be considered foreign. A person who has paid FIDS and who meets the circumstances published by the commissioner will be able to apply to be considered non-foreign for the purposes of a transaction and receive a refund of the surcharge.

This amendment will afford sufficient flexibility to the commissioner to ensure that the policy intent of the surcharge is achieved and buyers who should reasonably be considered as non-foreign are classified correctly from this date. To add further restrictions on the commissioner may restrict his or her ability to ensure the policy intent of the bill is achieved. We are talking about the policy intent and how to achieve that.

The member for Hobart also asked: why is it a state tax? It is because conveyance duty is a state tax. The Australian Government has a role in reviewing foreign investment through the Foreign Investment Review Board. Ensuring the appropriate level of foreign ownership in the state or territories is a combined effort. The Constitution does not prescribe how to deal with foreign investments. This is a state tax.

Mr Dean - Can you address foreign ownership?

Mrs HISCUTT - Foreign ownership - what is your question, member for Windermere?

Mr Dean - What is the quantity of property available for foreign ownership in this state?

Mrs HISCUTT - Do we know that? So, your question is -

Mr Dean - Maybe it is a question I should put on notice.

Mrs HISCUTT - Well, your question is asking, 'What is the pull-down-the-curtain percentage of Tasmanian-owned land?' I do not think we know that or whether that is a known fact, but I will ask my advisors if they have a figure in mind. I am sure they will say they do not. It appears that the Foreign Investment Review Board monitors that, so we cannot give you a percentage of how much of Tasmania will be put into foreign hands. It is not a figure we have, if that is what you were asking. There is no upper -

Mr Dean - Yes, I am. There has to be a limit on it. I will put something in writing.

Mrs HISCUTT - It might be better if you clarify your question and put it on the Notice Paper. Would that be okay?

Mr Dean - Yes, that is okay. Thank you.

Bill read the second time.

DUTIES AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 56)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to.

Clause 7 -

Section 30C amended (Additional duty chargeable for foreign purchasers of residential property)

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Chair, I am interested in the 5 per cent increase for principal residential property. How was that additional 5 per cent increase arrived at? It has gone from 3 per cent to 8 per cent, so we have a 5 per cent increase. Will it equate to at least \$420 000?

Mrs HISCUTT - It is expected to more than cover the refund. The FIDS on residential property was introduced in Tasmania on 1 July 2018, with rates broadly consistent with the FIDS rates first introduced in other jurisdictions. After considering the early impact of the surcharge, as well as feedback received through a consultation process with key stakeholders, FIDS on residential property is being increased to 8 per cent. This change will bring Tasmania's FIDS on residential

property in line with Victoria and New South Wales and is broadly consistent with Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, all three of which impose a rate of 7 per cent. Increasing the surcharge rates will continue to manage demand from foreign investors and help to maintain the affordability of the Tasmanian property market.

Ms RATTRAY - I appreciate that advice. Can I take it, from what the honourable Leader has provided, that the stakeholders who were consulted suggested that there be a 5 per cent increase? Interestingly, not very many people who are purchasing properties want to pay more than they have to. Was it the real estate industry? Was it the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association - TFGA? We will get to that in the next clause. I am interested in how that was arrived at - was it purely that other states have set it at this percentage and that is why we have as well?

Mrs HISCUTT - It was a government decision based on other jurisdictions. When it was presented to our stakeholders, the stakeholders were the Australian Institute of Conveyancers, the Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, and the Law Society of Tasmania. They fairly well agreed that was a reasonable rate.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8 -

Section 30E amended (Additional duty chargeable for foreign purchasers of primary production property)

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Chair, this is the same question, just relating to primary production property. The member for Windermere asked a very good question in the second reading debate about how much more Tasmanian land will be allowed to be sold for foreign investment until we get to a stage where we will have very little local ownership. I think that is a very relevant question. My question is about the 1 per cent increase from 0.5 per cent for the FID tax to 1.5 per cent. Again, I am interested in the rationale. I recall from the briefing this morning - which I very much appreciated; I did not put that on the record earlier. I also appreciated the opportunity to have the teleconference earlier in the week. It gave me some more thinking time in that four-hour plus drive that I have when I travel to the south of the state.

I would like a better understanding around that. As I said in my second reading contribution, many people in our community continue to be concerned about the level of foreign investment, particularly when it comes to primary production land in our state.

Mrs HISCUTT - The process was fairly well laid out with the residential process, but Tasmania was the first jurisdiction to introduce a surcharge on the purchase of agricultural land by a foreign person at 0.5 per cent from 1 July 2019. After considering early impacts of the surcharge, FIDS on primary production land is being increased to 1.5 per cent as from 1 April 2020. The process was the same as for the residential.

Ms Rattray - With input from the TFGA? I heard this morning that they were a stakeholder.

Mrs HISCUTT - I will go through the list of stakeholders for you. There was the Law Society of Tasmania, Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, Australian Institute of Conveyancers, Real Estate Institute of Tasmania, Australian Property Institute, Property Council of Australia Tasmania Division, Certified Practising Accountants Australia Tasmania Division, Institute of Public Accountants, and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association. There was

no formal response from the TFGA other than to say that the Treasurer himself had conversations with the TFGA. There is no record of that conversation, but they were consulted. There was no formal response received but a conversation was had.

Ms Rattray - They have not made any direct contact with me and possibly other members, so they must be satisfied.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10 agreed to.

Clause 11 -

Sections 30HA and 30HB inserted

Mrs HISCUTT - Madam Chair, I move the Government amendment -

Clause 11, proposed new section 30HB(1)(d)(i) -

Leave out 'within'; insert instead, 'no later than'.

Madam Chair, I explained the reasons for this amendment in the second reading of this bill, so I will not go through it again.

Mr DEAN - When you look at the amendment, it really does not change much from what is there.

If something has to be done 'within' six months, you have six months in which to do it. As the amendment simply says, 'no later than' six months, you still have a period from right at the beginning to the end of six months.

To me, this is lawyer talk. It does not really make it any clearer at all.

Mrs HISCUTT - As I mentioned in the email I sent to members with the amendment, it was a technical amendment recommended by the Law Society. The Solicitor-General also thought it was a good idea.

Mr DEAN - Just to say that obviously the OPC, in drawing up this bill, saw that as a reasonable word to have there, and that person, as I understand, has a law degree as well. This is what happens. I guess if we sent it out to other lawyers who are involved, they would argue the other way.

It is not an issue I am going to fight over. I do not think anybody will.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Chair, in regard to proposed section 30HA and over to proposed subsection (5), which is where a transferee to whom this section applies becomes a foreign person again within the three-year period after the relevant dutiable transaction.

They decide they no longer want to be an Australian citizen or they relinquish their permanent visa, and then they again become a foreign investor.

In the briefing we asked: how do you find out if they have become a foreign person again? I would like that response put on the public record, because I imagine the State Revenue Office does not have a lot of resources to be wandering through, I expect, federal paperwork. I am not sure about how that works in regard to citizenship because I know you apply to the federal government for citizenship.

I am interested because people often work out how to take advantage of situations. If you paid a significant amount of money for a property in the far north-east - it cost \$10 million and you have paid your 1.5 per cent foreign investment surcharge. Then you are able to apply for the reimbursement, because you have decided that is going to save you a fair bit of money. Then you go back and you decide, 'Well, I have done that, got my money back, and now I want to be the foreign person I was originally before I could receive the refund.'

I am not saying everyone will do this. It is probably going to be a fairly messy process to undertake. I am just interested in what the department has said in regard to people who change their mind about their permanent visa or their foreign -

Madam CHAIR - During the briefing, the question I asked was more around the change of deeds. Altering the deed back to include a foreign person, not just that example.

Ms RATTRAY - The question was also raised about how you find out and what the process is for having that information with it. Effectively they could do it three years and one day after because this has a three-year period. Within the three-year period after the relevant dutiable transaction; I want some clarity around that particular clause.

Mrs HISCUTT - The three-year rule is basically a deterrent for a trust not to be made non-foreign for an instant and then changed back. The three years sets a parameter. It sets rules. All sorts of things can happen, like a foreign marriage. Statistics indicate if a marriage is going to break down, it is usually within the first two years, so three years is set out as a deterrent.

Mr VALENTINE - Turning to proposed section 30HA, in its entirety it seems to work against itself. Maybe that is just the way I am reading it. If you look at proposed section 30HA(2), the transferee to whom this section applies may apply to the commissioner in writing et cetera and then (3) -

A transferee may only apply for a reassessment ... if the transferee has not transferred all, or any part, of the property.

It is assuming duty payment is made first before the transfer happens and then you go down to (4)(b) where it says -

refund any amount of duty paid in respect of the dutiable transaction that is in excess of the amount so reassessed.

It seems if you have transferred any or all of part of the property, you cannot apply. Did you understand what I am getting at? It would be interesting to hear your opinion.

Mrs HISCUTT - I think we understand your question. The buyer has paid the FIDS at settlement. Proposed section 30HA means the buyer cannot have resold the property. Is that clear?

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, I understand. I was reading it as the original sale. Therefore, how could you have the original sale, have paid the duty and not be able to reapply because part of the property has been transferred? You are talking about a second transfer. I understand, thank you.

Mrs HISCUTT - I clarify that is correct.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 12 -

Sections 30J, 30K, 30L and 30M inserted

Mr DEAN - This question is partly answered in the answer given to the member for McIntyre. If we look at 30J(1)(b) and (d), what is the position of a foreign person whose partner is Australian or naturalised Australian or holds citizenship if that relationship breaks down shortly thereafter? Does it simply not attract the duty, the tax in these circumstances? Once again, we are talking about partnerships here as well, not necessarily a marriage as such. As the member for McIntyre said, people do take advantage of certain situations, particularly regarding properties worth millions of dollars.

Mrs HISCUTT - The only point that the SRO can dictate is the point of sale. What happens after that is another issue. The FIDS is conducted or sought at the point of sale and what happens after that is out of anyone's control. What happens after that needs to be thought about after the point, but this is at point of sale.

Mr DEAN - In other words, what you are saying in that answer is that we lump it. In other words, a foreign person in a significant relationship could buy a very valuable property worth millions of dollars, that relationship could break down - who knows, the way things apply from today, it could be intentional - then another relationship is formed and then another expensive property is purchased and this goes on and on without any, as I understand it, comeback on that foreign person in relation to duties and taxes and so on.

I raised a matter during my contribution to the second reading about the principal place of residence. I refer to proposed section 30J(1)(d). There are people today who want to have a property. It is seen by them as a principal place of residence, but they never really live in it. They then have a motorhome - and that is fairly common today - which they travel in for the rest of their lives. They have a house sitter, who is not renting the property, but is probably paying a fee to be the house sitter. That happens. What is the position in relation to that situation?

The member for McIntyre said during the briefing that some period of time should be placed on a person, such as Housing Tasmania applies to persons living in their properties. You must live in a property for a certain period of time each year and you can only be away from it for a certain period before you lose your position and entitlement to that property. That is the current position the state has in relation to properties -

Ms Rattray - For the First Home Owner Grant, there is a cut-off date.

Mr DEAN - Yes, a cut-off time. I would appreciate an answer to those two issues.

Mrs HISCUTT - The commissioner does have a degree of discretion in this situation. Going on holidays does not break the claim of principal residence. If, for example, they went on holidays

for three years and they were charging it out as an Airbnb or renting it out full-time whilst they were away, that is a totally different scenario. The commissioner would frown upon that and take action. If you use it as your principal residence and you are not there a lot of the time because you are on holidays and it is not a money-making venture, it is your principal residence, your mail goes there, it is your principal residence.

Ms RATTRAY - Again, that would only come into play if the State Revenue Office knew about that scenario and would come down on somebody doing that. How do they find out? That is the issue. Are you are relying on a neighbour to contact the SRO and say that they haven't seen the owner of this property for the last 18 months and they think there is probably someone looking after a cat. That is the issue. It is not clear how the office, with limited resources, is going to be able to implement some of these safeguards we are being asked to put in place. It appears to be very difficult to implement. That is my question, following on from the member's very good question.

Mrs HISCUTT - The SRO has a variety of data-matching approaches to work out whether people have broken their connection with their property. For example, the Australian Taxation Office - ATO - can tell what is going on. There is MyBond, the website database for anyone who might be renting their house out through the short stay accommodation market. They have a variety of other means to check these things, and evidently a piece of paper is pushed out of a machine somewhere that the SRO checks off to see who is doing what.

Mr VALENTINE - On a question I asked during the briefing on proposed section 30J with respect to a party that might not be able to get back into the country - for example, the coronavirus at the moment. They might be prohibited from leaving or entering into a country so that indeed should not work against them. I assume proposed subsections 30J(5) and (6) would cater for that particular circumstance.

Mrs HISCUTT - The answer is definitely. The commissioner does have a discretionary approach from him or her and can look at those separate cases.

Mr VALENTINE - The other questions that follow on are: When the commissioner exercises their discretionary power, is that reported in any way, shape or form? In its annual report how many times it does that or to what extent it does that? Can that be answered for transparency reasons?

Mrs HISCUTT - The commissioner does have a list of power and discretions he can avail himself of. No, it is not reported. It is not reported anywhere in particular. It is just the commissioner going about his job.

Mr Valentine - That might be a question for Estimates.

Ms RATTRAY - In that instance, it would be reported on the documentation pertaining to the individual or organisation. It would be recorded somewhere. It would not be just this is my decision and there is no record. There would be some paperwork to follow up?

Also, I know social distancing is very difficult in this place. I apologise for the number of questions but it is really important piece of legislation, so I am calling it 'work distancing' today.

Mrs HISCUTT - Legislation still has to be scrutinised properly. The question was: is there a record of the commissioner's decision? There is a file, of course. The commissioner keeps a record

of everything that is done, every person, what has happened. Yes, it is recorded within that; however, it is not publicly reported upon. As the member for Hobart says, that may be a question for Estimates.

Clause 12 agreed to and bill taken through the remainder of Committee stage.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)(a)

[12.41 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That standing order 10(2)(a) be suspended to provide for the Premier's Address to be tabled without the requirement for the Address to be read again in the Council.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT - Mr President, I lay on the Table of the Council a copy of the Premier's Address. I move -

That the Address be incorporated in the *Hansard* record.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT - Mr President, I move -

That the Address be noted.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

It is a great privilege to provide my first address to the Parliament as Tasmania's forty-sixth Premier, and I thank my colleagues for entrusting me with this honour. I also thank my predecessor, Will Hodgman, for his service to the Tasmanian people, and his wife Nicky, along with his children, for the sacrifices they have made as a family to enable Will to serve this state and its people so well for so long. All of us in this place do what we do with the support of others, and too often they are not recognised for what they do, and I extend my thanks to our respective partners and families.

Over the last six years we have demonstrated we are a disciplined, united and responsible government. We have built the foundations for and sustained strong economic and jobs growth for our state, and we have demonstrated commitment, focus and drive to deliver a better future for Tasmania. This will not change under my leadership.

This Government was elected in 2014 to deliver a strong economy and jobs, build Tasmania's infrastructure for the twenty-first century, keep Tasmanians safe, invest in health, education and Tasmanians in need, act on the cost of living and protect the Tasmanian way of life. We will continue to deliver on these priorities but there is more that needs to be done.

In health, we have immediately increased investment and made sweeping changes to governance, recognising that demand for services remains high and we must get better patient outcomes.

There is more to do in housing and climate change, as well as ensuring that more Tasmanians are able to grasp the opportunities our growing economy offers.

We must keep our state's economy strong so we can attract investment, create jobs and also generate the revenues we need to invest into health, education, housing and looking after our most vulnerable.

We must continue to strive to make our state a better place to live, work and raise a family, across all our regions, and we must support people so they can benefit from the opportunities created by a strong economy.

Tasmania in 2020 leads the rest of the country on most economic indicators. Around 21 100 jobs have been created since 2014, with 256 100 Tasmanians now in work, the highest on record. Employment levels are now higher in every Tasmanian region compared to when we came into Government, and in the past year we have had the highest employment growth rate in the country.

We have an economy growing at its strongest rate in 15 years, faster than the powerhouse economies of Victoria and New South Wales. This growth is the result of nation-leading business confidence, increasing population and a strong budget position. There is no doubt our strong economy is making a difference to the lives of a great many Tasmanians, but we know there is more to do.

Tasmanians want Government services to be more responsive, more accessible and more connected, and so they should be. That is why we are commencing a broad sweeping review of the public service, which will bring the Tasmanian public sector firmly into the twenty-first century and stand us in good stead for the next 30 years. Our aim is to create a public service that puts Tasmanians at the centre of everything it does, from the provision of services to the development of policy, to the expenditure of taxpayer funds. The well-credentialed and experienced Mr Ian Watt is leading the review, which will deliver a final report by the end of 2020. However, we understand that it is the private sector, which is made up of predominantly small businesses in this state, that takes the risks, drives investment, creates jobs and generates opportunities, and this Government has and always will, unashamedly back them.

We are continuing to remove red tape and over-regulation in order to attract private sector investment and create more jobs. The latest Tasmanian Red Tape Audit Report confirms 84 per cent of the 125 identified red tape issues have now been resolved,

equating to over 100 red tape reforms made by this Government. These reforms have made doing business in Tasmania easier. However, there is more to be done.

A common complaint by Tasmanians, whether they be building a house, a hotel or a manufacturing plant, is the time it takes to gain the necessary development approvals required from TasNetworks and TasWater. In a state with a growing population and growing demand for housing, this must be improved. Clearly we need to further simplify our approvals process so homes are approved and built quicker. That is why today I am announcing that after consulting with TasWater, TasNetworks and industry representative bodies, we will introduce later this year legislative timeframes for the permit process for energy and water and sewerage services.

We also understand that supply of land is critical to meeting demand for housing and in this year's Budget we will better resource our Land Titles Office so that titles can be released to the market more quickly. These actions will help to decrease the time it takes to get houses built, increase the supply of land and save many months on the time it takes to get Tasmanians into new housing.

There is more investment occurring in our state than ever before, whether it be windfarms, transmission networks, major linear infrastructure works or major manufacturing plants. That is why today we are releasing new draft major projects legislation. This Government's major projects legislation will provide an approvals pathway for projects that are of a scale, strategic significance or complexity beyond the normal capacities of local councils or for projects that cross municipal boundaries and involve multiple acts and regulators. Major projects will be able to be referred into the process by local government, the proponent or the Minister for Planning, and if they meet the criteria in the act they can use this approvals pathway. Once a project is declared a major project by the minister, all decisions will be made by a specially convened expert panel appointed by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission.

The Government believes events tourism, especially relating to major sporting events supports the Tasmanian economy while also growing participation in healthy activities. This is why we are making strategic investments to secure national sporting teams. We want all children to participate in sport and for those who aspire to the highest level to have a pathway into national competition. This is why we are focused on ensuring that Tasmania is represented at the national level across our major sporting codes.

Being part of these national competitions will boost our economy, grow jobs and attract visitors, generating more revenue which can be invested into essential services like health, housing and education. This is why we are resolutely pursuing an AFL team for Tasmania, which modelling tells us will add \$110 million to the state's economy each year, generating around 360 new jobs. That is why we have reached an in-principle agreement with Glenorchy City Council and the LK Group to pave the way for Tasmania to have an NBL team for the first time in 25 years. This agreement will underpin significant development at Wilkinsons Point and see an economic injection of \$102 million into our state, lead to the creation of around 1200 jobs and be a complete game-changer for the northern suburbs of Hobart. It is also why I will be meeting with Football Tasmania shortly regarding their plans for an A League team

for the state. Not only will these arrangements create jobs and the opportunity for more Tasmanians to participate in sport, they will put Tasmania on the national stage, exactly where we deserve to be.

One industry sector that is firmly fixed on both the national and international stage is Tasmania's tourism sector. This industry generates significant economic growth and is one of our great success stories. In the five years to September last year, total visitors increased by almost 25 per cent to over 1.3 million and last year visitor spend increased by 5 per cent to over \$2.5 billion. A critical part of our tourism strategy is to encourage and drive visitation to our regions and last year we saw two thirds of all visitors dispersing into our regional areas. A crucial plank in our 'visit the regions' strategy is our creative, unique and diverse events.

We want to continue to support great events in Tasmania and that is why I am announcing that the award-winning Unconformity Festival in Queenstown, which has gained a reputation both nationally and internationally, will receive an extra \$375 000 this year so that they can deliver an even a bigger and better arts festival on the west coast. We know that we make the best whisky in the world, and our success at world renowned events in London and San Francisco has been spectacular and acknowledges our place on the national and global stage. It is now time to establish ourselves in this company and today I am announcing that the Government will provide \$125 000 to deliver the inaugural International Whisky Awards in Tasmania in August 2020, with the event positioned alongside the world-renowned events held each year in London and San Francisco.

We also know our tourism industry has had a challenging start to the year, beginning with the impacts on our domestic visitation from the tragic bushfire events on the mainland and with the travel restrictions due to coronavirus. As a state we are well placed to respond to these challenges and I want to outline the steps being taken.

Tourism Tasmania has developed a recovery response plan that will position our state and its offerings in the hearts and minds of national and international travellers in the months ahead. This plan will see it redirect \$2 million of its existing budget, as well as an additional \$1 million, towards in-market promotional activity. This is in addition to the \$6.2 million already committed to promoting travel in the forthcoming winter months and the new brand campaign to encourage more visitation during winter and for Tasmanians to holiday at home. Tourism Tasmania is also working closely with Tourism Australia to leverage its own recovery package, Holiday Here this Year.

Another focus will be working with our transport partners, such as the airlines and TT-Line to offer a range of packages that showcase our state and ensure that access to Tasmania is not just affordable, but attractive.

Our visitor economy supports more jobs per capita - mostly in small businesses - than any other state or territory, and with two of our regions in the five most tourism dependent in the country, the Government will not be complacent at this critical time.

Another industry we are assisting to remain strong in the face of the coronavirus is the fishing industry. A month ago, we acted quickly to roll over quotas, provide

assistance to enable direct sales to the public and extend fee payments for the rock lobster industry. If more has to be done to support these important industries we will do it.

Over the last 12 months as an exporter we have had to navigate Brexit, a US/China trade war and now coronavirus. It is why we have developed a Tasmanian trade strategy, the first in our history and developed in partnership with Tasmania's exporters and producers, with an ambitious target to reach \$15 billion worth of trade by 2050. Today I can announce that later this month, subject to travel arrangements, the Minister for Trade will be embarking on a two-week mission to the United States to support a range of opportunities in food, agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, space, defence, education, renewable energy and more. This market is our fifth-strongest trading partner and accounts for 16 per cent of our international visitors. With China and other Asian markets heavily impacted by the coronavirus, we want to assist our exporters to grow their share of markets and open up new opportunities.

Key to our continued economic growth are our advanced manufacturing and defence sectors, which continue to find global markets for their world-class products. Our Tasmanian Defence Strategy, supported by our highly regarded Defence Advocate, retired Rear Admiral Steve Gilmore, has been integral to accessing global supply contracts and finding new opportunities for our defence supply companies. The recent signing of an MOU between Thales Australia and the Australian Maritime College to establish a state-of-the-art test facility for submarine and surface ship sonar systems is testament to the success of our Defence Strategy. This Government has also provided \$125 000 for the business case to establish a maritime defence innovation and design precinct in Launceston as part of the Launceston City Deal, which will provide more exciting opportunities for our defence supply industries and advance manufacturers.

Unfortunately over the summer, we have witnessed more intense bushfires and extreme weather events and as the Minister for Climate Change, I am well aware that we face a more volatile and changing climate.

I would first like to thank our firefighters and volunteers for their bravery, commitment and selflessness. They put their lives on the line to keep us safe and no words can express our collective gratitude. Their work over the summer on the mainland and at home was outstanding and integral to the success of multiple firefighting operations. On behalf of us all, we thank you. Although Tasmania was not immune from fires this season, our fires were not of the scale or intensity of those on the mainland. The stories of lives lost, homes destroyed, communities devastated and wildlife killed was saddening and confronting, and my sincere condolences go out to the families, friends and communities of those who lost their lives. Many of the country towns were similar to those in Tasmania; small communities surrounded by bush.

It is clear that Tasmania is not immune from the same threats, so to keep Tasmanians safe we need to do more and we must be better prepared before next summer. We must do everything we can to protect life, property, infrastructure and our natural assets. Although we have a nation-leading and well-resourced fuel mitigation

program, the traditional window available for fuel reduction is narrowing and the intensity of our bushfires is increasing.

Under existing laws, in a bushfire emergency the state controller can immediately take steps to put in place firebreaks and reduce fuel, but this is only when the threat has materialised. Due to the smaller windows available to reduce fuel loads, the current planning controls and regulations can limit landholders and our emergency services in taking preventative action. This must now change. We understand, after the devastation on the mainland, that it is too late to put in a fire break when the fire is coming over the hill or at your back door.

We risk putting people's lives and property at greater risk if we do not act now. To keep Tasmanians safe, I can today announce that the Government will introduce legislation in the coming months to make it easier to reduce fuel and mechanically clear vegetation for a fuel break once a bushfire hazard reduction plan has been issued. The legislation will introduce a new streamlined process to enable fuel loads to be reduced while balancing environment and community concerns. Most importantly, it will make it easier for landholders to reduce fuel loads by allowing approvals to be granted in a shorter time frame when a bushfire hazard management plan is in place. It will also make landholders, both public and private, responsible for undertaking fuel reduction activities under a bushfire hazard management plan in order to keep the broader community safe.

The Government will also ensure we have more resources available this year, especially during the autumn and spring, to reduce our fuel loads. We will create two new fuel reduction teams, with 12 extra staff, to reduce fuel loads across the state. We will provide additional resources to help landowners plan and undertake fuel reduction activities. We will provide more resources to the Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure we have winch-insertion capability for remote area fire teams within Tasmania so we can insert specialist firefighters and respond quickly when needed. We will begin the establishment of a new state operations centre in a central location from which all our emergency services may coordinate our response to emergencies.

We have already announced the creation of three new specialist Aboriginal ranger positions within Parks and the creation of a \$100 000 pilot grant program to work with the Aboriginal community to draw on their expertise in fuel reduction and the maintenance of landscapes through cultural burning. These measures will help landholders and communities better prepare for the next fire season, making Tasmanian communities safer and more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

Our response to climate change cannot be limited to adaptation and risk management. We also need to mitigate the effects of climate change. Whilst Tasmania has a proud history of being a quiet leader on climate action, it is now time to showcase our innovation to the world and stake our claim as a renewables powerhouse. Tasmania's climate record is impressive. Tasmania was the first state in this country to have zero net emissions, and we did that in 2016. Tasmania has the cleanest air in the world and some of the leading climate research institutions.

Our greenhouse gas emissions have declined by 95 per cent from 1990 levels. The last greenhouse gas inventory shows that for the sixth year in a row we have met our

legislated emissions reduction target and we have the lowest per capita emissions of all states and territories and are one of the lowest net emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet.

We have already set a target of zero net emissions by 2050, which is in line with other states' targets. Currently the Climate Change Act is under review and many submissions to that review have argued that our state, which already has such a low emissions profile, should set a more ambitious target. However, any new target needs to be evidence based and informed by both science and economics. Therefore I have requested that central agencies DPAC and Treasury, in concert with DPIPWE and State Growth, conduct a detailed analysis of the pathway our state would need to take, and the impacts on industry and jobs, to achieve a target of zero net emissions prior to 2050. This process will include targeted consultation with industry, the business sector and the community and will occur over the next six months. The outcomes of the consultation will inform amendments to the Climate Change Act and Tasmania's new Climate Action Plan for post 2021.

Whilst this detailed work is underway, we will ensure that we continue to lead the country on renewable energy. We have already committed to being 100 per cent renewable by 2022 and we are on track to meet this target. However, we know this state is well placed to be far more ambitious. Tasmania has the opportunity to ensure that the most compelling twenty-first century competitive advantage that industry and consumers want - renewable energy - underpins our economy in Tasmania, attracting investment, creating jobs and also supporting Australia transition to a renewable base load supply.

Today we are announcing a new renewables generation target of 200 per cent of our needs by 2040, which will see Tasmania double its renewable production. Our new Renewable Energy Action Plan will be released in April and will ensure that Tasmania remains the renewable energy powerhouse of Australia. An important part of this plan will be capitalising on Tasmania's competitive advantages to produce hydrogen for domestic use by 2022-24 and export by 2025-27.

Tasmania's low cost and reliable renewable energy means that Tasmania is 10-15 per cent more competitive than our mainland counterparts when it comes to attracting investment in 'green hydrogen'. To capitalise on this, we have already announced a \$50 million package of support measures over 10 years to bolster and fast track renewable hydrogen industry development in Tasmania.

This Government is also committed to helping mainland Australia reduce its emissions by exporting more renewable energy. This will not only create new jobs and industries for Tasmania but will help meet the energy demands of the mainland whilst reducing Australia's emissions.

We are currently progressing the Marinus link, which is set to underpin 1400 new jobs in Tasmania, with up to 2350 jobs also being created from further renewable energy investment and our nation leading Battery of the Nation proposal. The combined investment has the potential to inject \$7.1 billion into the Tasmanian economy over the coming years, leaving no-one in any doubt that Tasmania is in fact the battery of the nation.

Our net emissions profile is the envy of the nation and we are one of the lowest emitters in the world. However, there is still more to be done. This Government will do its part in reducing our emissions by leading by example.

Supported by this Government's 14 fast charging stations at 12 locations across the state, Tasmania's electric vehicle network is now one of the best in the nation. By building this electric vehicle network, Tasmanians and visitors can take advantage of our clean and affordable energy to travel across the entire state.

It is important that the Government takes a leadership role in the use of low emissions vehicles. In this year's budget we will begin to transition our fleet which currently has only around 3 per cent in the low emissions category. I have requested Treasury to provide advice on an achievable, affordable but ambitious time frame to transition us to a low emissions fleet.

The introduction of our Waste Action Plan and the delivery of a container refund scheme by 2022 is also an important priority for this Government. Work has already commenced on designing a model with input from interstate counterparts, the local community, businesses and industry and legislation is to be introduced early next year.

Next year, we will also introduce a waste levy which will fund innovative reuse and recycling schemes and support co-investment with recycling businesses that will improve our capture of recyclables and will also generate more jobs for Tasmanians.

We all know how hard drought is on our farmers. They understand the impacts of a changing climate better than anyone. That is why my Government - together with the Australian Government - is drought-proofing our farm sector by building nation leading irrigation infrastructure. The proposed 10 irrigation schemes in tranche three of the Pipeline to Prosperity will provide an additional 78 000 megalitres of water, injecting an estimated \$114 million each year into the sector and the economy more broadly. Along with the Australian Government, we have already jointly committed \$170 million to deliver at least the next five irrigation schemes.

Today, we take the next step and I am announcing the preferred option for the Don Irrigation Scheme - the first of the tranche three projects to progress to this stage. The estimated \$28.5 million project will deliver some 5000 megalitres of irrigation water to high quality agricultural land in the Don, Barrington and Sheffield areas in the north-west. Once fully operational and the water utilised, the scheme is expected to deliver 130 direct and indirect jobs.

In the budget we committed to a record infrastructure investment of \$3.6 billion to build the infrastructure our growing state needs and to buffer the state's economy from national and international headwinds. This strategy has worked. Confidence levels remain high, our economic growth leads the country, record numbers of jobs have been created and we are well placed to face new challenges as they emerge.

Tasmania's population is growing at 1.2 per cent per year. This is nearly double our long-term rate and nearly four times faster than when we came to government. Although a growing population strengthens our economy by introducing

new skills, new ideas and greater diversity, it also comes with the need for increased investment in infrastructure. To ensure we can meet this challenge, we are investing record amounts into major infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, houses, roads, bridges, dams and our parks. We have a strong pipeline of public work, stretching out for the next 10 years and beyond.

Tasmania's world-class parks are a critical part of Tasmania's unique brand and our international and national appeal. But most of all for Tasmanians, these parks are especially loved and part of our way of life. We will continue to invest in parks infrastructure to make them more accessible and enjoyable to Tasmanians and our visitors.

This Government will continue to invest significantly into our parks infrastructure, with \$31 million committed this term. That is in addition to our \$56.8 million commitment to Cradle Mountain, and our \$20 million commitment to develop Tasmania's next iconic walk. The new Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre is now complete. Stage 2 will be completed by July 2020, and the Dove Lake viewing shelter will be completed in the latter half of 2021.

The preferred location for Tasmania's next iconic walk lies in the Tyndall Range on Tasmania's west coast and offers a potential multi-day walking experience. We expect the feasibility study will be completed in the first half of this year.

Our massive investment in infrastructure also underpins a record amount of new social and affordable housing. Last year we completed and delivered 349 new social houses, with another 173 to be completed by the end of June this year and another 200 to be contracted over the next few months.

We are expanding our emergency shelters, with 35 additional dwellings provided, including 18 single bedroom pods at Bethlehem House, 10 units for women and children at the Hobart Women's Shelter and seven family-sized units also managed by the Hobart Women's Shelter.

This year, we will also begin construction of seven supported accommodation units for older men in the south, commence the Wirksworth development, providing much-needed residential care for the elderly in our community, and expand the Magnolia House shelter in Launceston.

We will also begin the delivery of two new youth foyers for young people - one in Burnie and the other in Hobart - which will be built by 2022 with funding of \$20 million to be provided in this year's budget. In addition, \$4.5 million will be spent on Thyne House in Launceston and \$2.2 million on the Launceston Youth at Risk project.

However, we know that there is even more to do and we will work hard every day to put roofs over the heads of people who need them most, whether it be the need for affordable housing or combating homelessness, or for gaining access to your first home or downsizing.

We will continue key incentives to further boost home ownership. We are extending the First Home Owners Grant for a further two-year period to June 2022. This grant provides \$20 000 for Tasmanians building their first home, as well as the stamp duty concession for eligible pensioners to downsize their home and the stamp duty concession for first home buyers of established homes.

However, we recognise that for many people home ownership can seem a distant ambition even with low interest rates and the incentives I have mentioned.

Our HomeShare program where the Government provides an equity contribution and takes a share of the home as a silent partner has been very successful. Around 200 Tasmanians on modest incomes now own their home through this program. The Government will also increase the maximum government contribution available under the Government's HomeShare program by 20 per cent to a contribution of \$100 000. If you are eligible for the First Home Owners Grant you could also receive an additional \$20 000. This means that the Government will provide a HomeShare recipient up to 30 per cent of the value of a home to a maximum of \$100 000 in equity so that they will have lower interest payments and will find it easier to break into the market. This means that eligible homebuyers will be able to purchase a home much easier and save on the repayments as well.

Today, I can also announce we will transfer the management of almost 2000 more Housing Tasmania-owned properties to not-for-profit community housing providers. This will give them the capacity to build close to 700 social and affordable homes over the next 20 years. We will also be extending all management agreements to 2040, giving this sector and their tenants long-term security.

In addition, and in response to urgent demand for more social housing, we will commit \$22 million from the housing debt waiver to build 220 new social and affordable houses by June 2023. This adds to the more than 80 houses that will be built from the \$12 million in community housing provider grants announced by this Government in December 2019.

Through these new commitments, the Government will deliver an extra 1000 social and affordable houses, which is on top of our Affordable Housing Action Plan targets.

I am also announcing that for this winter, the emergency housing brokerage services will remain uncapped so those who need emergency housing can access it. We have also provided a further \$150 000 for the Safe Night Space program which will enable it to continue throughout 2020.

We have the fastest growing economy in the country but we know that not everyone is able to grasp the opportunities it presents. We are determined to help build the bridges that connect people to those opportunities through our strategic growth initiative. We want Tasmanians, regardless of their background, where they live or their circumstances, to be able to grasp the opportunities that present.

We recently announced the continuation of the successful Sorell employment hub, a program that assists local jobseekers in the Sorell and south-east region, which was part of the Government's Jobs Action Plan. Over 100 people have secured local jobs

as a direct result of the individualised focus, transport and training opportunities the hub provides.

Another area which is experiencing rapid growth is Glenorchy. The NBL deal, the redevelopment of Wilkinsons Point, the proposed MONA hotel, as well as the growing needs of local businesses and industry in the area, like our state-of-the-art ferry builders, Incat, will create enormous job opportunities for the people of Glenorchy. To help local people capitalise on these new opportunities we will establish a Glenorchy jobs hub, with funding of \$1.3 million over two years, which will be included in this year's budget. The hub will provide support to those seeking a job, connecting them with local employers as well as the transport they need to get to work.

As part of our ongoing strategic growth initiative, we are working with the George Town community with a \$1 million package to support projects in that community. We will continue to work with our community partners in the Derwent Valley, Break O'Day municipality and on the west coast to ensure the programs we have begun are achieving the right outcomes for those communities.

Health is a key priority for this Government.

We have seen the investment in health grow year on year since we came to office in 2014. To put this in context, the 2019-20 Budget for Health is now \$650 million more than the last Labor-Greens budget in 2013-14. That funding is supporting around 1200 additional FTEs in our health system, including 872 in the past two financial years alone. Today, Tasmania has a higher level of hospital staffing per capita than any other state in Australia.

We have also quarantined health from further efficiency dividends over the forward Estimates, delivering a further \$87 million into Health's budget.

I am also pleased to announce that in our upcoming budget we will be providing additional funding of \$500 000 per year for Palliative Care Tasmania for the next two years. Palliative Care Tasmania does outstanding work and we know how important they are in our communities.

We also recognise that more Tasmanians are increasingly seeking support for their mental health. The Government is delivering our \$104 million new, best practice approach to the integration of mental health services.

This includes establishing a Mental Health Hospital Avoidance Program which will aim to improve the model of care for those who find themselves in the emergency department. The model will feature GP out-of-hours assistance, expanded crisis response functions, community-based alternatives to the ED for assessment and treatment 24/7 and expanded adult community mental health services.

Adult Community Mental Health services will be revised to enable the provision of best evidence-based case management and treatment for people living with complex needs. We have already established a Mental Health Hospital in the Home program

and we will be developing an integrated suicide response that connects after care support with a community-based crisis response.

Community mental health facilities at St Johns Park and the Peacock Centre will also become integration hubs, providing 27 new mental health short-term recovery beds, as well as opportunities for the co-location of social, housing, employment, disability and health services. For the first time in Tasmania, the new wards at the Royal and LGH will provide dedicated child and adolescent mental health inpatient facilities.

The Government has listened to community mental health organisations and we understand the need for funding certainty to do the important work they do and to provide workforce security.

Today I am pleased to announce that future funding agreements will be over three years, allowing them to plan ahead with confidence and continue the great work that they do in our communities.

We understand that education is the passport to a better life and every child deserves the best possible education.

Equity and inclusion are the heart of everything we do in education and our new needs-based funding model for disability, which supports an additional 2000 students, and our groundbreaking Working Together initiative for three-year olds, providing free preschool for young children who would not normally engage in early learning programs, reflects this. Working Together is a nation-leading program and is being hailed by families as a great success.

Having excellent teachers to support our students is one of the key predictors of educational outcomes. We are reducing teacher workloads, employing an extra 250 teachers, re-shaping our education workforce right around the state and finding new ways to attract and develop quality teachers.

Our plan to extend all Government high schools to year 12 is working, with TCE attainment having increased by 10 per cent since we came to government.

Packages of learning are an exciting new approach to keep individual students engaged with learning in years 9 and 10 and allows them to explore new pathways to vocational education and employment. Last year, five schools took part and this year these packages are being offered in 12 government schools and one non-government school.

We have increased funding and student places for TasTAFE and that investment is paying off, with apprenticeship and traineeship starts increasing by 9.7 per cent, against a downward trend nationally.

We are investing record amounts into education to keep students engaged in learning and improve educational outcomes.

Soon we will be launching our new Adult Learning Strategy to provide more opportunities to participate in work and life, promote lifelong learning and build

stronger communities. Investing in the wellbeing of children and young Tasmanians is critical for our state's future; they are our next generation and the future of our state.

Today, I am announcing that in the upcoming budget we will be providing funding to commence Tasmania's first ever comprehensive long-term whole-of-government Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy. It will not only include the first 1000 days of life - where there is very clear evidence that a good start from conception to age two is vitally important to a child's development - but it will take them through to 25 years of age.

Another very important part of our agenda is working to ensure we keep our most vulnerable safe and we realise that more needs to be done on family and sexual violence. In recent times there have been some distressing and shocking incidents of family violence both interstate and here in Tasmania. It is horrific incidents like this that remind us that we have a long way to go to change the attitudes that lead to such terrible, senseless and unforgivable acts of violence.

Since 2015, we have invested over \$50 million in new funding to combat family violence. However, we must ensure our efforts are geared towards making sure we can keep people - mainly women and their children - safe, and that perpetrators are held to account.

In the coming year we will also introduce a number of legislative reforms aimed at protecting victims and ensuring offenders are dealt with in a manner consistent with community expectations.

We have introduced legislation to amend Section 194K of the Evidence Act, to allow victims of sexual offences to speak out if they choose to, while providing appropriate safeguards and protections.

We will make legislative changes to the names of sexual crimes, especially those involving young people, to better reflect the true nature of those crimes. For example, language used in the crime of maintaining a sexual relationship with a young person in no way reflects the gravity of that crime.

We will also be tabling a bill to enhance existing processes for dangerous criminal declarations to ensure Tasmania's most dangerous criminals are not released into the community, and we will create a second-tier classification to ensure strong post-release conditions.

Furthermore, we have introduced legislation to address one punch or coward's punch incidents, sending a strong message that these cowardly acts of violence will not be tolerated.

We will also continue to pursue our plan for mandatory sentencing for child sex offenders for those who commit serious assaults against our frontline workers, like correctional officers, ambulance officers, nurses, midwives, medical orderlies, hospital attendants and child safety officers. Tasmanians on the front line provide essential services to the community and any threatening behaviour, violence or

aggression toward them is completely unacceptable. All Tasmanians deserve to work in a safe environment and this Government will continue to support and protect them.

During our first term we worked hard to restore police numbers and our second term is about investing in an additional 125 police officers. Last year, additional police were deployed to Launceston, Glenorchy, Bridgewater, Burnie, Devonport, St Helens, Smithton, the Firearms Service, and a new dog handler is also now in place. This year, new officers will go into Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, Sorell, Bruny Island, Kingston, Oatlands, George Town, Scottsdale, St Helens and Deloraine as well as the establishment of a new statewide crime command, which will coordinate a whole-of-state approach to disrupting and preventing serious and organised crime. Six specialist 'ice' investigators will continue our war on ice-related drug activity, and four officers will start the first stage of our full-time Special Operations Group for rapid response and to support high-risk police operations.

Unfortunately, crime will never be eliminated completely but Tasmania remains one of the safest places to live in Australia and the world and this Government will keep working hard to keep it that way.

Another priority for this Government is taking action on the cost of living. In our latest budget we announced some of the most generous concessions in the country, providing \$72.7 million in last year's budget for concessions on electricity, water and sewerage and council rates.

In this year's budget, we will be extending the state's first sports voucher system, Ticket to Play, for a further four years to provide financial support to help families and their kids participate in sport when they otherwise may not have been able to do so.

We are also proud to announce that we will commit an additional \$185 000 for Loaves and Fishes emergency food relief. This will allow this tremendous service to continue its fantastic work in both the north and the south of the state.

Tasmania's rich and diverse heritage is an integral part of our life, treasured by the community and admired by visitors. Conserving, protecting and re-imagining our heritage listed places is vitally important to their longevity and the future success of our tourism and hospitality industry. It is now crucial that we move to protect these assets and create vibrant experiences that respond to visitor and local expectations.

Today, I can announce that from 2023 onwards we will invest \$1.5 million per annum from the increased revenues from hotels and clubs that the future gaming policy delivers to support the National Trust and revitalise our unique heritage properties that drive visitation. We will also ensure the Heritage Places Renewal Loans scheme is available to the National Trust Tasmania to continue their important work to conserve our built and natural heritage.

In conclusion, this Government's long-term plan for Tasmania has delivered this state with the fastest-growing economy in the country, along with record numbers of new jobs. We are investing record amounts into health, education, housing and infrastructure and to protect the most vulnerable.

The Government that I lead knows there is more to be done.

We will be a government of conviction. We will be a government of compassion.

Importantly we will work hard to ensure that Tasmanians wherever they live, whatever their circumstances and whatever their background will be supported to grasp the opportunities that our growing state now offers.

Mrs HISCUTT - Mr President, I am not quite sure where the phrase, 'We live in interesting times' originated. It apparently dates back to at least the nineteenth century, but it was used in a speech by a fellow called Sir Austen Chamberlain. It was used in 1936, when he made reference to its origins as a Chinese curse which was evidently heaped upon an enemy and took the form of 'may you live in an interesting age.'

I am not sure how accurate that assertion is, but today it seems almost prophetic. We certainly are living in interesting times. The threat of coronavirus hanging over the world seems almost surreal. But the insecurity, anxiety and physical consequences of this virus and how we deal with it is very real and it is impacting us all as we try to go about our daily lives. It casts a cloak of uncertainty over the future and its economic and social impacts are affecting Tasmania and Tasmanians, just as they are in communities across the globe.

We often think of Tasmania as somehow isolated and immune from the troubles and concerns of the wider world. We are not, of course. Events of the last few weeks have served to highlight that fact. It is against this background of uncertainty that the Premier has made his 2020 State of the State address to the Tasmanian Parliament. Our position as an island state has always offered us particular advantages and disadvantages that successive governments have endeavoured to take advantage of and address.

The focus for this Government under former premier Hodgman and now under Premier Gutwein has, and will be, the focus on the foundations for strong economic and jobs growth. Our economy is on a solid footing. We are all well positioned to tackle the challenges ahead, including those that will inevitably arise from this coronavirus situation.

More information regarding particular measures to address the inevitable ramifications of the coronavirus will undoubtedly be announced on an ongoing basis and be reflected in the forthcoming budget accordingly.

The Premier's ministerial statement released yesterday, as an initial response, provides a range of further support and economic stimulus measures to help businesses and Tasmanians affected by the virus. The \$420 million package will provide assistance to the Tasmanians forced to self-isolate as well as relief for affected businesses.

Importantly, it prepares the foundations to set up Tasmania for a rapid recovery when the crisis eases. Our strong economic position is also a factor that will stand us in good stead as we face the challenges ahead. As the Premier said yesterday, now is the time to use the budget as an economic stabiliser to support our economy.

It is important to recognise the success of the Government's strategy in recent years. At present, the Tasmanian economy is in the best shape it has been for 30 years with over 21 000 jobs created since the Government came to power, and 2000 more businesses.

There are more jobs in every region in Tasmania and we have the highest annual employment growth rate in the country. In the north-west and the west coast, the average number of people employed is 600 more than in 2014. The year average unemployment rate was 6.6 per cent. This contrasts with an average of nearly 9 per cent in 2014, and that is an improvement of 2.3 per cent. In fact, the unemployment rate is lower in all 29 local government areas and in an Australian Bureau Statistics series first for Tasmania, all 19 industry sectors grew throughout last year. This means that our economic success is diverse and broad-based, benefiting our businesses right across the state and creating jobs.

Tasmania's building and construction sector remains one of the strongest in the country according to growth in dwelling approvals, completion and work done. These results confirm that the Government's long-term plan is working and the Master Builders Association industry forecast February 2020 for Tasmania, released yesterday, indicates the strong state growth of recent years is set to continue in coming years.

According to the forecast, the total value of construction work is expected to expand significantly over the next two years, including expansion of 12.6 per cent next financial year, and by 2021-22 reaching a total value of \$3.98 billion.

Master Builders Tasmania has also largely credited government-backed infrastructure and a nation-leading economy for an unprecedented pipeline of commercial and engineering construction projects. This growth has Tasmania bucking the national trend again, and leading the way for many key state and territory indicators. Our economy is the fastest growing in the nation and Tasmania is the most confident state for businesses.

The Government's priority has been to maintain the extraordinary momentum in Tasmania and invest for even more growth. I think one of the most interesting and important messages coming from the Premier's speech in the other place, was an acknowledgement that, notwithstanding the undoubted successes and achievements of the Government during its term, there is more that needs to be done.

The Premier himself referred to the need for more effort to ensure that all Tasmanians can benefit from the opportunities created by a strong economy - more effort in areas such as health and housing, and more to do in the climate change arena as well.

Of course, since the Premier's speech, it has become increasingly clear that the state's response to the impacts of coronavirus, and our efforts to minimise the inevitable economic damage, must and will be, a priority for the Gutwein Liberal Government.

Put simply, the coronavirus has the potential to undo many of the benefits arising from the hard work that has already been done by the Government and others, as well as impacting on the efficacy of proposed new initiatives to make our state a better place to live.

Tourism is a major industry in our state. It is the first to reflect the impacts of lower visitation arising from events such as the bushfires and now coronavirus.

Steps have already been taken by the Government to ameliorate the impacts. Tourism Tasmania has developed a recovery response plan with sufficient dollars redirected to support our visitor economy.

The Government has also reacted quickly to assist our fishing industry with a rollover of quotas and enabling direct sales to the public and extended fee payments for the rock lobster industry. Clearly, more will need to be done to assist all our industries over the coming months and years ahead and the Government will be doing that. The Premier has made it clear we will not be complacent and what needs to be done will be done.

I would now like to talk about some of the topics in the Premier's State of the State speech and how I see it in my electorate of Montgomery.

The Premier speaks of -

A common complaint by Tasmanians, whether they be building a house, a hotel or manufacturing plant is the time it takes to gain the necessary development approvals required from TasNetworks and TasWater.

He then goes on to explain about introducing legislation to counter this lengthy time. Sometimes it is not only those two entities which hold things up. I recently visited the Kentish Community Men's Shed to witness the pouring of a slab for their new extensions. I was invited there by Mr Terry Hughes, the president and Mr Mike Dennis, the vice-president. They wanted to show me what was happening and thank me and the Mayor of the Kentish Council, Mr Tim Wilson for the help we had given them through the process.

During our conversations at 6.30 a.m - I might just note - it was advised the approval process for this small extension had taken about six months to complete. Mr Dennis explained there was a bit of going back and forth with the council to get things right, so six months might have been about the right time span. It did seem an awful long time to the men's shed fellows and myself.

The Premier's State of the State speech would not be complete without touching on our tourism sector. The current coronavirus situation aside our tourism industry was going gangbusters. The Premier talks about the crucial plank in our 'visit the regions' strategy and our creative, unique and diverse events. He speaks about festivals and I am sure the member for Murchison will touch on Unconformity in Queenstown.

Further in his speech he mentions -

working with our transport partners such as the airlines and TT-Line to offer a range of packages that showcase our State and ensure that access to Tasmania is not just affordable but attractive.

It is the 'visit the regions' and the attractive parts I would like to touch on for a moment. Visitation to Hobart and our iconic landmarks is good but the local LTA of which I am involved - which is called the Caves to Canyon Group in the Central Coast municipality - is trying to get people who travel on the *Spirit* to turn west instead of east when they get off the boat.

They usually travel east and go straight to Launceston and Hobart so this group is trying to get them to travel west to the Central Coast municipality and more to the central north-west. The group consists of about 15 businesses who are very active.

To assist this turn west attitude the Local Tourism Association is currently developing a virtual reality project and have employed a fellow with expertise to do this for them. It took at least 10 days to film with drones and cameras and another 10 days to put a prototype film together for the group to look at.

The Caves to Canyon group believes this has never been done before and they are negotiating to show it on the *Spirit of Tasmania*. There are logistics to think about like seats, headsets who will clean it and that sort of stuff. But at the moment -

Mr VALENTINE - Point of order. I draw attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mrs HISCUTT - I was talking about a virtual reality project, which the local Caves to Canyon, the Local Tourism Association is doing. The Central Coast Council was also very excited about the project, to the tune of a \$17 000 contribution. The Tasmanian businesses involved are quite prepared to add any extras which may arise. I was lucky enough to put on a headset, which are goggles that go over your eyes, and have a quick look at how it was going. I was not too sure about the Tassie devils that were chewing on my feet and in another scene it felt like I was walking in water at the Preston Falls and that my shoes were going to get wet. The group has since received a letter of support from the Minister for Tourism and the Premier. They were very excited to receive this letter and they will use it wisely. I hope that negotiations go well with the *Spirit* and it can be up and running for the next season or any season, for that matter, as Tassie is trying to place itself as an all-year-round place to visit.

Further in the Premier's speech, he talks about the new Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre. Stage 1 is completed with stage 2 to be completed in July this year. The Dove Lake viewing shelter will be completed in the latter half of 2021. Cradle Mountain is at the most southern tip of my electorate and I am keen to see things happen. I spoke at length about Cradle Mountain last year, so I will not labour it here today. I will not dwell too long on the Premier's mention of whisky.

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable Leader, it seems that we have lost our quorum. I will ask for the bells to be sounded.

Mrs HISCUTT - I was talking about whisky and we all know how good the Tasmanian product is. I recall talking to Mr Mark Littler from Hellyers Road Distillery in Burnie last year about the international whisky awards. He was very excited about that and I am sure he will be pleased to hear the \$125 000 going toward this event in August. The Premier also touches on the rock lobster industry and how we need to support them during their moment of crisis caused by the coronavirus. I was pleased to note that he has pledged that if more needs to be done to support this industry it will be done.

I noticed on Facebook about six weeks ago that there was a fisherman who was selling rock lobster from the Wynyard wharf. The Facebook page said he would be there on a certain date between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. It was on a Saturday, so I headed over all excited with my husband and my mother and our esky and away we went. I was blown away by the number of

people in that line before we arrived at 10 o'clock. I took a photo of it and sent it to the minister for agriculture, saying how large the local demand was. There was a lady standing behind me and she was counting the people in front of us, we could hear her. She got to 150 people in front of us and there were all these people still behind us. A little way off in front of us there was a couple who grumbled about the length of the line, stomped off and took their esky. The lady behind me said, 'Oh, 148.' Needless to say, they were sold out by 11 o'clock and I went home empty-handed.

There was a horrific fire situation on the mainland this year and, yes, Tassie did have our share but not as devastating as some on the mainland. I was pleased to hear in the Premier's speech that legislation is to be introduced to streamline processes to enable fuel load to be reduced, including a balance with the environment and community concerns. It will also make it easier for landholders to reduce fuel load. I am not sure how a lot of landholders will respond to the requirements to have a bushfire hazard management plan but I note that these requirements are a must to ensure safety because we certainly do not need fires getting away.

The mainland fire caused an outflow of mixed emotions from people all over Australia but the constant theme I kept hearing was, how can we help these people? We all have many examples. I wish to relay one outstanding example of how a small community can be enormous in their actions. I am sure that all members here would have heard, attended, supported and bought from many of these groups within our communities -

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

QUESTIONS

Recycling

**Mr VALENTINE to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT -**

[2.32 p.m.]

Given the significant issues faced by Australia over 12 months ago following China's ban on the importation of some 24 types of recyclable material -

- (1) What work has since been undertaken to develop viable recycling options for the state?
- (2) What expectations have been placed on local government in this regard?
- (3) Has there been any cost modelling undertaken for either state or local government?
- (4) What are the estimated time lines for the implementation of any options developed?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Hobart his question.

The changes in international markets arising from restrictions by China and other countries on waste imports means we have to take a more strategic approach to how we manage waste and how we value and re-use or repurpose our resources.

Last year, the Tasmanian Government released the draft Waste Action Plan for public consultation. The plan sets out a proposed framework to address the number of waste management issues that have been identified through ongoing discussion with local government, the resource recovery sector and the community.

It has a number of ambitious but achievable targets and focuses on the need for strategic and sustainable industry development in Tasmania. The plan recognises managing our waste and improving recycling and re-use is a shared responsibility between all levels of government, the private sector and the community. In particular, we want to work collaboratively and in partnership with local government.

There was a lot of interest in the draft plan. The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment received 66 submissions. I am advised there was widespread support for the actions proposed in the plan and, in particular, the key commitments to introduce a statewide waste levy and a container refund scheme. The plan is in line with the 2018 National Waste Policy and National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019, which was endorsed by a meeting of environmental ministers late last year.

The plan will also help to frame our medium- to long-term response to the COAG export ban on waste tyres, glass, plastics, paper and cardboard. We know one of the best ways to prepare for these incoming bans is to address other challenges in this workplace, to build industry capacity and markets for recovered resources. The plan has a number of relevant actions to help achieve that outcome.

As was stated in the Response Strategy to Implement the August 2019 COAG agreement released on Friday, 13 March, further details on significant commitments to be co-funded by the state and federal governments will be provided by the Tasmanian Government by the end of the second quarter 2020. The strategy also noted that, as the majority of Tasmania's exported waste products go to Victoria, the Tasmanian Government will work closely with the Victorian Government to ensure that both states' commitments are well aligned.

At this stage, while no specific Tasmanian cost modelling has been undertaken of the broader impact of China's bans, modelling has been undertaken of the introduction of both a waste levy and container refund scheme in recent years. A number of national-level analyses have also been undertaken to develop a COAG response strategy that gives a broader perspective. Tasmania will undertake its own specific analysis as needed at the appropriate time. The Government will continue to implement initiatives in the Waste Action Plan, including key actions to support resource recovery across industry, infrastructure planning to maximise waste recycling into a resource and move toward a circular economy. These actions will ensure that Tasmania has the best chance of capturing opportunities to improve resource recovery in Tasmania, and in future.

Review of the Electoral Act 2004

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.36 p.m.]

I ask the Leader -

- (1) To table a copy of the final report into the review of the Electoral Act reporting on the stated terms of reference of the review -
 - (a) Modernising the current Tasmanian Electoral Act 2004 with specific examination of sections, including 191(1)(b), 196(1) and 198(1)(b).
 - (b) Whether state-based disclosure rules should be introduced. If so, what they should include.
 - (c) The level of regulation of third parties, including unions, during election campaigns.
- (2) To provide a time line for the release of draft legislation and introduction to parliament of reform resulting from the above review.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

- A commitment was made by the former premier that the Tasmanian Government would review the Electoral Act.
- An Interim Report on the Electoral Act Review was released in December 2018. The interim report identified a number of consultation issues for further consideration and feedback from stakeholders.
- The Government introduced Electoral Act amendments last year and these are now law.
- The Government received the final report prior to the end of 2019 and is now considering it.
- The next state election is not until 2022 and it is critical this be considered thoroughly.

Review of the Electoral Act 2004 – Time Line for Draft Legislation Release

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.37 p.m.]

Please provide a time line for the release of draft legislation and introduction to parliament. It is mostly on the public record, what the Leader just said to me.

What is the planned time line? I know when the next election is; everybody does. I want a time line for the draft legislation, exactly as that question is stated. You could resubmit that question - that is what I need.

Mrs Hiscutt - I suggest that you think about the question a little more carefully and put it again.

Ms FORREST - I have: can you provide a time line for the release of draft legislation and introduction to parliament of reform resulting from the above review?

Mrs Hiscutt - The answer is: before the next election.

Office of Racing Integrity

Mr DEAN to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT

[2.38 p.m.]

A number of issues have been raised with me concerning the Office of Racing Integrity - ORI - including that it is not staffed sufficiently to be able to carry out its functions. With the further funding that will be received within racing and the increase in winnings and so on, it is likely that more people could enter that area, with more races, perhaps more horses involved.

What is the position with ORI?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

The Government regards animal welfare as of the utmost importance. We are investing more money into animal welfare than ever before. ORI is doing a wonderful job in providing confidence to the industry, and this will continue. I have been having regular meetings with ORI. I take this opportunity to thank John King and his staff for the amazing work they are doing throughout Tasmania.

In relation to the point of consumption tax, this will allow me to invest more money into animal welfare, into increasing stakes and also into infrastructure.

As I mentioned yesterday, I am having meetings with relevant stakeholders across all three codes and working out the best way to distribute that money. I will be continuing to meet with John from the ORI and listen to his concerns.

Office of Racing Integrity - Staffing

Mr DEAN to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT

[2.40 p.m.]

My concern here is with the emphasis put on animal welfare - and I support that as I think we all do - but more work is going to be required of the Office of Racing Integrity. I have spoken to Mr King; he is a former understudy of mine, and I have the greatest admiration for him.

Issues of concern have been raised with me - and I have brought these to his attention - about matters arising within ORI. My advice is that organisation has insufficient staff to properly carry out the functions required of it.

My specific question is: are you looking at the numbers of personnel in ORI and the work that they are required to do?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question and additional comments.

I will certainly be having discussions with John King and we will discuss whether additional staff are required. I will be having that conversation and listening to him.

[2.42 p.m.]

Efficiency Dividends - Directions to Agencies

Ms RATTRAY to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

In regard to the efficiency dividends -

- (1) What direction has been given to agencies by the Government to deliver these efficiency dividends and in what time frame?
- (2) Which agencies are involved?
- (3) What is the quantum of each efficiency dividend required by these agencies?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for McIntyre for her question.

The 2019-20 Budget included the implementation of limited agency efficiency dividends over the 2019-20 Budget and forward Estimates period.

As announced by the Premier on 17 March 2020, the Government will not now be applying any efficiency dividends to state government agencies over the forward Estimates period. Pages 45 and 49 of the Revised Estimates Report 2019-20, including the December quarterly report released on 11 February 2020, provided information on the required agency efficiency dividend for 2019-20.

Tasmanian Home Education Registration

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.43 p.m.]

This is a question I had on the Notice Paper with the Government last year. It did not get a response last year and I sent it with a week or more's notice. With regard to the roles and responsibility of Tasmanian home education registration under the new education legislation -

- (1) How many children are registered under this scheme?
- (2) How is the scheme monitored, and by whom?
- (3) How long does it take for applicants to get approval to provide home education for their child or children?

- (4) During this period of assessment for approval to provide home education, does the child need to attend school if this period is during a normal school year?
- (5) If not approved for home education, how will the child or children be transitioned back into the school system?

This may become superfluous in a few weeks if we have to close schools and everyone will be homeschooled, but on the basis of that not happening, I would like an answer to the question.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

- (1) As at 21 November 2019, 1130 children were registered by the Education Registrar to receive home education in Tasmania.
- (2) Registration of home education in Tasmania occurs in accordance with sections 67 to 79 of the Education Act 2016. The Education Registrar is responsible for approving home education applications with advice, as necessary, in accordance with the act from the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council.
- (3) In accordance with section 67(a), provisional approval is provided first and is usually provided within 10 working days of the application being made. Home educators are then given a period of four to six weeks to begin their program before a registration officer visits to assess their program prior to making a recommendation to the registrar. Full registration is usually granted within eight to 10 weeks of the initial application.
- (4) Section 11 of the Education Act requires that, unless exempted, a child who is at least five years of age as at 1 January in any year must be enrolled at a school or be provided with home education. Once provisional registration has been granted, home education can begin. The child is required to remain at school until provisional home education registration is granted.
- (5) The Office of the Education Registrar works very closely with families to support them and help them gain registration. The child's reintegration into school is a matter for the parent and the school to work through together.

Bicycle Rear-View Mirrors

Ms RATTRAY to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.46 p.m.]

- (1) In an attempt to provide a safer road environment for all users, has or will the Government consider making it compulsory for all bicycles on roads to have rear-view mirrors?
- (2) Due to the considerable growth in road cycling, what is the Government's current position on bicycle registration for adult-sized bikes?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for McIntyre for her question and for promoting this on behalf of her constituents.

- (1) No consideration has been given to introducing rear-view mirrors on bicycles. There is no evidence to support the introduction of such a measure.
- (2) The issue of bicycle registration and identification is raised periodically as a means of improving road safety; however, the Government does not intend to establish a bicycle registration scheme for a number of reasons, including that such a scheme would be costly, administratively burdensome and there is no demonstrated road safety benefit.

It is also important to note that registration of bicycles does not occur nationally. To be effective, the scheme would need to be introduced in all jurisdictions, otherwise the scheme would restrict access for bicycle riders from other jurisdictions who would be considered unregistered.

Bicycle Thefts

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.47 p.m.]

I have a follow-up question in relation to the bikes. Because of the popularity of bikes and the increasing numbers of them -

- (1) What was the number of bike thefts in the financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18? I have the figure for 2018-19 - it is in the annual report. I could not find figures for the other years.
- (2) Is the recovery rate of stolen bikes known; if so, what is it?
- (3) In 2018-19, how many offenders were charged with stealing or receiving these bikes?
- (4) What is happening to these bikes? Where are they all going?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

- (1) In 2016-17, 449 bikes were stolen in 376 offences; and in 2017-18, 510 bikes were stolen in 422 offences. The breakdown is -

Financial year	Stolen bike offences	Stolen bike offences resulting in court proceedings	Percentage of stolen bike offences resulting in court proceedings - %
2016-17	376	61	16
2017-18	422	69	16

- (2) See following table for breakdown -

Financial year	Number of bikes stolen	Number of stolen bikes recovered	Percentage of stolen bikes recovered - %
2016-17	449	91	20
2017-18	510	88	17

(3) and (4)

It is not possible, without manually analysing and reviewing sufficient amounts of information, to provide statistics on offenders charged with stealing or receiving bikes. This is due to the way in which affected property information is recorded against charged offences. In 2018-19, there were 492 offences, resulting in 598 bikes being stolen.

Mediation with the State - Settlement Processes

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.50 p.m.]

My questions relate to the practice or process around settlements reached generally following a process of mediation leading up to a decision to offer and accept a settlement between an aggrieved party, whether a member of the public or public servant and a government department.

- (1) After settlement has been agreed between parties and prior to the agreement being signed by the Solicitor-General or his office and the aggrieved party, what standard conditions, if any, are included?
- (2) If standard conditions are included -
 - (a) Are provisions for immunity from further investigation or redress from the Solicitor-General and his office or other government departments routinely or occasionally included?
 - (b) How is a standard immunity provision worded, if they use one?
- (3) If it is not the usual practice or process to include immunity provisions -
 - (a) have there been circumstances in which immunity provisions have been included;
 - (b) what were some of the circumstances where this may or does occur; and
 - (c) how are the immunity provisions worded?
- (4) Do you believe the inclusion of an immunity clause creates a potential of injustice to the aggrieved party?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

- (1) Each set of circumstances is unique, so each deed of settlement is unique. There are no standard conditions, if by that what is meant is conditions which always appear in deeds of settlement.
- (2) (a) It is common for a clause to be inserted to the effect that the releasor, in return for payment of money, releases the state and its servants and agents from all claims and complaints that are or can be made in relation to the subject matter of the dispute or the issue resolved by the deed. The settlement includes such a release.

(b) There are variations. The following is an example only -

Mr B agrees to accept a certain amount of money and costs in full satisfaction and discharge of any liability, actions, suits, proceedings, claims, complaints and demands of whatever kind, and whether under statute, common law or otherwise which he or she now has or may have against the state and/or any of its servants or agents, past and present, in relation to any matter touching and concerning the matter set out in the recitals of this deed.

- (3) It is the same as (2).
- (4) The answer is no. The aggrieved party is receiving money from the state and this is in exchange for something, that being the release. Sometimes the claim made by the aggrieved party has significant merit, that is, a strong case or claim in law. Sometimes it does not. The amount of the settlement sum, which, it must be borne in mind, arises out of negotiations, reflects this.

Oftentimes, the aggrieved party has a view of the strength of his/her or its claim that is at odds with the views formed by the legal advisers to the state. The aggrieved party always has a choice to accept a settlement. It is not necessarily unjust to require one party to give up rights in return for a payment of money. That is the essence of a settlement. The law of compromise requires both offer and acceptance of terms that bring the matter to finality. This is what some people refer to as its closure. It is generally seen as desirable. The law embraces finality. It is not a matter of injustice. Quite the contrary, it is in the public interest.

Ms FORREST - Mr President, I might resend part of that question in that in the first section, the first question - after the settlement has been agreed between the parties and prior to the agreement, we have a person who has made the complaint and who thinks they have agreed to a certain thing and find this in their documentation. It can seem like an addition.

Motor Accidents Insurance Board - Special Dividend Payment

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.54 p.m.]

The 2019-20 Budget included a special dividend payment by the Motor Accidents Insurance Board - MAIB -

Has the dividend been paid and, if so, when? If not, will MAIB pay the amount prior to 30 June 2020?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

The \$50 million special dividend from the MAIB was received on 23 December 2019.

Sporting Event Cancellations - COVID-19 Containment

Ms ARMITAGE to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[2.55 p.m.]

Could the minister please advise the current situation with regard to sporting groups and codes in view of the coronavirus?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Launceston for her question.

While the impact of the coronavirus continues to unfold, a number of sporting events have already been cancelled. While this is very disappointing for many men and women and the junior participants of these sports, the primary consideration must be health and safety.

By way of an update, based on this latest advice - and it is changing every 10 minutes - the following events and competitions have been postponed or called off. Following a meeting with the National Development Panel, Rugby Australia, along with all state and territory member unions, unanimously agreed to postpone all community rugby until the first week of May, effective immediately.

Hockey Australia and member associations have cancelled the 2020 Under-18 National Hockey Championships, scheduled for 16 to 24 April. Netball Tasmania has suspended all of its competitions across the state. Basketball Tasmania has suspended all events, leagues and training programs from 15 March. Tennis Tasmania has postponed all events, competitions and tournaments. Boxing Australia (Tasmania) has suspended all interclub boxing competitions and tournaments and training activities from 16 March.

Cricket Australia has postponed the Gillette One Day International Series. Cricket Tasmania has cancelled the final round of the Marsh Sheffield Shield, which was scheduled to start on 27 March. Cricket Tasmania is consulting with the Premier League Committee and club presidents to decide final standings on this season's table and will make an announcement as to who the premiers will be in coming days. Cricket Tasmania is also advising the relevant Tasmanian community cricket associations that there is an expectation that they will follow suit with their own competitions and has provided advice to support local decision-making.

Swimming Tasmania has suspended all regional and development clinics from 13 March. Surf Life Saving Tasmania has cancelled its High School Surf League program from 16 March. The Launceston Leisure and Aquatic Centre will close from today and the council will review its position in two weeks. The Doone Kennedy Hobart Aquatic Centre has also closed for a period of two weeks at this stage. I have been informed that the Oatlands Swimming Pool has also closed.

AFL Tasmania has postponed all AFL football until 31 May 2020. The Northern Tasmanian Football Association has postponed the commencement of their season until 31 May. Football Tasmania has postponed all football activity until 14 April 2020. The City to Casino Fun Run and Walk has been cancelled.

The following championships were to be held in Tasmania this coming month have been cancelled or postponed - Targa Tasmania has been cancelled; the super cars visit scheduled for 3 to 5 April has officially been postponed; Disability Sports Australia 2020 National Wheelchair AFL Championship; Netball Australia under-17 and under-19 National Championships; Rowing Tasmania School Rowing Championships; and the BMX Australian National Championships. Futsal Tasmania statewide school titles have been postponed in all areas until 20 May. Tennis Tasmania State Championships - the Junior Tour; the Derby Mountain bike Trails and Dragon Trail as well, both events; and Surf Life Saving Tasmania's 2020 Senior Championships.

In terms of fundraising events or dinners or award dinners, both the Olympic Appeal Dinner scheduled for 30 May has been cancelled and the Cricket Tasmania Awards Night, which incorporates the Ricky Ponting Awards, scheduled for 3 April, will be postponed until further notice.

I am advised that on 17 March the national Cabinet accepted advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee that community sporting activities could continue with involvement from the central participants, players, coaches, match officials, staff, volunteers involved in operations and parents, guardians or participants. This advice follows ongoing consultation with sporting organisations, which has resulted in guidelines being prepared for community sporting organisations. The guidelines provided relevant advice on change room access, physical contact, travel and social distancing and hygiene practices.

Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that contact sports have a greater risk of transmission than any other sport and as such should be considered on a case-by-case basis. All sporting codes should seek public health advice applicable to their code and take into account outdoor mass gathering issues as well.

TasPorts - Risk Register - Implementation

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.02 p.m.]

- (1) With regard to financial losses sustained by TasPorts' subsidiary, Bass Island Line, and the 2019 incident of fraud, did TasPorts have a risk register prior to this event? If yes, when was TasPorts' first fraud risk register implemented?
- (2) Do you have any other incidents of fraud being detected? If not, what measures has TasPorts taken since its inception to prevent fraud? Have any other instances of fraud been detected?
- (3) Did Bass Island Line have a risk register prior to this event? If yes, when was Bass Island Line's fraud risk register initially implemented? Have any other instances of fraud been detected? If not, what measures has Bass Island Line taken since inception to prevent fraud and have any other instances of fraud been detected? Of the \$352 516 subject to the fraud

event, including the \$99 475 recovered last year, what is the total amount that has been recovered?

- (4) Is TasPorts confident that appropriate measures are now in place to prevent and/or reduce the risk of fraud?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

- (1) TasPorts' fraud and reputation risk register was first established in September 2011. In addition to the register, TasPorts also has in place a fraud and corruption policy, as well as a fraud and corruption procedure, which were both implemented in November 2012. All three documents are subject to regular review under TasPorts' governance framework.
- (2) Bass Island Line adopts the policies, procedures and registers of TasPorts as its parent company. TasPorts' risk register includes items specific to Bass Island Line. However, in October 2018, Bass Island Line adopted its own risk register.
- (3) TasPorts recovered \$99 475 through financial institutions with an additional \$50 000 recovered from insurers. The total amount recovered is \$149 475. In response to this fraud incident, TasPorts engaged a third party to conduct an audit of the event. The company also completed an internal investigation on the incident. The external audit report confirmed a control framework was in place at the time of the incident to prevent and detect fraud, and that the processes to approve purchase orders and pay suppliers was sound.

It was determined, however, that in this instance the controls were not carried out effectively. Based on findings and recommendations made in both internal and external audit reports TasPorts has implemented several control improvements.

- (4) TasPorts is confident that appropriate measures are in place to reduce the risk of future fraud events.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Resumed from above.

[3.06 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, earlier I was talking about the devastating fires on the mainland and how we are going to implement legislation to enable landholders to burn off better. I was talking about how the community of Tasmania rallied at a time where many people on the mainland were in need and the sort of things that happened.

I was going to relate to you one particular incident in my electorate. It is about the Riana Cricket Club. Riana is also the birth home of the member for Murchison and it has a fantastic community spirit. I even sat with the member for Murchison's parents when we had dinner during this fundraiser.

Ms Forrest - As you should because my dad is the legend of that club. He is - it is up on the wall in the clubrooms.

Mrs HISCUTT - And indeed most of the community spirit was on display at the community centre, which is near the school and it is a clubhouse for the footy and the cricket club.

The Riana Cricket Club wanted to do something special for the bushfire victims on the mainland. They did a bit of homework and decided that the greatest place of need was Kangaroo Island. The sporting facilities on Kangaroo Island, amongst other things, of course, had been decimated. The Riana Community Centre and associated clubs are the heart of Riana and they decided the same would be for the Kangaroo Island team, the Western Districts Cricket Club.

It was decided that a fundraiser would happen. Under the guidance of the president, Mr Ben Radcliff, the club held a fantastic dinner and auction. The people in the kitchen, mainly ladies, served nearly 200 counter meals that night. They looked absolutely worn out by the time they had finished. Then came the auction with the deputy mayor, Mr Gary Carpenter, as the auctioneer. He moved things along very quickly as there was a huge amount of donated goods.

Most of the goods were farm goods such as super, lime and grass seed and the like. My husband got carried away by a large picture of Patrick Dangerfield in Geelong colours. Much to my disappointment, his was the winning bid so every time I walk through the hallway now I have to look at this picture of Patrick Dangerfield.

The bidding was so hectic that one fellow paid \$100 for a locally made fruit cake simply because he could not get in anywhere else and was desperate to contribute to the cause. Needless to say, \$42 000 was raised by this small community - \$11 500 went to BlazeAid and four of the team members - Ben Radcliff, Gary Carpenter, Damien Carpenter and James King - hand-delivered the balance, \$31 400, to the club on Kangaroo Island at their own expense. Mr President, they eliminated the middleman.

This is just one example of the fundraisers which were happening in my electorate and there would have been many, many more in Tasmania. I congratulate and thank all those people and clubs who have made the effort to raise funds for our mainlanders. We are lucky to be able to help.

The Premier's address goes on to talk about the Waste Action Plan. I was pleased to see the member for Hobart was interested in asking some question without notice on that. He talks about electric vehicles and irrigation schemes. It may seem that I have bundled some different subjects together here, but they are all related to our changing climate and how to manage it. I am sure the member for Hobart will touch on the electric vehicle subject, which I know is dear to his heart.

He also talked about the general waste as a big problem. It annoys me when I see rubbish, tins and bottles on the side of the road. I am hoping that when the container deposit scheme is up and running, most of the dumping will cease. Where there is a dollar concerned, hopefully people will think twice.

The Central Coast Council has introduced a FOGO system with their fortnightly waste collection services. The FOGO stands for Food Organics and Garden Organics, so it is a FOGO collection service. The FOGO is used to create compost. I am surprised at the small amount of consistent resistance from a handful of people who are unable to accept this change when most people have moved on and are using the system very well. We are about to discuss the member for

McIntyre's motion regarding Tasmanian Irrigation in weeks to come and water schemes so I will not go on too much about it but maybe next time.

The Premier has mentioned in his speech that \$170 million has been committed to deliver at least the next five irrigation schemes, the Don scheme being the first cab off the rank. I was in the room at Lower Barrington for the inaugural meeting of farmers interested in this scheme. There was a crowd of about 50 to 60 people and they were all very interested and excited about the scheme. Originally, it was very slow to get off the ground but with other schemes running, they could see the benefits of what could be achieved here.

The First Home Owner Grant is to continue for the next two years and will provide further boosts to our construction sectors. The member for Hobart will have a bit to say on this, but this grant is to provide stimulus for our builders, not particularly for real estate agents. However, stamp duty concessions for eligible pensioners downsizing their homes will still continue. There is plenty in the State of the State address that is good news, and I see real benefits not just for my own constituents in Montgomery, but for all Tasmanians. We have much to be positive about. It is times like these when I realise how fortunate we are to be Tasmanian living in Tasmania. There are significant challenges ahead, but I am confident in the Government, I am confident in this Council and I am confident in all members. Thank you, Mr President.

[3.12 p.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, I doubt if anyone here can remember a State of the State address delivered at such a time of uncertainty. At the time the Premier delivered his hopes and promises for the next 12 months in Tasmania, there was an air of uncertainty because of the coronavirus and other factors. Since then, our uncertainty has increased and it continues to increase beyond predictions.

By most standards it was a good address, concentrating on many of Tasmania's future needs. But let us face it: most of the address may now be wishful thinking overtaken by history. Like most of the State of State addresses, the bulk of the promises were predictable, more for health and education, although there never seems to be enough and health services are still in deep trouble.

Build infrastructure, create jobs and a strong economy but like all previous statements, the promises depend on future economic conditions which are increasingly harder to predict. Apart from the economic effects of coronavirus, global economic factors way beyond the Tasmanian Government's control are doubling down. We have a world recession on the horizon. The economic impact of coronavirus is still largely unknown and its impact on important Tasmanian exports could be catastrophic. There is this dangerous dispute between the Soviet Union and Russia over oil supplies, which has pulled down the global stock markets. I pity the state Treasurer and the Premier in working their way through these circumstances.

Like previous statements, this one dwells on past achievements. The state's economy is relatively strong, good employment numbers and there are plausible plans for the future which should have lasting benefits, such as the promised review of the public service to put Tasmanians at the centre of everything it does. The draft major projects legislation is an interesting promise although it does breed some scepticism, but if the time to gain development approvals is reduced, that is a good thing. If public opinion to some changes is disregarded, that is obviously not so good. Tasmania has a history of pushing through unpopular projects without due process. We all remember the Tamar Valley Pulp Mill process.

The Premier in his address spends a lot of time on the future of Tasmania's tourism industry, and so he should, but coronavirus presents a major problem there as well. If it is well gone by spring, well and good, but we just do not know. The 1918 Spanish flu pandemic lasted for years, but all that aside, let us cut to the chase.

The part of the Premier's statement that captures my imagination is the proposed renewable energy action plan. Tasmania is, of course, excellently placed to provide renewable energy well beyond its needs. Yes, it can sell some of it via the Bass Strait cable, but hydrogen storage, if it is feasible, will give Tasmania a tremendous export market. Hydro, wind and sunshine converted into hydrogen. The two proposed hydrogen hubs are only a start, but they could grow into something of major economic importance to the state, but that is well into the future.

The Government and all Tasmanians face big problems right now - problems that need leadership at both federal and state levels, and level-headedness among the rest of us.

[3.16 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise today in response to the Premier's State of the State address recently presented in the other place. However, before I do, I acknowledge the efforts of former premier, the honourable Will Hodgman, during his 18 years as a member, and six years as the leader of this state. As the member for Franklin, a minister and later premier, he served the people of Tasmania with distinction. I wish Will and his family all the best for the future.

I also take this moment to congratulate the member for Bass, Mr Gutwein, on his ascension to the position of Premier of Tasmania. Indeed, the role of premier is an extremely demanding and challenging one. I believe that the forty-sixth Premier of Tasmania has, in the performance of his many ministerial roles, demonstrated the qualities and professional skills required to unite and lead the Government in its endeavours to provide positive outcomes for Tasmanians. Eighteen years is a long time in politics, and I wish the honourable premier every success in his most senior office.

While the State of the State address is annual occurrence, and all members await the Premier's reflections and intentions with interest, it is perhaps more anticipated when a changing of the guard has occurred. With new leadership comes new perspective, and a possible change in direction and focus. Therefore it is important that we, as members of the Legislative Council - the House of Review - pay due care to the Premier's words, and that we will indeed keep him and his government accountable.

Last year, I spoke of the need to combat the impacts of climate change with thorough planning and mitigating measures. I note the Premier's comments that it is now time to showcase our innovation to the world and stake our claim as a renewables powerhouse. After a period of consultation and review in relation to pathways to zero net emissions prior to 2050, there will be amendments to the climate change act and Tasmania's new Climate Change Action Plan for post-2021. I look forward to the outcomes of this plan analysis, and indeed reviewing the post-2021 plan.

It is also pleasing to see a new ministerial portfolio for climate change, and it augurs well that the Premier has that role and responsibility. I am also aware that there are many individuals and groups in Tasmania who are experts in their respective fields, and want to contribute positively to the discussion and to do all they can to ensure Tasmania is a leader and an innovator with regard to renewable energy and reduction of emissions.

One of those expert groups is Climate Tasmania, which has previously advised that the dominant cause of climate change identified repeatedly in international and scientific reports is our burning of fossil fuels - coal, natural gas, petrol, diesel, jet fuel, LPG, and so on. Continuing use of these fuels is the critical factor in making our climate increasingly volatile, and indeed dangerous.

Every day, Tasmanians buy vehicles or equipment that rely on fossil fuels. Every purchase of a new car, truck, tractor, motorboat, aircraft, gas boiler, oil furnace or other industrial items involves an expectation that such items will be used for many years and that the relevant fossil fuel will be available for all those years. Scientists say that if such new equipment is used for anything like its expected lifetime, climate disruption will be far more dangerous.

Weaning ourselves off fossil fuels sounds difficult, and it will be, but Tasmania is well placed to make the transition and to reap long-term benefits in the process. First, our electricity supply is now mostly renewable. Second, we are a small island with a modest population, so we do not have to worry about long distances or large numbers of people in this transition. Finally, Tasmania's largest imports by value are for gas and petroleum fuels, for which we pay over \$1 billion each year. That money leaves the state and is a major source of economic leakage. The transition from fossil fuels will stop that leakage.

Economic transitions are, by nature, disruptive. Climate Tasmania's advice is that disruption can be minimised. Climate change is, perhaps, the greatest challenge of our time. By ignoring its roots, the burning of coal, oil and gas, we are collectively squibbing that challenge. I am heartened that the Premier has accepted the responsibility as Minister for Climate Change.

The Mersey electorate encompasses and is surrounded by many farms whose operations include dairy, grazing and cropping. A drive around the area displays a patchwork of paddocks with a huge array of enterprises run by hardworking farmers. The place is a hive of activity in the daylight hours and undoubtedly at night during lambing and calving. My view that the Mersey area is one of the most beautiful and diverse in the state is probably somewhat coloured by having had the privilege of living there for many years. I truly enjoy getting out and about in the electorate and having a look at some of the amazing innovation being implemented in our agricultural sector.

I have been very interested in the Pipeline to Prosperity program and was extremely pleased with the Premier's announcement of the preferred option of the Don Irrigation Scheme. He stated that the estimated \$28.5 million project would deliver some 5000 megalitres of irrigation water to high-quality agricultural land in the Don, Barrington and Sheffield areas in the north-west. Once fully operational and the water utilised, the scheme is expected to deliver 130 direct and indirect jobs. The irrigation scheme has been one that has been sponsored and nurtured by a number of governments over a number of years. This is great news for our farmers and provides some certainty in what has been an erratic and unpredictable period of weather. Additional jobs for the north-west across a number of trades are very welcome too.

In a boost for the north-west economy, BioMar Australia have confirmed commissioning has commenced at their Wesley Vale facility with some 38 staff now employed, offices open and world-class laboratories now in operation. The facility is on track to begin production by April and an official opening was expected in late May of this year, prior to the coronavirus.

The BioMar Group was started in 1962 by a group of Danish fish farmers. They are leaders in the research and development of sustainable, high-performance feed-providing diets for more than

45 different fish and shrimp species in more than 80 countries. BioMar was recently named the top-rated salmon sustainability fish feed company in the world. In late 2017, the firm unveiled plans to develop a \$56 million world-class state-of-the-art fish feed production facility at Wesley Vale. According to a media release -

BioMar Australia's Managing Director, David Whyte, said 2020 is set to be a big year, with the development set to produce up to 110,000 tonnes per annum of aqua feed product to support the Australian and Oceania aquaculture industry, creating some 55 full time jobs and an additional 30 jobs across the region through indirect support, operational, port services and logistical roles.

...

"We have already received interest in the project from local Tasmanian primary producers to supply ingredients and have had some preliminary discussions to date, with these discussions continuing throughout the year."

Mr Whyte said the recruitment process had gone smoothly with a total of 38 staff members on board in a variety of roles.

I was extremely heartened by the Premier's comments regarding tourism growth over the past five years. A 25 per cent increase in numbers of visitors is significant. The 5 per cent increase in visitor spend is of benefit to our small- and large-scale tourism businesses. Sectors such as retail are indirectly impacted by the increased presence of visitors to our state and, as the member for a rural and regional electorate, I am pleased that the Government has made a commitment to decentralising visitation to the state with the 'visit the regions' strategy, which is designed to entice visitors to Tasmania's regional areas through the promotion and development of creative, unique and diverse events.

Stage 1 of the new visitor centre at Cradle Mountain is complete. With a huge commitment to additional infrastructure within the park, the future for the north-west's most iconic attraction is both secure and bright. Businesses in the Mersey electorate benefit greatly from the indirect effects of Cradle Mountain tourism, as visitors often stop to pick the official uniform of a puffer jacket and thermals, sometimes returning post-walk for a warm bed or maybe enjoying some hot chocolate.

I still believe that, along with increased tourism of our trail bike pathways, scenic rail is still very much undeveloped in the state, especially the north-west coast. The Don River Railway could be supported to provide a regular service. The spectacular coastline would bring rail enthusiasts from all over the world.

Unfortunately, the impact of the coronavirus on tourism has already been felt in Tasmania with the cancellation of Dark MOFO. The owner and creative team have conducted rigorous risk assessments, both financial and with respect to public health, and made a decision in the best interests of Tasmanians and the long-term future of the event. We are seeing festivals, concerts, school events, sporting competitions and international travel cancelled or postponed every day. We are naïve to think that our state would not be affected by a pandemic of this scale. However, we may see more localised tourism, travel and spending within Australia or our own state. Much of the groundwork has been established due to the recent Holiday Here This Year initiative in response to the bushfire recovery effort from Tourism Australia and the Tasmanian recovery response plan.

I note the Premier's comments in relation to a Tasmanian AFL team. He said -

The Government believes events tourism, especially relating to major sporting events supports Tasmanian economy while also growing participation in healthy activities. This is why we are making strategic investments to secure national sporting teams. We want all children to participate in sport and for those who aspire to the highest level to have a pathway into national competition.

Members are probably already aware of my opposition to the creation of a Tasmanian AFL franchise. This may come as a surprise to those in the broader public who are aware of my lifelong participation in Australian rules football. I have experienced football in many guises, was fortunate to play in the statewide competition at senior level for both Hobart and New Norfolk in the 1980s, was then playing coach for Latrobe, the home of Darrell Baldock and the NTFL. As a physical education teacher I had the opportunity to coach numerous high school football teams. I am proud to have represented Tasmania on a number of occasions in a variety of sports, including football, as a player and a team manager. However, now is not the time or place to express at length my thoughts on a Tasmania-based AFL team. However, as confirmed with many constituents, I believe Tasmania's demand for AFL matches is satisfied by the current situation, with both Hawthorn and North Melbourne already playing in the state.

It is pleasing to see that the Government is aware that there are other sports that may also benefit from the creation of a Tasmanian team. Perhaps the best example is soccer, now referred to worldwide as football as in other parts of Australia. The honourable Premier stated in his State of the State address that it is his intention to meet with Football Tasmania regarding its plans for an A-League team. I must ask why the future of soccer in this state has been neglected or relegated below the AFL on the priorities list for so long. In 2019, in a speech in this place, I mentioned that 34 581 Tasmanians currently play soccer, compared to the 24 275 who play AFL. A-League crowds are obviously smaller than the average AFL crowds, which means that Tasmania could easily pull decent crowds by competitive standards. According to research from marketing company Roy Morgan, soccer was the fastest growing of the football codes in Australia between 2001 and 2016. It was the only one of the four, including Australian rules, Rugby union and Rugby league, that grew in popularity.

Football Tasmania's submission raised concerns about the disproportion of state Government funding received by various sports. The submission reads, 'We are however concerned about the way funding is allocated between various sports in Tasmania.'. The statement later expands on this point, saying -

We are concerned that the way the Tasmanian Government allocates funding to support recurrent spending, particularly on grassroots competitions and talent-pathway development, is not aligned to any performance-based or participation-based criteria. As a consequence, some sports in Tasmania are receiving disproportionately more funding from the State Government compared to others. We are not in any way suggesting AFL doesn't deserve funding. Quite the opposite. We are simply suggesting in the interests of fairness and equity, there needs to be a transparent process for allocating funding.

Commercially speaking, soccer is a sleeping giant. As the patron of the Devonport Strikers and the Devonport Junior Soccer Association, I have no doubt a Tasmanian A-League team would be very well supported financially by business and supporter numbers and a resounding success if we were to invest appropriately. If we keep chipping away at A-League, it has a strong chance of

happening as there seems to be a willingness at the national administration level for that to occur. Unfortunately, I do not hold the same hope for an AFL side.

Basketball is also a sport with which I am familiar, and the recent focus on Tasmania's re-entry to the NBL is one which may prove to be advantageous, but only if more kids get off the couch and away from a myriad of screens to bounce a basketball. Whilst I appreciate the desire to have pathways for talented athletes, I am personally more concerned for the majority of our younger generation who will never participate in a sport at a professional or semi-professional level.

One of the new age epidemics which is, and is going to continue to be, of a huge concern is obesity and its health and societal consequences. Health statistics clearly indicate lack of physical activity, poor eating habits and inadequate sleep is already placing unmanageable demands on our health system. Thus, it is encouraging to see the Government's renewed commitment to providing funds to encourage young people to play sport and to also level the playing field so our female participants also have suitable infrastructure. Locally the Meercroft Park Facilities Committee was fortunate and thankful to receive a significant government grant to assist in the update of the local change rooms, toilets, playing fields, canteen and so on under the Levelling the Playing Field grants.

While improvement in health communication is positive, it is important local services are retained so that people of all ages - from the young to the elderly - are able to access and take advantage of the service. This is one of the main reasons the Mersey Hospital is so important to the eastern end of the north-west coast, where, according to recent announcements, Devonport and Latrobe are both continuing to experience elevated house and building approvals. Associated health services like those provided at the Strathdevon hydrotherapy pool are vital in keeping people active and independent.

It is also heartening to see strong communities do all they can to help the elderly remain supported. As patron of the Mersey Community Care, I can only but admire the people involved, both as leaders and as volunteers. Those services are replicated in many organisations throughout the state and many volunteers are involved as part of community emergency and fire services, surf club patrols, sporting and theatre groups, and recreational bodies.

I am concerned with speech writers using the following strategy, as was apparent in the Premier's address. The spin went like this -

Today I can announce that from 2023 onwards we will invest \$1.5 million per annum from the increased revenues from Hotels and Clubs that the future gaming policy delivers to support the National Trust and revitalise our unique heritage properties that drive visitation.

The goal to adequately fund the National Trust and to support and revitalise our unique heritage is a wonderful and appropriate step for the Government as Tasmania's heritage is indeed a marketing tool for the state and does attract many visitors. Home Hill in Devonport, for instance, the home of Australia's tenth and only Tasmanian prime minister, Joseph Lyons and his wife Enid, is really a step back in time and worth of a visit. Our heritage assets entice people to Tasmania, as do our scenery, parks, beaches, waterways, mountains and diverse cultural activities, including art galleries, orchestras, dramatic performances, music and food festivals, agricultural shows, theatre and so on.

However, for the Premier to imply the support of the National Trust is associated with or it is because of a funding coup or increased revenue from an increased gambling revenue seems inappropriate. The two should not be connected in any way. However, the Premier, Mr Gutwein, also said in his address that we will also ensure the Heritage Places Renewal Loan Scheme is available to the National Trust Tasmania to continue its important work to conserve our built and natural heritage. That strategy I believe is to be commended. For the strategists to suggest the funding will come from future gaming policy delivering revenue to support the National Trust and revitalise our unique heritage properties that drive visitation is not sincere.

Mr Valentine – The Community Support Levy may be involved -

Mr GAFFNEY - He might have been saying that, but his quote said from the gaming revenue so that does not include CSL.

The Premier's State of the State address included a number of promises, but there are two I wish to address with specific reference to something I believe concerns all Tasmanians. He said -

We will be a Government of conviction, we will be a Government of compassion.

Mr President, as members are aware, I have spent the last year to eighteen months researching and consulting with national and international experts and the community with the view to providing Tasmanians with what will hopefully be the most sensible, safeguarded, accessible and sensitive voluntary assisted dying legislation. I call on the Premier and his Government to honour those statements. Let me repeat them once again.

We will be a Government of conviction, we will be a Government of compassion.

This is not easy, but the most important things never are. Voluntary assisted dying is an issue which can polarise people both inside our parliament and in the community. As I have said from the very beginning of this process it is not about opinion; it is not about picking a side or winning an argument - it is about choice: choice for the individual. The choice to utilise the legislation or not will have no tangible impact on anyone other than the individual. I have never sought to convince anyone of the ethical or philosophical correctness of voluntary assisted dying nor have I attempted to discredit anyone whose perspective differs from my personal view. But as one proponent of VAD said, 'There will be no more deaths, but less suffering.'. Let that sink in: 'There will be no more deaths, but less suffering.'.

I am heartened by the assertion that the Government will be one of conviction and compassion. I trust this will mean the new Government will indeed listen to those community feelings and vote in accordance with their wishes. I believe those who are in favour of the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020 are asking for choice. They need their representatives to act with conviction and compassion to ensure they have that opportunity.

[3.37 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, Tasmania and Australia are quite different places now as opposed to when the Premier delivered his address. We are facing, and will continue to face, significant financial pressures in coming months as our health services face enormous pressure to provide care for those who need it for matters other than and including COVID-19.

We know COVID-19 will put significant and hopefully not overwhelming demand on all our health-related resources - human, supplies and other resources and financial. It is vital all Tasmanians heed the advice proactively, responsibly and with a real appreciation of the reality that the inconvenience we all experience, may actually avoid the deaths of many vulnerable members of our community, our own loved ones and even ourselves.

Considering our actions, we also need to remember Tasmania has a more rapidly ageing demographic than any other state, and a population with a higher burden of chronic disease. I appreciate the serious manner with which our Premier and Minister for Health have taken this very serious public health matter. I particularly appreciate the openness and willingness of the Premier to engage with me directly when I raised concerns with him as well as providing clear evidence-based advice to the public. It is difficult in a cacophony of noise out there around this issue and we as community leaders need to all sing from the same songbook. We all need to demonstrate the behaviour as well as talk about it. When I was at a public event recently and heard a federal member say it was all 'bullshit', and that was the word he used, I was horrified. That was only a few days ago.

I am sure there will be opportunities and likely imperatives to revisit the challenges we face that are changing on a daily basis. They will continue to change on a daily basis for some time yet. That makes it difficult for the public because the message seems to change. The reality is the message is not changing, it is evolving as the circumstances evolve and we need to keep on top of it and we need to be sure we are singing from that same song sheet and providing accurate advice.

I appreciated today the opportunity to have the briefing on COVID-19 which focused on education. It is a shame we cannot record that and give it to the public because there was some very good information in that briefing. I urge the Leader to make sure we have very regular briefings of that nature so that we can be kept up to date. I had a Facebook message today that was just full of so much rubbish and scaremongering -

Mrs Hiscutt - You are aware of the 9.15 a.m. daily updates?

Ms FORREST - Yes, I watch that every morning, except when we start to sit and I cannot.

Mrs Hiscutt - We sit at 11 a.m.

Ms FORREST - We had a briefing at 9 a.m. or 9.30 a.m. by the time it started today, but it was not finished at the time, but that is okay. It is not going to be the case every day.

Mrs Hiscutt - Noted.

Ms FORREST - I have been tuning into those; if you check the feeds, you will see.

Those matters are frightfully important and whilst it seems to be overtaking everything - it should - we also need to make sure we continue the everyday things that need to be done. Particularly at the moment, we need to support our nurses, midwives, doctors, health professionals and teachers who are still working. We should remember that we may be angry at times about the fact that we might not get tested if we ask for it, or we might have a delay getting to a service, but we need to be kind to each other and actually work together in all of this.

There are some really good things on social media and there is some absolute garbage. I ask you to filter out the accurate information and share that. I have actually deleted stuff off my page that has been completely inaccurate when people put it on there.

I will now turn my attention to the Premier's address.

Mr President, I wonder if you have listened to a chairman's address to shareholders reviewing the past and talking about the future where not once there was a mention of the overall financial outcome now or at any stage in the future. All we heard in the Premier's address was how much we are spending here and how much we are spending there, but there was not a hint as to whether our revenue will be more or less than our spending, not a word. I am pretty sure we will now know that our spending will be much more but this was done before COVID-19 was understood to be the financial challenge to the state and the country, and the world.

I am pretty sure I did not miss it and I was very surprised that there was no mention at all of whether our revenue was to go anywhere near to matching our expenditure, and this is even more relevant now with the additional costs that will result from COVID-19.

We heard lots about what we were planning to do - we were planning to do 'this' and then hoping that something else would eventuate so that we could do 'that'. The member for Mersey alluded to some of those points.

Do not get me wrong, Mr President, I am always keen to hear about what the positives are for this great and wonderful state of ours. I dare to dream. I am all for it but I am really pleased to see funding commitments in areas that bring benefit to the broader community and that is important and we need to keep doing that.

We all like to see our electorates supported and we also like to see the state supported. On that note, I was particularly pleased to see the funding commitment to the Unconformity that the Leader alluded that I would mention, and I will. I declare that I sit on the board of Unconformity; along with our artistic director and other board members, we have actively lobbied for this funding to be secured in a timely manner to enable Unconformity to go ahead this year, which is in October so it may do. It is a matter of the board and our artistic director to decide in coming weeks whether we will proceed. We needed the funding in a timely manner before the budget announcement to enable staff to be engaged and things like that.

For arts organisations, these sorts of things are really important. They run on a shoestring. I was a little bit disappointed in the Premier's announcement today and the financial support for the state, for business and that sort of thing, the arts community basically was left off the map.

There are arts organisations that are really struggling. They have had to cancel every show. My daughter is the chair of a small professional theatre company. They have been working four years on this production and it was due to start this week. They have had to cancel it - four years of work. It does not mean it will not go ahead but those little organisations - and they are everywhere, and there are bigger ones like the Burnie Arts and Function Centre, the Princess Theatre, Devonport would have one - all of those, will be impacted.

Mrs Hiscutt - Paper on skin was cancelled.

Ms FORREST - That is right. I was surprised that was cancelled and not postponed, but there was a link from the Burnie Arts and Function Centre today. I had bought tickets for most of those events. I will leave that money with the organisation.

I bought tickets for the Australian Musical Theatre Festival in Launceston. I will leave the money with that organisation. I have the capacity to do that, not everyone does. I will consider making additional donations to those small arts organisations to keep them going but I want the Government to come in and back us on that. The arts are so important to this community. They are important at a time like this, so let's make sure they do not fall over.

Mrs Hiscutt - Can I encourage you to make sure the money goes to where you think it is and not disappear somewhere within the council?

Ms FORREST - Absolutely. The money will go to the artists; that is what I am talking about, these little art organisations. Some of them are not really small. I can understand absolutely why David Walsh has decided to cancel Dark Mofo. The investment in that is huge. The cost to the taxpayer is huge, and that is entirely sensible. His media release was very David Walsh-ish but he explained it really well. Someone may have taken out some of the esoteric arguments in it but still.

We need to remember it is not only about businesses in town that run businesses. Yes, they are very important. The big supermarkets look after themselves and certainly are at the moment. It is the small tourism operators. People who own a couple of B&B facilities. They are the ones who will need the support and the arts and hospitality organisations definitely need it.

We do not know whether Unconfirmity will go ahead this year. It will be subject to decisions the board will make regarding COVID-19 and it is a challenge all arts, sports and other events will face in the months ahead. Someone mentioned that it may be by spring; no, it will not. I can honestly say it will not because it takes 12 to 18 months to get a vaccine in place.

Whilst we have got some good news out of some of the research in Melbourne recently about some of the antivirals that may be able to treat some cases, it still takes months of human testing. You cannot fast-track these things. You do not want to kill people by the treatment, and that is the risk. We have to be practical and realistic about this and we have to plan for the long term here.

If we do find a drug that will kill off the virus and does it effectively and consistently and does not harm the patient further, then good. We will be ahead of the curve. But we cannot plan for that. We have to plan for the most likely scenario, which is a year or more of these sorts of measures.

I commend the Government for acting decisively. We have evidence around the world where it has not worked so well and we have evidence where it has and we need to learn from those as well.

Sporting and arts events in small communities, such as on the west coast, will continue to face these challenges in tourism and well as the arts. Particularly on the west coast, the Mount Lyell mine is still on care and maintenance. I acknowledge the tragic death earlier in the year of Cameron Goss, a miner from Queenstown who worked at the Henty Gold Mine. I offer my sincere sympathy to Cameron's family and friends. I appreciate the tragic impact this had on the whole west coast community.

Festivals such as the Unconformity help communities come together and heal. I am hopeful it will be able to do so in October or at a delayed time if it cannot happen in October.

In welcoming all the funding commitments, I am keen to hear about the way we will fund these commitments. To the dreams and aspirations of government, I like to know what is coming in as well as what is going out.

You may call me a bit 'nitpicky' around this, but surely we need to talk about revenue and how much of a shortfall there will be and how much we will have to borrow to cover the shortfall. I know the federal government will stump up some of the money for the COVID-19, but before that, we still had a shortfall and there was no discussion in the Premier's address about how we were going to manage that. What happens when the shortfall keeps growing every year? What are we doing?

Otherwise, listening to the spending and the hoped-for spending like this, the State of the State reads a bit more like a wish list. Since this Government assumed office six years ago, never can I recall not being reminded in this sort of address how the Government has turned around the fiscal fortunes of the state and how there will be surpluses as far as the eye can see; never, until now. When I say now, this was a couple of weeks ago, before the impact of COVID-19 was factored in. My question is, what has happened? Has the Government finally accepted that the surplus measure they have always used does not include all outlays and is, therefore, potentially a misleading indicator of the budget outcome each year? Is the Government finally admitting that, for the year 2019-20 and for the next three years of forward Estimates, we will spend more than we will receive?

I have always hoped the Government would acknowledge the fiscal reality facing the state, so we could have a sensible discussion based on the real world. Alas, there was no acknowledgement of this fiscal position. It is going to be hard to interrogate over the coming years because of the effect of COVID-19. It is all going to be lost. Not lost, but it is going to be harder to fully appreciate the underlying fiscal condition of the state.

It might have become a bit irrelevant because we are going to have to move forward and find ways to support the people of Tasmania. My concern was that taking this whole comment off the agenda is a step toward denialism and that could be where we are. It may be a perverse blessing for some; the party you belong to will no longer be encumbered by the need to say where the money is coming from. The current Treasurer often criticised the Labor Party for that - to fund promises made to the people of Tasmania. The Government is no longer bothering to do that. The alternative will not have to, either.

I hope we might all move to a more disciplined discussion of revenues and outlays and what the future holds for Tasmania but I feel we are moving toward a political environment more detached from reality than ever. The State of the State address made no reference to the predicted outcome in the Revised Estimates Report issued last month. I draw your attention to a couple of matters to back up the points I have been making from the Revised Estimates Report.

The Government is a cash business, cash in and cash out. The cashflow statement on pages 38 and 39 in the Revised Estimates Report sets out the revised Estimates for cash in and cash out for this year, 2019-20. If you take a look at the last line on page 39, the cash deficit for 2019-20 is \$340 million. That is the net cash from operating. After recurrent spending, paying for the delivery of services less the net cash outlays from non-financial assets, such as infrastructure et cetera, there are other outlays. There are outlays that relate to financial assets. These include equity injections

into GBEs, which are legitimate government outlays. If you include those, the cash deficit for this year would be \$604 million.

The Government does not use this figure from the cashflow statement to highlight its budget position, but that is the cash available to fund the services we all need and use. Instead, and it is not just this Government who has used it, it uses a net operating balance on the income statement. It is on page 18 of the Revised Estimates Report, a net operating balance or the surplus as the Government calls; it is \$10 million in 2019-20. That is a far cry from a cash deficit of \$604 million. For a service deliverer, isn't this the figure that really matters - the cash?

Even if a net operating figure is \$10 million in the Revised Estimates Report, it is not really a meaningful figure to rely on to understand our real position. Grants from the federal government make up a lot of our income. In the Revised Estimates Report income statement on page 18, there are grants totalling \$3.9 billion for 2019-20. Included in that figure is \$100 million of NPP grants, National Partnership Payments, that were included as income last year, in 2018-19.

Mr President, \$100 million of income has been counted twice, can you believe that? I am not making it up. The Government has even claimed surplus of \$10 million, which should really be a deficit of \$90 million, and I will be asking the Leader to confirm the double counting in case I am wrong. I sent a question through and am unsure if I have received an answer yet, but we ran out of time today. Hopefully, we will have that tomorrow, at the latest.

Maybe that is why the Government no longer wishes to talk about surpluses. People are waking up to the fact that the surplus figure has been used to paper over our problems. Nowhere in the Revised Estimates Report is the accounting policy which has produced this one-off situation and unspent grants in one year are once again included as income in the next when spent. Yes, the change was noted in this year's budget papers. There was a whole page on it. Someone picking up the Revised Estimates Report receives no explanation for such a significant matter that surely deserves some explanation.

We owe it to the people of Tasmania to help them understand our true situation. That is why I keep banging on about our fiscal situation. It is not so much what the Government is telling us; it is what they are not telling us that is the problem. There is no doubt we are spending more money every year, certainly more than the previous Labor government, a fact which the Government will tediously remind us of whenever it can, but I get no sense that we are catching up and fear about the people falling behind.

As I alluded to, the latest troubles in the globalised world will only make matters worse. The best way to tackle the current global pandemic is to be open and honest about the challenges ahead. I am hopeful the Premier and Treasurer will take this approach, as he has shown he can in relation to COVID-19, in relation to our fiscal position.

To move to a small number of other key matters I wish to comment on in my response to the Premier's State of the State address, I will confine it because there are other times to comment on these things. The financial position is one and COVID-19 is another major one. I will touch on a couple of others. During the Christmas and summer break, I travelled extensively around my electorate, engaging with my constituents, to understand what matters to them most. I met with people from all areas and all age groups. It is interesting to note there are some very familiar themes across my electorate. As I said, I will speak to some of these issues briefly now, as I will be raising

some of them again by way of notice of motion to enable a broader debate on some important matters, including family violence.

When our former premier, Will Hodgman, resigned I promptly sent him a message acknowledging his service to the state. I wish him and his family all the best for the future. I was also pleased to see the Treasurer, the honourable Peter Gutwein, being elevated to the role of Premier. I was particularly pleased to see him retain the very important portfolio of Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. Members would be aware I have placed a notice of motion to debate this very serious matter more fully in coming weeks.

My concern behind our need for serious and focused attention into this area has recently heightened significantly with the emergence of COVID-19. We are all facing stressful and worrying times. People are being required to self-isolate, possibly in homes where they may not be safe. Financial pressures and employment concerns, even the cancellation of our beloved sports events, or just being locked out of the games, causes significant stress to many people. All these factors increase the risk of an escalation of family violence. Our service providers and police may require additional resources to ensure we can keep families, particularly women and children, safe. We know stress increases the risk of an escalation in family violence. I will speak more about this.

Regardless of the immediate challenges related to COVID-19, we must all take responsibility to address this extremely serious crime of family violence and work in a united manner to achieve gender equality. Without gender equality the scourge of family violence will not be overcome. Again, I appreciate the Premier's willingness to engage personally with me on this terribly important matter. I have met with him a number of times since he became Premier - I really appreciate that - and discussed my desire for a nonpartisan cross-party approach to finding real solutions and ensuring adequate resources are available to address this matter. I appreciate he is terribly busy at the moment, but he showed a willingness to look at that, which I appreciate. I know he will get to it and I appreciate he is very busy at the moment.

In terms of family violence, primary intervention must be the key focus; however, we also need to ensure we have well-resourced service providers, shelter and financial support for victims, predominantly women and children, and evidence-based programs to enable behaviour modification of perpetrators. We need adequate funding and resourcing for gender mainstreaming and training and implementation across all areas of government, and support for programs to be provided in the private sector. We need to ensure all our education services promote and demonstrate gender-neutral approaches and gender equality. Respectful relationships programs are key to success but they need to be consistent and they need to be universal. We simply cannot tolerate the murder of more than one woman a week in Australia by her current or former intimate partner. I will speak at more length about this in a debate at a later time.

Another matter frequently raised with me in my electorate by people of all ages and backgrounds is climate change. I was pleased to see the Premier reinstate this portfolio area as a matter of genuine concern and interest to people of Tasmania. Last year I spoke about a young Wynyard woman, Mishca Linden, who led the climate strike in Wynyard. There are many other young people who are equally passionate about climate change and their future. I am pleased that the Premier has taken it on.

It is a time that is hard to focus too much attention on that, predominately, but I am hopeful that the office will be well-resourced to enable it to go about its work. It is interesting that COVID-19 might bring about a perverse outcome with climate change, as people cannot travel

around the world to the same extent that they have been and even interstate travel has been questioned. We may use more private vehicles than public transport at times but the planes and the international travel stopping, basically, will have a significant impact.

The other side of the same coin is that it will set us back a little. There are a number of cafes no longer accepting keep cups. They only want to use disposables. I can understand that. There are calls in some parts not to use reusable shopping bags. There are swings and roundabouts. We can do some of these things if we are careful about it. As for our work, I am sure all members would have noticed that the diary has been cleaned out. We will have time at home with our families, which will be nice.

Mrs Hiscutt - We will have time to put another row of carrots in.

Ms FORREST - Yes. In doing that, it is important we keep the wheels turning - meetings can be held by video link and we can keep the committee work going as much as we can with deliberative meetings and things like that. We can and will still do that. It is nice to think that I will have some weekends and evenings at home. I am being honest about it. It is amazing.

Mr Valentine - It is forced personal time.

Ms FORREST - Yes, and we should make the most of it.

The other matter I wanted to raise was about families and children. This fits in to the family violence aspect as well. Primary prevention must be the key in looking after our vulnerable children in our communities. This year, I noticed that in February, the Commissioner for Children and Young People released her report, 'Investing in the Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People'. This report made a recommendation for the Government to develop and implement a wellbeing strategy that implements a long-term, cross-partisan and evidence-informed strategy for promoting and improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania. The commissioner described the approach that should be taken and what the data required to measure and monitor progress against the strategy and inform the future action should look like. This is clearly outlined in her report.

The commissioner also recommended that whilst the strategy is under development, and I suggest under implementation, the Tasmanian Government should immediately focus on investing in two critical areas, strengthening support in the first 1000 days of a child's life and reducing fragmentation of effort in service delivery. That makes so much sense. Regarding the first 1000 days of life, which is effectively from conception to the age of two years, we can provide care to the mother and family to ensure the best possible outcome for the child. In this area the commissioner recommended that, when striving to achieve the very best experience for all children in their first 1000 days, we need a cross-partisan mainstream undertaking in Tasmania that it is a key priority for all relevant government agencies. Any intervention in the first 1000 days should take an evidence-based, holistic, integrated and inclusive approach to be delivered both universally and proportionate to need.

I was pleased to hear in the Premier's State of the State address that the Government has announced it will fund Tasmania's first-ever comprehensive long-term, whole-of-government child and youth wellbeing strategy. This is good news; I will be keen to see how the strategy is developed. YNOT has also been lobbying the Government because the children's commissioner's role only goes to the under-18s, whereas Youth Network of Tasmania's focus is for young people from 18 to

25. The lobbying of YNOT was part of the reason why the Government also committed to including young people from the ages of 18 to 25 in this strategy.

Mrs Hiscutt - I am sure the member for Pembroke will be pleased.

Ms FORREST - Yes. I am sure she will.

Whilst the needs of very young children and people in their early twenties are quite different, I hope and expect to see an action plan or implementation plan to accompany the strategy.

What is really important in this is to ensure there are actions and funding to support it focused on primary prevention, as this is an area where long-term lasting and intergenerational change will occur. To make a real difference, we need intergenerational change.

Primary prevention in these challenging times takes time to demonstrate. Financial return on investment will take time and it should not be the priority. It is the same in the healthcare sector.

On the north-west coast, we have an excellent example of effective primary prevention in the area of family violence, gender equality, empowerment of young women and intergenerational poverty disadvantage and low aspiration. The Leader and the member for Montgomery represented the Minister for Women at the Big hART Project O celebration of 'This is Us'. Big hART's Project O is one such example of a very effective, amazing primary prevention model. It requires government funding and the minister Mr Jaensch has been on the board for the last five years, as I have, with this project. It is such an important and life-changing project. I have watched these young women for five years and some of them are doing amazing things. As I said, this program relies on funding from the government. I know government members in the north-west and the Opposition see value in this program.

I have been engaged with the program for the five years of its operation when they had their world-first Colourathon in Wynyard. I have witnessed the amazing outcomes we are now seeing for these young women and their families, as the Leader will attest. Some of the young women in this cohort now going through are siblings of some of the young women in the first or subsequent programs.

Project O, as I said, commenced in Wynyard and has since expanded to Smithton and three other areas on mainland Australia. There are many other areas of the state that would benefit and the return on investment in every sense would be significant. I encourage the Government to continue to financially and practically support this effective, important and valued prime prevention model and program. I encourage other members whose electorates could benefit from this - which is all of you, I expect - to think about this sort of program and work to even engage Big hART to look at investing in that area. Obviously, they cannot do it without funding.

Another area people are expecting action from the Government is in the area of political donations. I appreciate this may not be the Government's highest priority at the moment - the answer today would so suggest. We need to keep working on other matters of importance while addressing our immediate challenges, so I will speak more about that at a later time.

There are many other areas of concern to people in my electorate and, as I said, I will speak more to those at other opportunities. Our key focus needs to be on supporting our communities to

respond effectively, appropriately and consistently to the very real challenges we face related to COVID-19.

I also ask when people go to the supermarket they think about others. I read in the media yesterday and saw on social media that about three buses from Melbourne went up to a small community of around 1500 residents north of Melbourne. Two hundred people got off those buses, went into the supermarket in this small town and cleaned it out so that community had nothing. I cannot believe we can bring out the worst side of humanity at times like this. We are seeing some of the best - the Somerset Rotary Club has initiated a service where people can call them if they need groceries delivered or if they need urgent supplies of anything, and a member of that club will go and do it for them. That is the best of humanity and then we see the worst. Let us think about it.

When we go to the supermarket, ask ourselves, 'Do we really need that?' Yes, we have the money to buy it. We are lucky. Many members of my community do not have the money to stock up. They might have to go back 10 times to find toilet paper. For goodness sake, what is that about? You cannot buy hand sanitiser anywhere. Yes, now people are looking at how they can make their own. I wonder how many people have a cupboard full of hand sanitiser that will sit there? I wonder how much will be thrown out.

Mrs Hiscutt - More to the point I hope those people with a cupboard full are not trying to onsell it at a more expensive price.

Ms FORREST - Well, some of them are.

Mrs Hiscutt - I know.

Ms FORREST - Some of them are. That is the worst of humanity.

Then you see the other side, the beautiful side of humanity - you have little children who put notes in their neighbours' letterboxes; I saw the member for Nelson on her Facebook feed the other day when she got her 'Who gives a crap?' delivery. I use the same toilet paper and you do buy it in bulk.

Ms Webb - I am really stocked up if anyone needs help.

Ms FORREST - And she said that on Facebook.

Mr PRESIDENT - I hope you mean the same brand of toilet paper.

Ms FORREST - Those are the sort of things we are seeing. I have seen on social media people hanging plastic tubs on their fence posts in the streets in Melbourne and places like that with a few essential supplies for people to help themselves to. There are many examples of really the best of humanity but there are some shocking examples of the worst of humanity.

Mr President, I am almost done. I appreciate the open and proactive approach the Government is taking and as I read on one of the many social media platforms where information is provided, some of them are good and some are not. But take the time to act before you really think you need to. Think: is this going to help? I commend the Premier for taking this seriously.

I finish with the words of C S Lewis from 1948, which may seem a little bit out of context but when I read the last paragraph, I think you will understand why it resonates with the moment. This is a quote from *On Living in An Atomic Age* by C S Lewis -

How are we to live in an atomic age? I am tempted to reply, why, as you would have lived in the 16th century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night. Or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents. In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear Sir or Madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented and quite a high percentage of us are going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors - anaesthetics. But we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to the world which already bristled with such chances, and in which death itself was not a chance at all but a certainty. This is the first point to be made and the first action to be taken -

and this is what I think applies here. Mr President -

... is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible things and human things, praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts, not huddled together like frightened sheep thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies, a microbe can do that, but they need not dominate our minds.

[4.14 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

EVIDENCE AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 4)

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

ADJOURNMENT

[4.16 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the Council at its rising adjourn until 11 a.m. 19 March 2020.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 4.14 p.m.