



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 12 March 2025

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 12 March 2025

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

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Question Time - Redirecting Questions

[10.01 a.m.]

The SPEAKER - Honourable members, the principal purpose of Question Time is for the House to elicit answers from members of the executive in relation to matters for which they have responsibility. My advice, take or leave it, is that that means your questions should be tight and the answers should be relevant.

After some of the incidents yesterday, it is in keeping with the practice of the House that any minister, including the Premier, may refer a question without notice to a ministerial colleague if, in their opinion, their colleague is better placed to answer such a question for the benefit of the House.

Two conditions apply. First, that the minister to whom the question is redirected has responsibility for the subject matter of the question. Second, that the minister to whom the question was first directed has not commenced a substantive answer to the question. That is, the question must be immediately redirected. There is a certain amount of latitude historically for the Premier. That latitude does not exist for any other minister. You either answer the question or you defer it straight away.

QUESTIONS

Energy Assets - Proposal for Privatisation

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.02 a.m.]

Yesterday you were once again unable to name a single example from anywhere in Australia where you believe privatising energy assets had been successful. That is because it has been a disaster every single time. When the Liberals privatised transmission infrastructure in New South Wales via a long-term lease, they spent \$74 million on consultants alone. They also did long-term damage to the state's finances - as outlined in a report they commissioned themselves - by selling off assets that generated billions of dollars in revenue for schools and hospitals. Is the reason you are unable to name a single example of a successful energy sell off because there is not one?

Mr Barnett - Sixty-five per cent under you.

The SPEAKER - Order, Deputy Premier. You are not answering the question. The Premier is. He can refer to you if you would like.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I implore the member to be very reasoned and measured in the conversation about asset sales. There are those GBEs that are best in government hands for better return and delivery of services to the Tasmanian people, and those assets that we are best to have in private hands to continue and build on better service delivery, but also invest in a future fund.

The important matter here is that we are the government with a plan, and the party with a plan: reducing red tape and regulation, right-sizing the state service, and reforming our GBEs. The so-called plan of those opposite and Mr Winter is to rack up fees and charges within the GBEs to maximise profits which will cause pain to the Tasmanian people.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on both sides, the Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You are all scare and no solution. It is ironic that the member would ask me this question and be so forthright in his views. I mentioned the Labor heroes yesterday. I will not go through them all again. One of those was Paul Keating, the hero of Mr Winter. Mr Winter has previously said that politicians are inevitably guilty of taking few risks, shirking difficult decisions and, as a consequence, upsetting very few. There is little meaningful policy debate -

The SPEAKER - Premier, I will draw you to the question for the final minute.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is what Mr Winter said about leadership, which is exactly what we are displaying on this side of the House -

Ms Finlay - Cannot answer a simple question.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I take Mr Winter's question very seriously.

Mr Winter - Well, answer it then. Have a go.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Okay, I will have a go.

Mr Winter - All right, name one.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have looked at a few eminent Tasmanians and what they might have said about these particular matters.

Mr Winter - You still cannot answer it. You have had a week to figure this out.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition, you can take a point of order if you wish.

Mr ROCKLIFF - One eminent Tasmanian said if you look at the research in Victoria where electricity assets are privatised, they pay less for electricity and that means every single mum and dad, business and home pays less.

Mr Ellis - Who said that?

The SPEAKER - I do not think you really want to know the answer to that, Mr Ellis.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not sure if the eminent Tasmanian - I am overdoing it a bit, but the eminent Tasmanian was Dean Winter.

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Who said that? It was Dean Winter on ABC in 2015. I have done a bit of research and you have been found out.

Mr Ellis - Uh oh.

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired. Mr Ellis, there are no questions from the government benches any more, so interjections for such questions will cease.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - The question to the Premier was: is the reason you are unable to name a single example of an energy company sell-off working is because one does not exist?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I will call the Premier, and members on my right will be silent so the Premier can be heard.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can see you. You exist. You are the one who was so forthright in your views about electricity assets being privatised before. It may well be the reason why, it is hardly a surprise, the union movement was worried about you being a secret supporter of privatisation. Back in 2021, when Mr Winter won Labor Party preselection for Franklin -

The SPEAKER - Premier, I draw you to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, I am being drawn to it right now.

The SPEAKER - Looking forward to an answer.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The *Mercury* reported, "Those opposed to Mr Winter's nomination believe that he has supported -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my left can raise a point of order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - some anti-union views on penalty rates and privatisation.' And privatisation -

Members interjecting.

Ms DOW - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The Premier has gone nowhere near answering the question. It is not relevant to the question. It is not relevant at all.

The SPEAKER - The member raising the point of order does not get to argue the case. She only gets to mention it. The Premier's time has expired. However, I note that if I draw you to the question, Premier, I expect you to do that, otherwise you will have to resume your seat. Also, members on both sides will calm down. Thank you. I will call the -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER I am sorry, members on my right, I just asked you to calm down. I know it is Wednesday, but let us just get through question time.

Energy Assets - Proposal for Privatisation

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.08 a.m.]

Privatisation of energy assets has been a disaster every time it has been tried interstate. In Victoria, prices soared by 170 per cent, nearly 15,000 people lost their jobs and the new operators caused a bushfire because they failed to properly inspect the network. In South Australia, prices rose to be the highest in the nation and blackouts increased by more than 30 per cent. In New South Wales, \$74 million was wasted on consultants and advertising, lawyers and marketing, and the state lost billions of dollars in revenue for schools and hospitals.

Mr Ellis - Why did you support it?

The SPEAKER - Order, Mr Ellis.

Mr WINTER - Let us not forget you nearly blacked out Tasmania in 2016, which cost Tasmania \$180 million. The fact is that privatisation of energy assets has always led to higher prices and less money for schools and hospitals, so why on earth are you doing it?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It sounds a bit like a question the union movement might have been asking when it came to you standing for preselection in 2021, when you were a privatisation advocate. The question for the Chamber and Tasmania is: will the real Dean Winter stand up? He says one thing one minute, and another thing the next.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. If I can correct the House, the question before the House is the one that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition and which the Premier must now address. As entertaining as we may be finding the answer, we are moving on to the actual answer.

Ms Dow - They are easily entertained on that side.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is important in the context -

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader, I have just called the Premier. I will warn you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - of the question and you have to verify everything that is put forward in a question from Mr Winter, as we had to do yesterday -

Mr Winter - With which question?

Mr ROCKLIFF - when you made all sorts of claims about dividends -

Mr Winter - They were all correct. You were wrong.

Mr ROCKLIFF - when you were proven to be misleading the House.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on both sides.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We know that Paul Keating is your hero and, in some circumstances, for good reason, given the Paul Keating reforms in the 1980s.

Mr WINTER - Honourable Speaker, point of order. This is an important question about the Premier's plans for privatisation. I will ask you to draw him back to the question, which is about his plans for privatisation of energy assets.

The SPEAKER - I will call the Premier to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When it comes to putting privatisation on the agenda, I am being open and transparent -

Mr Winter - Answer the question then.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Unlike the Opposition Leader who, when he was speaking of the lack of will and politicians taking few risks, shirking difficult decisions as a consequence, and little meaningful policy debate, we have policy debate on the agenda. -

Members interjecting.

Ms BROWN - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. He is going nowhere near the question. I ask you to draw him to the question.

Mr Ellis - Nice try.

The SPEAKER - I will make a decision whether it was a nice try or not, Mr Ellis. Premier, I will draw you to the question. Relevance stands.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Obviously, members opposite went nowhere near research of what their leader had previously said. You named a few in your comments: water and sewerage centralisation, voluntary public service redundancy measures, electricity competition and electricity asset sales. That was on your agenda, so my plea to the member -

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired. I remind him that Question Time is for questions to the executive.

Political Donations - Salmon Companies

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.12 a.m.]

Last night, this parliament expressed its will on political donations. That will is to have full transparency. In the spirit of this, and given the diabolical state of the marine environment, will you come clean and tell Tasmanians the price for your secret deals? From the last five years of undisclosed Liberal Party donations, how much of the \$13 million that went to the Liberals came from big salmon companies? If you are going to try your tired old 'that is a matter for the Liberal Party' response, will you take this question on notice, pick up the phone to Sam McQuestin, and advise the House by the end of the day?

The SPEAKER - I will call the Premier to the question, noting that he can answer it as much as it is in the public interest but, obviously, internal party processes are matters for each of the parties in this parliament to deal with separately.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Honourable Speaker, I reject the premise of the member's question. You have a little bit more transparency to put on the table as well because you hide all your donations through the Australian Greens, if my memory serves me correctly.

Members interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, honourable Speaker, I ask the Premier to withdraw that. That is a false statement. We do not hide anything. The Tasmanian Greens are fully transparent about our donations.

The SPEAKER - Before the Premier responds, there are two ways of dealing with this. If you have been personally offended - and you need to demonstrate how you are personally offended - I can ask the Premier to withdraw. Otherwise, if you feel the Premier has made a misleading statement, I call on the Premier to be aware of his obligations there. You have substantive processes of the House you may take. I call the Premier to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Not to mention the \$1.6 million donation to the Tasmanian Greens to shut down the forest industry, effectively, which is shameful. I reject the premise of the

question. Donations are a matter for the Liberal Party organisation, but we will always comply with the law.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Dr WOODRUFF - I asked the Premier not to use his tired old response and say it was a matter for the Liberal Party. On behalf of Tasmanians who are demanding transparency, pick up the phone to your Liberal Party president and ask him how much of that \$13 million went from the big salmon corporates to your party.

The SPEAKER - It was the original question. I fear that when I allow the supplementary, you will receive the same answer, but I will call the Premier to that. The only question was whether you would make direct contact.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Woodruff, all political parties should abide by the law and the Liberal Party will and is abiding by the law. Should the laws change then we will continue to abide by the law in terms of donation transparency.

Dr Woodruff - How much have you been paid for the damage that happened to the marine environment?

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens. If people interject on you, you are rightly offended.

Pork-Barrelling

Mr JENNER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.16 a.m.]

In 2022, the Integrity Commission warned that many election commitments could amount to indirect electoral bribery and called for greater transparency. Last year, Saul Eslake's report on the state's finances linked Tasmania's dire financial position to unfunded electoral promises. Why has your government taken no action to curb pork-barrelling?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank Mr Jenner for the question. It would be a sad day in Tasmania where people standing for election cannot reflect the views and wishes of their community. The member for the Greens in Clark, Ms Burnet, yesterday, I believe, and I will stand to be corrected, asked a question on notice about netball courts and upgrades and the like. Every member of parliament worth their salt should be out and about their communities and advocating for their communities, as I have done in seven elections. In 2002, 2006 and 2010 we made particular promises along with our party should we be successful in government to support community projects. The Liberal Party was not successful in all those elections, therefore those commitments did not come to fruition. In 2014, 2018, 2021 and 2025, we made

commitments, local projects, which we will honour as election commitments and that is all that is: members of parliament reflecting the wishes of their community.

Mr Winter made commitments about surf clubs and the like, which I put great interest in as well in terms of local commitments - could not help himself. I saw a Facebook post every five minutes about new stuff coming out every five seconds about trying to second guess what we might be saying ourselves and then putting out something else and he did not always get it right.

Mr Ellis - He promised \$4 billion. Absolute shambles.

The SPEAKER - Order, minister Ellis. Stop helping, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I understand where the member is coming from, but in full transparency, we outlined our commitments at the last election. Admittedly, the Labor Party outlined their commitments and they are spending three times as much as the Liberal Party, which makes a mockery of what they speak of today when it comes to budget management and pathway to surplus.

Ms Brown - You cannot manage a budget, and you cannot manage a state.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Nonetheless, the important thing is that members of parliament who make commitments to local individual organisations reflect the needs of the community. Why should a local member of parliament not support a local bowls club which encourages active participation from older Tasmanians and support upgrades of artificial turf? Of course, all demographics love their bowls. Why should I not provide support, if that is needed? That is pretty basic stuff, is it not, MPs?

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

Supplementary Question

Mr JENNER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr JENNER - I appreciate what the Premier is saying and it is laudable, but I was referring to Saul Eslake's report regarding the issues that we have now with our finances. Is it not time now to stop the unfunded electoral promises? That is why I am asking you.

The SPEAKER - I believe it is a separate question to the one that you were originally asked.

Mr JENNER - I thought it was part of the same one being it to do with the finances.

The SPEAKER - The actual question was: why have you not taken any action to curb pork barrelling? The Premier probably addressed that one. I will rule that one out of order. Feel free to ask again at another time.

**Government Business Enterprises - Proposal for Privatisation -
Submissions to Reform Draft Plan**

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.20 a.m.]

Two of the submissions to your Government Business Governance Reform Draft Plan have been kept secret. Can you confirm whether either or both of those submissions are from private sector companies expressing interest in purchasing Tasmanian energy assets?

Mr Abetz - I thought it was from you.

The SPEAKER - Order. The Leader of the House knows far better than that behaviour.

Mr Abetz - I could not help myself, Speaker.

The SPEAKER - Do try to help yourself to being a bit more silent.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I will seek some advice about that matter. It may have been from you, given your previous views. You said yourself, 'Deficits are forecast throughout the Estimates with no realistic likelihood of delivering an operating surplus unless wholesale reform is undertaken'. This is back in 2014. 'We can only hope the Budget contains a plan to fix it'. What you said back in 2014 is admirable. You also said back then, 'ordinary leaders pandered to public opinion. The best leaders change it. They can reform because they have a vision'. Unfortunately, your vision back then has turned into venom and there is actually no vision at all.

I stand to be corrected, but this is an important reform process when it comes to GBE reform for very good reasons as we have discussed in this place at length. I do not know if the Labor Party has put in a submission. Have you?

The SPEAKER - Premier, you do not get to ask questions across the room.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is a reasonable question for someone who gets up and points to everyone else's submission except the absence of their own. I will be very interested in the Labor Party detailing their submission.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - In relation to the Premier's answer about seeking advice, first, is the Premier committing to come back on notice? Following on from his answer, were energy retailers First Energy or Solstice Energy behind either of those secret submissions?

The SPEAKER - The Premier probably should have resumed his seat after taking the question on notice. He did take the question on notice and then chose to expand, so therefore I will allow the supplementary.

Mr Winter - It is on notice?

The SPEAKER - I am just confirming that question has been put on notice.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will seek advice is what I agreed to do and seek advice I will. I will make the point that the Labor Party - if you are interested in looking at reform and addressing some of the challenges, given that you are the alternative government, I expect to see a submission from the Labor Party. I mean really?

Mr Winter - We put a policy out on this. You copied it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have not had an alternative budget in 10 years.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition, member for Franklin, this will stop. Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Winter - Then I wrote to you about it.

The SPEAKER - Leader of the Opposition, I do not want to have to warn you. Latitude is given to leaders and you are fast trying my patience. Premier, to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The reason why we have put forward a number of suggestions about red tape reduction, addressing our GBEs, and the right-size public service is that we are a government that wants to continue the momentum of growing our economy.

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

Independent Red Tape Auditor - Role

Mrs BESWICK question to TREASURER, Mr BARNETT

[10.25 a.m.]

You are sending out mixed messages when it comes to your hiring freeze. You say non-essential roles are not being replaced, yet this morning you have announced a brand new position: the independent red tape auditor. Given we already have a Red Tape Reduction Coordinator who produces an annual Tasmanian Red Tape Audit Report, which the Premier pointed out to us yesterday, can you please explain why this new position is essential?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the very important question. It is much appreciated to have a question on the importance of red tape reduction. This question is on the back of the fact that overnight we have been advised that this state has topped the charts for all

of Australia in terms of business confidence. This is good news because it says we are on the right track. We have a plan, we have policies, and businesses are backing it in.

Your question is all about red tape reduction, which is to support small business. We are backing business. We are backing industry. We are growing the economy. We will not relent. The Premier has announced significant, in fact, very substantial reforms to slash small business, slash red tape -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. Everyone calm down. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr BARNETT - That is what Labor would do - 10,000 thousand jobs were lost. We went into recession under a Labor-Greens government. Nobody will forget that.

I have already announced on behalf of the government that we will have an audit of every single state and local government licence, permit and approval on the basis of ensuring that if they are redundant, if they are not necessary, if they can be consolidated all into one, if they can be digitised - anything we can do to help small business. We have nearly 40,000 small businesses, employing 100,000 Tasmanians -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my left. Mrs Beswick asked the question. She deserves an answer.

Mr BARNETT - We are behind them. We are getting on with the job of backing them in 100 per cent. Yes, we are pleased and proud, as the Premier said yesterday of the red tape reduction taskforce. I congratulate the work of the Red Tape Reduction Coordinator and his work. I thank him.

As the Premier made reference to yesterday, a report was delivered for the 10 years from 2014 to 2024. We appreciate that. We will not relent on doing whatever we can to support business, particularly small business. Remember that more than 80 per cent of all small businesses are micro businesses, with five employees or fewer. It is really hard. When I was with Dr Amy O'Brien this morning from O'Skin Medical, she made it very clear you can save absolutely hundreds of hours in effort to get the job done. It is an onerous task to set up a business. We want to make it easier. Yes, we have had improvements. We want to continually improve and back business all the way.

Vacancy Control - Maternity Leave

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.29 a.m.]

As the budget situation has deteriorated, your government has begun to trot out well-worn, break-glass-in-emergency type initiatives like efficiency dividends, right-sizing the public service and vacancy control. It has been reported to me that in a number of instances, public sector managers have been instructed not to fill vacancies created by maternity leave.

This is not vacancy control. These positions are not vacant. This is paid and recognised leave. This indiscriminate measure will lead to perverse outcomes on service delivery and those who deliver and benefit from those services. Surely you cannot support this kind of stupidity. Will you immediately communicate with all departments to ensure that this does not continue?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We have outlined very clearly with our actions and attention, when it comes to right-sized public service, we can ensure better service delivery with a sustainable investment when it comes to our public service.

I am not aware of the exact example that you have provided. I will check my records, seek some clarity and get back to the member on that example.

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary.

Mr O'BYRNE - I appreciate the Premier's willingness to investigate it, but even if you come back and say, yes, that has happened, that does not answer my question. The question is: this is an outrageous measure. It is not vacancy control. Will you rule out not filling maternity leave in the public sector?

The SPEAKER - Premier, the original question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the member for the supplementary question. From my point of view, that would not be the intent of the actions we have outlined. In saying that, I will seek information for you and provide some clarity on the circumstances of which you speak.

The SPEAKER - Can I clarify, Premier, that you will be updating the House on the answer to the question, or are you intending to update only the member?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will update the House. It is an important question.

The SPEAKER - Once I have it, can I confirm when you said you would take advice on the other question, that that has been taken on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, of course.

The SPEAKER - I just wanted to clarify. When the Leader of the House comes back this evening, it is always good if I know what he is going to be reporting on.

Land Titles Office - Proposal for Privatisation

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.31 a.m.]

In your state of the state speech last week, you announced your plan to sell off our GBEs. The only non-GBE you flagged was the Land Titles Office. This is oddly specific. Has anyone approached you or your government to discuss acquiring the Land Titles Office which sits within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment? Further, have you or your government been taking unsolicited bids for other parts of the State Service or statutory offices?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. There are examples around other states of Australia of the equivalent land titles offices having been offloaded.

Dr Woodruff - That has been a disaster for people.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is your interpretation. As to your question about unsolicited bids, I am not aware of any. However, why would we not look at all opportunities when it comes to sales, better service delivery and investing proceeds into a future fund?

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Dr WOODRUFF - There were two parts of my question. The first part was very specific in relation to the Land Titles Office. Has anyone approached the Premier or his government to discuss acquiring the Land Titles Office? The second part related to any other parts of the State Service or statutory offices. Could the Premier please get some advice and come back to provide that to us today?

The SPEAKER - Your question was specifically about unsolicited bids.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, it was about acquiring the Land Titles Office. Yes, approached, that is right. Unsolicited, correct.

The SPEAKER - The Premier referred to examples in other states, but could the Premier address whether he has had direct requests?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Again, I will have to point to other states where more recently land titles operations have been privatised. My advice is that we have seen New South Wales and Victoria privatise their land titles and registry offices, for \$2.6 billion in the case of New South Wales in 2017 and \$2.86 billion in 2018 in Victoria.

Dr WOODRUFF - Honourable Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. I understand the purpose of supplementary questions is to get a simple answer to a question. That is not going anywhere near the question, talking about what is happening in other states.

The SPEAKER - Your point of order is relevance, thank you. You do not need to make the argument. Premier, I draw you to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - South Australia did the same in 2017, netting \$1.6 billion. I am not aware of any unsolicited bids but we are looking at every opportunity for privatisation.

Dr Woodruff - Will you take advice on whether that has happened, Premier, and bring it -

The SPEAKER - The member has asked her question. She cannot continue to ask questions through interjection. Premier, I draw you -

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can seek some advice.

The SPEAKER - Actually, I ask you to resume your seat. The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

Dr Woodruff - Honourable Speaker, for clarification, the Premier will seek advice. Will he provide that to the House today?

The SPEAKER - There is no such thing as a point of clarification. The Premier said he will seek advice, and I confirm that is on notice.

Tamar River Bridge - Construction Prospects

Mrs PENTLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.35 a.m.]

Northern Tasmanian residents are increasingly frustrated by the political point-scoring over a new Tamar River bridge between Riverside and Newnham. When there is an election on, both sides of politics make promises and partial funding commitments in a bid to win votes, but the project appears a long way from getting off the ground. How many more empty election promises do voters have to hear before it is actually built? It took decades of politicking before the Bridgewater bridge became a reality. Should Bass residents expect an equally frustrating wait?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. You referenced the Bridgewater bridge, which took a couple of decades before our government had the courage to move forward, put it on the agenda and seek a commitment from the federal government. In this case, the Coalition first committed, if my memory serves me correctly, to the Bridgewater bridge and the Labor federal government have jumped on that commitment as well. We are doing that in partnership and it is fantastic to see that come to fruition.

I am advised that our government has allocated \$136 million towards the construction of a second Tamar River crossing, between the West Tamar Highway and the East Tamar Highway north of University Way in Newnham. Our commitment is included in our budget

papers, and is based on the long-accepted 80:20 proportional funding agreed by the former federal Coalition government for the Bridgewater bridge and the Midland Highway 10-Year Action Plan.

I am advised that the government's engineering consultants have finalised their work, including an extra alignment option, and the business case was submitted to Infrastructure Australia in February last year. This was a significant body of work that looked at a number of options for alignments, particularly on the West Tamar side.

I hope that we do not go through all the politicking, as you put forward. It is still very much part of our agenda. We look forward to a positive contribution from the federal government in the not-too-distant future.

Momentum and Aurora Energy - Proposal for Privatisation

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.38 a.m.]

In an earlier answer you effectively said that you were not aware of any attempts to purchase the Land Titles Office. However, you have not given the same commitments around energy assets. Were either of the secret submissions made to the GBE reform draft plan process expressing interest in the acquisition of Momentum or Aurora Energy? Are these assets also on the table for privatisation?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my right.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We are going on a reform process where we have the GBE reform out there for community discussion. We have put asset sales on the table for public discussion, in my view, courageously, and given your previous comments, you would agree. Why would we not, because we need to be able -

Mr Winter - They have been paying for schools and hospitals for a couple of decades.

The SPEAKER - Leader of the Opposition, you have opportunities. Leave the House to deal with the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You talk about funding schools and hospitals. You completely misled the Tasmanian people yesterday when you claimed \$1.4 billion of dividends, most of which would be Hydro, as I understand it -

Mr Winter - Are you going to say that again?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will go back and check the words you said, but I do know that you said this, 'Why does Tasmania own an insurer? What is the strategic reason for owning that particular business?'. You go on to say, 'We are not in the space anymore, at least during this

election cycle, where we can actually talk about what assets Tasmania should own. There is a whole bunch of areas - including Entura - but there was also, um, for example, um, um, um, TasNetworks', that you put on the agenda as well.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my right, so I can hear the Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is no wonder the left-wing unions and the left of the Labor Party were suspect about you. You snuck through the preselection - and good on you - despite the scepticism of the union movement and the left-wing of the Labor Party, Ms Haddad's faction. Is that right?

Members interjecting.

Ms Haddad - Just me? All on my own? There are a few more of us. I am not on my own.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my left. The Premier will be silent.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, honourable Speaker. It was a really quick question. It was whether there had been an interest in the acquisition of Momentum or Aurora Energy.

Mr Ellis - I thought you wanted interest in them?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members on my right, you will not interject when there are points of order. The Leader of Government Business and the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management are warned.

Premier, I will draw you for 15 seconds to the actual question that was asked. Otherwise, I am sure we are hearing a supplementary, so I can draw you to it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not unaware of the actual interest, as you talk about. I would welcome interest. That is what we want. We want interest. We want to be able to put the proceeds of any sale into a future fund.

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

Minister Ellis, you have been warned. Would you like to be the only minister thrown out while I am Speaker? It is entirely up to you.

Government Business Enterprises - Proposal for Privatisation - Terms of Reference

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.42 a.m.]

You announced Saul Eslake will conduct a review into our GBEs with a view to selling these community assets. The problem is that you have not outlined the terms of reference to

Mr Eslake or this parliament. Will you publicly release the terms of reference? Will all GBEs and state-owned companies, excluding Hydro, be included in this review? How long will Mr Eslake have to conduct this review?

ANSWER

Good question. We will be outlining a principles-based framework for the work that Mr Eslake will undertake. We will have more to update the Tasmanian people when that is finalised in coming days.

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Ms JOHNSTON - The Premier has outlined the timeline, and it is very vague what that timeline will be. There will be some point in the future where there will be an update. Is it the Premier's intention to have the fire sale in time to bank the money for the 2026-27 budget, or will you just let this budget continue in free fall?

The SPEAKER - I call the Premier to the supplementary question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I hope and expect that we will outline timeframes in the coming days. The last part of the supplementary question, when you describe the budget in free fall - I do not agree with that assessment.

Mr Willie - Your debt is in free fall.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Willie agrees with it because he talks about it all day, but he has no plan. Ms Johnston, you might have a plan. Your plan might be to increase taxes and increase revenue. That might be your plan, but there are other more sustainable -

Ms JOHNSTON - Point of order, Speaker. Is the Premier having these measures in place for the 2026-27 budget? That was part of the question.

The SPEAKER - Relevance is your question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will be very open and transparent about the process of the principles-based framework -

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

Fingal Coal Mine - Cancellation of Lease

Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ

After initially providing the proponent with support, your government has now cancelled the lease for a proposed coal mine near Fingal. The project proponent admitted that he could not raise the money from investors to pay his lease fees because of community opposition to coal in Tasmania. This is the second community win over a new coal proposal, with your government also forced to refuse extending a coal exploration licence in the Midlands.

Tasmanians recognise that the climate is changing due to human activity. They understand that is why we are seeing more extreme weather, more fire, floods, droughts and warming waters. They know that we must reduce emissions, not dig up more coal, which will only ruin our clean green brand. The community has made their views clear. It is time that the government listened. Will you finally enact a ban on new coal mines and exploration in Tasmania?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. How the wheel has turned. It was the former leader of the Greens who advocated for a coal-fired power station in the Fingal Valley in opposition or as a substitute for renewable hydro energy.

Dr Woodruff - Here we are today in a climate crisis.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr ABETZ - Whilst the Greens continually talk about the need for renewable energy, they opposed hydro, and they oppose wind farms.

Dr Woodruff - No we do not. That is not true.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens is warned. Members on my right will be silent.

Mr ABETZ - Which one do you actually support? It is one of those things is it not - that here we have a Greens member in absolute contradiction to the former leader of the Greens, indeed the founder of the Greens, who thought it was a great strategic idea not to have another hydro development, but instead have a coal-fired power station in the Fingal Valley. How the wheel has turned.

Mr Ellis - And she wants to rip up Lake Pedder.

The SPEAKER - Minister Ellis, you are warned again.

Mr ABETZ - What it indicates is that there is no consistency to the Greens approach to energy or indeed, any other method. It is simply negativity writ large. It is, 'No to hydro, we'll have coal instead'.

Mr Bayley - And now your approach, minister?

The SPEAKER - Order, Deputy Leader of the Greens

Mr ABETZ - 'When there is a possibility of coal, we say no to coal. No to old-growth forestry, no to native forestry, no to plantations'.

Ms BADGER - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. It is 2025 and we are in a climate crisis. The question was specifically about whether you will now be banning coal exploration and mining in Tasmania?

The SPEAKER - No explanation necessary other than its relevance. I will draw the minister to the question that was asked.

Mr ABETZ - I was getting around to that. Unlike the Greens, we do not say no to everything. We will examine each and every proposal on its merits and whether or not it will be of benefit to the people of Tasmania and their needs.

Keep this very much in mind. The history of the Australian Greens is to condemn renewable energy in favour of coal-fired energy. That is the Greens legacy. Now, they are saying, 'Well, we do not want coal either'. I suspect if we were to propose candles, you would be objecting to that as well.

Spirit of Tasmania Vessels - Lease Negotiations

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

[10.48 a.m.]

The mess you have made of our new *Spirits* highlights just how expensive your mismanagement of government businesses has become and just how much waste could have been prevented if they were run properly. Months ago, the TT-Line Chair told a parliamentary hearing it was highly unlikely the *Spirits* could be leased because of the substantial risks involved. Despite this clear advice, you spent months and millions of dollars pretending you could lease out new ships, including most recently as a floating refugee camp.

You and the Minister for Transport, Eric Abetz, claimed that you were in active commercial negotiations on numerous occasions and use this as the basis of refusing to answer questions. Can you confirm these active negotiations were actually just with a broker who had no authority from either the British Government, the Scottish Government or the local council to make any such negotiations happen? Are you so incompetent that you essentially were tricked into believing a deal was on the table when it never was?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question, and I will hand over to minister Abetz.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The whole House was reminded this morning that ministers can defer to the appropriate minister.

Mr ABETZ - Honourable Speaker, let us be exceptionally clear here. What the Leader of the Opposition is purporting is that the Premier and I have been misleading the people of Tasmania. That is absolutely and categorically rejected -

Ms Brown - Wool pulled over your eyes.

The SPEAKER - Order. The member for Franklin is warned.

Mr ABETZ - What the Leader of the Opposition would know full well is that the Premier and I do not get on the phone to do these things; that the management and board of the TT-Line engage in these things. What we have had over recent weeks are exceptionally sensitive commercial negotiations.

Mr Winter - They never existed.

Mr ABETZ - For very cheap politics -

Mr Winter - They never existed.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader. If you want the answer, listen.

Mr ABETZ - The leader of the Labor Party was willing to derail those negotiations, which would have cost Tasmanians a lot of money. We, as a government, were not prepared -

Mr Willie - It was not a real proposal.

The SPEAKER - Mr Willie, the member for Clark, is warned.

Mr ABETZ - We were not prepared to engage in that sort of activity. Despite the false allegations being made by the Leader of the Opposition against both the Premier and me, there were genuine negotiations underway by the TT-Line and various parties.

In a debate just recently in this place, I indicated - and I will have to check the record - I think there were about a dozen approaches in relation to the potential of leasing or chartering the vessel *Spirit IV*, keeping in mind that *Spirit V* is still being constructed. When you have the sort of evidence I have provided - that there were over a dozen approaches -

Mr Willie - Approaches, not negotiations.

The SPEAKER - Order, Mr Willie, you have just been warned.

Mr ABETZ - How do you negotiate -

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Leader. Mr Willie, you were warned again. One more time and you are out.

Mr ABETZ - It highlights the ignorance of commercial considerations. Unless there is an approach, how can you enter into negotiations? It is pretty basic. Anybody who has any understanding of the commercial world - and I would have hoped that the shadow treasurer would have had some modicum of understanding in this area, it just highlights his ignorance, and I dare say it explains why we have never received an alternate budget from the shadow treasurer.

However, back to the question. Approaches were received, physical inspections of the vessel occurred, and there will be other information undoubtedly released at an appropriate time.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - The question was not answered. It was specifically: can the minister or the Premier confirm that the government was negotiating with a broker who had no authority from the Scottish, British, or local council to negotiate with the government? He was effectively tricked.

The SPEAKER - You do not need to make an - it is a supplementary, you can actually. I will allow the question.

Mr ABETZ - As the Leader of the Opposition would be fully aware, we appointed a broker - brokers who have an international reputation, unlike the Leader of the Opposition -

Ms Dow - How is our international reputation?

The SPEAKER - The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is warned as well.

Mr ABETZ - that actually has credibility. The besmirching of these brokerage companies by the Leader of the Opposition makes him look small in the eyes of the international community that deals in these things. They will be scratching their heads wondering, 'Who on earth is this alternate premier who has no understanding whatsoever about how these matters take place and how they are pursued?' To laugh at the possibility that Tasmania was not able to avail itself of possibly a \$10 million or \$20 million or more contract is indicative of the leader's mindset, relentless negativity and talking Tasmania down.

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

Health Service - Delays with Glaucoma Check-ups

Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mrs PETRUSMA

[10.54 a.m.]

Yesterday, a person with glaucoma contacted us about a concerning development. They received a letter advising them that the regular six-monthly monitoring of their glaucoma had been stretched out to nine months. On contacting the clinic to ask why, they were told it was due to availability. They say staff told them this is due to the impact of the government's cuts. Proper glaucoma monitoring requires three- to six-monthly appointments, so six months between check-ups is already at the upper limit of safe practice. Stretching monitoring out to nine months places this person at increased risk of blindness.

Is the change to nine month intervals for glaucoma appointments universal? If not, how widely does it apply? Is this what Tasmanians can expect from your government's 'right-sized' health service?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member sincerely for her question. While I am unable to comment on specific patient circumstances, if the member can provide me with more details, I am very happy to investigate the particular concerns raised and get back to the member regarding this specific patient. I thank her for raising the question with me.

Supplementary Question

Ms ROSOL - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you to the minister for responding to that individual's concerns. My question was broader than that. I was asking about whether these interval increases for glaucoma appointments are universal and how widely the increases to time between appointments applies, and does it apply to others as well?

The SPEAKER - I will draw the minister to the original question that was asked.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I do need to look into the specifics of this because I am not sure if it is just this individual patient or the service. I would appreciate the member forwarding me the constituent's concerns so that we can look into this issue more clearly.

The SPEAKER - Can I just clarify -

Mrs PETRUSMA - It might be just an individual so that is why I want to look into this particular case.

The SPEAKER - You cannot require more than that, I am afraid.

Salmon Industry - Social Licence

Mr GARLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.56 a.m.]

In May 2023, your then minister for Primary Industries, minister Palmer conceded that the salmon industry had lost its social licence and things have only got worse for it since then; far worse. Do you believe this industry has a social licence? Yes or no?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this matter which is well-known and on record for many years.

The answer to your question about social licence is, yes, I do believe it does have a social licence for a majority of Tasmanians. A number of Tasmanians, if not all Tasmanians, want to ensure that any industry that involves livestock or fish is regulated and has the highest possible animal welfare standards. I made my point very clear in the House on Tuesday last week about my expectations of the salmon industry and, indeed, I was serious when I said that they are on notice. The social licence that the industry has today is based on continuous improvement of the industry over the last 11 years, including areas of transparency, compliance, monitoring and government strengthening the penalty provisions for non-compliance. I point to marine debris as an example of when we have bolstered the compliance and the penalty regime for that particular matter.

The industry, given the depth of feeling of some in the community, will effectively, as all livestock industries are, is always on notice for continuous improvement and ensuring the highest possible welfare standards and management when it comes to not only animal welfare but also environmental concerns.

Dr Woodruff - It is so far from that.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Rightly, that is the world we live in. That is a good thing because there are many examples, and you would be well across this, Mr Garland, about how far we have come from the 1970s on fish management, for example, wild fish fishery management, abalone licences, and rock lobster and all these matters where there was overfishing, clearly. Because of the lessons we have learned and depleted stocks in those number of areas, we have strengthened provisions around sustainable management of our fishery, just as we have strengthened the provision and transparency when it comes to regulating the salmon industry, for example. I will not repeat what I said yesterday and last week when it comes to the independence of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

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

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - Before calling the next question, we have some year 11 and 12 Legal Studies students from Geneva Christian College. Would that be you guys up there? Hello. Thank you very much for joining us all the way from the Latrobe.

Members - Hear, hear.

Government Business Enterprises - Proposal for Privatisation - Sale Management

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.00 a.m.]

The minister for Transport does not deny that your government, through TT-Line, was tricked into thinking that it was negotiating with the Scottish Government for the lease of *Spirit IV* for Ukrainian refugees, effectively a floating refugee camp. If your government cannot lease a ferry without wasting millions of dollars being tricked by the shipbroker and embarrassing our state, how can you possibly manage the sale of Tasmania's critical assets?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. You have obviously tricked your party room when it comes to your previous stance on asset sales, clearly. Willie-Haddad faction, I am presuming - from the left - I am just wondering if you knew about these previous comments? I notice the question, perhaps you will be asked when you go out there again?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The House will come to order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject the 'tricked' analogy, or whatever the right word is, as part of your question -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and the whole -

The SPEAKER - Member for Clark, you still talking. Premier, are you answering?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, I am. Admittedly, I am sure the fifth, sixth and seventh questions which were already written about GBEs, have been rewritten to TT-Line questions after the first few questions, which is why we get the language such as 'tricked' and all those types of things. We will go back to the -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I do not like the interjections.

Mr ROCKLIFF - principle of the reason why we looked and explored leasing options to maximise the value for the Tasmanian taxpayer. Why would we not do that? Okay, we explored. That did not work out. The ships are coming back to Tasmania to be fitted out and we look forward to celebrating the arrival of *Spirit IV* when it comes.

Back to a previous question about GBE submissions. There were 48 submissions made on the draft plan, Mr Winter. Copies of each submission, apart from two, are published on the Treasury website. The submissions that are not on the Treasury website were marked as confidential by the submitter and their request was respected. The confidential submissions were not from energy businesses or organisations.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - In terms of the answer about the leasing of the ship, last week we heard the minister for Transport saying that the government would be interested in leasing *Spirit V* when it was available. Does the Premier agree with the Minister for Transport's view and is the government really considering going through this process to waste millions of dollars once again?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The reason why we explored *Spirit IV* was the reason that I have just outlined in my answer to your question. When it comes to *Spirit V*, it is extremely unlikely that a lease arrangement will be found.

Mr Winter - Same as it was with *Spirit IV*.

Ms Dow - Talk to the minister about that.

The SPEAKER - The Deputy Leader is warned again. We are so close to the end of this. Can everyone please make a mind to stay in the Chamber?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Unlikely with *Spirit V*. There are reasons for that because my understanding is that the market would want at least two years of leasing arrangements for a viable proposition and so, given the timeframe and the completion of the terminal, wharf 3, under the two year -

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

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - It is entirely up to the House if you would like to finish Question Time.

Mr Rockliff - You said unlikely.

The SPEAKER - Unlikely reached the end of Question Time. I am going to call the member for Clark, Mr Willie. I will remind him that he is sitting on a couple of warnings when he resumes his seat. Just being helpful.

Mr Willie - Your wishes will be respected.

Treasury Building Sale

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.05 a.m.]

Can you confirm your plans to sell the Treasury building have hit a roadblock? Namely, there is no title for the property and rectifying the issue will require the approval of both Houses of parliament. Your budget disaster shows you are not up to running Treasury. Are you so incompetent you cannot even sell it?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Part of our plan is always trying to continue facilitating opportunities for economic growth and why would we not? The Treasury building is part of that. Should someone or an entity purchase the Treasury building, it is an opportunity to utilise that asset to grow the economy.

Speaking of growing the economy, was the NAB business survey not fantastic and notwithstanding the challenges out there in the business community and the effect of higher and longer interest rate rises? It has had a very worrying effect.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. Members can take a point of order, but they can stop interjecting.

Mr BROAD - Point of order, honourable Speaker. The Premier is not being relevant to the question. The question is about the Treasury building title, and he has strayed well and truly off track.

The SPEAKER - I will call the Premier to the original question without interjection or commentary from either sides.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Honourable Speaker, I was talking about opportunity and the member raised the sale of a Treasury building. When you talk about opportunity and confidence and growing the economy, you do look at the survey where Tasmania has skyrocketed, the first in the nation in business confidence tied with Western Australia, and that is backed up by business conditions where Tasmania is ranked second behind Queensland - 11 index points ahead of the national average.

Ms FINLAY - Point of order, honourable Speaker.

The SPEAKER - Premier, I will hear the point of order from the member for Bass, who has been quite well behaved this Question Time.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you, Speaker. Standing Order 45, relevance. It was a very simple question from the shadow treasurer about the title and the capacity to actually sell the building.

The SPEAKER - I will accept the point of order. Premier, that is two points of order on relevance. I am going to have to ask you to address the question or feel free to resume your seat.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The questions from the Labor Party are often laced with negativity.

Ms FINLAY - Point of order, Speaker. If he continues not to answer the question, I am going to continue to call points of order.

The SPEAKER - Actually, you do not get to continually call points of order for that reason, because that moves into the process of disrupting the House. Premier, I have called you to the question. You either address the question or you can resume your seat and wait for the supplementary.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, honourable Speaker. I respect your ruling. Laced in the question was negativity and it went to budget management.

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired. I will hear the not unexpected supplementary.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - My question was very simple. Is there a title for the Treasury building, which is required to sell it?

The SPEAKER - Premier, it was a very specific question without preamble. I will draw you to the supplementary question, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The point of the shadow treasurer's question and indeed the points of order from the shadow energy spokesperson is their willingness to defy good surveys and economic conditions by negativity. You come in here and you go out there and talk about recession, and you are talking Tasmania down.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, members will cease interjecting. The Premier has been asked to come to the question.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. Is there a title or not? It is a simple question. He has 20 seconds.

The SPEAKER - I will take the point of order. It has been well-made by members of the opposition what the question is. The Premier can answer it in the way he sees fit. I will ask him to come to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - A communications consultant was engaged on the 29 January 2025. An advisory consultant will also be engaged to facilitate the multi-stage public open process. This will include a registration of interest phase, an expression of interest phase, and request of tender phase -

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

Members interjecting.

Mr Rockliff - I am not sure if Mr Winter wants to sell Treasury or not. Could you check that?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The Premier will resume his seat. Premier, you are now warned.

Before we move into the next part of today, which will be the constituency questions followed by Private Members Time - not usually a quiet day of the week - I remind the members who have been warned that the warnings apply for the rest of the day.

Premier, you have one; minister Ellis, you have two; minister Abetz, you have one; member for Franklin, Ms Brown, you have one; member for Clark, Mr Willie, you have two; Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Ms Dow, you have two; Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff, you both have one. I came very close to warnings with Dr Broad, Ms Finlay, and a member who has not yet given his first speech. Do not get thrown out before that opportunity arises. Hopefully, that means everyone is going to be very well-behaved because these warnings are in place for the rest of the day. Yes, Mr Behrakis, you were lucky too.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

TasTAFE Staff Cuts

Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for SKILLS and TRAINING, Mr ELLIS

[11.12 a.m.]

I have been contacted by multiple constituents who work in the TAFE Tasmania's automotive department. I cannot use their names as they are under a Public Service gag order. These staff believe that they are set to have their jobs made redundant tomorrow, 13 March.

They point out that it was only a few years ago the Liberals pledged to employ 100 new TAFE teachers, and they wonder how things went so wrong. These educators know that slashing jobs will have detrimental long-term effects on the automotive industry which is already demanding more apprentices. Tasmania is also lagging well behind mainland states in providing adequate EV courses. Our state should be building an automotive centre of excellence, not slashing critical jobs.

Will you provide industry and employee certainty and detail your plan for automotives in Tasmania? For the interim, where and how are you planning to train automotive apprentices, and will some apprentices be dropped?

Tamar River - Abandoned Boats

Mr FERGUSON question to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ

I have been approached by a constituent, who will remain nameless, who asked me for an update on the government's work on derelict boats that have been abandoned on the Tamar River. In particular, what is being planned to start to remove abandoned vessels? Just as importantly, how is the government going to send a clear message to owners as well as deceased estate executors that they will be sent the bill for the removal of their derelict property clogging up our Tamar River?

Public Service - Hiring Freeze and Job Cuts

Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr BARNETT

My question is on behalf of a constituent in Glenorchy. He wants to know whether the two budget measures announced recently, a hiring freeze and a plan to cut the jobs of 2500 public servants, are part of your efficiency dividend or in addition to it?

Ashley Youth Detention Centre

Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

My question is on behalf of my constituent, Ace. Ace asks and says: As a young person and as a Hobart College student, I am concerned with the lack of action regarding the closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Despite a class action being filed in the Supreme Court by 129 inmates with abuse allegations dating back as far as 1960, the Ashley Youth Detention Centre is yet to close.

The closure of Ashley was announced in 2021, but this has now been dragged out to 2026. Furthermore, a \$75 million settlement has been issued in compensation for historic abuse, yet there have been reports of ongoing abuse in the last three or four years as the centre remains operational. What are the state government's current plans to address the serious issue of ongoing abuse of young people in the centre that was set to close four years ago?

Tasmanian Literary Community

Mr BEHRAKIS question to MINISTER for THE ARTS and HERITAGE, Ms OGILVIE

A constituent in my electorate of Clark has contacted my office regarding his concern over the literary and writing community. Tasmania houses world-famous authors and Hobart has been designated a UNESCO City of Literature. What has the government done to support writers in this state?

The SPEAKER - There is an allocation for the JLN or Independents. No one taking those questions?

PETITIONS

Caravan Parks - Long-Term Residency Law

[11.16 a.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to be the bearer of two petitions which are similarly worded, a written petition signed by approximately 1999 petitioners and an E-petition signed by approximately 781 petitioners praying that the government reviews legislation to support long-term tenants in caravan parks. The petitions conform with the relevant Standing Orders and Rules of the House.

I move -

That the petitions be received.

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

Joint Sessional Committee on Gender Inequality - Inquiry into the Expungement of Historical Offences Amendment Bill 2024 - Report

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to present the report of the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender Inequality and its inquiry into the Expungement of Historical Offences Amendment Bill 2024.

I move -

That the report be received.

Report received.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Short-Stay Accommodation

[11.20 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: short-stay accommodation.

Housing is a human right and the Tasmanian Government is currently failing to deliver on its responsibilities and obligations to house Tasmanians adequately. Housing stress is significant and it delivers significant pain. There are relationship impacts.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I ask members not to have conversations while a member is on their feet addressing the House.

Mr BAYLEY - There are relationship impacts. There are education impacts. It leads to homelessness and you need to only walk around after parliament in this city and see people camped on the Domain and at the Hobart Rivulet.

There are a whole lot of elements to housing policy failure that we can and need to talk about, and that we do talk about in here. We need rental controls. We need to end no cause evictions. We need minimum standards for rental properties. Where are the pets in rentals bill?

The government data also demonstrates it is consistently failing to meet its own targets in relation to building social and affordable housing, and it fudges the figures by including vacant land, crisis units, affordable rentals, and affordable home purchases.

Putting that aside, I want to talk today about short-stay accommodation because we hear so much from this government and federal politicians about supply. When it comes to short-stay accommodation, we are talking about a massive impact on supply: short-stay accommodation and the loss of whole home rentals to the Airbnb market. For all the talk of supply, there is simply no action when it comes to short-stay and it is actively stripping homes out of the market.

The latest statistics indicate that 1000 homes have been lost to Airbnb in the last four years. Roughly, since the last election, the Consumer Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) data from the first quarter of 2024 show that there has been a 4.6 per cent increase in whole homes listed for short-stay in that latest reporting period through our 7630 short-stay properties listed in the CBOS data. 49 per cent - 3000 - are not listed as primary residences, meaning there are whole homes that could have been lost to the rental market - 49 per cent, that is 3773 houses. This has delivered city and regional impacts.

In Hobart, 35 per cent of short-stay listings are whole homes. In Launceston, it is 54 per cent. Anecdotaly, we know from tourism operators and primary producers that people in the regions are struggling to find accommodation for their staff in those areas.

Since the election, we have heard some concerning rhetoric from a lot of people, including Labor Party MPs, about short-stay accommodation. We have not heard much from them recently about their long standing policy when it comes to short-stay. My question to Labor today is to be really clear with us about what your policy is. I hope you can clarify this straight away by saying that nothing in relation to your policy that you took to the last election has changed.

We are still absolutely committed to the policy of pausing new home short-stay conversions and we hope that the Labor Party is too. It would certainly be really good news if the policies change. What is it?

For other members in the House, we would be really interested in hearing your policy for short-stay accommodation, because in a collaborative parliament, we have huge opportunities.

Just to be completely clear, the Greens strongly oppose Airbnbs ripping homes away from Tasmanians and our policy is to ban new short-stay accommodation in residential zones,

to phase out existing permits, and to make it discretionary in non-residential zones. That is going to make a real difference to this terrible situation. At the least, we are hoping to see if there is some pathway forward in some kind of reform, in terms of dealing with this in this parliament.

Every year, hundreds of homes are being ripped out of the rental market and converted to Airbnbs. It is no wonder that we have seen rent skyrocket, homelessness increase faster than anywhere else in the nation, and the public housing wait list spiral out of control.

The Liberal Government has consistently refused to do anything about the proliferation of Airbnbs and that is a black mark on their record. They are responsible for the huge social consequences resulting from that situation, but in this parliament, the Liberals do not always get their way. It would seem at face value that there is a possibility for reform, genuine reform that we want. We, Greens, want it and as I understand, the crossbenchers do too. If Labor has their position that is consistent with the one that they took to the election, there is an opportunity to pause whole home conversions to short-stay accommodation.

We need to hear that clearly and we need to take action because this is an issue that is impacting Tasmanians right across the state. It is driving people into homelessness and it needs to end.

[11.24 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Housing, Planning and Consumer Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, I thought this was going to be a genuine debate. It is quite clear from Mr Bayley's discussion points that this is just a bit of a left-on-left tiff trying to figure out which parts of the left wing voter ecosystem they can scrounge out between them and the Labor Party on this debate. I am interested to hear from the opposition about it.

More broadly, for those who are seriously interested in how we best manage short-stay accommodation in our state, it is clear that our government has one of the best and most balanced approaches in the country to short-stay. We have fair and flexible planning rules. We seek to get the balance right. We want to unlock the amazing opportunity that comes from people being able to rent out a room in their house, receive a bit of additional income, and help with the federal pressures that have come from cost of living. Who would deny an older woman who seeks to rent out a room in her house on Airbnb and provide a bit of additional income for her living circumstances?

Mr Bayley - That is not what this is about, minister, and you know it.

The SPEAKER - Order, Deputy Leader of the Greens.

Mr ELLIS - Who would deny a family who owns a shack in one of our beautiful shack communities around this state seeking to open up their home to others who might want to experience those beautiful coastal communities or bush communities and also receive an income to help pay for the school fees and a range of other commitments that we know that families have? That is a wonderful opportunity for those people and it is also a wonderful opportunity for tourism operators around our state because in many of these small communities, there is not a large hotel like we might see in Hobart. It is people renting out their shacks, making them available to people and that means that there are people in those communities buying coffees, buying food at the supermarkets and at the restaurants for more

of the year, rather than just at a time when families might be using their own personal shack. That is great for the tourism industry, it is great for local communities and it is great for those families who are able to unlock those opportunities.

Our government, as I mentioned before, is keen to get the balance right. We provided, as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, 100 per cent land tax incentive for property owners who switch a short-stay to a long-term rental. I think the Greens support that. We have not really heard too much from them. We have also spoken about introducing a 5 per cent levy on short-stay accommodation to deliver about \$11 million a year -

Mr Bayley - Where is it?

The SPEAKER - Order, Deputy Leader of the Greens. Do you wish to stay for the whole debate?

Mr ELLIS - and I know that minister Jaensch is working diligently through that process. It is complex, but we want to get it right and part of the reason why we are so keen on delivering this is because 100 per cent of that levy will be used to support Tasmanian first home buyers: people who want to unlock the opportunity of home ownership so they can put down roots and grow their family. That is an incredible opportunity that comes from us being able to regulate Airbnb well, get the balance right and receive a return to the Tasmanian community through this levy. That would not happen if you banned Airbnb. That would make it harder to remove stamp duty for first home buyers.

I do not know what the Greens' position is on that one. Usually they want more taxes on the family home, not less, but clearly, our position is that with a proper balanced approach to Airbnb and other short-stay, we can leverage significant dividends for the Tasmanian community and, particularly, Tasmanian families buying their first home.

The Greens' position on these things is interesting. It reminds me a little bit of the Opposition Leader's position on privatisation. They are for it, and they are against it. They do not really know exactly what they think. I know first speeches are often points where we share our deepest and strongest commitments and our family stories. I spoke about my family fleeing eastern Europe, and my family providing healthcare and housing in remote Aboriginal communities. I know the Greens spokesperson talked about the fact that his parents are Liberal voters and I took that from his first speech.

One of the first speeches that I commend to the House was - and it was spoken really beautifully - it has been observed recently that Uber, the world's largest taxi company, owns no vehicles. Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate. Something very disruptive is happening. It is called the shared or collaborative economy, and it is coming to a mobile device near all of us. It is turning a generation of interconnected people into entrepreneurs. There will be small businesses, innovators and entrepreneurs of the future, and the Greens will be right there with them, advocating for more support, not less protection and the lightest possible regulatory touch. You know who said that? Nick McKim said it in his first speech to the federal parliament. A great contribution. It just shows that if the Greens did not have double standards, they would have no standards at all.

Time expired.

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I can always rely on minister Ellis for a bit of fun, in terms of giving people a whack indiscriminate of the topic that we are talking about.

I will be brief. I know other people want to have a conversation about short-stay accommodation. I do not demonise those people who choose to register properties or parts of their properties as short-stay. It has been a legitimate section of a tourism and holiday market that has exploded globally. You cannot necessarily turn the global tide back on this.

I think there is a role for short-stay to play, but when that has a perverse impact on local communities, it is incumbent on governments and parliaments to respond, in a way which is reasoned, appropriate and understanding of the market and what kind of behaviours. We use the tax system to encourage and discourage certain behaviours, to alleviate issues or to encourage certain levels of behaviour. There is no doubt that the explosion in short-stay accommodation in Tasmania has had a perverse and negative impact on large sections of our community. That is in my view, a statement of fact. It has had an impact.

I think you have in total an increased number of properties that are open for rent and open for short-stay. There is a large increase. There are some people who legitimately were never going to rent their properties, but do seek to derive an income from short-stay accommodation. I do not seek to demonise that. I just seek to understand it and understand the role of government to respond.

The issue that has occurred is that the profit margin for short-stay accommodation has meant that there is an incentive for people to remove their properties, complete properties, from the rental market into the short-stay accommodation market. It also creates an uneven playing field between short-stay accommodation and legitimate and historical bed-and-breakfasts and hotels. There is a distortion in the market where they are using short-stay accommodation to undermine both of those things.

I do not support a ban on short-stay accommodation. Essentially, what you do is you lock in the advantage of those people who already have it. What you do is distort in some respect the accommodation market in certain regions. It reduces the flexibility for a market to respond to needs and to opportunities.

I do, however, support a levy - a reasonable levy which is applied in jurisdictions across the world to acknowledge that the actions and the behaviour of the short-stay market need to be ameliorated, needed to be essentially managed to the point where the profit return is competitive with standard long-term rentals. This is what we are in dire need of, particularly in the Hobart region.

Having a ban on short-stay is a blunt instrument. It distorts the market. A levy actually brings the market back. It incentivizes those people who have short-stay accommodation to either move back or move into the rental market. What it also does is raise revenue.

I believe that revenue should be hypothecated to homeless services, because there is no doubt short-stay accommodation has exacerbated the rental market and the scarcity of properties. It concertinaed like a spilling cup, creating a problem at various points of the rental market in terms of which point that you enter.

I welcome this debate on Airbnb. We have to understand that a market response to a market failure by way of a tax or a levy that raises revenue to be used to ameliorate the problem that has created is an even-handed centrist way to respond. It does not impinge people's ability to raise money.

[11.34 a.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to give a contribution about the matter of public importance: short-stay accommodation. The idea that short-stay accommodation is the main driver for the issues we are seeing in housing and rentals is just not borne by facts.

It is interesting that the government's response is a very un-Liberal one, which is a tax and spend policy. A 1 per cent vacancy tax - sorry, it was a tax on Airbnbs. They were going to use that funding to reduce stamp duty, I think it was, for first home buyers. Tax one area of the economy, hand the money over to the other area of the economy. The only problem is that they have done the spending, but they have not done the taxing. We have not seen the Airbnb tax come into this place. The Liberals are the only party really considering a new tax, although that is probably not completely accurate and I will go into that in a second. The Liberals are considering it and Labor definitely is not.

The problem with the Greens and their policy is that they are always seeking to intervene, intervene in the market, intervene in a policy sense. The problem that they have is they have to continually escalate the intervention. The intervention that they are proposing will not necessarily have the impact they want, so then they have to do another intervention. I will give you an example of that. For example, they are saying -

A member - Do you have a policy?

The SPEAKER - Interjections are unseemly.

Dr BROAD - They are saying pause, they are going to intervene in the market. Okay, ban Airbnbs, pause new permits, and then phase out existing permits for Airbnb. The problem with doing that is the market may not respond in the way that the Greens want. Those houses that are no longer allowed to do short-stay accommodation will not necessarily switch back into the rental market, for various reasons, which I will probably get some time to go into.

If those properties do not automatically switch back into the rental market and become available, then what are the Greens proposing? Then you need to do a vacancy tax. Then you need to do another intervention because you are not going to get the response that you want.

The real problem in housing in Tasmania is actually supply. That is one area where the government, I believe, is failing to deliver. They claim that they have built 4000 houses. They have stopped saying 'lots and homes'. Now they are saying 'houses', which is completely untrue. They have delivered 1600 at best. They are nowhere near their 10,000 target. That is how they are trying to get around it.

When we consider the Greens - because the Greens did actually bring this policy up. Their other intervention in the market - I believe very strongly that supply is the issue here. We need more houses built and the government is not building them. What do you need for new houses to be built? You need new subdivisions, you need new land available for building, you

need density and so on. What do the Greens do? What they do is they see another intervention in the market. If you have a look at their alternative budget from last year, they believed that the way to tax Tasmania into prosperity was by putting into place a 75 per cent rezoning windfall tax. One of the things that we actually need is we need new areas to be opened up, we need new subdivisions, and we need new blocks available. However, the Greens are proposing to put a 75 per cent rezoning windfall tax on any subdivision. If you buy a property and you subdivide it, then any of those gains, the Greens will tax you at 75 per cent.

The reason why this is just a massive stupid idea is because they are claiming that they can get \$160 million per year out of a rezoning windfall tax. It is just incredible. That means they are claiming that there must be over \$210 million of rezoning value derived in the state every year that can be taxed at a 75 per cent rate every year.

Mr Bayley - Where are you on short-stay?

The SPEAKER - Order, Deputy Leader of the Greens, you are now warned. I am not having it today.

Dr BROAD - What would that do to the housing market? That would mean that rezoning as a strategy to introduce more housing into the market would not be economically feasible to do. Ironically, by putting forward policy like this, a 75 per cent rezoning windfall tax, you would kill the market for new subdivisions. It would die overnight. The only option then would be densification. What we see from the Greens, and we see this around Australia, is that every time there is a proposal to have more dense housing, the Greens are against that too. Here the Greens are trying to tax their way to success, trying to intervene in the market when all that will deliver is less housing and create a worse problem.

Time expired.

[11.39 a.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I am happy to stand on this MPI. Short-stay accommodation, including vacation rentals, service departments, and boutique lodgings, play an important role in our visitor economy, our local economy and enhancing tourism. These accommodations provide flexible and diverse lodging options for travellers, catering to different budgets and preferences. Their economic impact extends far beyond the hospitality industry, benefiting local businesses, employment, and overall economic growth. One of the primary benefits of short-stay accommodation is their ability to attract a broad range of tourists. As tourism increases, so does spending at local restaurants, shops, attractions and entertainment venues, directly benefiting small businesses and communities.

Additionally, short-stay accommodations create job opportunities in various sectors: property management, cleaning services, maintenance and customer support roles are all essential to running these accommodations. Moreover, the demand for local suppliers, from food and beverage providers to interior decorators, grows as property owners seek to enhance their offerings.

Ms Burnet - What happens if somebody lives -

Mr BEHRAKIS - Importantly, Tasmania has one of the -

The SPEAKER - Order. Member for Clark, Ms Burnet, is also warned.

Mr BEHRAKIS - clearest planning policies -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I am sorry. The behaviour and the warnings do not stop at the end of Question Time. We will have a seemingly private members' time today.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Tasmania has one of the clearest planning policies in Australia on short-stay accommodation, with flexible planning rules that support data collection to inform local policy. Any council that has a case to support further limits on short-stay can apply local restrictions with the approval of the Independent Planning Commission. Our approach is fair, consistent and simple to administer compared to that of other jurisdictions, that place a limit on the number of nights short-stay accommodation can operate in a year.

In support of our balance planning regulations, we also seek to incentivise the return of some properties to the longer-term rental market to boost housing supply. Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future includes our extension of land tax exemptions for those who switch from short-stay accommodation to long-term rental.

On the other hand, the Greens talk a lot and proselytise about short-stay accommodation as if it is the bogeyman and solely responsible for constraining housing supply in Tasmania. The reality is they should be looking in the mirror. Greens members in this place, and their counterparts in local government, are often responsible for blocking hundreds, if not thousands of homes being built and added to the housing supply. They often say in response that they are adhering to or respecting the planning rules. However, the truth is that the only respect the Greens have for the planning rules in this state is to use it as a tool to block development.

From March 2016 up until the 2022 council elections, the Greens planning spokesperson, Ms Burnet voted against 536 dwellings, 256 of which were recommended for approval by planning officers. In fact, over 30 per cent of dwellings assessed in that period that came to council and were assessed by elected members were rejected during that period when Ms Burnet was chair of the planning committee.

Whether a development application (DA) for housing meets the planning rules or not seems completely uncorrelated to whether the Greens supported it or not. The Welcome Stranger, for example, is a development that would have provided 52 dwellings and was recommended for refusal by the planning officers. The Greens, unsurprisingly, opposed it and that housing supply was lost. Conversely, the DA at 202 Macquarie Street for 40 dwellings was recommended emphatically for approval by planning officers. The Greens opposed it and it did not happen. The Greens planning spokesperson, whom I sat across from in the Hobart council chambers for a number of years, as well as other Green councillors, routinely campaigned for policies such as building height restrictions and other policies that constrain densification and constrain inner city development, and infill.

Now, in this place as the Greens planning spokesperson, in response to our government's expansion of the urban growth boundary, Ms Burnet called it urban sprawl and suggested instead the focus should instead be on promoting inner city development. It seems they are not happy one way or another. The only consistency is that they are against it. The reality is that

the Greens have not seen a development that they do not oppose. The only consistency in their policies on this is their opposition to anything happening in their state, opposition to the construction of homes and opposition to the visitor economy. Whether something is backed by the planning rules, they are against it and if it is not backed by the planning rules, they will sit there and they will use that call to authority - 'People need to respect the planning laws', but the Greens do not have any respect for those planning laws.

We saw it so often in my time on the Hobart City Council when Greens members of the council, including Ms Burnet, would call up short-stay applications knowing objectively that it met the provisions of the planning scheme, called it up, voted against it, causing that council tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees defending a case they already knew was a cut-and-dried approval. The only consistency here is the Greens' ability to say no.

On the other hand, our government is one that recognises it is important to get this balance right. We continue to allow many Tasmanians and visitors to our beautiful state to visit and make use of short-stay accommodation options across Tasmania.

Time expired.

[11.44 a.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I am glad Mr Behrakis finally circled back to the matter at hand, the matter of public importance, which is short-stay accommodation and reining it in. The Minister for Housing and Planning has talked about being glad to have the debate. However, he should use his powers as the Minister for Housing and Planning to intervene when there is a crisis, and we are in the midst of a housing crisis. A very simple way of reining in that problem with availability of rental accommodation is to rein in short-stay accommodation.

Labor has been weak on this, as we saw from Dr Broad's contribution. He has demonstrated, sadly, that Labor has dropped the ball on reining in short-stay accommodation. This is an appalling position by Labor as well.

These are the simplest of solutions. It is a gift to the Minister for Housing. However, we are seeing this reluctance. It is all about the dollar. It is about that spend that supposedly comes with short-stay accommodation. It sounds like the ability for somebody to be housed is much more complex. It is too nuanced, obviously, for the government and the opposition. It is important that people are housed. There is much greater economic benefit from a housed community, rather than a state facing the worst housing crisis we have ever seen.

Who would deny someone a roof over their head? It turns out that the minister, Mr Ellis, is effectively ruling out a roof over people's heads because he would sooner have short-stay accommodation availability, rather than reining that in. The government has some simple solutions at its fingertips to put roofs over Tasmanians' heads. These are cheaper, faster solutions, if only they could see it, but apparently they cannot.

There are buildings that have been left vacant and there are those that are mini-hotels in neighbourhoods across our state being used as short-stay accommodation. For too long, the increase in short-stay in residential areas has forced families out of housing. It has also hiked rental prices higher.

Local councils have been clear they want real solutions for their communities struggling with the cost of living and housing crises. It is time the Liberals, and Labor if they back them, prioritise housing for Tasmanians and reform the planning system to regulate short-stay accommodation. It is easy, but there has been denial to do this by the former housing and planning minister, Mr Jaensch, and that continues with Mr Ellis.

The Local Government Association of Tasmania put out a position statement on housing in November 2024, saying:

Governments at all levels play a role in setting the market risks and incentives, like taxation policy, so that our housing market meets our needs, or otherwise must intervene by directly building new houses for release to market.

This is a long-term strategy; changes to planning rules take a long time. This is simple.

Mr Behrakis interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr Behrakis.

Ms BURNET - It is so simple to change the rules for whole-house short-stay accommodation. Rein it in. That is all we are asking. It is a simple request from the Greens. It seems we are the only party that wants to do that and address these problems.

In summary, this is an appalling way for the Planning minister, Mr Ellis, to approach a problem he seems to do nothing about. Labor has no plan either and has walked away from reining in short-stay accommodation. The Tasmanian government and, specifically, the minister, Mr Ellis, must dither no longer. A levy on whole-home short-stay accommodation, any disincentive, as Hobart City Council has done, for short-stay in residential areas - you can thank me for that, Mr Behrakis - is worth undertaking.

Time expired.

[11.49 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Speaker, for so many Tasmanians, there is no more important issue in their life than trying to have a house over their head that is secure for an amount that is affordable on their income, whether that is for a mortgage or to a landlord.

It is so insecure for people living in rental accommodation in Tasmania. It is an unregulated market, essentially, that is at the behest of the changes happening in Australia and in Tasmania. We do not have control over some levers, but we have control over a whole bunch that would make a massive difference to people's lives. They are the ones that we are talking about today. What we have seen in Tasmania in such a short amount of time, in less than 10 years, is an explosion of whole homes that have been taken out of the market - especially and initially in Hobart, but now increasingly growing in other parts of Tasmania - a huge number of whole homes that have been taken out.

The evidence is really clear. There are 3773 properties that are listed under short-stay that are whole homes. They are not a primary residence. They have been taken out of the rental market and put into the short-stay market. They are not available for people who are renting.

I do not have the up-to-date figures on how many people are waiting for emergency priority housing, but I know those people are women fleeing family violence with their children, people with serious disabilities, older people, and people with a whole range of reasons that make it really imperative for them to have a house. Every person is important, but there is a priority ordering of everybody. In that list there are thousands and thousands of Tasmanians who are waiting for a home. It is a critical issue of our time, which is why the Greens have been so clear that we must at the Tasmanian and federal level pull every lever we can to make the changes to the housing market.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, I totally hear what Dr Broad is saying. We do have to be thoughtful and careful in any market. That is why our position has been so moderate and careful in making sure that we cannot take whole homes out of residential areas to go to short-stay. In non-residential areas, then that would be a matter for councils. We have to have the councils looking at local conditions.

What we had from the Liberals in the state election was an awful portrayal, really, of their misuse and abuse of the trust of people who are desperate, by pretending that they were going to do anything about short-stay. They promised a 5 per cent levy on short-stay properties, promised that they would then take and use the land tax or something else to do with housing to sort of make it better for people.

Dr Broad - Abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers.

Dr WOODRUFF - They have done absolutely nothing. They have done nothing.

Dr Broad - It has already been abolished.

Dr WOODRUFF - They have not taken the \$5000 from short-stay properties. They promised to get rid of the terrible war in place, which means that it is not required for a property owner to, by default, have a conversation with a person about keeping pets in their rental homes. That is so critical. There are so many Tasmanians who are not able to have their animals with them. It makes them incredibly sad that they do not have the animals that they love, or that if they move from one home into another home, they have to get rid of their pets, sometimes to the pound to be killed.

The question is: why have the Liberals not brought that in? They have done nothing. We are not surprised about that. We are concerned about Labor. I would like to have confirmation from Dr Broad, by interjection even, if the Deputy Speaker would allow that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Please do not invite interjections, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - We did read into Labor's response that they have not held firm to the position they took to the last election about pausing short-stay. Is that still your policy?

Dr Broad - It is a bit more qualified than pausing short-stay.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, there we go. It is very concerning to hear any qualification about what was already a very qualified position. The Greens call on the Labor Party to be really clear to renters about what your position is, whether you still would do something about short-stay. Would your policy be to pause it?

Time expired.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Salmon Mass Mortality Crisis - Motion Negatived

[11.54 a.m.]

Mr GARLAND - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House: -

(1) Notes: -

- (a) the recurrence of mass salmon mortality events in Tasmania; and
- (b) the unprecedented scale of salmon mortalities over the months to 11 March 2025, particularly in the lower D'Entrecasteaux Channel ("the event").

(2) Understands the event has a multi-factorial origin, including from rising ocean temperatures, an increase in nutrient levels, marine pests and bacterial disease.

(3) Recognises: -

- (a) the significant community concern about the impact of the event on the marine environment and public health;
- (b) the on-going community and scientific debate about the impact of salmon farming in Tasmania;
- (c) the significant impact of the event on the salmon industry and its workers;
- (d) the importance of primary production to the Tasmanian economy;
- (e) that salmon farming is Tasmania's largest primary production industry; and

- (f) the current shift from marine to land-based finfish farming around the world.
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Hon Eric Abetz MP in consultation with Mr Garland MP, to commission an independent, interstate consultant to conduct a feasibility study, to be tabled in Parliament within 6 months, on the costs, benefits and opportunities for Tasmania to transition its marine salmon farming industry to land-based aquaculture. The study will also include detailed discussion of: -
 - (a) the current and emerging environmental and social pressures on marine finfish farming in Tasmania; and
 - (b) emerging land-based finfish farming practices world-wide, and the applicability of these practices to Tasmania. (11 March 2025)

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Is a vote required today, Mr Garland?

Mr GARLAND - Yes, it will be.

The scale of salmon deaths unfolding across south-east Tasmania this summer is nothing short of catastrophic. In February alone, over a million fish perished. This crisis is far from over. We are witnessing truckloads of dead salmon, numbering in their hundreds of thousands, being dumped in landfills across the state.

This has become a national issue. It is on the radio, it is in newspapers, it is dominating social media, and it is even appearing on investor and hospitality websites. The salmon industry in Tasmania is now associated with images of fish parts washing up on beaches, decomposing salmon floating atop of fish pens, and live fish being tossed into bins alongside the dead as the poor workers struggle to manage the scale of this event.

Make no mistake - this is not an isolated incident. The salmon industry has long tried to downplay these events, but between 2019 and early 2022, Tasmania's three major salmon companies reported 68 cases of mass fish deaths. While the D'Entrecasteaux Channel has always been a hot spot for these deaths, we cannot forget the 60,000 salmon that perished at Petuna's Rowella lease in the north of the state, or the elevated deaths in Macquarie Harbour.

The Premier and the Minister for the Environment have told the parliament this week that these deaths are due to warming waters, marine pests like algal and jellyfish blooms, and bacterial infections. These are all symptoms of climate change, and we know climate change will only get worse.

On social licence, Premier, you have previously stated that all resource-based industries must be sustainable and have broad public support. In other words, you acknowledge the need for social licence. However, back in 2023, the then minister for Primary Industries, minister Palmer, conceded that the salmon industry had lost its social licence. She hoped the salmon industry plan reform would rebuild trust, but two years later things have only got worse.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) still does not know how many fish have died in this latest crisis because companies have yet to start their required monthly mortality reporting. The so-called 'industry-leading' environmental standards either do not apply to existing leases or are meaningless without technical standards, which have yet to be developed. This industry has no social licence in this state. Once again, the industry is pleading for understanding and promising to change.

I bring this motion forward not just because I care about our environment, but because I recognise the importance of primary industries to our economy. I understand how important these aquaculture jobs are, especially in regional communities. I do not want to see an industry collapse and people out of work. As a fisherman myself, I know what it means to depend on the marine environment for a livelihood. My heart goes out to the salmon industry employees caught in this storm, facing an uncertain future. There is only one demand that we have had all through this and that is that it is done right, and in the right places.

Many Tasmanians have reached out in recent weeks expressing their distress and calling for a transition to land-based salmon farming. Land-based aquaculture is something that has largely been ignored by this government, and it is not just the government. As far as I can tell, the Blue Economy CRC has not done any research on this. I cannot find any research currently being undertaken by Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) either, but I am sure the minister will correct me if I am wrong.

The community has long been calling for a transition of this industry out of our public waterways and onto land. You might remember the 2021 Dennes Point Declaration, which urged the government to lead a transition of the aquaculture industry from sea to land. This government and big salmon are all about preserving the status quo.

This catastrophic event should be a wake-up call for this government and the industry. If the government fails to start planning for an aquaculture industry that can meet the ravages of climate change, where will we be in five years? Will there even be a salmon industry left?

This motion is about future-proofing the aquaculture industry that is crucial to Tasmania in the face of climate change. There is a global shift towards land-based aquaculture. The shift from marine to land-based aquaculture is not a radical idea. Around the world, this transition is already happening. Canada recently announced an end to marine salmon farming by 2029, following the lead of Washington state. Investors are backing new land-to-plate aquaculture projects near major cities across the US, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. New Zealand has opened its first land-based kingfish farm, and even in Australia, the South Australian government commissioned a feasibility study on land-based aquaculture in 2022.

According to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia are investing in either investigations or pilot projects for inland aquaculture, which is being supported by the FRDC. In 2021, New South Wales redeveloped its Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy, aiming to provide a clear framework for sustainable development and management of land-based aquaculture operations. According to its strategy, land-based aquaculture is estimated to employ up to one full-time person for two hectares of ponds plus casual labour during busy periods. Currently, the salmon industry directly employs approximately 2000 staff across the state. To match the current employment in marine aquaculture in Tasmania through on-land operations would

require approximately 4000 hectares of on-land salmon ponds, which is an area about the same size as that proposed for the Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm.

Is this the price Tasmania is willing to pay to get salmon out of its coastal waters? That is an issue this feasibility study needs to address. Tasmania already has a model to build upon. The recirculating aquaculture systems currently being used as small hatcheries exist. We even have successful local examples like 41° South near Deloraine, that uses wetlands as a natural biofilter to purify waste. It is energy intensive, but with Tasmania's ambitions of becoming a renewable energy superpower, we will have ample energy to support this industry going on land.

The study I am calling for is about understanding the threats to the salmon industry. To do this, it must take a hard look at the ongoing mass fish mortality crisis and what it means for the long-term viability of this industry. It must consider the environmental impact of climate change and provide realistic policy recommendations to guide the future of aquaculture in Tasmania.

This study needs to be independent of government and the salmon industry in this state. There is a growing perception that the salmon industry wields disproportionate influence over this government and our state. It funds much of the research conducted by IMAS and often leverages its power to advance its own commercial interests. This is precisely why I have insisted on being involved alongside the minister to set the study's terms of reference, and I welcome the involvement of other members in this process. To maintain its independence, it is also important that the findings should be reported to parliament, not just the minister.

I would like to add that this is all about control. This industry is out in the marine environment. If we go on land, we do not have to shoot seals and cormorants. We will not be dealing with jellyfish, balloons and the associated diseases. We will not be dealing with failed nets. We will not be seeing dead, rotten, decomposing fish fouling our beaches and our waterways. There will be no pushing of native fishes to extinction as in the case of the Maugean skate. There will be no hundreds of kilos of antibiotics being put into our waterways which then go into the fish we eat.

The chemicals and nasties of all what has been happening in our inshore waterways will be alleviated and put out of the equation by getting on land. The biggest single threat though is our warming waters. We have no control over that whatsoever, and to stick our head in the sand and pretend everything is okay is like our approach to the budget where Saul has put his recommendations forward and it is ignored. If we take the same approach with this industry, we will see more dead fish washing up on our beaches. We will see more people lining up and protesting about what this industry is representing right now.

If they have not done it properly elsewhere, if they have not made the advancements to get it done properly on land, do it to the maximum best that we can. We are never going to get there if we do not try.

I might highlight, in World War I, we started on horseback and sabre with a collective focus on armament. Four years later, we were in aircraft and artillery and tanks. So, if there is a collective focus on this through the industry, the government and through us in this parliament, there is no reason why we cannot get this industry to be the best managed in the world on shore and take the community along with us.

[12.05 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, the salmon industry in this state is vitally important for literally thousands of families around our state. They get their livelihood from this sector. It has grown over the last few decades to now become the largest seafood sector in Australia by value.

It has an industry footprint of just over 3000 hectares of our state waters that is in relation to the lease areas. If you were to put all the pens together, it would simply be one square kilometre. You then consider the huge marine parks that we have that in fact are in the vicinity of hundreds of thousands of square kilometres.

All this needs to be put into context, but can I deal with two of the issues in the motion?

One, there is the suggestion that there is a public health risk. Let us be absolutely clear that the public health officials have indicated there is no risk to human wellbeing. I want to make that absolutely clear.

Having dealt with that, we then turn to the issue of on-land farming. The Greens in the past have held up Atlantic Sapphire as the golden boy in the industry as the opportunity. It is the shining light and the exemplar of land-based salmon production; the way of the future.

Well, what is the history? The company suffered multiple mass mortalities on land, multiple mass mortality events, and an estimated \$500 million loss before it collapsed in 2023. The cause of the collapse? Unmanageable energy costs and technical failures. These are fundamental issues when you consider if there were to be a change to on-land farming. Of course, the area required for the tanks, et cetera, would be massive compared to the marine footprint.

All these things need to be put into context. The reality is that in the event that we move to 100 per cent land-based salmon farming, and it somehow did become commercially viable, it would not be happening in our regional areas around the state. They would be built closer to markets in areas on the mainland or indeed overseas. That is the commercial reality and we would deny about 5000 of our fellow Tasmanians the opportunity of a livelihood and, might I add, a high quality, premium product which is much sought after in the market.

Let us be clear. The Chilean imports that are coming as we speak, nothing mentioned about what they might do to the environment, no concern expressed by the Greens. It is a matter of concern that those opposite - or those in the Greens, I should say - do not want to talk about that. When you talk about the value of salmon farming, it is our highest primary industry, as the motion tells us, but can I say it is the biggest in value. When it comes to land area, it is minuscule compared to land-based agriculture and it is the source of high quality protein which is required for human health. Our health experts tell us we should be eating more fish and we know from our wild fisheries that it is not able to be obtained from the wild fisheries. Therefore we need to farm fish, just as much as we have gone to farming sheep, cattle, pigs and chickens. We are now finding the need to farm fish because there are not enough in the wild.

You then have to ask the question: why is there a nearly manic opposition to fish farming? It is a bit like the 'No fish farm' stickers that I see. Surely, anybody should be saying responsible fish farming, but to hear, as I unfortunately did, that fish farms have no social licence tells me that this inquiry that is being suggested would not be a genuine inquiry at all. What it would be

is just an excuse to try to trash the sector for a period of time, because, one suspects, no matter what the finding, a predetermination has been made: that there is no social licence for salmon farming.

It is one of those things when people say yes, we support fish farms, but you then ask them whereabouts, they never give you an area where it would be appropriate to have a fish farm.

Dr Woodruff - It would be an independent investigation.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr ABETZ - I should not respond to an interjection, but just in the event that the Greens were to say, 'This would be an independent inquiry' - I set up an inquiry into the Mt Wellington precinct, which is now being called the Abetz inquiry by the Greens. Now all of a sudden, if Abetz and Garland were to set up an inquiry, I am sure the Greens would trash it as well as not being independent, because somehow I would have my nasty fingerprints all over it. I say to the Greens you cannot have both ways: assert that one of mine might be independent but the other not.

I am sure other people want to make a contribution in this debate. I simply say that from a government point of view, we support the salmon sector. Our heart goes out to the men and women involved in this catastrophic event that has occurred. It is something that nobody wanted and nobody foresaw. There are workers volunteering their time, helping in the clean-up to ensure that the farming processes can return to some degree of normality.

It is the same situation that we face with other farmed and intensive farming situations. It happens with cattle from time to time. It happens with chickens from time to time. Rather than celebrating the loss and the devastation, as some do, just the modicum of genuine sympathy and concern for the mums and dads and young people who work in this sector would at least be welcome.

I spoke to some of those people who have been volunteering. They told me that as they were seeking to clean up the beaches - and this particular example I know very well - they were shouted at and screamed at by certain people rather than helping them do the clean-up. Certain people went out and shouted and screamed at these volunteers and one was even spat at. This is not the behaviour of civilised people or a civilised society. May well we be concerned about fish fat globules washing up on shore, but that absolutely should not have occurred. Nobody wanted it to occur. People are cleaning up, volunteering as we speak to help in that clean-up. Those that allegedly champion the environment do not assist in that regard and then engage in that ugly antisocial behaviour.

We as a government want to see a well-regulated fishery in salmon farming. It has done well and it will continue to do well, but at the moment it has gone into and still remains in - but we are hopeful is about to emerge from - a very difficult situation which will be managed with the goodwill of all those involved.

[12.15 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Speaker, it is with great pleasure that we speak to this. I thank the independent member for Braddon, Mr Garland, for bringing this on. This has been a position that the Greens have taken since 2017. It was the

formal policy that we took to the 2018 election. At that time the evidence was, from the federal Department of Fisheries, that Tasmania's salmon industry had doubled in size in the previous decade.

Already, at that time, there had been a Senate inquiry into the finfish aquaculture industry that the Greens moved at the federal level, because of the disasters that were unfolding in Macquarie Harbour. What that inquiry uncovered were dead zones that had occurred in the harbour. It already foreshadowed serious impacts on the survival of the Maugean skate. It also uncovered threats to other native species, such as the handfish and the Gunn's screw shell. Many others were noted in that inquiry as being at risk of becoming threatened or actually becoming extinct from fish farming.

What we have seen since then is - well, here we are today. Here we are today, and we have a situation now which is entirely of this government's own making. I firmly believe that if this Liberal government, and the Labor Party, which has supported them all the way through, had taken a different road at that point in the 2015 inquiry, then we could have had a sustainable salmon industry with us today. We could have been transitioning then from 2015, 10 years ago. We could now have on-land industries like we have in other countries. Other countries are going down this path. What we did in Australia was, through failure of regulations and through cosyng up to the big salmon corporates, being the part of the world that was so weak in our regulatory framework that we were preyed upon by the largest international protein-producing corporation on the planet, choosing to take over one of our Tasmanian industries, so that now all of the Tasmanian salmon companies are foreign-owned.

It is a terrible place for Tasmanian business. It is a much worse place for our marine environment. In the middle are the workers who Mr Abetz talked about before, who we all have different connections with and who we are all concerned about for a range of different reasons.

The Greens understand that there is no sustainability possible for this industry unless we get onto the land. Let us talk about what the Liberal's failed policy has done in the past 10 years. It is hard to imagine an industry that could have a worse social licence. It is hard to imagine worse environmental impacts that are occurring at the moment. We have, it seems, an unknown but very large volume of antibiotics being poured into waters that were predicted to get warm from climate change and predicted to have an impact on disease pathogens in salmon populations. The response of salmon companies has been to increase the density of the fish in the pens and increase the risk for the salmon. Therefore, we have a large-scale salmon disease outbreak on our hands. They have been pouring antibiotics into those fish. We know from the research of scientists that antibiotics spread out further than the marine pens. They spread out long distances. They have been caught in recreational fishing by recreational fishers, with levels of antibiotic in their fish. We know it spreads into the environment.

We know that since then we have seen damage to the World Heritage area from fish farming in Macquarie Harbour. We know we have the Maugean skate now on the very brink of extinction. Federal and state Liberal and Labor parties are committed together to changing any laws that stand in the way of fish farming companies continuing to operate in Macquarie Harbour. They do not care. They do not even care about a species going extinct. They are here to do the bidding of big salmon companies. It is writ large in the response to this mass mortality event.

We know that we had at least three weeks after dead fish were reported floating at the top of pens in the Huon Aquaculture and Tassal pens in the Huon and D'Entrecasteaux Channels before we heard anything from ministers of this government. That is only because we came back to parliament. If it was not for Mr Garland and the Greens asking questions in parliament, and the activists, campaigners and local community who have provided footage to the media, no one would know what is actually going on in our waterways.

Instead, we know there are well over a million fish. We are in the middle of the second week of March, and we know from marine scientists that it is very likely this mass mortality event will continue. That is devastating for the marine environment. It is terrible for people who care about the beaches and the fact that they cannot go swimming in the area.

It is terrible for salmon farm workers who are being forced to work overtime. They are being dragged from all around the state to deal with this event and are being pushed to do things that I do not believe any of them are comfortable doing. I do not believe any of the workers on that boat who were scraping live fish into tubs and putting the tops on them so the fish would suffocate were happy with doing that. That is not normal practice. That is the responsibility of the salmon companies. How dare they point the finger at Tasmanian workers and try to absolve themselves of their responsibility for pushing people so hard in that situation. We have workers who are working in difficult conditions in very heavy weather on the seas.

We have the evidence of community people who have taken photographs of seals that have been shot, seals that have been blinded by salmon company workers to keep them away from pens to stop them predating on salmon. We have had explosives by the thousands let off by fish farm companies, shot covered in plastic fired at seals by the thousands and thousands. The bottom of our inshore waterways and our bays are covered with microplastics, not just from seal shots but also from the ropes, tubes and all the other plastic that comes from an industrial farming operation in the water. It is out of sight, out of mind.

If it needs to be any clearer how little this government cares about the impact on the marine environment, look at the comments from the two scientists formerly on the Marine Farming Planning Review Panel. They noted with regard to the Storm Bay expansion that only eight pages was devoted to an environmental management plan for that massive expansion. It just goes to show the difference to what would be required on land.

This is an opportunity for us to put fish farms onto the land and require them to work under the same regulations as any other farm. We are not targeting them. We are just saying get on the land and do what all other responsible businesspeople do and follow -

Ms Finlay - Like battery hens.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, Ms Finlay, no, it does not mean we adopt the worst practices of farming. We adopt the best practices of farming. Farming practices that are not intensive -

Ms Finlay - They are fish.

Dr WOODRUFF - that do not treat sentient beings barbarously.

Ms Finlay - They are fish.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms Finlay, you will have your chance to contribute.

Dr WOODRUFF - We can choose to have the best practices of farming for our fish farming industry in Tasmania, something we can be proud of, something we can control and manage, something that is not affected by the heat of climate change and waters, which will keep going up. It is known now that it is going to keep getting hotter and hotter in our waters. It will be normal to have mass-mortality salmon events in summers to come unless something changes. It will be normal to have diseased fish on our beaches unless something changes.

I do not agree with Mr Abetz saying that there is absolutely no public health risk because there was mixed information that went to members of the community from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) who reported that the public health department had told them there was the potential for risk and that they should not touch or swim in water where there were dead, diseased fish and rank stinking fish oil.

We have had mixed messages from the government. It is obviously not on top of this because their reflex has been to hide everything about the operations of the salmon farming industry because they are so stinky, because it is obvious from the response of the EPA that they are not in charge of what is going on. They have no intention of providing us with information about what is happening.

We had the acting director of the EPA on radio last Friday morning and she could not tell us where the non-compliant waste management sites were. She could not tell us about the stocking densities. She could not tell us about the impacts on the native fish. She could not tell us because the EPA is not really interested in those matters. They are not doing the job they should be doing as an organisation that protects the environment. That is something for the Liberals to deal with.

However, we are here today talking about the proposal for a feasibility study, an independent consultant to undertake work to look around the world at what else can be done and how we can do it differently. The Greens have looked around the world from time to time and there are many places where land-based salmon operations are happening at varying scales. They are in operation today, we understand, in Chile, Norway, Scotland and Canada. Further developments have also been proposed in Iceland, Japan, the United States and other countries.

It is a fledgling industry and, as with any fledgling industry - I am reminded of Mr Jaensch, who was the minister responsible for environment at the time, talking about the development of a recycling industry. He was very clear that when you have a new industry, you have successes and you have failures. You have to trial things and you make mistakes, and you do it differently. We are not blind to the fact that this is a new industry, but we support what Mr Garland is saying. We have to give it a go because we have no other option in front of us.

We cannot continue with what we are doing. We cannot continue to have salmon mass-mortality events like this, with the cruelty, the antibiotics, the vast amounts of microplastics we are seeing in our waters, with the disease, the biosecurity risk, and the impacts on native fish, which has not been researched, so we do not have the information about how it is affecting other fish. These are all reasons why we cannot keep going down the path we have been.

What we can do is have a go, do as Canada did and make the forward-thinking decisions to ban open-net pen farming. Canada made that decision last year, and that will be banned in British Columbia by 2029. We are talking about a transition out of the water as quickly as possible and into land-based farms. We have a real opportunity here. Part of the work that will need to be done will be to look at the animal welfare issues, exactly as Ms Finlay has suggested; to look at the energy implications; to look at the water implications; and to look at how you manage the waste.

Part of any feasibility assessment for on-land fish farming has to compare what happens now, so we have to have a measure of the nutrient load, and the pollution from salmon farming that goes into our waterways. We have to have a balance of the ledger. We cannot look at the benefits of on-land fish farming without looking at the benefits and costs of leaving fish farms where they are. We know it is not measured properly and any independent assessment will say that, or if it is, the public does not have the information. We would certainly hope that that would be acquired through a feasibility study done like this. Yes, it would use water on land to have land-based fish farming. We use water in the water. We hose our fresh, palate-potable drinking water over fish to prevent them from disease outbreaks. We are already using that. We are already using vast amounts of energy to move them around on the waterway. We already use a huge part of our marine environment.

It would have very little impact on visual amenity for all the communities on the coastline if they were on land. It would have very little impact, if none, on people with noise, which is such a problem at the moment. It would have very little impact, if none, on the tourism economy. People could come here and they could swim in the water instead of having to stay out because it was full of diseased salmon. They could see our beautiful rivers and waterways that are not polluted by nutrients and that have the flatheads, seahorses, and dolphins back, and all the other life and creatures which have disappeared from the Huon and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and all the other rivers where there has been industrial-scale fish farming.

I will finish by saying that we thank Mr Garland for bringing this on, and we strongly support it. We hope that the Labor Party does. Who can really say no, at this point, to an independent, interstate consultant undertaking a feasibility study? What would be wrong with that? If we actually care about the future of fish farming in Tasmania, would we not want to have all the information in front of us so that we can have a genuine conversation about a way forward for a sustainable future for us all?

[12.32 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, normally I would stand and say that it is my pleasure to rise to speak on this Private Member's Time, and it is always my pleasure to speak about the salmon industry. However, I rise, I suppose, curious to speak on this matter before us today around seeking a report on moving the entire salmon industry in Tasmania from our marine environment to on-land. The reason why I say it is curious is because both the proponent of the motion and the Greens, who have just spoken, have said that they have done some research, they have looked at it, and they think it is the way to go for Tasmania.

The first word that comes to mind is that is a little naïve, I think. When you do the research and you understand what is actually happening across the world, would the Tasmanian community seek to support that in reality? It is always really easy to say, 'We do not like this, and we want that'. The reality is, would that be something that the constituencies of the Greens or of the crossbench would actually support as well?

When you do some very simple analysis of what is going on around the world where people are trialling land-based salmon production, in the global production it has been spoken this morning as though there is a thriving industry on land for Atlantic salmon. Less than 1 per cent, probably around half a percent of global production currently is being trialled, with intense difficulties.

Atlantic Sapphire has been mentioned as a leader in this space. It is the place that people always refer to when they say that there are successful on-land salmon farms occurring around the world. The repeated challenges they have had with their production, the amount of fish, the weight of fish, and with their finances, have been quite incredible. You only have to do a really quick search to see the realities of that. There have been multiple mass mortalities. Some were because of conditions, whether it be poor capacity to manage temperatures in the water, and some because of simple failures in the operational systems, like filters. There seems to be a magical suggestion that you take full salmon farming out of a marine environment, you relocate it onto land, and all the problems and challenges go away. It is just a simple task to farm fish on land. If that was the case, then everyone would be doing it. They would be doing it all around the world and they would have been doing it for decades.

One of the things that we know around the world is there is an increasing pressure to produce quality protein. The population of the world needs to find access to protein. Atlantic salmon farmed in Tasmania is some of the best. We know that farming salmon at the moment is one of the lowest carbon proteins available. In Tasmania, in the short period of time of this industry, they do it with incredible innovation. They do it with incredible passion and care and as a result, have produced and continue to produce some of the world's best farmed salmon proteins.

I want to touch on some of the contributions from the previous speakers because, I think, in reality people talk about wanting to always base information on fact and science. There is importance to put some reality around the contributions that have been made. When we talk about the capacity to produce farmed salmon, as I said, already less than 1 per cent of world's production is currently being trialled in on-land production. The Leader of the Greens says it will be out of sight, out of mind, no noise, no impact, and no one would be concerned. It would be happy days. The reality is, and the minister raised this himself, that the actual relative marine area that is used currently to farm salmon in Tasmania is quite insignificant compared to the on-land farming. The amount of protein that you can produce in a small area to high quality is less than what it takes on-land.

We have some incredible on-land protein producers - whether it be our beef, lamb, or pork in Tasmania, or even our chickens. The reality is if you lined up all the salmon pens currently active in Tasmania and you put them all in one area, it takes up about 1 square kilometre of land area. I always like to paint a picture to get some context of what that actually means and what it actually looks like. People are quite aware of Macquarie Point area. The Macquarie Point area is about the equivalent of the land area that it would take to collocate all the salmon pens in Tasmania at the moment. If you actually wanted to transfer the effort of marine-based farming to 100 per cent land-based farming, you would need to multiply that land area by about 130 or 140 times, about 135 square kilometres of land area.

I asked the Leader of the Greens, and I asked the proponent of the motion, where in Tasmania, and as the minister said, if actually the market said that we would do that in Tasmania - let us set that question aside for a minute - where in Tasmania would you want that

to be? Where would you want 136 Macquarie Points lined up?

Farming salmon 100 per cent on land in Tasmania needs salt water for the process so to be near our coastal areas would be important. There are challenges in Tasmania for the outfall of used saltwater resources in planning and approval. The equivalent amount of water that you would need just to fill the tanks to farm them on land is something like 160 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water. Now, water is a precious commodity. We hear that all the time. Our salt water - you need access to bring it in. Then you need to be able to do something with the salt water at the end once it has been used and it has not been reticulated. You need to refresh the systems and we do not have rules or support for that at the moment. The reality is the intensity of that operation on land not only would require the drawing from water but also from power.

We are restricted in terms of the renewable energy that we can continue to generate here because of the lack of ability for the Greens to come on board with supporting renewable energy projects. Last night in the other place, seeking to undermine Hydro's capacity to increase its joint venture relationships into new renewable energies, the proponent of the motion talked about -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - No interjections please, and the member does not need to take the interjections. Continue your contribution.

Ms FINLAY - The interjection stopped my flow of thinking. So I will say that again.

It is really interesting where the Greens and the proponent of the motion seek to transfer marine-farmed salmon 100 per cent onto land, but at the same time, actually in the same days, seek to undermine the capacity of Tasmanians to benefit from increased renewable energy generation. If you are going to move marine-based salmon farming onto land, you are going to need more water and more power: significantly more power, not just a little bit. The Leader of the Greens seemed to imply just a few buildings and a few places. It is not going to bother anyone. It is not going to have any noise or anything. There will not be any worries. Just a little bit more power, a little bit more water.

Initial estimates say that to recreate the current industry in Tasmania 100 per cent on-land would require the equivalent energy of powering a city of 1.2 million people. That is a lot of power. When the Greens do not support Robbins Island, do not support renewable energy coming into Tasmania, where would we get that from? That is a whole other conversation.

The member who proposed the motion said that in his calculations, the land area to transfer marine-based salmon farming onto land would be the equivalent of the land area of Whaleback Ridge. That is a lot of land. To actually have the land-based salmon farming on the equivalent land area of Whaleback Ridge would also require a generation project like Whaleback Ridge. Who is going to support that from the crossbench or from the Greens?

We set aside a question at the very beginning. These are all the challenges associated with land-based farming. We have not gone into the increased densities. I would ask - although I cannot do that and the Speaker will not allow me - the proponent of the motion and the Greens

to answer this question: what are the current stocking densities of salmon farms out in our marine environment? It is around 2 or 3 per cent.

I have been out to many sites, I have been on the water across Tasmania, both in the marine environment and in our inland waters, making sure that I actually go out and visit and meet with and talk, and see operations in real life. Often you get onto a pen and you are reminded that you cannot see the fish. The density is so low that you cannot actually even see them in there. You expect it, by the descriptions of the Greens and others in this place, to be a chocked up mass of fish in the ocean environment. Sometimes, it is really hard to see where they are.

One of the other challenges of land-based salmon farming would be increased densities. We spoke about some of the challenges at Atlantic Sapphire of filtration problems, temperature problems, and mass mortalities. There have also been animal welfare problems. There are a lot of challenges with this very minute current production happening across the world with these facilities.

That does not actually even consider the question, which is: if land-based salmon farming were acceptable to the community in these large facilities, would it actually happen in Tasmania? Tasmanian salmon farming is Australia's most valuable seafood sector. It is the largest sector in our primary industries in Tasmania. It collectively employs about 5000 beautiful Tasmanians - Tasmanians who do care.

One of the things that the leader of the Greens said is that members of our salmon farming community at the moment are being pressured or forced to do the work that they are doing in the clean-up for the incredibly devastating mortalities that we have seen. The people who I am speaking to - there is no doubt that there is exhaustion and overwhelm and devastation around what has happened right now - however, people are willingly, in their extra time and in their days off, going to do all that they can to correct what has happened.

They have issued apologies for what happened. Nobody accepts that what has happened and the impact of that on our beaches and with the imageries that we are seeing is okay. No-one is saying it is okay, but it is an extraordinary event. It is a rare event. It is being presented by people in this place as the ordinary operations of salmon farming in Tasmania. That is not true. It is not fair. It is not fair to the people who have worked in these farms and continue to create the innovation in these places, to say that. We know that the people who farm salmon across Tasmania are some of the brightest, most innovative, most caring people who you could come across in a primary industries sector.

The 5000 people and their families and the communities that they live in, the schools that they go to, the footy teams that they play in, the bakeries that they eat at, the petrol stations that they pump their fuel at - they actually would not have jobs. Tasmania has birthed some of the world's best innovations. It is one of our greatest success stories. I will stand and back it every day. If we moved to 100 per cent on-land salmon farming - if there was a move to do it, it would not happen in Tasmania. What would happen is the costs of the power equivalent of a city of 1.2 million people, the increased energy costs, the increased water costs, and the increased operational costs would drive up the price of salmon. It would no longer be financially viable to do it in Tasmania. Therefore, it would be done close to market. People know the reality of that. That is how systems work. That is how economies work. That industry would be lost to Tasmania.

I have met people on the west coast, I have met people down in the south and in the north who are in their third generation. We have parents who started in the industry some time ago, and their kids and their kids are working together. It is incredible. In a short period of time you have families over time all working together. I read into the *Hansard* - it may have been last year, perhaps the year before - quite an emotional recount from someone on the west coast who said that by being supported by, and almost raised by, the salmon industry, it has given him purpose and a sense of self in a way. He has been cared for by the company and trained and grown and evolved as a person. Now, his kids are working with him, in a way where he never thought he would have had that opportunity or that anyone would give him that opportunity.

You need to remember that this move to seek to move salmon farming from the marine environment to the land environment would see that gone. It would see that gone in some of the smallest coastal or regional/remote communities in Tasmania. It would signal the end to many towns. That would then impact their schools, their hospitals, and the services and shops that are provided in those areas.

It is naïve to say this is the solution, and that it would magically come without any challenges or any concerns. It is disrespectful. There is no doubt that right now there is something devastating happening. Nobody says that that is okay. The overall conversation to lift it beyond what is happening now without offering care or concern to the salmon workers and saying therefore that everything is bad, is so disrespectful. It is so hurtful to people who are overwhelmed, exhausted and devastated about what they are working with right now.

I spent a lot of time responding to and commenting on where the Greens or the person who has brought forward this motion has been at. Some people say that the government and Labor are aligned around the salmon industry. I want to spend a minute on some things we are and some things we are not. I would say that Tasmanian Labor - whether it be through our leader, our members from Braddon, our members from Franklin, or anyone in our PLP - we stand really clearly and strongly with the salmon industry. We always do. We never falter. We never hesitate. We never undermine the incredible people who farm salmon in Tasmania.

That is not the same for this government. It is not the same for this government that never stand strong, that often delay, that pause, and that in fact create some of the circumstances for the negativity to rise up. I have spoken on this in this place previously, but under former ministers, such as Mr Barnett, a moratorium was put on this industry. If this government actually did always truly believe in this industry, they would not have put a moratorium on it. The moratorium provided an environment where the negativity could rise up. I think it started the challenges at Macquarie Harbour. It has seen inappropriate concerns raised, and given voice to that. I say that this government could do better and should not have placed a moratorium on the industry just this last week.

I agree with the leader of the Greens. It is these moments in these situations that we need to have the strongest representation from our EPA. There are high expectations. The regulations across our salmon industry are some of the greatest in number and the strongest internationally. The EPA do a great job to present, report, analyse and work with industry and the community around the salmon industry. Unfortunately, the Premier and the government have let Tasmanians and our salmon farmers down with the extensive delay in appointing a full-time director of the EPA.

Last year in September, the former director, Wes Ford, announced that he was going to be leaving. They started the process of looking for a replacement in November. We still do not have a permanent appointment. That is a matter of urgency.

That is one of the most significant appointments happening in Tasmania right now. That appointment has not happened and it is letting Tasmanians down and it is letting salmon farmers down. I would say the moratorium, the lack of capacity for this government to appoint a permanent director to the EPA, and statements that have been shared in the Chamber today, like the salmon industry has lost social licence in Tasmania - for a former minister, minister Palmer, to say that when the statistics and the evidence shows that in fact, Tasmanians do support the salmon industry.

There are a number of people in Tasmania who express concern with ongoing operations and regular operations from time to time. In this moment, all Tasmanians, all caring Tasmanians are concerned about this current event. If this event had happened in a chicken operation or a cattle operation, whether it had happened in a piggery, the first reaction of people is an outpour of concern, of worry, of how can we help, what can we do? I think that the majority of Tasmanians are in that place right now.

Salmon farmers and the companies themselves have recognised and apologised for what is happening in this rare event that has happened from an element that naturally occurs in the water, coupled with other things that have happened to cause this outcome.

The reality is that when this moment passes, the ongoing operations of the companies are always seeking to improve. They are always working on innovations. They are always working on research. They are always working on the way that they can continue to produce protein for Tasmania, Australia, and the world. We stand and support them for that. The government themselves have not given salmon farmers or Tasmanians much help along the way.

On this motion before us in this place, it is not necessary to do an investigation into transferring marine based farming onto land because we know that it has not been found to be working anywhere else; less than 1 per cent of global production, the costs, the challenges, the increased densities would mean that it is not actually as good a way of doing it as it is in the marine environment now. If, in fact, it was or sometime in the future it does become, it would be taken from Tasmania and Tasmanian workers would be put at a disadvantage and lose those opportunities of these great well paid jobs around regional Tasmania.

Tasmanian Labor does not support the motion before the House. We absolutely support salmon farmers and the people working across Tasmania and we believe that the right decision here is for a decision based on information. The information before us is that moving salmon farming from the marine environment on land is not credible.

What we do see, and what is happening with massive investments in Tasmania right now is if you grow out your fish for longer on land and then they spend more time in the marine environment, that is good for a whole lot of reasons. They are the investments that we are having in Tasmania right now and they are the things that we should be backing in and supporting. The salmon farms all across Tasmania continue to do that great work and continue to be an industry that we are proud of.

[12.53 p.m.]

Mrs BESWICK (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise in support of Mr Garland's motion regarding the salmon farming industry in Tasmania. Let me start by saying, I fully appreciate and understand the concerns raised in this motion. The recent mass mortality events, particularly in the lower D'Entrecasteaux Channel, are deeply troubling. The impact on the environment, the industry and the broader community is significant and deserves our attention.

I think the member for Bass has made some very good points about why it is probably not feasible to move it on to land, but I think it is really healthy to do in a feasibility study and actually look into that, have that information and prove that. We need to know. We cannot just assume this information.

Concerns expressed by environmental growth scientists and members of the community are valid and deserve to be taken seriously. Equally, we must recognise the profound impact these events have had on Tasmanian industry and those who rely on salmon farming for their livelihoods.

Time expired.

The SPEAKER (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House -

AYES 9

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Mrs Beswick
Ms Burnet (Teller)
Mr Garland
Ms Johnston
Mrs Pentland
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff

NOES 22

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Farrell (Teller)
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Willie
Mr Winter
Mr Wood

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Government Business Enterprise Privatisation - Establishment of Select Committee

[2.31 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House:-

- (1) Notes the Premier, Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP's announcement on Tuesday 4 March 2025 that his Government is considering the sale of Tasmanian Government Businesses and other entities.
- (2) Establishes a Select Committee, with the power to send for persons, papers and records, to inquire into and report upon the potential sale of Government businesses and other entities, with the following terms of reference and rules: -
 - (a) that the Committee inquire into and report upon the following: -
 - (i) the Tasmanian Government's plans to sell government businesses and other entities, and the potential impacts;
 - (ii) the current performance of Government businesses, including governance, financial outcomes, capital delivery and their contribution to Tasmania's broader economic objectives; and
 - (iii) any other matters incidental thereto.
 - (b) that the Committee consist of six members: two nominated by the Premier, two nominated by the Leader of the Opposition, one nominated by the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens, and the Member for Braddon, Mrs Beswick.
 - (c) that the Committee report by 1 February 2026.

I rise today to speak about something that has been on the lips of community members I have spoken to, particularly over the last eight days since the Premier announced his new plan - in fact, made two consecutive announcements.

The first announcement the government made in the last 10 days is that there is a budget crisis. They have finally admitted that, after 11 years and consecutive record cash deficits, fiscal deficits by this Premier, that there is a major budget crisis. They say that budget crisis can only be solved by selling Tasmania's assets. This was not put on the agenda by the government last year at the election and is something they have no mandate for. It is something Tasmanians have seen time and time again in terms of what the Liberals agenda is, and it is something they have previously ruled out.

The House has an opportunity today to demonstrate that it is holding the government to account, that it is here to provide scrutiny on government plans, particularly an agenda as

radical as this. This is an announced fire sale by the Premier of the assets Tasmanians built together over 100 years, including our renewable energy businesses, the assets we helped to build, our public transport assets and, of course, the *Spirits of Tasmania*. These are businesses that are known and loved and have been built by Tasmanians that are now up for sale. The government is not putting these up for sale for a strategic reason or imperative. The government says these assets are up for sale because it has run out of money. That is what the Liberals did up until 1998, and that is what they have done up until 2025.

The warning bells on the situation have been ringing for at least four years. In a report to government four years ago, Treasury's long-term forecasts demonstrated that if corrective action were not taken then, the size of the deficits would continue to expand and the problems would get worse. The chickens have come home to roost because that is where we are at today, where the size of the corrective action is massive and the only approach this Liberal government can see is to sell the assets that have been delivering for Tasmanians for decades.

This is a policy to sell Tasmania's future. Tasmanians will see this privatisation policy as leading them to pay higher prices for power and higher prices for car registration and public transport. They know that because it is exactly what has happened in other states. I continue to ask the Premier to name one state or territory where privatisation has worked, and he is still yet to provide us with an answer. That is the sort of thing an inquiry could get to the bottom of. I believe an inquiry by this House is an important piece of scrutiny this House can use to interrogate the government's plan, such as it is, and interrogate those people charged with looking after our GBEs and the governance of them.

Tasmanians are shocked by this policy. I had the opportunity to do a street stall with Labor MLC Luke Edmunds last week and the number one issue - in fact, the only issue raised with me for a couple of hours was the government's plan to privatise assets. They must be feeling the heat over there, the desperation of this policy. Up until a month ago they were saying they had a pathway to surplus and that they were good financial managers. That claim is in tatters. This inquiry needs to happen so that we can inquire into the government's plan, into what has happened in other states and territories, and the major governance overhaul that has failed to arise so far under this government. Tasmanians expect to have a government that has their best interests at heart. They clearly do not with this policy.

Tasmanians remember TasRail. TasRail was sold and its assets were stripped. The company threatened to shut down rail services in the state unless the government gave it \$100 million a year, if you can believe it. Eventually, the Tasmanian Labor government had to buy TasRail back so that we could have a proper rail system and the freight service Tasmanians need, particularly from the south to the north, but all over the state.

The Tamar Valley Power Station: attempted sale by the government, though covered up. That nearly blacked out the state. It cost Tasmanians directly \$180 million, as the Liberal government rolled out diesel generators to cover up their mess.

We have seen in New South Wales that the port was sold with secret clauses that effectively created an artificial monopoly for Port Botany; \$74 million was wasted on consultants, lawyers and marketing, and the state lost billions of dollars for its schools and hospitals when the assets were sold.

South Australia had the highest power prices in the nation, as well as a 32 per cent increase in blackouts after the privatisation of the assets there.

We have seen this time and time again in other states, and Tasmanians have made their views on this matter really clear. They do not want to see our assets sold and they do not want to pay for the Tasmanian Liberal government having led us to this situation, so an inquiry is needed. An inquiry is needed, as I said, for a number of reasons.

The first one I want to go to is the government's issues that we have seen. TT-Line is one of Tasmania's favourite companies. It is something that Tasmanians know and love because for 40 years since there was a market failure on Bass Strait and the government needed to intervene. For 40 years we have been providing a publicly-owned shipping service for passengers and later for freight that has delivered competition across Bass Strait, has delivered more tourists into the state, and has allowed Tasmanians to go and see the rest of the country. The public ownership of that has been backed in by industry and also by the tourism industry.

I noted in the submission made by the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT) to the government's review that they said very clearly, 'Do not privatise TT-Line, do not privatise it'. I will give you a couple of reasons why they should not. The first is that day sailings may not be commercial for the operator, but they are absolutely necessary at the moment to support our tourism industry that was built up and expecting a 40 per cent increase in passengers and freight, and by this stage have made their investments. The best and only thing the government is able to do without those new ships is to add more day sailings.

The government has been able to do that to respond to the tourism industry immediately, though a little bit later than we would have liked, to back in the tourism industry. The public ownership has meant that governments have been able to do things like subsidised fares so that the Tasmanian tourism industry, when it needs it, can make sure it has access to as many tourists as possible. Public ownership of the ships has added much needed diversity across Bass Strait, also competition and it should absolutely continue on that, yet it is on the chopping block.

An inquiry could get into these issues by talking to people at TT-Line, talking to people within the tourism industry, within the freight area, which is so reliant on making sure they have access to those ships and all the risks involved in the privatisation of it, and the governance around TT-Line as well.

The governance of TT-Line has been diabolically bad. There has been an incredible failure of governance. One of the reasons why we announced last year a major governance reform proposal or policy, rather than putting a submission in as the Premier urged earlier today, is because we actually issued a policy. We stood up and said here is what we are going to do. We are going to make sure that there is not one minister who is a shareholder minister at the same time. We are going to make sure there are always multiple ministers in charge. We are going to make sure that the directors cannot be sitting on these boards for years and years of time and they cannot be sitting on multiple boards. We want to make sure that there is good governance in place by people who know what they are doing which is not what happened with TT-Line.

We had a minister in place who was in charge both of TasPorts and TT-Line on his own for a long period of time. He failed to ask the questions and do the due diligence that he should

have and he should have taken responsibility and ultimately, he had to, because this House flexed its muscle and showed the government who is boss. It should not have come to that. It should not have come to this House to make those decisions. It should have been down to a premier in a government and a governance structure that avoided exactly what happened. I believe that is why part of this interrogation needs to be about the governance structures involved with not just TT-Line, but other boards as well.

The concern we have had about Hydro Tasmania and the governance of Hydro has been long running. This is a company that has overseen for decades our major industrials and the direct power price agreements that they have in place with major industrials which has kept prices low.

There are some people who do not agree with the way that Hydro directly deals with major industrials. I have to say that the direct dealing with Hydro with our major industrials has been one of the economic cornerstones of our economy. I hear people talk about what are the drivers for our economy all the time, but the one thing people should know is that our major industrials are actually the engine room for our economy. Up at Bell Bay, you see Liberty Bell Bay and the work they are doing employing hundreds of people. Rio Tinto, hundreds of people. If you look at Boyer and Nyrstar in the south, what they have been doing has been all about the fact they have been able to get access to cheap, reliable electricity.

In the future, the fact that it comes from a renewable source is going to be more important for the way they market their products. That has come from Hydro Tasmania being there in public ownership but also being governed.

The change that has happened though over the last 10 years is that there appears to have been a push from within the board that Tasmanians do not pay Tasmanian prices anymore and a reluctance from the government to get involved, a reluctance to get involved to say, 'Actually our major industrials should be supported'. They are here because of the support they have received from successive governments and they should pay Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power.

The major risk for our economy out of the attempted privatisation of TasNetworks is also about price and governance. TasNetworks is a big input into the prices paid by major industrials: a very big input. Power prices paid by major industrials up to about a quarter can be paid in terms of transmission costs which continue to go up and will go up by more if it is privatised. We are concerned about these issues, and part of an inquiry means that we can actually bring in these businesses in to provide their evidence to outline what risks they see. Perhaps they do see benefits, though I highly doubt it. The risks involved here for major industrials are really significant and should not be lost on anyone.

The example again of TT-Line. Last year, it is fair to say that we asked a lot of questions about TT-Line and the ships. A lot of those questions happened in this place. Those in the Chamber will know how difficult it was to get information out of the government. We did not just have to ask the same question once, we often had to ask it seven times in order to get a response. The big piece of work that was done in getting answers to the questions, the \$80 million bailout for a Finnish shipbuilder, in terms of the fact that they knew right from April that the port was not going to be available, the berth was not going to be available for the new ships. Yes, some of that came out in the House, but it also came out during the committee hearing process when the Public Accounts Committee, a committee of parliament, were able

to interrogate ministers, interrogate the board and find out exactly what was happening. Obviously, Question Time and the parliament provides an ability for us to ask questions. We do not often get an answer, but a committee hearing does. This opportunity is for the House to be able to ask those questions, not just here in the House, as we will continue to do, but also in a committee setting, where I think it is really important.

This government does not have a very good record of being open and transparent. Today, we heard the Premier being asked twice about whether there was a title for the Treasury building. Honestly, he knew that there was not a title. We hear this afternoon that the government has admitted that there is no title and there has not been for four years. Just say it, just give the answer. Instead, we had this obfuscation for - how many minutes did it take? It felt like a lifetime, honourable Speaker, but eventually we get the answers. That is our job, to get answers.

It took nearly a year of work, as I said, from the Labor Party to expose the TT-Line scandal, but the role of the committee was important. Just as the TT-Line was a really important issue for Tasmanians, the proposed sell off of our assets will be even bigger this year: even bigger in terms of Tasmania's interest in Tasmanian politics because they know this really affects them. This is major new policy. There is no mandate for it and it is risky. It will have major implications on the price of essential services like energy, car registration, public transport, as well as the ability for governments to fund services like schools and hospitals.

The Premier has been trying to make out like dividends are a dirty word in the last week. I have noticed the attacks being that if you are taking dividends then you are going to put prices up. Dividends have been a fact of life for Tasmanian governments for decades now and they have been something that have helped to sustain our budget. They have certainly been one that this government has lent on very heavily. Not just Hydro Tasmania, as the Premier wants people to believe, but also MAIB. It is risky to sell these key assets and the parliament should hear from the people who are impacted by them, by consumers who are potentially impacted by higher car registration. We pay half the price they do in the ACT. People should hear from renewable energy proponents.

I would like to hear from businesses like ACEN that want to build a wind farm at Robbins Island and relied on TasNetworks to connect them back into the grid and into Marinus. I would like to hear from farmers and what they see as the risk of selling Tasmania Irrigation. What do they think of the plan to sell TT-Line, a major freight carrier? What do the major industrials think? What does the tourism industry think? What does the freight sector think? What do the thousands of workers at the GBEs think? I think we should bring them in and make sure that their views are heard. This is not a small policy. This is a radical policy. It is a huge change in the Tasmanian economic climate. We have seen the government refuse to admit that they had a problem for years and years. Finally they admit it at the same time as they make this argument for privatisation.

I will go to the motion itself. The motion establishes a select committee with the power to send for persons, papers, and records. This is the establishment of a committee specifically dedicated to dealing with the biggest economic issue Tasmania faces today, thanks to the announcement last week. It means that we are inquiring and reporting on the potential sale of government businesses and other entities.

The terms of reference are as follows: we want to inquire into the government's plans to sell government businesses and other entities and their potential impacts. That means potential impacts on dividends, prices, and Tasmanian services that we are so heavily reliant on, and the current performance of the government businesses, including their governance, financial outcomes, capital delivery, and their contribution to the broader economic objectives of this place. I know that is really important to members on the crossbench, who have been, like me I think, scratching their heads as to how this all happened with the *Spirit of Tasmania* fiasco. How did it happen that our governance fell down so dramatically we ended up with a billion dollars' worth of ships in the wrong hemisphere, on the wrong side of the world, unable to do the job that we spent a billion dollars paying for?

That is really important. These projects do not just exist within TT-Line. We have also seen major failures of governance at TasPorts. TasPorts says that they have made no mistakes and they have not done anything wrong when it comes to the TT-Line. I sat there when Ms Dow asked that question last year. I am frankly still staggered by it. I am staggered that we had a minister who was prepared to sit there next to the acting chair at the time and basically agree with them. There have been major failures by TasPorts, particularly in the delivery of infrastructure.

We still have a situation where the *Nuyina*, a massive piece of Tasmanian economic infrastructure, owned and operated by the Australian government so that Hobart could be the Antarctic gateway, is unable to refuel in southern Tasmania. We have the issues at the Burnie port. It is basically falling apart. We have the issue in the Mersey, where TasPorts has failed to deliver that infrastructure. If you listen to the evidence provided by TT-Line, it stood in the way of them getting started on the project. It is the biggest infrastructure stuff-up and it deserves its own piece in the broader question about the governance of these businesses.

These are important issues that Tasmanians will face. The point I want to impress upon people here is that this is not something that will go away overnight. This is now the government's only approach to dealing with the budget debt and deficit position. They have announced that their only way to pay down the debt is to sell our assets. My argument to them, already looking at the numbers, is that this is actually going to make things worse. It is the sort of thing an inquiry could look into.

If they now look to put this money into a so-called future fund or a sovereign wealth fund - a so-called sovereign wealth fund - here is the first problem. By putting this money into a sovereign wealth fund, you are not paying down debt. You might be offsetting debt. I cannot understand the logic behind selling assets in the first place. Second, if you do put the money into a sovereign wealth fund, by the time they sell these assets, if they are allowed to get away with it, Tasmania will have billions of dollars of debt. Instead of paying it down, they want to set up a sovereign wealth fund. If they wanted to set up a sovereign wealth fund, they should have done it when they started. They inherited zero dollars in net debt from Tasmanian Labor when they came into office. The minister shakes his head today. I am not sure if he is going to make a counter argument to that.

The situation we are in is entirely the fault of the Tasmanian Liberal government. If you read Saul Eslake's report, he says exactly that. These are policy decisions, direct impacts of decisions made by the Tasmanian minority Liberal government. That is the fact of it. The majority of the damage has been done over the course of the last three financial years - not so coincidentally at the time when Jeremy Rockliff has been the Premier of Tasmania. The

damage has been done in the last three years. The damage will hurt Tasmanian families and the Tasmanian budget for decades to come. We get to this point now where we are looking to asset sales.

The concern about governance issues here is that we must be able to get to the bottom of them by asking these questions. We heard in 2024, only last year during the GBE estimates, MAIB outlining the concerns they had about - well, not outlining the concerns, extolling the virtues of public ownership of MAIB. The chair of MAIB said, 'The fact that we publicly own this asset is something that keeps prices low and something that delivers a better quality of service for Tasmanians'. That is from the board. That is the sort of question and conversation that we will be able to have as part of this inquiry.

When we speak to people within the insurance industry, they tell us that Tasmania's MAIB model is the best in the country, that our public ownership of this asset has been the thing that has kept prices low. It has been the thing that has made sure it is responsive to those people at their worst time, when they need it. That is a model which is directly under threat from the fire sale. It is without a strategic imperative. It is just purely a fire sale.

Tasmania Labor does not support the privatisation agenda of the Liberals. We do not support it because we can see this is the wrong direction. We also believe this parliament has a job to do. This parliament needs to hold this government to account and ask the questions, not just here, but in a committee to make sure that we have every piece of information.

I want to know whether Aurora and Momentum Energy are up for sale. Hearing the answer this morning, I think it is yes. I want to know what the plan for TT-Line is, whether they have already opened discussions about TT-Line and the potential sale of our new ships before they even arrive. I want to know whether the Premier is honest when he says that Hydro is not up for sale. It certainly seems like Momentum Energy, one of its subsidiaries, is. I want to know what the impact on Tasmanian road users will be through the sale of MAIB. We cannot allow this to just sail through without it being properly interrogated. As policymakers and legislators, we have a responsibility to make sure a radical idea like this is properly scrutinised.

This goes to a history of the Liberal Party that has led us to this point, in summary. We have a government that has overseen the largest budget deficits in Tasmanian history, time and time again. The response from them has been to do nothing about it until it was too late. They are now looking to sell our assets. We simply will not stand for it.

The right way for this House - and I ask for the support of the House in doing this - is to make our views clearly known but also open up a committee process into interrogating every aspect of these sales. We cannot rely on the government to release information. We know we cannot, because they do not tell the truth. This process will be important for us to get access to chairs and CEOs of existing GBEs: the peak bodies that represent the tourism industry, the freight sector, transport, logistics, the peak bodies that rely on having public ownership of these assets, for us to get access to all the information about projected profits within the businesses, about potential processes for offloading these businesses, and not just the GBEs, but also the Land Titles Office. Questions were asked about that today. It is not just the government businesses, it is the Land Titles Office. What is their plan?

Mr Willie - Goodness me, what is -

The SPEAKER - It seems to be happening a little bit.

Mr WINTER - It felt like the lights were about to go.

Mr Willie - We have not privatised the parliament, have we?

The SPEAKER - Keep going as long as the parliament lights are still on.

Mr WINTER - Honourable Speaker, I ask for the support of the House to support this motion. This is going to be the biggest issue in Tasmania's economy over the course of the next 12 months or so. The date for the committee to end has been deliberately set at February next year to give it the time and space to do exactly what it should. That is to enquire, to ask questions and hold this government account. I ask the support of the Chamber to allow us to do that.

[2.55 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Deputy Speaker, what a sad, half-hearted and lacklustre performance from the Leader of the Opposition. I have never seen the opposition so energised during Question Time as they were today when they saw and witnessed the discomfort of their own leader having been exposed as the Groucho Marx of the Tasmanian Parliament. What was Groucho's famous quote? 'If you do not like my principles ... well, I have others'. That is clearly the case for the Leader of the Opposition. He had these wonderful principles of privatisation. He was going to be a new Labor candidate, a new Labor leader of Paul Keating, ready to reform. Indeed, I am sure that 27 November 2015 is well and truly etched in the Leader of the Opposition's mind.

Mr Willie cannot help himself but smile at the discomfort and I am seeing, this Willie-Haddad alliance coming together a bit. We know why you came to the lower House, Mr Willie, and you are just watching this debate unfold, thinking things may be moving on a little bit faster than you had anticipated.

Coming back to the issue at stake, if the Leader of the Opposition is genuinely opposed, as he now claims, but we are not really sure where this conversion on the road to Damascus was - clearly not on 27 November 2015. Was it when he desperately sought his preselection or desperately sought the leadership of the Labor Party? Did he make some sort of a deal to say yes, Groucho Marx-style? 'I will jettison those principles and I will adopt a new set of principles to enable me to become a candidate, a member and/or a leader. A true leader is someone who does have principles, does have integrity, does have consistency which then leads to community respect.

The Leader of the Opposition today, or indeed about a week or so ago, opened himself up to the disrespect of the community because they know he says one thing one day and then the exact opposite the next.

Mr Willie interjecting.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, members on my left. You have two warnings, Mr Willie.

Mr ABETZ - Indeed, today, he was still asking the question: will people be better off in the event of privatisation? The Premier quoted none other than Mr Winter where he talked about the mums and dads and the businesses all being better off. He said:

Research shows Victoria where electricity assets are privatised, they pay less for electricity and that means every single mum and dad business and home pays less.

That was Mr Winter's considered opinion and that which he sought to bring to the public domain, to the public discourse in support of privatisation. Today, this is just so radical, so unthinkable that it has to be opposed.

Which is it? The people of Tasmania are entitled to ask the question: is the Leader of the Opposition the man of 27 November 2015 or the man of 12 March 2025? Mr Winter has to provide that explanation to the people of Tasmania.

The other interesting thing is that on the Notice Paper as we speak, we have this motion which the Leader of the Opposition has moved, but he also has another motion absolutely opposing privatisation. If you have already made your mind up, do not go on with this charade of an inquiry, when you already know what your little pencil is going to write at the end of the inquiry. You have already made up your mind, allegedly, but of course you have changed your mind once -

Mr Willie - You have changed your argument twice already.

Mr ABETZ - We give you the opportunity to change your mind again, and you never know, at the right time there might be a lucid moment with the Leader of the Opposition where he does back in the questioning of how we can deliver services better for the people of Tasmania. That is all that the government has embarked upon. We are willing to ask the questions. We are willing to ask and say, 'How can our government business enterprises, our state owned corporations, do business even better?'

The Leader of the Opposition mentions the Motor Accident Insurance Board. I happened to be the minister responsible. Fantastic organisation, fantastic Chair, fantastic CEO. You know what, as minister, I still want to know whether they can do better. That is what I ask of myself day after day. Can you do better? Can you achieve something more? Can you be of better service? Those sorts of questions are right and proper, but that was condemned by the Leader of the Opposition in response to the state of the state address, yet here he is in the parliament today moving a motion doing exactly that. That which he condemned a week ago is now all of a sudden a great Labor initiative, just copycatting that which the government suggested will be undertaken by economist, Saul Eslake. He will be going through that methodically with qualifications to do so. Once again, it will be advice to government. It will be considered in due course.

Mr Willie - Ignored, like his last report.

Mr ABETZ - Mr Willie interjects. I am sure he is not on his third warning, but I am sure he would like to contribute to this debate, but I will not bait you too much, Mr Willie.

Mr Willie - It would be very boring if he does not.

Mr ABETZ - I think he should be able to make a contribution to the debate, but what we need are those questions being asked. How can we deliver better for the people of Tasmania with the various business enterprises? Nobody should be afraid of asking the questions let alone getting a considered answer. It is the extreme ideology of those who say we do not want to ask the question, but no matter what, public ownership will always be better.

As we had a debate recently in this place about tourism and privatisation, the hapless Labor Party had to be reminded that there was federal Labor that privatised an airline on which Tasmania heavily relies for its tourism industry and which the Hobart Airport delivers or allows them to land and take off again - also privatised, this time by a state Labor government. You had federal and state Labor embracing privatisation. Is there anybody in this Chamber other than possibly the Greens who would really argue for the public ownership of Qantas and the Hobart Airport? Nobody says that was the wrong decision. Why? Because to their credit, the federal Labor government and the state Labor government were willing to ask the question at the time, get the answer and then act accordingly. Some of us might think the airport was sold a little bit cheap, but that is another argument.

Has it in any way negatively impacted our tourism sector or visitation rates to Tasmania? Absolutely not. Therefore, there comes in anybody's objective mindset, the possibility that you can have privatisation and work it for the betterment of the community and the economy and for job creation.

The Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about fire sales, that we are going to sell all the assets. No, none of that. We have not committed to any of that. What we have committed to is a full scoping and consideration of each and every enterprise to ascertain whether it can provide its services better. In the event that the argument is made in a sustainable and sensible way that privatisation might see an even better return for the people of Tasmania, then that is something we should be adopting. We should not be scared of asking the question and getting the answer, just as Mr Winter's forebears in the Labor Party did, and did so effectively.

On 27 November, we even heard the Leader of the Opposition say, in relation to energy, which was the topic of the day for Question Time, until he had certain quotes placed back at him that he quickly switched tactic to something else:

So, we are not in the space any more, at least during this election cycle, where we can actually talk about what assets Tasmania should own. There is a whole bunch of areas, including Entura, but there is also, um, for example, um, um, TasNetworks.

TasNetworks was up for sale when Mr Winter had his lucid moment of understanding that there might be a situation where TasNetworks could possibly be for sale. He went on telling us about the research that I had previously quoted. The interesting thing is the Labor Party's internal machinations, because why was Mr Winter so vehemently opposed -

Mr Winter - Are you arguing against a committee or what?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ABETZ - It was, if the media reports at the time are correct, because he was believed to be a supporter of privatisation. You did not actually have to believe he was because he said

so himself. It came out of his own mouth. That is why the left of the Labor Party was so sceptical. Today, about a decade or so later, he pretends he is a remade man. Most of us would say, unfortunately, he has sold his political soul for the benefit of being allowed to be the leader.

Ms Dow - What do you think about the committee?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Abetz, just excuse me for a second. The Speaker has asked me to remain faithful to the rulings and decisions she made earlier in the day, which puts Mr Willie and Ms Dow on two warnings each, as well as Mr Ellis, who has been interjecting in support of Mr Abetz. I ask that Mr Abetz be heard in silence for the remainder of his contribution.

Mr ABETZ - Thank you for your protection, Deputy Speaker. Any supportive interjection from Mr Ellis would be greatly appreciated by me, and I am sure the Chamber at large because it will be a great contribution to this debate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - I appreciate your assistance as well, Mr Abetz.

Mr ABETZ - Always here to help, Deputy Speaker. We have enlisted the services of economist Saul Eslake and we are looking forward to what he might be able to tell us, to provide us with his views. He has provided the government with reports in the past, some of which I agree with, other aspects that I do not. I had lunch with him just the other day to have a chat about these matters and we agreed not to talk about what we had discussed, so I will not. Suffice to say that being an economist is not an exact science. There will be competing interests, competing views that always have to be considered in these assessments. However, I think somebody of Mr Eslake's calibre will be a worthy contribution, just as much as his contribution to the stadium debate was good, as was Dr Gruen's - both eminent economists with differing views. I am happy to take those into account, as any good government ought to be able to take competing views into account and consider the way forward.

Also, keep in mind that I would suggest to those who are wondering how they may or may not vote on this, it is good to ask these questions. That is why the government will be supporting this motion, because it is something that the government said should occur. That is why we had Mr Eslake - and now Mr Winter playing me too, in contradiction to his outright opposition, is now willing to engage and talk about these matters.

The damning revelations this morning of Mr Winter's history in this area show a mishmash of contradictory public statements and alleged principles he thinks he is going to die in a ditch over - well, he has a few things now. He can decide whether he supports privatisation or he does not. He can decide whether he wants to support one of his motions on the notice paper, which is to have a full-scale inquiry, or one to reject it outright. He could have cut things pretty short if he wanted to and obviated the need for an inquiry.

I will offer the Leader of the Opposition some gratuitous advice: if you lose the trust of the people, if you speak with forked tongue; if you come out allegedly being principled in one area and then do the big flip-flop and assert the exact opposite, you will lose that fundamental ingredient of political life, which is respect. That is what will be now hanging around the Leader of the Opposition's neck for the rest of his period as Leader of the Opposition because he has lost respect. He has lost the regard of the people because of the two-faced approach. Speaking with a forked tongue is never something that people warm to. They do have - if I can use the

term - their 'BS detector' on for members of parliament and those of us in public life. A lack of consistency usually indicates a lack of integrity, which then translates into a lack of respect.

I would like to move an amendment because I think we need a degree of certainty in this debate. Those areas that might be ruled in or out should be provided with a degree of certainty. On behalf of the government, I move -

In paragraph 2(c) -

Delete 'report by 1 February 2026'

Insert instead 'report by 30 June 2025'.

That will provide greater clarity and greater certainty to those involved. Otherwise, what will happen is that this debate will go on through until February next year and then possibly even further. Whether members agree or disagree with privatisation, et cetera, having a more truncated reporting time will allow the parliament to get on with it and end any -

Mr Winter - Sorry, minister, what date was that?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Minister, can you please hand the amendment to the - thank you.

Mr Bayley - Do you have one for the rest of us?

Mr ABETZ - I do indeed, Mr Bayley, although I thought the detail of the amendment was not that complicated, to go from 1 February 2026 to 1 August 2025.

Mr Bayley - Certainly not.

Mr ABETZ - Nevertheless, I have it in writing especially -

Mr Winter - This says 30 June.

Mr Bayley - This says 30 June 2025.

Mr ABETZ - Sorry?

Mr Bayley - This is 30 June. You said 1 August. Thanks for clarity.

Ms Ogilvie - Do you want June or August? You can amend your papers. If you want August on the system -

Mr ABETZ - I do have on the paper, sorry, 30 June. I stand corrected.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - It is 30 June?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, to substitute 30 June. Thank you for drawing that to my attention, Mr Bayley. I should have been more gracious to you in acknowledging that.

Deputy Speaker, the government supports the inquiry because that is exactly the task that we have embarked upon. The parliament coming on the journey with us is exactly what we want. We want the public to come on the journey with us so that we can find out all the detail necessary to ascertain whether or not we move forward with the various proposals.

Mr Bayley - By way of interjection, on indulgence, can you tell us when Saul Eslake is going to report on his process so that we can consider it against your date?

Mr ABETZ - That, I am unable to tell you. I will see if during this debate one of the government members can return or incorporate that in their speech.

Mr Bayley - Perhaps all the issues. When are the terms of reference going to be published? When is he going to finish his work?

Mr ABETZ - The Premier answered that earlier on today, I believe, in answer to Ms Johnston.

Mr Bayley - Not the timing.

[3.16 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise on the amendment to air my concerns about the impact of bringing forward the date for reporting of this committee. Through the Premier's office I have expressed my concern when he flagged this particular amendment with me.

Practically speaking, this 1 August date is completely unachievable as -

Mr Bayley - It is 30 June.

Ms JOHNSTON - 30 June. Thank you very much, Mr Bayley, for correcting me. That is even more impractical in terms of being able to get the important work of the committee done. As a member who is on nine committees of the House - various committees, joint committees - I know full well the enormous pressure put on the committee secretariat staff from this parliament to hold hearings, receive submissions, collate those, and write reports. There is, practically speaking, no time available in most committee members' diaries between now and 30 June. I indicate that we have almost full bookings of inquiries, hearings and deliberative meetings for most of March and April, noting that we have two sitting weeks in April. In May, we have almost a full agenda there as well as sitting weeks. In June, we have Budget sitting weeks and full commitments there. There is very little opportunity for committees to do proper work in relation to this important piece of work that needs to be done.

I want to put on the record my complete objection. It is quite disrespectful to the staff in this place to be putting such a tight timeframe around a very important piece of work. I fully support the substantive motion moved by Mr Winter. I am particularly keen to have an inquiry look into the current performance of government businesses, including governance, financial outcomes, capital delivery and their contribution to Tasmanian broader economic objectives, and other matters incidental thereto. There is a really good time and place to have that, but it should be done properly. It should not be rushed. It is very disrespectful for those members who serve on committees, and particularly for the staff in this place, to put such a ridiculous timeframe around reporting back this committee. I deeply oppose the amendment.

[3.19 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, briefly on the amendment - talk about lacklustre. The argument put by the Leader of the House for the change in dates, first presenting it to members of the House as a date in August, and then it turns out he is now seeking to have this committee report by 30 June. That is 110 days away. It completely takes away any ability for this committee to actually do the job.

I think even the government would say that this is a radical and major economic reform that they are proposing. It is a major, major, major and radical reform. It requires the House to have more than 110 days to have a look at it. In fact, we would barely get a hearing in if this amendment was upheld. I urge the House to very strongly oppose this amendment.

[3.19 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I will save my substantive contribution until after this vote. I indicate that we do not support this amendment. I echo the words of both the member for Clark and the member for Franklin. This is a radically short amount of time to do this work. There is a fair chunk of work, not only for us as the parliament to consider this, but for the GBEs and the public themselves to be making their submissions. We all know how hard it has been to get our diaries set up for the committees that we are on. This renders this inquiry utterly impotent and meaningless.

I do not know what date the Leader of the House is going to come back to us on the timing of Saul Eslake's process, the publication of the terms of reference, the public consultation, and so forth. However, I am confident it is not going to be wrapped up, with recommendations, by 30 June 2025. That would be important information for our inquiry should we agree to it being established, which it sounds like we will. I think Mr Eslake's opinion and considerations are a critical part of our considerations in that inquiry as well, so we do not support this amendment.

[3.21 p.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I take the point about the time constraints in the parliament. However, a big part of this, there was a lot of talk about removing the uncertainty for people concerned about GBEs and those working there. If we want to remove that uncertainty for those who are worried about this, getting an answer to them sooner rather than later, being able to provide that certainty sooner rather than later, rather than leaving it as an open-ended question, does take that seriously, rather than just using it as a talking point. We are not talking about our own workloads here. We are talking about providing that certainty in a timeframe that is going to do what has been spoken about and give people some certainty and peace of mind about what is going to happen and when, and what is good and what is not. Therefore, it is important that we do this in a reasonable timeframe, not just leave it out to be done late next year. I think it is important that we do this sooner rather than later.

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, it is an extraordinary statement from the government, complaining about uncertainty, when this is nothing more than a thought bubble. No formed-up proposals have come to parliament. The Premier basically told the parliament and Tasmanians last week that he has bankrupted the state and now there is a fire sale. Every single GBE is on the table apart from Hydro. They are the words of the Premier. You hardly have a position to complain about uncertainty for the workforces in these GBEs because you have created that uncertainty through your statements.

Mr Ellis interjecting.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr Ellis.

Mr WILLIE - In terms of the amendment, the committee system is very important. As someone who has been a member of the other House, I deeply value our committee system. It is one of the Westminster traditions. It allows parliament to take a deep dive into issues that the parliament or the community may be having problems with. This is a proposal that did not go to the Tasmanian people and there is no mandate for it. A committee sitting alongside this the government's misinformed thought-bubble agenda will help provide scrutiny. We have seen that play out over the past 12 months when it comes to the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history, the TT-Line -

DEPUTY SPEAKER - You need to speak to the amendment, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - To the amendment, we need to allow the committee to do its work properly. It hardly allows any scrutiny at all with, I think it was 110 days. It is a ridiculous amendment because this government wants to avoid scrutiny. We have had the Leader of the House complaining earlier about this potential committee, then saying he was going to support it. He totally undermined the arguments he was making earlier in his contribution. We do not support this amendment. It is a thinly veiled attempt by this government to avoid scrutiny for a misinformed agenda that they will be exposed on.

Amendment negatived.

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, on the substantive motion, thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion on and initiating this inquiry. The Greens will support it. We have an amendment prepared, which I will distribute, to make sure that employees of our GBEs are explicitly considered as part of this.

Let me just start - I will try to be quick because I am conscious that there are probably others who are wanting to speak, and we have 25 minutes left. At the end of the day, Tasmanian people are the shareholders of the GBEs. They must function in the collective interest of Tasmanians and act in our public interest. They simply must do that. The Greens welcomed the 2024 commitment to reform GBEs and state-owned companies. We have publicly called for an independent inquiry. The GBE failures are writ large and are longstanding.

I am not going to go into the *Spirits* in depth. That has been extensively worked over in this place. It was a monumental stuff-up. The GBEs themselves and their interaction failed and ministerial oversight completely failed. It is costing us dearly. It is costing us money, time, and economic activity. We have historical issues with our GBEs. We have agencies like Forestry Tasmania that have been completely rogue. We have agencies like TasNetworks, who were instructed to make a \$30 million equity transfer to Forestry Tasmania in 2016 to prop up native forest logging. We have agencies and entities like Tasracing that continue to operate against the public interest.

There is absolutely a need for reform. The Greens made a submission to the government business reform draft plan in December of last year. We reiterated the need for an independent review. We questioned the reasoning behind some of the reforms. Some of them demonstrated little rationale. There was no evidence that was underpinning some of the proposals that were

quite unclear. We did not think it was a good faith process, nor that it would lead to better outcomes for Tasmania.

As an example of this, simply putting a Tasmanian in the chair of a GBE does not necessarily mean that it is going to do a better job or act in the interests of Tasmanians. I have a lot of confidence in Tasmanians, but I think that is a very shallow and very political way to try to address fundamental governance failures, just to say that we need to put a Tasmanian in the Chair.

In relation to the government's proposals, we specifically recommended that we do not support the proposed internal review of the GBEs. We want the review to be undertaken as part of a broader review by independent, widely respected experts. We do not support any move to merge or restructure GBEs. We believe the review of GBEs should extend to reviewing public non-financial corporations' statutory authorities. We did not support the introduction of powers that would allow ministers to appoint a ministerial representative on the board.

We have concerns about the undefined appropriate personal protections. We want GBEs to be accountable for their actions, whilst ensuring ministers do not unduly co-opt GBEs for political purposes. With regard to the proposed gateway reviews for projects over \$200 million, we believe that the Public Works Committee could have a clear role in that process. We put some really clear specific things on the table for the government to consider, including the fact that, and I quote, 'We do not support the privatisation or divestment of GBEs'.

This brings me to the motion. It is important at this point to step back and talk about the budget, an absolute budget crisis. The deficit has gone up by \$500 million to \$1.3 billion this financial year. Net debt is going to be up to \$9.6 billion by 2028. It is going to cost \$500 million to service every single year. Saul Eslake has predicted that that will reach \$16 billion in 2035. which will cost us \$750 million each year to service.

Action is clearly needed in terms of budget repair and budget restructuring. Selling state-owned assets is one of the most dramatic actions that can be taken. It is extreme, neoliberal, and it is highly problematic. It is not something that the Greens will support.

It ultimately shifts costs from the government onto consumers. If it is Metro, we can expect higher bus fares. If it is MAIB, we can expect higher rego fees. If it is Aurora, the actual power entity that sends out the bills and charges us for our power companies, we can expect higher costs.

Then there are these strange anomalies in this proposal that are not even GBEs or state-owned companies at all, things like the Land Titles Office. How on earth did that get put on the table in the context of consideration of government businesses and state-owned companies? It is not a government business; it is not a state-owned company. It is a very important service provider that sits within government department that actually manages incredibly sensitive information.

Only Hydro is off limits. Presumably, that is for cultural reasons and not economic ones. We understand, yes, of course it delivers a good dividend to the Tasmanian government, but, I guess apart from cultural reasons, why would it not be in the mix? If it is going to deliver a better dividend, would it not therefore deliver a better price ultimately and a bigger return to

the Tasmanian government in the context of this? I am not arguing for it. I am just saying in the context of this, it is clearly a cultural issue as opposed to an economic issue.

Unions Tasmania have cleared their perspective when it comes to GBEs, and they made a submission to the GBE draft plan. I will quote a few bits of it into *Hansard*:

Unions, in particular the Community and Public Sector Union have been sounding the alarm on privatisation by stealth within the Tasmanian State Service for several years. Prior to 2024, the government has slowly outsourced a range of public sector work in anywhere from family violence counselling, child safety, security, to parks and wildlife.

They are already putting on the record, their concern for workers in relation to privatisation. The largest recent change was moving TasTAFE from the State Service to a not-for-profit GBE. They go on:

Privatisation does not work. ... The community knows that privatisation is a failed ideology and a failed policy. Australia's history is littered with examples of failed privatisations at a federal and a state level.

Tasmania had a disastrous experience with privatised rail in the late 1990s. ...

The 2023 closure of St Helens Private Hospital left a huge gap in inpatient mental health treatment services for Tasmanians and saw the closure of the state's only dedicated mother and baby unit.

The unions are well and truly on the record about their concerns about this divestment proposition. That is why we have prepared an amendment and planning to make sure that workers are actively considered as part of this process.

Deputy Speaker, I move -

Amendment to paragraph 2(a)(i):

After the words:

'and the potential impacts'

Insert:

'including on employees'

Obviously, the effect of this amendment is simply to make sure that some of those people most impacted by these decisions or, potentially, most impacted by these decisions, are actually actively considered as part of this inquiry.

I will leave it there and I will come back and finish my substantive contribution because I hope that we will be able to get through this really quickly.

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, on the amendment, I do not think the motion drafted precludes the consideration of these issues, but it does make it more specific and so I do not have an issue with the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the House for their support for that amendment and I know workers will support you well.

The government has not made the case for this reform. That is really clear. Over and above anything, they did not take it to the election. They have no mandate for this. Not mentioned in the 2024 draft plan when it comes to GBEs and not mentioned in their election commitments.

There were several commitments that went close to this. There were commitments that covered off on this, but they did not specifically say and put this on the table.

I will read into *Hansard* exactly what the policy commitment was:

Requiring government businesses to deliver outcomes consistent with Tasmanian Liberal policy objectives - deliver services to Tasmanians at the lowest sustainable cost while also growing our economy and engaging with businesses and community in a constructive manner.

I mean, that is entirely supportable, and yet, that is not what is now on the table. What is now on the table is completely not supportable. It is a fire sale to plug holes in the budget to pay for stadiums, to pay for pork barrelling and other problems. Simply put, the government does not have a mandate for this. It is not transparent on the work that it is doing and it simply should not be supported.

We support the motion to establish this select committee. It is an opportunity to shine some daylight into this process, to get wisdom into it from varying different sectors. It has the power to compel evidence so that we can understand exactly what is going on. It will happen publicly and transparently so people can actually view what is going on. They can engage and participate in it. It can be in the public interest and the public can actually make their submissions and make their views heard. We are really keen and interested in supporting this and obviously will participate in it accordingly.

We are interested in the nomination of Mrs Beswick and the view of the rest of the crossbench is absolutely not a criticism of Mrs Beswick. However, I am interested in how the decision is made and whether the entire crossbench was consulted on that, but at the end of the day, that is not our business. We do not have a lack of faith in Mrs Beswick, but it is interesting to have her fully articulated in there and I do wonder what conversations were had around the Chamber and with the crossbench.

I will leave some time for contributions from other members. I thank the House for their support for our amendment and indicate that, yes, we will be supporting this motion.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - I call the member for Braddon, Ms Beswick.

[3.37 p.m.]

Mrs BESWICK (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I feel like I need to point out that it is 'Mrs', not 'Ms'.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - My apologies, Mrs Beswick.

Mrs BESWICK - It is okay, Deputy Speaker.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on Labor's motion and would like to indicate that I am supportive of the establishment of a select committee to take a thorough look at the pros and cons of GBE reform and potential privatisation. We are all aware these two issues, along with the budget, will be dominating the conversation for 2025.

There is no doubt the government's announcement that it is willing to sell some state owned assets has sparked a spirited community debate. It is obvious Tasmanians feel passionately about this issue and I believe this committee can help sort out fact from fiction. Both major parties have made it abundantly clear where they stand, so I think the public would welcome hearing some less political opinions.

A cross-Chamber committee creates an opportunity to put some cold, hard facts on the table and to have a proper debate about what is best, not only for the state's long-term financial future, but also access to services for Tasmanian people and how the governance of state-owned entities can be best managed. I am determined to hear about the potential opportunities created by reform or sale along with the risk factors. We owe it to Tasmanians to go beyond this tit for tat we have heard over Question Time for the last two weeks.

The constant political point-scoring, including the practise of putting words in other people's mouths is not in the public interest. I would like the committee to hear from witnesses who can provide insight into the short-term financial gains versus the long-term potential return to the state. I would like to hear from forward thinking people who can realistically predict what private ownership might do for service delivery. We are obviously talking about valuable assets. If they were not, the government would not be interested in selling them, but it is a proposal that requires serious critical analysis.

I think we can all agree that many of our government owned businesses are underperforming. The *Spirit* saga is the most obvious example of our GBEs not functioning as taxpayers expect them to. The breakdown in communication between TT-Line and TasPorts no doubt contributed to the costly delays our state is now dealing with. I would raise questions about reporting requirements of boards to ministers and through to parliament.

While Tasmanians are largely proud of our renewable energy assets, it does not mean they cannot deliver better outcomes for our state. I have been critical of the lack of urgency when it comes to some projects like Whaleback Ridge, and believe we need to address what role our GBEs play in facilitating new opportunities.

When it comes to public transport, Metro is full of hardworking staff who care for their customers, but it is facing a lot of challenges. In August 2023, it announced the temporary suspension of 180 services in Hobart. Nineteen months later, the word 'temporary' should be replaced with 'permanently'.

We need a more reliable modern bus system, but if the state government believes the answer is privatisation, it needs to be backed up by clear evidence and this has to be the case when it comes to any potential sale. All the pros and cons need to be carefully weighed against each other. We need intelligent, rational decisions based on what is best for our state, not what is best for the political fortunes of major parties.

That will be the attitude I will be taking if I am fortunate enough to serve on this committee, as suggested in this motion. My commitment to this House and the people of Tasmania is to pursue the truth. I am very interested in hearing from witnesses without a political axe to grind. We need to put everything on the table and bring the public with us. This needs to be a statewide conversation about our future. It was not an issue at the last election, so I believe the government has a responsibility to be as up-front as possible about what is being considered and what is not. Likewise, I believe the opposition has an obligation to participate in the debate in a passionate but fact-based way.

I also see exploring the mechanisms of any potential sale as being a key role of this committee. I believe it is very important for Tasmanians to understand the government's obligations when it comes to the sale, or partial sale of any GBE or state-owned company, which potential reforms of privatisation require a vote of the parliament and which do not.

We all remember the national debate about the sale of Telstra and the subsequent share offer. Does the government hold similar aspirations for any of Tasmania's businesses?

This committee can play a critical role when it comes to informing the public on the government and parliament's obligations. The committee also has a chance to look at the way our GBEs are currently being held accountable and whether they can be improved, what lessons have we learned from the *Spirits* saga and what changes will be implemented to make sure the parliament and, therefore, the public, has greater oversight? While we will never agree on privatisation, I am confident there is common ground when it comes to improving the ways GBEs perform.

Honourable Speaker, I welcome Labor's motion and again indicate my support. If I have the privilege of serving on this committee, I look forward to working hard in the state's best interest.

The SPEAKER - Without wanting to take any time of the House, Ms Beswick, under the formal advice that we have received, you are called 'Ms Beswick'. If you wish to change that, we are happy to do that. However, in defence of the Deputy Speaker, it is the language we have been advised in your formal documentation.

[3.43 p.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, as we heard from the Leader of the House earlier, we have always said we are open-minded about the possibility of divestment of government businesses and other assets. We have said we will work through this in a sensible, methodical way to make sure we are making the best possible decisions on behalf of Tasmanians. We support having a sensible conversation about this.

It does feel like a change of tone from this morning's question time. In the morning we had the Leader of the Opposition bashing up the government over privatisation then, by the afternoon, proposing a mechanism by which the concept is entertained.

Mr Winter - What?

Mr BEHRAKIS - Which Mr Winter are we hearing from now? Is it the 2025 Mr Winter from question time today or is it the 2015 Mr Winter who was a staunch advocate of privatisation?

Mr Winter - It is 2025, so you have to go with that one.

Mr BEHRAKIS - We are only looking at divestment if it is in the best interests of Tasmanians. Our analysis will include things like community service obligations, cost-of-living considerations, ensuring we continue to have the lowest costs in the country, and whether our entities would do a better job without the shackles of government.

Tasmania has a significant asset base and we recognise the important economic and social benefits these assets provide. Saul Eslake has spoken about the reasonableness of the government asking whether there is a continuing rationale to maintain state ownership of GBEs, and if no, whether the state would be better off selling it. Paying down debt through sensible divestment of assets to help path a sensible pathway to surplus makes good sense.

This is a sensible review of our government business enterprises. Our commitment is to fix our GBEs, to review our GBE portfolio and ensure that our GBE portfolio is put to work in a way that is in Tasmania's long-term interests.

Retaining Hydro is undoubtedly in Tasmania's long-term interest, which is why we ruled it out. The value in other GBEs is less obvious compared to Hydro, which is why we are undertaking a review of our other GBE portfolios. If the numbers do not stack up, or if it is taking more than it is giving, then we will consider what options we have.

It came as no surprise that the Leader of the Opposition has been caught out as being a pro-privatisation advocate. After weeks of attempting to launch a scare campaign - there we go, scare campaign -

Members interjecting.

Mr BEHRAKIS - The damning comments have shown Dean Winter's credibility is in tatters. Which Dean Winter are we getting today? The 2015 Dean Winter, in an ABC radio interview on 27 November, spoke of his pro-privatisation view, saying:

Why does Tasmania own Entura? What is the strategic reason for owning that particular business?

He went on to say, and I will repeat it again for the benefit of the House:

So, we are not in this space any more, at least during this election cycle, where we can actually talk about what Tasmania should own. There is a whole bunch of areas, including Entura, but there is also, um, for example, um, um TasNetworks.

These comments followed Mr Winter's opinion piece in the *Mercury* in June 2014, lauding his hero Paul Keating's economic reform agenda. He lamented that:

In Tasmania politicians are inevitably guilty of taking few risks, shirking difficult decisions and, as a consequence, upsetting very few.

Very little meaningful policy debate, he said.

We have now seen Labor's scare campaign go into overdrive. Tasmania should not be fooled by that, and they are not, because the reality is always far from what Labor says. Remember when Labor said the lights would go out in Tasmania? They were wrong. Remember when they claimed power prices would increase by 75 per cent over two years? They were wrong again. More recently, when they were called out by the *Mercury* for desperately predicting - pleading for, in fact, a Tasmanian recession, the *Mercury* said:

Labor's habit of crying recession every few months is unhelpful, particularly when the passage of time so often proves that prediction wrong.

We saw that just last week when state final demand grew 3 per cent in the December quarter compared to a year ago. We saw nation-leading economic growth. We have proven we can deliver on strong economy with good economic conditions in some of our most challenging times. However, Labor's only plan is to whip up fear and create uncertainty and anxiety in our community. Their secret plan, or whatever passes for a Labor plan these days, for GBE profitability, will see those prices hike up so they can charge Tasmanians more.

We know Mr Winter is already in trouble with the left of his party and the unions. They are not happy with him. For years we have been told 'Winter is coming', but it seems it is already thawing out.

We are ready for a rational, measured conversation about the future of our GBEs and what best serves the long-term interests of Tasmanians. Whether or not Labor is ready to have a rational, meaningful conversation about this issue in the best interest of Tasmania really depends on which Dean Winter comes to the table.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Storm over Hobart

The SPEAKER - I wish to advise that there are some government buildings that do not have power because of the storm. If that is an issue for us, we will suspend the sittings while we canvass what to do, as we do not have a generator that works.

[3.48 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I hope I can lift the quality of the debate because, from what we have just heard, it is pretty disappointing. I thank the opposition for bringing this motion for discussion and I appreciate the House accepting the Greens amendment to consider people. It may have been covered by the motion, but I think we needed to make it quite clear that we are not just looking at our public services. It is also the people

who power those public services. It is important that the institutions and the people be looked at.

I will concentrate on one particular area of service, transport, in particular public transport. It is an essential service for powering any society. We can have a discussion about the governance structure of the various GBEs but, fundamentally, we rely on a functional public transport system for a society to flourish. Fundamentally, it should be run by government.

Tasmanians are telling me that they are furious at the idea that these state assets will be sold from under them, particularly public transport. This is an issue that energises people. We only need to look at the traffic chaos this morning, and twice more in recent weeks, to see that a reliable, affordable and well-funded public transport system is more essential than ever. A well-functioning public transport system is the sign of an advanced society. It says we care about our communities and how they travel to and from the places they need to get to, and that they can travel inexpensively. When you go overseas or interstate, you quite often see public transport systems that are working very well, that are well-functioning, and cared for by their government.

What we have now is, unfortunately, a very run-down Metro where it is dysfunctional, unloved and underinvested in. It speaks volumes about the government and reflects poorly on our society overall. This is what we need now. This is the state of public transport in Tasmania and what it does not need is privatisation.

Transport requires a strategic approach in concert with government agencies. If that is taken out of public hands and run for profit - and we know that there is a review of the network which is imminent and it needs to be considered as part of the public asset - we can be certain of further service reductions otherwise, higher prices, poorer working conditions for staff including bus drivers, and lack of investment in emissions reduction. Once it has been run into the ground, we will end up buying it back.

I will talk about a couple of examples, in particular about privatisation. In South Australia there was privatisation. There was a 12-year performance-based contract between Keolis Downer and the South Australian government. It cost \$2.1 billion and was supposed to save taxpayers \$118 million. Figures were all done and it sounded great. Unfortunately, they could not recruit to that organisation, and ended up on the hook for almost the same amount. Taxpayers faced a \$120 million bill in this situation. I might add, just to make sure the government is aware not only of this situation in South Australia, but the same company, Keolis, has form and they copped a big fine from the Welsh Government for failing to meet contract expectations in 2020. There are problems. We have problems all through the UK government, with Carillion, with Serco. Those privatisations have had major political consequences for UK governments.

We have situations close by. I will finish in a moment, but the situation is of great concern. We saw what Jeff Kennett, as Premier, did with the privatisation of the Melbourne networks. This started with Jeff Kennett and has cost Victorians, and Melbournians in particular, a huge amount per commuter for using public transport services because of privatisation. It is not all good. It can cost quite a lot. You see reductions in staff morale.

The Tasmanian public and generations to come should not be made to pay for this government's mistakes through reduced services and higher prices. This is possibly what we

might get. I know the review will look at this, should it be passed today. That review may help us.

We also should not continue pouring money into unsustainable GBEs and state owned companies such as Forestry Tasmania. We are overdue for a conversation around whether all of these services and companies are working as they should. There would be no point in pretending that every GBE and state-owned company (SOC) is delivering to the max. However, we should know that selling off prized and beloved assets which deliver essential services will be short-term gain and long-term pain for all Tasmanians. We stand with workers across the state in opposition of any fire sale.

[3.55 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I want to bring a few comments to this debate. Obviously, the numbers are here for this committee. I listened carefully to what the Leader of the House had to say in responding to this motion. We will have the inquiry, no doubt. There will be a thoroughgoing process that will be established by a committee of this House, in addition to the already very transparently described process that the Premier and the Treasurer have outlined.

Mr Winter and others who are chomping at the bit for this, I worry that the motivation behind this is to have a kangaroo court where Mr Winter and others will show everybody how tough and strong they are, dragging witnesses in and demanding papers and wanting to see this and that. All the while, Mr Eslake and the team are going to be carefully working through the task in a different process, in a different room, in a different methodology designed to dispassionately consider the issues and look at what opportunities there might or might not be.

I could not help but notice that the tone of this entire debate changed this morning at about 11.06 a.m., when the Premier exposed the Labor leader for his doubletalk on the subject of privatisation. I have to say, it was a stunning turnaround in the fortunes for the Leader of the Opposition. I suspect it may have been a surprise to those people who sit around him and who are the people who decide who their leader is, to know that Mr Winter was so passionately pro-privatisation in an interview on the ABC on 27 November 2015:

Well, that's - why does Tasmania own Entura? What's the strategic reason for owning that particular business?

I could go on, but I would only be repeating what is now already on the record.

Mr Winter - It was on the record at the time 11 years ago. That is what 'on the record' means.

The SPEAKER - Members on my left, thank you. We are almost there.

Mr FERGUSON - The difficulty the House has in taking the motion and therefore the eventual report of this proposed committee is that you are doing it for political purposes only. That is what I worry about. When you have been exposed for, on the one hand, seeing the merit of divestment in certain circumstances, but today, because you sense political opportunity, you are now identifying yourself as a different Dean Winter, a different person and a different member of the Labor Party. I think it is also worth noting that - I am not sure how much time remains, probably a minute or so.

The SPEAKER - Two minutes. Member for Bass, can I ask you to stand a little closer to your microphone? It is hard for people to hear you. It is never an issue for me, but your distance from the microphone appears to be an issue.

Mr FERGUSON - Of course.

The SPEAKER - Thank you.

Mr FERGUSON - I appreciate that. Thank you, Speaker.

I noticed that in the debate earlier tonight, this afternoon, that there was some discussion about Aurora. In fact, I am holding in my hand a media release from the Labor leader. Time will not permit me - and I think I would put people to sleep if I read it out anyway - but he was making politics about Aurora being considered for divestment. Aurora has been considered for divestment for all of the time I have been a member of this House, the 11 years I have been a member of this side of the parliament in the government and the four years that I sat over on that side of the House.

Mr Green and the Labor-Greens government tried to sell Aurora. Labor has forgotten its own history. Even Labor could not sell it. It was a failed process, and the whole thing was an expensive waste of everyone's time. It has been in the publicly available documents of Aurora Corporation. A simple search identified the member statement of expectations, signed by me and the minister for Energy and Renewables, Mr Duigan last year, said that it needed to maintain flexibility for the potential future divestment of the business. That was the direction to the board.

Go back to October 2015, slightly bigger signatures of the previous shareholder ministers, minister Gutwein and minister Groom, same statement. What are you people talking about? It has been prepared for the sale this entire time.

Time expired.

Mr Ferguson - Bryan Green started it.

The SPEAKER - Order, I am calling a vote, thank you.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Salmon Mass Mortality Crisis - Parliamentary Inquiry

[4.00 p.m.]

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

That the House: -

- (1) Refers the following reference to the Standing Committee on Government Administration Committee A to inquire into and report upon the mass salmon mortality events and contributing factors with the following terms of reference: -
 - (a) examine and report on the responsibilities of the varying parts of Government in charge of approving and regulating the aquaculture industry and the efficacy of current laws, regulations and practices to protect and inform the public;
 - (b) examine and recommend improvements in the way these responsibilities are established and executed;
 - (c) ensure appropriate public consultation is conducted on all matters;
 - (d) any other matter incidental; and
 - (e) that the Committee reports by 25 September 2025. (11 March 2025)

I will require a vote.

An environmental and industrial scale disaster has and continues to be played out in Tasmania's south-east waters. We do not need to retread the ground that has been well covered this week by the Greens and the independent member for Braddon, Mr Garland. It is a statement of fact that this is an environmental and industrial scale disaster. We all know that the salmon mass mortality crisis is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for workers and it is a tragedy for the environment. It affects Tasmania's overarching brand and, from various angles, the economy.

All of us in this place are united in our concern for communities who are currently being impacted by the salmon mass mortality crisis, be they residents upset and frustrated over their local environment and the loss of amenity they have experienced or workers working overtime and out of area to desperately deal with a situation that I acknowledge is distressing and that they will find distressing. Industry and government have called this situation unprecedented. During unprecedented times, community members rely on their officials and institutions for guidance.

There is no rule book on what you are supposed to do when you head down to your local beach and see salmon carcasses strewn from one end to the other. Information has not been forthcoming from public health. Information on how the community should respond if they come into contact with material has come third-hand from public health and late in the process from an email the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) sent to a community group which quoted public health information internally provided to the EPA. Coming into contact with decomposing carcasses or globules of fat, regardless of how they died or how they got there, is a health concern. Encountering them on public land or water with the expectation and historic experience is for a clean, safe, and natural encounter is a shock to the system.

On ABC radio last Friday, a member of the community told a heart-wrenching story. Recently diagnosed with cancer and scheduled for a double mastectomy, the community member was heading to her shack at Surveyors Bay, a place she has been visiting for 27 years. She was looking forward to a swim in the waters that she loved so much with the people she loves before she began treatment for her illness. She was not able to take that swim because

she was unsure about the potential impacts to her health from swimming in waters that had been exposed to an unknown bacterium. To the extent that it is possible during an unfolding crisis, people should be able to have clear access to information that may have an impact on their health.

Today we are calling for an inquiry into the government's management of this crisis. We acknowledge that the EPA is investigating this event and it is important that this investigation continues. They have a remit to investigate how this event occurred and whether the salmon companies have operated according to their licence conditions.

We also know - after questioning, I might add - and acknowledge that Biosecurity Tasmania are also investigating the biosecurity and animal welfare concerns surrounding this event, within their remit. This is an incredibly important investigation to establish the factors that led to disturbing video footage released last week.

It is evident to the Greens and to other members of this place that the government and its departments have not managed this crisis according to their remit, and that is the issue that requires the oversight of parliament. Information on public health impacts has not been forthcoming. Ministers are apparently unclear about what issues fall into their portfolio areas. Different departmental areas appear siloed and operate in isolation, second guessing the action and responsibility of others. There appears no central point of coordination. Mixed messages have been given to communities about whether or not it is safe to swim. The acting director of the EPA was unable or unwilling to answer questions about where salmon remains were being disposed of and the nature of non-compliant disposal. In the other place this afternoon, we also heard allegations of salmon remains being dumped on Crown land. Information that you would expect to be simple about what this bacterium actually is and how it ended up in our waters has been opaque and confusing, including to marine biologists who are experts in this field.

It has been said multiple times that this event is unprecedented. On one level, it is. This is the largest ever mass mortality in Tasmanian salmon's history. After any unprecedented event, it would be expected that the parliament would scrutinise how the event was handled by those that the community has placed their trust in to manage it, to review whether the current procedures were followed, to establish any failures that may have occurred, to ensure that the right departments are in charge of the right aspects of the response.

A parliamentary inquiry would not subsume or overrule any investigation undertaken by the EPA or Biosecurity Tasmania, but it would help us as legislators to understand how this mortality event came to pass and to ensure that it never happens in Tasmanian waters again. In fact, the findings of any government investigation or inquiry can be included in the committee process to add to the knowledge base and inform recommendations.

Otherwise, where do they go? To a government in trade? Quite likely to gather dust, as has happened so many times before. Just like so many other things we have had a parliamentary inquiry into, like the referral of the Yole stables racing matter. Ben Yole has been the subject of many investigations over the last little while, but there is no reason not to examine how that came to pass and what factors or structures could change.

I am sure that no one in this Chamber wants to see this happen again. The Greens do not want to see this happen again. We have a responsibility as a parliament to ensure that this does not happen again, on behalf of the workers who have been put into incredibly difficult positions

during this crisis by the salmon industry and on behalf of the community who have expressed deep concerns about this event.

The Greens and the independent member for Braddon, Mr Garland, have asked multiple questions from the government regarding their response to the salmon mortality crisis and they have been fobbed off or gone unanswered. We have asked the Premier if he would increase the EPA's funding and powers, whether EPA roles were exempt from the government's hiring freeze to ensure they are fully staffed while they respond to this crisis, whether the government takes accountability for the policies they have brought in that lead to this event and whether the government would take appropriate action over any industry mismanagement?

The minister for Primary Industries has been asked numerous times by the independent member for Braddon regarding the serious biosecurity questions this event has raised. Multiple questions were asked about the strain of bacteria and whether or not it posed a risk to human health. There still has not been any public advice from public health on how the public should respond if they come into contact with the material. We have only third hand advice from an email the EPA sent to a community group that the material should not be handled and if you do handle it, you should wash your hands.

We still have no understanding about how a strain of a so-called endemic bacteria that was formerly considered to be an east-coast strain found its way into the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Perhaps this is a case of too many cooks in the kitchen with the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, and Minister for Business, Industry and Resources all notionally being responsible for different aspects of this event.

Our question is: is this the best way for an event like this to be handled? Is the necessary coordination between governments occurring? Recent questioning in parliament indicates that it is not.

It is well established that the climate crisis is also a human health crisis. We need only to look at the recent pandemic to see the interrelationship between the environment and human health. It is not clear to the Greens from the response to this event that the EPA, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) and the Department of Health have the procedures in place to co-manage an environmental and public health disaster. This may be unprecedented, but it will not be the last.

In order to learn, to adapt, to improve and to address outstanding issues, we need a thorough, transparent, publicly accessible process. Just as argued previously in the debate about an inquiry to look at the GBEs, it needs to be a public one, with capacity for the public to engage, for the capacity for the public to view the transparency. The best way to do this is through a parliamentary inquiry.

In fact, we believe it is our responsibility as parliamentarians. As elected representatives, we have an obligation to look deeply into this incident, address it and learn from it, so that we can change and make things better from it. Yes, we come from different policy positions on salmon. That simply means we will bring different perspectives, different information and different approaches, and probably a different, better outcome than leaving this to the government, and this government of all governments.

We have constructed this motion and engaged in this debate without rhetorical politics to make it easy as possible for members to support.

This is a matter of deep public importance. From the Greens perspective, we are hearing from communities who are concerned, frustrated and angry. No doubt other parties are hearing from workers. There is nothing to fear from acting in the public interest and from being open and transparent. At times like this it is clear that the public interest is best served by initiating a cross-Chamber inquiry to transparently and publicly understand the crisis and recommend a collective way forward.

[4.11 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for the Environment) - Honourable Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise to respond to this notice of motion in my capacity as Minister for the Environment, which is a role I take very seriously. I have said in this Chamber that I want to be, and hope to show, that I am a minister driven by science, data and facts. Today, I will be placing some facts on the record as well. I am always happy to debate matters in relation to the environment. I know it is something in Tasmania that we all take very seriously and we all love our environment, which is generally a good thing.

The Deputy Leader of the Greens, Vica Bayley, has tabled the motion and in that motion he seeks to refer several aquaculture related matters to the Standing Committee on Government Administration. Whilst I truly appreciate the member's interest in that oversight, I must respectfully oppose this motion as the member appears to be somewhat in the dark in relation to legislation and regulation in this state and how it works.

The Tasmanian Government, in parallel with the independent Environment Protection Authority, has established a robust and transparent regulatory framework that comprehensively addresses the concerns raised. An additional inquiry would duplicate existing efforts, diverting resources from the meaningful work already in progress. Allow me to outline why this motion is unnecessary, drawing on clear evidence of our comprehensive regulatory framework.

The salmon industry is a vital part of Tasmania's economy, supporting regional communities and driving sustainable growth. It is guided by the Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan 2023, which focuses on sustainable industry, prosperous communities, healthy ecosystems, and contemporary governance. This plan has delivered tangible outcomes since July 2023. We have implemented full-cost recovery, ensuring the industry operates on a sustainable financial footing. We have tabled environmental standards for marine fish farming in this parliament, empowering the EPA to regulate nitrogen outputs and manage noise and light emissions. These measures directly address environmental concerns, making a separate inquiry redundant.

The Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan 2023, and supporting documentation, outlines and informs development of the plan and engagement with the community. This document and its addendums provide a comprehensive and detailed overview of the Tasmanian regulatory framework for aquaculture and this documentation provided to the Tasmanian community set out very clearly the regulatory framework, relationships, roles and responsibilities of the respective agencies tasked with the regulation of the aquaculture sector in Tasmania.

Examination and reporting on this quite recent document and process would be a monumental waste of time. It has been in the spotlight, subject to rigorous and comprehensive review and is the culmination of continuous improvement over many years, and I would encourage the member, in fact all members in this House, to avail themselves of the information

that was circulated and considered through the consultation process - a process that spanned over 12 months.

The EPA's independent oversight is the core of this framework, and we have spoken a lot about this in this Chamber during Question Time in particular. As Tasmania's principal environmental regulator under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*, the EPA ensures rigorous standards. Their 2022-23 annual report, on page 24 - if you would like to look it up - highlights their efforts. They concluded 173 compliance inspections across sectors, including aquaculture to enforce environmental conditions. They issued 12 formal cautions and five infringement notices where needed, showing their commitment to action and additionally, the EPA completed 47 environmental monitoring programs, including water quality assessments in key areas like the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Macquarie Harbour. Results are publicly available via the Salmon Farming Data Portal, ensuring transparency.

The motion mentions a mass mortality event. Our systems are well equipped to manage such issues. The biosecurity program under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* and the Tasmanian Salmonoid Health Surveillance Program closely monitors fish health. The Centre for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines contributes to the development of multiple salmonoid vaccines to enhance welfare and ensure this industry is able to address key learnings. Any incidents are tracked and promptly addressed with the EPA's dozens of monitoring programs providing oversight.

An inquiry into this matter would simply replicate existing processes, offering no new value. The motion also seeks to examine government and industry responsibilities and identify improvements. Our framework is comprehensive. *The Marine Farming Planning Act 1995* sets out environmental limits through marine farming development plans, while the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995* governs licencing with biosecurity conditions. The Biosecurity Salmonoid Biosecurity Zones Regulations 2022 manage risks across the supply chain and we are reviewing these acts to align with best practices, a process already underway. The Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies and CSIRO provide the scientific foundation, many years of modelling and assessments that ensure continuous improvement and ensure our regulatory bodies have the base settings right.

Public consultation, another focus of the motion, is already prioritised. The Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan 2023 emphasises stakeholder engagement, as seen in the release of the draft Technical Standards for Benthic Monitoring for public comment. The EPA's commitment to transparency is evident in their public disclosure of monitoring data, strengthened in 2022 by amendments to the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act*. This ensures community input and access to information addressing the motions called directly, without requiring new processes.

We are striving to streamline processes, cutting red tape while improving environmental standards in a framework of strong checks and balances and we do not intend to tie the state in endless knots as this motion would have us do.

The notice of motion is in fact a ruse in its purest form as the member does not wish to enquire into regulatory matters. I suspect the Greens wish for there to be no agriculture industry losing those jobs and no regional supporting jobs in the sector or indeed any industries it would

see because it is not clear from the outset what he and his team actually do support. Honourable Speaker, would he have Tasmanian people living in the dark, similar to his party?

The proposed timeline for a report by 25 September, just six months away, is impractical, as we have heard in the debate just previous to this one -

Dr Woodruff - We would be happy to amend it.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Ms OGILVIE - We just had that debate about another motion, given the motion was tabled yesterday.

More importantly, our ongoing initiatives like environmental standards for freshwater finfish farming and wildlife interaction standards already cover the motion's goals with public input and expert oversight. The EPA's many hundreds of inspections and dozens of monitoring programs demonstrate their capacity to deliver without impost and oversight and to act as intended, independent of government. I have mentioned that many times in this Chamber during Question Time.

Over on this side of the Chamber, we proudly support a salmon industry that is guided by science and sustainability, employing our best scientists with a progressive framework of strong regulatory controls under our EPA, Biosecurity Tasmania, Public Health and NRE Tas.

Our regulatory body's expertise in parallel with the Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan 2023 ensures we are protecting our environment and our community. This motion, while well-intentioned and we have said many times in this Chamber as well, we are very aware of the community concern and have been responding but this motion is unnecessary. It would waste resources, and I am certainly not about wasting resources at a time when we are deployed addressing the matter. I do not want to waste the resources or time of this House as well.

I strongly urge this House to support the EPA's independence. That is what is at the heart of this motion. The EPA is independent for good reason. Its ongoing efforts in an active investigation, as we have underway as we speak in this Chamber today, vote against the motion and allow us to keep delivering real outcomes for Tasmania.

I do have a little bit of sympathy for those who say that there are many ministers and many departments involved in this matter. Yes, there are. It is being managed well centrally and we are delivering results for Tasmania. I will wrap up to allow others have to have the time to speak, but I acknowledge that it has been a very difficult time, not just for the community but for business, for industry, and most importantly for the workforce.

[4.21 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to talk on the Greens' motion No. 97. We are witnessing an unfolding environmental and economic disaster, one that threatens our public waterways, our beloved beaches, and possibly even our own health. It is a crisis that could devastate our marine ecosystem, wild fisheries and the industries that depend on them, and yet, instead of transparency, what do we see? A cover-up by both the industry and the government.

The government will tell you, 'The independent EPA is investigating, let us give them time to do their job'. Let us break that down. Based on the limited and at times inconsistent information released by the EPA, their investigation is focused on breaches of environmental licences, the *Environment Management and Pollution Control Act* and waste regulations. That is important, but it barely scratches the surface. This investigation is expected to drag on until late in the year. If a prosecution follows, we are looking at 12 to 18 months before there is a resolution.

Here is the catch: we likely will not see the findings of this investigation until after any court proceedings are completed. In other words, the public will be left in the dark for years while this crisis unfolds before our eyes and might be repeated again next summer.

Let me highlight what the EPA will not be investigating. They will not be investigating what caused this outbreak and whether similar outbreaks will become more frequent in the future, or whether we are dealing with a new exotic bacterial disease in fish, as the salmon industry itself suggested just last week.

The Commonwealth website, which I urge you to check, states that *Piscirickettsia salmonis* is an exotic disease not yet detected in this country. If that is true, how did it get here? If this is an existing strain, why are the vaccinations and antibiotics failing to contain it? What role do high stocking densities play in the scale of this outbreak? What impact does this bacteria have on humans and the broader environment? Are diseased fish being harvested for human consumption? The EPA admits they do not monitor this, so who does? How much antibiotic treatment is being used on the fish? The EPA refuses to answer, hiding behind the excuse of commercial-in-confidence, yet those antibiotics are going into our waterways, into our native fish, and ultimately into us. One of the single biggest threats that we have on the horizon is antibiotic resistance. What percentage of a company's stock has died? We do not know this. Again the EPA was asked, and again they refused to answer.

These are the questions my colleagues and I in the Greens have been asking this government for the past two weeks, but we are none the wiser. The EPA claims it has directed the companies to bring this situation under control, but when was this direction issued? What are the actual terms? Nobody knows.

The real problem here is that this crisis involves multiple ministers, multiple agencies, independent statutory bodies and private industry, which has the unwavering support of this government. Without an independent review, one that examines the failures, the mismanagement, and the lack of transparency, we will never know the full truth. If we do not act now, this could become an annual disaster, hidden behind closed doors, eroding public trust and damaging our environment and reputation.

The Premier today said that transparency and accountability are crucial to maintaining a social licence. What we have seen from the industry, the government, and its agencies has been anything but transparent.

The public deserves answers. Who knew what, and when? What was done or, more importantly, what was not done to prevent this catastrophe? The only way to get those answers is to support this motion. This parliament has an opportunity to demand accountability, to demand transparency, and to show the people of this state that we are open and transparent about what is going on.

[4.26 p.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I will also be supporting the motion. I believe that we need this sort of transparency. It would always be impossible to deny that the salmon industry has done irreparable harm to Tasmania's beautiful, world-renowned coastline. I am not one that people would consider to be a greenie, but I find that the older I get, the greener I become. What is happening to our coast is nothing short of disgusting. I commend the Bob Brown Foundation for blowing the lid off an incredibly irresponsible industry.

The environmental damage caused by the salmon industry is not unique to Tasmania; it is a global issue. Whenever this industry operates, there are clear signs of environmental degradation. From declining marine health to a build-up of waste and chemicals in waterways, the evidence is undeniable. This makes it indisputable that the salmon industry plays a direct role in the deterioration of the environment of our waterways. We have just had 5500 tonnes of live fish, with dead salmon, thrown in the waste bin. To mention but a few, the fatty globules, the salmon waste choking the sea beds due to a lack of oxygen, and the two Tasmanian species that are unique to us now on the brink of extinction, along with bacteria.

There are a number of countries around the world who have now finally recognised the massive environmental impact of the salmon industry on our environment and have started to regulate the industry more heavily - as we should. Canada has banned open-net salmon farms on the coasts of British Columbia by 2029 to help protect their wild salmon. The Canadian government has committed to protecting their wild salmon and promoting more sustainable aquacultural practices. The Canadian government will also release the Salmon Aquaculture Transition Plan by the middle of this year to support workers and communities who rely on the industry for work.

We know that there is not enough effective and clear legislation and control of the salmon pens. As Mr Garland pointed out, the antibiotics are being pumped into our waterways. There are serious concerns that this would contribute heavily to antibiotic resistance globally. The salmon farms have a direct impact on oyster beds, farms, and fisheries. When we talk about the jobs the salmon industry provides, the government conveniently forgets the hundreds of jobs lost by local fishermen who are forced to walk away from livelihoods in families that have been fishing for generations. I support the Greens' motion, and I am happy to do so.

[4.29 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I would like to build upon what minister Ogilvie's contribution was, and the solid case that she has put forward to tackle the notice of motion from Mr Bayley and the Greens. Whilst I certainly respect the member's desire to raise issues, this motion is a step too far. It is a call for an inquiry that is out of touch with the reality of what we have achieved for the Tasmanian salmon industry, a sector that is a powerhouse for our regional economies. The Greens' approach lacks substance. I am here to say and to show why they cannot bluff their way past the facts. This motion needs to be knocked back.

Let us ask: where have the Greens been while we have been strengthening Tasmania's future? They have been tangled in an ideological spin, dancing to the tune of their big backer mates, while we have been rolling up our sleeves and getting on with the job over the past decade. We have boosted transparency by launching the Salmon Portal, sharing economic, employment and environmental data, giving our communities the full picture. We have made every environmental and marine farming licence public so folks know exactly what is happening. We have introduced a zero tolerance policy on marine debris, handing Marine and

Safety Tasmania (MAST) a formal role to keep things safe around our farms. These moves build trust and keep our industry clean and secure.

We have put our money where our mouth is in partnering with industry to fund cutting-edge research through Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, a global leader driving innovation. We have set up a biosecurity program under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* to tackle disease risks head on and shifted environmental oversight to the independent EPA, amending the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* to support strong standards and open reporting.

The Greens seem blind to this progress, yet they push this motion as if we are starting from scratch. It is quite hard to take seriously. On the current mortality event, the Greens are clutching at straws. This is a natural challenge, not a failure of our farmers who have met their reporting duties under strict licensing rules. However, we hear the community's concerns and understand the pressure on the salmon companies facing these losses.

The industry stands on the toughest regulations in Tasmania, and among the strictest globally, as the Tasmanian regulatory framework confirms. Investigations are underway and we need to let experts handle it. The Greens demand to dissect our system ignores this process and the resilience we have built. This motion wants to poke into responsibilities and improvements, but we are already ahead. The Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan 2023 shows our focus on prosperous communities, with initiatives like the Tasmanian Policy for Marine Aquaculture Research Activities in Adjacent Commonwealth Waters boosting jobs and innovation with top scientists. Our regulatory setup, backed by IMAS, ensures we are adapting and growing - something an inquiry would only delay. I am advised that the Greens have not even had a briefing from our agencies yet -

Dr Woodruff - Getting it tomorrow, thanks.

Mr WOOD - proving they are flying blind. They have jumped the gun. What a reckless waste of taxpayer dollars and a clear push for more red tape. We do not need it.

The Environment minister, Ms Ogilvie, laid out the strength of our regulatory framework, and I am here to back her up by highlighting the economic and community spine this industry provides. The Greens cannot bluff past decades of hard work that has kept our regions thriving, our data open and our innovation sharp. This motion risks stalling that progress for no gain. I urge this House to stand with our practical, community-driven approach, vote against this motion, and keep Tasmania moving forward.

[4.34 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this afternoon to make my contribution to the private members motion before the House and indicate that Tasmanian Labor will not be supporting the position.

There has been a lot said in this Chamber and in the community over the last couple of weeks about the devastating events that we are experiencing as a community with the mass mortalities from salmon farming in the south-east. A lot of people have laid on the record their thoughts and concerns for the workers who are, day in, day out, responding to and cleaning up the areas of Tasmania that have been impacted. There is nobody in Tasmania more concerned, devastated, overwhelmed and exhausted than the people working on our salmon farms and

dealing with this every day. There have been a number of stories shared around community members and residents who have been impacted by materials found on beaches. Community members, members of parliament, salmon farmers of Tasmania - everyone understands how horrible this experience has been. I am glad to hear the Greens acknowledge in the Chamber today that this event is unprecedented. There has not been an experience like this in Tasmania of this scale of fish mortalities.

I extend my thanks to the companies operating in Tasmania that responded immediately in terms of their clean-up and also in their bid to understand the circumstances we find ourselves in now. They set to work, as any credible individual, any successful, innovative, research and science-based entity would do, as the minister herself said, on understanding, responding and seeing how they can continue to improve and respond to situations like this.

This mass mortality event followed an announcement of a leadership position taken by one of the companies just days before where, for the first time, it would disclose in real time its use of antibiotics. I think what we can see is a group of companies working in Tasmania that all the time want to meet the expectations and standards of the community and of this place, and are doing more all the time to be transparent in the ways they operate, both in terms of the expectations that a community has, but also in terms of the celebrations that a community has.

I know the focus of this motion before us this afternoon is on the devastating events. However, it is easy to lose perspective in these moments about the bigger picture of salmon farming in Tasmania. The bigger picture, the longer time picture of this collection of people in our state is that it is an incredible success story. It is a group of people who started as a very small group of people, as individuals, in fact.

I will interrupt my flow there for a minute. I had an opportunity to visit one of the birthplaces of aquaculture in Tasmania in my own electorate of Bass last year, I think it was, it might have been the year before, at Bridport. There were individuals decades ago who said, 'I reckon we can grow some fish in this way in Tasmania'. From individuals, from families, grew this opportunity. When I visited one of the fish feed plants in recent times, I heard the story where, originally, when these farms were developed, they were feeding fish by hand out of buckets from wheelbarrows. Because of the way people in Tasmania think, and because of the way people in Tasmania have to work hard to create solutions to challenges, innovation came in from Tasmania.

I think it is easy to lose sight in these moments when things are difficult and people are overwhelmed with what we are experiencing, that we lose sight of the fact that salmon farmers in Tasmania have led some of the world's greatest innovations in how to grow fish to provide food for the people of the planet. We can lose sight of the fact that farming salmon in Tasmania has the lowest carbon footprint of the production of protein. That is one of the greatest ways that we can grow and develop a great product at a great price for people to live a healthy life.

I want to respond to some of the comments made by the JLN member in the Chamber today, and also on some comments made previously. It might have been through Question Times last week. It was sometime early in the days last week. There was a particular comment made about our wild fishers in Tasmania. One of the reasons why farming fish is so important is because, over time, our wild fisheries are depleting, for a whole range of reasons, for pressure, for all sorts of things. I ask the member to reflect on his source information, where

he says, and he has repeated now at least twice in this Chamber, that hundreds of wild fishers in Tasmania have been forced out of that livelihood because of salmon farming. That is absolutely not true and I think for the wild fishers in Tasmania who have had collectively really challenging times over a number of years, there are reasonable things to reflect on that could be different to support our wild fishers, but to blame the salmon industry. You know, salmon becomes an easy target for everybody. If something goes wrong, it has to be salmon's fault. To suggest that wild fishers have been forced out by our salmon farms in numbers of hundreds, is something that the member should reflect on and perhaps go back to the source and check, and not repeat in this Chamber again because that is wildly unfair.

There are a lot of things that happen that are wildly unfair for this industry. I was going to say, one of the things I think the minister is challenging about the governance of salmon farming in Tasmania is that for whatever reason, the government of the day made a decision to divide the portfolio of aquaculture across a number of areas. In the last couple of weeks, there have been some comments which I would support about the difficulty in getting on top of public communication about this from the government has been that there are so many pieces to the puzzle, so many moving parts. We have had contributions from the minister for Primary Industries, the minister for the Environment, the minister for Resources, and the Premier himself.

As a reflection on that, I think, it makes it difficult. It feels like the government has sort of caught up now and is coming into a coordinated approach but it is not great for the people farming salmon in Tasmania to wait for the catch-up of the government to get themselves organised to be able to come out cleanly, because on Tuesday, when questions were asked of the Premier, I think on reflection even the Premier would say that he was a bit slow and soft to start communicating about what was happening in Tasmania. Soft and slow - I often use the language in the Chamber about this government having lost their capacity to act with urgency. They have lost their capacity to see the critical issues that actually Tasmania needs them to lead on and one of the areas where Tasmanians needed this government to lead and to act with more urgency, and to understand the importance, was the appointment of the Director of the EPA.

It was mid to late last year when the former Director announced that he was going to retire. The recruitment process started late last year. The recruitment closed in January, the first week of January this year, and still we do not have a permanent director for the EPA. I think everyone in this Chamber would agree that that is not good enough, and it is not fair either on the people who are installed in the temporary positions. It is not fair for the people who are in that organisation that although they have leadership, they do not have a permanently installed full-time director for the EPA, which Tasmanians need right now, salmon farmers need right now, and it would be useful for the parliament to have that leadership and, therefore, that level of information and sharing right now.

There are some things happening in the government that are not helping now. I hope there is reflection from the government on that. When we have an event of this scale, when we have an event that has not happened in this way before, we do call on the resources and the effort and the energy and the goodwill of many to do the work of recovery. I know this motion is about reflecting on an inquiry to do into that, but, as already outlined by the government and by a number of members, there probably is not an industry in Tasmania or even in the country that has as much regulation, or as much strong regulation, has as much legislation, or has as many standards as the salmon industry does in Tasmania.

There cannot be a statement of truth to say that it is underregulated, that there are no strong frameworks or processes in place for salmon farming in Tasmania. I and Tasmanian Labor do not believe that it is necessary for this motion to be supported today and we know that with the many processes, with the auditing, with the reporting - there is an expectation and a commitment that the reporting will be public- that work happened with the frameworks that already exist between the government, companies, and the EPA, whether it be the EPA, or whether it be the role biosecurity will play, whether it be the role that NRE Tas play, there is substantial work that will occur as a result of this extraordinary effort.

Tasmanian Labor do not support the motion before the House today. I put on record our thanks to the workers who continue now, day and night to do the work of clean-up. I acknowledge the concern, the devastation, the impact that has occurred to Tasmanians at this time, and to workers at this time. I believe that it is important that the government maintain their alignment in the communications and perhaps reflect on and consider whether it is too many moving parts to have too many ministers across what is Australia's most valuable seafood sector in Tasmania's greatest primary industry. We cannot afford to be let down by a slowness in process right now.

Having said all of that, salmon farming in Tasmania is something that we should be proud of. There is an extraordinary event which has caused devastation and has caused impact. That has been acknowledged. Apologies have been offered. Recovery and clean-up is happening. The motion before the Parliament this afternoon is not necessary.

[4.47 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Speaker, I rise today as Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, the minister responsible for public health in Tasmania, just to make a short contribution to address some of the matters that have been raised by earlier speakers.

As each of the speakers has mentioned in their contributions, this is an event, a situation that crosses the responsibilities of a number of different parts of government, statutory organisations as well as government agencies and across several government ministers as well. I thank my colleague Minister for the Environment, Madeleine Ogilvie, for her leadership and the EPA's leadership of this complex piece of work and the coordination required across many parts of government. It is interesting to note that that brings a bit of commentary and criticism from others who are viewing that from the outside.

Ms Finlay mentioned that maybe too many ministers are involved or too many departments, but it is a complex matter that covers many different areas of statutory responsibilities.

Mr Bayley was concerned that there was information on public health coming out second hand through the EPA. It is important that there is a coordinated lead. You do not want necessarily to have each of the four or five or more ministers or agencies each separately reporting using their own language, separate in different information on these matters in the public realm. It is important that those agencies brief each other. They share information. They coordinate through regular situation reports and brief up to their respective ministers as well so that we can maintain overview of the situation, but ensure that when the information is coming out that it is consistent, coordinated and it is coming from sources of truth and information that people can learn to listen out for.

We make no apologies for having a cross agency, a whole of government approach to this, coordinated by the EPA as the lead at this stage of this event, and ably led by my colleague, minister Ogilvie, in our government.

The EPA remains the agency responsible as the lead for managing the fish mortality event and the associated deposit of fatty substances that are being experienced in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel area. The public health service, as I mentioned, is providing advice to the EPA, and that advice has been passed on as part of consolidated information that is coming out on a regular basis.

I am advised that testing that has been undertaken by the EPA and reported to the public health service has demonstrated that the fatty substances that are being washed up are derived from fish and fish oil products. The bacterial infection, which I understand is a strain of *Piscirickettsia salmonis* causing the mass mortalities, is a fish pathogen and cannot, in itself, cause human disease. The public health advice remains to not handle or consume dead fish or such substances when you encounter them in the environment and - this is important - to wash your hands if you do come in contact with them, and to avoid recreational activities that will bring you into contact with the dead fish. In particular, members of the public are asked to leave such material alone in the same way as any other dead animal material that you may encounter in your day-to-day going about.

It is never pleasant, but anyone who goes for an early morning walk, particularly if they live in a rural area like mine, will have experienced roadkill on our road verges. People will occasionally come across other rotting animal material in the environment and on our beaches. The advice is to avoid it, and not to handle or consume it. This is not a type of material that is inherently more harmful because of what led to its death, but it is something that you might want to avoid and take precautions. This includes avoiding areas where you can observe an accumulation of this material and washing your hands or other body parts if you come in contact with it.

The other issue is that public health alerts are generally issued in circumstances where there is a significant risk of harm to human health, particularly when the public may not recognise or understand that there is a risk. In the current circumstances, the well-publicised presence of fish material on beaches, while unpleasant and smelly, does not itself propose a health risk unless handled or consumed. Importantly, our beaches and coastal areas which have been or may be affected are open for use. No advice has yet been issued contrary to this. I had a briefing yesterday and asked a question about whether this was something we anticipated could be necessary.

One of the issues is that the distribution of the fatty materials and fish remains that are turning up can change very quickly depending on wind direction, tides and currents. A warning or alert that is applied to declare an area open or free or safe one minute or one day might be out of date the next day. We also know that there are clean-up works underway and that the material itself is not inherently harmful to human health beyond being dead animal material to be treated as I mentioned earlier.

On that basis, while public health will continue to monitor and receive information about this incident and provide advice back through our lead agency to communicate to the public, at this stage beaches remain open for us. However, beach users should be aware of the possible presence of fatty substances on some shores along the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. This event is

being well-communicated in and to those communities. Members of the public can call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738 if they have questions or concerns.

I know that Mr Bayley mentioned that there was no information coming out from Public Health, but then mentioned that there was information coming out from Public Health via the EPA. The information he read in as part of his contribution is consistent with what I have just confirmed in my contribution. That information is coming out. It is coming out as part of a balanced package of information from the EPA. We know that people are interested not only in their own health, but the health of the environment. Those in the vicinity who have the likelihood of encountering these materials on their beaches will be listening out for both messages.

Importantly, there is another matter. I am advised that the public health service is aware that some of the salmon at some of the leases in the lower D'Entrecasteaux Channel region have been treated with oxytetracycline (OTC) to treat a bacterial disease affecting salmon stock. A previous detailed risk assessment requested by the Public Health Service and undertaken by Food Standards Australia New Zealand found that the prescribed application of OTC for treatment of farmed salmon did not raise public health concerns associated with the consumption of wild fish living in waters surrounding salmon cages. Commercially farmed salmon treated with OTC are subject to withholding times and must comply with the requirements of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code which specifies a maximum residue limit for OTC in fish.

In Tasmania, the safety of commercially-produced seafood is overseen and regulated under the *Primary Production Safety Act 2011*, which is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The *Primary Production Safety Act* adopts the requirements of the code which is developed and overseen by Food Standards Australia New Zealand. The code sets requirements relating to the safety of food and prescribes what level of certain chemicals can be present in foods. The limits are based on formal risk assessments. For ethoxyquin, a chemical permitted for use as a feed additive, the code permits a maximum level of 1 milligram per kilogram in marine fish and seafood. Producers are required to ensure that the food that they produce complies with the requirements of the code.

This goes to the matter raised by Mr Garland in terms of knowledge of the levels of what chemicals are being used under veterinary supervision for the treatment of fish in fish farms. The further advice I have had from public health, based on the work undertaken by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) previously, is that the concentrations of the antibiotics that enter the environment of the wild fish populations in the vicinity of fish farms are of concentrations below those determined to be of any harm to humans.

In terms of the materials, the treatment of the fish through this mortality event, and that risk to recreational users, recreational fishers and the environment - these are matters that are well understood but will continue to be monitored. This is a significant event. There is a lot of experience from regulation from previous research on things like those residual limits for antibiotics that are at play at the moment.

Public Health is continuing to work with NRE Tas and the EPA to monitor this situation. We will update information as it comes to hand if there are any changes. In the meantime, we encourage our recreational water users and concerned citizens to observe their environment and to listen out for updates from the combined messaging that is coming from government

and coordinated through the EPA at this stage. Be sensible, take care of yourself and your family, look out for things on the beach that are not normally there. Avoid them if you can. If you do come into contact, wash your hands. Be confident in the knowledge that there is not something that killed that fish that can harm you directly in terms of the mortality event. Take sensible precautions if you do come into contact with those materials. Treat them as you would roadkill, or if you are walking through a paddock, animal faeces, et cetera, those sorts of things.

Common sense can prevail and assist. We will keep you up to date with any developments and advice from our statutory bodies.

[4.59 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, in relation to this motion, I will be clear. I have been a supporter of the industry for quite a period of time. It is a big employer and plays a big role in the community that I represent. I am a supporter, but I am not a cheerleader. No industry in Tasmania gets a blank cheque from me as a local representative. Nor should any industry get a black cheque. When occurrences such as this confront our community - it has confronted a fair whack of the community that I represent, the seat of Franklin. Some of those coastal communities, some of those beach communities have no doubt been massively impacted by what is a terrible set of circumstances.

Community members and industry members have been very concerned about what is happening. I believe this is a moment in time where we need to understand how government needs to structure itself to respond to a large industry that has an impact on our environment by virtue of their activities, and the lack of information, the confusion, the rumours, the scrambling of various agencies to have some level of basic information to the community has been terrible. It has put communities through fear that has been out in the community about what has happened and the circumstances around it and what may happen to people's environment, what may happen to children and families who swim.

All of this swirling around our community has been very disappointing, because if the government had a clear single point of contact, a single approach to this kind of incident and the industry to enable the industry to communicate clearly what has happened, to allay fears of the community, to inform the community of what has happened and why, I think the kind of concern and anguish in the community would not be as much. I accept there is broad concern about the industry from corners of our community, but people in the industry are very concerned about this as well. No one chooses to go through this event; no one deliberately makes decisions that create this kind of outcome. It is bad for everyone.

My perspective on the role of government is to ensure that the industry is regulated appropriately, that when incidents such as this happen - and we know that many industrial-scale farms, be it on or off water, regardless of the animal that we are talking about or the kind of protein that we are dealing with here - there are implications, and transparency and clarity of communication from industry when these things occur, and from government is crucially important.

In relation to this motion, as I will make it clear, people in my community are very concerned about what has happened. People in the industry are concerned about what happened. The lack of clarity about information and transparency is of concern to everyone and we need to do better by our communities. We need to do better by the industry. As I said, I am a supporter of the industry, but I am not a cheerleader and I will fight for the jobs and

fight for the communities, but ensure that we do this well and we do this as best as we possibly can and that is my position broadly on the industry.

In relation to this motion, we are still going through this incident. This is still evolving and the lack of information in certain areas and some of the media interviews that we heard last week from the EPA was not good enough. It is not good enough. That is why we have this amount of angst. The government needs to do better at this. In terms of this motion, I may well at some stage in the future support a referral to deal with matters such as this or this incident, but we are still going through it. We do not know. Injecting a political committee into the middle of what should be a scientific process, I think at this point, is not helpful. Whilst I am not saying that we should not investigate what happened and understand what has happened and improve how we respond, and improve how we support our community - be they in the industry, be they living near the industry - until we know exactly what has happened, getting a political committee into the middle of it is exactly the wrong thing to do.

Whilst I echo the concerns of the member who moved the motion that he is no doubt hearing from his community, as are members, particularly, members across the south of the state, and their legitimate concerns. We should not hide from that. We should respond with evidence, with scientific fact and with reasoned argument, and ensure that hopefully this kind of incident does not happen again. I cannot support the motion because it is injecting politics into the situation, where, at the minute, our government's focus should be on ensuring that we round this up and try and get things back on an even keel. Excuse the pun.

[5.05 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I reaffirm the words of the member for Clark, Mr Bayley, and Mr Jenner and Mr Garland, who understand, we understand, and at least are being truthful about the disaster that is unfolding around us.

I have heard what Mr O'Byrne said about it being premature to have an inquiry. In fact, now is the time to get started. This is the biggest salmon mass mortality event in the state. Ms Finlay said earlier in her contribution that she was glad to hear that the Greens called it 'unprecedented'. The words of the acting director of the EPA last Friday was that it is 'unprecedented' and that does not mean that enormous mass mortalities have not occurred before. They have. We had 1.35 million salmon which died in Macquarie Harbour. I cannot remember if it was 2018.

Mr Bayley - It was 2018.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Mr Bayley. If the salmon companies had not learnt from that experience then that would be on their head, but we have certainly been here with mass mortalities before. What we have never seen is the scale of impacts so apparent to our eyes as we have in the current event which is still ongoing. A large part of that is because of very committed campaigners and locals who have themselves taken footage of things that have happened and posting the experiences of what they are seeing on beaches across the vast amount of the Huon and D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

Whilst those 1.35 million salmon died in Macquarie Harbour from a heat wave event seven years ago, we did not see that happening in real time and now we are. What the reality is of how salmon farming occurs in Tasmania is writ large for everyone to see - not just in Tasmania but around the world. Definitely on mainland Australia people are paying notice.

The RSPCA is paying notice. It is having a devastating impact on our marine environment. It is having a devastating impact on the reputation of Tasmania and I believe anyone who is watching what is happening in Tasmania from outside of Tasmania would see more clearly than most of us here are able to see that this is in greatest part because of the capture of the Liberal and Labor parties by big salmon corporations and their donations.

It is the relationship between the Liberal and Labor politicians and the big salmon corporations that has meant we have such appalling laws and we have effectively no arsenal in to deploy to do anything about them, even if we want to, in this unfolding marine event. We have no laws to throw at them, effectively. What the EPA has at their hands is so pathetic.

I have even heard complaints from the salmon companies themselves at the EPA not providing information in a timely fashion, at the run-around between ministers, between the multiple ministers and the lack of coordination in the Liberal government, and their mismanagement of this event.

Let us start off with the biggest mismanagement, which was hiding, obfuscation and silence. It was weeks before anyone in this government spoke up and it was only in parliament that it actually happened on the back of Greens questions and from Mr Garland, and that is not textbook perfect management of a mass mortality event. That is not the way to handle a community of people who were looking forward to summer holidays on the long weekend and you had no clear information about what to do with the stuff that was washing up on their beaches.

I have listened to minister Jaensch with his comments from the public health authority and now I can understand why people were genuinely confused and were posting and calling each other and talking in the Huon Channel, 'What do you do? Is it safe to go in the water?' because it was such a mixed message: 'Leave the fish', 'Avoid contact'. How do you avoid contact with fish when you are swimming in the water and they are floating around? How do you avoid contact with parts of contaminated, diseased fish, diseased fish oil when it is a surface of oil on the water? Is it a problem for dogs? Is it a problem for children who are playing in the sand and putting things in their mouth? These are entirely reasonable questions where people were left to make up their own answers themselves with no help at all from the Liberal government.

When Mr Jaensch said before that, 'Oh well, people knew about it because they heard the message', as Mr Bayley said, from an EPA email that referenced an advisory that Public Health had given them, and it was to an environmental group. Classifying that as information to Tasmanians is bizarre. There were no alerts on beaches, there were no signs anywhere. There was no stand-up media about public health risks, even after people had been asking these questions. They were left alone to work it out themselves.

There was no TasALERT. Why was TasALERT not used? For sure, you did not know which beaches were going to be affected from day to day, but I can tell you, there were so many of them: Verona Sands, Charlotte Cove, Randalls Bay, Ninepin Point Marine Reserve, Miceys Beach, Drip Beach, Gourlays Bay, Surveyors Bay, Garden Island, Huon Island, Kays Beach, Eggs and Bacon Bay, Abels Bay, Roaring Beach, Conleys Beach on Bruny Island, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. They are the ones we brainstormed in our office from the conversations we have had with people in the community and things people have posted. It could have been an alert to the whole of the Huon and Channel. That would have sufficed. That

is actually what we are talking about, all those communities and all the people who flooded down there.

It shows that this government and, from the things I have, unfortunately, heard from the Labor Party, having been champions and cheerleaders of big salmon for so long, are now, at this point, riven and immobile, incapable of having anything like an adequate response because they do not know what the salmon companies want them to say in this unfolding PR disaster.

Ms Finlay said that companies responded immediately. Yes, they did respond immediately. I heard from the people at Verona Sands that they responded immediately to try and hide what was happening. They denied to locals that they were employed by Huon. They would not say which company they were employed by. The same thing happened on Bruny Island. They had unknown people on their local beaches cleaning up stuff and they would not say where they came from. Then, they must have read the room when it got out later that day how bad that looked, from the social media comments. They went back in the afternoon and told people, 'Oh yeah, we are actually from Huon Aquaculture', and, probably, 'We are from Tassal', too.

Ms Ogilvie - They were volunteers, were they not?

Dr WOODRUFF - No, they were from those companies. They were cleaning up the beaches. This was an act of PR management. It was a disaster unfolding. Both of the companies have been scrambling to do everything they can to keep a lid on it.

The lid popped off with the footage the Bob Brown Foundation posted on the weekend about the animal cruelty. I have been through that numbers of times. If members have not seen that, I strongly suggest you do because it is something I would never have expected or hoped to see in Tasmania. It is vile. Those companies should be held to account for what they were doing to the salmon, and also to the workers that they threw under the bus at the same time.

Let us not forget, it has been such a bad PR disaster that Henry Batista, who is the CEO of Huon Aquaculture, has cut and run from Tasmania -

Ms Finlay - Get out of here. That is just -

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass. You may take a point of order if you like.

Dr WOODRUFF - Where is he? Where is he to take responsibility? He was parachuted in from Brazil, one of the great Batista family, to come in, have a little play around with business in Tasmania -

Members interjecting.

Dr WOODRUFF - They have such weak rules, they can do whatever they like. Who knows? A bit of money laundering. Not sure. That is the sort of stuff that was happening in Brazil -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Sorry, I will stop the member. I did not allow the Leader of the Greens to interject on anyone else. I will not allow you to interject on her. You may take a substantive motion or a point of order if you wish, but sniping from the sidelines is not going to be tolerated today. The Leader of the Greens has the call and I ask her to come to the matter before her.

Dr WOODRUFF - My point is that he has disappeared to Europe to have his hand at doing something with the chicken industry for them over there. JBS are the biggest protein producers in the world. Our three salmon companies are not owned by Tasmanians any more. They are profit-making companies, some of the biggest on the planet. What they are doing is damage control. The last thing on their mind is the impact on the marine environment.

The motion we have before us today is an attempt to say: 'We are at a crossroads. We can make a decision about whether we continue with an industry like this. Every time one of these events happens the community gets stronger.'

I remind members that when the mass mortality event happened in 2018, Neighbours of Fish Farming had barely been established. There was no Friends of the Bay, there was no massive Carlton River-Dodges Ferry community group, which sprang up like a mushroom overnight. The Friends of the Bay and the Carlton River and Dodges Ferry communities have got together in the last couple of months, or six months or so. They are very new in the space because there are communities all around Storm Bay who are sick to their back teeth at the idea that this industry is not only existing where it is and doing the damage it is to the marine environment, but it has planned on expanding and stomping down south.

They have already had a taste of fish farms in Norfolk Bay. It might be good for people to remember the reason that Huon Aquaculture took their salmon pen into Norfolk Bay in 2018, was because it had diseased fish. They were potentially responsible for biosecurity breaches and Tassal, at the time, was very concerned about it.

There are so many questions we do not have answers to. Where did this strain of the *Piscirickettsia* come from? It has now been identified, it seems, as the Tasmanian rickettsia-like organism (TRLO), and I think it is understood that came from the east coast.

How did it get around here? What is happening to all the fish being dumped, the 5000 to 6000 tonnes that have been dumped so far? We understand from the EPA that some of it involves illegal dumping practices, but even with the legal dumping practices, the community is saying: Where is it going? How are you dealing with such large quantities of fish all at once? What are you going to do? Is it going to end up coming into our waterways? Is it going to contaminate our rivers if it is being sprayed as a kind of compost on properties? What is the oversight of what is going on there? Are we going to have rickettsia-like organisms in our rivers?

We know it can affect other species. We do not have any evidence of research done on Tasmanian native fish and this new strain of bacteria by any scientists. There is no information about the research that has been done. It is claimed it does not affect native fish, but how would we know? Where is the research that demonstrates it does not affect native fish?

We are concerned that the Labor Party has taken \$5 million in donations over the past five years and has not declared where those donations came from. The Liberal Party has taken \$13 million in the last five years and has not declared where those donations have come from.

Clearly, that is secret for a purpose. It is secret because the Liberal and Labor parties do not want to tell Tasmanians who made those donations. We strongly suspect that large amounts of those monies have come from foreign-owned salmon corporations who want to get a result. The result is that when things like this happen, the Liberal and Labor parties do not effectively advocate for any change in the situation.

We say we need to have an inquiry to look into this. It is entirely reasonable. If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear. Why would we not want to improve on the current situation? Ms Ogilvie's message was that an inquiry would be unnecessary and it would waste resources. That is what parliament is here to do, Ms Ogilvie. Parliament is here to make investigations into one of the biggest crises that has ever happened in Tasmania in the marine environment. It is a great use of parliament's time to investigate that. It is necessary because, clearly, everything is not perfect. The regulations are not working, and the laws are not working. The oversight is not working. If there is an investigation that the minister talked about, can you please table the terms of reference of that inquiry?

Ms Ogilvie - The EPA is investigating it.

The SPEAKER - Order, minister Ogilvie.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes. Could you please come back to the House and let us know:

- (1) What the terms of the EPA's investigation are.
- (2) Who is involved in that investigation.
- (3) Whether people can make a submission to the investigation.
- (4) Whether the results of the investigation will be made public to Tasmanians?

If we do not need to have a parliamentary inquiry, then anything else that is done should be open. It should be fully available for people to have a look at. They should be able to make a submission. We should understand what the scope of the inquiry is. It would be very helpful if you could come into the House at some other time and provide us that information.

I want to conclude and say that there is a huge amount of extra information that we need to get about this ongoing outbreak. I have mentioned the waste disposal issues and the impacts on native fish species.

Salmon farming, by the way, Ms Finlay, has had a very devastating effect on commercial fishers.

Ms Finlay - The point was on hundreds.

Dr WOODRUFF - For example, there are no commercial fishers -

The SPEAKER - The member for Bass will cease interjecting. The member who has the call will direct her commentary through the Chair to stop inciting interjections.

Dr WOODRUFF - I will not speak to the member for Bass. Thank you, honourable Speaker.

What we have are commercial fishers who have all been, as I understand it, taken out of Macquarie Harbour as part of the skate management plan. The salmon farms were not taken out of Macquarie Harbour. The commercial fishers were removed, but not the big salmon companies. I spoke to people in the Storm Bay expansion who are commercial fishers and are deeply concerned about the impacts of the West of Wedge leases from Tassal would have on their fisheries. I heard years later that they were badly affected by that.

We used to have an enormous amount of flathead. Most recreational fishers in Tasmania would be very concerned about that. They might be interested to know that escaped salmon have been shown by our IMAS scientists to eat the eggs of flathead. The evidence is there. IMAS has shown that escaped salmon - and we never get any information about how many escaped salmon there are. That is another bit of information that Tasmanians would like to know: how many salmon escape into the wild to eat the eggs of our own native fish? If we knew that we might be able to have an appropriate response. That is another piece of information that we should be able to get at in an inquiry. If we want to have a sustainable fishery, if we want to have our own native fish in the river for us to enjoy, for people to have recreational fishing activity, then we need to know what the true impacts of this evolving marine crisis are.

We hope that Mr O'Byrne changes his mind. We will see what happens a month down the track. We know it would probably take about a month for this inquiry to get fully going, at the earliest, to start calling people. Now is the time to start. In a month's time, I sincerely hope this evolving marine crisis is over. I am not confident from what we have heard from scientists that that is the case. The Greens are going to be here standing up with other people on the crossbench to call out the secrecy, the silence, and the shocking mismanagement, and to stand up for the marine communities who demand us to do better.

The SPEAKER - Before giving the call to Dr Broad, I remind members of their obligations under particularly the final section of Standing Order 2 and the rights of others that exist under Standing Order 352.

[5.25 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to give what will now be a very short contribution. I have just been reflecting on the way this issue has been handled. There is no doubt that the government could have done better, especially in terms of their communication with the public. Think about it, if this was any other primary industry - if we had a disease outbreak in the dairy industry, in the wool industry, in chickens or pigs, you name it - then we would be having a very different discussion. We would be talking about pulling together and trying to solve the problems that the industry is now facing. What we see all the time from the Greens in particular, and also, I must say, my colleague from Braddon, Mr Garland, is the framework that the industry should not exist. That is the framework that is in place. It should not be out in the oceans, and we have to understand and take note of that, and they should too.

The communication with the public obviously needs to be much better. The coordination also needs to improve. I think we all have a duty of care in this place not to spread misinformation, okay? What I have heard in this place is that the Greens have raised issues and

those questions have been answered. They have been answered in this place, and yet I hear those same questions being put again and again. We heard the Leader of the Greens do that. That is misinformation.

For example, she was saying that there was this conspiracy, albeit briefly, that this was the same disease that wiped out the Chilean salmon industry. That was pretty quickly put to bed when it was said that it was a naturally occurring bacteria that is of local origin. Now, we hear the leader of the Greens talking about what the impact is on local fish stocks. It is a naturally occurring bacteria. It is a naturally occurring organism. They have been having an impact on those local fish stocks the same as they have been having an impact on the salmon. We have an independent EPA doing an investigation and they really need to get on with their job.

We heard time and time again that this is a disease that does not affect people. We hear again the questions from the Leader of the Greens: 'Is it safe for dogs? Is it safe for children? Is it safe to swim?' Then she says something which was just so completely ridiculous. It was just insane. She said, what happens if a child walked along the beach and picked up a bit and stuck it in her mouth? Stuck it in the child's mouth. That is a very decent question. What would happen if that child stuck anything from the beach in their mouth? I mean, come on. Obviously, you do not encourage children or even dogs to pick up stuff on the beach and eat it. It is just insane to think that there is any exception, that the salmon industry needs to be treated differently.

I wish that in this place we would see the industry treated the same as the other industry. For example, primary industries can be messy. At the moment there is a bird flu outbreak. It resulted in the culling of 10 per cent of the nation's flock of chickens.

Mr Bayley - Not on public land and public water.

Dr BROAD - Half a million chickens had to be culled.

Mr Bayley - Did they wash up on the beach?

The SPEAKER - Order, Deputy Leader of the Greens, I gave protection to members of the Greens. The same extends to Dr Broad.

Dr BROAD - We see sheep being shot during a drought and we see animals culled all the time. Primary industry can get ugly.

The member for Clark interjects and says, 'But it is washing up on the beach'. You know what, there was an industry, Cadbury's, for example, had a malfunction at their factory. What happened? Sewerage spill. It shut our beaches. It absolutely shut our beaches. The Greens are not calling for Cadbury to be shut down, and they are foreign-owned.

Dr Woodruff - We did call for it.

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens. The protection you had will be extended to other members.

Dr BROAD - My goodness me. They are foreign-owned. You have to extend the same arguments. I am running out of time. The framework of the Greens is that the industry should not exist, when what we should be doing is pulling together and understanding how this happened.

When *Pilchard orthomyxovirus* (POMV) struck the salmon industry and there was a mass fish kill, what happened? The industry developed a vaccine and largely solved the problem. Same with this *Piscirickettsia salmonis* - hopefully the industry will focus on a vaccine and the government will, so that this never happens again. That is the sort of thing that we should be talking about. This is an unprecedented issue.

We know that fish in the ocean in salmon pens are vulnerable. There is science that can help tackle those issues, just like they did with POMV. When your framework is that the industry should not exist, then you are always going to look at everything that happens as a reason to shut down the industry. What we should be doing is pulling together to make sure the industry still exists.

Time expired.

The SPEAKER (Ms O'Byrne) - The question is -

That the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 9

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Mrs Beswick
Ms Burnet
Mr Garland
Mr Jenner
Ms Johnston
Ms Rosol (Teller)
Dr Woodruff

NOES 24

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Mr Farrell
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Willie (Teller)
Mr Winter

Motion negatived.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Movement Around Chamber

[5.30 p.m.]

The SPEAKER - While I have members, I did chip members for not being fast enough getting across to the other side of the Chamber in the last vote. Thank you for your correspondence, Ms Johnston. The issue of the chairs being pushed back is actually difficult before we get to the lunch break because they are very noisy to move back. That is why the chairs used by members of the other place when they are here in Question Time are pushed back. We rarely have divisions before the lunch break but I will be conscious of that. I will ask perhaps members of the government side to use other mechanisms to get to the other side if that occurs again. I apologise for chipping quite so harshly.

MOTION

Mental Health Support for Retired Police Personnel

[5.37 p.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House: -

- (1) Notes: -
 - (a) research indicates that retired police personnel are at an increased risk of PTSD, depression and other mental health conditions; and
 - (b) hundreds of retired and former police personnel suffer from mental health disorders as a direct result of their work.
- (2) Acknowledges the vital role that police officers play in protecting the community and the lasting impact their service can have on their mental well-being.
- (3) Recognises that many former and retired officers struggle to access adequate mental health support due to the lack of Government funded mental health support.
- (4) Further notes that the Government provides some mental health support for those whose conditions arise and are reported during service.
- (5) Calls on the Government to immediately establish and fund ongoing mental health support services for those whose conditions were found arising during service, but were not reported at the time, due to the fact health issues like PTSD can often emerge years later. (11 March 2025)

I will require a vote.

From the moment I entered the Tasmanian parliament, I have always been a steadfast advocate for our frontline essential workers. We know our frontline workers are overworked, understaffed, underpaid, and are struggling under impossible expectations. The conditions they face are not just unfair, they are not sustainable. The government has repeatedly spoken about the support of frontline workers, but talk is meaningless without action. It cries poor, yet it can seem to find the money to build a billion-dollar stadium.

As we know, our frontline workers endure stressful and demanding conditions throughout their careers, but in some cases, the government wipes its hands clean of them as soon as they retire. I was approached last year by members of the Retired Police Association Tasmania (RPA), frustrated because there was zero mental health support available for former or retired police officers. I acknowledge that those who have been diagnosed with PTSD or other work-related mental health disorders during their service receive support, as it should be.

However, we know that conditions such as PTSD do not stick to a deadline, often manifesting years later after the initial trauma. Many officers do not even know they are suffering from PTSD until it is too late. It is one of those insidious illnesses where the patient is usually the last to know. There is a huge gap in support at the moment if the condition is not diagnosed before they leave the service. They are left struggling on their own.

The RPA slogan for their battle to receive mental health support for all former and retired police officers is, 'You broke us, you fix them'. That is exactly what this government should be doing. We are actively encouraging young Tasmanians into a career with the police, a great and honourable career that it is. In recent years, this government has embarked on an extensive recruitment drive. A quick glance at the Premier's and ministers' social media pages reveals a steady stream of posts celebrating new police graduates, seemingly every other week, and it is congratulations, and well-deserved. The government must accept that they still have a duty of care and support for these officers even after they leave or retire, and that includes the PTSD, even if it was not diagnosed when they were in service.

Between 2000 and 2020, 103 serving Australian police officers died by suicide, with that rate doubling in the last decade. It is hard to find statistics on the exact numbers of retired and former police officers who commit suicide, but it is impossible to deny that policing takes a massive toll on mental health.

We need to ensure proper support systems are in place to help these workers heal and adjust to life after service. This means far easier access to mental health care, stronger peer support networks and policies that acknowledge the lasting effects of their work. Other retired police officers should not have to take on the responsibility of helping their peers access mental health support. That support should be guaranteed. Tasmania relies on its police and the work that they do to protect our community is invaluable.

In a journal article titled '*Holding onto trauma?*' *The prevalence and predictors of PTSD, anxiety and depression in police officers working with child abuse, rape and sexual exploitation victims* they state:

Policing is unique, as officers have to be a combined crime fighter, rescue worker, counsellor, psychologist and social worker due to the routine and

occupational exposure to violence, danger and traumatic events on the daily basis. For large numbers of officers this will also include exposure to secondary trauma through listening to the first-hand accounts of potentially the most traumatic experience of someone's life, from both adult and child victims of violent and sexual abuse.

This article highlights how police officers are especially vulnerable to psychological injury due to repeated exposure to these traumatic events. It also emphasises that these injuries are often hidden for years before manifesting.

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of sitting down with several members of the Retired Police Association of Tasmania and the stories they have shared about those who have sought help are nothing but harrowing. Let me share part of one of those stories. I have to say to parliamentarians that I also have friends who have committed suicide through PTSD, so this is a harsh reminder of this issue to myself.

This is John's story:

I started policing as a cadet in February 1979. Two years training and then on to multiple stations around the state, giving my supervisors a headache as we did back in those days, attending training courses, catching crooks and helping those who needed us, and always backing up each other. I resigned in 2001 and rejoined again in 2007, finally retiring from the best job I have ever had as a Sergeant-In-Charge of the Marine Police Division in the western district of Stanley.

What they did not tell us back then, and probably because they did not know, was all that stuff that we have seen and heard would eventually take its toll on us in different ways. We were too busy chasing the bad guys, driving flash cars and boats we could never afford ourselves and getting paid for it. Feeling pleased with ourselves and some workmates when a plan came together and ended up in convicting the crooks. We made a difference. Never let anyone tell you any different.

My trauma battle started in 1986, although I did not realise it at the time. It was when I was attending a particularly nasty multiple-fatality injury of children in Swansea. Chatting with the other coppers after a beer, and I mean a lot of beer, seemed to settle it, or so I thought. It took a long time for me to realise it had not in the slightest. I had young children at the time and I have to say the incident filled my glass up three quarters where it remains still today and from time to time that last quarter would fill up to overflowing.

That is when I knew I was in trouble. I cannot tell you exactly when, as, with us coppers, it is just a little bit of time over a long period. But back then you were told, 'Toughen up princess, get on with it'. Anything else was a sign of weakness, and no one wanted to see weak coppers.

My realisation came in 2017 when I attended my final fatal car crash in the north-west, where we were asked to back up so we assisted in traffic control. Unfortunately, an elderly lady had passed away and a young P-plater, and not

his fault in the slightest, was involved. When I told him the lady had passed away, he broke down and cried and so did I.

My wife, Carol, whom I have been married to for over 40 years, has been an absolute lifesaver. It was only then that I did not realise that I was like I was. This was not selfishness in my part. It was failure to understand what was happening to you to the point where I needed someone else to point it out.

It was not what I wanted to hear, but it is what I needed to hear. She told me that she had been noticing since 1999 that I had changed. I asked her why she said she had not told me and she said that she had not told me because she was scared of how I would react.

I was horrified to think that I could not be approached by my loved ones. I have never been formally diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety, or anything like that, but I am on meds and have been for the last 10 years. I was and still am in trouble.

John's story did not end there. He went on to share how he received support from an organisation called 4 Aussie Heroes. His experience is just one of many. Countless former officers face similar struggles, though not all are fortunate enough to find the helping time.

Tragically, some of these stories do not have happy endings. This is the harsh reality that far too many retired police officers confront, often feeling abandoned after years of service for their community.

Supporting our frontline workers should not stop when they finish service. It needs to continue long after they hang up their badges. Tragically, these harrowing experiences stay with them for life. The things they witness on the job, the trauma, the stressful situations, and the sacrifices they make do not just disappear when their career ends. It is now our turn to look after them.

[5.48 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Honourable Speaker, at the outset, can I just express how grateful I am to Mr Jenner for bringing this forward. Our condolences for the loss of your friends. Thank you for sharing those stories.

Our police do incredible work, as do all of our emergency services who put themselves in harm's way to serve those in our community. We are forever grateful for their service and for their sacrifice. I know that this House broadly feels that way. There would not be a member among us who would not recognise the extraordinary service of our first responders and the passion for which you bring this motion to the House, Mr Jenner. Thank you for that.

We know that our emergency responders experience circumstances that the majority of people cannot imagine. They see people every day on, potentially, the worst day of their lives. They run towards the danger and can be exposed to violence, other distressing situations in the course of their day, in the early hours of the morning, and in extremely challenging environments.

Due to their exposure to trauma in their work setting, we as a government, and I acknowledge across this parliament, are committed to supporting the physical and mental health for all Tasmanian emergency responders. That is Tasmania Police, fire, SES, ambulance, and others, both career and volunteer. The journey that we have been on as a government, as a parliament, as a community, and particularly within Tasmania Police, has been an important one. You mentioned in the old days, certainly, there has been a big cultural change that has needed to happen right across our community, but particularly in our emergency services, so people know that they will be supported when they reach out and seek help, that they do so at a time that is not too late.

When those feelings, those thoughts start to creep in, they need to know there is a place that they can go. Bottling it up, hiding it and resiling from it was an approach that may have been accepted in the past. However, in the conversations I have with our police officers these days, there is much more of a recognition of change, that there needed to be change and that there are some pretty bright opportunities in the future.

You mentioned our recruits coming through. In the awards given out at each graduation, there is an award for those with the highest commitment to health and mental wellbeing. I think that speaks volumes for the cultural change that has happened within Tasmania Police.

In 2018, the government introduced a trauma-informed program to support the health and wellbeing of emergency service responders. It is quite stark that it was only so recently that this program came through. As a community, we are playing catch-up on the support that could and should have been provided over many decades to our emergency responders, exposed to some of the worst things you can imagine. That is where we were. We have been on a journey. In the last budget, our commitment of \$3 million a year increased to \$4 million. I am blown away every time I speak with people from other jurisdictions who recognise that Tasmania has a nation-leading mental health and wellbeing program for our emergency services.

However, we need to do more, we need to continue to build on that work supporting an innovative and evidence-based health and wellbeing program that provides a mix of proactive, preventative and intervention measures 24/7 to our police, fire, SES and Ambulance Tasmania personnel.

In addition, we support and acknowledge the important work of the Retired Police Association of Tasmania (RPAT), which offers fellowship, peer support and mental health initiatives, including a 24/7 hotline, manned by trained RPAT members who work closely with our mental health and wellbeing unit so that those retired police officers who were on either end of the phone are providing and receiving evidence-based care to the highest standard. Our wellbeing support has already trained two cohorts of resigned or retired police officers as volunteer peer supporters. The coordinator of that program, who is a retired police officer, volunteers for wellbeing support once a week and is provided with advice and options for providing support. That growing investment and support in our people, by our people, for our people should be encouraging for us all.

This program delivered in partnership with RPAT was recognised last year at the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Community Network LiFE awards. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank those volunteers from RPAT working in the program and providing key supports to our retired police officers.

More broadly, the wellbeing support program provides a mix of proactive, preventative and intervention measures 24/7. It is award-winning and nation-leading, but it is not really about winning awards. It is about setting the highest possible standard to support those who served our community. The wellbeing program focuses on seven highly effective preventative measures to help prevent any potential deterioration in wellbeing. It includes the MyPulse program, Ready for Response, Mental Health First Aid, the wellbeing Sitrep Wellbeing Checks, education and information sessions and people-focused leadership initiatives.

Within these initiatives, I would like to highlight some of the amazing work that goes behind the scenes. The MyPulse program was launched on 10 September 2019. Again, I think many young people coming through our community who are so well connected with the language and thinking around mental health and wellbeing would be shocked at how recently these programs have come about, but these are the situations we are in. Building the trust within our emergency services that seeking support is okay, coming forward is okay and that you will be supported and listened to is so important. It is a proactive and preventative health and wellbeing program that supports both the physical and mental health of our emergency services personnel.

The services under MyPulse include online education modules, information and resources to help understand, improve and maintain mental and physical health and wellbeing, face-to-face education sessions aimed at increasing physical and mental health and wellbeing literacy, face-to-face health clinic consultations measuring individual physical health indicators, online health screening, including a physical health screen and a mental health screen with follow-up personalised coaching support for eligible employees. Family and friends of emergency services employees and volunteers can also access a publicly available version of MyPulse for information and resources that will help them support the health and wellbeing of our emergency services.

I pay a tribute to Sergeant Stuart Williams, from the north-west, who has written a beautiful book that sits on our bookshelf and is read quite regularly, called *It's Just Work Stuff*. It is all about explaining, in a child-friendly way, to children about some of the difficult matters that their parents might be going through as a career or a volunteer first responder. It does so in a way that is sensitive and trauma-informed. It explains quite beautifully that it is not your fault, it is not mum and dad's fault, it is just work stuff. That support for not just the first responder, but the people around them, can make an enormous difference.

As far as the statistics, as of 31 January 2025, an incredible 1769 individuals have completed the physical and/or mental health screen; 3208 screens have been completed; and 5083 coaching sessions have been held for 1299 unique individuals. Of course, that will continue to grow. Wellbeing checks were also offered to all police members working in areas considered to be high-risk. This includes areas such as forensic services and crash investigation. Any issues highlighted within these checks are addressed by wellbeing support psychologists or referred to another psychologist, as necessary. The wellbeing check model has been reviewed and will be extended to isolated and remote police stations, among others. There were 858 wellbeing checks conducted last financial year, which is nearly double the 432 conducted the previous year. Again, this is building that culture of support and feeling comfortable coming forward and saying, 'Hey, I need a need a hand here'. This is really important.

Other preventative responses available include the Ready for Response, which focuses on physical health and fitness, which we know is a critical driver of people's mental health and

wellbeing, particularly when they have been in emergency services and had to maintain quite a high level of fitness already. That is currently being redesigned for even bigger and brighter things: education information sessions including mental health first aid and people-focused leadership. I am pleased to share that a new program, Tactical Wellbeing, is also under development with more to come on that one in due course. People will often hear the unique language of our first responders in the names of these programs, and a big part of that is about meeting people where they are and providing the services they need in a way that works for them.

In addition to these preventative wellbeing initiatives, the Wellbeing Support Directorate within the department has early intervention services, injury management and advisory services, psychological services, social work services, the Tasmanian emergency services critical incident response management program and wellbeing services. Within these, Tasmanian Emergency Services Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a peer support program that has been in operation since 1988. Over 30 traumatic incidents are reported and responded to each month. I know the amazing work they do at a personal level, as a volunteer firefighter who has attended a couple of road crash fatalities. It was amazing support, down-to-earth, connected, meeting me and my other peers where we were at the time and ongoing if that support was needed. I thank all of our peer support workers and peer support volunteers who play a part in CISM. They are really special people and go above and beyond to support their mates.

To give you an idea of the uptake, currently Wellbeing Services takes on about 100 new clients each month. The reason why I am describing the breadth of these services to the House and as part of the discussion in this important motion Mr Jenner has brought forward is to illustrate that the health and wellbeing of our emergency services workers, including members of Tasmania Police, is an absolute priority for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management.

Our police are everyday heroes. They take on extraordinary challenges in their jobs. We are committed to providing a wellbeing support program that meets their mental health and wellbeing needs. Wellbeing Support's evidence-based focus on putting people and their families at the centre of decision-making has been a key reason for its success over time. The approach is supported by a mental health continuum to help target appropriate services, and a stigma reduction model, which I have spoken about already. We know that these things are not always easy for people to talk about, particularly when they are often looked up to as pillars of strength in a most difficult circumstance.

In relation to the legislation that applies in this space, it is important background, as with all emergency service workers, the provisions of the *Workers Rehabilitation Compensation Act 1988* apply to claims made by police officers. That is a given. There are significant provisions under the act that apply to police officers, including the presumption of work that is taken to be a contributing factor to incidents of post-traumatic stress disorder. Our government has been the one that has brought in presumptive PTSD for police officers. I want to pay tribute to my predecessors in this role who are in this House, Mr Ferguson, minister Petrusma, and a number of others, for the important support that they have provided. It is clear that we will support our first responders, particularly our police officers, when they shoulder the heavy weight of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Part 4 of the act sets out the general statutory timeframes for making a claim of compensation for a currently employed worker. This is within six months after the date of the occurrence of the injury. However, a workers' compensation claim - and this is important - can be made by a resigned or retired member. It will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances given the statutory timeframe. Given that we are talking about exceptional circumstances here beyond the support that is already provided, I think it can give the House some comfort.

In terms of the substance of the motion, our government is very supportive of the motion itself in general. I note clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 are absolutely a strong commitment. We disagree on the matter of number 3 in terms of the lack of government-funded mental health support. I have provided an update on the journey that we have been on. I understand that for officers who have served over many decades, and in decades past, they did not receive the support that they should have. It is important that we recognise the important journey that we are going on. We do not want to send a message to people that help is not out there when there is.

That is really important because when people come forward today, that experience is so far and away different from what it was like 10, 20, 30 years ago. We want our police officers and all of our emergency service responders to know that if you come forward, the support will be there. In Tasmania we need to recognise that we do this better than anyone else. There is absolutely room to improve. There are absolutely opportunities for further funding that we have identified as part of the budget. Let us not as a House send a message to our first responders that help is not there for them when it is.

In terms of an area that we do have a substantive challenge with in the motion, in Part 5, it calls on the government to immediately establish and fund ongoing mental health support services for those conditions arising. We have circulated an amendment to the House that we think finds a good compromise. I understand Mr Jenner has indicated that he is not minded to support that, but I would commend it to the House. Speaker, if it works for you, I might just read it in. I move -

In paragraph (5),

Delete the words: 'immediately establish and fund'

Insert instead: 'collaborate with the Retired Police Association of Tasmania to develop options for'

The SPEAKER - Are you moving that motion now?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly.

The SPEAKER - You are speaking to the amendment now?

Mr ELLIS - If that works, yes.

The SPEAKER - I will seek advice from the Clerk. That is the easiest way through.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you. The reason why we bring this forward is that we think there is a good opportunity for us as a House to work together and to pass something unanimously through this House. We will not be able to support it as it is currently written in terms of

immediately establishing and funding it. We think that this is an important area for us to get right. There are a huge number of complexities.

There are budget processes and there is significant work underway. Most importantly, we need to remember the people who are at the centre of this. Immediate work is often rushed work. If we can collaborate with the Retired Police Association of Tasmania - who I know in this House we all have an enormous amount of respect for - to develop the options that will help support their current members and future members coming through, then that is going to be the best outcome for the community, this parliament, the association, and most importantly, every individual member who has reached out seeking support.

More broadly, thank you, Mr Jenner, for the motion. It is wonderful to be able to discuss such an important area of support. We all need to send a message that we back our first responders. I know that in the political argy-bargy of the day we do not always agree. On something as important as this, I know that there is a strong groundswell of support for our first responders and their wellbeing. I am really hopeful that we will be able to pass this minor, commonsense amendment to Mr Jenner's motion, so that we can all support this in the House and deliver some of those opportunities for collaboration and ongoing mental health support for our first responders.

Dr Woodruff - On indulgence, would the minister be able to read that amendment in again?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I think Ms Badger has it.

The SPEAKER - Ms Badger has it. In that case I will give the call to the member for Clark.

[6.08 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to support Mr Jenner's motion and to deal with the amendment moved by the minister for Police, Fire, and Emergency Management, Mr Ellis, which he describes as minor and commonsense.

I am going to take a moment because I am quite emotional about this particular topic. I am a member of the blue family. I am very proud that one of my loved ones serves in Tasmania's police force. I am in the privileged position to fully appreciate the work they do. At the end of every day and every shift, they come home and have served Tasmanians well. I know firsthand the trauma that they are exposed to: the deaths that they attend, car crashes, child protection issues, welfare issues, the endless cycle of repetitive endings and the feeling of hopelessness, domestic violence, abuse from members of the public, the search and rescues they attend, and the major incidents that they respond to. These are just a small fraction of the things that they do on a regular and daily basis.

I recognise that the minister has indicated that he sees and acknowledges these significant issues. I am sure everyone in this House does too. For the minister to describe an amendment of this kind as minor and commonsense is insulting. I want to make it really clear for those members of the service who are watching, either currently serving or retired: in the amendment he has moved the minister intends to remove the words 'immediately establish and fund'. Instead, he plans to insert words that push the commitment down the road, and in no way require adequate funding for any kind of service delivery. It is simply a business-as-usual

approach. It is not good enough. It is insulting, and it is utter BS that this happens to our serving police force.

The substantive motion talks specifically about the reason why retired and former police officers need an established and funded service. We know that there are a range of programs in place now for those who are currently serving to access mental health support and peer support. I recognise the great work that the service has done in that regard in establishing and developing more programs.

I know first-hand that often these issues do not come to the surface until after they have retired or left the service. I know far too many people who have retired and left the service and it is only then that they recognise the heavy burden that they have been carrying around them for such a long time. Many members do not recognise the symptoms or they do not present for some time.

I know members who recognise the symptoms but ignore them, because they are putting their service to the community ahead of their own well-being, because they feel that they do such an important job and they absolutely do such an important job for our community. They do not want to let their community down by putting their hand up and say, 'I have an issue and I cannot continue'. They continue to put themselves out there protecting our community, serving our community, and only when they stop doing that, retire, back to being with their loved ones, they realise, 'Well, actually, what I have done has completely destroyed me'.

In this place yesterday, we moved a supplementary appropriations bill which included \$14.5 million towards injured workers within the Tasmanian Police Force. We recognise that we are breaking police officers left, right and centre. Yet, if they retire, we wash our hands of them and we expect the Retired Police Association to deal with the situation themselves. The Retired Police Association did not break these people, the government did, by failing to look after them adequately at the time. That broke these people, and yet, this minister in his hollow words of platitudes, of understanding what they are going through, expects the Retired Police Association, which is made up of many people who are experiencing PTSD themselves or serious trauma and mental health issues, to support one another. It is insulting, deeply insulting.

I implore other members in this place to reject the minister's amendment, stick true to what we should do, the morally right thing to do, to immediately establish and fund services. I know that my loved one has been to far too many funerals, been to far too many sick beds, visited so many friends of people who have been utterly broken by their time and service. We should be supporting those people, whether they are serving members or retired members. It is the right thing to do. Mr Jenner has responded to those pleas for help.

If we accept minister Ellis's amendment, then it is a slap in the face to those people who have served. I hope we are a better parliament than that, honourable Speaker. I hope that tonight I can go home to my loved one who is working right now, protecting Tasmanians and say, 'Look, we are going to look after you when you retire because it is the right thing to do. We are going to look after your colleagues because we recognise what you do'. I sincerely hope that this insulting amendment is knocked back.

[6.14 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, and to save time, I will speak to the amendment and give my substantive contribution at the same time. First, I commend Mr Jenner

for bringing this forward and commend the member for Clark for her very moving words just now. I do not presume to understand day-to-day the way both of you do, the pressures that you have seen through your friends and loved ones serving in police forces, the pressure that they have experienced and the trauma that they carry with them. I think it is incredibly generous of both of you to have shared such personal stories with the parliament today. It is meaningful and will hopefully lead to some lasting action and change.

I had two grandfathers who were serving police officers. They both died before I was born, so I did not have the opportunity to learn from them about the work that they did as policemen in their day. I do know from my aunties and uncles that they were quiet, stoic men, who, quite likely, were amongst that generation that Mr Jenner so eloquently described; that generation who was told to toughen up and deal with it; who were taught to push down their experiences of trauma; that it was a sign of weakness if they asked for help, or a sign of weakness indeed if they simply talked about trauma, or even recognised as trauma, the experiences that they had day-to-day in their workplaces. I understand the reality of that trauma that was experienced in the way that previous generations dealt with mental health, generally.

It is a very important thing that these days we acknowledge, understand and speak about mental health in a much more contemporary way. People are encouraged to speak about their own issues with mental health and are commended when they do. Yet, it is still really hard to do that. It is still really hard to do that publicly, even though our understanding of mental health and the importance of sharing what we go through as individuals has developed so much further than those previous generations who were told just to push it down to not show any sign of weakness.

That is a good thing that we understand mental health better now, but in that what we also understand now is that it can take weeks, months, years, decades for people to really understand and come to terms with trauma that they have experienced. The parliament has been exposed to that through much of its recent work. Indeed, the commission of inquiry and the national Royal Commission that preceded it showed us that it can be, on average, 20 years before people can feel comfortable coming forward to talk about their experience of child sexual abuse.

Through the Maternal Health Committee that I have the privilege of chairing - the Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health - we are hearing from mothers who do not recognise that they experienced birth trauma until they have a second or subsequent pregnancy and labour. Similarly, other committees have canvassed some of these same issues and understood that it can take a very long time to recognise that you might actually be suffering the effects of mental health from events that happened a long time earlier.

That is certainly the case for first responders, and the minister recognised that. It is the case for many other Tasmanian public servants who serve in other roles: nurses, health professionals, allied health professionals, child safety officers and staff, forensic scientists, crime scene photographers, or work safe inspectors who attend work sites when there has been a tragic accident or fatality. I do not hold the Corrections portfolio anymore, but when I spoke to correctional officers, when I did hold that portfolio, they spoke very favourably about the current programs available to police, which we heard the minister talk about, and the member for Clark spoke about the importance and the success of those programs. Also, MyPulse and others which I know are serving current police officers, correctional officers. My information might be a little out of date now. It is a while since I held that portfolio, but I believe that the

support provided to serving correctional officers is not quite to the extent that police experienced through MyPulse. They would really like to see a similar type of program introduced for correctional officers.

It is not enough just to provide that support while people are serving. I think we do need to recognise that there are so many workers across the state service, particularly first responders, but many others, as I mentioned, who might take a long time to recognise what they experienced at work has contributed to PTSD, anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns that might take a long time to rear their head.

To give one personal anecdotal story, a family friend of one of my children, who is only 18, is a food services officer at the Royal Hobart Hospital delivering meals to patients. She has described to my children some pretty horrific scenes she has witnessed in the psychiatric ward and elsewhere when she is doing her job. I doubt she would be in the thoughts of policymakers designing those support programs for currently serving police officers and other first responders, but she needs to be.

The fact that we, as a society, now understand mental health better than we have in the past comes with a responsibility to make sure our policies and programs remain contemporary to address that increased understanding of mental health. That means extending programs government provides to government employees or to people for whom it might take time for mental health conditions to emerge. Therefore, I have a problem with the minister's amendment.

I can understand his motivation. To be called upon to 'immediately establish and fund' might be difficult for the government to achieve, partly because we are in the middle of a budget crisis. There is already \$30 million of cuts to the Police department's budget slated in the budget handed down late last year and, no doubt, further cuts to come in the upcoming budget. I can understand it is a struggle for the minister to think how he might come up with the funding required to implement a program like this with any speed. However, I think it is not reasonable to take out any reference to funding in an amendment of this type. That would run the risk of implementation of such a program becoming not much more than talk, good will and good gestures. Without funding behind it, it may never come to fruition.

The Police Association needs to be involved with the work of developing this program. As the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, said, the Retired Police Association of Tasmania is mostly run by volunteers. They are very dedicated to the work they do, but the Police Association, which has a role in working with government on the programs available to serving police officers, should be involved with any design of a program that is available to retired police officers.

I do not intend to amend the motion to add in all those other State Service employees who I know experience trauma through their work, but I wanted to put those thoughts and sentiments on the record today to recognise that there are rafts of Tasmanian public sector workers who experience trauma in their work and whose work can lead to mental ill health, either at the time they are working or, as is the case with police officers, a long time down the track.

I was encouraged by the minister's recognition that things have changed. He said seeking support is okay and coming forward is okay. I endorse those words and think we should all

carry them with us in the work we do as elected representatives. However, with that comes a responsibility to actually take care of the people who work for the Tasmanian government in every respect.

We cannot support the amendment in its current wording, but the opposition does intend to support the motion.

[6.24 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I will also make my substantial contribution to the motion in order to save time, because I know Mr Jenner would like to address this.

Thank you very much for bringing this on today and for sharing your stories. This is incredibly important. The Greens will support the original motion from Mr Jenner. I will get to the amendment in just a moment, but we want to begin by thanking all of our incredible police force and emergency services workers in Tasmania, many of whom are out today dealing with a lot of issues that have come from the storm. We thank you for what you are doing.

The work the police and all emergency services do is challenging and complex. By its very nature, it requires them to put their life on the line for others and to be there in the direst circumstances. I, the Greens and the Tasmanian community are very grateful for the work they do. I emphasise that this sentiment is shared across all emergency services. The trauma, stresses and injury experienced by police, put forward in this motion by Mr Jenner, is shared across all of those departments and services. A study conducted by the Black Dog Institute in 2023-24 estimated that at least one in 10 emergency services workers in Australia would develop PTSD and that emergency service workers are twice as likely to experience a mental health condition than the general population. That is purely because of the trauma they experience while they are at work, let alone when they retire.

I am going to skip to the amendment to make sure Mr Jenner has time.

The SPEAKER - The vote is due at 6.37 p.m.

Ms BADGER - Great. We will not be supporting the amendment. It does not even give a timeframe for that collaboration with the Police Association. It is a lazy amendment to put forward. It is insulting. The government should already be collaborating with the Retired Police Association of Tasmania to develop these options. This is not a new proposal. This is something they have been speaking about to many members across the Chamber for quite some time. The question really is: why was the government not listening before?

If it comes down to the cost, it can be planned for with good budget management. However, it is not just about the cost. Yesterday, we had the supplementary appropriation bill come forward with that amount. It is known and we have the statistics here in front of us. In 2021, Tasmania Police had 112 active workers compensation claims, with 49 of those claims related to psychological injury and 37 were fully incapacitated. Last year, 2024, there were 201 open claims, 142 of which related to psychological injury, and 108 staff, or 7 per cent of the total workforce, were fully incapacitated. That is just police still in the workforce, let alone those who are retired. We have a duty of care and moral obligation to ensure that our police and all emergency services personnel are looked after when they have finished serving the community.

We are also neglecting the very basics: their costs and causes. Obviously, in emergency services there are causes that organically come with that job. They are dealing with death, family and sexual violence. Incredibly high emotions go with a lot of the situations they are responding to, and that is all part of their job.

However, there are some other basic things. For example, it needs to be recognised that understaffing has a significant impact on psychological injury in the workplace. We have seen the lack of investment in critical service areas and we are soon going to be facing more within the State Service. We have to be looking after the basics as well.

We do have a civic duty to fund this and we have to ensure that we do so, so that we have a healed, caring and safe Tasmanian community moving forward.

[6.29 p.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I thank everyone for their contributions. I know it has been tough for some of us. It has been great to discuss this issue. I appreciate the minister's input, and what is being done for serving police officers and new recruits at the moment, but I cannot agree to the amendment.

These retired officers need our help now, not more talking, not more words. They need funding. I appreciate you did not touch points (1), (2), (3) and (4) because they were only notes, acknowledgements and recognitions. Part (5), if you amended it, was the whole point of the motion. That was to seek funding for these officers.

I totally agree with Ms Badger and Ms Haddad. All first responders should be covered with this. However, at the moment, I am only covering retired police officers. I thank everybody for today.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Labor's Attack on Tourism Industry

[6.31 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House: -

- (1) Recognises that Tasmania's tourism industry is one of the State's biggest employers, and Tasmania's economy relies on key sectors like the tourism and hospitality industries to fund schools, roads, and hospitals.
- (2) Notes that visitors inject around \$3.5 billion into the Tasmanian economy every year, and for every dollar visitor spent in Tasmania, another 83 cents is generated in our economy.

- (3) Agrees that for the Labor Opposition to describe critical marketing campaigns that drive visitation to Tasmania as, “puff and promotion,” is a blatant display of his disregard for homegrown jobs.
- (4) Further agrees that Labors' plan to slash the Government’s investment in this vital sector should send a shiver down the spine of the nearly 43,000 Tasmanian jobs it employs.
- (5) Further notes: -
 - (a) that under Labor, these jobs, and the families they support, would be at risk; and
 - (b) Labors' recent attack on co-funded grant support for small businesses as “reckless spending”.
- (6) Further notes that as part of the Government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania’s Future, the Government is investing in destination marketing to ensure the State remains competitive in national and global markets.
- (7) Calls on the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Dean Winter MP to withdraw his attack on the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Tasmania. (11 March 2025)

A vote will be required.

An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future is to continue to build on Tasmania's reputation as a world-leading tourism destination, highlight Tasmania's unique experiences, and ensure that the visitor economy continues to have its positive impact on Tasmania's environment, economy and our way of life.

Tourism and visitor spending is indeed an essential contributor to Tasmania's economy, local businesses and regional employment. Tourism supports around 42,900 Tasmanian jobs - one in eight. Visitors to Tasmania directly spend around \$3.5 billion annually in Tasmania. Tasmania's visitor economy is one of our state's success stories. There is no greater supporter of tourism than the Liberal government.

Labor recently attacked one of our most important industries. In doing so they also attacked 43,000 jobs that rely so heavily on the tourism industry. For Labor to describe critical marketing campaigns that drive visitation to Tasmania as puff and promotion is a blatant display of their disregard for homegrown jobs. Tasmania's economy relies on key sectors like the tourism and hospitality industry to fund essentials like schools, roads and hospitals.

As the lead agency for generating demand for travel to Tasmania, it is important for Tourism Tasmania to continue building on the Come Down for Air campaign, activity that ensures Tasmania remains top of mind for potential travellers. Tasmania needs to deliver distinctive advertising that cuts through, gets attention, is remembered and ultimately has a lasting impact in creating future demand for travel and visitation. The latest Come Down for Air campaign was launched to promote Tasmania as a year-round holiday destination, showcasing our beautiful island state as a desirable place to visit, not just in summer but importantly also in the cooler winter months. The advertisements aim to inject a unique

Tasmanian perspective into the busy urban life of a mainlander, as a meaningful invitation for people to come to Tasmania and find their own air.

With more Tasmanians employed in tourism and hospitality per capita than any other state, it is important that we continue to invest in our tourism brand and deliver marketing incentives that attract visitors and support Tasmania's tourism sector. Tourism Tasmania continues to evolve its successful Come Down for Air brand platform with campaigns that ensure Tasmania stands out in busy advertising environments and maintains relevance in key markets.

The agency's demand and marketing strategies focus on capturing the attention and building consistent long-term brand awareness with travellers aligned to the state's values. This value-over-volume approach is achieved through creative, distinctive and memorable marketing activity that ensures that Tasmania stands out from other tourism holiday destinations.

Since Come Down for Air first launched in October 2019, awareness of Tasmania as a holiday destination has risen by an impressive 10 per cent, with Tasmania's brand awareness second only to Queensland amongst Australian travellers. That is not a bad result for some puff and promotion, as it has been described by Labor.

The agency's winter off-season campaign will be in market from March to August 2025, encouraging Australians to consider a winter holiday in Tasmania. With domestic holiday travel softening after the post-COVID surge, and with international travel beginning to recover, the tourism marketplace is increasingly competitive. In a similar approach to last year, the current campaign includes conceptually relevant advertising strategically placed in built-up urban locations on the mainland.

Indicative data for international visitations shows Tasmania welcomed 247,000 visitors in the year ending November 2024, or 87 per cent of the pre-COVID data from 2019. International visitors spent \$530 million in the state in the year ending November 2024, or 96 per cent of 2019.

In summary, Tasmania's visitor economy is one of our state's success stories. Visitor spending remains significantly up by 34 per cent compared to 2019 levels. Tasmania's international recovery is on par with the national average. There is no greater supporter of tourism and hospitality than this Liberal government. The Tasmanian visitor economy is one of our state's success stories. We welcomed 1.3 million interstate and international visitors in 2024.

I also take this opportunity to give a big shout-out to the Launceston Airport, that saw through its doors 159,032 passengers in January this year, which is very impressive. Its busiest day ever on record was 2 January, when they had 6114 passengers through the airport in a single day. It is a credit to the Launceston Airport. Well done.

The tourism industry currently injects about \$3.42 billion in visitor spending into the Tasmanian economy. The sector is also a jobs powerhouse. Labor should consider withdrawing their negative comments.

[6.38 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I do not intend to spend too much time on the motion brought forward by the Liberal member for Bass who has been sitting over there on the backbench waiting for his turn today, thinking he has some sort of 'gotcha' moment. Most of the motion is based on a false premise.

There is some reasonable content in there. Points 1 and 2 seem factual to me. Some of his contribution seems quite factual. I can tell the house exactly what I provided to the journalist who made that report, word for word. This is in relation to an RTI on government advertising. I said:

It makes sense for Tourism Tasmania to spend -

Wait for it -

largely on advertising, but Tasmania cannot afford puff and promotion in these other areas.

Areas like Hydro Tasmania and State Growth. Hydro Tasmania, by the way, spent over \$5.5 million on advertising. State Growth spent \$3.4 million in advertising. The Tasmanian Racing Board spent over \$2 million on advertising. There is a whole list here on this RTI, which is available on the State Growth website, in advertising that amounts to \$61,340,388.

Why does this matter? This matters because this government is drowning in debt. Some of the other comments I provided at the time included that total state sector debt was projected to be at \$14 billion. It is going to be worse than that now. The latest budget update is projected to reach \$17.66 billion.

This is a government that is completely addicted to the credit card. It has not been able to rein in frivolous spending - puff and promotion, if you like - for areas that have nothing to do with tourism. They blow the budget every year on advertising, consultants and travel. There has been a lot of commentary about this government and its COVID hangover, not being able to rein in some of the spending that it has. There was mention of the small business grants in the motion that the member has put forward and - I will get to you in a minute.

Ms Howlett - I will get to you in a minute too.

Members interjecting.

Mr WILLIE - You are free to make a contribution and I would like to hear it. This is a government that continues to spend small business grants. They were being shoveled out the door during COVID to keep the economy going. It was the right thing to do at the time, but this government continues to do it even though they are racking up record deficits and debt. They have not outlined any way that they can afford to pay for it. I take the member's interjection over there because she attacked me. She attacked me for my commentary. I will read the release that I put out in relation to this. I said:

Premier Rockliff is digging a huge debt hole for Tasmania with his addiction to reckless spending, showing no signs of letting up. Yesterday, the Liberals dished out \$1 million of taxpayer money to small businesses while the state's

finances sit in record debt and deficit. While small business grants are a nice idea -

And they are a nice idea -

- handing out Tasmanian taxpayer money with no plan to pay for it is a sign of a reckless government with no regard for Tasmania's future. Earlier this month, Moody's downgraded Tasmania's credit outlook from stable to negative, citing weakening in the state's governance and rising debt burdens.

After 10 plus years of Liberal mismanagement, Tasmania's finances are in need of desperate repair. More debt-funded handouts from a desperate minority Liberal government, spiralling deeper into debt by the day is going to make the problem worse. Premier Rockliff needs to explain why he thinks this reckless spending is appropriate, what this latest round of debt-funded taxpayer money went towards, and how he is going to pay for it.

How is he going to pay for it? We all know how these business grants work. It is a first in, first serve arrangement. We know that the minister for Small Business goes around Tasmania telling people about the grants and you have got to get in, it is going to open up at this time - taking photos for socials, had the gall to attack me and say that I needed to apologise to 42,000 businesses. There were over 41,000 businesses that did not get a grant. I speak to business owners and there are business owners that I have spoken to who are annoyed at the anti-competitive nature of some of these grants, where their competitors are getting taxpayer handouts and they are not.

There were over 41,000 businesses that did not get one of these grants. It is anti-competitive, and you are addicted to the credit card. It is very telling, in this whole debate, that the Tasmanian Chamber of Industry and Commerce (TCCI) did not take a position. The TCCI, the peak body for business, were asked for comment and did not take a position, because they know that the budget has never been in worse shape: that this government is addicted to the credit card and they keep doling out money that they cannot afford and they cannot outline how they are paying for it. That is the problem here.

Not only is this motion based on a false premise, he did not have the guts to come and ask me about this tourism spending thing. He just tabled something that probably the Liberal advisers gave him and said, 'Here, go and get your gotcha moment'. He could have just asked me, 'Were you quoted accurately in that story?' I would have told him, 'No, I was not'. He thinks he has a gotcha moment. I look forward to the member for Bass, who I know has an amendment, because I think that is a good amendment. I can quite happily support that amendment because I quarantined Tourism Tasmania's spending from my comments. I think your amendment reflects that and it actually guts the government's very poor attempt for a gotcha moment.

That is about all I will have to say on this motion, which is a waste of the parliament's time, based on a false premise, based on a government that is addicted to spending, with waste that they cannot control and new spending that they cannot control. We have some of the biggest deficits in the state's history in the past couple of years. We have record debt. Someone is going to have to pay for that, in the end: \$500 million of debt in servicing costs just in the last year of the forward Estimates.

Yes, the small business grants; a nice idea. They are not able to explain how they are paying for it. They are paying for it on the credit card and it is going to catch up with people in the end. There are businesses that I talk to who are annoyed because it is anti-competitive. They are seeing grants being doled out to their competitors and they are not getting them because it is a first-in first-served basis. Who knows what the Liberal MPs are saying to some of these people; some of the people that they may know very well in some cases, and you might need to have a good look at that list over there, honourable member, because there are people with very strong connections to the Liberal Party on that list. There will be some further scrutiny, I can tell you.

[6.47 p.m.]

Mrs PENTLAND (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for the Tasmanian tourism and hospitality industries. These sectors are not just vital to our economy, but they are the very fabric of our communities. They are the backbone of our state, providing employment for nearly 43,000 Tasmanians.

From hotel staff and tour operators to restaurant workers and local artisans, these industries sustained livelihoods across our cities, towns and rural communities. Every dollar spent here by visitors generates an additional \$0.83 in our economy. That is real money flowing directly into local businesses, our cafes, restaurants, accommodation providers, and experience-based tourism operators. It is money that helps fund our schools, roads, and hospitals. It ensures small towns thrive, that family businesses can continue to operate and that Tasmania remains a destination of choice for travellers from all across Australia and the world.

We have even more reasons to celebrate, in my electorate of Bass, Launceston. The Tamar Valley has been recognised by the Lonely Planet as one of the top ten regions in the world to visit in 2025. This is not just a plaque to put on the wall. It is a monumental opportunity for our tourism sector, local businesses and entire community. It is an international recognition of what Tasmanians have always known -our state offers something truly special.

I am proud that Launceston is a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. We need to champion our winemakers, distillers and brewers who pour their passion into every bottle they craft. Champion our tour operators, accommodation providers and local guides who welcome visitors from around the world and showcase the very best of what Tasmania has to offer. Tourism is not just about visitors coming here for a holiday, it is about what they leave behind; their investment in our state.

Every visitor who comes to Launceston, the Tamar Valley, means more business for cafes, more bookings for our accommodation providers and more revenue flowing into our local economy. Tasmania's tourism sector injects about \$3.5 billion into our economy every year. This is not fluff; this is not excess. This is the foundation of thousands of jobs and countless businesses across our state.

Our tourism sector is made up of mostly small businesses. These businesses are the beating heart of Tasmania and we should be doing everything we can to help them grow, to innovate and to employ more people. This is not the first time Tasmania has received global recognition. We have been named in the *New York Times* 52 places to visit. The Wukalina Walk was recognised by *Time Magazine* as one of the world's greatest places. The Tasman Hotel made it into the world's best 50 list. Tasmania's tourism sector is built on hard work, strategic promotion and a genuine passion for showcasing our state, not just puffery.

Tasmania's future depends on forward thinking investment, not backward steps. Tourism is not something that just happens. It must be nurtured, it must be actively promoted and supported, or we risk losing our competitive edge. We live in a world where destinations must fight for every visitor dollar. Other states and nations are investing heavily in tourism marketing. Tasmania cannot afford to be complacent. If we do not invest, we will fall behind. If we fall behind, it is not just businesses that suffer; it is Tasmanian workers, Tasmanian families and Tasmanian communities.

We cannot afford to gamble with the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Tasmanians. Our tourism industry is a success story, one built by hardworking Tasmanians who believe in the potential of our state. We must protect it, champion it, and ensure it continues to thrive for generations to come.

I stand with the operators, the business owners, the hospitality workers, and everyone in the tourism sector who make our region shine. I invite every Australian and every international traveller to come and experience for themselves why Tasmania - and particularly my electorate of Bass - is a place to fall in love with. Regardless of the context in which 'puff and promotion' was applied, those words should never be used to describe Tasmania's hardworking tourism sector.

Deputy Speaker, I wish to move an amendment, which I believe everyone has.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - It has been distributed?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I will need you to read it into the Chamber.

Mrs PENTLAND - Amendment to motion 103, I move -

Delete paragraphs (3) to (7),

Insert instead:

- (3) Recognises the vital role tourism marketing plays in attracting visitors to our state and rejects any suggestion it amounts to 'puff and promotion'.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Do you wish to speak to your amendment?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, briefly. I think we are all getting a little tired of the jiggery-pokery politics. I would like to thank Mr Garland for the use of the words 'jiggery-pokery'. I think we just want to get on with the job. We are getting that from both sides of the Chamber a lot lately. It is getting a bit tiring. We all have a job to do. We need to stay focused on that in here and just get on with it.

[6.53 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will put on the record my support for the amendment, because, as I explained, I was not quoted accurately. I would like to put on the record my strong support for the tourism industry and the hardworking people across Tasmania,

who are delivering great social and economic benefits to Tasmania. I would also like to put on the record my strong support for small business.

Business confidence and business conditions improve when government gets the fundamentals right - strong budget management, fiscal discipline, and ensuring predictability and certainty. With this government, we are seeing anything but predictability -

Mr Shelton - We did business confidence yesterday. When did you write this speech?

Mr WILLIE - Do you want to talk about predictability being able to deliver a port at Devonport after you spent a billion dollars on two new ships? How is that going for the tourism industry?

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The Chamber will be quiet and the member will be heard in silence.

Mr WILLIE - Predictability and certainty. If you promise to build a port after you have invested a billion dollars in two new ships that are going to significantly increase the tourism industry's capacity, make sure that those fundamentals actually get done, that people can trust in the business community, and that they can trust the government that what it says it will do will actually happen. That gives them confidence to invest.

What we are seeing from this government is the fundamentals being completely shot to pieces. We have very poor budget management, weakening governance, unpredictability, a minority government. The Premier famously said in the election campaign, 'Don't elect a minority government. It will crash the economy. It will crash jobs'. He is right. This government is out of control in terms of its spending -

Mr Shelton - They did not elect you, that is for sure.

Mr WILLIE - I have news for you: they did not elect you either. Fourteen does not make a majority.

Mr Shelton - You did not even put your hand up.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, member for Lyons -

Mr WILLIE - There was a very strong swing against the Liberal Party at the last election because this government is tired. It has run out of the people who got them into government. It has run out of the motivations. It has run out of the ideas. Time and excuses are catching up with them. Get the fundamentals right. That is what you should be focused on. That will help businesses across Tasmania.

[6.56 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the government will support the amendment moved by Mrs Pentland. I think Mrs Pentland is a very caring soul. She has seen how bashed up the Labor Party were after Question Time today when the Leader of the Opposition was exposed as the fiscal fraud that

we all knew that he is. There he was championing privatisation - the privatisation champion - and then all of a sudden, he wanted to be the public ownership champion. He has done his cause a lot of damage. It would be fair to say that there have been a few people whose grins finally emerged on the other side during Question Time when they saw the discomfort of their leader and the opportunities for their own ambitions.

The important part of the motion is the absolute commitment by Mr Wood and the Liberals to supporting our tourism sector, which is so fundamentally and vitally important to 43,000 or so workers around this state. Many of those workers are in fact owner/operators, micro businesses scattered throughout our rural and regional communities. They are fundamentally important. To be able to maintain the tourism sector and those employment opportunities, you need to be able to differentiate yourself from all the other tourism offerings that are literally there right around the world. In even a half-hearted way, to seek to condemn the expenditure on tourism is -

Mr Willie - That is not what I said.

Mr ABETZ - Look, I was even giving -

Mr Willie - It is misleading the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Mr ABETZ - This is about the fourth time you should have been warned by now, and out, Mr Willie.

Mr Willie - I think you are disrespecting the Chair, telling her how to do her job.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Mr ABETZ - No, no. What I am suggesting is, and what I said very politely - rather than calling it out as it was, as it should have been - was that the suggestion of 'puff and promotion'; that sort of terminology does Brand Tasmania a lot of damage. It is unhelpful and unnecessary, other than if your only aim is to try to score a cheap political point. We see what happens when you try to score cheap political points - it comes back to haunt you. All you need to do is look at the experience - and here he is laughing again, already -

Mr Willie - I am laughing at how ridiculous you are.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Willie, you are on two warnings.

Mr ABETZ - at the experience of his leader during Question Time today. Having one day for cheap political purposes that championed the cause of privatisation and then did the flip for other political purposes, such as gaining the leadership of the Labor Party, all of a sudden he transforms himself into this champion of public ownership. It has been a tough day for Labor.

Ms Brown - Tougher for you, much tougher.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. You are also on two warnings.

Mr ABETZ - As a result Mrs Pentland's amendment will ease the cruelty and the gruelling day that it has been for the Labor Party. In that spirit of cooperation, we will be supporting the amendment.

[7.00 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, this motion is a bit of 'puff and promotion', is it not? Really. It could have been used for good. Of everything that is happening - we have a housing crisis, a climate crisis, cost-of-living crisis; use it as a Dorothy Dixier equivalent of a motion and put something forward, rather than just this absolute waste of time for this parliament. It is completely pathetic.

We have also been hearing all morning, throughout Question Time, 'Oh, we have to have accurate information, we have got an obligation'. Yes, we do, but here we have this completely taken out of context. A simple Google search can show you that this is not even factually accurate. This is an absolutely appalling use of this parliament's time and of Tasmanians' taxpayers' money.

Mr Abetz - Coalition partner running defence for you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Leader of Government Business. I remind you that you are also sitting on warnings.

Ms BADGER - Seeing as we are here, we will not say no to an opportunity to talk about reckless spending and a bit of puff promotion, Liberals recklessly spending \$4 million on a chocolate fountain. That is what future Tasmanians need when they cannot put a roof over their head, a bit of reckless spending. \$100 billion stadium: that is fine when you cannot put food on the table. \$200 million now on a cable way from \$60 million initially, still waiting for that revised business case to prove that new expense that you have gone to the federal government for because Tasmanians actually deserve that. It is not only reckless expenditure, it is reckless finance management, and a fair bit of reckless transparency.

Paragraph (3) of this motion touches on marketing. What about that over half a million dollars that was spent on a private company, the Tasmanian Walking Company, to help promote its Three Capes Walk? That is a private company that charges \$4000 per person to complete that walk and it is largely booked out. That same Three Capes Walk is actually making losses over the past three financial years. In fact, the cost of maintaining that track have far exceeded the revenue that it has brought in from people booking to walk that track. Talk about reckless expenditure when that is the same business model that the government is relying on for the Tyndall Range walk, which, again, miraculously, is just completely immune to inflation. Is it? No major project is. Yet again, the Liberals need to stop being reckless and table that revised business case as well.

In fact, here, the 2030 Strong Plan. This is from 2024. It has in here, this is part of the tourism aspect of it, reaffirming its commitment of \$30 million to the Cradle cable-way visitor experience for the master plan. It is now \$45 million. This is not even barely 12 months old. It is talking about the Tyndall Range walk that is going to start construction by mid-2025, subject to all approvals, none of which have actually been submitted for yet.

Some of this motion was initially actually talking about small businesses, for which there have been a number of grants and rounds that this government has been out spruiking. Where

is the due diligence, the fairness, and the competitive example? The member for Clark, Mr Willie, has already touched on that, so I will not go into it any further.

A lot of those businesses, particularly the tourism small businesses, rely on accredited trained employees to come into that, such as guides. Yet our TAFE does not have Cert 4 in guiding, or Certs 3 and 4 in outdoor leadership, which are absolutely important and help maintain the credibility of our tourism industry in Tasmania. TAFE is completely falling apart. What is happening? The CEO has just walked away.

We have small businesses, mum and dad businesses, in the automotive industry that need to be able to have trade apprentices going through their doors. They need to be able to upskill so that people can actually service the growing number of EVs on our road. They cannot do that. There is nowhere to do it here in the south. We are looking at teachers facing the axe coming up as well.

There is absolute systemic failure of the funding that has been slashed around and that is why it is absolutely reckless. There are so many other priorities that we could be using to spend our money on, such as bridging the digital divide in Tasmania. We have to make sure that Tasmanians have the digital literacy as well as basic connectivity to be able to go forward.

Small businesses cannot function and take payments unless they have connectivity, particularly, in peak season. Look at what is happening on the Tasman Peninsula and the massive public meeting that they have just had. It is the same in St Helens, Swansea, and, I am sure, in many other small communities. When they see the increase in tourism visitation in peak season, the internet connection goes down. This week, or perhaps last; Tasmania, the big announcement. We are going to be the startup capital of Australia; ask them what internet connection we need to get the fundamentals right first.

I also want to point out paragraph (4) of this motion, 'Labor's plan to slash the government investment in this vital sector would send a shiver down the spine of the nearly 43,000 Tasmanian jobs it employs'. Fair, but what do you think you are doing, inducing anxiety into the GBE workers, the public service workers who have absolutely no certainty in their future either?

This has been an absolutely tremendous opportunity to not achieve anything for this parliament and the outcome of Tasmania. We really need to think a little bit further about what we are doing. As to the amendment, it also does not matter because that also does not achieve anything for Tasmania's future.

Amendment agreed to.

[7.06 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Lyons - Minister for Hospitality and Small Business) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to the motion put forward by the member for Bass, Simon Wood MP. Our tourism and hospitality businesses know they can rely on this Liberal government because we have a strong plan to support their futures. A part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is to continue to build on a strong reputation as a world-leading tourism destination, showcase Tasmania's unique experiences and ensure that the visitor economy continues to impact positively on Tasmania's sustainable future and economy.

Tourism and visitor spending to our state is an essential contributor to the Tasmanian economy, local businesses and regional employment. Tourism employs around 42,900 people, or one in eight Tasmanian jobs, right across Tasmania. We know visitors directly spend about \$3.5 billion annually in this state. It is one of our state's success stories and there is no greater supporter of tourism than this Liberal government. You would think that support for our tourism sector would be bipartisan, but Labor's recent attack on this industry is an attack on thousands of jobs.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Minister, I am taking the point of order.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, the motion has now been amended. I have made it very clear that I was taken not accurately -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I need a Standing Order for the point of order.

Mr WILLIE - Standing Order 45, relevance. To the amended motion, the minister is not very good unless she has a script in front of her. She has a script, obviously, for the old motion. The motion has now been amended and I have clearly explained -

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, I am taking the Standing Order of relevance. Thank you, member for Clark, take your seat, you do not need to describe it.

Minister, the motion is amended. It is now paragraph (1), and (2), and the amended paragraph (3). I draw your attention to the motion as amended.

Ms HOWLETT - Okay, let us not forget Mr Willie's comments, and I will not repeat them in this House, but very, very disappointed in you, Mr Willie. I thought as opposition treasurer you would have had an alternative budget. I have been waiting. I had such high expectations.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, Standing Order 45, relevance. The motion has been amended now -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I hear that it is point of relevance, thank you. You do not need to describe it.

Ms HOWLETT - There is nothing about an alternative budget -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - To the motion before us, minister.

Mr Willie - Yes, the motion has nothing about that.

Ms HOWLETT - I know.

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Member for Clark, you are on two warnings so do not push it.

Ms HOWLETT - So much for jobs, jobs, jobs. All that side of the House does is talk Tasmania down, which destroys business confidence, Mr Willie. That is all you do, talk Tasmania down. I am still looking forward to seeing an alternative budget sometime in the future from you, but clearly, Labor certainly has not changed. It has not changed under Mr Winter, and as I said, I had higher expectations.

Our economy relies on key sectors like the tourism and hospitality industry to fund our schools, our roads and of course our hospitals. Every visitor dollar spent in Tasmania generates an additional \$0.83 dollar flow on contribution to our state's economy.

The rhetoric around slashing the government's investment in this vital sector should send a shiver down the spine of the 42,900 people who create jobs in this sector. With the latest Come Down for Air campaign launched to promote Tasmania as a year-round holiday destination, we have demonstrated that we punch well above our weight in brand awareness with this campaign placing us second in the nation on the back of a very limited budget. I congratulate Tourism Tasmania for the campaign. It is an excellent campaign. I know when I have been travelling interstate I have seen it on-screen at airports and it is an absolutely brilliant campaign.

Indicative international visitation data shows Tasmania welcomed 247,000 visitors in the year ending November 2024, or 80 per cent of pre-COVID figures. Last year, 2024, international visitors spent \$530 million in the state, 96 per cent of pre-COVID.

In summary, Tasmania's visitor economy is one of our state's biggest success stories. Visitor spend remains significantly up, by 34 per cent, compared to our 2019 levels. These visitors dine in our restaurants and cafes, shop in our retail stores and many of the 42,000 businesses across Tasmania are supported by these visitors.

There used to be upgraded systems that allowed businesses to be more sustainable, increase operational efficiency and promote growth. Let us not be afraid to say it. On this side of the House, we understand that current national economic conditions are having an impact upon many businesses and contributing to business stress across Australia and Tasmania. We are proud to be out there meeting and engaging with business owners and key stakeholders, and listening to their needs, whether it be on King Island, Flinders Island or mainland Tasmania. We know how hard it is to be in a small business, particularly, in the hospitality and tourism businesses, and the important role they play in the Tasmanian economy, particularly across regional areas. There is no greater supporter of tourism, hospitality and small businesses than this side of the House.

Tasmania welcomed 1.3 million interstate and international visitors in 2024, and small businesses and hospitality venues across the state supplied outstanding quality service to those visitors. They also showcased our amazing Tasmanian produce, our wine, spirits, food, cheese, et cetera. They do such a tremendous job. These sectors are an absolute powerhouse and in regions like the east coast, in my electorate of Lyons, make up a huge percentage of the job opportunities for locals.

The other side of the House should come clean on their stance on supporting jobs and these vital industry sectors and stop attacking vital industries like the tourism and hospitality sector.

Mr WILLIE - Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask the minister to withdraw that comment. I have never attacked hardworking industries in Tasmania; I have only ever attacked the government.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - The Standing Order is only if you take personal offence. Do you take personal offence?

Mr WILLIE - I do take personal offence to that, because I have never done that. I have only ever attacked -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - You can take your seat. I understand the point of order. Minister, given that the member has taken personal offence, I ask you to withdraw.

Ms HOWLETT - I withdraw. I am sorry I personally offended you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Thank you, minister.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS TIME

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Does the member wish to waive the balance of the time? There is still 15 minutes available.

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Yes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Answer to Question - Vacancy Control - Maternity Leave

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - In response to a question from the member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, to the Premier about maternity leave vacancies in the public service, I can advise as follows:

Agencies often review medium- or long-term vacancies in the context of workforce priorities. They may choose to recruit short-term to fill the vacancy or to provide development opportunities. In the context of workforce priorities, they may choose to recruit short-term to fill the vacancy or to provide development opportunities for other staff through higher duties, or more responsible duties allowances, whilst managing workloads accordingly. These decisions are made by the relevant head of agency in consideration of the operations, environment and context of their agency. It is the responsibility of heads of agencies to make decisions at agency level, considering business and workforce priorities.

SteamFest

[7.16 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to pay tribute to a fantastic event that took place over the long weekend just passed. That is SteamFest at Sheffield. This is a fabulous annual event held over the long weekend in March in the grounds of the Sheffield Steam and Heritage Centre with the backdrop of beautiful Mount Roland and the gateway to the iconic Cradle Mountain.

This year marked the 30th annual running of SteamFest in this historic town of murals. The festival is organised and run by volunteers under the leadership of the Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage centre. The weather was amazing over the weekend and the crowds reflected the popularity of the event, with families making the most of the beautiful but hot autumn days, entering the Sheffield Grounds in a constant but steady stream. An estimated 10,000 people came through the gates over the three days; the event also provides a great flow-on effect for the economy of Sheffield, with local businesses and other organisations being supported around the town by the crowds.

SteamFest is a celebration of many things: the steam age, vintage machinery, railways, the rural way of life in north-west Tasmania and, especially, the old ways of doing things. The weekend-long event provided all the popular attractions of steam train rides, vintage machinery displays, Tasmania's biggest tractor pull competition, working blacksmith displays, Lighthorse troop of Tasmania training demonstrations and many food and drink stalls, along with the return of the ever-popular woodchopping event on Monday. Throughout the event, 20 steam traction engines operated, providing displays of threshing, chaff-cutting, straw-pressing, stone-crushing and a slow race. There was a children's tug of war, the grand parade of everything that moved, and a welcome to the patrons on the Saturday afternoon.

Added entertainment for families featured Clydesdale rides, bullock teams and farm animal displays. There was also interactive fun for the kids, including lino-cut printing in the old printery. SteamFest also features Steampunk Victorian-Edwardian costume competitions, giving added visual excitement for the children to learn about the fashions and trends of years gone by.

SteamFest is a volunteer-run organisation, run, as I said, by the Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage centre. All proceeds raised from the event go towards the ongoing preservation and restoration of historic machinery, as well as the retention of the skills and accreditation needed to maintain and operate these machines. Hundreds of volunteer hours are poured into the organising and running of events such as this. I am proud to have sponsored the SteamFest again this year.

I congratulate Chris and the whole team, who work tirelessly on this event every year, helping it to become the success it has so clearly been in the past and one which will, hopefully, continue for a long time in the future. It is a fantastic day for a family. If anybody has not ventured to Sheffield, the town of murals, over that long weekend in March, you are missing out on a real treat. It is the biggest display, as I understand, of steam traction engines in the Southern Hemisphere.

International Women's Day
Christine Milne AO - Tribute

[7.20 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, International Women's Day was on 8 March. I give thanks and kudos to the extraordinary women fighting for the future of Tasmania, for our wild places and for a liveable climate in Lutruwita/Tasmania: Dr Jen Sanger, Kat Bourne, Alice Hardinge, Patsy Jones, Sarah Lebski, Jenny Weber, Sophie Underwood, Kate Johnston and Nala Mansell, just to name a few. To those who came before, too, Melva Truchanas, Florence Perrin, Hilary Bennell, Helen Gee, and so many more - we truly stand on the shoulders of giants.

On Friday, in a belated but highly deserving acknowledgement, Christine Milne AO, was inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Role of Women. The community statement for Christine's inclusion reads:

Christine Milne's visionary leadership has transformed the environmental and political landscape, inspiring generations to fight for a sustainable and just future.

From growing up on a Tasmanian north-west coast farm, Christine has gone on to empower and inspire women and climate activists around the world.

It was the crime of flooding Lake Pedder in 1972 that galvanised Christine to take action for our wild places, as it did for so many. When the Franklin River blockade took place a decade later, Christine was up-river. She was arrested and risked great personal and professional backlash for taking this stand. She did so because this place and the possible loss of this magnificent ancient place of the Tasmanian wilderness was a cause far greater than herself and her own.

She is no stranger to this place. As a former member for Lyons from 1989 to 1998, she was the first female leader of a Tasmanian political party and the first woman to lead the Australian Greens. She was elected to the Senate from 2004 to her resignation in 2015.

It is not only Tasmania and Australia that benefit from Christine's work. Her staunch advocacy for the climate and biodiversity is respected around the world. She was part of the United Nations Environment Program's Global 500 Laureate and was former vice president of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Christine has been recognised with numerous accolades including the Australian Bicentennial Award. She has been a Tasmanian recipient for women and leadership in Australia, and was appointed as an officer of the Order of Australia in 2018.

Christine has been a mentor for many. I particularly want to mention her strong female leadership. She always ensured that everyone around her rose to the top. A testament to her leadership are the successive achievements of all her staff throughout her career; each went on to make extraordinary change in this world. She has always ensured that everyone around her has had the opportunities to grow, learn and make this world a better place.

She has also shown us that retirement is a myth. Christine is presently working on the restoration of Lake Pedder; she is part of the Invasive Species Council, the Justice Reform Initiative, Wilderness Australia, the Bob Brown Foundation, the UTAS Women in Politics program, and is a Global Greens Ambassador.

Christine was added to the Tasmanian Honour Roll for service to the environment, government, public services and politics. That is just the tip of the iceberg of Christine Milne's legacy and impact in creating a fairer, safe planet Earth for generations to come.

What cannot be captured by that statement is her big heart, incredible thoughtful kindness, her unbreakable optimism and her spirit of never, ever giving up.

It felt very weird writing this because it could quite easily slip into eulogy territory, and it certainly is not. Christine is here with us today, active and as strong as ever and continuing to progress a futuristic vision for this planet. We in this place should acknowledge and thank giants like Christine far more often.

Every time that someone from Labor or the Liberals wants to sledge the Greens as extremists or anti-everything, just think of Christine Milne. It is on her shoulders that you also stand each and every time you hang your hats on this state's clean, green and clever brand. It was her vision decades back that laid these foundations for the Tasmania that we enjoy today.

In years to come, when we have island-scale renewable energy and generation that does not destroy biodiversity, when Lake Pedder is rightfully revived, when we have stopped cutting down our grand carbon-storing native forests and when we fully protect and appreciate the array of ecosystems here on this island - in the unknown future that is coming under climate change as we surpass environmental tipping points of no return, when Tasmania has that regenerative restorative trademark lifestyle, just know that that too will be thanks to the visionary, ardent work of Christine Milne, AO.

Ukraine-Russia Ceasefire - Developments

[7.25 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, today, very welcome news has been received of a US-brokered 30-day ceasefire between Russia and the Ukraine. That has been accepted by the Ukraine, but not yet by Russia. I hope and pray that they do accept it, and so they should.

Three years ago, this House, with complete unity, passed a motion supporting the Ukrainian territorial sovereignty and its right to peace, freedom and democratic rule. We united around those principles. We also united to condemn the aggressive actions of Russia against the peace-loving people of the Ukraine and any action that endangered human life and liberty. The full-scale invasion of the Ukraine happened just over three years ago, but the conflict goes back 11 years. There has been an immense scale of loss of infrastructure, homes, communities and industries.

Of course, at its worst - as I am sure we all agree - it has been bloody. Many innocent lives have been lost. Families have been destroyed. Whether it is a loss of life of militants on either side or innocent civilians, those estimates vary, but they are in the hundreds of thousands.

The best estimates suggest that perhaps 100,000 civilians have been killed. I note how hard it is to account for civilian or military losses in areas that are occupied by Russia that are in fact part of the Ukraine's sovereign borders. This is a massive scar - what has happened in the last three or 11 years, take your pick. It is a massive scar in the landscape, in the culture and the psyche of the people of the Ukraine.

I am very proud to be a member of a House that stood quickly and with a united voice to condemn those appalling actions. The ceasefire was negotiated behind closed doors in Saudi Arabia. With the disappointing backdrop of the Oval Office confrontation, this is a tremendously welcomed intervention by the Trump administration and the American government. I sincerely hope it sticks.

Speaking of sticks, the USA itself and the international community, more generally, hold immense power to bring Russia to heel. I still believe that the full extent of those sanctions has not yet been tested. It should use those powers of sanction, if required.

I maintain regular contact with Ukraine's ambassador to Australia, Vasyl Myroshnychenko. I regard him as a friend. He is certainly a friend of our state. He has been like a rock, supporting and speaking for his country to ours. He enjoys bipartisan support at the federal level of the Australian parliament, including through that confrontation in the Oval Office. I was very proud that all sides of politics maintained their strong position supporting our friends, the Ukrainians.

Today, I spoke with His Excellency on behalf of the people who I represent. I passed on our continued best wishes for him, his government and, most importantly, his people, as we strive, work and pray for peace. We especially pray for a peace that passes understanding, something that will transcend the usual power plays of politics, diplomacy and sabre rattling.

I conclude my brief remarks tonight in thinking mainly of the people of the Ukraine, and also the peace-loving people of Russia - those of them who are peace-loving - who are caught up in this illegal and immoral war. They all deserve true peace.

I welcome the Ukrainian government's statement today that they will accept the terms in full of the 30-day ceasefire. They should not have to. They are not the ones who have been causing aggression to other parties. I think that shows tremendous grace and pragmatism that should not have been asked of them. Nonetheless, they are prepared to honour those terms of that ceasefire. I am sure I can say, like every other member here tonight, we hope that Russia will formally adopt those terms of that ceasefire as well and honour it fully while a more lasting diplomatic solution toward a lasting peace is found.

Caravan Parks - Rights and Security of Residents

[7.30 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening to address an issue that is close to my heart and one that affects many long-term residents across our beautiful state of Lutruwita/Tasmania. It is the rights and security of those living in caravan parks. The Tasmanian Greens stand with these residents, many of whom have made these parks their home for years and sometimes even decades. This is why I was pleased this morning to table a written petition signed by approximately 1999 petitioners and an e-petition signed by approximately

781 petitioners that urges the government to provide better protections for long term residents of caravan parks in Lutruwita/Tasmania.

It is time that we recognise the unique circumstances and needs of these residents and ensure they are given the same rights and protections as renters. Caravan parks have long been seen as an affordable housing option and for many Tasmanians they are not just a place to stay temporarily, they are home. These parks provide stability, a sense of community and affordability in an otherwise challenging housing market. Despite this, we know that the rights of long-term residents in these parks have been largely overlooked. Long-term park residents who own their own units are excluded from the protections offered to renters under current laws. As a result, they are vulnerable to unfair evictions, poor living conditions and a lack of security in their housing arrangements.

Of the people who live in caravan parks, most come from vulnerable groups and many are highly disadvantaged. There are people who choose to live in caravan parks for reasons of lifestyle or location, but for many, living in a caravan park is one of a limited number of choices they have in order to avoid homelessness. For these reasons, regulation of long-term residency in caravan parks in Tasmania is acutely needed and long overdue. Tasmania is the only state in Australia that has no law protecting the rights of residents in caravan and tourist parks who own their own units and as such are not covered by the tenancy act.

Other jurisdictions, like South Australia for example, have had robust protections in place for residents and park owners for almost 18 years. That means Lutruwita/Tasmania is almost two decades behind the rest of Australia. A consultation on the regulation of long-term residency in caravan parks in Tasmania discussion paper last year concluded in October with several submissions calling for legislation to be introduced to support the wellbeing, safety and security of all residents.

This call is not a surprise for anybody who has been following this issue. The need has been clear for a very long time. Nowhere has this need been clearer than in Beauty Point Tourist Park, part of our electorate of Bass. The difficulties of people living in this park have been well documented and include evictions and new park rules developed with no consultation or empathy. Many residents are elderly and vulnerable and are at risk of becoming homeless if evicted. They are living with anxiety, feeling disempowered and keenly awaiting action from the Liberal government. In response, residents have joined together to fight for their rights. The local community of Beauty Point has gathered around them in support and now many people from across Tasmania have signed this petition. Thank you to Marian Fletcher for initiating this petition and for the enormous amount of effort put in by volunteers to raise awareness of this issue and gather so many signatures.

The dedication and commitment shown by these community members is a clear indication of the support that this legislation has across our state. The Greens ask that the government recognises this effort and moves to enact the much-needed protections that this petition calls for. The wellbeing of many vulnerable long-term residents depends on legislation to provide them with protections and dignity. We urge the government to prioritise work on this matter.

The Greens believe in the fundamental right of every Tasmanian to have access to secure and affordable housing. This bill would be a vital step in that direction. This legislation is an

essential piece of the puzzle in making Tasmania a more just and equitable place for everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

In closing, the Greens call on the government to listen and take the actions contained in this petition. Let us pass legislation to ensure residents have the protections, secure housing and dignity they deserve. It is time to act and make a meaningful difference in the lives of people who live in caravan parks.

Homes Tasmania - Support for Unwell Resident

[7.35 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on behalf of one of my constituents, Julie Anne Takaski, who resides in a Homes Tasmania unit at 1/56 Colgrave Road in Upper Burnie. I am really pleased that the Housing minister is here in the Chamber to hear firsthand about Ms Takaski's experience.

Ms Takaski was diagnosed in 2002 with a grade two brain tumour. During surgery, not all of the tumour could be removed. In 2020 further growth of the tumour occurred and she undertook another surgical intervention. Following that intervention, Ms Takaski, unfortunately, acquired a brain injury and epilepsy.

In August of last year, a home modification request was made by Ms Takaski's treating team. In the interim, Ms Takaski's unit bathroom developed a severe leak that required significant maintenance. The decision was made to move Ms Takaski while the bathroom maintenance was being conducted. It was the understanding of her family that the required modification would be carried out during this time. The family and Ms Takaski's treating team made it very clear that the temporary housing needed to be a suitable premises for her conditions. Unfortunately, this did not occur and Ms Takaski was placed in an unsuitable property and broke her leg within two days of the relocation.

Ms Takaski spent several days in hospital. Homes Tasmania then found her suitable premises but only until 16 March of this year. Homes Tasmania has indicated that Ms Takaski has to move back into her unit even though they acknowledge that the premises is unsuitable. The suggestion has been made that Ms Takaski is to adhere to rules like not using the kitchen or the bathroom without support staff.

Ms Takaski is now wheelchair-bound due to her broken leg and her family has been paying \$622 per night to fully support her needs. The family is unable to sustain this cost and Ms Takaski does not have the NDIS funding to facilitate the ongoing 24-hour support that would allow her to safely move back to her unit.

I have written to the minister today about this matter and my office has been liaising with his office about this issue. I call on the minister to reach out to Ms Takaski and her family and to Homes Tasmania to make sure that the right thing is done by Ms Takaski and her family - whether that is by way of additional support to enable her to stay in the safe unit that she currently resides in whilst her new unit, her original unit, can be updated.

It is a disgraceful situation. It shows a distinct lack of empathy on Homes Tasmania's behalf. I ask that the minister address it and fix it.

Allana Wilson - Make-A-Wish Volunteer - Tribute

[7.38 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Community Services) – Honourable Speaker, Make-A-Wish is one of Australia's most valued and respected charitable organisations for the joy it brings to children and families experiencing the daunting challenge of a critical illness. I rise tonight to pay tribute to Allana Wilson, who was a most loved, dedicated, and generous member of Tasmania's Make-A-Wish family.

Allana gave an astonishing 18,000 hours of her life to Make-A-Wish across almost 30 years of volunteering. She played a role in the fulfilment of more than 250 wishes and raised \$300,000 during many long nights at her computer.

Her passion for granting wishes was not dimmed by her diagnosis of motor neurone disease less than two years ago. Allana continued to volunteer for as long as she could despite her declining health. Sadly, Allana died in January. She is survived by her husband, Allan, and two adult children.

Her peerless contribution was recognised last November when she received a lifetime commitment award and was also named Tasmanian Volunteer of the Year for 2024. I had the immense honour of presenting the award to Allana on behalf of the Premier. The Government House Ballroom erupted with cheers, tears, and applause as she accepted it. It clearly meant a lot to her and she meant a lot to everyone in the room. With the assistance of her husband, Allan, Allana let us know that volunteering gave her the most amazing feeling because of her passion for helping others. She also treasured the friendships she made with her fellow volunteers.

Allana was not one to seek the spotlight and was described as a true grassroots volunteer who was dependable, capable, persistent and in it for the long haul. A sense of urgency was the hallmark of her volunteering. There was a very good reason for that. Her first wish, almost three decades ago, was for a teenage girl who did not live to see it become reality. This changed how Allana approached each request. She reached out to parents as soon as possible and launched the wish creation process immediately. This inspired other volunteers to be urgent and deliberate in their interactions to ensure no time was wasted. Allana was also an avid advocate of the Make-A-Wish message. She regularly raised her hand to speak at community events about the power of a wish.

When a child has been diagnosed with a critical illness, the anticipation of a wish about to come true can lead to a better response to treatment. It is also a distraction from the physical effects of their illness, and time spent away from family and friends. The hope and joy a wish can bring is not just life-changing for each child and family, but also for the volunteers. Allana showed the most steadfast commitment of all by attending the funeral of every Make-A-Wish child in the Hobart area, a gesture that will always be deeply appreciated by their grieving families.

Words are barely enough to thank Allana Wilson for the profound impact she has had on so many children, along with their parents and siblings. Our heartfelt thanks must also go to Allan, daughter Rachel and son Mark for sharing their remarkable wife and mother with so many grateful Tasmanians. Vale Allana Wilson.

Members - Hear, hear.

Professor Richard Scolyer - Tribute

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I commend the member for Braddon, Roger Jaensch, on that beautiful tribute to a wonderful woman. It was wonderful being there at Government House to see that award being provided and then applause and support from just about everybody you can imagine. It was a beautiful tribute indeed.

Tonight, I pay a tribute to the former Australian of the Year, Professor Richard Scolyer AO, who, as you would know, Speaker, was born and raised in my hometown of Launceston in northern Tasmania and educated at the University of Tasmania. I caught up with him a couple of months ago during his visit to Hobart and Launceston.

He is a distinguished pathologist who has made many significant contributions to medical science, particularly in melanoma research. Recently, he has faced serious health challenges, which I will come to in a moment, but his accomplishments include pioneering melanoma treatment as a co-medical director of the Melanoma Institute of Australia. It is worth having a look on their website to see their beautiful comments and tributes to Professor Richard Scolyer and what he means for the institute.

Professor Scolyer, alongside Professor Georgina Long, revolutionised a melanoma treatment through immunotherapy. This approach has increased the five-year survival rate for advanced melanoma from 5 per cent to approximately 55 per cent, saving thousands of lives. He made a massive difference in the course of his lifetime and in the course of that wonderful work with Professor Long.

We would all recall that professors Scolyer and Long were jointly named Australians of the Year in 2024. I know, as far as I am concerned, that Tasmanians were immensely proud. The Premier and many others acknowledged that at the time. I speak on behalf of members in this Chamber about how proud we were of that appointment. During that year, he travelled extensively throughout the country, including to Tasmania.

Professor Scolyer has received global recognition, receiving the 2023 Society for Melanoma Research Lifetime Achievement Award, acknowledging his significant contributions to melanoma research worldwide.

In terms of the current situation, many of us would be aware of his brain cancer diagnosis. In June 2023, Professor Scolyer was diagnosed with grade 4 aggressive and incurable brain cancer. There was experimental treatment utilising his expertise. He underwent a pioneering immunotherapy treatment before surgery, the first known application of this approach for brain cancer. More recently, despite the initial positive responses, recent scans have revealed tumour recurrence following complex surgery, and Professor Scolyer has announced that his prognosis is poor, with medical assessments indicating he has only months to live.

When I saw that some days ago, it was a bit of a shock and incredibly disappointing. I was able to send my message directly to Professor Scolyer and received some feedback. Obviously, it is of great sadness and dismay to many in the community to be made aware of

that prognosis. He has advanced the cause for so many across this country and he should be given a tribute and acknowledged for his service and sacrifice for so many Australians and so many Tasmanians. He has dedicated his life to advancing cancer treatment, and his courageous personal battle continues to inspire the medical community and the public.

I also want to pay a tribute to his family, his beautiful children and all those who care for Professor Richard Scolyer.

Moonah Arts Centre 10th Birthday
Hobart Northern Suburbs Railway

[7.47 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, there have been some fantastic Adjournment speeches. I also acknowledge Richard Scolyer's struggle. Also, the member for Lyons, Tabatha Badger, and her tribute to Christine Milne AO. It was good to be at the Honour Roll for Women with you last Friday, honourable Speaker.

I want to talk about a couple of events I went to last Saturday, 8 March. I was out and about in the electorate of Clark, in the northern suburbs. The first event I went to was the 10th birthday celebrations of the Moonah Arts Centre. The Moonah Arts Centre is a great little centre in the heart of Moonah, in the heart of Clark. It has been responsible for some of the most exciting and vibrant events in this community, and it makes for a really good third space. It is a publicly owned event space and gallery, it is affordable for people to hire and put their own events on, and Moonah is lucky to have it right in the middle of the community.

It is one of the best spots for under-18s and young artists to put on shows and learn their craft in a properly professional arts environment, with good curation and support. It has also made a great effort to engage the multicultural community in the northern suburbs, which is one of the most diverse, if not the most diverse community in the state. I thank the team, including Andrew Clark, who is the creative communities coordinator. I caught up with Scout Winter who is there as well, and many other members of the team.

It is one of the most favourite places to go. It has gone from strength to strength from the time it was first started. It is a real gem of a place, so happy 10th birthday, Moonah Arts Centre.

After that event, I went to the AGM of the Hobart Northern Suburbs Railway held at the Claremont RSL. I congratulate the new committee and Toby Rowallen and who retains the President's role. Toby noted, quite lamentably, that it is 50 years since the closure of Hobart's suburban rail services. A milestone, not necessarily one to celebrate for this group.

As part of the AGM, the guest speaker, Tony Cohen, talked about public transport and the rail system. He was a former train driver. He is involved with the transport museum in the northern suburbs, and he was talking about the role of integrated transport. He gave quite a lot of historic examples of when both ferries and trains were linked to buses. The passengers who might have caught ferries from west to east of the Derwent were taken home by buses that were waiting there.

That might sound like it is a hard thing to do, but if you want to catch a ferry to Bellerive currently, catching a bus is not a matter of just seeing where the bus is waiting when the ferry

is about to arrive, but you have to walk up to a fairly hostile area to wait for a bus that may or may not come. A lot of things demonstrated in this historic account were really relevant to making public transport work well in our current environment. Not hard to do, but it was certainly good to see the photographs and hear those stories of people going off to the Zinc Works or catching the trolley bus into North Hobart from the train.

Time expired.

The SPEAKER - I remind members that parliament used to sit at 2.00 p.m. because that is when the train got in from Launceston.

The House adjourned at 7.53 p.m.