



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 10 November 2021

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 10 November 2021

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

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Official Photographs

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, there is a photographer present in the public gallery for the purpose of taking the official Chamber photo.

QUESTIONS

Department of Education - Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms COURTNEY

[10.04 a.m.]

Yesterday you released the heavily sanitised 12-page version of the Independent Inquiry into the Tasmanian Department of Education's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Overnight the full 92-page report has been released to the ABC. The authors of the report clearly state the department's own human resources branch has, and I quote:

... identified 41 currently serving Department of Education (DoE) employees with some record of concern, 21 of whose cases were assessed as requiring a more detailed review and possible further investigation.

This report has been on your desk since it was finalised on 7 June. In the past five months since this information was given to you, what have you done to ensure that these staff were actively being investigated and children's safety was your top priority?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question on what is a very important matter. The Tasmanian Government takes the safety of our children extremely seriously. There is nothing more important than ensuring the vulnerable in our community are protected. I acknowledge the suffering of victims and their families across the Tasmanian community. I apologise to those who have been impacted by sexual abuse in our systems.

All children and young people have the right to an education, to be heard and to be kept safe from harm. This is why last year the Government commissioned an independent inquiry into the Tasmanian Department of Education's responses to child sexual abuse. I pay tribute to my colleague, Jeremy Rockliff, and the Attorney-General, Elise Archer, for leading that work. That work concluded earlier this year and the final report was provided in full to the commission of inquiry for consideration in its deliberations, as was committed to when the commission of inquiry was established.

The stories that have come to light through this work are deeply confronting. As the Minister for Education, I am sorry. We do not want to live in a community where this happens. It is important to note that these issues go back decades under governments of all colours. I am very proud to be part of a government that has been open and honestly undertaking this inquiry and the commission of inquiry -

Ms O'Connor - You sat on this report for five months.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - to ensure there is maximum scrutiny across our public service and that we do take action. We will take any and all action necessary and work as hard and as swiftly as we can to ensure Tasmanian children are safe.

The inquiry report acknowledges the Department of Education's culture and leadership has changed for the better, particularly over the past decade. I also note that over that decade we have significantly increased safeguards, including implementing improvements recommended by the royal commission in regard to record-keeping, information sharing and guidance for staff on effectively responding to sexual abuse as well as registration to work with vulnerable people checks and new pre-employment safeguards. It is clear that there is much more we can do.

On receiving this report, the Government took immediate action with the recommendations accepted in full and a new office of Safeguarding Children and Young People was established in August, with Ms Elizabeth Jack appointed as the executive director to that office. The establishment of the office is in direct recognition of the importance of safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in the department's schools, libraries and child and family learning centres.

The office has commenced implementing the recommendations, with two completed now, one more due by the end of the year, and 12 expected to be complete in 2022, with the final five due in 2023. The majority of the recommendations will be completed by the end of next year. As minister for the department, I have a deep commitment to ensuring each of those recommendations is delivered in full and delivered as quickly as possible. We will ensure these recommendations incorporate the voices of young people and children. They will be front and centre of this work and the office will work closely with other state government agencies to meet our responsibilities.

Work is underway on a review of current policies and procedures to ensure that expectations for staff behaviour and conduct in relation to student safeguarding are clear and in line with national best practice and guidance for staff in relation to their responsibilities.

While the work of the office of the executive director is focused on fully implementing the inquiry recommendations, the royal commission recommendations, and will implement any further recommendations arising from the commission of inquiry, a broader and important piece of ongoing work for the office of the executive director is to embed all underlying safeguarding principles into the Department of Education culture.

We are fully committed to making our systems and policies, processes and procedures, stronger to protect the rights and safety of all children and young people. We are embedding

a culture where child safety is everybody's responsibility in our schools, libraries, and child and family learning centres. We will engage in an ongoing and meaningful way with children and young people, parents, carers, and the community. There is no more important task for any government than ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our children.

I cannot change the past. I can work decisively now to ensure we chart a better course in the future.

To the question the member asked: I am advised that appropriate action has been taken by the secretary of the Department of Education to review and action any immediate risks to children and young people in Tasmanian government schools that were identified in the report. This also included reviewing all known historic allegations of child sexual abuse made against current employees identifiable in the report to ensure appropriate action has been taken.

The reviewers were provided with open access to department files and personnel and examined a range of historic issues that ranged from allegations of improper conversations to serious sexual assaults.

As part of the secretary's review of historic allegations of abuse made by current employees, each matter has been reviewed in turn and a decision made about what further action needs to be taken. Actions have included: ensuring all matters have been reported to relevant authorities, including the Tasmania Police, and working with vulnerable people; confirming that historic investigations have been thoroughly conducted; and, where necessary, commencing new investigations for potential breaches of the State Service Code of Conduct, with staff under investigation being suspended from duty pending outcome.

In total, I am advised that five code of conduct investigations have commenced for alleged historic sexual misconduct as part of the secretary's work, with employees being suspended for the period of the investigation. Two of the code of conduct investigations have now concluded with their being no evidence of sexual misconduct by the employees in question and their employment has recommenced.

I can assure, not just the members of this House, but the Tasmanian community that as the minister responsible for education and children and youth in Tasmania I will take assertive, decisive action to ensure that every recommendation is implemented in full. I commit to the people of Tasmania that as minister responsible I take these responsibilities seriously and will ensure that I take every step possible, supported by my colleagues and supported by a government that led the introduction of the commission of inquiry to keep our young people safe.

Members - Hear, hear.

Department of Education - Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms COURTNEY

[10.12. a.m.]

You have known since 7 June that the report into your department's handling of child sexual abuse in schools, and I quote again:

... identified 41 currently serving Department of Education employees with some record of concern, 21 of whose cases were assessed as requiring a more detailed review and possible further investigation.

Of those 21 cases, how many individuals are still working in State schools, or have they been stood down while an investigation takes place?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, with regard to the question that Ms White asked, I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the previous answer I gave regarding the reassurance from the secretary of the Department of Education that all these matters that have been identified through this report have been investigated thoroughly and appropriate action taken. That is my absolute expectation not just of matters that arise through this report but any matter that comes to light needs to be investigated.

When this Government made the decision last year, not just to start an investigation into the Department of Education, but more importantly the commission of inquiry, we always said and we always expected that deeply confronting and concerning stories would come forward. We have taken this decisive action because we believe it is the step we need to take to ensure that we can have every assurance possible that our young people are safe.

Ms White - I would be more assured if you spoke directly to the 21 cases and told us if they are still working, or not.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order, you have asked the question.

Ms COURTNEY - As the minister responsible for the Department of Education and Children and Youth, I cannot change the past. What I can do, together with my colleagues, is continue to take action to keep young people safe.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. This is very serious. The question was specifically about the 21 cases identified in the report. The minister has not addressed that question in her answer.

Parents in Tasmania would like to be reassured that there are no teachers working in our schools who have been identified through that investigation.

Mr SPEAKER - The minister has already sat down.

Ms White - She did not answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER - You will have opportunity to ask the minister further questions through question time.

Department of Education - Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms COURTNEY

[10.14 a.m.]

The full report for the inquiry into sexual abuse in the State public school system was received by your department nearly five months ago, and only released through right of information. On the same day, you tabled the summary in here. It reveals some record of concern about more than 40 current employees, including at least three principals, with half potentially requiring further investigation. The question Tasmanian parents are asking is, how safe are Tasmanian students in our public schools?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I can provide her, the general community, and the parents of young people who are at each of our schools that, as the minister responsible, I will take every step possible to ensure our children are safe.

That is my commitment. That is what we are seeking to do by taking this step of having this independent inquiry. It is why this Government took action with the commission of inquiry. We recognised that we needed to ensure that these matters were appropriately and thoroughly investigated by the right bodies, with the appropriate powers to ensure we can take informed action. We can report that to the Tasmanian community, and we can have those assurances into the future. This Government has taken action. I know this is very confronting. I am the minister responsible; I accept that. Today, I can ensure that I take every step possible, with my colleagues, to ensure that children are kept as safe as possible.

As I have outlined, I am advised that appropriate action has been taken by the secretary of the Department of Education to review and action any immediate risks to children and young people in Tasmanian government schools that are identified by the report. This included reviewing all known historic allegations of child sexual abuse made against the current employees identifiable in the report to ensure appropriate action was taken. I have already outlined that the reviewers were given open access to department files and, as part of the secretary's review of the historic allegations, each matter has been reviewed in turn, and a decision made about what further action needs to be taken.

I can assure the House that I and the secretary of the Department of Education take the safety of our children seriously, and will ensure that any allegations that come to us are appropriately dealt with.

Elite Sporting Content in Tasmania

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.18 a.m.]

Could you please update the House on how the majority Liberal Government is delivering on our plan to put Tasmania on the national stage by delivering more elite sporting content for Tasmanians to enjoy?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her interest in a very important matter. The Government is committed to delivering more elite sporting content for Tasmanians to enjoy, to provide pathways for our local sportsmen and women, for the significant economic boost that it provides for the economy.

This year we saw a record 14 AFL matches in the state - including the two historic, hugely successful elimination finals. Tasmanians turned up and businesses benefited when we really needed it.

In recent weeks, our state was once again on the national stage as the country watched the first 20 matches of this season's Women's Big Bash League, with matches played in Hobart and Launceston. This weekend will see the opening of the new MyState Bank Arena, and the very first match of the new Tasmanian NBL team, the JackJumpers, in the NBL pre-season blitz playing on Sunday against the Brisbane Bullets. The NBL blitz will see 12 games played across the state throughout November. The north, south and north-west of the state will all get to see this incredible spectacle. The blitz will create a huge local economic boost, and there will be significant benefits to the Tasmanian economy as well, especially as we lead up to the JackJumpers' first official home roster match at MyState Bank Arena on 3 December against the Bullets.

Further, with regard to our AFL licence, a joint AFL and Tasmanian licence taskforce working group has been established and commenced. The group includes the support of four-time premiership winning master coach, Clarko. Alastair Clarkson will work through the matters raised in the Carter report ahead of a final position being put to AFL club presidents for a decision on a Tasmanian team next year.

This brings me to my Government's ambition in coming months: to put Tasmania front and centre on the national stage. That is by working to host what would be the state's biggest sporting event to date, an Ashes Test match between Australia and the old enemy, England, at Blundstone Arena.

Tasmania has a great history and a proud tradition in representation in the Australian cricket team, including Ricky Ponting as former captain, who I think, with no disrespect to Tim Paine, was Australia's best captain for a period of time. The legendary David Boon continues to represent the state as a referee in the T20 World Cup in Dubai. The silky skilled but tough George Bailey is now chief national team selector: the courageous fighter and previous short game captain, Matthew Wade, and the current Australian test captain, wicket keeper, batsman, Tim Paine. It would be fantastic to see Tim play at Bellerive as captain of Australia.

We have been having on-going discussions with Cricket Tasmania and the CEO of Cricket Australia. I spoke with the CEO of Cricket Tasmania in recent days. Today I will be writing to Cricket Australia to formally put our case for the relocation of the fifth Test match, scheduled to commence on 14 January in Western Australia. As Western Australia said, its borders will not be open by then. The Government is prepared to work with Cricket Australia to get the match played in Tasmania. The match could be the one that decides the series. Tasmania stands ready to host that important match right here. We will continue to work with Cricket Australia to bring our ambition to reality.

On behalf of the Tasmanian Government, I extend my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Keith Bradshaw, one of Australia's much loved and respected cricket identities. He passed away in recent days after a long illness. He had a long and courageous battle with cancer. His passing will be felt by many in the sporting and business community across Tasmania. He had many dear friends and colleagues in the state.

Department of Education - Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms COURTNEY

[10.23 a.m.]

You failed to answer a crucial question: of the 21 individual staff identified as requiring further investigation by the independent inquiry into the Department of Education, how many are currently being investigated and are any of those 21 still working in our schools? Can you answer it now?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Regarding the report that has been tabled, appropriate action has been taken by the secretary of the Department of Education to review and action any immediate risks to children, and young people in Tasmanian schools who were identified by the report. This includes reviewing all known historic allegations of child sexual abuse made against current employees identifiable in the report to ensure appropriate action has been undertaken.

As part of the secretary's review and historic allegations of abuse made by current employees, each matter has been reviewed in turn and a decision made about what further action needs to be taken. Actions include ensuring all matters have been reported to relevant authorities including Tasmania Police and the registrar of Working with Vulnerable People, confirming that historic investigations have been thoroughly conducted and where necessary conducting new investigations for potential breaches of the State Service code of conduct, with staff under investigation being suspended from duty pending an outcome.

I am advised that five code of conduct investigations have commenced for alleged historic sexual misconduct as part of the secretary's work, with employees being suspended for the period of investigation. Two of the code of conduct investigations have now concluded, with no evidence of sexual misconduct by the employees in question. Their employment has recommenced.

Where an allegation is made by the first receiver of that information, that person makes an immediate mandatory report to the Child Safety Service and informs their principal or manager who ensures contact occurs with either the department's assistant director of industrial relations or manager of workplace relations. If there is clear evidence available at the time of allegations, within 24 hours a range of actions are taken including contacting Tasmania Police, the registrar of Working with Vulnerable People, Child Safety Service, the Teachers Registration Board, and if the matter relates to a teacher, the Integrity Commission.

The secretary may determine that a code of conduct investigation is required. If this is the case, evidence to inform this determination and reporting to the four mentioned entities

occurs within two days of the allegation. During that period an employee involved in the allegation will be advised to remain away from work and not contact any staff members or students. If a code of conduct is commenced the employee is immediately suspended from duty and remains suspended until that investigation is finalised.

I am committed to making sure all allegations are taken seriously. I know that the secretary of the department shares this commitment to ensure that the safety of children is our utmost priority. The reason we commissioned these reports last year, the commission of inquiry and this report into the Department of Education was so that we could inform the best steps possible to keep our young people safe. The Government has acted because we believe in the importance of the safety of our young people. I commit to this House that the Government will take all action necessary to ensure that we deliver on the safety of our young people.

Department of Education - Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms COURTNEY

[10.27 a.m.]

The report of the inquiry reveals a culture of cover-up within the Department of Education that persists to this day. That culture extended to the manner in which the findings of this inquiry were released by your Government, with the summary tables on the same day the ABC received the full document through right to information six months after it was received by the Department of Justice.

In the Government's response to the recommendations, Tasmanian parents and students were told it will take more than a year to implement five of the key recommendations designed to keep children and young people safe. Yet, you said a short time ago the Government will work as hard and swiftly as we can. Why is the implementation not an absolute and immediate priority given the risks? Why the inertia? Why can you not, as minister, ensure every recommendation is implemented, and the systems and people to safeguard students are in place by the start of the next school year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. I too share the member's passion ensuring that these recommendations are implemented as swiftly as possible.

One of the key recommendations was the establishment of the Office of Safeguarding Children and Young People. That happened immediately. That office is leading the work to implement these alongside the implementation of the recommendations from the royal commission and at a point in time where I would expect the Government will see recommendations from the commission of inquiry. With regards to the process and the progress of this, the department has provided assurance that updates will be provided on its website so that people can stay fully informed.

Ms O'Connor, with the creation of this role led by Ms Jack and her office directly reporting to the secretary embedded in the office of the secretary of the Department of Education, there is a commitment that these need to be fully imbedded. The statement that was

made yesterday by the Department of Education said the Department of Education is committed to continuing to build on previous improvements and embedding positive cultural change that will protect all our children.

Ms O'Connor, I want to ensure these recommendations that, as you can appreciate, are complex to deliver over a system that is so large, across our thousands of employees, are embedded fully and ensure that this cultural change is embedded across our system, and that is what I will deliver.

Department of Education - Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms COURTNEY

[10.31 a.m.]

The Independent Inquiry into the Tasmanian Department of Education's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse contains damning evidence that claims of child sexual abuse by school staff are no longer reported to child safety authorities. The authors say, and I quote -

One example provided to us describes that when a graduate teacher made a report to their principal, the principal informed this teacher that the school no longer reported to the Child Safety Service as the CSS had not actioned or followed up any of the school's previous reports.

You have known about this since 7 June, when this report landed on your desk. As you are also the minister responsible for children, what specific steps have you taken to ensure that children at risk are no longer falling through the cracks because staff have given up on making formal reports about their welfare?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. It is important, not just in our school systems but across our entire community, that Tasmanians feel confident to come forward with reporting, and with their stories. I take this opportunity to encourage all Tasmanians in any setting at all - inside or outside government institutions; historic or current - to please come forward and share your stories. I can assure people that when they come to us we will take the necessary steps.

The Department of Education has commenced the development of an MOU with the Department of Communities Tasmania. The MOU will be directed towards preventing and responding to sexual abuse in government schools, and will include agreements on respective roles and responsibilities; information gathering, exchange and recording; and how outcomes for child complainants are to be monitored.

There are challenges with sharing personal information, including statutory provisions -

Ms White - There should be no challenge with reporting suspected abuse of a child to the Child Safety Service.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - I share the frustrations of those in the community about the uncertainties that those limitations create about sharing information, but this is one of the reasons why -

Ms White - This is not about sharing information. This is about reporting abuse.

Ms COURTNEY - Please, I am trying to answer this for you, Ms White.

This is why, as part of our election commitments, the Department of Communities Tasmania is currently conducting an extensive review of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997. Among other matters that are all important, the review will consider the suitability of information sharing provisions within the act and propose any further changes necessary.

I want to make it really clear that the reason we have these recommendations that we are acting on is because this Government commissioned this report. We are proud that we commissioned it. We knew that in commissioning this report, as we have commissioned the commission of inquiry, that there would be recommendations - and we wanted them, because we want to take every step possible to keep our children safe.

I do not step back from that. I stand here today providing that commitment to this House and to the people of Tasmania that I will deliver on that commitment.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. Before the minister runs away and sits down, the question was specifically about what is happening right now. What we have heard from this inquiry is that reports to Child Services are not acted upon so they are not even being made.

This is not about information sharing, minister. This is about the welfare of children who are vulnerable, who are being left to fall through the cracks. You did not answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER - The point of order, of course, is that you are not hearing what you want to hear. The minister has the right to answer it how she wishes. I cannot put words in the minister's mouth.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your direction. When a point of order has been taken and the minister is at the lectern, I have not seen a minister - this is twice now in question time - the minister has gone back to her chair during a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER - The minister decides when she has finished her answer, and she has to move away from the lectern when she has finished her answer. I cannot go any further -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. I cannot direct the minister how to answer the question or what else needs to be answered.

Tasmanian Racing Industry - Review of Regulations

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT

[10.35 a.m.]

Can you advise how the Tasmanian Liberal Government is securing Tasmania's future by ensuring the sustainability and confidence in the racing industry in Tasmania?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this very important matter. The Tasmanian Government is a strong supporter of the Tasmanian racing industry. The Tasmanian racing industry makes a vital contribution to our economy, with \$185 million in economic activity benefiting regional Tasmania in particular. Almost 6000 Tasmanians are either employed in the industry or direct participants. The Government's support for the industry gives it the confidence to continue to grow.

This Government knows probity and integrity are critically important for the racing industry and underpins confidence in racing across all three codes. This is why the Government has previously announced there will be a review of the racing regulations of 2004, which have not been substantially reviewed since its inception.

I am pleased today to announce that the highly regarded Mr Dale Monteith has been appointed an independent expert to undertake the review. The review will ensure that the governance and integrity model in Tasmania is effective in delivering probity and integrity to support the sustainability of the racing industry in Tasmania. Furthermore, I am also pleased to announce the public release of the terms of reference and a discussion paper which has supported the review and promotes meaningful engagement during review. The review of the act will be undertaken with a view to strengthen and enhance integrity functions, as well as animal welfare.

As members know, there has been consultation with key industry stakeholders in recent weeks. I am pleased to say the feedback on the terms of reference has been extremely positive. This important consultation will continue in the next phase of the review when Mr Monteith engages with stakeholders to canvass their views on a new model.

I hope that the Opposition shadow, Mr Winter, will express Labor's support for this important review and the ongoing consultation of the industry. Rather than trying to score political points, the Labor Party should be providing bipartisan support for this important review, which is designed to increase the confidence and integrity in an industry that supports a significant number of jobs and delivers important economic benefits, especially to regional areas in Tasmania.

Instead, all we get is more negativity from a bitterly divided Labor Party. It is pretty clear that Mr Winter is 'hot to trot' in his own right to become the next Labor leader. I am told that the odds are shorter than Winx. Seriously, Mr Speaker, I hope we have the Opposition's support with this review.

The Government is a strong supporter of the Tasmanian racing industry, which makes a vital contribution to our economy and employment, particularly in regional Tasmania. This review is about ensuring the future of the racing industry in Tasmania.

Integrity Commission Act - Cox Report

Ms JOHNSTON question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.39 a.m.]

Over five years ago, in August 2016, the honourable William Cox completed his review into the Integrity Commission Act - five years ago. Whenever I raise matters pertaining to the Integrity Commission, you say that you are still considering the Cox report. For instance, in this House yesterday, you said the Government is currently undertaking a comprehensive, sensible and measured approach to consider necessary further reforms as a result of the Cox Review recommendations. Nothing will come before parliament now, this year, and parliament will not sit again until maybe March 2022.

It is difficult to accept that in five years, soon to be six, there has been no progress on necessary reforms to the Integrity Commission. There appears to be a pattern of behaviour here, where the Government is slow to act on critical recommendations from reports. It is little wonder the public is sceptical about the Government's ability to protect them. How much time do you need and when will the Tasmanian people finally see a commitment from the Government to ensure the Integrity Commission Act is fit for purpose?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I did take time to get detail for the member so I can properly inform her of the work we have undertaken in the last five years. It appears she is unaware of the first tranche of reforms we did to the Integrity Commission Act under this Government.

As the first phase of implementing our Government's response to the Cox review, the Integrity Commission Amendment Act 2017 was progressed to make technical and other amendments to the act. The bill addressed recommendations 1 to 6 of the report by providing improved governance and clearer direction to the Integrity Commission. Parliament approved the bill and it received Royal Assent on 13 June 2017.

In relation to the second tranche, as I informed Ms Johnston and the House yesterday, we are taking the time to consult with the Integrity Commission. We are taking time to consider the second tranche. The Department of Justice has commenced work to progress the next tranche of reforms. I meet with my department on a weekly, sometimes more regular, basis. Each week I receive a progress report on matters such as this type of reform. As you would appreciate, my department is undertaking a number of different areas of law reform but this is, and remains, on our list of priorities.

I also met with the CEO of the Integrity Commission as recently as last week. It could have been the week before. We discussed the ongoing work that is occurring in relation to the Integrity Commission's discussions with my department. I can assure this House that there is active progression of the second tranche of reforms.

I hope the member is aware we have already acted in relation to the Cox review. We continue to act in relation to the further detail of that independent five-year statutory review undertaken by the honourable William Cox. He considered a number of different things and produced a very comprehensive report containing 55 recommendations, including 45 proposed technical amendments to which I have referred.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Subsequent Homelessness on Release

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.43 a.m.]

Yesterday, when you were asked about a young child who was allowed to leave Ashley Youth Detention Centre and ended up sleeping in a tent, you said you would seek advice on the numbers of other children who have been released into homelessness. You failed to update the House yesterday. Given the seriousness of this issue, did you seek that advice, do you now have that information and can you share it with the House?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The young people in our custodial youth justice part of our system and our entire youth justice system are a key responsibility of this Government. This is why we have moved not only to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and open two new facilities, but to look at a new approach to our custodial youth justice system in Tasmania. This is to ensure that young people are supported all the way through and to try to divert young people from youth justice, that we support young people who have interaction with the youth justice system and that we support young people after they have left the youth justice system.

As I outlined yesterday, regarding young people who have been in Ashley Youth Detention Centre, I cannot comment on individual cases. The Department of Communities has advised that young people are not released from Ashley Youth Detention Centre into tents.

Young people who are currently sent to Ashley by the court remain in custody on remand for only a short period of time and are often released to their families or other arrangements they were in place before their period of custody. Others are sentenced for detention for longer periods, allowing time to plan for their release. A multidisciplinary case management team develops an exit plan that takes into consideration the preferences of young people. All residents have accommodation options as well as other supports identified as part of this planning.

Parents or guardians and carers and the young person themselves are encouraged and supported to contribute towards their exit planning process. Exit planning involves working with the Community Youth Justice -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order. If you are not prepared to listen to the answer then I will ask the minister to sit down. Please, silence while the minister is answering the question.

Ms COURTNEY - As I was saying, exit planning involves working with Community Youth Justice, Child Safety Service, Save the Children, the Department of Education, NDIS and other relevant stakeholders. This is to ensure that plans for supporting young people in the community align with the care-plans in place at Ashley and are in the best interest for young persons. Young people who are also in out-of-home care under a care and protection order, an outcome of home-care placement is identified.

We work with these young people, not just on the day that they exit Ashley, but in the days and the weeks afterwards. Many of these young people have highly-complex needs and have highly-complex circumstances. The Department of Communities Tasmania and the team in Child Safety Service work very closely to ensure that they are meeting the needs, wishes and desires of the young people.

The Government recognises that there is more work to be done. This is another example of where a government has recognised that more needs to be done and the Government is taking action. The Government will be releasing its custodial youth justice transition plan and a discussion paper for consultation on our youth justice blueprint in coming weeks. Our goal is to give young people in Tasmania who are at risk a far better chance of gaining the supports they need so that they can rehabilitate and live better lives as valued and respected members of our community.

The youth justice blueprint will provide broad strategic objectives to ensure we are engaging and intervening with young people and children at risk of offending early, to prevent offending, positively influencing the wellbeing of young Tasmanians through therapeutic, diversionary and restorative services to reduce re-offending by children and young people, and engage in the community to invest in our vulnerable young people, making the community safer and reducing long-term cost to the community. Consistent with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the blueprint will also have a focus on building partnerships with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people, to build capacity, to deliver services to youth engaged in youth justice or at risk of entering the youth justice system.

The strategic direction that will be outlined in the blueprint will also bring together a range of current initiatives to ensure these form part of a coordinated approach to youth justice in Tasmania. I stand here and demonstrate the action the Government is taking. We recognise more needs to be done, which is why I will be releasing this blueprint for youth justice. The Government recognises when action needs to be taken and we are doing that.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - I ask Ms White when they were in government, what action they took. We have a demonstrated track record across child safety, across Youth Justice -

Ms White - What did you do when you found out about this child, minister? Nothing.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - across the Department of Education and across all our institutional settings through the commission of inquiry.

Ms White - Do not level accusations at me when you are the minister, aware of a child living in a tent in the middle of winter.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White.

Ms COURTNEY - We always expected, through the investigations into the department, through the commission of inquiry, that stories would come forward and we have committed to respond and we are responding in Youth Justice.

Electric Vehicles - Support for Uptake in Tasmania

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr JAENSCH

[10.51 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is supporting our commitment to support the uptake of electric vehicles in our regions and key tourism destinations as we look to reopen our borders?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr Street, the member for Franklin, for his question and his interest in this important matter. Tasmania's greenhouse emissions profile is the envy of the world. We are one of the few places in the world with net zero emissions and 100 per cent self-sufficiency in electricity from renewable sources. The Tasmanian Government is committed to legislating a target of net zero emissions from 2030, one of the most ambitious targets in the world.

Dr Woodruff - We are going to go backwards. That is your legislation, going backwards.

Mr JAENSCH - You used to believe in that. Tasmanians and visitors alike want to participate in our low emissions economy -

Dr Woodruff - We do not want to see our forests felled.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, order.

Mr JAENSCH - and make it part of their experience of Tasmania.

While Tasmania has achieved net zero emissions for six of the last seven years, transport-related emissions have grown and we need to do more to reduce emissions and support those who want to make the switch to electric vehicles. By supporting electric vehicle uptake we can reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels, drive increased demand for our own renewable energy and reduce pollution in our towns and cities.

That is why the Tasmanian Government delivered its first ChargeSmart Grants Program, establishing a statewide network of 14 fast chargers and 23 destination and workplace chargers. It is why we are now delivering on our commitment for a second ChargeSmart program to

expand our charging network to more regional areas and key tourism destinations, making it possible for more electric vehicle users to travel more of our state more easily.

ChargeSmart Two will support 20 additional public fast-charging stations and 23 new public destination charging stations across Tasmania bringing our ChargeSmart network up to 80 chargers across our state and the total number of public charging points across Tasmania to more than 120.

It will mean the average distance between ChargeSmart charging stations will be just 47 kilometres, well within the range of even the most basic electric vehicles, an important factor in addressing range anxiety which is one of the few remaining barriers to the uptake of electric vehicles. Tasmania now has the largest number of charging stations per person of any Australian state or territory.

The program is providing up to \$50 000 for fast chargers along regional highways and up to \$2500 for destination charges. ChargeSmart Two will support the installation of fast chargers in Exeter, George Town, Derby and Fingal in the north and north-east, Tullah, Ouse and Miena in the highlands, along the Great Eastern Drive in Bicheno, Dunalley, Triabunna, in Burnie, Sheffield, Smithton, Strahan and Waratah in the north-west, in Oatlands and Maydena and on Bruny Island in the south.

The Government also knows that many visitors to Tasmania want to travel electric supporting our tourism industry's goal to be a carbon-neutral destination by 2025. Destination chargers will be supported in locations from Zeehan to Southport and from the Pier Hotel in George Town to Stewarts Bay Lodge at Port Arthur.

The 2021-22 Budget included funding of \$600 000 for ChargeSmart Two. Reflecting the high quality of applications, a further \$175 000 will be made available bringing the total funding for this program to \$775 000, stimulating a total infrastructure spend of more than \$1.7 million. ChargeSmart Two complements yesterday's announcement of the Australian Government's Future Fuels Strategy with its goal to increase EV and hydrogen infrastructure across Australia in addition to the charging infrastructure already funded under the draft strategy in the greater Hobart region.

Our Government is serious about doing all we can to drive down transport emissions. Under our proposed new climate change legislation we will develop an emissions reduction and resilience plan for transport, working in partnership with industry to build on our existing policies to reduce transport emissions. This includes our commitment to transition the government fleet to 100 per cent electric and hydrogen vehicles by 2030, a two-year stamp duty waiver for electric vehicles, two years free registration for EVs for rental car companies and our commitment to trial zero emissions Metro buses.

Importantly, Tasmanians are taking advantage of these supports. Nearly 120 Tasmanians so far have accessed the stamp duty waiver. Today, in southern Tasmania, Drive Car Hire, a rental car company owner by John and Anna Donovan is launching three new Teslas for the luxury tourism market powered by our renewable Tasmanian electricity, supported by our stamp duty waiver and two-year registration fee waiver for rental car companies providing EVs. I congratulate John and Anna for their investment in this new vision for Tasmania and I wish them every success with their new hire vehicles as borders reopen.

Unlike Ms White and the Labor Party who have no vision, no plan who remain bitterly divided, on this side of the House we are getting on with the job of delivering our plan to drive down transport emissions. We will continue to support the uptake of electric vehicles to drive economic growth and jobs, reduce emissions and make it easier for Tasmanians and visitors alike to be part of one of the world's first net zero emissions economies as we reconnect our state and secure Tasmania's future.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Subsequent Homelessness on Release

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.57 a.m.]

Can you confirm that you were made aware that a young child was living in a tent after they had been released from the Ashley Youth Detention Centre? When did you first find out? What did you do to make sure that this young person has safe and secure accommodation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question. As I have answered today and yesterday, we have comprehensive plans in place at Ashley for exit planning of young people. It is important that when we are looking at this multidisciplinary team we are looking at not only the care plans they have within Ashley but also what we can do once they leave Ashley.

It is also important to recognise that once a young person leaves custodial sentence they have left the custodial component. The team at Child Safety works very closely with individual cases over a long period of time to ensure they can provide support. We want our young people to be safe. We want to ensure there are options available to them.

We know that at times for young people who have left Ashley their nominated accommodation placement option has failed for a range of reasons, including the young person choosing not to reside there after exiting Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Our election commitments with regard to accommodation and support options for these young people are about transitioning from the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

We have invested, and are continuing to invest, a significant amount of money in our response to youth homelessness through our \$15.3 million election initiatives, including our Under 16 Lighthouse Pilot Program, new modular transitional accommodation for young people and a youth housing initiative to assist young people to share Housing Tasmania properties.

What I am talking about today are the solutions that this Government is providing in providing more housing for young people in ensuring - and I gave a very comprehensive answer earlier with regard to our Blueprint for Youth Justice. The Government recognises that more action needs to be taken and we are taking that action.

Opposition members interjecting.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. The question was very short: when did this minister find out and what did she do. She talks about action; what action did she take?

Mr SPEAKER - As you know, I cannot put words in the minister's mouth. I will ask the minister to continue, but only in silence. If you continually interject then I will ask the minister to sit down.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition may not have confidence in our staff at Child Safety but I do. I have confidence that they will work appropriately with these young people.

I am not going to go into an individual case but what I will say is, broadly, across the young people who intersect with our youth justice system, there are often highly complex needs, and these young people are in very difficult circumstances. We are ensuring that we are building a system responsive to the particular needs of these young people. I have stood here and said that we will be, in coming weeks, releasing our youth justice blueprint and that pathway. This is a multidisciplinary, across government, across community sector response for our young people to divert them away from youth justice, to support them in therapeutic ways while they are there and, importantly, restore them afterwards to productive, safe members of our community.

I am very committed to this body of work. It demonstrates the fact this side of the Chamber will continue to take the steps we need to that are systemic to make sure our young people are safe.

Brahminy Foundation Program - Safety of Children

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms COURTNEY

[11.01 a.m.]

Last month it was revealed that Child Safety Services had arranged for the mother of a 15-year-old to fly to Darwin to immediately remove him from the Brahminy Foundation program. This followed Allan Brahminy accidentally leaving a voice mail with a child protection worker in which he could be heard subjecting the young person to sustained and personal verbal abuse.

After this shocking incident, how can you have any confidence in the safety and wellbeing of the other young people in this program? Why, more than a month later, have you not removed all the other young people from the program? When will you bring these young children and young people home to ensure their safety?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. As I have stated previously this morning, our number one priority is the health, safety and wellbeing of our young people across Tasmania. I am very happy to provide an update on this important issue. However, I expect that members will want to hear the answer.

The Department of Communities Tasmania has confirmed that young people at MC1D are safe and the Australian Childhood Foundation continues to support young people at the program with their therapeutic needs. Tasmania is transitioning away from the program with no placements at MC1D, since the investigative review a year ago.

For the young people remaining at MC1D, there are individual transition plans in place that have been developed by Child Safety Service in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation, the young people themselves and their families. It is vital to ensure all the necessary supports are in place to ensure a stable and safe transition with visits by child safety and family members scheduled in the coming weeks as part of these plans.

In July this year, we accepted, in principle, the expert panel's recommendation to transition away from the use of MC1D with the panel acknowledging this could take some time. The expert panel represents a significant step forward in our commitment to establish programs for young people with exceptional needs here in Tasmania. In readiness to respond to the panel's recommendations, the Government set aside an initial \$500 000 of seed funding to develop this progression.

Work is underway to develop and procure new programs and services to support Tasmanian children as well as young people with highly complex needs locally through a cross-sectoral group which has been established to progress the implementation planning. The group includes members from the non-government sector including TasCOSS, Families and Children Tasmania, the Australian Childhood Foundation and Aboriginal community organisations.

The group also includes representatives from the departments of Communities Tasmania, Education and Health. The breadth of the participation in that panel recognises the responses required to ensure that we can stand up these programs appropriately and they are much broader than government.

Yes, we need to ensure we are engaging all the correct agencies within government but importantly, this is about our partnerships with the non-government sector and I have confidence, particularly with the oversight of this panel, we will be able to progress.

With regard to this, the Government will be shortly releasing publicly an implementation plan and members can see the update. This is an important step forward to ensure exceptional needs here in Tasmania are met.

As the member would very much appreciate, I am not able to comment on the individual circumstances of a young person. The Department of Communities Tasmania has confirmed that young people at MC1D are safe and, where incidents occur, it is standard practice they are always thoroughly assessed and appropriate action is taken.

Parents of young people are regularly advised of the progress of their children and are kept up to date with incidents and follow ups.

Securing Tasmania's Future - Bass Highway Improvements

**Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr FERGUSON**

[11.06 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the majority Liberal Government's record infrastructure plan is securing Tasmania's future and in particular how it is delivering improvements to the efficiency and safety of the Bass Highway in the far north-west which is one of Tasmania's most productive regions?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I hope to not upset the Leader of the Opposition with my answer in relation to infrastructure upgrades. I will do my best to steer clear of the James Kitto article in the *Mercury*.

The Government was re-elected by the people of Tasmania to secure Tasmania's future and they turned out in their droves. They backed us in with our strong plans, including to improve outdated infrastructure. We must not ever overlook the importance of the north-west community, including the Circular Head and Waratah Wynyard districts for the great contribution these regions make to the economic life of Tasmania and the living standards of all of its people. This includes people in the cities like Hobart, who at times forget the importance of the economic contribution of our regions.

The Bass Highway between Smithton and Burnie is the highest volume freight-feeder route connecting to the corridor between Burnie and Hobart. That is an important reality fact. Two hundred laden trucks each day feed into this corridor amounting to around two million tonnes per year. That does not include local freight and light vehicle traffic. With the great economic growth we have seen under the management of the Gutwein Liberal majority Government guiding our economic and jobs growth, freight volumes are also growing. We are now predicting to grow by around 42 per cent by 2034, in 13 years from now.

The Gutwein and Morrison governments have recognised these contributions and we have committed \$280 million of taxpayers' money to the Bass Highway. The highway west of Wynyard is our initial focus of this investment and \$60 million committed by the Australian Government and \$40 million committed by the Tasmanian Government for a series of projects over the 112 kilometre stretch between Wynyard and Marrawah, a land of beautiful pastures and ocean vistas. As I said before, with spring and early summer we love the smell of bitumen.

Now that work is ramping up, the Bass Highway in the far north-west was actually designed for lower volumes and lighter vehicles. The roads are narrower; the widths and junctions do not meet today's expectations. They were built for yesterday's use. Members who might have visited that way recently would have noticed the works that have started through our great friends of our proud Tasmanian company, Shaw Contracting, including overtaking lanes near Dallas Road at Rocky Cape. They are well-needed and appreciated, as well as improvements at junctions with Gates Road and Junction Road.

Construction is also about to start on overtaking lanes near Morris Road and other projects to improve safety and efficiency at Salmon River Road; PACEYS Road, Togari and

Tollymore Road. Projects in the design phase include overtaking lanes near Monateric Road and improvements to junctions at Mella and Speedwell Roads.

Designs are continuing on a further 13 junction upgrades to begin late next year and another 35 junction improvements from late 2023. These are historic investments on that stretch of the Bass Highway, only made possible by the strong commitment demonstrated by our Government and the great work of the Morrison Liberal Government with its great advocate, Gavin Pearce, the federal member for Braddon, who is an absolute champion for jobs in the north-west coast community. He is doing a brilliant job and has been a great advocate for getting these projects moving. He does not hesitate to pick up the phone and give me more good ideas about how we can support that community.

I encourage members who are laughing to get out of town and visit these communities, have a talk to some people and ask them what they think about these important upgrades. These projects are part of the transformational \$280 million investment that we are making between Launceston and Marrawah, backed by real money from the Morrison and Gutwein governments. We invested a record \$317 million last financial year on our roads and bridges program. We have beaten every record that there was on that delivery.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order.

Mr FERGUSON - Maybe for members opposite, those numbers seem a bit big, not sure how to place them? Let me help you out. It is two-and-a-half times more than was delivered in the last year of that miserable Labor-Greens government. People notice it because they appreciate the upgrades.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - The other side has no record to crow about. They failed on infrastructure. When they had money for the Bridgewater Bridge they spent it on other projects.

On this side of the House we have a plan. We are delivering our plan and we are united. We are on the job and we are supporting Tasmanians to get the infrastructure that is needed.

While the member for Braddon likes to give himself little fist bumps and punching the air from his delivery of a killer question, the Opposition is reeling from self-inflicted upper cuts. The Leader cannot control her party. The real leaders are the unelected factional bosses who continue to shamelessly brief the media without consequence, threatening a revolt on gaming legislation, even publicly threatening Mr Winter with his preselection -

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. It has nothing to do with the question. It is a DD.

Mr SPEAKER - Minister, could you be more -

Mr FERGUSON - I will try harder to be more relevant. It could not be more relevant. The union bosses are now coming after Mr Winter for his preselection if he does not do what they say. Ms White said she would end the infighting. She said she would unify the party but she has done the very opposite.

Mr SPEAKER - Question time has now concluded.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Child Safety

[11.14 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: child safety.

There could be no more important issue for the parliament to debate today. The minister frequently parrots a line that there is no greater priority for the Government than the welfare of children. I point out that in question time today, the Premier stood on a DD and spoke about cricket and then we had another one on racing. If there is no greater priority for this Government than the welfare of children, why did the Premier not get up today?

On the back of a report that was released overnight that illustrates there are serious problems in our Education department's ability to protect vulnerable children, there are serious issues with young children being released from the Ashley Youth Detention Centre into homelessness and given a tent, that we have myriad problems in the child protection and welfare system, why did the Premier not get up and speak about it today if the protection and welfare of children is the state's highest priority?

Why, instead, did the Government try to create a smokescreen by talking about cricket instead? We all love cricket. I hope they do play an Ashes Test game here in Tasmania. That does not abrogate the Government's responsibility to make sure that when it says it cares about children, it actually takes action that protects them from risk and makes sure that when damning reports like the one released, only through right to information to the ABC because the Government certainly did not release it, that demonstrate there are serious failings, that the Government tells us what it is going to do about it.

Had we not asked questions today, the Government would not have spoken about it at all. That is disgraceful. We have a commission of inquiry looking at serious and concerning issues that have been raised through the royal commission. It has our full support to do its work in a thorough way because that will be the only way to make sure we have an independent investigation with independent recommendations that can be implemented to protect the welfare of vulnerable children in our state.

We also have a number of reports that have been handed down recently that identify failings of children by this Government as well as stories we have heard about the failings of children by this Government. You only need to look at the datasets released by this Government on its dashboard, which are provided monthly, where we can see that the number of notifications to Child Safety Service that have not been acted upon is growing month on

month. The most recent dataset showed there are 121 children in active transition who have been notified to the Child Safety Service because someone has a serious and legitimate concern about their welfare or safety, but these young people have not been allocated a case worker.

The report released to the ABC, through a right to information request, speaks about problems within the Department of Education, particularly in our schools where they identify a child who might be at risk and do not report it to the Child Safety Service, because when they have done that in the past nothing has happened. That is not a reflection on the staff. That is a reflection on the lack of resourcing and the lack of funding to allow those hardworking staff to respond.

We know because we have spoken to child safety workers about how deeply they care about young people in our state, but they are at breaking point. This report highlights that is having an impact on the welfare of young people because teachers no longer report cases of concern they have about the welfare of young people to Child Safety Service because when they have done that in the past no action was taken.

We asked the minister a question about that today because she is not only the Minister for Education, she is the Minister for Children and Young People. How is she going to address that? She had this report on 7 June. We have not found out about it until now. The minister has had a five-month head start on the rest of us. What has she done to make sure a teacher in a school today who has a concern can report it and knows with confidence it will be acted upon? How has she resourced through the Budget allocation for Child Safety to have the staffing they need to respond? Between this report being handed down on 7 June and now there has been a budget handed down by this Government. This minister, if she is worth her salt, would have been in the Premier and Treasurer's office arguing for more funding, to make sure that our most vulnerable children can be kept safe, because as she repeatedly says, 'there is no greater priority for the Government than the welfare of children'. If that is the case, prove it. Prove it through your actions, by funding and resourcing those government services that are responsible for protecting our most vulnerable children, because what we can see through the evidence in this report is damning.

It made my stomach drop to learn that teachers no longer feel they can report cases of potential abuse of children because they do not think it will be acted upon. It also made my stomach drop to learn that there are 21 cases, identified through this report, of individual teachers within the Department of Education, or individual staff within the Department of Education who they have real concerns about when it comes to allegations that have been made about their conduct and the safety of children. We asked the minister to explain the status of those 21 cases.

I remain concerned that we are unclear about the status of the 16 that you did not mention. You have spoken about five code of conduct complaints that were made - two that have concluded, three that have not concluded. What happened to the other 16? Are they still in our schools? Is the minister satisfied that there is no risk to the safety and welfare of our children in those schools? As a parent and as a member of our community, I want to know that every single child is safe in our schools, right across Tasmania, because every day they go to school we place our children in the care of somebody who we expect to be able to trust, and that we trust our children to.

We need to have confidence that they are safe and that this Government is doing everything it can to ensure that is the case, every single day.

Time expired.

[11.22 a.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Education) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this matter of public importance today to the Chamber. It is an extremely important matter. One of the points the member raised is that I am both the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children and Youth. This is a very deliberate decision by the Government to ensure that we are joining up those two very important portfolios because of the significant interaction we have with young people, obviously within our Department of Education, but also the Department of Communities Tasmania.

Yes, I recognise the opportunities this provides. Indeed, that is work that I am very focused on, ensuring that at a leadership as well as an operational level we can strengthen those relationships between the Department of Education and the Department of Communities Tasmania. This has been a deliberate decision because we recognise there is more that we can do. One of the recommendations from the report publicly released yesterday outlined the fact that partnerships and a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Communities and the Department of Education is important.

In one of the responses earlier today, I outlined some of the challenges we have around information sharing. These challenges have been recognised, and this will be part of some of the work that we are doing in reviewing that legislation. I put that on the record in particular, because it is no accident that I hold these two portfolios. I know that there is significant opportunity that can come, not only the child safety, but also the wellbeing of these young people, to make sure that not only are they safe, not only that they have high levels of wellbeing but that they can be supported to be learning as well. There are significant benefits that can be realised and that is one of my priorities across these two portfolios.

I also need to make it clear that the reason we have these recommendations is because my colleague, Mr Rockliff and the Attorney-General, last year, worked together -

Ms O'Connor - And with the Greens, minister. Could you just acknowledge that, no.

Ms COURTNEY - to make sure that this was implemented - I acknowledge the fact that this inquiry was welcomed by others -

Dr Woodruff - If it was not for the Greens we would not have this inquiry.

Ms O'Connor - It is true.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - I refer to the terms of reference from the Attorney-General, which looked at examining and understanding what changes and additional actions are necessary. We acted to ensure we could take these steps. There was recognition that there was more that could be done, and this is what we are doing.

We have established the Office of Safeguarding Children and Young People, headed by Ms Liz Jack. That has been established. It was swiftly established, and that will take leadership over the implementation of these recommendations.

I note, Ms O'Connor, your comments in question time this morning about the timing of implementation. I can assure you and this House that we will resource as required to ensure that these recommendations can be implemented.

It is important, not that we just tick a box; it is important that we look to the entire culture of the organisation, and other organisations the Department of Education interacts with. We have seen that through another recommendation regarding the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. There are further opportunities across Government.

We await the outcomes of the commission of inquiry. When the Premier stood up last year, and announced the commission of inquiry, he said it would be confronting. We knew that information would come forward, and we knew these steps needed to be taken so that we can take action. I am very proud to be a part of a Government that is leading this type of work to ensure we are shining a light on all those areas, and ensuring we have informed recommendations that we can implement so that we can have the most robust systems possible.

Mr Speaker, I take this very seriously, and I am committed to it, not just within the Department of Education, but across the Department of Communities Tasmania. This is why my colleagues, Mr Jaensch and Mrs Petrusma, prior to me, led the Strong Families Safe Kids redesign of our child safety system. That has seen a significant investment, but also reform into the way that system works - so we can make sure we are taking steps to keep our young people safe; ensure they have welfare; ensure we have robust processes and procedures around the way we deal with abuse of young people; and ensure we can all have confidence that we are doing our utmost, our very best, to keep young people safe.

In the time that I have, I do not have the opportunity to outline all these steps that have been taken, but we have seen additional positions added to child safety. We have had an independent evaluation conducted by UTAS, to ensure that we are taking the right steps on this project. We have established the Commissioner for Children and Young People Act. We have established a Serious Event Review Team and we have invested an additional \$24 million in the system for the recruitment of 25 more child safety officers.

We are also in the process of developing Strong Families Safe Kids - the Next Steps Action Plan, which we are working to deliver. This work incorporates recommendations from the University of Tasmania's evaluation. We know that across any system, one cannot be static. We need to continually review. We need to look to external experts on how we can ensure, not only are our systems robust, but also ensure that the culture within an organisation is driving the outcomes we want from the systems that have been established.

In closing, I commit to this House, that I will continue to take action, and continue to take steps, along with the Premier, to keep our young people safe.

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, this report, which has only been released through right to information, is deeply confronting reading. What we know is that Professor Stephen Smallbone and Professor Tim McCormack put their heart and soul into this work, and you can read that in every word and in every recommendation.

What also comes through is a sense of shock at what they discovered. Poor record keeping, and historical behaviour when dealing with education department staff, that reflects in many ways what the Catholic Church did, which was to move on paedophile priests. In the Department of Education, there is a record going back to at least the 1990s of the department moving on teachers who were the subject of complaints and allegations of improper behaviour with children and young people - if not downright abuse.

What happened in question time today was the most tone-deaf demonstration I have seen from this Government. We had the Premier getting up and talking about a letter he is going to write to Cricket Australia about the Ashes, and then the Minister for Racing. It is this bread-and-circuses deflection from the most serious matter, because all parliament has on the record is the summary report that was released yesterday.

Mr Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to table the full redacted report that was provided to the ABC through right to information.

Ms Archer - You are going to breach section 194(k) under parliamentary privilege.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that leave be granted.

Leave granted.

Ms O'CONNOR - We just heard the Attorney-General muttering; I do not know why. Parliament should have the full report that was provided to the ABC through right to information. Instead, a choice was made by the Government to sit on this information for five months.

Every day of that five months, Tasmanian parents were sending their children to school in complete ignorance. It is unacceptable that what we get in here is a summary report that conveniently - and apparently coincidentally - is tabled on the same day that the full report is released to the ABC through right to information.

What the full report, and indeed the summary, tell us is that there has been a culture of cover-up in the Department of Education - just as there was a culture of cover-up in the Department of Health over the LGH; a culture of cover-up in Child Safety and Communities Tasmania; and at Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

That culture of cover-up is reinforced when ministers sit on critical reports for five whole months, and then release the summary in the shiftiest way.

Why not a statement from the minister yesterday to the parents of Tasmania detailing the findings of this inquiry, outlining the steps that have been taken by Government, reassuring parents that their children are safe in our public schools? Why was this decision made to sit on this report, release a summary, not make a ministerial statement, deflect with bread and circuses in question time today?

I have no doubt at all that this minister and the secretary of the Department of the Education do take this inquiry and the recommendations extremely seriously. How could they not? I also acknowledge that they are dealing with legacy issues in the department; legacy issues that have allowed perpetrators to continue to work with children and young people.

Legacy issues that we hear through the findings of this inquiry are persisting - at least in part - to this day.

People who were interviewed by the professors pointed to a reluctance to report to Child Safety because of a lack of feedback and follow-through. That is so deeply and profoundly concerning. Legacy issues that, because of poor record-keeping, lack of integration and lack of guidance to Department of Education staff, paint no conclusive picture about the extent of the problem today relative to how it has been in previous times.

I thank Professor Stephen Smallbone and Professor Tim McCormack for their incredibly important work.

I place on the public record through *Hansard* that the Greens played a critical role in getting this inquiry established, because we had received information from survivors of abuse in schools and we were not prepared to just lay it out in question time; we wanted it dealt with properly. We approached the then minister for education who, in an open and honest way, sought our advice on how to approach this and then initiated an inquiry. We were part of this, because we did it constructively out of concern for survivors of past abuse. We will not be written out of the history on this.

Tasmanian parents are entitled to know why five of the most important recommendations that have been made by the professors are not going to be implemented before 2023. It is simply not good enough.

Time expired.

[11.36 a.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Speaker, there is no topic that is more serious or more important than keeping all of our children safe, particularly from predators. This issue is of great concern to our entire community and every member in this Chamber. As a mother of three children who are currently at school, I am with the mums, and I understand the issue and the concern. When we send our children to school, we need to know they are safe. How do we do that? We do that by making sure that we understand what has gone on, what is currently going on, and what we need to do better.

I was particularly impressed with this Government when it announced the commission of inquiry, because it is a brave, bold and serious step to lift the lid on those conversations that inevitably are going to be uncomfortable, challenging, difficult and emotional. There would not be a person in this room or in this state who would not want us to do that. We take it very seriously.

Having said that, as an Independent in this place, I do recall the Government also trying to work on mandatory sentencing around child sex offences. I was disappointed that ideology got in the way of pragmatism there; it is work that I think victims really did want. I sat with the victims and communities and I talked to those people. As an Independent, I supported it. I took heat for that in the community, particularly from those who are wedded to ideology. It was a very difficult moment, but it mattered.

Now, before us, we see this Government acting again - boldly, appropriately and with leadership. Yet what we are hearing is the noise around that. We want to see that action land.

From my perspective, as a parent - and, believe it or not I was a child at one stage, too, and I had friends who did not have great journeys through school.

If anybody has a concern about the treatment of a child, if a child raises a concern and you are worried about it, no matter what your organisation - whether it is a school, a sporting club, a political party - if you have a concern, pick up the phone and report it, because that is what you ought to do. All children and young people have a right to a safe education, a right to be heard and to be kept safe from harm.

These issues that we are dealing with go back decades, under all governments of all colours and hues. We all acknowledge that. We are not silly people but it is this Government that is currently ensuring that there is maximum scrutiny across our public service and that no stone is being left unturned.

It is clear that the majority of the recommendations that have come through the report will be completed in 2022. The appointment of Ms Elizabeth Jack as executive director of the new office of safeguarding children is a very strong and good appointment. Her skills will be very welcome.

Child safety and wellbeing is an issue, more broadly and more generally, for this Government. It is something that we as Tasmanians want. There is nothing more important that we can do to make sure we have robust communities, strong families, and kids who are getting a fair go at having a beautiful and wonderful life here in Tasmania. We are seeing more support for families at risk. That is because we know more, and people are coming forward. We see fewer cases referred to statutory child safety intervention and a decrease in the rate of children and young people -

Ms O'Connor - Have you read the inquiry report?

Ms OGILVIE - entering out of home care. That is just the data.

Ms O'Connor - No, I didn't think so.

Ms OGILVIE - That is what it is. The Strong Families Safe Kids redesign acknowledges that the safety and wellbeing of children cannot be the responsibility of the statutory Child Safety Service alone. This is the point: it takes a village. I think we all agree with that. Let us not abrogate our personal responsibility to look after each other, to keep eyes on each other, to look after the kids.

This is happening at a moment in time when we have just seen a national sigh of relief that little Cleo was found and saved, with the whole nation holding its breath, with every man, woman and child trying to help find that beautiful little girl. That could not have come at a better time. We all needed that bit of good news that things could end well and not poorly - and we did that because we had eyes on.

It is not just a government responsibility - but the leadership, particularly coming from this minister, is good. It is bold and strong and brave, but it is up to all of us. I see many women in this room. We are close to those kids. We see each other's kids and we know what is going on. We are with them, and they have sleepovers, and we hear those conversations. It

is up to us. If we are concerned, mums, raise that concern. Do not hope somebody else will. It is very important.

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy - a foundational piece of work that is happening at the moment - was announced by the Premier on 22 August 2021. He is a dad himself. He gets this stuff, and it is our headline commitment to children and young people. It is the development of our state's first ever comprehensive, long-term, whole-of-government child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Mr SPEAKER - I remind the House that it is a limited debate. I cannot fit everybody in, but if there is a minute or two, we can proceed.

[11.43 a.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, as others have said, there is no greater responsibility for any government or any Tasmanian than the safety and wellbeing of our children.

What we have seen over a number of years, one by one, is deep exposures of systemic failures across government in the education system, health system, housing, homelessness, child safety and in youth justice. Many of these have been historic, but there have been many allegations, particularly in the last two years, raised about current actions happening in Tasmanian government agencies where, systemically, young people are being let down.

Young people are not safe in a range of different ways. For example, we know people are being turned away from shelter accommodation in worryingly increasing numbers every year. The number of times people were turned away from shelter accommodation grew from 15 000 to 18 000 in just one year. Many of those will have been young people. Many of them would have been parents with young people.

In the youth justice system there are incredible stories of abuse and trauma that have been experienced by young people and children experiencing the youth justice system. Just this week we have heard stories - and we asked in question time - about a young person who was released from Ashley into homelessness and ended up sleeping in a tent. In answer to a direct question about that in question time today, the minister said, 'Young people are often released into conditions that they were in prior to custody'. So there are conversations with caregivers, parents and family members in terms of the conditions they were in prior to custody, and if they can be reunited they will be.

What if the conditions the young person were in prior to custody was homelessness? Does that mean it is alright for that young person to then be re-released into homelessness? This young person spent a winter in a tent. I wonder how many more winters young people are going to have to spend in tents before something serious changes.

The report that most speakers have gone to today raises serious issues across not just historic cases and allegations, but current ones as well. It was only released as a result of an RTI application. Who knows if the full report would ever have come to light, had the ABC not chosen to RTI it, and the department released it? That is not good enough.

I welcome the fact that the Leader of the Greens tabled the report today. I acknowledge that the Attorney-General said it was inconsistent with our voting record on section 194K legislation. I disagree with that. It is not a threat to victim's rights for that full report to sit on

the parliamentary record, because anyone who has looked at the report will see that the case studies have been redacted. There is not a risk to individual cases for that report being on the public record - as it should be, and as it now is.

The minister spoke a lot about reviews of legislation, the commission of inquiry, new frameworks, new safeguarding units that have been set up. Those things are all welcome, of course, and have the full support of the Opposition.

However, what has been revealed in this report is an absolute lack of faith in the system from schools, from people working in schools, from teachers and caregivers and staff - that they have given up on making reports to Child Safety because they just do not get the action they need to keep those young people safe.

Now, that is not on those Child Safety staff. They are working as hard as they can. I know numerous people who work in Child Safety, and I know the pressure they have been put under by increasing cuts from this Government since they came to power in 2014 and ripped millions of dollars out of the health and human services system and expected the same, or better, results. What is the result of that?

Mr Jaensch - Increased the workforce by 20 per cent. You should know that.

Ms HADDAD - I was there, Mr Jaensch, when I saw people going, when I saw those millions of dollars pulled out of that department in 2014, and again in 2015, and again in 2016. I saw those cuts with my own eyes. I saw people walking out the door - and now they are doing mop-up. Now they are recognising that the systemic result of those cuts has been a starving of resources in the child safety system. What has that led to? It has led to people in the education system completely losing faith in even being able to raise a report.

We can review the Child Safety Act. We can review the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act. We can put in place new systems and frameworks. What is that doing right now for people on the ground who today might have cause to have concern about a young person in their care? What the report reveals to us is a systemic long-term problem which is not being fixed by this Government, and is certainly not being fixed by systemic cuts to those public sector workers and agencies who deal with that.

With those comments I will conclude my contribution, and hope people will take this very seriously.

Time expired.

[11.49 a.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will be very brief in the minute remaining for this debate.

It was horrific to read through the report yesterday. It churned my stomach, but it perhaps was no surprise, given the number of concerns expressed over many years about Ashley, children released into homelessness, as we have heard this week, child protection putting children into homelessness in an attempt to avoid domestic violence and, of course, the commission of inquiry.

My very brief point relates to the timeliness of responses. I note the minister has had this report for five months and we only just hear about this now.

It will be concerning to parents right around this state to hear that some of the key recommendations - and I will quickly read the first one because it is quite critical: 'The first recommendation regarding safeguarding records of all sexual abuse concerns, complaints, responses and outcomes be systemically recorded by DoE and that these records are periodically analysed to monitor patterns and trends'.

It is not going to be completed until 2023 and I think the community's expectations are that many of these recommendations in the report would have already been in place. It is astonishing that we see a report and recommendations that have time frames of 2022 and 2023 and beyond. It is beyond the pale in terms of community expectations and I put on the record my concerns regarding that.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

CONTAINER REFUND SCHEME BILL 2021 (No. 54)

Second Reading

[11.51 a.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Environment) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read the second time.

I am proud to be introducing the Container Refund Scheme Bill 2021 into this House.

The purpose of this bill is to establish a container refund scheme, a crucial policy initiative helping us to deliver on our commitment to build Tasmania's circular economy, reduce litter and increase recycling.

Beverage containers make up 43 per cent of Tasmania's litter by volume. A study conducted in 2017 found that more than 7 million beverage containers were littered around the state in that year alone. As has been clearly demonstrated in other jurisdictions, a container refund scheme will reduce beverage container litter and result in purer, cleaner streams of recyclable containers, maximising recycling rates for these materials. Modelling undertaken by my department indicates that beverage container litter will be cut by almost 50 per cent with a container refund scheme in operation, keeping millions of bottles and cans away from our roadsides, parks and beaches and away from landfill.

Like all schemes currently in operation across Australia, our scheme is based on a product stewardship principle, where the cost of recovering containers is built into the sale price of those containers. It is important that these costs are minimised, while the number of containers returned is maximised. The scheme will promote better environmental outcomes, create employment and provide opportunities for local businesses, while also enabling charities and community organisations to raise money to fund their valuable work.

In February 2021, I announced the governance model for the scheme, a split responsibility model, bringing the beverage, waste management and community sectors together to deliver the best scheme for Tasmania. The split responsibility model - currently operating in New South Wales, the ACT, and announced as the Victorian Government's preferred model - involves a scheme coordinator who will run the administration and finances for the scheme, while a network operator runs the network of refund points and is paid per container returned. In this model, each sector plays to its strengths. The scheme coordinator is incentivised to keep costs low and the network operator is incentivised to ensure that as many containers as possible are returned through the scheme.

The announcement of the split responsibility model for Tasmania's Container Refund Scheme was publicly supported by the Local Government Association of Tasmania, the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Tasmania, the Australian Council of Recycling, the Boomerang Alliance, Clean Up Australia Day and Charitable Recycling Australia which represents many charities.

This Government hopes that by the end of next year, Tasmanians will be able to receive a 10-cent refund for every eligible empty drink container they return to a designated refund point for recycling.

This time frame of 2022 was based on research from other jurisdictions, which clearly showed that there needs to be adequate time to put in place the policy research, consultation, infrastructure, and rollout of a large-scale behaviour change activity of this type.

There will be a network of refund points reaching to all parts of Tasmania, including King Island and Flinders Island. The design of the scheme strikes a balance between a refund point network that is accessible and makes returns convenient for the community and keeping the collection and administration costs of the scheme as low as possible. We want to make sure that all Tasmanians can get a refund for their empty containers wherever they live. Whether you are in Scottsdale, Queenstown, Ulverstone or New Norfolk, there will be a refund point nearby.

There will be more refund points across Tasmania than there are Service Tasmania shopfronts and, like Service Tasmania, they will service the whole of Tasmania, not just the big population centres. Minimum standards will be in place for the network of refund points to ensure that this is achieved while allowing flexibility for the network operator.

At those refund points you will get an immediate refund for your empty containers, whether it is from a reverse vending machine, over the counter in your local shop, or at a depot. Importantly, eligibility of containers will be consistent with what other states are doing, ensuring harmonisation between schemes. This provides clarity for both consumers and the industry.

The involvement of the Tasmanian community will be critical to the success of Tasmania's container refund scheme. In particular, the Government is committed to maximising the opportunities for charities and community groups around Tasmania to benefit from the scheme.

All charities and community groups will be able to run donation points where they can receive donations of containers from the community and collect 10 cents per container for their

organisation. This is a great way to get local communities engaged in the scheme and works well for trusted local organisations run by volunteers.

Further to this, all charities and community groups will be able to register for a refund account so members of the public can donate their container refunds directly to a charity or community group of their choice. Of course, any person or group can apply to the network operator to run a refund point and receive a handling fee. The network operator will provide administrative, transport and other services to refund point operators.

Throughout the design of the scheme, my department engaged an expert reference group made up of representatives from the beverage, retail and hospitality industries, the waste and recycling sector, environment groups, local government and charities. This group provided valuable input to the design of the scheme and I thank them for their contributions.

The Waste and Resource Recovery Ministerial Advisory Group made up of Tasmanian government, local government, the resource recovery sector and industry stakeholders also provided valuable technical advice and input into the development of the scheme. I thank them too for their considered advice to me.

A five-week public consultation period for the draft bill was undertaken from June to July this year. More than 3500 people contributed to the public consultations through either a formal submission or by filling out a short online survey. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive with 98 per cent of survey respondents supportive of a container refund scheme. My department also held a number of webinars both for the general public and targeted stakeholder groups.

Feedback from the public and from stakeholders has been used to improve the scheme's operational design. For example, one consistent message from the consultation feedback was the potential impact on Tasmania's many small and boutique beverage producers. My department has been working with small beverage manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that their concerns and issues are heard and understood and I, too, have heard directly from a number of small producers.

The department contracted three advisers from the local small beverage sector to provide their knowledge and insight into the challenges facing the sector. This has resulted in a package of initiatives that will assist our small beverage producers to be part of the scheme in a way that no other state or territory container refund scheme has done before.

In Tasmania there will be no fee for container approvals and a grants program will be provided for Tasmanian small beverage producers to reduce the administrative and transitional costs of entering the scheme, such as adopting bar codes for their products for the first time. In addition, all beverage companies will be exempt from paying into the scheme for their first 20 000 containers sold each year. That means many of Tasmania's smallest and newest beverage companies will not pay into the scheme at all while their customers can still claim a refund on their containers. This approach is equitable and fair to all producers but will be of most benefit to those Tasmanian businesses for whom the additional costs of the scheme would have the greatest impact recognising the vital role they play in tourism, hospitality and regional employment in Tasmania.

The Container Refund Scheme Bill 2021 covers establishment of the scheme, requirements for container approvals and identifies scheme participants. It explains the administration of the scheme including the roles of scheme coordinator, network operator and other key participants. The Government will ensure various details of the scheme are expressed in regulations such as container approvals and labelling, the refund amount and minimum standards for the refund point network. This will enable the Tasmanian Container Refund Scheme to be sufficiently flexible so future changes including national harmonisation efforts and the changing nature of the beverage market can be adequately addressed.

The Government acknowledges that curbside recycling services already offer an effective and relatively low-cost system for collecting and recycling containers used in the home and this will continue. Eligible containers collected through curbside services will be identified at resource recovery centres and refunds returned to councils effectively reducing the overall costs of those services. The advantage of the refund scheme is it separates beverage containers at the source creating cleaner streams of recyclable material that are of high value for downstream processing.

The Government's aim has always been for the Container Refund Scheme to compliment the existing kerbside recycling system and infrastructure. The refund scheme adds a new incentive to avoid littering. The Government is aware of the unique requirements and circumstances of our island councils, King Island and Flinders Island Councils. We want all Tasmanians to have access to this scheme and all Tasmanian communities to benefit. We will require the network operator to work with these communities to devise arrangements that meet their unique needs and ensure the scheme works for them.

The Government will continue to progress on the implementation of the scheme and our time frame is ambitious, but achievable. Tasmanians overwhelmingly want a container refund scheme and they do not want Tasmania to be the last state to have one. The very strong advice from other jurisdictions who have implemented schemes before us is to allow at least 12 months to roll out a new scheme and to avoid introducing a new scheme during peak holiday periods. If this bill clears both Houses of our parliament this year we can have a container refund scheme operating in Tasmania by next Christmas.

The next steps involve making regulations to support the bill and concurrently commencing the tender and selection process for the scheme coordinator and the network operator. The Government is pleased to be taking action to reduce litter and increase recycling by introducing a container refund scheme for Tasmania. I thank everyone who has participated and provided feedback. We have listened to your views and we are taking action. This bill is what the people of Tasmania want and we are here to deliver it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[12.04 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Tasmania is one of two jurisdictions that does not have a container refund scheme, one of two states I should say, including the territories in that. It is certainly something the Labor Party agrees with the Government that we want to see one in Tasmania. We also want to make sure the design of the scheme is going to achieve the right balance across the community.

I am sure that it comes as no surprise to the minister to know we support container refund scheme for Tasmania, but will be seeking in the upper House, to move for a short, sharp inquiry, to examine the evidence to understand exactly how we can implement the right scheme for Tasmania. Tasmania deserves to have the best designed scheme to achieve the right balance across the community.

There are a number of questions I have for you today, minister, on the bill we have before us in this House. I make it clear at the outset that whilst we have concerns or questions about the design of the scheme, that will not mean we will vote against the bill in this place. We will be supporting the bill today to progress it through to the Legislative Council. I can indicate that members in the Legislative Council will be seeking to move for an inquiry.

I will ask the questions, minister, and see how you go with answering them. I have some questions from your contribution you just made in the second reading speech. In particular, the evidence that you relied upon to prove the statement that the container refund scheme will reduce beverage container litter, and result in purer, cleaner streams of recyclable containers, maximising recycling rates for these materials, using the scheme you proposed. If you can provide the evidence for that, please?

I also have questions in relation to your statement that the scheme would 'promote better environmental outcomes, create employment and provide opportunities for local businesses, while also enabling charities and community organisations to raise money to fund their valuable work'. That is a direct quote from the minister's second reading speech.

I seek your answer to questions about specific elements of that statement. In particular, how you arrived at the decision on a split responsibility model and you are confident the evidence supports this model will promote better environmental outcomes; that this model will promote and create employment opportunities, provide opportunities for local businesses, and the split responsibility model is the best model to enable charities and community organisations to raise money to fund their work.

I am also keen for the minister to detail for the House the membership of both the expert reference group his department engaged, as well as the membership of the ministerial advisory group engaged by the minister to inform the decision to go with the split responsibility model and the makeup of the bill before the parliament today. I understand you have referenced in your second reading speech the sectors that were consulted but I am interested to understand, minister, precisely who sat around the table, and how any conflicts of interest were managed.

I am also interested to understand how the minister ultimately decided on the split responsibility model. I am sure it is informed through the evidence he received based on comments he has made in his second reading speech, but can he provide a response to the House about why he has chosen the split responsibility model over other models, particularly given this is not just a program that will support charitable organisations, but importantly, increase recycling rates. What evidence is there it maximises containers returned by progressing with the split responsibility model?

I refer to the Marsden Jacob Report which recommended to the Government the best model for Tasmania was not the split responsibility model. It highlighted it recommended the producer responsibility model and indicated in the Marsden Jacob Report, the producer responsibility model would achieve the environmental outcomes desired by the scheme.

Interestingly, through that it also identified it would not only achieve the environmental outcomes desired by the scheme, but it would minimise the impact on business, as well as provide greater benefits to small business, community groups, charities and organisations hoping to utilise return materials as part of the circular economy and start-up enterprises.

I note that there are variations across the country. There is a responsibility model in some jurisdictions and there is the producer responsibility model in some jurisdictions. We can see, looking across the country, different models in action, noting that some of them have only been in action a very short while. It might be difficult to learn as much as we would like from them to help inform the decision of the Tasmanian Government. However, given the work you have done with your expert reference group and your ministerial advisory group, I am interested to understand how you arrived at the decision that was different from the Marsden Jacobs report.

I am keen to hear from the minister as to whether jobs were a priority for this scheme? What does your modelling say about job creation for this model versus the producer responsibility model? Who do you intend to run this scheme? Is it one operator or numerous operators? Will you guarantee there will be competition in the network?

It has been brought to my attention that the Premier has received correspondence from businesses in Tasmania, and I assume that was shared with you. I will not go into the specifics of it because it is commercial-in-confidence, but I would like to understand whether you have received any representations from Tasmanian businesses expressing their concern about the proposed design of the scheme? Have you or the Government received any representations from Tasmanian businesses expressing their concern about the cost impact of the proposed design of the scheme and how do you intend to respond to the concerns that have been raised? That correspondence is not the first time the Government has been contacted about those two questions but, to date, they feel no substantive response has been provided to those concerns. I am interested to get your advice about those matters in the debate today.

In your public comments made previously in this place when we have spoken about container deposit legislation, you have indicated that you believe Tasmanians are already paying for the incorporation of container deposit legislation in beverages they are purchasing. Can you explain why you have made that assumption? Why do you think that the impact on business will be cost-neutral? I presume, again, that is because of the assumption you have made that they are already participating in other schemes across different jurisdictions so they have factored the costs into their manufacturing or production. If that is your assumption, I would be grateful if you could share that assumption. If there is another assumption you have made I would be grateful if you could share that. It was put to us that it is not cost-neutral, as you have previously claimed.

Why are you not legislating for a redemption target of 85 per cent? This would be a world-leading target. I would be grateful if you could explain why you have chosen not to do that.

The question has been raised that, due to the characteristics of the Tasmanian marketplace, the future CRS would be the most expensive scheme to operate in Tasmania. As a user-pays scheme, how will the Government limit the impact on consumers and businesses that have to fund the scheme's operation? Will the split responsibility collection network increase the costs as a new tax for these stakeholders, stakeholders being businesses participating in the CRS?

During the consultation period tender documentation was released indicating a set scheme design had already been finalised and that the Government did not intend to consult at all. How can you claim to have consulted with all stakeholders in good faith?

Regarding the exemption for small business of up to 20 000 containers, how did you arrive at that figure of 20 000 containers? Was that informed through the work of the expert reference group or your ministerial advisory group? If not, who else provided advice to help you arrive at that figure?

The other question I have is what costs, if any, will there be to the Government, either through the establishment of the scheme and then ongoing cost?

There are a number of questions. The Labor Party in its support for a container refund scheme for Tasmania is interested in understanding the evidence you relied on to support the model that has been detailed in the bill before the House, as opposed to other models that exist in different states. Once this model is implemented we can expect it to be in place for generations so we need to ensure that it is the best model to not only improve the rates of recycling but to also provide the benefit back to charitable organisations that will benefit from participation in a container refund scheme.

There is a lot of competing information in the public domain, as I am sure you are well aware, hence our desire to further examine this bill once it reaches the other place, presuming it passes the House today, because of the work we have done comparing schemes across the country where they are already in existence. Some have been in existence since 1977, which is the South Australian model. The most recent implementation is Western Australia in October 2020. New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory have a split responsibility model, whereas South Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia have different models.

We would like to be reassured through the evidence that you have relied upon to decide on this particular model that it is the best model for the Tasmanian community, that we will see improvements in the overall return rate, that we will not see a significant impact on businesses, or an unreasonable cost to business, whether they are big or small, and that jobs will be created. Looking at the comparison across other jurisdictions, jobs obviously will be created no matter which scheme is adopted in Tasmania but the number of jobs varies greatly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

We would like to make sure that we can create as many jobs as possible through a new scheme like this being introduced into Tasmania and the total payments made to charities are maximised through any scheme. We know through our conversations with the charitable sector and the community sector that there is great opportunity for them to fundraise this way or for other members of our community who are already picking up litter to receive remuneration for that. That would be of great assistance to many in our community who are on lower fixed incomes.

I want to be reassured that we have the best model here in Tasmania to achieve the environmental objectives that I think this parliament all shares to see as many containers recycled as possible, but also that we have the greatest return to charities who participate in the scheme and to create as many jobs as possible for Tasmania.

Recognition of Visitor

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome former Tasmanian senator, Father Michael Tate, to the Chamber.

Members - Hear, hear.

[12.20 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens strongly welcome this container refund scheme legislation. We have been the party that has been pushing, prodding, shouting from the hilltops for decades now for this kind of legislation in Tasmania. We have been the party, and continue to be the party at the national level, that is pushing for product stewardship responsibility for all packaging products.

We understand that the imperative for this is growing, not decreasing. We have a tide of plastics which is choking landfill around the country; but much worse - it has spilled out, is dumped and is washed out into our waterways, our streams and, ultimately, into the ocean. It is at that point that it is so damaging to the animals that live in the marine environment, and to the food web. What we are seeing is microplastics - the breakdown of plastics as they abrade with seawater and movement over time - break down into tiny, micro parts that can never be recovered from the floor of the ocean and from riverbeds. They make their way into sediment and they form part of the food for small sea life, and work their way up the food chain into large sea animals, fish; things that we humans consume. Ultimately, they end up in our food, in our bodies, whether we eat it or not. Everybody on the planet has plastic in them. Everyone is exposed to plastic that has been leached into the environment.

This is a huge issue for human health. It is a massive issue for sea life, for birds are being choked and strangled by eating plastic that fills their guts and makes them incapable of taking on nutrients that they need for life. I commend the work of Tasmanian scientists, starting with Dr Jennifer Lavers from the University of Tasmania, in bringing to national and international attention the realities of the horrifying amounts of plastic that are disgorging into the marine environment and the impacts, particularly, on birdlife. Now so many other scientists, including Dr Joanna Vince, who is a senior lecturer at UTAS, have published about marine plastic pollution.

The Greens have been pushing for decades because we have listened to the science, we have looked at the natural world and we understand the consequences of plastic pollution.

Why has it taken so long to get to this place? It is pretty obvious when you understand how power operates in our current democratic system. We have massive international corporations - Lions, Schweppes, Nathan, Coca-Cola - all of these companies have been very concerned, and fully understand the impact of legislation like this. They have been aware of it, and they have been looking after their bottom dollar from way back in the 1970s when conservationists started to talk about the impact of litter.

It was actually back in the 1950s, and that was the origins of the clean-up campaign and that was the start of the gaslighting by the beverage industry in an attempt to deflect from the

reality of the damage that their products were doing to the natural world. They created a faux campaign which changed the narrative and now, 70 years later, we are playing catch-up; 70 years too late for many parts of the natural system. It has been that faux narrative which has been attempting to talk about Keep Australia Beautiful, which was also backed by the beverage industry and pushed as the way we could put the responsibility onto individuals and take it away from our collective responsibility to legislate and to mandate the companies that produce products that cannot break down, that are not organic in their origins and cannot be broken down into organic components, that those companies must take responsibility for whole-of-life processes.

This whole-of-life responsibility for products is now forming part of our understanding of the circular economy; and I hope that both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party understand that this is actually what the circular economy is about. The circular economy is not about creating products and off they go, somebody else's problem because the somebody else ends up being the birds, the fish and ultimately the health of us all and in particular of pregnant women, for example, who are exposed to plastics in food.

We have seen for over a decade now, studies that show breast milk has levels of microplastics and components of plastic chemicals. This is damaging. It is damaging to the human physiology in ways that we do not yet appreciate. However, the real issue is the whole web of life issue and it is about us taking responsibility, that as just one of the species on the planet, we must work out how our rubbish, our mess, contributes to all the other species because we do not own this place. We are just one of the many species that is trying to live in collectivity on this planet. We strongly welcome this legislation.

I noted that a container deposit scheme will: create hundreds of jobs in Tasmania, including for people living with a disability; will save much more than \$1 million in kerbside recycling costs for council each year; will benefit young Tasmanians who are looking for pocket money, for schools, for community groups, for sporting clubs, for the scouts, small business enterprises; will improve the recycling rates of beverage containers in Tasmania that are the worst in the nation; and, also, will help the authenticity of Tasmania's Clean and Green brand for tourism and export industries, in addition to the most important objective, which is to keep beverage containers out of the natural environment.

I said those things, on behalf of the Greens, five years ago. I stood in this place when we moved a motion to call for the Government to legislate to introduce a container deposit scheme. That was five years ago and now that motion - which only called for the Government to commit to legislation; it did not prescribe the legislation, did not talk about the timing of it, just to commit to it - was voted down by the Labor party and the Liberal party, by every single member of the Labor party and every single member of the Liberal party. Five years ago - another five years wasted.

We have a much longer history which needs to be on the record, for the go-slow tactics of the Labor Party and the Liberal Party, who have consistently heeded the concerns and the wishes of beverage industry lobbyists when they have come to Tasmania talking about their concerns and their issues. We have it as a matter of record that the beverage industry watches around the world to look at any potential opening, any gap, for legislators or people working at any level of government to introduce legislation, even a by-law, even a policy, which would prescribe that a product stewardship must occur in their jurisdiction or that there must be mandated levels of recovery for plastics and beverage containers.

We know this because Greens councillor, Bill Harvey, on the Hobart City Council, when he introduced a motion into the Hobart City Council - I do not remember when, but it would have been probably 2012-13 - to talk about the council banning or disallowing plastic water bottles to be handed out at Hobart City Council events, the beverage industry, the very next day, were in the *Mercury* newspaper with a letter talking about how it would be the end of the world as we know it. They were on the phone. They were chatting to the premier of the day. They were making sure that there was no-one in government with a stupid idea to back up that very sensible proposal of councillor, Bill Harvey.

Since then, we have the Hobart City Council, thanks to the Greens councillors and their work over decades, one of the most forward-thinking councils in Australia with the recycling rates and their waste strategy which are definitely the most advanced in the country. Thanks to the Greens on council.

The history for the Labor Party when there was a joint parliamentary standing committee that began an investigation into waste management in Tasmania in 2004, that final report recommended a container deposit system should be introduced subject to a cost benefit analysis and nothing happened. When Labor got Hyder Consulting in 2009 to do a study for a container deposit scheme in December 2008, despite the fact the report recommended establishing such a system and noted it had the potential to improve recovery rates of beverage containers, Ms O'Byrne chose to do nothing at that point.

The Greens in government did everything we could to push the government, to push the Labor Party to take some action on this. Mr O'Halloran made the point in a motion that there was nothing stopping Tasmania bringing in its own container deposit legislation because both the Labor Party and the Liberals had made a faux argument we had to have a national approach; we could not possibly go it alone as a state. When that was put to bed as nothing more than a distraction, the Labor government was asked to commit to introducing a container deposit scheme in 2010, Mr David O'Byrne, who was minister at the time, said, 'The idea has merit', but no action was taken.

In 2013, Ms O'Connor called on the minister to honour the commitment to the state-based container deposit scheme, but again no action was taken by the Labor Party in government. The Liberals have followed suit and voted down the container deposit legislation motion we introduced in 2016. When we kept introducing this matter, Mr Gutwein, who was the minister at the time, said he '... was committed to working through the process and ensuring that the container refund scheme was implemented when we appropriately consulted with local government to ensure that with local government and with industry we get the settings right'.

For the record, local government has been and has always been a strong backer of a refund scheme. Dion Lester said last year:

It is recognised nationally as one of the most effective ways of reducing litter. Waste is an extremely high priority for the sector and this is one key element where Tasmania can catch up to the mainland states.

That has been a consistent position across the sector over the last couple of years. Mr Lester said:

You could say the sector is becoming frustrated around the lack of action on a container deposit scheme.

I am not surprised because there has been so much inaction but, meantime, while the inaction has been there, we have seen just an increase in the damaging impacts on the marine environment and waterways. Dr Joanna Vince is a senior lecturer at UTAS. She has published in international journals about marine plastic pollution. She said in 2018:

Research shows that on a local level, a container deposit scheme will make a difference in the amount of plastic found in the ocean. Plastic does not disappear and the plastic that was around in 1950 is still around today.

We have to stop using it. Because of the avoidable inaction we have had in Tasmania, since at least 2004, it has been on the table for governments to take some action on this issue.

As well as the Labor Party voting against the motion in 2016, I want to note that for this bill before us today there has been a gradual process of it being regularly hit over the head. That has made the Minister for Environment finally understand the overwhelming evidence and the fact as you said in your second reading speech, we will be the last state in Australia if we do not get our skates on and that is the imperative to move.

We are, supposedly, the clean, green state. It is essential we do everything we can to prevent plastic and rubbish going into the environment. It is pleasing to see the Liberal Party has moved on this. However, Labor is still stalling and still obviously doing the bidding of the beverage industry. Ella Haddad attacked the Government when she was the environment, parks and heritage spokesperson and said the Government should be acting with urgency on the issue after the councils backed a container deposit scheme at the Local Government Association conference. She said:

The state government's slow action on waste has left Tasmania vulnerable to considerable reputational risk against its clean green image that has been steadily built over many years.

Ms Haddad, the member for Clark, why do you not listen to the words you said so passionately a few years ago? If you do care so much, then why is Labor pushing to hold off on implementing this bill for even longer than it already has? Why is it pushing for an inquiry in the upper House? That inquiry is a fantastic opportunity to stall this bill and continue to do everything the beverage industry wants, which is just hold off on them having to take responsibility.

There has been so much time with Labor in government - years and years of Labor in government - and they have done nothing. They did nothing in government. They had all the opportunity in the world. Now they are in opposition and they still, even in opposition, will do everything possible to be the lackeys of the beverage industry and stall this legislation and stop it getting through.

I want to read out the letter from the Australian Marine Conservation Society, a letter that is on their web page:

Dear Leader of the Opposition, Rebecca White

...

I am very concerned about the ALP's announcement that you will try to delay the Container Refund Scheme Bill in favour of Coca Cola's flawed alternative.

I ask you to urgently reconsider your decision.

For decades ocean lovers have fought Coca Cola and other big beverage companies who tried to stand in the way of container refund schemes in Australia. After extensive consultation with stakeholders, the Tasmanian government has chosen the best model for the state, the same model being used in NSW and being implemented by Victoria.

This model was supported by environment groups -

I know the Labor Party does not like listening to environment groups, but you would think, at least on a container refund scheme bill, that they might actually understand what this is all about. It is actually about the environment - and ultimately it is about all of us:

This model was supported by environment groups and over 75% of submissions to the public consultation. I call on the ALP to recognise the community's decision.

Beverage container litter is one of the most common types of marine debris found in ocean cleanups, directly correlated with deaths of ocean animals and seabirds.

Tasmania consumes about 260m drinks a year and for too long they have been littered or wasted in landfill. The objective of the container refund scheme should be to achieve the greatest possible recycling and return of the 10 cent deposit to consumers, rather than allow bottlers like Coke to keep it. The chosen model maximises the recycling rate and provides plenty of opportunities for charities and community groups to participate.

Please don't delay the container refund scheme any longer. Every day we wait, we lose more animal lives.

For our oceans.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Boomerang Alliance is the organisation that has been pushing for container refund schemes around the country for decades. It has successfully worked with community groups. It has successfully done all the back-room work, and all the hard work of keeping track of what legislation is at what stage in every state of Australia. They have been there, Jeff Angel and Robbie Kelman. I put on the record their hard work, which they have done basically for nothing. We do not get paid big bucks working in the conservation sector, trying to fight the beverage industries. You are not on the pay of the Grocery Council or Coca-Cola. They are the hard yards, and they have done it because they are goodhearted people.

Their work has made it very clear. They have been working constructively with governments in every state - and I note that Mr Kelman is on the advisory committee, I think, together with many other people. They have done constructive work, trying to find the best outcomes.

They are really clear that this is a totally unnecessary stalling tactic by Labor to continue to stand up for beverage companies first. There is no doubt there are questions about the details of this bill. The Greens have questions and I will go into Committee and ask them. We are not waiving this through without a lot of serious questions that need to be answered by the minister, but there is no reason why Labor cannot do its work here.

Do the work. Ask the questions. Why have you not done the work with stakeholders? Why do we need to have more stakeholders? There have been endless submission processes, endless opportunities for engagement, and when you get conservationists from around Australia, the Greens and the Liberals lined up on something like this, you would think that you could read that there is really nothing much left to fight about. It really does not happen very often.

Ms White - Any time the Liberals and the Greens line up together is nothing to worry about, is that what you are saying?

Dr WOODRUFF - No, you purposely misstated me. I said there are serious questions to answer. That is exactly what I said, but that does not mean that we do not support the bill. We do support the bill. We do understand that it is actually important.

There is a huge amount of power involved in this situation, so why you would want to give it to one body - which is what Queensland has, and it is a great way of making sure you just get the minimum recycling that you possibly can - rather than providing a situation where we ought to be maximising the recycling rate in Tasmania? That is, fundamentally, what this is about.

We have concerns about the lack of detail in the bill. So much of this is left to regulations. We are concerned to hear more about the tendering processes. It is not good enough to say 'just standard government tendering processes'. There is clearly a requirement to have as much transparency, independence and expertise as possible.

I am concerned that no targets are mandated to be established by the bill. We are concerned that there are no objects in the act stating that this container refund scheme must provide for consumer accessibility, and must prioritise consumer accessibility. We know from other states that that is essential for a container refund scheme to maximise the recovery rate. If it is not easy and it is not close, then it is not going to happen. There are only so many hours in a week, and most people just do not have the time to wait on a Saturday morning for a couple of hours at some kerb to hand in their recycling. We have to make this reasonably available for everybody in Tasmania.

I do not understand, as the Leader of the Opposition said, why the minimum number of containers to be recycled for free is 20 000. I would like the minister to answer why there has not been a differentiation between the scale of large container producers and small container producers, or large suppliers and small suppliers. There is clearly a difference between Coca-Cola and a small microbrewery or a small cider place in Tasmania; there is no doubt. Who

pays for the 20 000 by every single supplier? That is a lot of product that does not get paid for - and who pays for that?

I would also like the minister to answer where the intersection is between this bill and the Waste and Resource Recovery Bill. The waste levy bill has a lot of detail about a board and the board establishing a waste strategy, but that is a separate bill, and I do not see in here that there is any dissection with that bill. I want to understand how they are going to work together.

Before I conclude, I make a point about the last time we stood here to talk about the container refund scheme - when we moved a motion to introduce this legislation. It was five years ago, in October 2016. In the Chamber at the time was a Scouts group from southern Tasmania, from the Blackmans Bay/Kingston area. The Greens had been working with them on this issue, and they could see that the container refund could be a welcome source of funds. Every local Scouts group is responsible for raising their own sources of funding, and they spend far too much time fundraising to cover the basic things that troop leaders should be doing. There is no doubt that it might be used by Scouts groups and many other community groups who want to make some money to cover the expenses of running their halls.

I cannot talk about the Scouts without talking about the fact that it is a disgrace that this Government does not recognise Scouts and Guides as their own peak body, and that they ought to have peak body funding status. We will continue to wave that flag for the Scouts, because they do that really important work.

We want to make this scheme accessible for everybody. Community groups have a concern that there will not be the accessibility under the model that is proposed. This is a concern that Labor seems to be whipping up, but it is the case that this bill does have plenty of opportunities for engagement.

I would like the minister to talk about the donation button that has been discussed on reverse vending machines. There has been some conversation. There is nothing in the bill about that. How can people choose to give their refund to a particular charity or a group and how hard will it be to get on that list? Is it going to be a very exclusive club of hand-picked groups or can any group register to be on there so we could choose to give it to the scouts in Kingston or the Sexual Assault Support Service? Many other bodies are worthy and should receive that money.

We will go into Committee and we are very pleased to support the bill.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome the year 4, 5 and 6 students from the Launceston Preparatory School. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members - Hear, hear.

[12.50 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Welcome. I was going to say I think I lost my audience as the Premier made his entry up there but hopefully someone is watching.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff, I think, for supporting this bill and for her learned, rambling history lesson. She no doubt has a future post-politics as a recycling scientist or something like that. The Greens, despite, as Dr Woodruff pointed out, this being in the Greens' consciousness for the last 70 years, had an opportunity when they were in government less than a decade ago to do something, anything about it. Apparently you are too distracted, too busy destroying thousands of jobs in our sustainable forest industry to actually do something.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff and Mr Winter, enough.

Mr ELLIS - They were too busy destroying thousands of jobs in our sustainable forest industry. It speaks of the sheer bloody-minded ideological approach to which the Greens take environmental matters. It is not about making the world a cleaner, tidier place, a better environment; it is just simply anti-capitalism and anti-jobs.

On this side of the House with the practical action of looking after the environment and for caring for country, things like what we are doing today with the container refund deposit scheme, it is tangible. It is about getting plastics out of our oceans, it is about getting glass off our streets and making sure that our kids can live in an environment that is clean, pristine and cared for.

This is a hallmark of Liberal Governments. When we talk about looking after our country we take practical actions rather than ideological approaches, which do not help anyone. I want to talk about the split responsibility model that we have brought into place. Earlier this year the Government announced its preferred model for the Tasmanian container refund scheme, which would be a split responsibility model. We are confident that this model will deliver the best scheme for Tasmania. It is convenient for the consumer and it provides opportunities for charities and community groups to be involved and benefit. It will maximise the number of containers that are returned. This feeds into those two earlier points that we want to really drive home to people.

Tasmania has learnt from schemes operating in other states including what works well and what does not. The split responsibility model is already operating successfully in New South Wales, as well as the ACT and soon in Victoria. It involves a scheme coordinator who administers the scheme while a separate network operator runs the network of refund points. The scheme coordinator keeps the overall cost of the scheme down, which is important with scarce tax payer's money. It ensures that all beverage companies pay their fair share.

The network operator is paid per returned container and is therefore incentivised to maximise the number of containers returned. One of the key points about this model is that when you incentivise a network operator to make their refund points as accessible as possible for people right around the community it means that you bring more containers back into the recycling system, off our streets, out of our waterways and give more charities the opportunity to raise money through that scheme. We do not want a situation where the incentive is the

opposite. We do not want to be pushing people away from returning a product because it may come at a cost.

We want as many of those products as possible back in our recycling system and then being reused for whatever purposes that they will be.

The split model aligns with the incentives for both the scheme co-ordinator and the network operator with government and industry objectives to keep costs down and maximise container return. A number of community organisations support the split responsibility model. I want to go through their responses to the scheme. They are the most important beneficiaries of this, aside from the broader benefits of living in a clean environment.

There is a fantastic opportunity to push volunteerism and citizen service in our state and get young people and communities involved where they can raise money, care for country and put more back into their voluntary organisations that do so much good for people right around the state.

I will start with young people. Scouts Tasmania said, 'participating in the scheme provides a fundraising source for our groups across the state, to not just invest back in the Scouts but into our community'. I pay tribute to the Scouts around Tasmania and around the world, for that matter, who do amazing work. They are the future leaders of our state and our world. Through being involved in this scheme in other states they have been able to raise an extraordinary amount of money for that fantastic organisation. The leaders put it back into opportunities for the kids to get out and enjoy our beautiful natural environment.

Tasmania has some of the best hiking and camping opportunities anywhere in the world. To have Scouts cleaning up that country and financially facilitating their ability to get out there is an amazing opportunity. It shows some of the intangible benefits schemes like this can have. It is not just about dollars and cents. It is not just about containers out, containers in. It is about giving young people the opportunity to contribute to their community and to benefit from the hard work that they put in on a daily basis.

Charitable Recycling Australia says:

We have been behind this scheme since the start and have been involved in the consultation along the way.

Their input has been invaluable and important because they are people with experience in this space. They have been pushing it since the early days.

St Vincent de Paul Society of Tasmania said:

The profit-sharing model proposed by the Tasmanian Government will most benefit Tasmanian community groups and charities. Building, running and maintaining a recycling plant is best left to professionals so community groups can concentrate on their core activities, building better communities, and assisting the most vulnerable in our society.

That is what this model is about. It is about giving the people who are collecting the cans and bottles from around our state the opportunity to do just that and focus on those works, rather than having to do a lot of the grunt work behind the scenes.

Anyone in a recycling industry will tell you that it is becoming an increasingly high technology space. It is a complicated industrial process and it is networked right around the state. We do not need St Vincent de Paul focusing on how it can run a better recycling scheme. We want it focusing on how it can best help the needy in our society. How it can best, in conjunction with other groups, help clean things up at a local level with volunteer hands. Let us help them focus on the things that they do best and get the recycling industry to focus on what it does best.

LGAT welcomed the announcement of the Government's preferred container refund scheme design:

LGAT commends the state Government on choosing a split-governance model for Tasmania's container refund scheme.

I can hear the praise from mayors, and ex-mayors right around the state.

LGAT went on to say:

This scheme would separate responsibility for running the scheme from operating the container collection network, similar to the model currently operating in New South Wales.

I could not agree more with our local government colleagues.

Debate adjourned.

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

MOTION

COVID-19 - Government Response

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House -

(1) Notes that -

- (a) COVID-19 has been one of the greatest health, social and economic challenges Tasmanians have faced;
- (b) the Government's number one priority is to keep Tasmanians safe and secure;

- (c) on 22 October 2021, the Government announced its 'Reconnecting Tasmania' plan to safely re-open our borders on 15 December 2021, based on advice from Public Health, the State Health Commander, the State Controller and relevant agencies;
- (d) based on the Tasmania-specific modelling from the Kirby Institute, the Government is confident that we can open our borders and manage COVID-19 safely, including within our health system;
- (e) the Government's 'Reconnecting Tasmania' plan allows Tasmania to re-open our borders, while ensuring we have the health and safety nets in place to keep on top of COVID-19;
- (f) by retaining baseline community health, hygiene, tracking and tracing protocols, coupled with COVID-safety business plans, and a well-resourced and prepared health system, we can re-open our borders safely and sensibly;
- (g) between now and 15 December 2021, vaccination remains the priority with more than 90% of Tasmanians aged 16 years and older having had at least one dose and nearly 80% fully vaccinated; and
- (h) by 15 December 2021, the Government is confident that everyone above the age of 12 in Tasmania will have had the opportunity to be vaccinated.

(2) Endorses the Government's 'Reconnecting Tasmania' plan.

I would like a vote, Mr Speaker.

COVID-19 has been one of the greatest, health, social and economic challenges Tasmania has faced. Around the world countries have been separated, economies disrupted and 5 million people have lost their lives.

The Tasmanian Government, under the leadership of Premier, Peter Gutwein, has guided our state through this global pandemic. We led the country by taking a firm border stance early and delivering the biggest economic support in stimulus package as a proportion of our country at over \$1.1 billion, because our first priority was and has remained to keep Tasmanians safe and secure. It is still the first priority going forward and it has worked.

As we have watched other jurisdictions battle extended lock-downs we have enjoyed, here in Tasmania, a relatively normal way of life. We have been able to go to work, to school, to restaurants and cafes. Not only is Tasmania one of the best places to live, Tasmania has been recognised as one of the top five, safest places to live in the world and our economy leads the nation.

People not only want to travel here but they want to live here. I am sure everyone in this House agrees Tasmania is the best place to be. This Government has taken a careful and cautious approach to managing COVID-19, at our borders and in our state for the past 21 months. Our Reconnecting Tasmania plan is based on these principles. We chose not to race ahead and drop our border guards at 80 per cent full-vaccination rate, like other jurisdictions. We led the way by declaring the higher benchmark of 90 per cent vaccination rate for Tasmanians before relaxing our borders. It is not just 90 per cent vaccination rate for Tasmanians aged 16 and over, it is for Tasmanians aged 12 and over. This means when we re-open our borders on 15 December every eligible Tasmanian aged over 12 years will have had the opportunity to be vaccinated and we will reach the 90 per cent mark at a minimum.

What is disappointing is that rather than acknowledge the Government's high bar for vaccination rates and the importance of achieving that high bar, Labor is deliberately trying to scare people. They are ignoring the empirical evidence and statistical facts that if you are vaccinated that you are at least 90 per cent less likely to be seriously ill, require hospitalisation or lose your life. That is why being vaccinated is so important. I reiterate what the Premier has already said many times, 'please get vaccinated, it is your best safety'.

In New South Wales, 95 per cent of those in hospital with COVID-19 are unvaccinated. That is why we are waiting until all those who are eligible have had the opportunity to be vaccinated, because the evidence is that this will only become a pandemic of the unvaccinated. It was interesting that out of the 9000, or nearly 9000 in New South Wales, who were hospitalised recently, only 5 per cent were vaccinated, because the evidence is that this will only become a pandemic of the unvaccinated.

However, this does not stop Labor playing politics. It was only last week that an embarrassing email gaffe from the Labor leader, Rebecca White's chief of staff exposed their shameful politicising of the pandemic and clearly demonstrated that they do not have a position on our border reopening plan. Included in a response to the media release calling for Labor to support the Government's safe plan to reopen our borders, Labor's chief of staff stated:

If we want to go harder we could say that we support reopening when it is safe to do so but to say they have a plan is a stretch.

This is further proof that Labor is grasping at straws for a shred of relevance and that Rebecca White's leadership is driven by desperately going harder on the Government. There is no substance to the argument and, quite frankly, what they are doing is playing with people's anxieties. Business owners and hardworking Tasmanians as well as families who have not seen each other for a long time deserve better.

Once and for all, Labor must cease this reckless politicking and support our plan for reopening on 15 December because that plan is carefully considered and backed by Public Health. From 15 December people will be able to enter Tasmania from all over the country subject to being fully vaccinated if aged over 12 years and, importantly, to lower the risk, having had a negative test result within 72 hours of travelling if coming from Victoria or New South Wales and the ACT.

An exception to this is for returning Tasmanians who undertake a short trip of less than seven days - then the test will not apply. However, they will need to monitor for symptoms. People who travel to Tasmania but do not meet these criteria will be subject to additional

quarantine and testing requirements. Based on the Tasmanian-specific modelling we commissioned from the Kirby Institute, we are confident that we can open our borders and manage COVID-19 safely, including within our health system.

By retaining baseline community health, hygiene, tracking and tracing protocols, coupled with COVID-safety business plans and a well-resourced and prepared health system, we will reopen our borders safely and sensibly. These baseline measures include our vaccination program including boosters; hospital preparedness including new beds and COVID-surge capacity; hygiene; social distancing, and staying home if unwell; cleaning, Check in TAS app at all designated settings; gathering restrictions, including density limits and restrictions on movement based on risk; masks if required; COVID safety plans to support safe business and event operations; testing and contact tracing; isolation of cases in quarantine of contacts.

Our fully-vaccinated health system stands ready. A significant amount of work has occurred over the past 12 months to ensure our hospitals are ready. This includes increasing our public bed capacity. There will be 152 new beds by the end of this year, from May 2021 to December 2021. We are hiring an additional 840 full-time equivalents since July last year with further recruitment for new beds underway.

Our escalation plans also provide at the highest level for a surge capacity of up to 211 COVID-19 ward beds across the state and up to 114 ICU surge beds. In addition, we now have two community care facilities - Fountainside here in Hobart with 50 beds and the Coach House in Launceston with 25 beds. On equipment, we will have 367 ventilators available in the state and we already have a secure six-month pandemic stockpile of the critical PPE that will be required.

We have already purchased 2500 smart devices, which can be dispatched statewide to patients and enable daily monitoring of pulse rate and oxygen levels.

Centralised monitoring of health and wellbeing needs will also occur as part of the COVID@Home model, with a team of Tasmanian Health Service (THS) health professionals available 24/7 to provide support.

Escalation pathways are also in place, with the capacity to directly admit COVID-positive patients, if clinically recommended, to an appropriate inpatient bed, bypassing the emergency department.

Mr Speaker, now is the test for Labor. Do you support our reopening plan, or not? Do you support our Hospital Preparedness plan, or not? If not, what is your alternative?

At every opportunity, Labor has sought to politicise the pandemic and create fear among Tasmanians. Faster than a yoyo, Labor called for the border to open, close, open and close again, without taking any notice of advice from Public Health. This politicking must stop.

I want to read from a media release from 22 October, by Peter Gutwein, to explain this:

To be clear, the modelling doesn't take into account the retention of some important hygiene measures and COVID safeguards, particularly across the first few months, including gathering restrictions, density limits and mask wearing in high-risk indoor settings.

As we draw closer to December 15, we will continue to take Public Health advice on what the most appropriate settings for Tasmania will be as our borders reopen.

Importantly, over the past 12 months our hospital system has been building capacity, with more than 655 additional full-time equivalents working in our health system today than there were 12 months ago, and more dedicated beds to surge capacity, and as our borders reopen, our vaccination program will continue, so Tasmanians can keep lifting the high vaccination rates to make sure our communities are safe.

We will continue to manage and monitor the situation closely and take Public Health advice to ensure we can reopen with confidence and Tasmanians can once again reconnect with friends and loved ones.

I have a Labor media release dating back to 26 June 2020. The first thing that is said on the front is 'Labor welcomes border reopening date, subject to Public Health advice' - moves consistent with Labor's call to provide certainty to business and get people into jobs. Rebecca White knows Tasmania is prepared for a safe border reopening, so why does she continue to undermine Public Health? Labor's shameless pandemic politicking demonstrates a complete lack of leadership and leaves Tasmanians wondering if they support the Government's Reconnecting Tasmania plan or not. Labor must cease their reckless politicking and finally reveal if they support the Government's reopening plan for 15 December.

Labor had nothing to offer Tasmanians at the last election. They went backwards in every electorate, and they still have nothing to offer. In fact, St Marys was the only northern booth that Labor won.

Since coming to government, we have reinvested record funding into health, while under the previous Labor-Greens government, they sacked a nurse a day for nine months. They closed whole wards and put beds in storage. In contrast, we have employed nearly two health professionals every day for the last 15 months. The question is still open as to whether Ms White and those opposite support our Reconnecting Tasmania plan or oppose it.

Most people listening to Labor recently will be left with the impression they oppose it.

Unlike those on the other side of the House who have no plan, who do nothing else except play pandemic politics, on this side of the House we have a plan: a plan to safely reconnect our regions with visitors, our business with markets and Tasmanians with their loved ones. On this side of the House we are preparing for a safe reopening on 15 December.

Mr Speaker, we call on the House to endorse the Government's Reconnecting Tasmania plan.

[2.45 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on this notice of motion brought forward by the Government. I want to put on the record a couple of facts at the start of my contribution this afternoon.

The government-of-the-day has set 15 December as the reopening date for our borders and Labor has always supported public health advice. I want to put on the record my sincere

thanks to our Public Health professionals and those working across our health care settings for the extraordinary contribution they have made over such a prolonged period. They have kept Tasmanians safe and provided very sound advice to Government and to others about what measures should be put in place to ensure the Tasmanian community is kept safe. It is going to be a really difficult time for them also going forward and they deserve our thanks and encouragement to continue doing the great work they are doing as we look to reopen.

The Labor Party is not the government-of-the-day and it does not have access to the information to guide reopening or the jurisdiction to even set a date. That is your job, Mr Tucker, as the government-of-the-day and you have done that.

I will say from the outset, we will be proposing an amendment to today's motion. I will be providing that and tabling it later.

The Government has brought this motion on today to wedge us, that is pretty clear. It is a nice try but it will not work, Mr Tucker. The Labor Party has never spoken against the Government's policy position of opening borders on the 15 December. We have been very clear that we want the Government to be upfront with Tasmanians about what this will mean for them when the borders do reopen and the Government's plan, most importantly, to support our community in this significant period of change across our communities.

Tasmanians have done an amazing job keeping each other safe. We have not had a community transmission case of COVID-19 in 18 months across Tasmania. This has meant, Mr Tucker, that life has remained largely unchanged for many here and that has been great for Tasmania. There is no doubt we have been very lucky as a state. Our life, compared to our fellow Australians, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, has been relatively unchanged.

However, our community has suffered in other ways and we acknowledge this. People have been separated from their loved ones interstate in times of tragedy at the end of their loved one's life, and they have been separated at a time when they should have been together. This has been devastating for families and for communities. I have been contacted by many of those people, as I am sure many members of this place have been.

The other point is the incredibly difficult time border closures have meant for our aviation, hospitality and tourism industries across Tasmania. On this side we have stood strongly upright with those businesses, strongly advocated for their needs and the need for additional financial support from Government; financial support that was lacking has required strong advocacy on our behalf to get the Government to do something. You were not forthcoming in approaching your federal colleagues for additional financial support for Tasmanian businesses across the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. You finally did it, but it was only after we called for it.

We have spoken with those industries. We understand the significant impact border closures have had on those industries, their workers across the state, and we have proudly spoken up about the need for those businesses and workers to be better supported by your Government.

The other point is, a border reopening date has provided certainty for those Tasmanians I have just reflected upon, and that is a good thing for those businesses. We do not dispute

that. People need to have confidence. Confidence is only instilled in people by them having access to good levels of information - and that is what we are calling for. It is not good enough to announce a one-sheet plan about how our hospital system is going to cope with COVID-19 cases, when we have not had active cases for 18 months and our health system is already at breaking point across Tasmania. Whenever the minister is asked, he always says there is more work to do - he even acknowledges that it is at breaking point.

I am now going to read into *Hansard* my media release that I issued the day following the Premier's very late in the day press conference about the reopening plan. It is important to get this on the record:

Plan provides certainty, but questions remain.

Yesterday's announcement of a firm plan for the reopening of Tasmania's borders provides welcome certainty to those impacted by border closures including Tasmanians separated from loved ones and our hospitality and tourism industries.

Shadow Health Minister Anita Dow said yesterday's announcement will raise many questions for Tasmanians as we look to reopen and live with COVID in our community.

"It's clear a large amount of work has gone into the state's reopening plan, including additional health system capacity," Ms Dow said. "However, the question is, will these measures be enough to ensure our health system can cope with a COVID outbreak? Our health system is already at breaking point. This government has been in power for almost eight years, if they have had that long to fix the health system and failed, how can Tasmanians feel confident our health system can be ready for an outbreak in a matter of weeks?

"Quarantine, both at home and in hotels is another issue that remains critical, with an increased importance placed on it early in the reopening plan. The community need confidence that previous problems with our quarantine system have been addressed following recent breaches.

And we still do not have those reports tabled for public information.

"It's also crucial that the government do everything possible to help people across the state get access to a vaccine. The government has now set an opening date and they must pull out all stops to ensure every Tasmanian can get the jab before December 15.

"Tasmanians have worked incredibly hard to get to the point we are at now and yesterday's announcement was welcome.

"However, it is clear the government has plenty of work to do to make sure our state is prepared for our reopening, more Tasmanians can get a vaccine and our health system can cope with an inevitable COVID outbreak."

That is what I said, Mr Tucker. Mr Tucker, your Government's own modelling shows that there will be tens of thousands of cases of COVID-19 across Tasmania in the first 200 days when we reopen our borders. The modelling also shows that our health system will be impacted. The minister has failed to state how many ICU trained staff we have across Tasmania, and how many staff we have trained to operate ventilators. We have asked questions about our health system which is at breaking point right now - without COVID-19.

We have asked questions about the capacity of our health workforce. In your own admission, minister, with a number of your media releases around your workforce recruitment strategy, there has been an ongoing need now for many years to recruit more health professionals to our health care workforce. Our staff are working long hours, they are burnt out, they are doing double shifts. This is not a new issue, but you have had almost eight years to address it.

We have asked questions about our emergency department waiting times and what impact COVID-19 outbreak in our community will have upon that. We have asked questions about elective surgery waiting lists. There are over 10 000 people across Tasmania waiting for elective surgery, right now. How will the COVID-19 outbreak in our health system impact on their ability to get the surgery that they need right now, and that they have been waiting far too long for?

We have asked for details about the COVID@Home program. It is only reasonable that people in the community should have a good level of understanding about the type of care that is going to be able to be provided to them in their community, when it would appear that the Government's focus is primarily going to be around providing community-based care. People deserve access to this information.

We have also asked questions about the impact of active COVID-19 cases on our ambulance service. Yesterday the Government made some further announcements about that. These are not unreasonable questions to ask, when the information about these things is severely lacking. These points that I make are important, Mr Speaker, because it is not clear from the Government what will be the trigger for lockdowns and increasing restrictions across our communities. It is so critically important that our health system can cope with COVID-19 cases, or we will find ourselves having snap lockdowns as happened in southern Tasmania only a few weeks ago.

The ability of our health system to cope with COVID-19 cases - this is the biggest risk to our state when our borders are opened, and it is only right and fair that we should be asking these questions.

Lockdowns will severely impact our tourism and hospitality businesses, and local economies, once again, as we have seen in other states.

We are the Opposition. We are holding the Government to account in asking these questions about our state's preparedness to reopen. We are doing our job, by asking the questions Tasmanians want to know the answers to.

You only have to look at the public commentary on news reports, on social media, or speak with people on the street, people who you have conversations with in the community. People are concerned about the state of our health system, and its ability to cope when we do reopen in just five weeks. We have reached a critical point in time.

We are not the only ones saying this. The health unions are saying it. Our health care workers are concerned about the health system's ability to cope when we get the surge and the increase in COVID-19 cases across our hospital system.

The Health and Community Services Union, Assistant Secretary, Robbie Moore said he was very concerned that the health system would not cope with the number of cases projected by modelling from the Kirby Institute. The modelling assumes Tasmania will have an average of 258 COVID-19 cases a day over the six months from 1 December, under a scenario where current health measures remain in place as well as a high level of contact tracing. It forecasts 87 people will die in that period, with 242 hospital beds to be occupied by COVID-19 patients at the peak of the outbreak.

Under the reopening plan, Tasmanians returning home, would not be required to take a COVID-19 test if they have been away from the State for fewer than seven days. Mr Moore said the health system was already not dealing with current demand, and extra beds announced by the Government were not enough to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak.

There are others - the AMF and the AMA, to name a few, and I will certainly be mentioning those in my further contributions in this place this afternoon.

I will take the opportunity to read through the motion, that Mr Tucker has brought to the House today, and provide some comments on each point:

- (a) Of course, we agree with that. It is not just Tasmania. It is the world, Mr Tucker.
- (b) It is everybody's key interest for everybody to be safe and secure across Tasmania. It is our primary role in this place.
- (c) Of course, we always take public health advice from our public health officials. Why wouldn't we? As I stated up front in my contribution this afternoon, I extend my sincere thanks to them for all their hard work and dedication in which has been an incredibly stressful time for them over a sustained period of time.
- (d) We are asking questions about d), and we are entitled to do so.
- (e) It is just stating a fact.
- (f) We do have some concerns about this. You are stating the importance of these things being in place as we reopen, and we agree. That is why we are asking these questions, Mr Tucker.

Vaccinations: more needs to be done to get the vaccine out to our people across our local communities, particularly in those areas of high disadvantage where we know that there are low vaccination rates right now. I know in my electorate there are a number of communities that do not have the vaccination rates of other centres across the state. We should be doing everything we can to get mobile vaccination clinics standing up at local supermarkets. We are doing it at Bunnings, so why do we not do it at Woolies?

We have this one window of time, this one window of opportunity, to make sure that every Tasmanian, no matter where they live, has the opportunity to be vaccinated. We have to pull out every stump. We have to be creative about it. We have to make sure they have had

that opportunity. It is absolutely critical that they do, for their own health and wellbeing, for their community, and for our health system, and our health care workers.

- (g) I have spoken about.
- (h) Similar lines again. I have already said that we have never spoken against the border opening.

Mr Speaker, that concludes my contribution this afternoon on this Notice of Motion. I want to make it very clear that we support the certainty that providing a date to reopen our borders provides to our community. Make no mistake, though. This does not mean we will stop raising the concerns of the community, holding this Government to account, and asking very important questions that Tasmanians want answers to, as we look to reopen the borders in the next five weeks.

I have my amendment. Would you like me to read the amendment?

Mr SPEAKER - You need to read the amendment in.

Ms DOW - Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment -

Insert -

"(3) Calls on the Premier to provide a Ministerial Statement no later than 25 November 2021, on the preparedness for COVID of our health system."

It is straightforward.

[3.00 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, we are pleased to have this opportunity to talk about safety in Tasmania. It is a highly discussed topic. Every person I speak to has a different perspective, whether it is getting coffee from a small business owner, speaking to people who have art shops where there has been almost no traffic, speaking to a person in the community who has a dangerous level of emphysema, speaking to another person who was immuno-compromised and another one who had a child with cerebral palsy. There are people in Tasmania with a range of experiences and a whole range of views about opening our borders. I have not yet spoken to someone who is not concerned about the state of the health system and does not have confidence that it will be able to withstand any type of shock.

I want to address the conversation about the Kirby Institute's modelling. We had a briefing from the Director of Public Health on Monday. It was a short briefing; not as long as I would have liked to have gone into the details behind that modelling. The Director of Public Health made the point that it will provide a guide to the restrictions that he will implement when the borders open on 15 December. He will keep an eye on the situation, particularly the response to the borders of New South Wales and Victoria opening and the movement of Delta around those populations.

We do modelling and we understand it does not provide real world answers but what is the point of doing modelling unless it is providing some guidance? We assume that the Government and the Director of Public Health have asked for this modelling to provide some

indication of the trends. Pulling back without looking at the raw numbers, the trends are concerning for our health system and for people who may become sick and exposed. What they say is that the modelled scenarios include a range of different restrictions and a range of different public health capabilities.

The contact tracing, the testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine - the TTIQ - is critical to making sure that once Delta enters Tasmania, which it will, we can keep a handle on where it is moving and who it is affecting so that we will pre-emptively be able to put public health restrictions in place to manage the load on our health system. That is where the things are with the global pandemic. Some countries have done that effectively; other countries have failed. Public health systems in other countries have failed when they have given up on the contact tracing and said it is too hard.

The modelling in this situation looked at 80 per cent contact tracing effectiveness and 50 per cent contact tracing effectiveness. We have been able to achieve something in the order of 80 per cent so far, but the experience elsewhere, as the Director of Public Health said, shows it is unlikely we will be able to stay at 80 per cent. The modelling for 80 per cent is more than heroic. It is not useful information because it is not what Tasmania is likely to be able to achieve, said the director.

Scenarios 1, 2 and 3 all provide for a level of contact tracing we are not likely to be able to achieve, according to the director. The fourth scenario, which is for contact tracing of 50 per cent of people who have become infected and mask wearing indoors for children over the age of 12, probably gives us a sense of where we are likely to be with the number of deaths and the number of cases.

I struggle to say these words casually because each of those modelled deaths represent the potential real-life experience for Tasmanians. We cannot get casual about this and it is not my intention to be. I am just reading from this modelling, which is pointing out to us that with 10 per cent movement restriction, which is about where we are now, there would be 70 000 cases in the 200 days after 15 December and there would be 148 deaths. Those 148 deaths would, in the greatest likelihood, end up with people being intubated in ICU wards or a bed in hospital. Beyond that, those deaths also include people who are hospitalised but who, thankfully, do not die.

You cannot understate the fact that there will be an increasing burden on the health system. That is why we cannot support the way Mr Tucker has framed part (f). He said that 'by retaining a well-resourced and prepared health system'. We do not have a well-resourced health system. It is not properly prepared. People in the health system are working day and night to do everything they can. I thank them on behalf of the Greens and everyone we represent for the work they do. The quality of the work is outstanding. However, they are working with limited resources and that is the fault of the Government.

The Government has starved the health system of the baseline level of resourcing in a number of areas, particularly the hospital system and community health. We were in a situation of pandemic 18 months ago and the Government had a blinding realisation that public health is a fundamental bedrock of society. We are playing catch-up but there is only so much people can do. When you do not have enough beds built because that work did not start seven years ago, it is difficult to manufacture the extra room in the emergency department, the extra room to make sure people can have their elective surgeries done on time.

With the figures from the AMA report card, and the evidence on the Government's own dashboard, where we stand at the moment is that only 29 per cent of emergency department patients were seen on time in August. That is a truly appalling figure, and it is the worst one this state has ever recorded.

Under the Liberals' watch, under this Government, we have now reached the bottom of our level of statistics of people being seen on time in the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Only 36 per cent of patients with an imminently life-threatening condition and 90 per cent of patients with a potentially life-threatening condition were seen on time. They were devastatingly low numbers, and they are truly distressing when you reflect on the experiences of people with life-threatening conditions who have been waiting to be seen, and have not been seen in a timely fashion.

The emergency department staff are doing their absolute best. People in the hospital, nurses, people in Ambulance Tasmania and paramedics are working so hard, without enough people to help them to balance their workload and have enough nurses and midwives on the wards. This is not an insoluble situation. There is no doubt that there are problems that we cannot quickly return from, that the Government has made, but there can be more investment in nursing and midwifery staff. There can be more commitment to doing what the ANMF has been asking for - putting the money and commitment now into the equipment and retention that is required for nursing and midwives over the long term. However, it has to start with the commitment, and it has to start first and foremost with bringing the nurses into the system to fill the gaps that are there.

The ANMF is very clear that there are existing gaps in the system, which requires the casual nursing pool to be overused. It means that nurses in Tasmania continue to do double time overtime and work longer hours than they want to, because of their passion and devotion to their work, and their commitment to their teammates and other staff - and obviously, first and foremost, their care to look after patients.

The Minister for Health has opportunities. There is the \$300 million that the Premier talked about in the state election budget. That \$300 million budget was sitting there, he said, to be available for the sort of contingencies that we have now. The last thing we want to do is to hold that money back, when there is something we could be doing today in preparation.

We have to have a plan for nurses, doctors and other healthcare staff who become infected with COVID-19 and are not able to work. Although it is true that double-dose vaccination for the coronavirus does dramatically and substantially reduce the risk of people becoming hospitalised and dying from COVID-19, it does not completely protect a person from becoming infected - and potentially infectious as well. If a person who has the double-dose vaccination becomes infected, they must be removed from the staff. They will not be available to work in the hospital.

We asked the minister the other day - and I still have not heard a response, minister, and I have written to you about this because it is really concerning. Many conversations have been had amongst Liberals about plans; we would really like to know what modelling has been done. There has been a lot of modelling work done on the impact of staff losses and absences because of COVID-19 infection, and the two-week-plus period that people would be off work while they were infectious or sick, for replacement staff in that period. You cannot whistle people up at the last minute and I am not convinced there is a plan for this; I have not heard anything yet.

The minister has written a long opinion piece in *The Examiner* about COVID-19 and all the actions the Government is doing, but there is radio silence on the issue of supporting nursing and, particularly in the long term, putting that investment in now. The pandemic, COVID-19, will be with us for an indefinite time, and those staff take time to recruit.

I also want to make a point about the third vaccination dose. It would be great if someone from the Government could provide some information about what proportion of our healthcare staff will have received a third dose by 15 December. I have spoken to doctors who are working, and who were double-dose vaccinated back in April; there was a rollout that started in April and May. There are certainly people who have been double-dose vaccinated for many months now in the healthcare system, but the laggards were only finally required to do that on 31 October.

There is a spread before people will have their third dose. The evidence from the international literature, and experience in Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States is that vaccination efficacy drops off quite rapidly after a month, and then there is a decline. It is pretty clear that we need to have a third dose to get proper vaccination coverage for COVID-19.

If the minister, or someone else from the Government, could provide an answer to that, I would appreciate what the plan is for the third doses. We have no problem with supporting the Labor amendment that is proposed.

[3.17 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Deputy Premier) - Thank you, Mr Tucker, for bringing forward this motion for debate and discussion today, and for all members' interest in the border reopening plan, our health system preparedness and our capacity within our health system, hospitals and the community. There has been some discussion on COVID@Home as well, which I have detailed in a number of articles, and in this place as well.

Right throughout the pandemic, the health and safety of Tasmanians has been at the forefront of all our thinking, and the number-one priority right throughout the pandemic. Of course, it includes where we are presently and leading up to 15 December, and the work and activity that will be required post-15 December.

I want to reinforce the importance of vaccination. As Health minister, day in and day out - and no doubt for other members of parliament, within your communities as well - to reinforce the message that the best line of defence against COVID-19 is to be vaccinated. The experience, as I have also mentioned, with respect to New South Wales, with the 8851 people hospitalised during the outbreak - if my memory serves me correctly - 95 per cent of those who required hospitalisation were in fact not fully vaccinated. Leading up to 15 December, we can only reinforce the message of how important it is.

As a state, we are travelling well, but we need to continue to be very vigilant in imploring Tasmanian individuals - parents of young children aged between 12 and 15 in particular at present - to take the opportunity of ensuring first-dose vaccination, and the importance of the second dose as well.

There have been a number of discussions in this House and more broadly within the community on hospital preparedness, health preparedness. I place on the record, as other members have done during this debate, my thanks and appreciation for the enormous amount of work since the start of the pandemic to now, and the work that will be required from all our

health professionals across our systems - our public hospitals, private hospitals, community care settings, primary health settings and pharmacies.

There has been an extraordinary effort, and I appreciate that effort wholeheartedly. I have met staff - particularly in the north-west coast community, which had a very traumatic experience through the COVID-19 presentation last year. I continue to engage and want to support those staff and understand what many staff went through, particularly over that intense time in the north-west community, but more broadly across Tasmania, because with COVID-19 and the pandemic there were many unknowns. People had to adapt, change and innovate very quickly - and very much at that front line as well. I greatly appreciated that, and take every opportunity I can to thank our staff.

Our Reconnecting Tasmania plan is informed by the Tasmanian-centric modelling done by the Kirby Institute and allows our state to open - while ensuring, once again, that the health and safety nets are in place to keep on top of COVID-19 during those reopening phases.

We have chosen the date of 15 December to reopen our borders, based on the vaccination trajectory at the particular time where we expect all Tasmanians aged 12 years and over to have had the opportunity to have the vaccine, with our aim being to have at least 90 cent cent of Tasmanians fully vaccinated. We are doing well, as I have said, but we need to be vigilant.

The Kirby modelling is challenging, as the Premier has said in his commentary as well. However, it is important to note that the modelling is not forecasting. It is a set of scenarios and variables that provides possible outcomes, not predictions. However, that modelling is important as we prepare for that reopening in terms of our community care, COVID@Home, and our escalation management and hospital preparedness. We are committed to ensure we are as prepared as possible and believe we will be post-15 December.

We have been focused on developing plans, investing strategies to protect Tasmanians and meeting the many challenges the virus will present. I want to focus on the key planks in my relatively short contribution, although we will have another hour-and-a-half discussion following my contribution in the motion presented by Mr Tucker today. I will speak about that at more length. We must ensure high levels of testing for COVID-19, effective contact tracing and quarantine capability, rapid response capability to plan for, to prevent, manage and treat any outbreaks and, of course, promoting COVID-19 safety work plans and other strategies to reduce the risk of COVID-19. Importantly, the Tasmanian Health Service has comprehensive COVID-19 escalation management plans that describe the operational actions taken by the state's major hospitals and related facilities in response to COVID-19.

There are three escalation management plans across our Tasmanian Health Service - THS North, THS North-West and THS South. Each plan includes trigger points for actions, escalation levels from 1 through to 4. I am advised all regions are currently at code level escalation 1.

District hospital response plans also have been developed for each of the three regions covering the region's district hospitals and associated community services. These have been developed in collaboration with the regional health emergency management team and incorporate the escalation management plan. The objectives of the district hospital response plans are to document, control, coordination arrangements and the actions that will be undertaken to prevent transmission between staff, patients and visitors at district hospitals when

delivering community-based services and are plans to find and prioritise essential business functions and manage risks.

The regional health emergency teams have made adjustments to the escalation management plans in response to new and emerging information and risks including emergence of the Delta variant. A lot of work has been done.

I only have a few moments before we wind up but I commend all the people across services, primary health and hospital settings and appreciate the regular communication. We have been meeting regularly. The health commander, Dr Veitch, has done a tremendous job throughout the entire pandemic; and his team with representatives of workers in the hospital system with the ANMF, the Health and Community Services Union, the AMA, Primary Health Tasmania and key stakeholders. This is so we can ensure we are responding to their needs, concerns and objectives which we all share of keeping Tasmanians safe, as we have done so well throughout the pandemic.

I commend not only our health services team but also the leadership of our Premier in working with all people to keep Tasmanians safe. We will be talking more about this in the motion from Ms Dow.

I commend the motion to the House. It is a motion that clearly sets out our reopening on 15 December. It calls on the House and indeed the Labor Party to stop playing politics -

Time expired.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 12

Dr Broad (Teller)
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

NOES 12

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis (Teller)
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Tucker

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The result of the division being Ayes 12, Noes 12, therefore, in accordance with Standing Order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

COVID-19 - Preparedness for Reopening the Borders - Motion Negatived

[3.35 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges that -
 - (a) the Tasmanian Government released its Roadmap to Reopen, 'Reconnecting Tasmania: our safe border reopening plan', on 22 October 2021;
 - (b) the Tasmanian Government has set the date of 15 December 2021 for reopening Tasmania's borders; and
 - (c) the Tasmanian Government's Kirby Institute modelling outlines a range of scenarios including forecasting the State can expect tens of thousands of cases in the first 200 days.
- (2) Notes that -
 - (a) people right across the State have raised concerns about the health system's ability to cope with a COVID outbreak;
 - (b) recent health dashboard data highlights current demand is not being met across the health system;
 - (c) four out of five people presenting to the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department and 60 per cent of people presenting to the Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department are not seen within clinically recommended time frames; and
 - (d) 10 776 Tasmanians are on the elective surgery wait list.
- (3) Further notes that Tasmanians, no matter where they live, should have every opportunity to be double vaccinated before 15 December 2021.
- (4) Calls on the Premier, Hon Peter Gutwein MP to -
 - (a) table the report and modelling on surge capacity which informs the Government's hospital preparedness plan;
 - (b) table the report and modelling on surge capacity which informs the Government's community health preparedness plan; and

- (c) provide a ministerial statement to parliament on the COVID@Home program and how this service will be provided across our communities.

This is an important motion before the House today. I know that the Government will say that by bringing this on we are being political about this issue. That could not be further from the truth. What we are doing is seeking more information. Information communicated well provides certainty to people and it provides confidence to people. To date, the Government's background information that it has developed for each of these plans that it claims to have has not been widely available across communities. In fact, it has done nothing to instil confidence in people by just producing a one-page fact sheet about only hospital preparedness when we know there will be a huge focus across our community, a community-based healthcare response providing care for patients in their own homes with the COVID@Home program.

We asked the minister about this during question time a number of weeks ago now. He was not able to provide us with any further information about what the program would actually be. There was a brief mention about pulse oximetry being monitored in people's homes. There was no other further information about how that would be delivered and who would deliver that. It is disappointing because if there is going to be such a huge emphasis on community-based care then Tasmanians need to have good access to information about how that care is going to be provided. Everyone in this place would agree with that.

I thank our hardworking healthcare workers across our healthcare settings, wherever they work across Tasmania. They do an amazing job and they are under incredible pressure. That has not improved under this Government. They are under more pressure each and every day, working double shifts, poor cultures across a number of healthcare setting across Tasmania that are detailed in numerous reviews that this Government has commissioned during its time. Each of them report to the need for recruiting more staff across our health system, but also poor culture. Culture starts at the top and it starts with the government of the day. This Government needs to do much more to improve the culture across our healthcare workplaces right across Tasmania. I will talk more about that later in my contribution.

I also thank our hardworking Public Health officials and health professionals. They have done an amazing job and I referred to this in my previous contribution. They have been through an incredible amount of pressure and that pressure is only going to continue as we look to reopen and have this ongoing period of uncertainty for Tasmanians. There will be lots of work that will need to be done by our Public Health professionals as we reopen and consideration is given to what restrictions need to be in place and where and when. That is not clear right now from the modelling that has been commissioned by the Government.

Tasmania has lost 13 lives to COVID-19 and my thoughts are with the families of these people. Where I live in Burnie, we had one of the most significant outbreaks in the country with our major hospital shutting down and the army brought in to provide services.

A review of this outbreak was undertaken and it is fair to say this event demonstrated the importance of our hospital system being prepared, and that good systems and processes are in place in managing COVID-19 across our healthcare settings both in the community and in the acute care setting. There were 32 recommendations as part of that report and the annual report of the Department of Health states that 10 of those are yet to be completed. I would like the

minister to outline why they have not yet been completed. That is concerning, given that we are looking to reopening and yet we have not addressed all of those recommendations.

During this time, vaccinations have been made available across our communities. We do know the severity of disease will not be experienced as it was during that time. That has impacts on our health system, we understand that. I understand the focus on community-based care, where there will be a less severe COVID-19 contraction across our communities. I want to talk about the importance of the vaccination program and I will do that later in my contribution.

There is no doubt that Tasmanians have been very lucky over the past 18 months, since we had our last case of community transmission of COVID-19. Our lives, compared to our fellow Australians, particularly in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, has been relatively unchanged. We are about to come into a significant period of change. Our community has suffered in other ways. By this, I mean being separated from loved ones interstate and overseas, sometimes in times of tragedy or at the end of life. That has been devastating and hard for individuals, their families and our local communities. These are times when families should be together to support one another and to grieve together. I know they will be very pleased there is a set date for opening our borders and the certainty that provides to those families.

The other members of the Tasmanian community that I know will also be very pleased are our business community, in particular our hospitality, tourism and aviation industries that have suffered significantly due to border closures. As I said in my last contribution, it was only this side of the House that stood up for those businesses, advocated for ongoing financial support for them, put the case, called on the Government to ask their federal colleagues for support, and it was only after our strong advocacy that that happened. That was very disappointing because those businesses and their workers were suffering.

You only have to look at the current state of the health system across Tasmania to understand why we think it is so important these plans and reports are tabled publicly and that there is a ministerial statement made to the parliament, to the people of Tasmania, about these plans. It is important. We are at a point in Tasmania when things are going to significantly change. We have a small window of opportunity to make sure we are prepared - five weeks, in fact.

This is very serious and we have every right to be asking questions about our healthcare system's preparedness, but also what the Tasmanian community will look like. What can Tasmanians expect? How can they expect their lives to change as we look to reopen our borders? We want to have confidence in the health system and in the systems that have been put in place, but the fact is that the current state of the health system does absolutely nothing to instil confidence in us or our fellow Tasmanians. I speak to people all the time regarding their concerns about this. They have contacted me.

You only have to read the commentary on news reports or social media about people's concerns about the fact that the health system cannot cope right now. We are not meeting current demand; we have not been for some time. This Government has had nearly eight years to address all of the issues across our health system and they have failed to do so. Things have become worse. We have chronic workforce shortages across our healthcare services. We cannot afford to lose any more staff from our health care workforce. They are working under

tremendous pressure. You can understand why they choose not to work in our health care system when they are under the pump every day. They do not see any change. They need to be supported by the Government, particularly during this period of significant change which we are now entering as we reopen our borders.

Every report that has been done by this Government in recent times, whether it be about what happened at Roy Fagan Centre, maternity services in the north-west or the review of CAHMS, makes reference to the need to recruit more staff. Many of them make reference to culture. You only have to look to the work recently done at Ambulance Tasmania when we look at the culture of that workplace and the findings. That was shocking. You have not even released the full report so people can truly understand what our paramedics are experiencing right now, the demands on Ambulance Tasmania, and the demands on these hardworking paramedics.

Volunteers at Ambulance Tasmania often work in rural and remote communities, isolated and not supported by a paramedic in those communities. We had a policy at the last state election to better support our ambulance volunteers across the state. It is critical. How are they being prepared for when there is a COVID-19 outbreak in their local community? I would like the minister to provide an update on that in his contribution.

You only have to look at the most recent dashboard health results provided monthly by this Government. You only have to look at the fact that over 10 000 Tasmanians are waiting for elective surgery, waiting in pain, waiting for a hip replacement or a knee replacement. It is not really elective surgery, it is necessary surgery they are waiting far too long for. People are waiting far too long to see a specialist. Many of the people seeing specialists will eventually require elective surgery. That means there will be more Tasmanians on the elective surgery waiting list.

There are pressures on our emergency departments at the North West Regional Hospital, the Launceston General Hospital and the Royal Hobart Hospital. I have included those in this notice of motion today. The fact that four out of five patients with a potentially life-threatening condition are not seen within a clinically recommended time frame is terrible. What does that mean for those patients? Poorer health outcomes.

The Launceston General Hospital has the worst bedblock in the country. If you are seeking assistance there, 60 per cent of people presenting there with life threatening conditions are not seen in clinically recommended time frames. That is an indictment on this Government. A few months ago we heard that Tasmanians were electing to have their teeth removed rather than pay for dental therapy or wait on the public dental waiting list. It is unacceptable. We know that those people will go on to present at hospital. They will need surgery to have teeth removed. This puts an increased burden on our hospital system. Why are we not providing better care across our communities?

The point I want to make through this motion is that each of those areas will be severely compromised even more when we have a COVID-19 outbreak in the state. The reason why we are asking for this information to be tabled and made public is so that we can understand what the effects will be for most Tasmanians who are waiting for elective surgery. When there was COVID-19 in the state that had a negative impact on the elective surgery waiting list as it did on the oral health waiting list. The Government should be providing this information.

Tasmanians need to know what it is going to mean for them when there are active COVID-19 cases in our community. Will they be able to access elective surgery?

I have talked about the staffing levels in our hospitals and we have been called out for supposedly playing politics with this pandemic. This motion is not about politics. It is about providing information. It is about getting an understanding of the true capacity of our health system.

We are not the only ones talking about the severe impact that a COVID-19 outbreak will have on our health system. I mentioned in my last contribution about HACSU's. In an ABC News story on 23 October, in response to the Government's reopening plan, Robbie Moore, from HACSU, said:

Members are very concerned in relation to this decision to open up when the health system has not got the capacity to do it. They are very frustrated that the Government knew that this would be coming along, and we don't have the capacity, both in the ICU, throughout the emergency department, and throughout the entire health system, to deal with this.

Fundamentally, what we need is more staff and the only way to get more Staff to the State is to offer decent wages and conditions.

At the moment we have the lowest salaries in the country, when it comes to allied health professionals and workers, so we need to see pay equity for Tasmanian public health sector workers so we have the capacity to deal with these oncoming COVID-19 cases.

What did the ANMF say in response to your reopening plan?

The reality is the health system is already under significant strain. Our members are working extremely long hours, overtime, double shifts, just to meet the health care demands of Tasmanians without COVID-19.

Earlier this week in parliament we made reference to comments from the president of the Australian Medical Association's Tasmania branch, Dr Helen McArdle. I want to read some of those comments into the *Hansard* because they are important. As the president of the AMA, this is what she had to say about the state of Tasmania's health system. This is not Labor politicking. It is important that we put on the record the concerns of those working within the sector day to day, dealing with the current state of Tasmania's health system. Dr McArdle said:

Staff are overloaded and exhausted. Patients are not reaching care in a timely manner. An investment in vital modern integrated communication is lacking. Within Tasmania, while the Government has increased recurrent funding to health in more recent years after having significantly cut health spending, our three major hospitals continue to suffer from growing demand.

While there are plans currently underway to open additional beds, this relies on recruiting additional staff, a significant issue in Tasmania. We urgently need more inpatient hospital beds opened and different models to deliver care in the community funded.

We need greater integration with primary care providers and more services closer to home for patients. We need to look at how we can support our medical workforce to ensure the Tasmanian health system attracts and retains health professionals across specialties.

Despite having nearly the highest level of public hospital beds per capita, Tasmania's elective surgery waiting list is one of the worst in the country, more times than not the largest on record, and is continuing to blow out. Only 56 per cent of patients are seen within the clinically recommended time.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a temporary pause of most elective surgeries in 2020, exacerbating an already significant issue. An ever-increasing number of emergency patients needing theatre time as well as the growing number of medical patients in surgical beds has meant elective cases having to be cancelled.

Elective surgery was underfunded and struggling to keep up with the demand pre COVID-19, where we were completing about 15 000 elective surgery cases a year, on average, while adding a further 19 000 to the list.

Bedblock at the Royal Hobart Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital continue to be extreme, and are now experienced at an increasing level at the North West Regional Hospital.

It does not really paint a very positive picture of the state of our health system.

That brings me back to the primary reason for this motion. We are asking questions because we want to be informed. People in the community are concerned. Our healthcare professionals are concerned. Our health unions are concerned. The Australian Medical Association of Tasmania is concerned. We are not the only ones asking these questions or stating these facts. That is why it is so important for the Government to be up-front about their plan to support the community as we reopen our borders.

I spoke before about the vaccine rollout and I want to make the point again about the importance of this and the importance of ensuring that every Tasmanian has the opportunity to be double-vaccinated. We are at a critical point in Tasmania where we have to make sure that people have the opportunity to do that. That means going out to the community. Not everybody, all across Tasmania, tunes in to the Premier's press conference on Facebook. There are people who are not reached by that. People do not read government media releases. How do people get access to information? Many people do not watch the news anymore or read the newspaper and so, there has been a significant challenge set to this Government to ensure that they get information to people and how they think differently about that.

It is really important that we take the vaccine to communities, rather than expecting people to come forward. There are a number of creative ways that you can look at doing that. The Bunnings' model now being used on the north-west coast is a good one but we should have been doing that weeks ago. I cannot understand why it has taken so long for that to be put in place. I would love the opportunity, as I am sure many other members would, to suggest places, or community groups that would be suitable sites for people to receive a vaccine. Why have we not been afforded that opportunity? We all have great knowledge. I have had local

government report back to me to say that they are disappointed that they have not been able to feed in as much information as they would have liked regarding new ways of reaching people, working with community organisations, like Neighborhood Houses, child and family centres.

We have to give this every chance to be a success and we have to give every Tasmanian an equal opportunity to access the vaccine. As I said, we are at a critical point in time. Time is running out and we know that where there are low vaccination rates there are areas where there are ageing populations. People with chronic health conditions and also some of those communities do have people living with significant disadvantage and that is concerning and we should be making every effort to make sure that we reach those communities.

The purpose of this motion is all about information sharing and us being informed. It is about us being informed, as members in this place, to provide information to our community when we are asked. We have continued to ask questions about the health system's ability to cope, because all that has been provided by the Government, more recently, is this fact sheet, which does not even tell you where the ICU beds will be across the state. There is no community care centre in the north-west and I do not understand why. You would have thought from the experiences of the north-west, during the COVID-19 outbreak, that it would have been essential to have that. Why is there one in the north and the south but not in the north-west? There are many unanswered questions. That is why we have continued to ask questions to seek information.

I want to make this important point: I am very disappointed that the Government did not support our amendment on the previous motion. We have roughly four sitting days left until the end of the year and then we rise. We are not back, most likely, until March. In that time between is when there will be COVID-19 again within our community. There is going to be no opportunity for us to have information about that and how we can support our community. You only have to look back at times when there has been an outbreak to see how many of our constituents contact us for information. It does not matter if you are Labor, Liberal, Independent or Greens. Your constituents will reach out to you for support and information. As elected members in this place we should be provided with information. It is not an unreasonable ask for a ministerial statement on the preparedness of our hospitals. That is the one point in that previous motion - which we supported, I might add - that there are unanswered questions around. It is only right that an update be provided to the House as there has not been a lot of information on what will be provided across our communities as far as the COVID@Home program goes, and the lack of a community care centre in the north-west.

You have talked about the hospital system's preparedness, but you have not talked about our community health service preparedness. Do we have enough community health nurses working across our communities to provide this care at home? You said you have recruited all these people across the health system, but where are they working now? If they are working in areas such as testing, contact tracing, vaccination programs, they are not going to not be required once we open the borders. Who will be providing the booster shot program across Tasmania, which is going to be just as important as the first series of vaccinations?

There are many unanswered questions when it comes to this Government's plan and preparedness. This motion today is asking for more information to be made available. We know the health system is at breaking point; everybody knows it. The minister always says there is more work to do. Why can we not be better informed about surge capacity?

We know you wrote to the Prime Minister - as one of the health ministers across each state coming together - to provide advocacy on behalf of your state for more funding, and some of that request was around community-based support. Have you followed up on that request? Will the federal government be providing any more funding for our health system as we reopen our borders? It is another question that remains unanswered.

Will we be provided with briefings over the summer break from the Government? If emergency orders need to be developed, will we be briefed on those? All of these questions remain unanswered.

In conclusion, our health system is not in a good state now. It is not just us saying that. It is the people who experience that, who live it every day when they present at an emergency department, when they call an ambulance and they are waiting for very long periods, often in pain. I told the story of an elderly woman in Wynyard who waited for hours with a fractured hip. These are Tasmanians. They are not statistics. These are people and Tasmanian families who are impacted every day by the state of our health system.

We know you have prepared this one-page document. Since we have been asking questions, you have provided a bit more of an update on the COVID-19 website about the COVID@Home program but it is still not entirely clear. That is why we would like a ministerial statement provided on the matter with further details. It is not unreasonable for us to be seeking information. We are doing our job. We are asking questions that Tasmanians want answered. That is the right thing to do, and we will continue to do that.

Today we are calling on the Government to provide us with more information about their plans - about what we will expect to see as our hospitals surge again, when they are already not meeting demand, and are already at full capacity. What additional supports will be put in place for our staff across the healthcare settings, in the community, in their acute-care setting?

I call on the Government to support this motion today, to reconsider the amendment we moved on the last motion, and to provide that ministerial statement before we rise on 25 November. It is important that we are informed - not only us, but the Tasmanian community. How are you going to communicate with the community about your plan? How are you going to communicate with the community about who they call for help in their community? How will you work with general practice which is already at breaking point? It is taking Tasmanians weeks to get in to see their local GP, yet the whole focus of the response to COVID-19 is going to be a community-based response.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I call on the Government to support this motion.

[4.05 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Health) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for bringing forward this motion. The member mentioned quite a range of areas, including elective surgery, ICU capacity, ventilator capacity, culture within the workplace, the north-west outbreak, recommendations from the north-west report, staff to support the use of ventilators and the like, and there are a number of areas we can touch on here.

Throughout this pandemic, the Premier has been upfront, accountable, clear but also comforting when it comes to communicating with Tasmanians with respect to the most serious disruption the globe has experienced for generations. Not only the Premier, but respective

health ministers and of course, Ms Courtney and all the work that Ms Courtney did last year throughout 2020 and the pandemic health commander, Kath Morgan-Wicks, Dr Veitch, Public Health Director and Dr Veitch's team. Day in, day out, media briefings, briefings, communications with the Tasmanian people and those communications, clear messages, information, being accountable continues today, as do those clear communications around reopening.

The Reconnecting Tasmania plan is an informed plan by modelling by the Kirby Institute, Tasmanian-centric modelling if I can put it that way, and it will allow our state to open its borders while ensuring we have the health and the safety nets in place to ensure we keep on top of COVID-19 during the reopening phases.

I sensed within the member's contribution what the Opposition has largely been presenting to the Tasmanian community over the last number of months, depending on the politics of the day or week, creating fear, scaremongering, undermining our health system and the confidence within our health system. We do have some challenges and I am upfront about the challenges we have in our health system. I have never shied away from those challenges. We are regularly releasing more data when it comes to the challenges within our health system so that the Tasmanian community is informed and to ensure the Government, and me as Health minister, are kept accountable for the healthcare that Tasmanians deserve when they present at a community care setting or primary health setting. Although primary healthcare and GP services are the responsibility of the federal government.

I am aware of the data. I am aware of the statistics. I am well aware, when I first came to the role as Minister for Health, that the data does matter. Those statistics do matter. Every number behind that data is a human face, a Tasmanian in need of care and seeking care. That drives me and this Government and our health department every single day, in providing and continuously improving the healthcare we deliver to Tasmanians.

Yes, there are challenges. The dashboard, as members have mentioned this afternoon, points to those challenges. I visit many healthcare settings and have done over my 19 years in parliament, but particularly as shadow minister for health between 2010 and 2014 and, of course, since May this year when I assumed the role - very proudly and very willingly. I see great care, and I hear of great care, by the thousands of health staff across Tasmania in a challenging environment, particularly when it comes to our emergency department presentations. Yes, the data is there to demonstrate that we need to work better and do better in that sense. I do not shy away from those challenges.

The Premier has never shied away from the challenges of the pandemic. He has taken it head-on, as this Government has - every minister and every member of the Government - and kept Tasmanians safe for 20 months.

The member mentioned in her contribution that as well as we have done in Tasmania in keeping Tasmanians safe and being relatively COVID-19-free for a period of time, we will never forget that we lost 13 lives to COVID-19. That is why this modelling is important. That is why the modelling around hospitalisations is important, and how we can ensure that we are as prepared as we possibly can be, in terms of care within our community and the COVID-19@Home and the acute care that we need to provide - including the equipment, the ICU ventilator capacity, to ensure that we do not add to those tragic numbers of 13. The modelling is challenging because it points to more people losing their lives to this pandemic.

Everyone across our health system, across government, is working day in, day out, to continue to protect Tasmanians and to ensure that we are as prepared as we possibly can be.

We have chosen 15 December to re-open our borders, based on that vaccination trajectory. Again, I implore Tasmanians to get the jab. Many Tasmanians have, and I am proud of them. They have stepped up - not only to protect themselves, their families, their friends, but all Tasmanians, the whole community. We have done extremely well but we are coming to a point where we need to reach in and get to the Tasmanians who, for whatever reason, whatever barrier, have still not rolled up the sleeve and got the jab. It is the number one line of defence when it comes to COVID-19 and protecting ourselves and our community.

The member mentioned a range of areas within her contribution, including recruitment. Again, that is a challenge. Recruitment was a challenge in Ms O'Byrne's time, a challenge since 2014 in our time, and it remains a challenge. You mentioned culture, Ms Dow. Culture is important to me: building a culture in a workplace where people feel safe, where they feel valued and are valued and, most importantly, where they are respected. We want to ensure that Tasmania has a health service that is considered a workplace of choice, where everyone feels valued and are valued, staff are recognised and individuals feel empowered to make positive changes and are given opportunities for growth. I reinforced that point when I recognised 25 years of service and recently presented awards to a number of Tasmanian Health Service employees on the north-west coast; and I was proud to do so.

Words and leadership are important, and investment in culture is as well. Our Budget includes \$5 million to implement a cultural improvement program. The member raised this, and it is important to talk about culture. It is important to talk about the fact and appreciate the work of our staff over the course of the last 20 months. It is important to support staff to work together, to learn, collaborate, problem-solve, empower and respect each other. That is a goal of mine: to improve that workplace environment in our hospitals and across our broader health system, including our mental health services.

It is a major focus of mine, and it goes hand-in-hand with the Health Recruitment Taskforce which first met a few weeks after I became Minister for Health. It builds on our Health Workforce 2040, which has had \$15.7 million provided over four years to implement the health workforce strategy.

Culture, workforce planning for our future, and that focus of employing more staff, more health professionals across our health system is important. This is a government that has not just started this, following the election on 1 May. In fact, we have been employing more staff since we were elected to Government in 2014. Since coming to Government, we have employed an extra 1500 full time equivalent health staff. We are looking to employ more, because we recognise the increase in demand. I could devote much of my contribution to the times between 2010 and 2014 when staff were taken out of our health system, when beds were closed, wards shut, but I will leave that for another time.

I will focus on the positives. The positives quite clearly are, as the record demonstrates, that since 2014 there are 1500 more full-time equivalent people within our Health department. That is important but it does not stop there. We are recruiting up to 280 extra full-time equivalent health staff, to whom we are committed, to support new services, as well to boosting our services across Tasmania delivering our elective surgery program, which the member also mentioned.

In the challenging environment that it is, our recruitment efforts have been met with some success, even in recent times. I mentioned 2014 to now in terms of the extra 1500 staff, but between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021 we saw an increase of 655 paid FTE across the department. I am now advised that the full-time equivalent overall has increased to some 840 FTE since July last year. That works out to nearly two people being recruited every day in our health system over the course of the past 15 months - much better than taking a nurse a day out of our health system for nine months, as we experienced under the previous government. I said I would not go into that.

The member mentioned elective surgery in her motion: the 10 776 people on the wait list. Yes, it is too high, but what you failed to mention in your motion is that we have 1500 fewer patients on the wait list than we had since January this year.

There are improvements and there are positives and there is investment happening. The data says that but there is more to do. I have consistently said we will want to see more people get their surgery within the clinically recommended time. While the September figure of 55 per cent indicates there is more work to be done, it is an improvement of some 10 per cent since January this year. A key focus is to ensure that people on the elective surgery waiting list are seen within the clinically recommended time frames because people get sicker if they are outside the clinically recommended time frames -

Ms Dow - That's right.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is right. That is why it is a focus. They require more and different care as a result of the time on the waiting list. That is why we recognise continuous improvements need to be made. We are heading in the right direction. Through our positive management of COVID-19, we are continuing to perform elective surgery right through 2021, something that cannot be said for New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT.

Those waiting lists are high, but it also needs to be recognised that for a time in Tasmania, and indeed the country, elective surgery - not emergency elective surgery, of course - was cancelled. This is why we are working so hard preparing and responding to COVID-19. That work has started in effect in the beginning of 2020.

The best defence we can have is vaccination. I will say this again because it highlights a key point: in the recent outbreak in New South Wales, 95 per cent of people who were hospitalised with COVID-19 were not fully vaccinated. This is the message we need to continue to get out to Tasmanians: the best way you can protect yourselves, your loved ones, your family and your community, is to roll up your sleeve and get fully vaccinated.

As at 8 November we have just under 91 per cent of Tasmanians 16 years and over have received one dose, and just under 80 per cent have received two doses. Thank you to all those Tasmanians who have rolled up their sleeves and been vaccinated and to those who have booked in. Thank you to all the staff in vaccination clinics across Tasmania who have done such an outstanding job and quickly. I commend each and every one of them. It was fantastic to meet a number of them just 10 days or so ago to thank them and to acknowledge their efforts. To see how justifiably proud they were of the work they had done was incredibly heart-warming and made me, as Health minister, very proud.

We have been a leader in the delivery of vaccine per capita and the message has to be 'Don't wait, vaccinate'. We are asking every Tasmanian to get behind our vaccination effort. We have constantly said that we want every eligible Tasmanian to have had the opportunity to get vaccinated. The member mentioned the number of initiatives we are rolling out to achieve this aim. Good work is happening. Thank you.

Ms Dow mentioned the success of the Bunnings vaccination clinics, if I can put it that way - thank you - but there is a lot of work we still need to do to get to 90 per cent fully vaccinated by 15 December. We have a number of initiatives: a program vaccinating high school students in selected regional high schools, 12- to 16-year-olds; additional pop-up clinics in regional areas of Tasmania and niche locations, such as the University of Tasmania and Bunnings; specialist clinics to support vulnerable sectors, including multicultural and indigenous communities; extra days and extended hours in all state community clinics statewide to target our children 12 years and above; support for the primary care sector to offer Moderna and Pfizer to Tasmanians over the age of 12; and a small-town vaccination bus tour in conjunction with the Royal Flying Doctor Service - I commend the RFDS on the work that they are doing in partnership; and continuing our main clinics in major centres such as Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport. I have seen these areas. I have seen the in-reach and the out-reach.

I mentioned more vulnerable sectors within our communities - multicultural communities and also people experiencing homelessness. The work that is being done - the Moreton Group is an example that I witnessed in Launceston a number of weeks ago - everyone is pitching in to ensure that we can reach in to areas where we feel there are barriers to people having a vaccination opportunity. We want to ensure that every single eligible Tasmanian must have had the opportunity to be vaccinated.

A significant amount of effort has quite rightly gone into our vaccination efforts. This continues to be the case. If my numbers are correct, there are 35 days to our borders reopening. We have to focus on the 45 000 people turning up for their second dose to receive full protection prior to COVID-19 cases in the community, as well as our 9500 school children aged 12 to 15 years who still have not received their first dose, and around 40 000 Tasmanians 16-years and over who, I am advised, still have not received their first dose. That still points to considerable effort. The effort has been extraordinary. I have just been advised that 80 per cent of Tasmanians 16 years and over are now fully vaccinated. It reached that milestone of 80 per cent, which is good and positive, but we have to get to 90 per cent by 15 December.

The best protection our community can have is for all to get vaccinated. I have mentioned that for those who are yet to present for vaccination, one dose is not enough. We need to finish the job. We need two doses before 15 December for full protection. As a parent - and as I said in a previous contribution - please get your child into a vaccine clinic in the next week to ensure they can get their two doses before the borders open. I implore and I know all members of parliament will get that message out to the community.

The Department of Health has released a flowchart showing four other elements that make up our hospital system preparedness, including community-based initiatives. It has been shown nationally in Victoria and New South Wales, and internationally, that people who are COVID-19 positive can be monitored effectively in the isolation of their homes, or in a community case management facility. The Department of Health is currently finalising our

own COVID@Home plan, which recognises home as the preferred treatment setting by ensuring that patients are safe and supported.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about COVID@Home, which was a focus of mine in a recent opinion piece in all three major newspapers. I believe Dr Woodruff mentioned that in her previous contribution. COVID-19-positive patients will be initially assessed by Department of Health clinicians, with engagement also occurring with any existing care providers, such as GPs, to determine the most suitable environment and support level required for the patient.

Centralised monitoring of health and wellbeing needs will occur as part of the COVID@Home model, with a team of health professionals available 24/7 to provide support for up to 2500 people. Daily remote monitoring will be enabled through the simple-to-use smart devices, which include home pulse and oxygen monitors; we have already purchased 2500 of these devices. Each device will have its own mobile 4G network, and will not need home wi-fi. MyCare health manager technology has already been successfully trialled by the Department of Health with COVID-19 patients, in over 3500 hotel quarantine participants since 2020.

Telehealth consultations with different clinicians, such as mental health or other general medical clinicians, can also be facilitated through the MyCare Manager portal while a person is recovering in isolation. The COVID@Home program will be rolled out statewide, including regional and rural areas, with teams set up in each region to deploy the devices. Health will undertake a clinical risk assessment of a person's condition and available health supports, to recommend whether care be undertaken by the Department of Health community care facility, in close proximity to a hospital, should deterioration occur. We have 75 of these beds available across the north and south of the state.

Should a participant's condition worsen, and clinicians determine escalation of care is required to an inpatient bed, plans are in place to enable direct admission to hospital, bypassing the emergency department. There was a primary care forum - which I believe I mentioned the other day in this place - held last week. I understand that over 350 stakeholders were invited. It is pleasing to see such good engagement with the primary care sector unions and others, as it should be. My predecessor, Ms Courtney, met regularly, sometimes weekly, on an online forum capacity during 2020. Since May this year I have met regularly, indeed monthly, with GPs, the AMA, ANMF and a range of stakeholders about the pandemic. I expect to meet more regularly as we approach 15 December, and of course beyond.

We have been working very hard, over the last 12 months and more, to ensure that when COVID-19 enters our community, we are as prepared as we can be for the small percentage of people who, according to the modelling, will get very ill and require hospitalisation. We have actively identified every opportunity to increase beds in our hospitals. We are working to bring on 152 new beds before the end of the year, so we have this capacity when we need it most.

I am happy to provide the member with an update on the new Ward 3D at Launceston General Hospital. There are now 12 beds open in the new ward, with another 16 to open by the end of November - a total of 28 new general medical beds. An additional four beds will be opening in our surgical short-stay unit, along with the conversion to a seven-day overnight roster next Monday, 15 November, I am advised. We have already delivered

13 new beds in the paediatric Ward 4K; after tower core drilling works we will have 4K fully open from late November.

The new Ward 3A at Royal Hobart Hospital, which you will be aware was where our Royal Hobart Hospital vaccination clinic was, we are currently getting the last infrastructure works to convert to ward beds. We have interviewed 60 nursing staff this week, I am advised, for this new ward, and also to assist with some of the vacancies, with very positive results. This brand-new ward of 24 beds will be open on 15 December.

I have spoken in this place and elsewhere of the TASU; the Trauma and Acute Surgical Unit on Ward 6A is now open, with 20 of the 24 beds open. When I last advised the House, I think I said 16; that has increased to 20 of the 24 beds operating, with equipment being finalised for the final four beds, which will be complete for December. This will allow us to continue with our emergency surgery and elective surgery targets as long as we can safely do so.

Our adolescent beds, mental health short-stay unit at Ward 2A, general medical beds are all open and operating, and of course our emergency department is working to reconfigure an increase in our emergency management unit beds, with recruitment underway. From a private support perspective, we now have contracts in place with Hobart Private for five beds; Calvary 10 beds; and Calvary special care paediatric, three beds. I am happy to provide the member with a briefing if required.

In the north-west, following our reconfiguration to create a separate infectious disease ward, we have opened four of six beds, with a further two beds opening by December. At North West Private we also have a contract for three additional general medical beds to support and decant two.

Our escalation plans are constantly being reviewed and refined, and at the highest level allow for a surge capacity of up to 211 COVID-19 ward beds across the state, and up to 114 ICU surge beds as well.

I believe the member mentioned the North West Regional Hospital report and the recommendations. I think you might have mentioned -

Ms Dow - Ten were outstanding still, as per the annual report.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ten recommendations still outstanding. I believe there were 37 recommendations.

Ms Dow - It was 32, I think.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Was it 32? I will find those figures for you. I know it is important and I can assure the member that those recommendations are continually being implemented. I have the figures here: of the 37 recommendations 23 are completed, with some of these recommendations including further ongoing work to ensure maintenance and continuing improvement. The remaining recommendations are in progress and on track. I thank all the hardworking committed staff for their brave work, who continue to care and support Tasmanians throughout the pandemic, felt the hardest, of course, in the north west.

When it comes to ventilators available in each ICU, we have mentioned those figures before. The Royal Hobart Hospital has 23 intensive care unit standard ventilators, the LGH has 19 intensive care unit standard ventilators and the North West Regional Hospital has 17 intensive care unit standard ventilators. In addition to these 59 intensive care unit standard ventilators located at the Royal, the LGH and the North West Regional Hospital there are a further 112 intensive care ventilators in the state pandemic stockpile and in the private sector, making a total of 171 intensive care ventilators available in Tasmania.

Tasmania currently has 267 ventilators of various makes and types. When all ventilators are received in partnership with the Australian Government we will have 367 ventilators to support each of the health services. The Royal Hobart Hospital has 175 qualified and experienced nursing staff trained to use ventilators, the LGH has 95 qualified and experienced nursing staff and the North West Regional Hospital has 33 qualified, experienced nursing staff. In addition to the staff there are other health professionals who possess transferable skills in ventilation, if needed, in areas such as the emergency department, theatre, anaesthetic, recovery and retrieval.

The best way to ensure we can keep hospital beds open when we have a COVID-19 surge is to have a fully vaccinated health workforce to protect our patients and each other and to keep our health system going. We want to avoid mass furloughing of unvaccinated health staff, which can bring enormous challenges to the hospital system and hospitals, as we saw in the north-west last year. I am very pleased we have seen more than 99 per cent of our public sector health workforce comply with the Public Health direction for mandatory vaccination and shown evidence of vaccination and a booking in the near future or an exemption.

I thank the 99 per cent of staff, if I recall the numbers correctly. I believe Queensland has around 3 per cent or 4 per cent of their staff unvaccinated. If I recall the numbers correctly, that is about 4000 staff who have not complied with the direction in Queensland. This will present enormous challenges. Thank you to the hardworking staff across our health system.

A significant amount of work has been done to maximise our health service resourcing. We have employed 840 additional full-time equivalents since July last year, largely due to the significant resourcing required to run statewide vaccination clinics, testing and contact tracing. We are continuing to recruit. Hundreds of existing health staff have been involved part-time in COVID-19-related duties. When borders reopen, how we manage COVID-19 will change. Many staff involved with the vaccination clinics will be redeployed into our hospitals or support the COVID-19 at home program.

We are well placed to meet the demand on our health system. I have mentioned ventilators. Our hospital pharmacies have increased stock on hand to support the ICU and High Dependency Unit, and we are extending the home medication service.

Regarding scenario testing, IPC refresher training is occurring in our hospitals and Statewide Mental Health Services. Our COVID-19 preparedness efforts including increasing our testing capability to 4000 to 5000 tests per day.

Time expired.

[4.46 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens will be supporting the Labor Party's motion. We understand the importance of making sure that everyone in Tasmania is as well protected as possible prior to the borders opening.

We agree with the concerns that are raised here about the ability of the health system to cope with a COVID-19 outbreak. We expect that the Director of Public Health will be watching the situation very closely and we hope that he places the appropriate restrictions on our movements, on whether we wear masks, on the density in venues and events, and the other restrictions needed for the unknown timing of the spread of Delta in Tasmania. Although the intention is to slow it down, it will arrive and it will spread.

We are concerned that the health system has no capacity to have any additional load on it. That is why we are raising the issues that we are about the furloughing concern for staff who may become infected despite the fact they are vaccinated. The minister again pointed to the effort that the Health department is making to ensure there are not people working who are unvaccinated. That is already the situation. No-one is allowed to work as a health care professional in Tasmania unless they have a double dose vaccination.

Despite having a double dose vaccination, there will be a risk that a proportion of people become infected if they are exposed to the Delta virus. That is what we need to prepare for. The minister keeps circling around this and talking about the importance of everyone taking responsibility for getting vaccinated. That is a very Liberal approach to this. It is going by the Liberal playbook about let us all take responsibility for ourselves. That is true, but it cannot be done without the whole system being protected at the same time. I accept there is a lot of work happening in the health system. I am not for one moment saying that is not occurring; however, there is more that can be done. The minister knows that and he keeps circling around the points that we, the Greens, are making on behalf of the ANMF about the problems with staffing today. We have a problem today before we have opened our borders, and I draw the minister's attention to the fact that the ANMF had to lodge an urgent application with the Tasmanian Industrial Commission regarding the ongoing staffing and workload crisis at the Launceston General Hospital emergency department.

The ANMF has many things to do every day and they do not go to the industrial commission without being forced to do it. It is not for fun, I can assure you, minister. It is a reality that sustained workload pressures are occurring at the Launceston General Hospital emergency department. These have been discussed for well over a year now and they are not getting fixed. In a situation where we have the nurses and midwives union taking the Government to the industrial commission just prior to the opening of our borders, we are reasonably concerned. So should people who are watching the state of the health system be concerned at the fact that the minister fails to address this question? Where is the response about how nurses in the north are being responded to on this matter? It has gone into some enterprise bargaining space. The minister is not talking and meanwhile patients are being ramped outside resuscitation bays and cubicles. According to the ANMF, there are persistent vacancies now that total over 30 FTE staff.

The minister can talk about the number of people who have been employed since the previous government but it is irrelevant. We have to look at the need that we have today. We have the Premier constantly talking about what a fantastic state our Budget is in. If that is the case why are we not funding those extra 30 full-time equivalent staff in the Launceston General

Hospital? On behalf of Tasmanians, I honestly do not understand what the problem is here. It is not hard.

There is meant to be \$300 million in a slush fund for contingencies that the Premier talked about. There is meant to be everything that possibly can be done by the Health department for COVID-19 reopening. One of them is not true. Everything is not being done. If there is money available, and we know there is, then it should be diverted towards this most critical area. We are only five weeks away from 15 December. Surely this is the time to make sure you have every single last position filled. As sure as eggs are eggs, when a person is infected in Launceston they will need to be absent for two weeks so fewer and fewer people will be available in emergency departments when we need them.

The ANMF has made a clear and passionate plea on behalf of their members to do what needs to be done to keep northern Tasmanians safe. On behalf of people in southern Tasmania, I say the same things stands. We have an emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital where the emergency room, which had been taken over in the ED from a potential hot COVID-19 space, is needed today for people coming into the emergency department to expand the capacity of beds in the emergency department.

If a person who is COVID-19 infected comes into the Royal Hobart Hospital, the emergency department will need to be taken over for that person. Those other beds will no longer be available for people who come in for hip fractures, or strokes or what other conditions where they need a bed before they can be seen as an inpatient in the hospital. That capacity which we have in the emergency department in the Royal Hobart Hospital today will not be available for emergency staff to put patients into. That is a concern.

Minister, please respond to the questions that I have raised. We have asked them before and we have not heard a response. On behalf of the ANMF and their members we need to understand why it is that you are not putting nursing staff first and doing the basics before we open our borders, having those extra staff positions filled and giving some longevity and commitment to the recruitment and retention process that is needed. It takes a long time to recruit and train and keep trained highly skilled nursing staff. That is why we need to start that process today.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the motion be agreed.

The House divided -

AYES 12

Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay (Teller)
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms White

NOES 12

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis (Teller)
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff

Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

Mr Street
Mr Tucker

Mr SPEAKER - The results of the division being Ayes 12, Noes 12, therefore in accordance with the Standing Order 257, I cast my vote with the Noes.

Motion negatived.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (VOTING AGE) BILL 2021 (No. 38)

Second Reading - Negatived

[5.01 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be read a second time.

The Electoral Amendment (Voting Age) Bill 2021 amends the Electoral Act 2004 to allow for voluntary enrolment on the state roll for Tasmanians aged 16 and 17 years. The Greens' bill recognises in this climate-constrained century young people need voices in parliament and governance and they deserve agency. They have unarguably the right to have a say. They have witnessed in this past week the failure of political leadership at Glasgow for COP26, an epic failure of political leadership.

This bill amends sections 31, 34 and 39 of the Electoral Act 2004. The amendments to section 31 stipulate that a person is eligible for enrolment on the state electoral roll if they are, (1) aged 16 or older; and (2) would be eligible to be enrolled on the Commonwealth roll if they were 18 or older.

The amendments to section 34 provide that a person aged 16 or 17 who is entitled to be enrolled on the state roll may apply to be enrolled on the state roll and vote in a state election. This means while those aged 18 or older are required to be enrolled to vote, 16- and 17-year-olds have the option to enrol. Importantly, once enrolled, like anyone else enrolled to vote, there is a requirement to vote. I am certain plenty of engaged bright young Tasmanians would relish the opportunity to cast a vote for their future in a state election.

The amendments to section 39 of the principal act establish separate provisions regarding eligibility for the candidate roll and election roll to reflect the differing age requirements in respect of candidates and electors as a result of the Greens' amendment bill.

Despite references to the state roll in the Local Government Act 1993, this bill would not affect eligibility to vote for local government elections by virtue of section 254(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1993. Given that the Local Government Act is intended to be substantially rewritten as we understand it, and electoral matters are intended to be introduced in a separate act, this would be an appropriate opportunity to address voting age matters should this bill pass.

Australia has a long history of extending the right to vote. In 1856 South Australia was the first Australian jurisdiction to extend the right to vote to all males aged 21 or older, which

other jurisdictions quickly followed. As we know, the right to vote was once exclusive to the landed gentry. South Australia was also the first state to extend the right to vote to women in 1894. In 1902 women nationwide were granted suffrage in Commonwealth elections.

Shamefully for this nation, it was not until a referendum in 1967 that Aboriginal Australians were given the right to vote. We sent First Nations people into the First and Second World Wars, but we did not give them the right to vote until 1967. In 1970 New South Wales was the first state to lower the voting age to 18. In 1973 the voting age was lowered to 18 for federal elections. We have lowered the voting age before; extending enfranchisement is not a new concept.

Providing the vote to those aged 16 and older is also not a particularly unique proposition. In 1984 Nicaragua lowered the voting age from 21 to 16. Nicaragua was joined by Brazil and Estonia in the 1990s. In the 2000s, the Isle of Man, Austria, Guernsey, Jersey and Ecuador all lowered their voting age to 16. In the 2010s, Argentina, Malta, Scotland and Estonia joined these ranks and, in 2021, so did Wales. East Timor, Greece and Indonesia allow 17-year-olds to vote.

Opponents to this bill will likely cite the 2019 Senate inquiry into this matter. We would be disappointed if there were strong opponents to this legislation and people in this place who did not recognise that young people should have agency, they are informed, and, in a climate-constrained century, should have a say at the ballot box once they reach the age of 16. The 2019 Senate inquiry examining a Greens bill to lower the federal voting age to 16 rejected the bill and, of course, as we know, the major parties had the numbers on that committee.

In their rejection of the bill they relied heavily on the argument that public support is not clear. That is no argument. Public support for climate action in Australia is strong and it is growing. Yet this is ignored by the federal government. Public support for the removal of poker machines from pubs and clubs in Tasmania sits at about 75 per cent to 80 per cent but that has been completely ignored by the major parties in this place. Whether something has public support or whether there is any clarity over public support is no reason to reject voting reform that extends franchise to younger people.

The history of the right to vote in democracy is replete with examples of enfranchised groups with the view that others should not be enfranchised. History has not treated them kindly and rightly so. We are now seeing in the United States the Republicans at state and national levels trying to prevent people from exercising their right to vote; trying to disenfranchise black Americans, Hispanics, women, and people who are in poverty. It is an age-old trick of parties and candidates who know that if there was a general right to vote and if they genuinely put themselves forward in a free and fair election they would lose. That is why parties like the Republicans cheat and try to take away from people their right to vote.

The Senate report also claimed little empirical evidence to support the view that lowering the voting age would improve political engagement. Recent evidence challenges this view. In July 2021 the journal *Parliamentary Affairs* published an article by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh examining the impact of lowering the voting age to 16. This article is particularly compelling as it examines findings from studies in a range of different countries. None of these studies found any negative effects on political engagement or civic engagement. To the contrary, many studies found that 16- and 17-year-olds who had been given the right to vote

were often more interested in politics, more likely to vote, and demonstrated other pro-civic attitudes which, surely, we should be fostering in a healthy democratic society.

The study also found that 16- and 17-year-olds who have the right to vote were, in many instances, more politically engaged than those who were first allowed to vote at 18, and that this engagement carries on into later life.

Sixteen and 17-year-olds in this country are subject to laws and policy introduced by governments. They can be liable to pay taxes as workers, and make numerous contributions to our communities. They deserve to have a say about who represents them, particularly in this climate-emergency century.

Traditional arguments opposed to lowering the voting age rely on assertions that people under the age of 18 are less experienced, mature or knowledgeable about political matters. These same arguments, of course, are used to say that scientists and Greens politicians and other clear-thinkers who relay the facts on climate are scaring children and young people, and that they cannot make up their own minds.

As we know, what young people are most afraid of, in this century, is a failure of political leadership. Tragically, almost everywhere they look in the democratic world, they are seeing manifest failures of political leadership. Here in Australia, of course, we have the most embarrassing climate-denying prime minister that we have ever had, who went to Glasgow with a pamphlet, was rightly given the cold shoulder by world leaders, is a passionate advocate for coal, oil and gas, and is now pretending that he is a big believer in electric vehicles.

Being knowledgeable about political matters is not a prerequisite for voting for people over the age of 18. It is a rather condescending assumption to think that young people, aged 16 and 17 - the kind of young people who gather on our lawns to strike for climate - are not knowledgeable about political matters. In my experience, the young people you talk to about the state of the planet, the climate, and raging inequality, are deeply informed - they have made sure they are - and deeply engaged, and they want to be part of the solutions. They deserve to have some power given to them, because the decisions that are being made by governments now will profoundly affect their futures, just like the decision that this Government is making not to end native forest logging will affect their lives and their wellbeing into the future.

Mr Speaker, those under the age of 18 can make enormous contributions to society. In 2014, Malala Yousafzai, at the age of 17, won the Nobel Peace Prize for risking her life to fight for the protection of children from slavery, extremism and child labour. In 2012, 15-year-old Jack Andraka received the Smithsonian American Ingenuity Award for developing a new method for the detection of pancreatic cancer. Taylor Wilson was the youngest person to create nuclear fission, at age 14; that sounds like a dangerous child to have, but what an amazing kid. At age 17, Taylor had taught a graduate-level nuclear physics course at the University of Nevada.

Aside from these examples, the assumption that younger people are somehow naturally less capable of decision-making is flawed and insulting.

A 2015 study conducted by Joshua Hartshorne and Laura Germine on the rise and fall of cognitive function across the lifespan - one of the largest studies of its kind - found a range of cognitive domains that peak before the age of 18 and decline during our 20s. I am sure in

honest moments every member of this place would confess to that. While certainly many cognitive domains peak around middle age, others begin declining quite early in our lives. In short, people of different ages have different cognitive strengths, and therefore different insights to offer.

It is inconsistent to prohibit the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds on the basis of a lack of knowledge and intelligence. We know that is not true, when people over the age of 18 are universally entitled to vote, despite all of us being somewhat along a journey of cognitive decline.

We move this bill because we believe in young Tasmanians. We recognise their worries and their hopes for the future. We understand their frustration at the failures of political leadership. We have the deepest respect for young people who strike for climate, who advocate for change.

We, the Greens, want to be in here pushing that envelope to drive that change for young people, because the history of Greens policy - and every member of this place knows this - is that at first you laugh at us and then, over time, after a bit more of ridiculing us, our policies are adopted, because they are good evidence-based policies. As I said earlier, there are many other jurisdictions, all over the world, who have extended the right to vote to 16 and 17-year-olds.

We moved it this week, particularly, after the fiasco that was COP26. Anyone who saw the outcomes of what was to be one of our great hopes for change will be intensely dispirited by what came out of Glasgow. No real commitments to change. Even the Glasgow Declaration, which talks about halting and reversing forest loss and restoring forests - the very next day we had this Gutwein Government say it does not apply to us. The Australian Prime Minister signed that Glasgow declaration. Its first point calls on governments to halt forest loss, and yet within moments we had Senator Jono Duniam and state ministers basically saying nothing to see here, and nothing will change here.

That is what scares young people. Not the truth. What scares young people is when they see people like Senator Duniam absolutely dismiss the science, pretend that everything is fine, ignore the fact that native forest logging is contributing towards global heating. That is what worries young people.

I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of two young climate strikers, Sam Eccleston and Lucian Beattie. Lucian has given us permission to read into *Hansard* some of the speech that he made here on the lawns at the Strike for Climate on a rainy day on 15 October. Dr Woodruff and I were at this school strike in the bucketing rain, and this speech was electrifying. Lucian says, about the third paragraph down:

It was only this week that Scott Morrison's buddies in the Murdoch press began promoting net zero by 2050. This may sound like an amazing step forward, but it truly is just a greenwashed election scheme hidden behind demands from the Nationals for \$250 billion subsidies to the billionaire owners of the fossil fuel industries, and not to mention the fact that net zero by 2050 is 20 years too late.

By then, we will be well over the greenhouse gas emissions allowance to stay under a 1.5 degree rise, which would absolutely devastate the environment.

Lucian says:

Unfortunately, it is not only the federal government that needs to act, although this week the Tasmanian state Government announced their plan to legislate a target towards net-zero emissions by 2030, which I applaud them for; they are not perfect. In fact I am utterly shocked that our Premier can target net zero emissions by 2030, but still ignores pushes to declare a climate emergency, saying that it will frighten the children.

We'll look at us now. Frightened children. But we are not frightened the way Peter Gutwein said we would be.

We are frightened because we have a Government that won't take up their full responsibility and act.

We are frightened because we have a Government that won't declare a climate crisis: a crisis that our Government, being the climate leaders of the country, are doing their best to fight, but still won't even officially acknowledge its existence.

To quote Tim Flannery: 'The costs of the clean energy transition have never been lower nor the costs of inaction higher. Australia is poised to grasp a brighter, more prosperous and cleaner future, but delay, even by a few years, could cost us everything'.

This truly is a turning point. If our Government, and the world do not act on climate change to the best we can, we are doomed. The seas will rise, the arctic will melt, the coral reefs will die, the days will get hotter, the fires, storms and floods will get more extreme.

If those in power really cared for us, they would hear our voices: our voices that feel so helpless right now.

The fact that I and all of you here, as children, teens, parents, grandparents, and more, have skipped many days a year of our valuable education and work to protest for our futures, our lives, is hurtful.

It is hurtful to know that we have a Government that chooses to care more about money than they care about the health and safety of their own citizens. For them to not act on or care about the state of our planet's climate is the equivalent of them digging our future children's graves before they could even have a chance to see the beauty of Earth's nature.

To Scott Morrison and every government and person in power that chooses to not act, I say shame, shame on you.

The Australian Government must act now, or never will the future generations of our country and the world, live on this planet knowing there will be a tomorrow.

Thank you. Let's keep fighting.

This is something we should all be fighting for together. It is something that we should be able to agree on.

We have had debates in this place, only this week about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Without exception, every member who spoke in those debates made strong, passionate statements about the vital importance of protecting children and young people. There is a risk here, that what young people will hear is lip service, because the actions are not following the words.

I wanted to thank Lucien for that magnificent speech. Thank you very much, Lucien. It is one of the most powerful speeches I have heard. I hope my colleagues in here were listening carefully. I hope the Premier was listening carefully because I did not see many of our colleagues at that school strike on 15 October.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People undertakes statewide consultation on young peoples' hopes and dreams for the future. Every report in recent years of the hopes and dreams of young Tasmanians is very clear. They want a safe climate. They want to be able to experience the beauty and the wonder and the life-sustaining goodness of nature.

This is across regions in Tasmania, from Smithton to Southport. I will just read a bit from the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

I know that in just a few short years this world will be in our hands. It is very important that the Government takes into account what we would have done with our world. One major issue is climate change. If this is not acted on immediately it could potentially be the end of our future. The Tasmanian Government needs to educate people about this issue. They need to make their decisions with climate change in the backs of their minds.

I would argue in the front of their minds, but I digress:

They need to lead people in the right direction because together we can make a huge difference. This all needs to happen before it is too late. I personally do not want to be handed such a big problem. It should not fall on the people of the future's shoulders. It should fall on those of the present. If that means we need to finish what they started, that's okay, but this should not be all up to the next generation.

That is pure wisdom coming out of the mouths of young people. Another correspondent to the commissioner's consultation says:

Education of people about the importance of our environment is important. If we don't act now, in less than a hundred years over half the Earth's species will be extinct. This would be a great tragedy for the world and future generations.

Another young Tasmanian said:

Big corporations need to reduce and ultimately stop their production of carbon emissions and stop putting the blame on everyday people who use straws, et cetera.

A few tips:

Plant more trees.

We need the attitude of older generations to change and for them to listen.
We need to ban the production of fossil fuels across the world, to find alternative materials to use.

As we know, the alternatives are there. Predator capitalism is just under-investing in them and governments are not creating the regulatory and legislative climate for these changes to be accelerated. Another correspondent to the commissioner's consultation says, 'At school we have a green team who recycle and reuse our recycling'.

One student says, 'Schools need to make their students more aware of the climate strikes'. That is because young people want to participate. They want their voices to be heard. While the climate strike on 15 October was not at the scale of the last couple before that, we know that thousands and thousands of young people were prepared to walk out of school, walk out here on to the lawns of parliament and demand that every person in this place elected to represent them listens to their calls for a safe climate.

Now is the time to rethink the power and the agency that we give to young people. Now is the time to extend the right to vote to 16- and 17-year-olds. When I was Minister for Climate Change I used to say to young people who were interested in a career in politics, 'It is probably a good idea that you finish your studies and you do some work in an area that you are passionate about, where you are making the world a better place, and you party and you have fun and then late 20s or early 30s you could think about going into politics'. I do not say that anymore. I say, 'Crack into it. Put your hand up. We need you in there'. My oath, we do.

I hope that what we hear from our colleagues in this place is a considered and nuanced contribution to this policy of extending suffrage to 16- and 17-year-old Tasmanians. If you vote against it, it tells me personally that there is a fear there. There is a fear that if you give younger people the right to vote, they might not vote for you.

There is another way of looking at this. If we give young people the right to vote, they can help us. They can certainly help the major parties lift their game, have good policies that respond to that aching, yearning of young people for real political leadership, that yearning to look to their prime minister and their premier and see someone who always puts their future first.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[5.29 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I rise to provide a contribution on behalf of the Government and as Attorney-General in relation to the bill. We will be dealing

with some electoral amendments throughout the next few months and so I wonder about the timing of this. Anyway, it is important -

Ms O'Connor - It is straight off COP, as I said.

Ms ARCHER - Yes, it is important that we put our view on the record. Let us be specific, this is about voting age. The Leader of the Greens spent a lot of time talking about a lot of other issues that members will have distinct views on, but they are different issues from the issue of voting age. I am going to bring it back to our position on that because it is important to explain all the different mechanisms that give young people a voice in our community.

Our Government's position has not changed since 2013 when the Greens last brought this type of thing before the House, if I am correct on that date. We do not support lowering the voting age in Tasmania. However, we do -

Ms O'Connor - Why not?

Ms ARCHER - I am making a contribution to explain our position. We do support young people being engaged and encouraged to participate in the development of policy and in politics. It is a fallacy, in my view, when it is argued that you cannot achieve one without the other. You can. Our Government established the Premier's Youth Advisory Council in 2019, providing an invaluable opportunity for the Tasmanian Government to directly hear the concerns and ideas of young people from diverse -

Ms O'Connor - They have asked for an end to native forest logging.

Ms ARCHER - I listened to the member in silence, Mr Speaker, because this is a really important issue -

Ms O'Connor - No, you sneezed all the way through it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - otherwise you would not have brought it before the House. I would like to contribute on behalf of the Government.

Going back to the Premier's Youth Advisory Council we introduced in 2019, it provides the Premier in particular - he takes a very keen interest in this - and the Government an invaluable opportunity for us to directly hear the voices, the concerns and the ideas of young people from diverse backgrounds and communities on issues and policies affecting them personally. This announcement was warmly welcomed at the time with the Commissioner for Children and Young People stating that the council would strengthen the ability for young people to participate in the decisions which impact them. She also agreed with the Premier that:

Through listening and giving due consideration to the views of young people, government policies will better reflect the views of all Tasmanians.

The council is one such mechanism that appropriately provides an avenue for government to support young people and to hear their views directly.

Other practical ways we are engaging with young people include the annual session of Youth Parliament. I know that other members are very passionate about Youth Parliament. I have personally been involved since 2010 when I first became a member and when I was in your Chair, Mr Speaker, as well. Youth Parliament educates young people about the parliamentary system and provides opportunities for students across the state to create youth motions and bills while communicating their opinions on various topics directly to government. I am constantly impressed at the knowledge that our youth parliamentarians have. Some would say they have more knowledge in this place than a lot of other people.

Ms O'Connor - That is why we should give them the vote.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - I digress. It is a great apprenticeship, in my view, what Ms O'Connor is submitting at the age of 16. They do get an idea to directly communicate this with government. They provide a report to us at the end. I have had many an opportunity to receive that report and provide it to the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Greens.

As part of the recently released Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, one of the initiatives outlined is the Youth Climate Leaders' program. This initiative will provide a tailored program for Tasmanian high school students to inspire, educate and empower young leaders. It will include a climate change initiative, sustainability solutions for local communities, potential national and international collaborative opportunities, mentoring and support, and presentations from keynote speakers as part of two conferences during the year.

We are also supporting the young leaders program under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy to continue to deliver their successful mentoring in schools for young people with disabilities. In addition, the Commissioner for Children and Young People has created an ambassador program, which provides the platform to have their voices heard on how things could be improved for children and young people in Tasmania.

We are also funding the commissioner's engagement activities to include additional best practice opportunities for all Tasmanian children and young people to express their views.

The Youth Network of Tasmania also holds an annual youth forum for young people aged 12 to 25 years, which brings together young people from across the state to share their views and opinions on youth issues as well as generate ideas and solutions for improving outcomes for young Tasmanians. I have attended that forum on a number of occasions to hear those views. I am sure other members of parliament have as well.

These are just some of the ways our Government is supporting children and young people to directly and meaningfully engage and participate in our political system. The notion that the only way that you can show respect for young people is by giving them the right to vote is in my view -

Ms O'Connor - I did not say that.

Ms ARCHER - No, 'the view'. I did not say 'your view'. I will make that clear on the record. It has been a notion put forward in similar debates. The notion that giving them the

right to vote is the only way to show respect for our young people is manifestly wrong because if we extended that view we would provide the vote to youth of all ages.

Ms O'Connor - No.

Ms ARCHER - This is a view in the community. I am not saying it is the Greens' view. As was the case in 2013, when I think this was last before the House, it is regrettable that further homework has not been done.

I will explain it on process; it is about legal consultation. I know the member has used policy issues of climate change and other issues that young people and most people are very passionate about but, as Attorney-General, before we bring things into this House we need to ensure that we do not impact on our systems and our other legislative mechanisms or frameworks.

It is unfortunate that we have not had an opportunity to engage with relevant agencies, with industry, with community stakeholders to develop a considered and measured proposal that appropriately details the pros and cons of such a dramatic shift to the way our electoral system works in Tasmania. If the Greens were serious about that they would have consulted all of these areas. They would have developed a robust communication strategy to educate Tasmanians on these changes and highlight the importance of strong engagement by the community in elections. They have simply tabled a bill and decided to bring it on for debate in the last few weeks of parliament. What is missing -

Ms O'Connor - We have done our homework.

Ms ARCHER - We have done community consultation. This is the point I am making.

Dr Woodruff - So have we.

Ms ARCHER - No, you have not. Not in the same way we deal with legislation in this place. That is my submission. What is missing from this proposal is the considered assessment of all the social and legal implications of such a change. For example, how do the Greens propose to address the consequential impacts, of which there would be many, that would arise by creating a conflict between the age in which parental and guardian responsibility remains until the age 18. For example, many of our laws, not just state but federal, rest upon the principle that children are legally considered to be of an age under 18. That is how it is defined.

While 16- to 17-year olds do take on significant responsibilities, in most cases this is under parental and guardian guidance, and most social and legal norms do not apply full responsibility to a young person until they reach the age of 18. Even young parents generally remain under the guardianship of their parents until they reach the age of 18. It is also important to note that every state and territory has legislation relating to the age of majority. This is set at 18 in every jurisdiction. In Tasmania it is the Age of Majority Act 1973, which has flow-on impacts regarding the range of laws, including estate trusts, property and financial liabilities.

I state this as Attorney-General. I have to be a bit of a wowser in these circumstances, but this type of homework has to be done. The bill is conspicuously silent on this matter. It would be legally irresponsible to support any proposal that impacts the age of maturity without

clearly identifying how all of these conflicting and consequential requirements would be addressed. For all of these reasons we believe -

Ms O'Connor - So you say you are going to have a look at them?

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, you have had your opportunity. You had half an hour. You have made your contribution. The Attorney-General is now speaking. I have asked you to listen to her in silence, and that seems to be an impossibility. If you keep interjecting I will ask you to leave.

Ms ARCHER - I will get to the end, because I know Ms Haddad probably wants to make a contribution on behalf of the Opposition.

It is for all these reasons that we believe any move to lower the voting age would need to be considered at the national level to ensure consistency across Australia. It is therefore important to point out that this is not a new concept, as the Leader of the Greens - and I do not wish to invite an interjection - but the idea of lowering the age has been considered at both state and federal levels, with the matter most recently considered nationally by a federal parliament Senate inquiry in 2018, to which you referred. The inquiry committee found that while some research has been carried out on the community's attitude towards lowering the voting age, the research actually indicated there was limited community support for the proposal.

They noted that despite trends in Europe and Latin America towards lowering the voting age, the committee was not convinced that it was warranted in Australia. Importantly, the clear recommendation was that any proposal to change the voting age should not be considered and passed by parliament without wide and expansive consultation, so that it is done in partnership with young people and the community and not imposed on them.

I also want to draw the House's attention to a 2013 paper by Professor Ian McAllister from the Australian National University, titled 'The Politics of Lowering the Voting Age in Australia - Evaluating the Evidence', which found that lowering the voting age in Australia to 16 will not improve political participation, or make the system fairer.

As I have outlined, there are more ways than ever before for young people to be engaged with policy and politics in Tasmania. It is our Government that is actively encouraging and funding those options, but we cannot support this proposal today, for the social and legal implications that I have outlined - most particularly the impact on other laws in this state, without it being fully consulted.

As I have said, I do have to be a bit of a wowser in these circumstances, but we cannot just change laws because of good ideas even when they might be what the Greens would like to see. We have to consider the social and legal implications.

[5.42 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to provide a contribution on this bill, the Greens' Electoral Amendment Voting Age Bill 2021.

I begin by putting on the record my absolute admiration for the power, knowledge and strength of young people in this state and around this country. They have a right to a voice, and they have a right to a say. They have a right to influence change - and they do influence

change. There is no arguing with those young people's voice on big issues that affect all of us, like climate, education, taxation, rights at work, and like the age of criminal responsibility, for example, which is an example of an age differential in state law.

The Leader of the Greens put those voices very compellingly and movingly in her contribution on this bill. I do not fundamentally disagree with the intention of this bill. I believe that the right to vote is something that we, as Australians, hold extremely seriously as part of our democracy. It is something we know people have suffered for and died for in the past, in this country. Indeed, around the world there are people who continue to suffer and fight and die for the right to free and fair elections.

I believe that young people are often the smartest people in the room. The Leader of the Greens went through the traditional arguments against the idea of lowering the age of voting. I do not subscribe to those traditional arguments against lowering the voting age. I believe that young people often have the smartest, wisest and best ability to tackle the big problems that affect our nation and our state. Perhaps it is because they are not as jaded as those of us, as we age, become. They often have a different view that is informed by their experience. That is certainly my experience.

Ms HADDAD - In fact, one of the things I enjoy -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The member for Clark deserves the right to be heard in silence.

Ms HADDAD - most about this job is talking to young people and sharing with them the fact that they do not have to wait until 18 to have a say and a voice. Whenever I speak with school groups in particular, I encourage them to have a voice in their local community, in their local neighbourhood. Ring their local councillor, ring their local member of parliament, write emails, and write letters. Their voices matter and their voices effect change.

I am a parent of a 16-year-old. In my view she has a far better grasp of politics than many adults in my life. I do not disagree that the universal concept that at 18 we suddenly know how to make an informed voting decision suddenly appears. That is not the case. I do not pretend that for a moment. Mr Speaker, I do not disagree -

Ms O'Connor - Just cut to the chase. Tell us you are not going to vote for it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor. Same deal.

Ms HADDAD - with the fundamental concepts in this bill. I also want to acknowledge that Australia actually has a very strong and unique commitment to enfranchisement. South Australia was the first, and Australia amongst the first, to grant the right to vote to women. The Leader of the Greens went through the Aboriginal referendum of 1967 to extend the voting rights to Aboriginal people.

Indeed, the voting age nationally used to be 21. It was reduced to 18 in 1973 or 1974, recognising that people at 18 had the right to work, they paid taxes, they could be charged with crimes and sent to prison. I believe that if there was a true and widespread national public consultation on the issue of reducing the voting age nationally to 16 or 17, there probably would

be that public support, if that happened. Enfranchisement is something that Australians have always taken very seriously and hold very deeply.

There is something else: I believe as Australians we hold the concept of compulsory voting very seriously. Not every country has compulsory voting. In fact, it is not the norm. Most countries have voluntary voting. Compulsory voting regimes, as people know, are considered to be more democratic, and considered to increase the legitimacy of elected representatives. MPs who win seats in compulsory voting systems like ours generally do that with a majority of votes - but in places that do not have compulsory voting regimes, where voter turnout can be low, like the United States, candidates can win with much less than a majority of eligible voters, and much less than a majority of public support.

It is not as simple as just saying in those countries you just register to vote, and more people will vote, because we know that that is not the case. We know there are countless regimes that actively work to discourage people from exercising their right to vote. Not just in those truly corrupt regimes where people are threatened and killed, but also, for example - I believe it is in the United Kingdom where elections are held on a Tuesday in business hours, or held in a way that requires people to travel long distances to vote at a particular booth or area away from where they are working or studying. Apparently, if you analyse the voting history in the United Kingdom, you can see a pattern that in many instances, if it was raining on election day, the conservatives were more likely to win. Why is that? Well, because traditionally wealthier voters are more likely to vote conservative, and they are more likely to have access to things that could overcome bad weather that might prevent them from attending a polling booth - things like access to private transport, flexible working conditions that mean that they can easily attend a polling booth and vote. That could be anecdotal, but it does ring true.

The moral of that story is that we have a great and proud democratic history in Australia of enfranchising voters, and through compulsory voting, having the right to vote is a powerful gift, and one we hold very seriously in Australia.

The problem I have with this bill is not the lowering of the voting age. The problem is the inconsistency it would create where young people of 16 and 17 could vote in Tasmanian elections, but not Commonwealth elections. It could and would lead to confusion and potentially people missing out on the right to vote altogether. Just this year, we saw what happened when upper House and lower House elections were held on the same day in Tasmania. That led to thousands of people missing out on their vote.

The compulsory enrolment provision in our act mirrors that in the Commonwealth act. The divergence would mean that 16- and 17-year-old Tasmanians could be subjected to specific penalties for failing to enrol to vote, which would not be imposed on their voting in federal elections.

The bill also provides that 16-year-olds can enrol, but does not allow for provisional voting. At the moment, with the voting age being 18, you can enrol to vote when you are 16 or 17, which is called provisional voting. If an election is held at that time, you are not entitled to vote but it means that if an election is held not long after you turn 18, you are on the electoral roll and you are able to vote. I did that; I enrolled when I was 17. It is a safeguard. It means that you are correctly enrolled and if an election is called you can vote. That happened to me.

An election was held not long after my eighteenth birthday. Had I not enrolled early, I might have missed out on the chance to vote in that election.

This bill does not allow for provisional voting at 14 or 15, which I believe would be needed to replicate the system that we have in place now for provisional voting for people before they reach 18. It could mean that if someone turns 16 near election day that they would miss out on the ability to vote. I note that provisional enrolment is voluntary or opt in. This bill does not provide for that.

Dr Woodruff - It does.

Ms HADDAD - It does not provide for provisional enrolment.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, this is not a two-way debate.

Ms HADDAD - It does not provide for provisional enrolment so if an election is held just when you are turning 16, you have not had to opportunity to enrol at 14 or 15, which would mirror what we have now. Young people can enrol at 16 and 17, as I explained earlier in my contribution, but you were chatting and you did not hear me say it.

The other point that I was trying to make is that it creates a differential where there is opt-in, non-compulsory voting for some citizens, and there is compulsory voting for other citizens. I believe that is a fundamental divergence from what we have benefited from in Australia, which is compulsory voting. This is a fundamental tenet of our democracy.

If you look at voting records in the USA where they have a very unequal and voluntary voting system, their voting rates have always hovered around 50 per cent. When they started taking statistics in the 1800s, it was about 57 per cent. It only rose to just above 57 then down to 54 per cent in 2016. Last year, in 2020, it was 62 per cent. A very high result for them.

In the UK it is a little higher. It is usually around 70 per cent. It hovers somewhere between 50 per cent, 60 per cent and 70 per cent in the UK. That is two jurisdictions that have voluntary voting.

In Australia, we were the same up until 1924 when compulsory voting was imposed - or rather, granted. It sounds like a burden. It is not. It is a privilege and a fundamental tenet of our democracy that we have compulsory voting. Up until the 1920s, Australian voting turnout rates were around about 59 per cent to 60 per cent; the same as the United States and a little below the United Kingdom. In 1922 the turnout rate was 59.4 per cent. In the 1925 election it was 91.4 percent. That is a whopping increase. It does not mean that every single voter is informed. It means that every single voter had the ability to vote.

My problem with this bill is that it would create a two-tiered system, where there is voluntary voting, opt-in voting for some citizens. It would be a departure from a fundamental tenet of our democracy that I hold very seriously, which is compulsory voting.

The Leader of the Greens asked for a considered contribution. I hope that we do not see at the end of this debate, the stock-standard media release that says Labor and the Liberals are in lockstep to lock young people out of having a voice in Tasmania. I am sure it is already drafted.

Mr Speaker, I put on the record my absolute agreement with so much of what the Leader of the Greens said in her admiration for the right that young people have to have a voice and a say.

Ms O'Connor - What about your colleagues who turn up and get drunk.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms HADDAD - I am just going to barrel on. I only have four minutes to go and I will not get to finish my contribution.

I made it very clear that I agree with much of what was put in the contribution of the Leader of the Greens.

Dr Woodruff - Pointless, irrelevant, meaningless, calculated handling.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Ms HADDAD - You asked for a nuanced contribution and I have given you that. I have given you my view on why compulsory voting is a fundamental tenet of our democratic institution.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin, we are not in Committee. Order, member for Clark. If you could address through the Chair please.

Ms HADDAD - I have made it very clear that I do not disagree with the fundamental tenet of the intention of this bill.

They will characterise it, however they want. If the voting age were to be changed, that needs to happen at a Commonwealth level. We have a Commonwealth voting system in Australia where the age at which people can vote is 18 in every state and territory. I would not support something that creates a two-tiered system. I would not support something that would create something that is different in Tasmania in this regard, from what it is in the Commonwealth jurisdiction. I would not support something that would create confusion for young people about when they can and cannot vote. It would be unfair for young people to have a say at a state level and not at the Commonwealth level.

Ms O'Connor interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Ms HADDAD - It would be unfair for young people to have a say at a state level and not at a Commonwealth.

I am disappointed that the federal committee did not support, at least looking more deeply into the issue. I am disappointed that there was not a wider and broader public conversation about this, because the results could have been quite different but that is not what has happened.

[5.57 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, Labor agrees with the fundamental tenet but is not going to take action. How 100 per cent Labor. It is always hand-wringing, concern -

Ms Haddad - No matter what I say -

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - The concerns they had about this were curious; they were irrelevant and they were insubstantial. They were meaningless and they were clutching at straws, to find any reason not to vote with this bill.

If you want to talk about young people being confused, let us talk about Labor policy on climate change. That is the definition of confusing young people. If you want to talk about the reality of changing the voting age, you have the Labor and the Liberal parties at the federal level voting against the Greens Senate bill in 2019. It is not about leaving it to the national level as the Attorney-General would say, and it is not about, we cannot take action, because it is confusing. It is because they do not want to; they are afraid.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, other conversations in the Chamber should cease.

Dr WOODRUFF - They are afraid of young people. They are afraid of where the vote could go. They are afraid they could not control it.

The point is, although the minister might like to say that she takes claim for some of the things that young people are doing, when it comes down to it, the Government does not listen to young people. The Youth Advisory Council recommended to the Premier to end native forest logging. He listened to them, and said he would not. They called on him to end native forest logging. He ignored them.

We have the Youth Parliament. What a wonderful institution. It has nothing to do with the Government. The minister cannot claim the Youth Parliament. That is a creature of the parliament. It is for young people who come to Youth Parliament and who inspire us -

Ms ARCHER - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I did not claim Youth Parliament as an initiative of mine nor of the Government. I acknowledge that all members of this place participate in Youth Parliament. Do not misrepresent what I say.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am very pleased to hear that because it has nothing to do with the Government. The young people who go through Youth Parliament like to be paraded about in an infantilising way by members in this House - 'little pets, and how wonderful it is to see them play acting grownups' - but when they go out into the world, like School Strike for Climate kids, and they get up there and they show real leadership, they find their voice and their power, they are not listened to.

That is what this bill does. It gives them the voice, when they need it; the intelligent young people who are more than capable of making the sort of sensible decisions we need to see in this place.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER -The question is that the bill be read a second time.

The House divided -

AYES 3

Ms Johnston
Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

NOES 21

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis (Teller)
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Street
Mr Tucker
Ms White
Mr Winter

Second reading negated.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCY REPEAL BILL 2021 (No. 40)

Bill returned from the Legislative Council with amendments.

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the amendments be made an order of the day for tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

CONTAINER REFUND SCHEME BILL 2021 (No. 54)

Second Reading

Resumed from page 47.

[6.05 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, where we left off was going through the praise that LGAT and the local government sector have provided for this bill and reminding those such as yourself and others who were part of that esteemed level of government about the support that LGAT has for this bill. LGAT commends the state Government on choosing a split governance model for Tasmania's container refund scheme, which separates responsibility for running the scheme from operating the container collection network similar to the model currently operating in New South Wales.

As I mentioned previously, it makes sense. You want people doing what they do best and specialising in particular areas in the scheme. Local government recognises that because they have an enormous amount of experience in collecting and processing waste over many decades and perhaps centuries. They speak credibly on these issues in this state, in particular. I know that you as a former mayor, Mr Speaker, and all the former mayors and councillors in this place could recognise the strong support that LGAT has for this scheme.

The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia supports the Government's decision, stating:

WMRR congratulates the minister for understanding that a best practice CRS is one that includes multiple important layers with distinct responsibilities to drive success in the system, the proof of success being in its ease of access, effective community engagement and clear ability to boost recycling.

These are the core tenets of what we want to achieve with this scheme. The more that we can get this resource back into recycling facilities, the better for everyone: better for the environment, better for our processors, better for all the community groups that will be raising much-needed funds for their organisations and doing good in our community.

The Australian Council of Recycling supported the Government's announcement, stating:

The Government's proposed model of tendering for the collection network is appropriate and offers the best opportunity for Tasmanian consumers to be supported by a diverse and convenient network of refund points.

By having that strategic overview for our network operator, we are not going to potentially have failures in the system whereby there are two collection points operating in a small town right next to each other, thereby damaging the ability to get scale, to operate efficiently and to bring in the resource to that central collection point and then distribute to the point where it will then be processed and made into something useful again. We do not want to be tripping over ourselves in our enthusiasm for supporting the scheme but without doing it with a clear eye to the strategic way that we need to be operating.

It will also prevent there being noticeable gaps in the network because with that overview it will be clear to the operator just where the best points are to be placing these collection points and how best to distribute it across the Tasmanian population as well as the Tasmanian geographic landscape, so we take into account where our people are, where our waste is, and where they want to go to bring that altogether.

The Boomerang Alliance, who we should pay tribute to, has been a long-time advocate of such schemes, supported the Government's announcement, stating:

The Government has adopted the model that will best deliver sustainable recovery rates, recycling jobs and charity income.

It does not get more simple than that. The praise for this model is strong and we have seen it work in other places. We are proud to be adopting such a model in Tasmania, as are many Tasmanians.

I will outline to the House there are many community organisations who support our chosen model, but it has come through a process of strong consultation. I want to outline that for the record, because it has been an important part of this journey.

There are various different schemes, and Labor has spoken quite a lot about the model itself and the way it may be implemented. There does not seem to be an opposition to the principle that we should be recovering our waste.

I want to give people at home and around the state a sense of who has been asked, and what their views are, and how we have got here. As the minister has already highlighted, consultation has been extensive, and a critical part of the development of Tasmania's container refund scheme, to ensure it is a scheme that will best serve the Tasmanian community.

A report by Marsden Jacobs in April 2018 prepared for the department started the current conversations, and made a number of recommendations. The department has built on this work, and an expert reference group was convened early last year to provide advice to the project team. The expert reference group made up a wide diversity of organisations, and individuals with container refund scheme expertise and knowledge provided extensive advice on the policy and operational issues. The group provided feedback on an issues paper prepared by the department, and participated in group one-on-one sessions with the department.

In August last year, the minister appointed the waste and resource recovery ministerial advisory group to advise on matters relating to waste management in resource recovery in Tasmania. The MAG consists of Tasmanian Government, local government, the resource recovery sector and the many industry stakeholders right across our state who have a particular interest in this policy, and the problem we are all trying to solve. While not originally set up for this process, one of the things the minister did ask the group to do was interrogate the advice that had been provided by the department on the CRS governance arrangements. They pulled it apart, interrogated it, and came to government with their own recommendations, which ultimately align with the recommendations of the department.

There was a five-week public consultation period on the draft bill, which closed in July this year to provide the community with an important opportunity to comment on the draft bill. Along with the draft bill, an explanatory paper and a regulatory impact statement were made

available on the DPIPWE website for public review. Officers from the department also conducted webinars with the general public, local government and targeted stakeholder groups to discuss the impact of the bill. A short online survey was also available.

The department has drawn on the experiences of other states, and engaged heavily with other jurisdictions that have implemented a scheme, seeking information and advice. We do not need to reinvent the wheel here; there are others who have gone before us. The benefit Tasmania has now is being able to choose the best model. We believe this is so. They have comprehensively analysed, modelled and consulted on various governance options and scheme design. It is clear that the process to get to where we are has been extensive and thorough, as is characteristic of the minister, and there have been multiple opportunities for stakeholders and the public to provide feedback along the way.

We have listened and considered all those views. I know the minister has thanked those groups already, but I wish to do so again. I know it takes a lot of time, particularly for charitable organisations who sometimes have better things to be doing, like caring for the vulnerable. To provide information to parliamentarians, departments and governments about how best we can serve them is always really valuable. Whether it is this bill, or many others that come into this place, we should all be thankful for the work that many of those people do for us.

We know questions have been raised regarding the role that charities and not-for-profits can and will play in the scheme. I want people to rest assured that this Government is dedicated to maximising the opportunities for charities and community groups around Tasmania to also reap the benefits of the scheme, much like the Western Australian and New South Wales schemes. Tasmanian charities and community groups will be able to be a part of the scheme in a number of ways. Any interested charities and community groups will be able to run a donation point where they can receive donated containers from the community, and take these containers to a refund point to collect 10 cents per container for their organisation and their cause.

I also want to speak briefly about the impact this may have on rural and remote communities, such as ours, and the ability to actually recycle some of these containers. As many people around Tasmania who live in these areas know, we do not often have access to recycling schemes, in the same way people living in the larger towns and cities do. I do not have access to that at my place, and none of my neighbours do.

However, the opportunity to incentivise people in rural and regional areas, who do not get a yellow bin picked up from out the front and instead have to go to a fair bit more effort - for them to be able to contribute as well to the recycling effort in Tasmania, and Australia, is important, and also the extra incentive that you can get when you can collect your cans and bottles and take them to a refund point and be able to donate to a charity of your choice. That is quite an empowering thing, particularly for families, where you can turn what would be otherwise a waste product, that is going into landfill, into not only a recycled product, but also a product that is doing good and raising money for so many local causes and charities, which we all want to look after.

Most of all, I commend this bill to the House because where you have container refund schemes, it gives young kids the opportunity to gain an understanding of citizen service. Taking practical volunteer action to create a better world it is one of the intangible things about these schemes. In places where they operate, it is encouraging to see young kids - whether it

is in the scouting uniform, girl guides, brownies, their local sporting club, their school - take ownership of an environmental problem in the 21st century having an impact and being able to clean up their streets as a group, and then be able to donate that back into either their own organisation, or the organisation that is helping people in their community.

It speaks to a broader goal that we need to have at a time when we have declining rates of young people participating in volunteer service. If we can find those small things that give young people an opportunity to play a part in the bigger picture, and have a common mission with people in their local area, that is a really commendable thing. Providing the incentive through something as simple as a container refund scheme speaks to the higher goals we have for our young people and our environment.

[6.18 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, Mr Ellis pointed out that there seems to be broad agreement across the House that a container refund scheme, as it is called in the bill, is a very good idea. I agree with that sentiment. It is a very good idea. The point has been made by others that it is well past time that Tasmania joined other states and territories in having its own scheme.

In the second reading speech from the minister, I believe he said he 'does not want Tasmania to be last' - but the alternative is we will be second last. Here we are, trying to bring Tasmania along with the rest of the country, in putting in place a scheme that has been in South Australia since the 1970s; quite a long time. The objectives to reduce litter and boost recycling to protect our unique natural environment are very worthy ones, and I am not surprised there is unanimous support for that. As outlined in the minister's speech, or elsewhere in some points made in support of the bill, millions of drink containers will be recycled each year instead of ending up in our parks, rivers and beaches. Every Australian territory either has a CRS, or has committed to implement one.

Labor has supported a CDS for a long time. In preparing for this and reading through the bill, I remembered some conversations I had with former environment minister Mr Brian Wightman many years ago, as he was working as hard as he could to bring the rest of the country along to have a national recycling scheme. Labor's view at that time was that that was the best model. It made a lot of sense. On 8 November 2011, almost 10 years ago to the day, Mr Wightman said:

We all want a cleaner environment with less litter and more recycling. We are working with other states and territories and the federal government to achieve that. If we can develop a national recycling scheme it will work far more effectively than individual state programs. For example, a single national scheme will be much more cost effective to implement, to promote, and operate.

It makes a lot of sense. For whatever reason, the national scheme did not get legs and other states and territories, as we know, have gone ahead with state-based schemes. Here we are debating the implementation of Tasmania's own scheme tonight. Labor has been pushing for this for a very long time.

The model is the important question. As Ms White pointed out, it is critical that we get this right. Labor supports a container refund scheme but the scheme we choose today will be

with us for decades. We need to make sure it is the best scheme for Tasmania's businesses, its consumers, charities and the environment.

The Government has not, in our view, made a complete case for the scheme that it has chosen as the best one for Tasmania. I know Mr Ellis read some of the more fawning consultation pieces but the consultation revealed that there have been some concerns raised by iconic Tasmanian beverage manufacturers, hospitality businesses, the TCCI. They are concerns that are worthy of consideration.

There is also evidence from interstate that appears to show the scheme in Western Australia and, to a lesser extent, Queensland is producing higher return rates and creating more jobs than is the scheme in New South Wales. The minister may not agree with that but I look forward to him presenting evidence that that is not the case. Tasmania has effectively chosen the New South Wales scheme.

If the Government appears very confident in its view that it has chosen the best scheme for Tasmania, which is different from the one recommended by the independent report they commissioned, we need to point that out. There was an independent report commissioned which suggested one thing and the Government has decided to go down a different path. I am struggling to see why they are so surprised that parliamentarians might want to examine the reasons why they have chosen a different path from the one suggested in the report that is still available by Marsden Jacob Associates on the website.

In some of the research, the minister used that 'big beverage companies' line in some of the material I read. I wondered if he meant Boags Brewery in Launceston. I wondered if he meant Cascade Brewery in South Hobart. Does he consider them to be part of the 'big beverage company' line the Greens love to use? It is language that is creeping into the minister's rhetoric. I do not consider Boags or Cascade to be big beverage companies. I know they have been acquired over time by larger companies but these are still companies -

Mr Street - They are owned by CUB and Lion.

Mr WINTER - Exactly my point, member for Franklin. They have been acquired by large companies but these are still local breweries.

Dr Woodruff - They are not niche Tasmanian breweries.

Mr WINTER - They are still local breweries brewing local beverages for Tasmanians and have been doing so for a very long period of time. Earlier this week Boags celebrated 140 years of brewing in Tasmania.

While they continue to have local employees, a local brewery, maintaining that local presence in Tasmania, brewing Tasmanian beer, if you want to just call them a big beverage company then that is up to you. While they have a local brewery and local employees, local workers brewing Tasmanian beer then I still consider them to be an important part of the Tasmanian business community and they should be respected for the views that they put forward.

Mr Ellis ran through all the positive feedback that he could find from the consultation. Apparently we need to do exactly what LGAT says now. I am sure at some stage he might

regret that because LGAT makes a lot of points, not all of them I agree with. He did not talk about the submission from TasRecycle, which is representing Boags in its concerns. The submission that TasRecycle put forward into this process said:

On the suggestion of the minister's office we have marked up the draft legislation to demonstrate how simple this change in the legislation is and have set out the reasons for and the benefits of implementing the change.

We are happy to continue to assist the department with how practically this change could be implemented to benefit the Tasmanian CRS while being consistent with the Government's policy intent of having the split responsibility model.

They provided an extensive piece. They marked up some changes that they suggested to improve the bill. As far as I can tell, and I am happy to be corrected, none of the suggestions from TasRecycle have been included in what we are seeing today.

In the past couple of months I got to do my first Boags Brewery tour in Launceston with the member for Bass, Ms Finlay. I spoke to them not only about their operations leading up to their 140th birthday, but also the importance of the container deposit scheme to Tasmania. They are hugely supportive of a container deposit scheme in Tasmania. They understand Tasmania's brand is all about clean and green and having a container deposit scheme fits in with what that company is about, what the Tasmanian brand is about. They support it but they have raised concerns about the model. I think they are very fair concerns. They have written to the Premier.

I have spoken to representatives today about their concerns with this bill, about the impact it will have and making sure we get this right. We cannot afford to pick the wrong one because the model that is selected will be in place for a long time. I suspect Cascade, another local brewery, would have a similar set of circumstances in terms of their size, the fact that they are a subsidiary of a larger company and that they also need to ensure they are viable into the future. We have seen the consolidation of breweries around Australia over a long period of time.

I think it was West End in South Australia that recently closed its doors. Was it West End, Ms Finlay? Perhaps Ms Finlay is not as familiar with the product as I was.

Mr Street - I was going to say have you drunk it? No great loss to the market.

Mr WINTER - You are on safe ground in this parliament. I am not sure you would be in South Australia. The other interesting thing about Boags Brewery is that they are brewing those South Australian beers, I think it is West End and other beers from across Australia here by Tasmanians in Launceston. It is important that that is able to continue. The reality is that we have seen consolidation of breweries in Australia. It can happen. We have seen in manufacturing right across Australia that smaller manufacturers without the economies of scale that larger producers have need to ensure that they are working really hard to remain in operation and to continue to provide value. We are lucky that Boags - and thanks to Nathan Calman for showing us around - are continuing to operate a really efficient business that continues to make great products for Tasmanians, and employ Tasmanian people.

On this side we want to make sure that there is the continuation of those businesses. We want to make sure that this is properly and thoroughly considered. I am not sure if I have doubled up on some of the questions that the Leader of the Opposition went with; there is no need to answer them twice. Some of the questions I am looking for answers for are: how many times has the minister met with both the working groups, as part of the consultation? Has the minister, or his department, modelled the per container costs? Have you modelled the cost of this model on consumers? Have you modelled it against the alternative model that was suggested by the independent review?

With that, as I said, we are supportive of the concept of a container deposit scheme. It is well past time, but we do need to make sure that we get this right.

[6.32 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution on the bill that is before the House this afternoon. My fellow member, the member for Franklin, who commented about our visit to one of Tasmania's iconic businesses, Boags Brewery, has taken some of the contributions that I would have liked to make.

If I reflect back on one of my earliest moments in public life when I was first elected to the City of Launceston, we were considering whether we would implement kerb-side recycling. The conversation then was about container deposit schemes nationally. I remember having robust conversations within our council and with community about what is the best way to manage materials in the community and whether implementing our kerb-side recycling is better, or advocating to be part of a national scheme, the right decision. Back over the last 20 years this has been a conversation that has been front of mind, where we think about waste management, material recovery; where we think about the impacts of materials in our environment and where we look at reducing litter and increasing the rates of recycling.

It is something I have been familiar with for a long time. As a proud resident of Launceston I have been mindful of the contribution that businesses like Boags Brewery make to our community and the importance of us, and particularly me as their shadow minister for small business, to consider always the decisions that we make and the impacts that it has on the viability of these traditional, long held iconic businesses in Tasmania.

There is no doubt Tasmanian Labor, and I personally, support the introduction of container deposit scheme to Tasmania. The question is, what is the right scheme and what will make the greatest impact to the Tasmanian environment and the Tasmanian economy? What will support Tasmanian businesses and also what will support Tasmanians and Tasmanian families? What is going to provide for the greatest recovery of resource and what is going to provide for the greatest opportunity for jobs and for return to our community?

There has been talk about a range of submissions, both positive and concerning in regards to the Government's position on this. It is important for all those matters to be considered to ensure that, as many members have said, the decision we take now and which will be implemented for the long term, given the significant investment and the logistics of actually implementing, have been fully considered and will be implemented to support Tasmanians and Tasmania in the best way possible.

I rise this afternoon to support that we should implement a scheme but have strong regard for and concern about many matters that have been raised in the submissions. I do not feel that

the Government's position on the scheme they are suggesting recognises the greatest opportunity for material recovery. I do not think it provides the greatest opportunity for jobs within Tasmania or the greatest opportunities for the outcomes of our community.

As the member for Bass, completely committed to the businesses in our area, I am concerned for, in particular the iconic businesses like Boags Brewery in Launceston, that any fundamental shift in the financial viability of their operations poses risks for people in Launceston who are doing traditional jobs. Those jobs are really important and provide a sense of pride for our locals and an opportunity for people employed there, and continue to deliver right in the heart of the city, a great industrial operation that we can all see and understand.

When we are considering this, it needs to be considered on all ways. There is no doubt that a container deposit scheme needs to be implemented. There are concerns with the model that the Government is representing and I think it needs to be fully interrogated.

[6.36 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Environment) - Mr Speaker, I thank members for their contributions. I will do my best to address the matters raised by the various speakers in my response. I will start with some matters raised by Ms White in her contribution. Some of them were echoed by other speakers as well.

Ms White asked what evidence was relied on to give us confidence that a split responsibility container refund scheme will reduce beverage litter and result in cleaner streams of recyclable materials. Beverage containers make up about 43 per cent of Tasmania's litter by volume according to the Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter report. This means more than \$7 million beverage containers were littered in Tasmania in 2017. We also know that less than a third of beverage containers are recycled in Tasmania, that is 32 per cent to be more exact.

Every year 190 million drink containers end up in landfill in Tasmania. Evidence from interstate shows that container refund schemes are highly effective mechanisms for reducing litter and increasing the recycle of containers. In New South Wales they have seen a 52 per cent reduction in beverage container litter. That is from the EPA New South Wales website. In Queensland they have recorded a 48 per cent reduction in beverage container litter, which is from the COEX annual report 2021.

One of the important things to note is that often the image of a container refund scheme reducing litter conjures ideas of people on the roadside collecting cans and bottles. The far more important way in which refund schemes can reduce litter is to prevent it from becoming litter in the first place by assigning a value to it. Then this is no longer a waste item that people freely toss away or do not care about. It has a value and there are convenient ways of recovering that value or transferring it to somebody else by having a scheme like this in place and properly configured.

The important thing is that the evidence that we can rely on for this is actual performance of the existing schemes of different types, in particular in Queensland and in New South Wales, which has shown a strong impact on litter reduction for beverage containers.

We know it is going to result in cleaner streams of recyclable materials is because they are sorted at the point of disposal to the scheme. We are not recovering bottles and cans from

next to a comingled recycling or landfill or general waste. Contamination levels are very low. The containers that are received into the scheme need to be entire, not crushed or broken; therefore, you are collecting streams of containers that are all the same at the point. That is what the refund is paid on. The sorting is done by the person returning, or the first receiver of, the returned container.

Ms White asked how does the split responsibility model promote better environmental outcomes, opportunities for local businesses, raise money for charities to fund -

Ms White - You did not really answer the first question, minister, because you referenced the New South Wales and the Queensland schemes, but I believe they are different in design. New South Wales is split, but the Queensland is not. How did you decide on a split as being the best model for return rate?

Mr JAENSCH - I will answer that as we go through. In this question I have gone to your specific issue about how do we know that a split responsibility CRS will reduce litter and result in cleaner streams. Evidence from interstate shows that a split responsibility model in New South Wales has achieved, so far, a 52 per cent reduction in beverage container litter. In a comparable scheme, but different model, in Queensland, had a 48 per cent reduction in beverage container litter. There is an evidence base to show that these schemes can reduce litter, but also there is a comparison between different schemes.

While both models create benefits for the environment by preventing these containers from entering it, and for business and charities, the point of the split responsibility model is that it involves a network operator that is solely incentivised to make the network as convenient, accessible and effective as possible, because they are paid per container returned.

The split responsibility model creates a positive commercial tension between the two different governance bodies for the scheme. The scheme coordinator wants to keep costs low, because they are typically from the beverage industry that is paying for the scheme, and as a product stewardship scheme, the scheme is funded by that industry. They pay 10 cents for each container, plus the cost of running the scheme as well.

The model we are proposing, as operating in New South Wales and elsewhere, creates the best possible incentives for maximising the collection of containers, which means less litter in the environment, more opportunities for businesses that are involved in handling and processing containers through their journey in the circular economy, and more money for charities and community organisations, which they can access in multiple different ways and different roles in the scheme as well.

Ms White, you also asked about membership of the expert reference group and the ministerial advisory group, and how conflicts of interest are managed. The expert reference group members are listed on the DPIPWE website, and also in the regulatory impact statement, which was released with the draft legislation.

I will quickly list the organisations that were represented on the reference group: the Australian Beverages Council, the Australian Council of Recycling, the Australian Food and Grocery Council, the Boomerang Alliance, Carlton United Breweries, Cleanaway, Coles, J. J Richards, Lion, the Local Government Association of Tasmania, Master Grocers Association, Independent Retailers, Charitable Recycling Australia, the National Retail

Association, Small Business Council of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, TOMRA, Veolia, the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia, and Woolworths.

The expert reference group conflicts of interest were managed by requiring a declaration at the time of invitation to membership. The reference group was not a consensus or voting group, and each view was recorded as part of the process. It was understood that members did and could have a financial interest in the model developed. However, the expertise and input was valuable in developing the right model for Tasmania.

The ministerial advisory group is a separate and different thing. It has nine members, and it is important to note that the advisory group is something I established to provide me with advice on this but also other matters, including the development of the waste levy bill, and the governance structure for that, which is also the subject of a bill before this House.

Ms White - How many times did the expert reference group meet?

Mr JAENSCH - I am advised that the expert reference group has met five or six times, and then consulted on a range of matters over the period. It would also be fair to say that various organisations represented on the reference group have sought meetings with me, and have had meetings - some of them several - in different combinations of these groups on the matter over the period of developing the policies and legislation.

The ministerial advisory group is a separate thing, which was created later in the piece. There are nine members on it from Tasmanian industry, education, local state government. They were selected for skills and experience, rather than representing any particular organisation. Conflicts of interest for the ministerial advisory group are managed through a regularly updated register of interests, and any conflicts relating to specific advice provided are also disclosed in that advice.

As for the membership of the ministerial advisory group - the chair is Tim Gardner, probably known mostly for his role with the organisation Stornaway; Allison Clark from Optimum Standard Consulting; Matthew Greskie from Dulverton Waste Management; Pam Allen, Adjunct Professor at UTAS, and also a chair in RN North, I believe; John Christian, Meander Valley Council; Dion Lester from the Local Government Association of Tasmania; Glen Doyle from the City of Hobart; Wes Ford, the Director of the EPA; and Brett Stewart from the Department of State Growth. Those are the advisory consultative groups.

Ms White - Thank you. Were they paid to sit on that advisory group?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, they were. I would like to run through a bit about the consultative process and the mechanisms, because it has come up in a number of contributions.

Consultation has been extensive, and it has been a critical part of the development of our scheme proposal to ensure that it will best serve the Tasmanian community. As you referenced, a report was prepared for my department in 2018 by Marsden Jacobs. That started the current conversation and made a number of recommendations. The department has built on that work in the intervening years. I have covered the expert reference group. The group was convened early last year to provide advice to the project team on policy and operational matters raised in the consultancy report, and other matters raised by the department. They provided feedback

on issues, on an issues paper prepared by the department, and participated in group and one-on-one sessions with the department.

In August last year, I appointed the waste and resources recovery ministerial advisory group, to which I have just introduced you, to advise me on matters relating to waste management and resource recovery in Tasmania. I have covered its membership.

One of the things with the container refund scheme policy is that I was the second or third minister in this Government to inherit the Container Refund Scheme policy and contribute to its development. I am proud to be the one who is hopefully going to land it.

One of the reasons I appointed the Ministerial Advisory Group is to have a group of people whose job it was to provide advice directly to me on the work that had been done previously by the department and its various other consultants and advisers so that I could catch up and have confidence that I was not just paying through a body of work that was in train, and did not examine it critically. I asked that group to integrate the advice coming from the department on the CRS governance arrangements, among other things.

They pulled that advice apart, interrogated it, put it back together, and came back to me with recommendations which aligned with those the department had brought. I had confidence with that process had been subject to some a third-party interrogation.

There was also a five-week public consultation period, on the draft bill, which closed in July of this year, giving the community an opportunity to comment on the bill. To help the community with that, along with the draft legislation, we released an explanatory paper and a more detailed regulatory impact statement on the website.

Offices from the department conducted webinars with members of the public, local government and targeted stakeholder groups to discuss the impacts of the bill, and also conducted a short on-line survey to capture people who were interested enough to have gone to access these documents, to understand consumer dynamics of how the scheme could best operate. This provided really useful insights into how people might want to use the scheme, and things like how to make it convenient for them to access.

I have covered some of that process, and confirm again that the Ministerial Advisory Group recommended to me that the split responsibility CRS model was the way to go.

I will just quote from their advice to me:

The split responsibility governance model drives towards the Government's policy objectives by aligning commercial incentives with optimal scheme performance.

The advisory group found the split responsibility models had a stronger trajectory on container redemptions and were lower cost to operate.

The advisory group concluded that the split responsibility governance will support the primary scheme objectives of reducing litter and promoting container recycling, will be cost effective and will provide a high performing

scheme for Tasmanians with respect to regional coverage and engagement with community groups and charities and social enterprises.

Ms White asked what evidence we had that split responsibility schemes maximise the containers returned, made reference to the Marsden Jacobs report and asked how we arrived at a different result to where that advice originally went.

The Marsden Jacobs report considered a wide range of issues in relation to Tasmania's CRS. It has informed us and it is referenced throughout the LIST and the explanatory notes.

However, it did come out in early 2018. Its analysis of governance options was not able to take account of major developments which have since shaped recycling and the operating environment in Australia, including that the New South Wales Container Refund Scheme, a split responsibility model, had only just commenced operation and had not reached its full scale and operations at that time.

We now know more about the performance of the New South Wales scheme. We have interviewed the operators of that scheme and the Government agencies who put it together, and taken their advice as to what to do and what not to do in building a scheme of our own, particularly in terms of the time frames for putting a scheme into operation to give it the best chance of success.

They had, I think, a four-month window in which they were trying to smash out a scheme and get it operational to meet deadlines. They had some teething problems in getting it underway. We are now seeing that that scheme is performing quite strongly in terms of costs and redemption rates. They compare favorably with the scheme operating across the border in Queensland.

Another important development that happened since Marsden Jacob produced the report is the introduction of what we are calling, waste export bans, but driven by China restricting its waste imports. That has changed some of the economics and the dynamics and resource flows in the waste management and resource recovery sector, particularly favouring production of higher volumes of better sorted and purer streams of recyclables. That has been an important development that has happened since the report was put together. The Marsden Jacob report raised concerns that a sole-operator scheme, a single-governance scheme, controlled entirely by the beverage industry, as most of the sole-operator, or single-governance schemes tend to be:

Risks concentrating authority in a single organisation with limited interest in maximising container redemption rates.

The report also said that:

A split responsibility model would balance cost-effectiveness versus redemption rates.

Compared to 2018, we now have much more information about the performance of schemes operating in Australia. We do not need to rely as much on assumptions and modelling. Publicly available information shows that the redemption rate for New South Wales in the last financial year was 67 per cent of containers and the Queensland redemption rate was

61.6 per cent. This is information in their published annual reports. The average cost increase of beverages in the first year of operation was 7.7 cents in New South Wales, but 9.9 cents in Queensland.

The independent price reviews for the Queensland and New South Wales schemes are also available online, the Queensland Productivity Commission - now called the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction - and the New South Wales Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal websites, which I believe is the evidence you are referring to Ms White. It is distinct from modelling and projections. We have had the advantage of that since the Marsden Jacob report was written. That helps to inform the decision-making on which model is going to work best for us.

Dr Woodruff - With indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, minister, are you saying that the Queensland model made the beverage prices increase more than New South Wales? The price was 9.9 cents, versus 7.7 cents, did you say, in New South Wales? At some point that is going to flow through either as a reduction in profit for the beverage industry or an increase in the price of beverages for consumers.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, and the way that product stewardship schemes work is that we expect that cost is passed on. The increased cost of beverages to the consumer is what we are quoting here. In both cases, notably, less than the refund amount, which is an important consideration.

Dr Woodruff - That is the argument for the split system. It provides incentives. It reduces overall costs and it forces an increase in recycling.

Mr JAENSCH - Correct. Ms White also asked were jobs considered a priority, were they modelled for the scheme and was modelling for job creation, for this model versus the other model, the sole-operator model, conducted? Our priority is for the container refund scheme to reduce litter and increase recycling. They have been the overwhelming priorities and objectives of the scheme as we have looked at the options. Noting that, every one of these schemes creates work that needs to be done in terms of collecting, processing and sorting and managing the schemes.

All schemes in Australia have created a significant number of jobs. The CRSs in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia report about 700 new jobs created in each of these jurisdictions. That includes jobs at refund points as well as in transport, logistics, administration, technical support, cleaning. There is nothing inherent in the single governance model that means it would create more jobs.

Whoever runs the scheme will make decisions about the types of refund points that are operated, their opening hours and logistics. Those decisions all affect employment. On the performance of the various schemes across the states, at this stage, again with those two New South Wales and Queensland being the most interesting to compare across large jurisdictions but using different models, roughly equivalent job creation across the two according again to their own reporting.

Ms White asked if there would be one or numerous operators and a guarantee of competition in the network. I can confirm that the Government intends to conduct a competitive public tender process for both the scheme coordinator and the network operator

services. This will be the best way to ensure that we are testing the market and ensuring an efficient cost for the services so it will be a competitive process for the tendering for those contracts.

We also have a challenge in Tasmania where we have a small population, relatively small volumes of materials and relatively large distances to cover. We recognise that economies of scale will also be important in making sure the scheme works as efficiently as possible. We anticipate that when we go to market we are most likely to receive, in terms of the network operator, competitive tender bids from organisations seeking to manage the network across the whole of Tasmania. The expectation would be that any network operator would be entering into many different subcontracting and partnering arrangements, with other types of organisations providing services to them. The transport, logistics refund and collection points will be different in different parts of the state and involve different types of organisations, depending on the local situation and need.

If there were organisations that approached the tender process with a view to providing a service in only one part of the state or were partnered with other organisations and doing it in other parts, we would consider anything that came through. We would expect that the tender process is most likely to attract organisations with experience in logistics that would be seeking economies of scale. That would help us get a most efficient scheme operating for Tasmania. Also in that process we would be applying the Government's normal buy local provisions and policies to ensure that there were opportunities for Tasmanian businesses to access the opportunity.

Ms White referred, as did Mr Winter, that the Premier had received correspondence from businesses in Tasmania. Labor wanted to understand whether I received representations from businesses expressing concerns regarding the design or cost impacts of the scheme. I can confirm that yes, the Premier and I have received - I know that I have received many representations, have met many times with a whole range of different players and learnt a lot from them about the realities of operating a scheme like this in Tasmania and heard their suggestions as well.

All correspondence that the Premier and I receive is responded to through normal ministerial processes with information that the department is able to provide at the time. I note that probably most of the organisations that have approached or corresponded with us have also participated in the expert reference groups directly or via representative bodies bringing their sector's concerns. We have been very grateful for the time that various organisations have given us to explain their business structure, their industry structure and their issues of interest and concern in regard to the design of our container refund scheme. We are very grateful for their input.

Ms White also asked me to explain why I thought Tasmanians are already paying for schemes operating in other states. I cannot recall asserting that but I do recognise that in the context of a question that I have asked some of the beverage industry participants given that we are Australia's smallest state, smallest market, and hopefully the second last to have a container refund scheme. The companies I am talking to operate nationally, sometimes internationally. They produce their product here with a label on them that clearly identifies that they are participants in container refund schemes in six other jurisdictions. There are costs involved in their distribution and different sorts of costs involved in each of the other container refund schemes.

My question to them has been: do you and how do you manage those cost differentials across a range of different markets and jurisdictions? One of the markets that they operate in is in Tasmania. That question was related to how significant would be the increase of costs incurred by entering into a CRS here for a company that is already operating across multiple schemes, across far bigger markets over a larger territory.

In terms of the industry absorbing the extra costs of having Tasmania operating with a CRS, we do note that some of these companies do have ownership structures and distribution networks that may have the capacity to absorb it across their network or may have already done so. We understand that as a product stewardship scheme that the impacts of new costs on these businesses are expected to be passed on to their customers in the form of increases in the sale price of their containers. That is what I offer in response to Ms White's comments on beverage companies absorbing the cost of the scheme.

Ms White - Minister, can you confirm that the beverage companies provided you with a price list? I believe they have done this in order to explain to you they do not pass the costs on already to Tasmanian consumers. Do you acknowledge that you have received such correspondence from them?

Mr JAENSCH - I have received several pieces of correspondence with modelled costs of what some of the beverage providers and their representative bodies have modelled out in their view of what our proposed scheme would cost to operate in Tasmania. I can confirm that we have also asked for more information on the assumptions used to drive those models. That has not all been shared with us to be able to understand if they are fair comparisons.

Ms White - I do not think we are talking about modelling. I believe they provided you price lists to answer your question that you just asked again through this debate about evidence that they are not passing that cost onto Tasmanian consumers because they make the argument they currently are not.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. I will make sure to follow up from the correspondence. We have had significant correspondence with TasRecycle and other organisations that it represents.

Ms White - Thank you.

Mr JAENSCH - If that was in answer to my questions then it is good to have that on the record. You have asked why we are not legislating for a redemption target of 85 per cent, as has been proposed by TasRecycle or others representing it. We note that the state-based container refund schemes with the highest container redemption rates so far are not the ones that have legislated targets. There are many factors that go into making a container refund scheme a success. The redemption rate is one of the critical data points for that. Part of the reason we decided on a split responsibility model is that it naturally incentivises higher container redemption rates without having to set a target.

While some states have legislated redemption rates it is also far from clear what consequences would apply if those targets are not met. Legislating a redemption rate does not mean that it is reached. I believe that Queensland has an 85 per cent redemption target due by the end of this financial year and is currently returning 61 per cent. It will be interesting to see how that performance hurdle is dealt with in the governance of that scheme.

We want as many containers back as possible. That is one of the key reasons why we have gone for a scheme that creates an incentive for a network operator to return as many containers as possible by ensuring that they are paid for every container and they are incentivised to get as many as they can. Ideally we would like 100 per cent back. When contracting our network operator we will need to ensure the scheme is accessible to people so they can easily get to it and return their containers and that we educate the public about how the scheme is going to work. It is another reason why we need the 12 months lead time to do this thoroughly and properly.

Ms White also suggested that given the characteristics of the Tasmanian marketplace, the Tasmanian scheme will be the most expensive scheme in operation and asked how the Government would limit the impact on consumers who have to fund the scheme. Will our split responsibility network model increase the cost to stakeholders via, and I think she said, this new tax on business?

We are talking about a product stewardship model where the costs of recovering those containers and ensuring that they are going into recycling not into landfill or litter is built into the price of the container and the product in the first place. We do not consider it to be a tax. There is no evidence that sole governance or single governance container refund schemes cost businesses any less than split responsibility CRS models.

Our department has analysed the costs that companies pay into CRS schemes interstate and there is no evidence that the supplier contribution is less in sole operator schemes. In fact, the published supplier contribution in New South Wales split responsibility scheme is often less than the published supplier contribution in Queensland's beverage-controlled scheme. The cost impact on businesses is less. The evidence and track record of the schemes that are already in operation does not suggest that the model we are choosing is likely to be a higher cost on businesses than the alternative. Some of the figures that have been promoted claiming that our model will be more expensive to operate have not come with any justification for the figures used. We have not been able to access the fundamentals of the modelling that those estimates are based on, although we have asked for it.

Ms White asked why we did not consult publicly on the governance model?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Minister, are you going to need more time?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I will need more time.

Ms WHITE - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the minister be granted an extension of time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Five minutes?

Ms WHITE - I think he will need 10 minutes, based on my knowledge of how the minister speaks.

Mr Jaensch - You asked lots of questions, Ms White.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The question is the minister continue to be heard for a further 10 minutes.

Leave granted.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Ms White.

Ms White - You are welcome.

Mr JAENSCH - The split governance model was part of the package that went to public consultation in June 2021. Stakeholders and the community had the opportunity to consider and provide feedback on each of the key elements of the scheme over the five weeks we were out to consultation. This comes off the back of the process involving the expert reference group and people who were involved in and potentially affected by our choice of model. They had significant time with the various options and provided their input that the final decision was based on.

Ms White asked how did we arrive at the exemption figure of up to 20 000 containers for businesses? Was it informed through the work of the reference groups or if not, who? Small businesses up to the 20 000-container threshold are not exempt. All businesses will have to register eligible containers but no businesses will have to pay for the first 20 000 containers that they sell. The department commissioned a report to understand the beverage industry in Tasmania and contracted three small beverage advisers to develop initiatives to support the sector in the transition to a CRS for the first time.

The department also conducted modelling indicating a threshold of 20 000 containers would achieve maximum overall benefit by making a real difference to Tasmania's smallest beverage producers without significantly altering the cost of the overall scheme. Other thresholds that were modelled were 10 000, 50 000 and 500 000 containers. It was found that 20 000 had the lowest cost impact to the scheme while still providing relief to Tasmania's smallest beverage producers. Setting the threshold lower would not have captured many companies who raised concerns about the cost of the scheme. Setting it higher and the cost increase to the scheme would be more. All companies will get their first 20 000 containers free and the cost for this initiative will be spread across the containers above the threshold, including by those same companies for their containers above 20 001.

The question was asked what cost, if any, to the state Government either through the establishment of the scheme or ongoing costs is anticipated? The cost to the Government is intended to be kept to a bare minimum. The Government will be able to charge the scheme coordinator for the costs associated with any government auditing or regulation of the scheme. The scheme will have an internal accountability by the very nature of having a split responsibility scheme. Each party can hold the other to account. This is not meant to be something that the Government continues to put money into to operate, albeit that some of the alternatives recommended to us have involved the Government being the contractor for refund points and responsible for various transaction costs for those contracts and management of them.

Ms White - Who were the three advisers that you engaged, minister? Have you told us that?

Mr JAENSCH - They are people who work in the sector, small beverage producers. I will give you those names in just a moment. I need to move on; I will come back to that.

Mr Winter spoke - he has gone, that is pity -

Ms White - He is listening intently, I am sure.

Mr JAENSCH - I am sure. Many of the matters he raised have been covered in my answers so far, particularly about the process and the decisions that we have taken.

He has made reference to my language regarding 'big beverage'. I have referred to big beverage companies to distinguish them from the smaller ones, particularly in relation to the 20 000 threshold that we talked about. I share everybody else's fondness for our Tasmanian breweries and their products. We certainly recognise and care about the impacts of any change on businesses and employees in Tasmania, as a result of policy decisions to bring in something like a CRS in. We have listened to, and asked a lot of questions as well, with Boag's and others, throughout the course of this journey. As I said before, we have met many times with them and we have shared information. We have asked for some more information to help us understand how they have calculated some of the figures they have come up with. We are confident that the worst cases they have identified are not likely to emerge from our scheme, or the model of scheme that we have embarked on.

I can confirm that the small beverage industry participants who we had advice from were Damien Viney, from the Spreyton Cider Company; John Burrige, from the Independent Brewers Association; and Craig Airey, from the Tasmanian Chilli Beer Company.

Very briefly, I thank Dr Woodruff for her support for the bill and the scheme. She has asked me to comment on planning matters, because it has been raised in submissions that we need to ensure we do not run into planning issues if we roll out refund points and related infrastructure around the state. I can confirm that the department is working with LGAT and councils to understand the planning requirements relating to mobilisation of the refund point network, with a view to avoiding any such delays for implementation. We will make amendments or adjustments, or provide information and education, as needed to ensure we do that. When I am saying 'the department', I am referring to our planning policy unit, which is working with local government on those issues.

Dr Woodruff, I believe I covered the 220 000 threshold question in your -

Dr Woodruff - That is right, thanks.

Mr JAENSCH - As to the intersection between this bill and the waste resource and recovery bill, they have complementary aims in diverting waste from landfill. There is no other functional relationship between those two pieces of legislation, or the governance and management structures for them, but they are on the same mission to feed the circular economy, create demand, drive recycling and the recovery of recyclable materials from what used to be waste streams.

On community group concerns regarding access to the scheme, I can confirm in the remaining time that our intention will be to require a network operator to have coverage of the state, to provide at least 40 refund points where Tasmanians can get a refund for their container.

We will also ensure that all charities and community organisations can apply to have a refund account, so that when someone takes their container and is able to redeem their refund, they have the option of nominating a charity of their choice for it to go to. All charities will have the option of taking up the offer of a refund account in that system for free. That is one of the things that we will build over the next 12 months, to get it in place in time for people to be able to donate their refund to a charity of their choice.

Obviously, charities themselves can collect and claim a refund on containers. People can donate containers to a charity. A charity or a community organisation can also make application to the network operator to take on a role as a refund point operator, but that will come with certain requirements.

In other states, those organisations need to have an ABN; they may need to be prepared to operate for certain hours and meet requirements for audit, safe storage of equipment, occupational health and safety and other matters. That will not suit all charities, but definitely, we hope, many.

Time expired.

Bill read the second time.

CONTAINER REFUND SCHEME BILL 2021 (No. 54)

In Committee

Clause 1 - Short title

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, for the record, we were thinking of moving an amendment to include the objects into the bill, but on reflection and consideration, it is apparent that the Acts Interpretation Act section 8A makes it the case that the objects of the bill, if they are in the short title, are taken, for the purposes of any part of the bill, to be related, to be the objects of the bill. They do not need to be expressly stated.

We felt that it was so important to have the objects which are in the explanatory paper in the bill, but they are in the short title. So that people who are interested can understand what has happened, I wanted to read that into *Hansard* and get you to confirm that this is the case.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I can confirm that is also the advice that has been provided to me. Perhaps for completeness and for the record, we might note here what that title is. This is a bill for -

An Act to establish a container refund scheme to reduce litter in Tasmania
and increase the recovery and recycling of containers

Dr Woodruff - Hear, hear.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 -
Interpretation

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the question was asked by TOMRA in their submission and also by the Boomerang Alliance, about the definition of prescribed marks. In terms of where the refunds are payable are in respect to certain containers, in section 31, it states the refund is not payable if the container does not display the relevant prescribed marks. I would like to clarify that the prescribed marks in Tasmania will include barcodes in the regulations so that that is abundantly clear.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, the answer is yes.

Dr Woodruff - Thank you.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 11 agreed to.

Clause 12 -
Approval of eligible container

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Chair, in clause 12(2) it states:

The Secretary may impose any conditions, requirements or restrictions on an approval of an eligible container under subsection (1) that the Secretary considers appropriate.

TOMRA asked the question in their submission, whether this part of the clause will be able to be used to ensure that containers within the container refund scheme are actually capable of being recycled; that they are, in other words, recyclable. Will that be a condition of being approved in the regulations?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes.

Clauses 12 agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 15 agreed to.

Clause 16 -
Fit and proper persons

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Chair, the clause states:

- (1) In determining whether a person is a fit and proper person under this Act, the Minister must take into account the following matters:

- (a) the person's conduct with regard to the scheme or a similar scheme established, or operating, in another jurisdiction;

There are a number of other factors, but I wanted to come to the fact that it is not prescriptive that the minister 'must' consider any of these things. The minister 'must' take it into account; the minister must not be bound by the quality of the person's conduct. It is not a deal breaker if the person has been found guilty of an indictable offence, where there is a maximum penalty for more than of imprisonment for three months, and so on. I would like you to speak to why those things are not a requirement. There is a fair bit of potential slippage there, even if a person has been convicted of dishonesty or fraud.

I also would like you to speak to subclause (a):

the person's conduct with regard to the scheme or a similar scheme established, or operating, in another jurisdiction;

Could you please tell me what factors would guide the decision about a person's conduct? What does a 'person's conduct' mean? That is quite broad. I expect that this would be tightened up in the regulations. What are we looking to tighten it up to? If we have companies that have been convicted of fraud in another jurisdiction, is that relevant to conduct? What other factors have you accounted for?

Mr JAENSCH - Dr Woodruff, I am advised that this applies to only a couple of key appointments that the minister makes; being the appointment of the Scheme Coordinator and the Network Operator the bill provides that the minister is able to enquire of the persons who would be considered for these roles, information to enable the sound judgment and assessment of risk to be made. As I understand it, this does not pre-empt any particular types of issues but it gives the minister the ability, because it requires it in the act, to consider those matters to be able to require that information to be provided so I can make that assessment. The indication is that without it there may be limitations on what information the minister can get.

Dr Woodruff - What you can ask for.

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. It is simply a power to enable us to satisfy ourselves that we have got people who might otherwise have grounds to withhold that information from us even if there were concerns.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clause 17 -

Minister may appoint scheme participants in certain circumstances

Dr WOODRUFF - Clause 17, as I understand it, provides for despite having established that this is legislation to enable a split scheme and establishing a scheme coordinator and the network operator, this allows the minister to appoint a person to be the Scheme Coordinator or the Network Operator. This provides the opportunity for the minister because it states 'despite sections 14 and 15', which set up separate Scheme Coordinators and Network Operators. It provides for that to be able to occur, and I assume - I had not finished speaking, minister.

Mr Jaensch - I beg your pardon.

Dr WOODRUFF - You just turned your back so you could not hear me so I thought I would wait so you could hear me.

I assume that is to provide for a possibility where there may not be a satisfactory person, body corporate, that has tendered. The state would not want to find itself in a situation where we did not have the right person or anybody to be the network operator, scheme coordinator or vice versa. I am getting furious nods from the bench.

This enables under clause 17(3)(b) for the appointment of a person into either of those roles to be for a period not exceeding a cumulative period of five years. Five years seems a very long time. It is a cumulative period but five years is a long time if we are stuck in a hole and we cannot find anybody to fulfil those roles and we have the same body performing both roles. It is a long time to not have what we have already decided to be the optimum model.

Mr JAENSCH - This is a provision that enables us to deal with an emergency, an unforeseen absence of one or the other parties that runs the scheme and go into a makeshift arrangement for an interim period while that issue may be resolved. I do not believe the intention of this clause is to enable us to commence the scheme with one operator across the two roles simply because we did not get a taker for one or the other. This is to do with a situation where one of those positions might become vacant and we need to be able to ensure continuity of operation of the scheme for a period of time.

I agree with you that five years is a long time but it is cumulative. It may anticipate that there is the ability to drop in and out of this arrangement if needed. I cannot imagine the circumstances but there needs to be a limit and the advice in drafting was to make that cumulative five a maximum.

Dr Woodruff - Through you, Mr Chair, the word, 'may' in clause 17(3)(b), 'may not exceed a cumulative period of five years', is that prescriptive? Is that like must not or does it still leave the possibility that it could be more than five years?

Mr JAENSCH - The advice is that this is language chosen by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. Our understanding and intention is that it would be equivalent of saying, 'shall not' rather than it being discretionary.

Dr Woodruff - Which is a step below, 'must,' but it is a step above -

Mr JAENSCH - A step in the right direction.

Dr Woodruff - It is not as tight as, 'must'.

Mr JAENSCH - The intention is to provide sufficient time so that if needed we could go back to the market and commence an entire tendering process again and have a period of time for a new operator to be ready to take up that role. It is a provision that allows us to deal with a gap in the provision of services by a provider and be able to fill that with an organisation that has good working knowledge of the scheme while we remedied that absence.

Clause 17 agreed to.

Clause 18 agreed to.

Clause 19 -

Agreements generally

Dr WOODRUFF - This is on that little word again in 19(1)(d):

- (d) may include one or more of the following:
 - (i) performance targets or other targets or requirements;
 - (ii) sanctions for non-compliance;
 - (iii) requirements for monitoring, auditing and reporting under the agreement; ...

These are very important matters that go to the heart of the effectiveness of a container refund scheme in Tasmania. Can you clarify that it is your Government's intention that these will form part of the agreement and that there will be conditions around those things?

Mr JAENSCH - This appears to be a drafting convention and has to do with binding future decision-makers. I can confirm that it would be my intention to include those four minimum requirements in an agreement, as the minister who will commence the operation of this scheme and this legislation. I note there might be situations, say, 19(1)(d)(iv) that there are no such other requirements that someone may want to add. I think that is why it is a 'may' include other such terms and conditions.

The advice I have is that these seem like reasonable inclusions in an agreement. I am prepared to commit in this speech to include them in any agreements that I enter into.

Clause 19 agreed to.

Clause 20 agreed to.

Clause 21 -

Scheme coordinator agreements

Dr WOODRUFF - In relation to clauses 21(a) and 21(b):

In addition to the requirements of this Act, an agreement to be a scheme coordinator must specify the following terms and conditions in respect of the person appointed as the scheme coordinator under the agreement:

- (a) that the scheme coordinator is to enter into supply agreements with the first responsible suppliers of containers to ensure that the suppliers bear an appropriate proportion of the cost of the management, administration and operation of the scheme;

I have a few questions about this. How will an appropriate proportion of the cost be determined? The Boomerang Alliance makes the point that there should be a requirement for the scheme coordinator to have a diversity of board members. This may actually have been

overtaken by the changes in the bill. If we just talk about (a) first, and then I will talk about (b) next.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I have just conferred and can confirm that the scheme coordinator will need to consider the total costs of the scheme, including the refund payable, and the costs of handling the container and the management costs of the scheme. There is then a calculation of what that works out to for an individual container. That will then provide the basis for calculating the contribution required from each supplier. This means that each supplier pays the same rate for the same thing - the container and cost structure that is in the scheme.

Dr Woodruff - Good. Chair, the second part of this relates to part (b):

that the scheme coordinator is responsible for entering into an agreement with the network operator;

The scheme coordinator, in the explanatory paper, has a number of roles. The last one that is listed is minimising fraud, including managing verification mechanisms to prevent inflated container return claims. TOMRA said in their submission that they want a guarantee that the network operator would be required to administer a statewide IT system for collection points. In the draft bill there were other things that were listed, other parts to this section, and they have been taken out and it has become less prescriptive.

It is still prescriptive, but it does not have a list of things that the scheme coordinator is required to do. I guess that is to leave in as much latitude to the regulations stage, but it seems from what TOMRA and also the Boomerang Alliance have said, having a requirement for an IT platform for container refund points will be important for verification - and verification is critical to provide accurate data about the effectiveness of the scheme, and also to prevent fraud. They instance a situation with a recent large fraud case in Queensland, which had a weight-based system, and that was open to abuse. The use of barcodes significantly helps to avoid fraud, which is why they are so important, but also to have the requirement for a statewide IT system for collection points to be something that the scheme coordinator would require of the network operator. Is that what will happen?

Mr JAENSCH - I will get some advice on that. It sounds like this is a clarification of what is in the scope of those agreements, rather than something that you might seek to change in the -

Dr Woodruff - Yes, correct.

Mr JAENSCH - Dr Woodruff, thank you for your question. From my advice, I understand there may be a range of different ways that a network operator might satisfy the requirement to provide an information management system for the purposes of traceability and audit, and the discovery and prevention of fraud.

Our intention would be to include, in the tender process, a requirement for the network operator to propose what they would do to provide for a system like that. If, on assessment, that was found to be lacking, we have the ability to, by regulation, require certain things to be done to meet a standard. Then there is scope for negotiation between the scheme coordinator

and the network operator on how their systems would be interoperable, to meet the requirements of managing the integrity of the scheme.

Dr Woodruff - Great.

Clause 21 agreed to.

Clauses 22 and 23 agreed to.

Clause 24 -

Refund point agreements

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, in your Government's regulatory impact statement from May this year, page 15, Features of the draft legislation, in relation to section 24(1), it states:

A network operator may enter into a refund point agreement with a refund point operator for the refund point operator to operate one or more of the network operator's container refund points.

The regulatory impact statement says:

The number of refund points, and the mix and distribution of refund point types, is the subject of ongoing policy work and will be discussed during public consultation in 2021. The minimum number of refund points will be set out in regulations to ensure convenience of access for all. The 2018 Marsden Jacob's report recommended the Government set a minimum number of refund points and set access targets for urban, regional and remote area Tasmanians. The report recommended the mix of refund point types to be left to the commercial entity running the scheme but that a mixture be encouraged.

Because this legislation does not have any details in it about the number and the distribution and the mix of refund points and especially the issue of access for regional and remote area Tasmanians, it is important for you to state what the Government's intention will be when establishing an agreement with the network operator. How prescriptive and what requirements will there be to ensure that we do not end up with people having to go unreasonable distances and the times of day and all those other factors that will make a system work really well?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I am advised that the way those matters are dealt with will be in the regulations through the provision of community access standards. They will define a minimum number and other characteristics of the distribution, coverage and accessibility of refund points without being prescriptive about exactly where they should be.

For example, King and Flinders islands will be part of the scheme. It will include also that there will be at least 40 refund points in Tasmania at commencement. Then there will be other access standards created which will have regard to things like distance travelled for a size of population, et cetera. The working model we used has been to ensure we have coverage like the coverage of Service Tasmania desks across the state. There is not a default to putting all of your assets and all of your collection only where all the people are, but that we are providing

for access for all Tasmanians, so all Tasmanians can get their refunds conveniently for their used containers.

Dr Woodruff - Would there be reverse vending machines at Service Tasmania? I do not know. You just said that and it provoked an idea.

Mr JAENSCH - No, but the principle is that it has to do with accessibility and coverage of the territory so that everyone has a chance. They are not excluded by geography. We want to make it as convenient as possible. Then the mix of refund point types will be determined by the logistics, the availability of suitable partner organisations or service providers that can take on those roles. We imagine things like reverse vending machines would probably be limited to the larger centres with highest volumes of foot traffic and there would be a wide range of different configurations involving businesses, larger not-for-profit organisations that had the capacity to perform in those roles, through to interactions or agreements with some volunteer organisations in smaller areas.

Dr WOODRUFF - Another submission. Still on clause 24(3):

A person, other than a network operator, must not operate a container refund point unless the person is the refund point operator in respect of the container refund point.

I am going now to a submission made by Charopy, which is a New South Wales-based technology company that says it is solving the problem of container refund scheme contamination in out-of-home bills. Trying to find a space where a variety of human behaviours in different situations like the strata title unit areas would mean that it might prevent people living in more urban situations from accessing container deposit schemes.

This is what they do as a business. I am not spruiking the business. I am just explaining it. They are quite passionate about providing opportunities for innovation, and they were concerned that Part 3 might hinder innovation. They had a specific example. They said:

In Sydney we have seen some primary Schools use Charopy technology to reward children for returning eligible containers and the children can then use this money to buy items in the school canteen or tuckshop. This instance of the Charopy technology was integrated with an app widely used in Tasmanian schools today, called *Qkr by Mastercard* ...

It would appear from the bill that clause 24(3) would ban this type of activity in schools given that the school, or the parent association running the program, would not be a 'container point operator' as defined under the legislation; they would most likely send the collected containers to an official container point operator at a later stage to be refunded for the 10c per container they had already given the students.

You can see that in this situation, in a small school environment, it is a disincentive for students to do it, because they do not get the immediate reward. It is a small thing, but it is about keeping the door open for innovation. Can you talk about that instance?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. My department has just confirmed it is not the intent of clause 24(3) to limit innovation and creative lateral thinking to ensure that we are getting all the containers that are out there back into the scheme.

In the case that you referenced, the school, or the school association running that program using their software, would not be a container refund point in itself. It would be operating its own little program and collecting materials that it could then take to an official container refund point, and receive a refund. Those containers and those refunds would be registered by the scheme in the knowledge that the refund point operator would be feeding them into the network, and ultimately into recycling.

Dr Woodruff - Okay, you would make a virtual little box and you would call it a reverse vending machine, but actually someone in the school, a parent or teacher, would recoup the money and make the circle complete.

Mr JAENSCH - I can also imagine that occurring with an enterprising young person after school who goes to visit people at a retirement village, maybe. I trust I did not get anything legally wrong here - but offering to take people's cans and things and give them half the money. To provide a service, effectively, and be able to redeem, but without themselves claiming to be - or being seen in any way to be - a container refund point operator.

Ms White - Minister, the reverse vending machine concept. Is that your preferred way the network will operate? Is that something that will happen for all the different points, or just some of them? Can you explain that a bit further?

Mr JAENSCH - We do not intend to set a preferred technology for the refund points. The experience elsewhere, from the discussions that I have had, seems to be that reverse vending machines will work in certain circumstances - generally in high-traffic areas in population centres, say around large supermarkets where there is space in a car park to accommodate a reverse vending machine, and enough foot traffic to make that an economic solution.

We do not expect there to be a large number of reverse vending machines in Tasmania. Across the network, we would expect there would be a wide range of different ways of providing a container refund point, mostly involving people - some of them in existing businesses, some in depots or centres, enterprises or shopfronts set up specifically for the purpose.

Ms White - Thank you.

Clause 24 agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 43 agreed to.

**Clause 44 -
Regulations**

Ms WHITE - Minister, could you provide an update on the time frame by which you expect the regulations to be concluded - anticipating that there are no delays to the progress of the scheme?

Further to that, picking up on your second reading speech, where you talk about the exemption from paying into the scheme for the first 20 000 containers sold each year; in your answer to my question on that, in your summing up, you mentioned that the department had looked at 5000, 10 000 and 15 000, and found 20 000 was the 'goldilocks' approach, for want of a better description.

Are you able to share any information about that? I know this might not be the appropriate clause to ask this, but it is the regulation side, and I did not know where else to ask for further information about the modelling that you relied on, to arrive at 20 000 being the number of containers at which you provide that exemption. Are you able to table any of that information for our understanding?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Ms White. I am advised that the regulations drafting is underway now, and that the regulations will be complete but in draft form when we go to market and when we are negotiating through that tender process.

The reason being that those draft regulations will inform the tender process and those negotiations, but if in the negotiations it is found that there may be matters that were unanticipated, or that are critical for establishing the scheme correctly, there is scope to adjust those regulations to achieve the outcome that we need. We anticipate that the final regulations would then be made around the time of finalising those contracts in the process, around the middle of next year.

In arriving at the 20 000-container limit, we engaged representatives from the small beverage sector. We are talking about a sector that has about 90 businesses in it. It is a quite small community. The people who participated and those who gave information did so under the understanding that it would be commercially sensitive information. It is about their businesses - how many containers and how many products they produce, and where they send them, et cetera.

As I understand it, and I mentioned in my previous response, we have tried to strike a happy medium between a threshold that would have a meaningful benefit to the smallest businesses, that may not even have barcodes on their products at all, and had not been part of a container refund scheme before, and were not, in most cases, selling into other states already.

From the figures I have seen, of the 90 small Tasmanian beverage producers, around 40 of them, or nearly half, would be at or below that 20 000 cap, and therefore not be paying per container into the scheme. Many of them are businesses that do not send their product into other states and are not paying for their schemes either and therefore have not gone through the set-up costs involved.

We will be offering a small grants program for those small operators to assist them with the set-up costs. We are also making sure that nobody is going to be paying for container approvals and that there is an 18-month period for transition so those businesses moving into the scheme for the first time have time in which to comply and to ensure that their containers are fully registered and operating as part of the scheme.

Ms WHITE - I appreciate, minister, particularly for some of those small businesses, it will be a significant transition for them. The department provided us some advice about the grants that would be made available to support them. I also appreciate the commercial-in-

confidence and the fact that people participated and shared information that they would not want to be shared elsewhere.

Correct me if I am wrong, but in your answer to my earlier question in the debate, the unit costs had been modelled under different scenarios and that is why you arrived at 20 000. Was that a unit cost for the small businesses that they were able to reasonably accommodate, or are you talking about a unit cost to the scheme? Are you able to clarify that for me, please? Also, appreciating that there is commercial-in-confidence information that has been provided to Government, can you also confirm that you received a report on that? Would you be willing to table a redacted version of that report so that we do not compromise businesses that participated in good faith?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Ms White. I have not seen the full text of that report. I have seen the resulting recommendations arising from it. It has been provided to me by the department.

Ms White - Could you share that then? Presumably that does not have confidential information.

Mr JAENSCH - The information we are prepared to share at this stage is the stuff that I have read already, in describing that there was a range of different settings that were tested. This comes down to advice and judgment on what we could put in place that would be helpful for the smallest but not transfer a significant cost to the remaining containers in the scheme, if you like.

In answer to your question, it was a cost to the scheme that seemed to be a threshold, so we sought to assist a significant number of small businesses with the minimum impact on the scheme overall. Also note, that the 20 000 threshold applies to all businesses, so even the largest, will not be required to make payments for their first 20 000.

Ms White - I appreciate that but those containers will still be included within the scheme, so somebody has to pay for them?

Mr JAENSCH - That is right. The rationale is that the cost of applying this threshold will be then applied across the vast majority of containers that are in the scheme. The additional cost for an individual container would be extremely small. We would hope that some of those little businesses become bigger businesses in time. What we did not want to do is make having a Tasmanian container refund scheme a reason why their continued trading or their growth might be held back.

Clause 44 agreed to.

Clauses 45 and 46 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill to be reported without amendment.

Reported adopted.

CONTAINER REFUND SCHEME BILL 2021 (No. 54)

Third Reading

[8.25 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Environment) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I put on the record my appreciation for the contributions of other members who have been part of the debate and the many people, organisations and businesses that have given us their time, their information and their advice on the journey to building Tasmania's first container refund scheme.

I particularly like to thank the DPIPWE project team members from my department, some of whom are with us here today: Wes Ford, Jo O'Brien, Penny Stolp, Cathy Alexander, Katie Parrott, Lynda Jordan, Isabelle Goodfellow, Paul Docherty, Darryl Cook and Kendal Boyd. I also thank from my office: Alice Clayton, Lauryn Smith and Anthony Reid for their assistance to me. Thank you very much.

Bill read the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

[8.27 p.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Education) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Conduct of Members

[8.27 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to make a long contribution this evening. I want to acknowledge that there was some really poor behaviour from some of our colleagues in this place today. The subject of questioning and scrutiny in this House in question time and during the matter of public importance debate was how the Department of Education responds to historical and contemporary complaints or allegations of sexual abuse. It is the most serious of matters and there is now a full report, which the Greens tabled in parliament today during the MPI debate.

We undertook a media conference today at 1.15 p.m. and during that media conference, it has been brought to my attention that the Liberal member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, and the Liberal member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, thought it was the funniest of jokes to walk behind our press conference today, which was held in the atrium because it was raining, stomping and chortling.

I understand that both Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis are relatively new members of this House and perhaps they have not understood the importance of treating very serious matters that come before this place with the gravity that they deserve. Perhaps those members think everything in here is a joke. It is not. Perhaps those members think that when the Greens raise their voices that it is part of their job to deride us.

We were talking to journalists today about the matters that were contained in the Department of Education inquiry undertaken by Professor Michael Smallbone and Professor Tim McCormack. This relates to how parents in Tasmania should feel about the safety of their children when they are sent in to our public schools. It was witnessed by multiple journalists and camera operators when Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis thought it was the funniest of jokes to walk behind our press conference stomping and giggling, while we were talking about how safe our children are in our schools.

We are put here to work for the people of Tasmania. The people of Tasmania pay taxes, pay our wages, and when they elect us they expect us to behave in this place with integrity and propriety but to behave like adults. I believe that is what they expect of us. They have been very poorly served by the conduct of Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis today. It was witnessed. It was heard.

Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis were not put in here to make light of the most serious matters. They were put in here to work for, and we all remember the words, the true welfare of the people of Tasmania. While it might suit your political purposes to have a crack at us at a press conference, it does not serve the people of Tasmania -

Ms COURTNEY - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. With regards to your contribution, Ms O'Connor, you have every right to be able to say what you feel you need to during adjournment -

Ms O'Connor - And what's your point of order?

Ms COURTNEY - The point of order is you are reflecting on the person in the Chair, which is inappropriate.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am not. Thank you, Ms Courtney, I have been extraordinarily cautious in the way that I have framed my contribution tonight but it is necessary to put this on the *Hansard* record because we are not elected to make fun in this place of matters of great gravity. We are not elected to deride other members in this place when they speak to the media on matters of significant public interest.

All I will say in closing is that Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis did a disservice to the people of Lyons and Braddon by behaving like children during our press conference today, a press conference which was about the Department of Education's response to historical and indeed contemporary allegations of child sexual abuse.

I understand, Ms Courtney, your desire to run cover for Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis but it will not wash because we are not elected to this place to be idiots and to deride legitimate public discourse about the safety of our children in public educational settings. I encourage Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis to reflect on the oath that we swear when we have the great privilege of being elected to represent the people of Tasmania. That oath is to work for the true welfare of the people of Tasmania, so I say to Mr Tucker and Mr Ellis, 'Grow up'.

Time expired.

2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference - Glasgow

[8.35 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Glasgow has been a world event like no other. That conference has been determining the fate of the human species and all other species on earth. The outcome of Glasgow has been both grim and galvanising. It has been incredibly grim to see the failure of our political leaders make meaningful commitments for the action we need to take.

It has been incredibly grim to watch our appalling Primer Minister turn up with a 'planphlet', it has been described as, a 'scamphlet', basically a piece of paper no bigger than a couple of pages from a person who is a key advocate for the coal, gas and oil industries, which makes no meaningful commitments on behalf of Australians.

It has been, however, galvanising for civil society, for young people who have come together across the globe in enormous numbers to use the power of collective action and to understand that the failure of leaders at Glasgow is the space that they must step into. There is now no other space except for civil society action, except for financial market action, except for tariffs. These things will come.

They will come to Australia because we refuse to reject the fossil fuel industries and the power they still exert over us. It will come because the Labor and Liberal parties in Australia continue to be co-opted to the trickle-down donations that come to them and that silence them, even at the expense of their own children's futures. Silence them and shackle them, so that they are incapable of doing the things that scientists tell us we must do.

Right now, we are on track for 2.7 degrees of global warming. We can make a difference but not with the Liberal and Labor party policies that are on the table. Professor Nicholas Stern wrote the Stern Review in the United Kingdom in 2006. What a prescient document it was. He said recently:

Economic assessments of the climate crisis grossly undervalue the lives of young people and future generations.

Economists have failed to take account of the 'immense risks and potential loss of life' that will occur as a result of the climate crisis.

The economics profession had, he said:

Misunderstood the basics of 'discounting', the way in which economic models value future assets and lives compared with their value today.

It means, he said:

Economists have grossly undervalued the lives of young people and future generations, who are most at threat from the devastating impacts of climate change.

Discounting has been applied in such a way that it effectively discriminates by date of birth.

The Stern Review was criticised in 2006 for exaggerating the risks of the climate crisis. He said:

The idea that I was alarmist is just laughable in retrospect. We underestimated the dangers. The costs of inaction were very worrying 15 years ago - they are immensely worrying now.

Scientists, the evidence and the truth that they reveal to us have been continually dismissed, ridiculed, derided, comprehensively ignored by the Labor and Liberal parties. They have taken none of the meaningful action that has been pointed out to them time and again. They refuse to do it today.

It is only the Greens who have ever taken a science-based approach to targets for climate change. It is only the Greens who negotiated the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the \$10 billion to funding incentives in the solar renewables' uptake. It is only the Greens that pushed for the Climate Change Authority, which was the federal statutory authority, to feed advice to parliament to drive a carbon price, to find a third way as a circuit breaker when the Labor and Liberal parties refused to come to their senses. The Greens chose scientists for that commission. When the Labor Party put up a bunch of lobby inside hacks, it was the Greens who made sure that Professor Will Steffen and Ross Garnaut were on that committee.

The Clean Energy Finance Commission, in the first year, cut 10 million tonnes of carbon. We would have, at this point in time, have cut 256 million tonnes of carbons if the Liberals, under Tony Abbott, had not cut the price on carbon. If we had kept the price on pollution that the Greens negotiated when we were in the federal government, at this point in time we would have met the Liberals so-called 2030 target now. That target would have been met today and we would have had more reliable and clean energy by 2020; we would have tariffs put on us. I want to table these documents that I have given to members.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Has the member circulated the documents?

Dr WOODRUFF - I have. I did that two weeks ago.

Leave granted.

Time expired.

Conduct of Members

[8.42 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise, after what has been said tonight, to apologise for what has occurred. As you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, we were a little bit late - I think Mr O'Byrne, Ms Ogilvie and Mrs Petrusma were at the fire briefing. We were heading up the stairs. I did not notice the cameras and Ms O'Connor until I was half way up the stairs. I did not think that we were overly loud. Accusing us of laughing at what was going on at that media speech, to be quite honest with you, I did not even know what was being said at that media speech.

I want to clear up the record up in regard to that. If I have caused offence with what I did, I apologise. It was not meant to be offensive. We were heading to the fire briefing. It had nothing to do with the Greens. Nothing to do with what was being said. I do not even know what was said at that media event.

I want to clear the record and clear my name because of what I have been accused of. Thank you.

Clarence Plains Community Awards

[8.43 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a more positive note to talk about the Clarence Plains Community Awards, which was a wonderful night of celebration held in Clarence Plains last Thursday night, 4 November. It was a wonderful event. One Community Together is an amazing organisation. It is a collective of community groups and not-for-profits supported by the Clarence City Council. Its initiative is to bring people together in a community that is full of heart, is full of passion and that looks out for each other.

Part of its genesis is to try to bring two communities together. The South Arm Highway intersects Rokeby, Clarendon Vale and Oak Downs and that community. It was a good idea from a number of community groups to try to form an organisation that will bring that community together and celebrate what is and continues to be great about that community.

In the annual awards - we had a bit of break for COVID-19 - it was great to come back into the room and celebrate community spirit and community collaboration and acknowledge individuals and groups that do so much to make their community better.

One of the comments that they have in the pamphlet that was circulated acknowledging the nominees and the winners is pretty telling. It says:

We believe that this community is made up of incredibly strong, kind, passionate people, all playing their part to contribute to a community that feels safe. It is full of life, it is hopeful, positive and strong and we hope that you do too.

It was a very generous spirit in the room on the awards. There are a number of award categories: Outstanding Community Project or Program, Community Award for a Business or Club, a Young Leader Award, Prime Mover Award, Kindness Award, Community Volunteer of the Year and One Community Together Award. All of the nominees I think were winners on the night. I know other members of Franklin were there and shared in that celebration.

It is magnificent. I will not talk about the winners because they are all winners but I will acknowledge the nominees: Clarence City Council Youth Services, Grace Youth, Clarendon Vale Primary School Garden Club, the Growers and Crafters Market, 26TEN Adult Literacy Program, Rokeby IGA, Ian Dixon, Gary French, Lorraine Redway, Deidre Ayers, Deb Savage, Clare Porthouse, Deb Austin, Jennifer Dare, Jenny MacIntosh, Mark Morrison, Michael Kavanagh, Roxanne McIntyre, Mel Barwick, Finnian Danger, Marie Crick, Peter Francis, Gaye Edmunds, Nayton Martelli, Jasmin Woodleigh and Cianna Fitzpatrick.

It is a wonderful organisation doing wonderful things. Thank you to all those community members who stood up and made a difference for themselves and the community.

Conduct of Members

[8.47 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel moved to say a few words tonight after what has been said in this place, I think somewhat inappropriately.

Dr Woodruff - Be careful what you say.

Ms OGILVIE - I do not need your assistance, thank you very much.

I want to report on teamwork and what a great team it is that I have joined and how much I respect you with whom I share offices as you go about your business with intelligence, with care, with concern. He is about policy and not people and he is a good man.

Dr Woodruff - That is grotesque grovelling and it is so beneath you.

Ms OGILVIE - Are you finished? Thank you. You have a beautiful family; we had dinner with them tonight. It is very unfair to come into this place on adjournment and seek to smear people.

Dr Woodruff - Read Twitter.

Ms OGILVIE - It is not okay. We have heard the response.

Dr Woodruff - Go and check the facts, Ms Ogilvie, so you know what you are talking about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Ms OGILVIE - My report is this: I like my new team. I think you are a good guy. I think there is behaviour in this House that we have to meet the standard of. I think we are losing a bit of that. I am now heading into what will be my eighth or ninth year in this place. I have seen changes here and not all of them are good. We all need to reflect on that.

Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Inveresk Site - 20th Anniversary UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy - Launceston

[8.49 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a proud member of the Launceston community. This evening I rise to speak about the twentieth anniversary, which is occurring next week, of the opening of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery at the Launceston Rail Workshops which took place 20 years ago on 23 November 2001.

My fellow member for Bass, Ms O'Byrne, who, unfortunately, is not in the Chamber this evening but is in here with us, attended with me on that day, and it was a very special moment for the Launceston community.

At the time I was a relatively new alderman at Launceston City Council. I place on the record the incredible amount of work and passion that the late Launceston mayor, John Lees, had for this project, together with the director of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery at the time, Chris Tassell. They were so dedicated to the project of bringing to life an exceptionally iconic, unique and important part of Launceston's history.

So many City of Launceston employees worked hard to make this possible. In a word, it was really visionary. To see an abandoned site - and this site actually included all this incredible tooling and copper pipework; metres and metres of incredible assets that had been abandoned for years and was brought back to life and is now both nationally and internationally significant. The workshops themselves are extraordinary.

That vision included the ongoing development of the area as a place of learning, a place of culture, and a place of recreation. Thousands of apprentices were taught a trade in the workshops there, and that has now grown to also include TAFE, the University of Tasmania, and, most recently, the fabulous Big Picture School.

This commitment was driven by federal and state and local governments across that time and it has evolved into a place where we celebrate, come together, and continue our deep learning, not only of our own city and our history, but of the role that this centre played in the history of Tasmania and Australia.

I have always admired that it was the outcome of efforts of governments of all different political persuasions, both at the state and federal level, and it has ensured that the wonderful Launceston railway workshops remain a point of pride for the Launceston community.

Tonight, I thank the staff of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the employees of the Launceston City Council and the broader Launceston community who have worked over the past 20 years to ensure that these buildings remain preserved, that the collections remain cared for, and the Launceston community can engage with and understand our past. The railway workshops are a representation of Launceston at its best. It represents innovation, creativity and resilience.

Talking about Launceston and its creativity, innovation and persistence, I also rise to celebrate that it has today the City of Launceston now holds the declaration of a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. This has been a project that many in our community have worked for over a number of years.

It has seen persistence, determination and passion. It has seen hard work and many, many hours of pledging and pitching and bringing together our community, as well as joy - joy that will be celebrated tomorrow night by many of the participants that have come together to secure this designation. There are few cities around the world that enjoy UNESCO designations, and I understand this will now be the third in Tasmania. It is rare for a state of our size, with our population, to have such significant designations.

Often, the word 'gastronomy' brings to mind ideas of excellence or eliteness or top-class restaurants, Michelin-star restaurants, but for the City of Launceston, for our community, the work that we have done to underpin and bring about this designation, it is about food security, and food access. It is about ensuring that young people and families in our community understand what it can take to come together and connect around food, to develop and grow around food, to participate in the process of planting and harvesting and cooking food. Then it also celebrates and seeks to raise an understanding and education in what can then be done if you want to have a career in food - whether that be a career in hospitality, in service, or in tourism, whether it be a career as a chef.

It underpins and supports the great work of Ferment Tasmania and what they are going to do - which, along with its designation, will be game-changing for not only Launceston and the Tamar Valley, but for the entire northern region and across the state.

We will connect with other cities across the world that also have this designation. It will bring people's focus from across the world to what we do that is really special in Launceston and Tasmania. Equally, it will share across the world some of the things we do that are unique about value-adding to our produce, supporting and understanding the great producers and farmers and people who grow and provide our great natural assets that we can celebrate and put on a plate, and share and inspire people, not only locally but across the world.

Today is a great day of celebration to recognise the 20th anniversary of bringing to life the railway workshops at the QVMAG. It is also to say to everybody who worked so hard to build a program that with this designation will mean all the great things that happen in Launceston and northern Tasmania will be celebrated for years to come here and across the world.

National Rental Affordability Scheme - Redwood Village, Kingston

[8.55 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk about some residents in my community at Redwood Village in Kingston who are under extreme stress because of the end of the National Rental Affordability Scheme and the impact it is having on them and their families.

This group of people at Redwood Village in Kingston approached former member, Alison Standen, in February 2021 to seek support for the dire housing insecurity they were faced with at the time. These residents of 11 units have been happily living with the support of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), which provides incentives to housing providers which then rent properties out for at least 20 per cent below market rates.

At the end of NRAS in Tasmania we saw around 130 exits from NRAS in Tasmania in 2020, 300 exits in 2021-22, 300 in 2024, nearly 600 in 2026. Nationally 2184 homes will leave NRAS this year. This will mean that many renters will either be slugged with higher rents or have to compete for homes in the open market. We know that that is really tough for people at the moment.

The NRAS program was started in 2008 under the federal Labor government with a goal of boosting affordable rental properties in Australia. This program is coming to an end and is

having an impact on Tasmanians at the moment. These tenants will face highly competitive and challenging private rental market conditions where the rents have surged in recent years. We are all aware of that issue.

To achieve or maintain housing stability in this environment I believe they will need some assistance and support because of the condition of the market. In Kingston, the market rental value for a similar unit to these 11 units is likely to be in the vicinity of about \$500 per week. This is close to the weekly amount received on the aged pension. For the residents I am talking to, that is their only source of income. If these people want to continue their way of life in their current housing, it would take the entirety of their aged pension to make ends meet.

These residents are faced with uncertainty when their current arrangements finish on the 30 June 2022. These are people who have worked hard their whole life. They are pensioners and they deserve the respect of certainty and support for their housing needs given that they have been outstanding tenants of Redwood Village for such a long time. This group of people has come to me collectively and to Alison Standen before me as a community who have been neighbours, who have got to know each other, become family and are now faced with this uncertainty. They are now also faced with the uncertainty of the housing waiting list or of looking for a private market rental. These are just 11 households of hundreds or thousands of Tasmanians who are facing housing uncertainty.

I will continue to work with them and housing providers to try to find a solution. It is just one example of the housing crisis facing so many Tasmanians at the moment.

The House adjourned at 9 p.m.