

Wednesday 28 November 2018

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

QUESTIONS

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.03 a.m.]

There is not a shadow of doubt that Adam Brooks has, over the past two years, carried out a deliberate and calculated campaign of lies and deceit to save his own political skin. The Integrity Commission has established that Mr Brooks lied to all Tasmanians. He lied to the Crown Solicitor, he lied on the floor of this parliament. He not only lied to your face, Premier, but he lied to you in writing three times. Despite this premeditated and meticulously plotted and accomplished dishonesty, Mr Brooks has escaped any real penalty and will be allowed to still sit in this House, with your blessing.

Under your weak leadership how badly does a minister or a member of your Government have to behave before they are held to account, be asked to resign or sacked?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for the question. It is not true to say that Mr Brooks has paid no price for his consequences. Of course, it will never be enough for members opposite, but the facts are he has not been a minister since 2016. He was stood down in 2016. He has not been considered for a ministry since. As I said yesterday, I have no plans for him to return to the Cabinet of this Government. I have also very clearly stood him down from other responsibilities he has not only to government but to this parliament. As political analyst, Richard Herr, said yesterday -

He has paid a very heavy price losing his ministry, being sat on the backbench.

That is what one of Tasmania's leading political analysts has said about this matter.

Members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - I have said very clearly that his behaviour did not meet the expectations I have of my colleagues. There have been serious consequences. He has rightly lost his place in Cabinet. I have no plans to put him back in and he will not be considered for the foreseeable future.

I note the fact that he is taking leave and doing so to seek some medical assistance. I would expect the he be allowed to do that.

With respect to who sits in this place, that is a matter for the Tasmanian people. It is not the call of the premier of the day. If it were, we would pass judgment on the merits of some of you sitting in this place. We had a former member for Braddon, Mr Green, who was required to attend

court and face two criminal trials, yet he was not asked to leave by the Labor Party. They made him their leader.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.06 a.m.]

You are a weak leader and you have proven that you will say or do anything to protect your political skin. To be clear about what has occurred here, Adam Brooks lied to a parliamentary Estimates Committee on 9 June 2016 about operating his company business email account. He then went home and under the cover of darkness, tried to rewrite his history by deviously deleting 125 emails from his MSS business account. The majority of those emails were specifically about the management of his business, defying the protocol put in place by you while he was mining minister.

Mr Brooks did this because he knew these emails would cost him politically. Mr Brooks then lied about it to everyone, including the electors of Braddon. Despite this, today he continues to receive payment from this company and continues to be paid by the taxpayer.

The Integrity Committee report amounts to 70 pages, detailing how Adam Brooks lied multiple times at the highest level of government. By failing to take strong action, you are sending an equally strong message that you accept blatant dishonesty from your ministers. By doing that, what kind of role model are you as the Premier of this state?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I believe Tasmanians judge their political leaders on the basis of objectivity; on the basis of track record, on the basis of standing up for what they believe in and demonstrating what they stand for. Despite the gratuitous character assessment by the Leader of Opposition who has been called into question by one of her own colleagues for lacking leadership in recent weeks, the member for Clark -

Ms O'Connor - What are you talking about?

Mr HODGMAN - I will do what is right. Weak and dishonest, that is what Ms O'Connor said about you.

Ms White - You should worry about what your ministers say about you.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Premier, please take your seat. This is a very sensitive issue. It is in the public interest. I ask that discussion and debate be orderly and respectful of all involved.

Mr HODGMAN - The point I am making is that you would expect that sort of thing from the Leader of the Opposition who lacks substance and stands for little. I will get to what the Integrity Commission has said about how I handled this matter. I will repeat what has happened with respect to Mr Brooks.

The Integrity Commission has said very clearly that the allegations from me that were put from Labor members have been dismissed. It found no evidence of misconduct and no evidence that my response was improper or purposefully inadequate. It found -

Deliberate, detailed and documented steps were taken by the Premier, following advice from relevant ... State Service officers, to address Mr Brooks' conflict of interest issues.

On page 5 of the report, it says that while my response did not lead to a resolution, there was no evidence to suggest my response was intended to avoid such resolution.

In fact, the report states -

... that the Premier's intention was to manage and respond to the issues effectively.

On page 33 of the report, it clearly indicates that -

... neither the Crown Solicitor nor the Premier were aware of the status of Mr Brooks' marriage and how it would impact the audit.

On page 56 -

... Mr Brooks continued to be involved in a way that was contrary to the Premier's expectations.

That is a selection of the things the Integrity Commission states that I handled this matter. I reject the suggestions made by the Leader of the Opposition of a failure to do what was right in the circumstances and to appropriately deal with this matter. It has finally been resolved by the Integrity Commission. We received the report, which clearly outlines those things I have done and those things Mr Brooks has done that did not meet my expectations.

It is not true for members opposite to say he has suffered no consequence. As independent political analyst, Richard Herr, says, he has paid a very heavy price.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.11 a.m.]

Yesterday, after it was confirmed your former minister, Adam Brooks, had lied to parliament three times, to you, repeatedly, to the people of Braddon and to the Crown Solicitor, you said Mr Brooks would not be offered a position in the Cabinet in the foreseeable future. Are you serious? Are your standards of ministerial behaviour and accountability so low that you would consider offering this disgraced member a ministerial position sometime in the future, which is not yet foreseeable?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I could not be any clearer. I have no plans to bring Mr Brooks back into this Cabinet. It is not up to me as to whether he continues to

serve as a member of this parliament. If Mr Brooks seeks re-election at the next election, it will be a matter for the people of Braddon. It is unbelievable that I have Labor members seeking to set a standard in this place when they have had a number of ministerial failings, which have eventually resulted in resignations and have, on a number of instances, resulted in nothing by way of discipline for those members.

Bryan Green was sent to the Supreme Court to face two criminal trials and he was promoted to leader of the Labor Party. I will not be lectured to by members about the standards that should be set. I will stand by the standards we do set.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is to standing order 45, relevance. The Premier needs to state whether he would reappoint Mr Brooks to Cabinet sometime beyond the foreseeable future.

Madam SPEAKER - That might be the subject of another question. I will rule against it.

Education and Training Outcomes

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.13 a.m.]

Can the minister update the House on how the Hodgman Majority Liberal Government has delivered on our plan to improve education and training outcomes for Tasmanians since the election?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this matter and in Education. Education will always be a key priority for the Hodgman Liberal Government, which is why we are investing record amounts in staff, schools, infrastructure, and in education outcomes for Tasmania. This Government is getting on with the job -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, I ask the front bench of the Opposition to remain quiet.

Ms O'Byrne - We are very concerned, Madam Speaker. We do not know if they are telling the truth.

Madam SPEAKER - I know, but we have the minister on his feet.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Madam Speaker, this Government is getting on with our plan to improve Education. Since 2014, we have seen 38 schools extend to year 12, with five more schools set to start offering their senior secondary courses in 2019. This year, we have announced a further four more schools to extend in 2020. We are on track to achieving our goal of every Tasmanian high school extending to year 12 by 2022. We know our plan is working, as we have more students staying in school longer and they are achieving better results. We have reintroduced school nurses into our schools, employed 142 teachers, more than were there in 2014, and over 63 more support

staff including school psychologists, social workers and speech pathologists. We are introducing a new needs-based disability funding model for students with a disability.

Ms O'Byrne - You were supposed to bring that in next year. That will not be happening, will it? You said it would be in Term 1 next year.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Ms O'Byrne, I give you your first warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Madam Speaker, the more the member interjects, the more it highlights she has no plan for Education and no respect for the staff in Education across Tasmania.

There is no doubt this Government has accepted the responsibility for improving educational outcomes. Our NAPLAN results show evidence that progress is being made and we are on track to achieving our bold target of being at or above every NAPLAN measurement in reading, writing, science and maths by 2020.

We know high quality early learning experiences benefit all young children and improves education and life outcomes, and getting it right in the early years means getting it right for life. This is why our Working Together for 3 Year Olds initiative is so important. We will provide 400 hours of free early learning for disadvantaged or vulnerable three-year-olds. This work has commenced, with five pilot locations confirmed to offer this service in 2019, ahead of our set date for 2020. Our major investment in early years education includes 80 new prep teacher assistants and the development of six early learning hubs to provide greater access to services to support families and young children.

Over the next six years, we will employ 358 more staff in our education system including 250 teaching positions, for which we have had 600 applications. To support the recruitment drive, I have convened the education workforce round table, which pulls together key stakeholders and works on planning, teacher training and employment and continues to focus on teacher quality. These teaching jobs will be targeted to improve literacy and numeracy through our coaches policy and implementation of the new literacy strategy, as our election commitment stated.

Ms O'Byrne - Why did you cut Raising the Bar funding? He wants to give a lesson on Education funding. He can answer some questions.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This Government is investing more than \$16 million in revitalising school farms. We have advertised for new farm teachers to improve student learning and support a network of school farms across Tasmania. Staff have already been allocated and schools are looking forward to farm teachers starting in the new year.

The Government has funded Relationships Australia's \$1 million over four years to continue to deliver the SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY program in our schools. This is an important program that builds young people's awareness, knowledge and skills in their mental health and wellbeing and the needs of those around them.

We continue to make a significant investment in school infrastructure, with the largest ever state government commitment to improve access to modern, state-of-the-art schools. We are on track with our community consultation for new schools we are building, including Cosgrove, Sorell,

Penguin District School, Legana and Brighton. This Government is delivering its plan and is making significant investment into Education. We are seeing the results of this investment in many ways. Most importantly, the educational outcomes of Tasmanian students are improving.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report - Legal Expenses

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.19 a.m.]

The Adam Brooks email saga and investigation has been dragging on for two years and five months and has involved significant legal expertise. How much has this sorry saga cost taxpayers? Has Mr Brooks asked the state to pay for any of his legal fees?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for the question. I will seek advice as to the details of matter, the incurring of legal costs by members of Government. There are precedents and practices in place for that to occur in appropriate circumstances but I will obtain that information and report back to the House as soon as I am able.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.20 a.m.]

In a statement issued through your Government's distribution channels yesterday, Adam Brooks disagrees with some of the findings of the Integrity Commission. Is that also your position, is it the position of your Government, and which of the findings of the Integrity Commission do you dispute?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question. I, and the Government, have no issue with respect to the findings and contents of the report of the independent Integrity Commission. We are the only party in this place and responsible government that acknowledges and accepts that the Integrity Commission is an independent authority - established under a Labor government - and it is a matter for them when reports are tabled and proceedings are concluded to finalise their reports. That should not be something that is subject to political interference, which we have seen, not just in this instance, but on previous occasions by irresponsible and reckless members of the Opposition.

These matters are significant. With respect to those matters to which Mr Brooks takes issue, and it is contained within the report that he did take issue with a number of matters, they are a matter for him. The Government's position is very clear. Mr Brooks was cleared of having a material conflict of interest, not an insignificant matter, because that was the principal charge levelled against him by the Opposition. He was cleared of that matter by the independent Integrity Commission - not by me, not by you, by the independent Integrity Commission. He was also cleared of having breached the code of conduct. That is the bar set by the Integrity Commission.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - Once again, we have the opportunists trying to politicise the independent Integrity Commission. Those are the findings of that body.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - Judge, jury and executioner -

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I have been trying to set a standard for myself to be the fairest Speaker there ever was in this parliament, but now I need to set one as being the firmest and fairest. I ask for respect in this matter. We cannot be yelling just because we are angry. Debate should be at a professional standard; that is what is expected in this House. Please resume, Premier.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The reason I am so often required to raise the level of volume in my voice is to be heard over the constant interjections by members opposite. Notwithstanding the fact that Madam Speaker has requested that you desist from doing it, you continue to do it.

The point I make is that the report and its conclusions have been accepted by me and my Government.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, going to relevance. The question goes to the fact that Mr Brooks' statement was distributed by the Government Media Office, so one can only assume that the Government Media Office endorsed the content, which says that he does not agree with the content. The Premier is doing everything he can to dissociate himself, but the reality is that his Government has endorsed the position.

Madam SPEAKER - As we all know, that is not a point of order. It has been recorded on *Hansard* for your benefit but I do think at some stage we need to look at standing order 45 because it is quite frustrating. I ask the Premier to continue.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is not a point of order but is a puerile point of fact because Mr Brooks is still a member of this parliament and Government. It is his right to express his views, as he has done directly to the Integrity Commission in relation to the investigation, and made his views known publicly. He is entitled to express his views.

I have done so similarly on behalf of the Government to note that whilst Mr Brooks has been cleared of substantive claims, baseless claims made against him by the Labor Party, where there are matters of concern to us and where he has not met the expectations of me and my Government, he has paid, as Mr Richard Herr has said, a very heavy price.

Business Growth Strategy

Mr HIDDING question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.24 a.m.]

Can the Treasurer please update the House on how the Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering on its plan to grow the economy, foster job creation and deliver sound and sustainable budget management?

Ms O'Connor - See if you can self-promote in a bit under seven-and-a-half minutes today.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question and his interest in this important matter.

Ms O'Connor - Put out a media release.

Mr GUTWEIN - The only thing the member for Clark has demonstrated in the 10 years she has been here is that she can keep time.

When the Liberal Government came to power, Tasmania was in a very different place. The budget was in the red, our finances were unsustainable, and confidence was at rock-bottom. Ten thousand jobs had been lost at the peak and the unemployment rate had reached over 8 per cent. The Government's number-one priority was jobs. Under our long-term plan, over a quarter of a million Tasmanians are now in work, a record. Fifteen thousand jobs have been created since March 2014.

Compared to where we were in 2014, today Tasmania is almost unrecognisable. There is a buzz in the air, the confidence is contagious, and people are excited about what the future will bring. The latest Sensis Business Index results once again confirm that Tasmanian small and medium businesses are the most confident in the nation. Impressively, Tasmanian business confidence outpaced the rest of the country, reporting the only positive net increase out of all states and territories across a range of indicators. Our small and medium businesses reported either the most favourable results or the most optimistic expectations in the nation for the fifth consecutive quarter, rating our policies the most popular in the country. The Sensis Business Index comes on top of a number of reports which confirm what many Tasmanians know to be the case.

Ms O'Byrne - Just don't get sick.

Mr GUTWEIN - You would have loved this when you were minister, but again -

Ms O'Byrne - If the Australian dollar was where it is now.

Mr GUTWEIN - Again, blame the exchange rate. Look at your policies.

Madam SPEAKER - Through the Chair, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - The business index comes on top of a number of reports which confirm what many Tasmanians know to be the case - that our economy is strong, businesses are confident and investing more and hiring more. Our economy is one of the fastest growing in the nation. Our international visitation leads the country. Our retail sector goes from record to record. Population growth is the strongest in 10 years and we now lead Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

There are around 37 700 businesses registered in Tasmania and around 99 per cent of these are small to medium businesses. These businesses comprise around 36 000 of those nearly 38 000 businesses. They employ fewer than 20 staff each and in total they employ around 110 000 Tasmanians, which accounts for around half of Tasmania's private sector workforce.

The Government understands that more still needs to be done, which is why we are introducing our Business Growth Strategy. The strategy will be delivered through a strategic partnership with business and industry representatives of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Tasmanian Small Business Council. It will outline how together the private sector and the Government can build on the high levels of confidence, take advantage of emerging opportunities in our economy, and ensure government policies are aligned with business and industry goals and targets.

During the process of developing the Business Growth Strategy in mid-August we have had 70 Tasmanian small businesses take part in statewide roundtable sessions and have received over 100 submissions to the surveys we have sent out, which is an outstanding result. In October I hosted a business round table for peak industry associations and local business chambers, which rounded out the consultation process.

As a result, the Business Growth Strategy is now being finalised and I will be announcing it shortly. I want to again express my thanks to the TCCI and the Small Business Council, as well as the businesses and other industry participants who have worked diligently with the Government to develop the Business Growth Strategy.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report - Preselection as a Candidate

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.29 a.m.]

The Integrity Commission delayed the ongoing investigation into Adam Brooks' email account because Mr Brooks refused to be interviewed due to the state election. When did you first become aware of Adam Brooks' deceit and honesty? Were you aware of the lies before Mr Brooks was preselected as a candidate for Braddon for the March state election?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is true, as the reports says, that there were other reasons why there was some delay. The Integrity Commission notes they had resourcing issues that also contributed to the delay.

Ms O'Byrne - Whose responsibility was that?

Mr HODGMAN - I believe the Integrity Commission, unlike the member who constantly interjects.

When I became aware of the investigation and since that time when the draft report was provided to me on 18 October - it has subsequently been tabled following its final conclusion to this place - I was subject to the confidentiality requirements of section 98 of the Integrity Commission Act, which members should be aware of. It is important to remind the House that section 98 says that I am not able or indeed any other person who is notified of an investigation is not able to disclose to any other person the existence of that notice, the contents of that notice or any other matters relating to or arising from that notice.

I do not intend to break the law as members opposite might suggest. Those are the dates on which I was advised by the Integrity Commission on this matter.

Standards of Ministerial Behaviour

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.31 a.m.]

Do you accept the bar you have set for ministerial conduct is extremely low? Not only have you flagged the possible reinstatement of a former minister who lied to the parliament, you, the people of Braddon and the Crown Solicitor, but another of your ministers, Ms Courtney, concealed a conflict of interest from you for a month and was rewarded for her bad behaviour with another ministry. What standard of poor ministerial behaviour is low enough for you to take action and act decisively?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question, with the most spurious of assertions contained within it. The standard that I have set, in this instance, is very different from that which the Labor Party set for former Labor leader Bryan Green. Whilst it is very appropriate that they be called into question on their judgment of that matter, so should the Leader of the Greens who was quite happy to sit in Cabinet with Bryan Green during the Labor-Greens government.

Ms O'Connor - Sure.

Mr HODGMAN - Sure, she says. She was quite happy to get the ministerial loading, have all the power of office, after she had spent a lot of her time with her colleagues pursuing Bryan Green, declaring him to be corrupt.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, 45 - relevance. The Premier has now entered ancient history and it is not relevant.

Members laughing.

Ms O'CONNOR - Cue faux laughter from the Government benches.

Premier, what standard of poor ministerial behaviour is low enough for you to act decisively?

Madam SPEAKER - As the member is aware, Standing Order 45 gives me no power whatsoever, regardless of the point you have made. I ask the Premier to resume his contribution.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you Madam Speaker. The answer to that question is a damm lot higher than you set yourself. I have acted responsibly and appropriately according to the Integrity Commission. Mr Brooks has not escaped punishment as you assert.

I would ask rhetorically of the member who asked the question, how could she have sat in a Cabinet with somebody that the Greens declared corrupt and who had gone to the Criminal Court on two separate occasions? How could that be so? How could you set yourself such a high standard?

The member claims my response is irrelevant because it happened some years ago. That again shows the level of standard that she abides by in that it will change, from one day to the next.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.34 a.m.]

Your disgraced former mining minister Adam Brooks remains in this parliament despite his appalling dishonesty. At any stage during the investigation into the scandal over his blatantly lying about the contents of his email account and then deleting those emails to try to escape detection, or at any stage after that report, did he offer to tender his resignation as the member for Braddon? Or did you seek it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I again point to what is required of me and indeed any other person who receives notification of such matters.

What Mr Brooks chooses to do is a matter for him. He has indicated his desire to continue to serve as a member for Braddon and that is his right. He is elected to this place, not by us - certainly not by members opposite - but by members of the community of Braddon who have made a decision as to Mr Brooks. He has indicated his intention to continue to serve as a member, albeit on the backbench of a majority Liberal Government.

I have every confidence that once he receives the assistance and support that he needs from his doctor, for example, and those close to him, he is likely to return to this parliament at a time that is suitable and appropriate in those circumstances.

That is what he clearly indicated in the statement he released yesterday.

Building a Better Health System

Mr HIDDING question to MINISTER FOR HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.36 a.m.]

Can the minister update the House on how the majority Hodgman Liberal Government has delivered on its plan to build a better health system since the election?

Mr Bacon - Cue fake laughter from the member who is desperate to get a question up today.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question because he cares about our health system, unlike members opposite.

Mr Bacon - Do you?

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Christmas is coming. Ho, ho, ho. This fake laughter covers Labor's lack of policy in health system improvement in Tasmania in contrast to the Hodgman Liberal Government since the 2018 election.

Mr O'Byrne - Are you serious? The AMA said you are ill-equipped.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne. Warning number one.

Mr FERGUSON - The Hodgman Majority Liberal Government has focused on our plan that Tasmanians voted for to address the issues that Tasmanians care about. We are not for quitting, we are for delivering results.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition who walked away from Health, we are steadfastly focused on working to improve our health system, to fix it. It was left badly damaged by members opposite, by Labor and the Greens. Fixing the health system that was so badly damaged by the O'Byrne legacy has been a top priority for our Government. The Labor-Greens opposition can throw all the rocks and pull all the stunts they want. They have talked; we have been delivering.

I want to give the House an update on what has happened since the election. Since the election in March we have recruited well over 200 additional health staff. That includes 130 full-time equivalent nurses and 20 doctors.

Mr O'Byrne - It is the Iraqi communication, minister. Baghdad is safe.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. Let us get through this together.

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, Madam Speaker.

As announced yesterday, this Government has provided an additional \$105 million, a demonstration that we will act when demand in the health system continues to grow. It shows we are good for our word that we will fund the responses to that demand our health system needs to do.

It is no-one's fault that our hospitals are very busy. We need to meet that demand, including through times of redevelopment of the Royal Hobart Hospital, in particular. That is important capacity that we look forward to releasing. Health by its nature is demand driven. Our public hospital emergency departments never close their doors.

This extra funding is on top of the Government's previously announced \$465 million investment that we placed in Health in our last Budget. It is delivering new services. We have spent this year steadfastly focused on delivering our plan, which includes: the new 22-bed ward at the Hobart Repatriation Hospital opened in July, taking more pressure off the Royal; a new Tasmanian Health Service act; stronger local management and decision-making in our hospitals, more operational decision-making at the local level; recruitment processes underway for 42 additional paramedics around Tasmania; and, importantly, one close to my heart, 30 new drug and alcohol beds commissioned across Tasmania to support people through recovery and rehabilitation in the south, the north and the north-west.

The Royal Hobart Hospital has progressed spectacularly and I hope you have seen it. It is massively improved. It is a massive building. It is on track for completion in the middle of 2019. Over coming years, the redevelopment will provide for 250 additional beds and hundreds more staff, which we are funding. It would have been opened already if the project had not been bungled. We have it back on track and it is a better redevelopment, with a helipad and better space for mental health. We have been able to do this because we have fixed the budget and shown strong financial management, which allows us to invest more money, record amounts into our essential services, creating jobs and growing the economy. Over six years, our \$757 million plan will see the recruitment of an estimated 1300 additional staff. This includes 298 additional hospital beds to take pressure of our EDs, investment in Hospital in the Home programs to improve waiting times and to improve access to care for people who need it.

Tasmanians are not served by jeering by the Opposition of a Government that has a plan Tasmanians voted for and expect us to deliver. They would be looking to the Labor Party to support the Government in its reform and funding improvements, especially considering we are opening up services Michelle O'Byrne closed down. On that, Labor cut half-a-billion dollars from the Health budget and we have reversed those cuts. They cut the budget, closed wards, including putting beds into storage. The statement from the former minister, Ms O'Byrne, was that they had to be locked away so the staff could not use them. That is what they said. The Labor Party sacked a nurse a day for nine months, totally stuffed the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment and, as people confirmed, all these bad decisions sets the Tasmanian health system back 10 years. They are the words of Dr Nicklason.

The Liberal Government has listened to Tasmanians. The Labor Party put up its pathetic seven versions of its health policy but Tasmanians voted for the Hodgman Liberal majority Government plan for Health. We are determined to implement it, with or without the support of the Labor Party that so appallingly failed Tasmanians and left people languishing on waiting lists.

Ms Sarah Courtney MP - Breach of Ministerial Code of Conduct

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.42 a.m.]

Your failed and disgraced former primary industries minister, Sarah Courtney, thought it was acceptable to breach the ministerial code of conduct for at least a month before she confessed to you. She knowingly carried on a personal relationship with her department secretary, a breach of the code, for at least four weeks before informing you of that breach. Clearly, you also thought that was acceptable because, as with Mr Brooks, you have been too weak to hold Ms Courtney to account.

Yesterday, you said there had been repercussions for both these failed and deceitful ministers. Can you explain how handing Ms Courtney another senior ministerial role, rather than removing her from Cabinet, qualifies as a consequence? Since you have now established new protocols to manage her conflicts of interests and how this minister conducts herself, are you confident they will be upheld, given that Mr Brooks blatantly disregarded the protocols you put in place for him?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for the question. The matter involving Ms Courtney was appropriately handled and not, as characterised by the Leader of the Opposition, without

consequence. In accordance with the recommendation from highly-respected Tasmanian lawyer, Damian Bugg QC, it was determined there was a minor breach of the code of conduct in that instance. The code referred us to a range of sanctions available in the circumstances of minor breach, such as counselling, as was provided to Ms Courtney. That is what occurred as to those consequences.

It is important to note this is the code of conduct put in place by the Labor government in 2011, which followed a model recommended to government by the Integrity Commission. Several key sections of the code use the same wording as the model and other sections go beyond the model code requirements. The same code that was applicable for Labor and Labor-Greens governments is the same code being applied to ours.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, which is standing order 45. I ask you to direct the Premier to answer the question regarding protocol in place for Ms Courtney to address conflict of interest issues, given Mr Brooks blatantly disregarded the protocols put in place for him. How can we have any confidence the protocol in place now would be adhered to?

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, on the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is not allowing the Premier the time to answer the question. She does not know what he is about to say. I argue against the claim on relevance, it is perfectly relevant to the question and the member is simply restating the question.

Madam SPEAKER - I will make a ruling. It is not a point of order, as you well know, because of the structure of standing order 45. You have made your point and it is up to the Premier to answer as he feels appropriate.

Mr HODGMAN - Madam Speaker, I am more than happy to speak to the protocols put in place with respect to Ms Courtney. I point the House to the findings of the Integrity Commission with respect to those protocols we established for Mr Brooks, which were considered to be robust, as members opposite said, and a model appropriately formulated with advice, I hasten to add. It was acknowledged by the Integrity Commission as a demonstration of the importance I had applied to this matter, as it is with Ms Courtney.

In her case, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Solicitor-General reviewed the interactions between DPIPWE and Ms Courtney's new portfolios before Ms Courtney took on the new portfolio. I will outline them all for you. It has been advised there were no impediments to Ms Courtney taking on these portfolio responsibilities. There may be - and this is not limited to this Government, it may be for any government - some interactions and potential conflicts on a number of occasions. In this instance, there may be such between DPIPWE and Ms Courtney's responsibilities.

It is well established under former governments, and likely for future governments, that all ministers are expected to manage their own compliance with the ministerial code of conduct and obliged to report any code non-compliance by themselves or by another minister to the premier of the day. This will ensure that no advice will go directly from the Secretary of DPIPWE to Ms Courtney. The minister's interactions will be with statutory officers such as the EPA Director, the Director of Crown Lands or with a delegate of the Secretary of DPIPWE. Suitable delegations are in place to ensure Dr Whittington will not be directly briefing or advising the minister.

This extends to the procedures under the Threatened Species Protection Act, for instance, where appropriate processes and procedures are in place to ensure transparency in the provision of advice -

Mr O'Byrne - What a mess. What a rabble.

Mr HODGMAN - You say you are interested in the facts and you demonstrate you are not.

Under these procedures, experts with the Natural and Cultural Heritage Division of DPIPW, including the Threatened Species section, would consider whether a proposed harvest plan or forest practices plan makes a sufficient contribution to the conservation of a threatened species. Any advice provided to the FPAs Chief Forest Practices Officer by the secretary or their delegate is provided by that officer.

These conflicts are perfectly managed through normal and longstanding processes. I have outlined them, despite members opposite having no interest in them, to demonstrate what can be put in place to deal with any potential conflicts of interest, which exist for this and former governments. My expectation is that all ministers of my Government will abide by those protocols that may be established in such circumstances and the code itself.

Tasmanians in Need - Government Assistance

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.50 a.m.]

Can the minister update the House on how the Hodgman Liberal Government has delivered on our plan to invest in Tasmanians in need since the election?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and his interest in and support for Tasmanians in need. The Labor-Greens Opposition can make all the noise, throw all the rocks and pull all the stunts they like, but we are focused on the job at hand, and that is delivering on our plan to improve the lives of Tasmanians and Tasmanians in need.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has been working hard to address the issues of homelessness and housing shortage in Tasmania and investing in Tasmanians in need. We can do this because we have managed the state's budget and got it back into balance. Since the election in March this year we have convened a housing summit which produced a number of endorsed actions aimed at increasing the supply of social and affordable housing, as well as increasing affordable rental stock. A key action was enabling legislation to fast-track zoning changes targeting surplus government land identified as appropriate for residential use to accelerate the supply of affordable housing in areas of need. We introduced the House and Land Supply Act 2018 and developed brand-new legislation for this purpose. It was supported by the Parliament and last week we tabled the first three packages, the first three initial parcels of land in Devonport, Rokeby and West Moonah to meet that objective, the first of many.

In March this year I announced a support package to assist Tasmanians in urgent need through the winter months. This funding was to be used for immediate emergency accommodation and

support for Tasmanians in the greatest need. Housing Connect has been regularly visiting a number of sites around Hobart every day to connect with people in need of assistance, and recently the Government extended the program to continue to assist Tasmanians in need to connect with housing assistance and other supports, bringing our additional investment in responding to these needs to \$1.2 million this year.

Madam Speaker, this Government is committed to implementing our Affordable Housing Strategy and our two key action plans, with an additional \$125 million committed last Budget. In total, we have committed nearly \$200 million in funding over eight years, the largest-ever Tasmanian Government investment into affordable housing in the state's history. Tasmanian Government investment -

Ms O'Connor - There is no eight years in a budget.

Mr JAENSCH - We have consulted on the next steps and are working to release our Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 by the end of March next year.

We are also investing an additional \$24 million in funding to support the redesign of child safety services in Tasmania, employing up to 25 more child safety officers. Give us a 'hear, hear' on this one, please; you have been calling for it for a year.

Opposition members - Hear, hear.

Mr JAENSCH - We are employing more child safety officers and other frontline staff and assisting vulnerable children with very complex needs in out-of-home care. This is on top of \$51.2 million in increased funding for out-of-home care and the redesign of our child safety services that we already committed in our first term.

The wellbeing and safety of all children is of the utmost importance to the Hodgman Liberal Government, and Tasmania's first-ever Child Advocate will provide a greater voice to children in and out of home care regarding the quality of and decisions made about their care. By giving kids a voice, we look forward to ensuring that we are providing the best care and services, supporting them and protecting them from harm. The wellbeing of children relies on everybody in contact with them, working together and strengthening families to prevent problems and act decisively when problems escalate.

The Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework is one of the initiatives of the Tasmanian Government's Strong Families, Safe Kids strategy which is redesigning our child safety system to be one of the best in the world. The redesign is deliberately bringing service providers together to work more effectively with children and young people, and we will have more to say about that in the very near future.

On the subject of elder abuse, the Hodgman Liberal Government is implementing the Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse: Tasmania's Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy because we firmly believe that elder abuse in any form is not okay. We have reconvened the statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee and are working in partnership with the Council on the Ageing and Advocacy Tasmania to delivering identified outcomes under our strategy, which continues to be successful in raising awareness and helping prevent elder abuse from occurring in Tasmania.

We have been able to do all of this because we have fixed the budget and showed strong financial management, allowing us to invest more in essential services, creating jobs and growing the economy. We took to the election a plan to invest in services important to Tasmanians and since being re-elected, we have focused on delivering that plan to improve the lives of Tasmanians, including our most vulnerable.

While those opposite are focused on reckless politicising of issues that should be above politics and attacks under privilege on independent people who cannot defend themselves in this place for their own political gain, we are focused on the Tasmanian people and we are delivering to them.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.56 a.m.]

Earlier when we asked what standard of ministerial behaviour would be low enough for you to act decisively, desperately flailing about, you went back to the turn of the century and a former Labor member who was charged and hauled before the court. Is that a pointer to your expected standard of behaviour? Will Mr Brooks have to face criminal charges for you to rule out inviting him back into your Cabinet?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It was not that long ago and the standard we are talking about is what occurred within the time that both of us had been in this place. It was a most undesirable circumstance where Bryan Green conducted himself in a way that was serious enough to be considered a breach of the Criminal Code that would require him to submit to two trials, which I must point out did not return a verdict. They were inconclusive. Notwithstanding all of that, the former member for Braddon, Mr Green, was able to stay in this parliament. He did not resign. It was not expected of him by the Labor Party, and nor did it worry you when you were able to get yourself into government with the Labor Party and sit alongside him at the Cabinet table.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order, on relevance. The Premier is desperately flailing about. Could he confirm that it would take criminal charges against Mr Brooks for him not to be considered for Cabinet in the foreseeable future?

Madam SPEAKER - That is another example of the weakness of standing order 45. I ask the Premier to proceed.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I point to the fact that the Integrity Commission has found in this instance that there was no material conflict or material advantage gained.

Ms O'Connor - Semantics. Weasel words.

Mr HODGMAN - Semantics? This is unbelievable hypocrisy and carelessness to the extreme. These are the findings of the Integrity Commission. No advantage was obtained by Mr Brooks; no conflict, no breach of the code. This is very different from what Mr Green went through, that standard that you accepted.

With respect to the other matters contained within the report, as I very clearly said that they do not meet my expectations. They do not afford Mr Brooks the opportunity now, nor has it afforded him the opportunity to be a member of the Cabinet.

As to any further action that is taken with respect to this matter, it would be for independent authorities or any other members to determine what they wish to do. We are dealing here with the determination and the conclusion from the Integrity Commission, no less, which has been extraordinarily dismissed by the member who asked the question as some sort of irrelevancy. Opposition members have suggested that we interfere in the business of the Integrity Commission. The member for Clark is now clearly questioning the integrity of the Commission itself and its findings by calling into question those findings.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order. I ask the Premier to withdraw that false and misleading statement.

Madam SPEAKER - Premier, the member for Clark has taken offence at your accusation. I ask that you respectfully withdraw it.

Mr HODGMAN - Madam Speaker, I withdraw it, but I consider it entirely unacceptable for the member who objects to assert that the Government interfered in the timing of the tabling of the report. The member said that publicly and it was reported. It is entirely untrue and questions the integrity of the Integrity Commission. It is an integrity commission that was established under a former Labor government and has been supported since.

I recall former premier David Bartlett saying that he feared a time when the Integrity Commission would be used for political purposes. The former premier would be looking with disfavour on what is occurring now because that is exactly what has happened. We have had a direct plea from the Integrity Commission. In their annual report they said that the spurious and publicly made statements about the operations of the commission - indeed, references to it - are undermining its independence, politicising the process and deliberately damaging reputations.

We know that is all you are interested in. You want to damage people's reputations. If that means you have to call into question the operation of the Integrity Commission, then you will do that.

Members of the Labor Party have quite willingly declared that they are referring a matter to the Integrity Commission. Even though the Integrity Commission regrets that sort of conduct, I am sure it will continue. They are the depths the Labor Party have stooped to; they ignore requests of the Integrity Commission and, as former premier Bartlett said, use it for political purposes.

We respect the findings of the Integrity Commission. We will respond to these matters appropriately as we have done.

Time expired.

TABLED PAPER

Joint Standing Committee on Integrity - Annual Report 2018

Mr Hidding presented a report of the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity.

Report received.

Report printed.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 25)

TRAFFIC AND RELATED LEGISLATION BILL 2018 (No. 30)

CRIME (CONFISCATION OF PROFITS) AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 34)

Bills agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

CRIMINAL CODE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (CHILD ABUSE) BILL 2018 (No. 63)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Archer** and read the first time.

FOREST PRACTICES AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 61)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Courtney** and read the first time.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion Forthwith

[11.06 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move that so much of Standing Order be suspended today as would -

- (1) Refer the member for Braddon, Mr Brooks, to the Standing Committee of Privileges to consider and report whether the finding of the report of the Integrity Commission No. 5 2018 constitutes a breach of privileges or the Standing Orders of the House.
- (2) The Privileges Committee be given the powers to consider matters of conduct and compliance with the Code of Ethical Conduct in Standing Order 2(d).
- (3) That the committee be given the powers to send for persons and papers.
- (4) That for the remainder of this session, standing order 325 be amended as follows -
 - (a) After 'Privileges' insert, 'and Conduct' and;
 - (b) After 'Privilege' insert, 'or the provision of the Code of Ethical Conduct'; and
- (5) That the committee report to the House by 12 March 2019.

Madam Speaker, I move to seek leave so we can suspend Standing Orders to bring this motion on forthwith, given the serious content in the report tabled yesterday by the Clerk to the parliament.

The Premier, in response to questions today has said that this is a matter for the parliament to determine. He has stated very clearly that the actions of the member for Braddon, Mr Brooks, do not meet his expectations. The only way this parliament can hold the member for Braddon to account against the standard of ethical conduct is for the Privileges Committee to examine what has been presented in the report by the Integrity Commission. Even the Integrity Commission, in its report, in response to allegation 4, makes it clear that it is a matter for the Parliament to determine whether it has been misled.

Allegation 4 in the report is that -

Mr Brooks took steps to hinder an audit by the Crown Solicitor of Tasmania of his email account arb@mss.com.au that may have detected evidence of misconduct through his ongoing involvement in the operation and management of his business interests. In doing so he may have performed his functions as a Member of Parliament in a way that was dishonest or improper.

The Integrity Commission reports goes on to say -

Mr Brooks' answers to questions in Budget Estimates Committee hearings on 9 June 2016 are an important event in the context of this investigation. Although his answers that day are referenced in this report to provide important background information to the misconduct allegations, the Estimates hearing are a 'proceeding of Parliament', for the purposes of the *Integrity Commission Act 2009* (IC Act). As such, it is outside the jurisdiction of the Integrity Commission; it is a matter for Parliament to determine whether it has been misled.

There is no other way for us to progress this matter, given that the Government has failed to bring on for debate the issue of the Integrity Commission report and it failed to make a referral to the Privileges Committee.

We seek leave to bring this matter on without delay. It cannot be left until March for there to be a resolution, given the serious allegations levelled against the member for Braddon; that he has potentially breached the code of ethical conduct, the code each member in this place signs up to when we are elected to this Parliament.

I respect that this is a 35-minute debate and there will be other members who wish to speak to it. If agreed, we will have the debate on the suspension of Standing Orders and a substantive debate on the motion, which is to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee. I ask that the parliament recognise the seriousness of this matter. Given the Premier's own comments in question time that Mr Brooks' behaviour did not meet his expectations, any further actions would be up to members in this place. Given the findings of the Integrity Commission report, it is now up to the parliament to find whether Mr Brooks misled this House.

There can be no other response from the Government but to support the seeking of leave to have this matter referred to the Privileges Committee, to allow them to examine matters of privilege and matters of conduct by expanding their scope to examine such, given that the motion we will be debating tomorrow is of a code of conduct. This will require the Privileges Committee to eventually expand its scope to such, anyway, hence the reason for amending standing order 325. The motion also proposes to deal with that issue.

We cannot have this matter hang over the parliament another four months, until we return in March. The people of Braddon deserve to know whether Mr Brooks will be held to account. The Government and the Premier have proven they are unable to hold Mr Brooks to account and uphold the highest ethical standards and level of integrity people demand of their politicians. We seek for leave to be granted and for debate not to be limited, that all members who wish to speak on this matter be afforded the opportunity to and that this be referred to the Privileges Committee, which can then examine the conduct of Mr Brooks as outlined by the report by the Integrity Commission. That is, to determine whether he did mislead the House and therefore what sanctions should be imposed on him.

[11.12 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, it is the right thing for parliament to refer a member, who has been exposed misleading the parliament three times and has lied to the Premier and the Solicitor-General, to the Privileges Committee of the parliament. We support this move.

We believe the Privileges Committee, should it examine Mr Brooks, should have a member of the Greens because that would restore some balance and make sure it is not a highly political Labor-Liberal exercise, given the seriousness of the allegations made about Mr Brooks and the issues detailed in the Integrity Commission report.

This is a question of faith and public faith in the institution of parliament, in the conduct of elective representatives, in the ministerial code of conduct and the government of the day. I hope that the Premier and Government members recognise it is the entirely appropriate course of action for parliament to refer Mr Brooks to the Privileges Committee. We have, as a sitting member of the Tasmanian Parliament, a person found by the Integrity Commission to have misled parliament three times, misled the people of Braddon, misled the Premier and lied to the Solicitor-General. The Privileges Committee is the appropriate place for Mr Brooks's conduct to be examined.

If the Government is thinking clearly, and I am not sure they are at the moment -

Mr Hidding - Of course they are, looking at the text of the motion.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr Hidding, for your input. - they will let this go through without the need for a division. If you force this to a vote, it will say to the people of Tasmania that you do not believe the Privileges Committee is the appropriate body to look into Mr Brooks' conduct and the findings of the Integrity Committee, and that the government of the day is prepared to let this matter lie to the furthest possible extent.

I strongly urge the Premier and members of the Government to support Labor's motion to refer Mr Brooks to the Privileges Committee. We support the motion.

[11.15 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, we have been discussing this process on this side of the House. Mr O'Byrne was probably jumping to allow me extra time to continue to do so, which I do not require. This Government, in the short time we have had this motion in writing, is not of a mind to oppose the granting of leave, nor the subsequent agreement to a motion to suspend the Standing Orders. We need to discuss this. I will seek to do that with Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Connor in relation to time because we will not be supporting an open-ended debate on this. We have important Government business to facilitate and private

members' time to allow. I offer to treaty with the Opposition on time on the basis that the Government's numbers are absolutely necessary to suspend Standing Orders. I ask members opposite to consider that.

There is opportunity for a short debate on this because the Government is not opposed to the matter being referred to the Privileges Committee. Members opposite may be surprised to hear me say that and it may temper an appetite for a long debate. If the intention of members opposite is to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges, I hope we do not have a kangaroo court in this House today. Is that reasonable?

You are not even listening to me. I am trying to deal with you across the Chamber.

Mr O'Byrne - You lost us for a moment there. I am not sure where you went.

Ms White - You have no other option. You have no choice. The Integrity Commission makes it plain.

Mr FERGUSON - I will restate it because you may not have comprehended what I was offering to do. The Government offers to support the process of allowing the Privileges Committee to look at the Report of the Integrity Commission No. 5 and for the matter to be considered there, but not for a kangaroo court in this House today. There is no appetite for that to occur.

Mr Hidding - The point is, you can't have it both ways.

Mr FERGUSON - You cannot do both, that is my point. Thank you, Mr Hidding. We are prepared to deal with the Opposition and Greens members as to time because we will not support a suspension of Standing Orders that upends the day's work. We are here to do work on behalf of the people of Tasmania and if members opposite are as well-intentioned as they would have us believe to allow the Privileges Committee to have a look at these matters, I hope in good faith that be allowed to occur in a timely fashion.

I will seek advice about the appropriateness of retrospectively applying a new set of Standing Orders to something that is historical. You may say what you like and shake your head. As to the notion of allowing this debate to go ahead, no problem, and I will ask to speak to Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Connor now or very soon.

[11.19 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, we thank the Government for allowing this debate. It is a very important debate. The behaviour of the Government with regard to this issue over the last two years indicates a consistent and unfortunately poor reflection on their dealings with matters of honesty and integrity in the House. We are thankful you will agree to the referral but given the conduct not only of the last two years but particularly over the last seven days, when you have had this report in your hands; there were three days of sitting -

Mr HIDDING - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The report was tabled by the commission. Nobody is allowed to intervene and suggest when it be tabled. It was a decision of the commission to table it on a certain day. No-one can have any scrap of input into it; it would be highly improper.

Mr O'BYRNE - In terms of how the matter was dealt with yesterday, we want to make sure there is an appropriate time to debate the referral and for members of this House to put on the record

their views leading into that referral to the Privileges Committee. We propose a time limit of at least until 3.30 this afternoon. I understand the Leader of Government Business is in conversation. I do not want him to miss what we are saying. We believe a debate until 3.30 this afternoon would be appropriate for members of this House to put on record their views about why this matter should be referred and that is an appropriate time frame for the debate to occur.

Mr Hidding - You want to hold the inquiry now? That is what you are proposing?

Mr O'BYRNE - No, we are asking the Premier -

Mr Hidding - If we agree to send somebody to the Privileges Committee, the question of privilege or conduct gets determined by that committee.

Mr O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, if they try to debate and guillotine this referral, it continues the pattern of behaviour of protecting and almost waiving through some of the matters of behaviour. We believe an appropriate debate where members can put on record why they think this matter should be referred to, for the record of the House, is important.

Suspension of Sitting

[11.22 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, I ask that you leave the Chair and suspend the House until 11.45 a.m. so that we can take advice, discuss this with Mr O'Byrne and allow the matter to progress at 11.45 a.m.

Ms White - We support that, Madam Speaker.

Mr Ferguson - Good governance, Madam Speaker, I would suggest.

Madam SPEAKER - Good governance? My favourite words. In the interests of good governance and the hope that we can resolve this sensibly, I am happy to leave the Chair.

Sitting suspended from 11.22 a.m. until 11.55 a.m.

[11.55 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, the Government would recommend we immediately proceed to the question of seeking leave.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Move Motion Forthwith - Referral of Mr Adam Brooks MP to Committee of Privileges

[11.56 a.m.]

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

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent a motion to refer the Hon Member for Braddon, Mr Brooks, to the Standing Committee of

Privileges, of which notice has been given this day, from being brought on for debate forthwith.

Given the debate that has occurred during the suspension of the session I will not take up too much time on this issue. I understand there has been agreement reached that the motion presented will not be altered except for an amendment to allocate the time frame within which this debate will occur and the Leader of Government Business will move that. We will support that and then move into debate on the substantive motion.

[11.56 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the motion be amended after the word 'forthwith' by inserting the words 'and that debate on the motion be completed by 1 p.m., and immediately following a vote on the motion the House proceeds to Government Private Members' Business.'

I will also be brief to preserve some time. The parties have reached agreement as to time. The initial request was for 3.30 p.m. and in further discussions it has been agreed that 1.00 p.m. would be appropriate. That allows the blue to be proceeded with to Government private members' business and the rest of the blue would follow as usual. I will speak to the substantive motion in a moment.

[11.57 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - The Greens support the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Referral to Committee of Privileges - Mr Adam Brooks MP

[11.58 a.m.]

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

That the House -

- (1) Refers the member for Braddon, Mr Brooks, to the Standing Committee of Privileges to consider and report whether the findings of the Report of the Integrity Commission No. 5 of 2018 constitutes a breach of privileges or the Standing Orders of the House.
- (2) The Privileges Committee be given the powers to consider matters of conduct and compliance with the Code of Ethical Conduct in Standing Order 2(d).
- (3) That the Committee be given the power to send for persons and papers.
- (4) That for the remainder of the Session, Standing Order 325, be amended as follows -

- (a) After 'Privileges' insert 'and Conduct'; and
 - (b) After 'Privilege' insert 'or the provisions of the Code of Ethical Conduct'
- (5) That the Committee report to the House by 12 March 2019.

I am pleased the suspension of Standing Orders has been approved by this parliament to enable us to debate this motion. I note the Government's indication that they would support the motion to refer Mr Brooks to the Privileges Committee to examine his conduct and whether there has been a breach of privilege.

The report of the Integrity Commission tabled yesterday in this place is the most damning thing to come out of the commission since it was established. The Premier's claim that Mr Brooks has been cleared is misleading in the extreme, because the report reveals lies upon lies upon lies. It details a cover-up in order to avoid political fallout. Adam Brooks has been caught red-handed trying to destroy evidence.

Just hours after he lied to the parliament about the existence of an email account connected to his private company, he sat up late into the night deleting emails which he knew were incriminating. They were not just personal emails but emails which detailed his ongoing day-to-day decision-making in a mining company while he was the mining minister. Then he lied about it to the Tasmanian people, this parliament, the Premier and the Crown Solicitor. We believe this man is not fit to be a member of parliament. It is a matter the Privileges Committee will need to examine carefully.

The Integrity Commission acknowledges that there are matters that are out of its jurisdiction, including the questions of whether Mr Brooks misled parliament during Budget Estimates hearings in 2016 and on subsequent occasions in this place.

I have read already in debate about allegations for and against Mr Brooks, which is in the Integrity Commission report. Mr Brooks took steps to hinder an audit by the Crown Solicitor of Tasmania of his email account, arb@mss.com.au, that may have detected evidence of misconduct through his ongoing involvement in the operation and management of his business interests. In doing so, he may have performed his functions as a member of parliament in a way that was dishonest or improper. That is why the scope of the motion to include the examination of matters of conduct is so necessary and why it is pleasing to see the Government agree to those elements being included, given that it is not just the examination of whether he has breached privilege of this House but also whether he has breached the code of ethical conduct that each of us as members of this House subscribe to.

Mr Brooks has twice been elected by the people of Braddon. I believe they would now be questioning his dishonest conduct and asking themselves why they did not know about this prior to the March election this year.

These matters now fall to the parliament to determine. The Declaration of Principles and Statement of Commitment that all of us make in this place is very clear. The Statement of Commitment says a number of things but most importantly and relevant to this is that -

To our constituents, we owe honesty, accessibility, accountability, courtesy and understanding.

There is a role in the Declaration of Principles:

Members of this Assembly must carry out their official duties and arrange their private financial affairs in a manner that protects the public interest and enhances public confidence and trust in government and in high standards of ethical conduct in public office.

There can be no doubt that Mr Brooks failed to do that. The Integrity Commission report identifies those failings and refers this matter back to the parliament. It is now a matter for the Privileges Committee to examine whether Mr Brooks breached the standards this House and the people of Tasmania expect.

I do not believe anyone could claim that Mr Brooks displayed reasonable standards of ethical conduct in the way he behaved over the last couple of years. It is not ethical to say that you are divesting yourself of a private company and distancing yourself from its operations and then fail to do these things. Worse than that, Mr Brooks lied about it; and not just once. We already knew about him famously lying to the Estimates Committee when he said he did not have an MSS email account but the lies started well before that. The Integrity Commission report states -

... the investigation concluded that Mr Brooks gave inaccurate written assurances to the Premier about his compliance with the Protocol, and failed to advise the Premier of the true nature of his involvement with MSS, when the Premier was relying on Mr Brooks' advice and updates.

He also repeatedly lied to this House. Those lies lay on the parliament record, uncorrected to this day. On 5 May 2016 Mr Brooks said -

I undertook as soon as possible to divest any interests which may give rise to real or perceived conflicts of interest. I resigned any directorships of companies and removed myself from operational involvement with companies.

That happened.

While the process of divestments progresses, I am removed from all management and operational decisions of relevant businesses.

That is what Mr Brooks told this House on 5 May 2016. That was a lie; he never corrected the record. Later, when he was caught red-handed using an MSS email account he doubled down. He said -

I completely reject claims that I failed to adhere to the strict protocol put in place to address any perceived or real conflicts of interest between my role as Minister for Mining and my shareholding in Maintenance System Solutions.

Since that time, I have used the account for personal and non-business-related correspondence, including emails regarding my daughter's school activities and discussions with regard to financial and legal matters relating to my marital separation.

Madam Speaker, we know that not to be true, given that the majority of emails that Mr Brooks deleted in the middle of the night at his home were found to involve him managing business affairs.

Mr Brooks continued to say -

I remove myself from all management and operational decisions of relevant businesses. This audit will look at my MSS email account. The audit will look at whether there has been any correspondence which could be perceived as a conflict of interest between my role as Minister for Mining and the ownership of MSS. I am confident I will be cleared.

That night he went home and deleted 125 emails. The majority of those emails were found by the Integrity Commission to relate to business activities and not private or personal matters as he claimed.

The following day, and the days after that, he recommended to the Premier that he undertake an audit of the emails without disclosing to the Premier that he had deleted the emails that implicated him.

Mr Brooks said in this House that the audit would clear him, knowing full well that he had double-deleted the emails that implicated him and exposed him as breaching the protocol the Premier put in place. More seriously, and it is a matter for this parliament, we believe that he breached the Code of Conduct for members of this House and that there was a breach of privilege when he lied about his actions.

Mr Brooks has also caused the Premier to repeatedly mislead the House. The Premier said -

... Mr Brooks has assured me the email account is used only for personal and non-business-related correspondence. I have said that very clearly as has Mr Brooks. I considered it appropriate for the matter to also be audited and that is appropriate in the interests of transparency and accountability and being upfront. I am concerned the Leader of the Opposition would now be bringing into question the Crown Solicitor's ability to undertake such an audit. That is an extraordinary development.

...

The audit will be undertaken. Mr Brooks is complying with the audit to ensure that the Crown Solicitor is able to access all of Mr Brooks' emails in and out since he became minister.

The Integrity Commission Report makes it clear Mr Brooks had no intention of complying with the audit. He misled the Premier and he misled this House.

His first action was to mislead the Estimates Committee and to delete the emails, destroying evidence which showed he had been involved in the day-to-day operations of MSS. It is uncanny that he managed to delete every single email that related to his dealings with the business. He must have thought he was so clever when he then suggested to the Premier that he carry out an email audit to review his emails. The email audit was Mr Brooks' idea. Of course, he did not tell the Premier or the Crown Solicitor that he had already deleted incriminating evidence.

But there was a problem for Mr Brooks: the person appointed to conduct the audit, the Crown Solicitor, Mr Alan Morgan, is beyond reproach. Mr Morgan sought unimpeded access to Mr Brooks' emails. In the words of the Integrity Commission -

Mr Morgan's audit, had it obtained the emails subsequently obtained by the Commission, in all likelihood would have identified that Mr Brooks had been participating in decisions concerning the operations of MSS and had been provided information in relation to MSS that was not otherwise in the public domain, contrary to the Premier's expectations.

Mr Morgan's reporting on such evidence would likely have had damaging ramifications for Mr Brooks' Ministerial and political future.

At that point Mr Brooks changed tactics. Through lawyers - and we are still unclear whether they were paid by the taxpayer - he tried to change the scope of the audit. The revised terms of reference made no reference to deleted emails. Mr Morgan did not revise the scope but the stalemate continued because Mr Brooks refused to consent to the audit taking place.

The Integrity Commission sought technical advice which suggested that the deleted emails would not have been accessed under the revised scope suggested by Mr Brooks. It said -

... it cannot be guaranteed that the deleted emails that were produced to the Commission under its specifically phrased notice referencing backups would have been available for Mr Morgan's audit.

The Integrity Commission had to enlist the support of Microsoft and the Victorian broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission in order to access Mr Brooks' emails which had been double-deleted, first from the inbox and sent items, and then from the deleted items.

It is arguable that Mr Brooks' attempted to manipulate the process every step of the way to avoid his lies and deceit being detected. He attempted to destroy evidence. He suggested the email audit, knowing he had already deleted crucial evidence. He then requested a change in the scope of the audit, knowing the revised scope was unlikely to capture deleted emails on his server. He delayed the audit indefinitely and then did not make himself available for interview by the Integrity Commission in November last year in an apparent attempt to get past the March election.

But the truth does have a way of catching up with people and the Integrity Commission's findings are clear. On the basis of evidence obtained by the commission, Mr Brooks, while a minister, had ongoing involvement in the management and operation of MSS, contrary to the protocol established by the Premier. Mr Brooks exercised influence over the operation of the decisions of MSS, contrary to the Premier's written expectations. He had not removed himself from management operational decision of MSS, contrary to his written advice to the Premier. He was participating in decisions concerning the operation of MSS, as the Crown Solicitor's audit was tasked with determining. He was provided information in relation to MSS that was not otherwise in the public domain, as the Crown Solicitor's audit was tasked with determining.

Madam Speaker, these are the findings of the report of the Integrity Commission's investigation into the conduct or misconduct of Adam Brooks. They are not the actions people would expect of someone elected to high office, a minister of the Crown. The standard expected of all

parliamentarians is necessarily high and we subscribe to the code of ethics in this place for good reason. When people like Adam Brooks get away with blatant lies it reflects badly on all of us.

If the Premier refuses to uphold appropriate standards, the parliament must step in, and the Privileges Committee is the appropriate body to determine if the statement of commitment and declarations of principles have been upheld.

I commend the motion to the House. I know that the people of Braddon and the people of Tasmania will be watching very closely to see the outcome. I expect in the interim that Mr Brooks might want to reflect on his actions, do the honourable thing, and resign.

[12.13 p.m.]

Mr BACON (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I also thank the Premier and the Government for supporting the motion. I will only speak for a brief moment and allow the Premier to put some thoughts on the record.

Anyone reading the Integrity Commission report No. 5 of 2018 would be concerned about the effort of the member for Braddon, Mr Brooks, when it comes to owning up to the truth that he had lied not only to the parliament but to the Premier of Tasmania on many occasions, three times in writing. It is all well and good to have protocols set up to manage a perceived or real conflict of interest, but if you have a person the protocols were designed to protect, determined to circumvent, ignore and wilfully mislead the Premier, it puts the Premier in a very unfortunate position. Given that we have only recently had another minister move sideways in the Cabinet and further protocols set up to manage another conflict of interest, it is still a live issue for the Premier and one that he still has to deal with.

The response from the Premier in terms of the content of the Integrity Commission's report has been to remove Mr Brooks from the position of Government Whip and Deputy Chair of Committees. We do not think that goes far enough given the years of deceit and the levels of deceit Mr Brooks has gone to to cover up what were his initial lies to this parliament through the Estimates Committee. Mr Brooks could have come clean on the Friday following that Estimates hearing, stood down from the Cabinet, apologised for misleading the committee and we all could have moved on two-and-a-half years ago, but he was determined to cover up his activities as mining minister while he was operating his company, MSS, in contravention of the protocols he had signed up to.

We know that he did not waste any time on the Thursday night after misleading the committee. The committee was shut down because of Mr Brooks misleading it. He clearly would have then met with members of the Premier's staff and his own staff to talk about what was going to happen next, but his first order of business after that was to rush home and double-delete 125 emails so they could never come to light. The majority of those, as found by the Integrity Commission, were of a nature that dealt with his business, in contravention of the protocols that had been set up.

We know that he was motivated in this cover-up by any potential for political damage to himself, which led him to destroy that evidence just hours after saying those initial lies. The emails detailed his ongoing relationship with MSS, which is a mining services company as Mr Brooks is always very keen to point out, but this was while he was the mining minister. We know that he lied about it not only to the Premier but to the Tasmanian people, he lied to the parliament and he lied to the Crown Solicitor in a very deceitful way.

It is my personal opinion that Mr Brooks is no longer a fit person to be a member of this parliament. I believe his actions reflect badly on us all. When politicians at the moment are held in pretty low regard generally it is actions like these that lead to that and we all have to make a stand as parliamentarians to make sure our behaviour is beyond reproach. Given the fact that the Government will support this referral to the Privileges Committee, there is an opportunity for us all to clear this matter up so we can say to the Tasmanian people that what goes on in this House is of the highest standards and the members of this House are of the highest standards. I thank the Government for supporting the motion.

[12.17 p.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, as has been foreshadowed, the Government will not oppose the motion and the reference contained within it. There is an appropriate forum for the matters that have been canvassed to be considered, and that includes some of the things Opposition members are not so keen to highlight that were contained in the report and also any perspectives from Mr Brooks, which he is entitled to make and has done to some extent in the statement he released yesterday which are a matter for him.

The reference to the Privileges Committee is not an insignificant matter but one we will not object to in the circumstances, noting however that there has been a thorough investigation conducted by the independent Integrity Commission in a report of some 70 pages. It has taken some time to conclude and contains a number of matters that point to circumstances that are extremely regrettable and unacceptable, but also are matters for which Mr Brooks has apologised, be that as it may, and more significantly has suffered the consequences from. It is not true for anyone to say he has not received any punishment or sanction as a result of this conduct. It is entirely incorrect for it to be asserted that he is off the hook or that this matter has not been appropriately handled.

The commission goes into some extent as to the processes that were put in place, the appropriateness of them, and finds no fault in those processes. The commission did not find any fault in anything I have done. The commission raised matters in addition to those substantive claims for which Mr Brooks was referred to the commission and has now been cleared. That does not in any way -

Ms O'Connor - No, he hasn't.

Mr HODGMAN - I will come to exactly what he has been cleared of. He has not been found guilty, for want of a better word, of all the things you assert or the matters referred to the commission by the Labor Party. That is not true to say. That does not excuse him in any way for conduct for which I hold him accountable and which are unacceptable and for which he has apologised. He has faced and suffered consequences. He has not been found to have breached in all the ways put forward by the Labor Party in their referral to the commission.

I will remind members of some of those findings so they stop dishonestly representing what the commission has found, which does not set a very high standard or demonstrate integrity in so doing.

I refer members to page 53, that there is no evidence Mr Brooks was improperly influenced by his business interest in making these decisions, that there were no identifiable consequences for Mr Brooks' decision that could lead to any improper advantage for Mr Brooks or any of his relatives and that MSS is not a mining company and it has never held a mining lease. On page 54, as MSS

is not a mining company and that it operates in other sectors, coupled with the nature of Mr Brooks' involvement with MSS, this does not give rise to any reasonable perception or potential of sufficient substance so as to form a material conflict of interest.

On page 55 -

Mr Brooks has not failed to take reasonable steps to resolve a material conflict of interest.

... although Mr Brooks did have an ongoing involvement in MSS's operations and management, he did not by virtue of this have a material conflict of interest.

Mr O'Byrne - He regularly lied to you.

Mr HODGMAN - You are asserting he has not been cleared of matters and I am pointing out that he has. This is what the Integrity Commission has found. On page 55 of the report, the commission states that -

As no material conflict of interest existed, Mr Brooks was not required under the Code of Conduct for Ministers to take reasonable steps to resolve his conflict.

On page 61 of the report, the commission states that -

Mr Brooks' decision to delete the MSS emails was motivated by:

- genuine concerns about the protection of his family's privacy;
- genuine concerns about protecting ongoing marital proceedings;
- genuine concerns about protecting private business information that could have been detrimental to the interests of MSS if publicly released;

On page 69 of the report, the commission states that -

- Mr Brooks did not misuse information acquired in the performance of his Ministerial functions.
- Mr Brooks followed departmental advice in his decision making as Mining Minister.

On page 70 of the report, the commission states that -

- Mr Brooks took steps to ensure MSS would not obtain, or would not be perceived as obtaining, any advantage or benefit from his Ministerial position.

Ms O'Connor - Why did you skim past pages 67 and 68?

Mr HODGMAN - These are some of the findings opposition members will not talk about, and they will selectively quote their bits from the commission, and that they claim not to exist. That is

not setting a very high standard. The member for Clark has denied some of these matters or asserted them not to be true. The report contains those findings. Yes, there are other matters I have -

Ms O'Connor - You people just lie by reflex.

Mr HODGMAN - Seriously, if this is the standard you demand of everyone else, with inane, personal insults or worse, asserting these findings are not in the report, which they are. That is why I have read them. That is setting a very low standard when it comes to integrity and that is weak.

There have been consequences with respect to the other matters. Mr Brooks has been out of the Cabinet for over two years. He has not been considered for Cabinet since. He will not be, for the foreseeable future, and it is not in my plans for him to return to the Cabinet. It was entirely acceptable for the member who interjects to sit alongside somebody who had been charged with a criminal offence and to do so quite happily, saying it was so long ago it does not matter. A standard is a standard and, if it was good enough then, it should be good enough for you to stand by now.

Ms O'Byrne - How far back should we go on standards?

Mr HODGMAN - A standard is a standard. That is well within living memory and it is entirely appropriate for your standards to be judged against those you set. The standard you walked past in that instance is the one you should own, the one you should live by and that we are being asked to live by. That standard, to quote the Leader of the Opposition, was not making the rest of us look that great, either. It did not reflect well on that parliament.

Interestingly, there was another case of a parliamentary secretary lying to a former premier, the honourable Jim Bacon. Brenton Best lied about his use of the government car. Did he have to resign and leave the parliament? Was he able to front up at successive elections and, for whatever reason, continue to be elected? Yes, he did. It was the people of Braddon who made that call and he was elected but he did not have to leave the parliament for lying to former premier, Mr Bacon.

I do not see how a matter of integrity that arose only a few years ago is irrelevant now. I do not see why it is not. I raise these matters because of the hypocrisy from members opposite and the double standards they set, albeit with an Integrity Commission report now before us that contains a range of matters of genuine concern and public interest. We do not shy away from that, nor for the ability of the Privileges Committee to consider this matter and other matters brought before it. I remind members this matter has not been treated with anything other than the seriousness it deserves. It is being treated with the gravity it deserves, as has been confirmed by political analyst, Richard Herr, who said Mr Brooks has paid a very heavy price for this.

Mr Brooks' circumstances may not be a matter of concern to some. He is currently on leave and will be seeking assistance and has been, as he said in his statement, under considerable distress for some time. He has found the process to be a difficult one, which includes other personal circumstances with which he has been dealing. He has not sought to use that as an excuse but it is pertinent to the circumstances. I ask for due consideration to be given when deliberating these matters.

I am happy to defend my actions in response to the matters that have come to light, as contained within the findings of the Integrity Commission report. There will be no objection to this matter being further referred.

[12.28 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Premier, you have had a very bad week-and-a-half, a very bad year, in fact.

Mr Hodgman - The election result was a shocker.

Ms O'CONNOR - It was for you, Premier. Despite soliciting and obtaining millions of dollars from the predatory gambling industry to secure your re-election, you scraped in with a one-seat majority, which is entirely precarious.

Mr Hodgman - Scraped in? You lost two seats. Don't talk to us.

Ms O'CONNOR - The term that comes to mind right now is chickens coming home to roost. In the past five years under this Premier and this Government, there has been such disrespect for proper processes or a high standard of ethical conduct. We had to sit in the previous term of the parliament before a measure of independence was brought into the Chamber, listening to ministers repeatedly not answering questions, waffle on, obfuscate, and sit across the Estimates table and refuse to provide the most basic answers on matters of administration of a minister's portfolio. We listened to it all for four years, and if there was one person in this place who was going to end up before the Privileges Committee, I would argue it is Adam Brooks. Anyone who has spoken to Adam Brooks about what he thinks of politics will know he thinks it is a game. He said to me, 'It's a funny old game, isn't it?'. That is the problem and why we are here at this point today.

The most serious breach of the standard of conduct people expect from elected representatives, I would argue, is his utter misleading of the people of Braddon. It is the people of Braddon who elected Mr Brooks to this place and who are entitled to hear the truth from Mr Brooks after misleading parliament three times and misleading the people who elected him and gave him the honour and the privilege of sitting in this place to represent the north-west of Tasmania.

Regrettably for Mr Brooks, he will go before the Privileges Committee, because he deserves it. We had to listen in the last term of parliament, and in fact in the term before that because Mr Brooks was elected in 2010, to him constantly warp the facts, distort the truth, make false allegations and treat this place as a playpen, so it is no surprise to us that Mr Brooks will be referred to the Privileges Committee.

We heard the Premier just then make multiple excuses, if you like, and point to parts of the Integrity Commission report that favour a glossing over of the facts here. Tomorrow the House will debate the long overdue Code of Ethical Conduct for Members. This is the standard we should all apply to ourselves and each other and that the Tasmanian people expect us to adhere to. The preamble starts with this:

Members of parliament recognise that their actions have a profound impact on the lives of all Tasmanian people. Fulfilling their obligations and discharging their duties responsibly requires commitment to the highest ethical standards to maintain and strengthen the democratic traditions of the state and the integrity of its institutions.

Compliance with the law may not always be enough to guarantee an acceptable standard of conduct. Members must act not only lawfully but also in a manner that will withstand close public scrutiny.

Madam Speaker, Mr Brooks' behaviour does not withstand close public scrutiny. When we go to the section about ethical standards and conflict of interest - and there is no word 'material' in front of this either - it says:

A member protects and upholds the public interest by taking all reasonable steps to avoid, disclose and manage any conflict of interest that arises, or is likely to arise, between her/his personal interests and her/his official duties.

A conflict of interest may be financial or non-financial. A conflict of interest may be potential, actual or perceived.

There is no question that Adam Brooks had a conflict of interest when he was appointed to Cabinet, and it is a failure on the part of the Premier to have made sure that his ministerial code of conduct was upheld.

The parts of the Integrity Commission report that the Premier studiously avoided reading out, the pages he swerved by, are the findings on the basis of the evidence obtained by the commission that:

- Mr Brooks omitted to accurately inform the Premier about the true nature of his ongoing involvement in the operation and management of his relevant business interests while he was a Minister.

Conflict of interest.

- Mr Brooks did not provide the Premier on 7 March, 20 May or 10 June 2016 with an accurate update about his ongoing involvement in the operations and management of his relevant business interests.

Conflict of interest.

- Mr Brooks did not properly advise the Premier on the 7 March, 20 May or 10 June 2016, that the objective of the Protocol - that he have no involvement, in any form, formal or otherwise, in the management and operation of any of the relevant businesses - was not being met.
- Mr Brooks did not provide the Premier with an accurate account of how a filtering system prevented him from accessing or seeing business-related emails on 10 June 2016.

The Integrity Commission further found:

- Mr Brooks proposed an audit of his email account on 10 June 2016 to the Premier knowing that he had deleted emails from that account on 9-10 June 2016 that indicated he had: ongoing involvement in the operation and management of MSS, exercised influence over the operational decisions of MSS, and not removed himself from the management and operational decisions of MSS.

The Premier can stand in this place and selectively point to parts of the Integrity Commission report that find Mr Brooks did not have a material conflict of interest, but that is the only thing the Premier can hang his hat on here, because the rest of the report is utterly damning.

I do not know if Mr Brooks is watching this debate. If he is not feeling mentally well I would hope he is not, but I agree with Mr Bacon that Mr Brooks should consider his position as an elected member. He was elected on a lie. The people of Braddon cast their vote for Mr Brooks in good faith, trusting him to have told the truth about his connections to his former company when he was a minister, to have told the truth to the Premier, but he did not tell the truth. He is a serial liar, and that is a shameful and disgraceful tag to have associated with your name. It certainly does not adhere to or uphold a high ethical standard of conduct. It is a source of frustration to Dr Woodruff and me that every time a Tasmanian elected representative misbehaves we are all smeared. It drags us all down, because out in the community often there is no distinction made between members of parliament from different parties.

When Mr Brooks, through his conduct over years in this place, demonstrates himself to be a serial liar, we are all smeared. It is a further erosion of public faith in the institution of parliament. This is a very, very serious matter. A duly elected member of parliament, a Liberal Party member, has been found by the Integrity Commission to be a serial liar. He lied to parliament three times on that unforgettable day in Estimates. He lied to the Premier repeatedly, lied to the people of Braddon, and lied to the Crown Solicitor. This is a very, very serious matter and must be examined by the Privileges Committee.

I was having a look earlier at some of the extraordinary powers of the Privileges Committee. Under section 3 of the Parliamentary Privilege Act 1858, which still stands, it allows either House to punish a person, including a member of either House, by imprisonment at any place of its choosing. This power may be exercised summarily, and rules of evidence and due process do not apply to the exercise of parliamentary powers. The power to imprison a person summarily applies in relation to a range of listed contempts, including to the creating of or joining in any disturbance in the immediate vicinity of the House. The summary exercise of the power to imprison in relation to the latter offence may infringe on the implied constitutional freedom of political communication. The power also extends to the historical offence of sending a challenge to fight a member.

We thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party for bringing this referral on. This is exactly the kind of work the Privileges Committee should be doing. We continue to argue that for this process to be as robust and impartial as possible and, in fact, to be owned by all of us, the Greens should have a position on this particular Privileges Committee hearing. We believe that would be procedurally fair and will be looking to take that up at a later time.

Madam Speaker, it is not surprising to see so few Government members in here during this debate. Clearly the conduct of Mr Brooks has been an embarrassment to everyone in the Government.

I will finish where I started. This is called 'political karma'. This is Premier Will Hodgman's chickens coming home to roost. The standards he set, not only for his members but for his minister, were so low that now we have a former minister and duly elected current member of the Government being referred to the Privileges Committee to examine some of the most serious allegations that can be made against a member of parliament.

Madam Speaker, it is a damning indictment on the Premier.

[12.41 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, the public trust of politicians is at an all-time low and that concerns me. It should concern each and every one of the members in the House here today. That is really disappointing. The findings of the Integrity Commission, handed down yesterday, do nothing to further engender trust in elected officials, and as others have said, they reflect very poorly on us all.

Integrity is defined as a quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. Nowhere is this more important than in the Parliament of Tasmania.

We come to this place through the privilege of being elected by the people of our electorates who put their trust and confidence in us to make decisions on their behalf and to conduct ourselves to the highest ethical standard. The people of Braddon have a right to feel disappointed. In fact, upon reflection, it is quite remarkable that Mr Brooks was preselected to stand at the last state election with this cloud hanging over his previous conduct and previous actions.

Events over the last few weeks have called into question the integrity of the Tasmanian Government and the standards that it accepts. I was extremely disappointed by yesterday's findings of the Integrity Commission into the investigations into allegations of misconduct by my Braddon colleague, Adam Brooks. Tasmanians have the right to be disappointed too.

The Premier, maybe out of his desire not to enter minority government or the need to save face, has chosen to accept Mr Brooks' apology and demote him from the roles of Chair of Committee and as Whip. That brings us to our notice of motion today and the importance of it.

Madam Speaker, this motion is the responsible thing to do. I thank the Government for supporting the notice of motion today because there is the requirement for further examination of the findings of the Integrity Commission.

The first two parts of the notice of motion state that this House -

- (1) Refers the Honourable Member for Braddon, Mr Brooks, to the Standing Committee of Privileges to consider and report whether the findings of the Report of the Integrity Commission No. 5 of 2018 constitute a breach of privileges or the Standing Orders of the House.
- (2) The Privileges Committee be given the powers to consider matters of conduct and compliance with the Code of Ethical Conduct in Standing Order 2(d).

The preamble of Standing Order 2(d) states -

As Members of the House of Assembly we recognise that our actions have a profound impact on the lives of all Tasmanian people. Fulfilling our obligations and discharging our duties responsibly requires a commitment to the highest ethical standards.

That is very important and it justifies the reasoning behind this notice of motion today.

The Privileges Committee is the appropriate body to determine if a statement of commitment and declarations of principles have been upheld.

Public life can at times be challenging. We all enter into politics with a good understanding of that. I acknowledge Mr Brooks and his family during what must be an incredibly difficult time for them all as he considers his future.

The findings though of the report presented yesterday highlight again to us all and serves as a timely reminder of the importance of us acting with integrity and conducting ourselves with the highest possible ethical standard, as I said in my opening remarks. It has been important for the House to have the opportunity to reflect on the importance of integrity and good conduct in this place over the last couple of days. There needs to be further consideration of this matter. That is why we are supporting this motion today.

[12.45 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I had a bit to say about this last night on adjournment. I reiterate my comments that I believe Mr Brooks should consider his future quite carefully. I echo the comments of my fellow member for Braddon, Ms Dow, that life in parliament can be difficult for families and so on. There is no doubt that there are pressures.

However, we still have an obligation to behave ethically and to behave in the best interests if our constituents and to uphold the principles that are outlined in the proceedings of standing order 2(d) which we are referring to - that members will then subscribe to the following code of ethical conduct. It is very important that we judge ourselves and indeed members on this code of ethical conduct.

We know that when we have a minister of the Crown deliberately deleting evidence and going to great lengths to do so, it calls into question their ability to be in this place. Any fair-minded judgment would say that it is not ethical. Once you are discovered doing the wrong thing, it is not the highest of ethical standards to double down; to take a deliberate course of action under the cover of darkness and delete evidence, and then suggest that an email audit is the best way to clear your name, knowing that you have taken an action to deliberately remove evidence that would prove your guilt or otherwise.

It is far from the highest ethical standards, as outlined in the preamble in page 20 of the Standing Orders. As a parliament we cannot allow this to happen. We cannot allow us all to be tarnished by this behaviour.

We give up quite a lot to be in this place. We are under constant scrutiny; there is no doubt about that. We know that our actions will be judged by the public, the media, our colleagues and our opponents. When we get to positions like this, ethics should be driving us.

I understand that Mr Brooks may not be in a good place right now. I accept his current situation in not attending parliament until he deals with those issues. There is no doubt that is a very good course of action for him. I wish him all the best. However, the damning nature of the Integrity Commission report and the way it highlights his lack of ethical behaviour, parliament may not be the best place for him to be in terms of managing his health. These challenges will not go away. This motion is very serious. It will be a serious inquiry and it will have consequences, potentially, to his health. If Mr Brooks wishes to avoid that then the honourable thing to do is to fall on his sword and remove himself.

The Integrity Commission could not have been more damning of his behaviour. It was a deliberate course of action by a minister of the Crown, removing evidence and then suggesting a

pathway to exoneration was to examine the evidence that had already been doctored, and not make the Premier or the Crown Solicitor aware that this is what happened.

He double deleted. He took great effort to remove those emails not only from his inbox but also from his deleted items. He went to quite serious steps to remove that evidence.

It took efforts from an independent commission against corruption to get advice and then further advice from Microsoft to recover those 125 emails, the vast majority of which proved that he still had an ongoing role in his business, contrary to everything he had said.

If we went back to *Hansard* we would find numerous occasions where he made statements in this place that were contrary to the findings of the Integrity Commission. He stated in this place that he had removed that conflict of interest. This Integrity Commission report demonstrates that he had not. It contradicts all those statements in this place, not on one occasion but numerous occasions. There were also numerous occasions when he said things along the lines of accusing us of wanting to read his daughter's emails. That was the protection he was affording himself, knowing that he had already removed those emails. He had already taken a course of action to delete those emails yet he used that as a shield to try to guilt us into not prosecuting the case.

Thankfully the Integrity Commission pushed through that and sought advice from technical experts in the IT field, from Microsoft itself, to recover those emails. That is where he has come undone. He knew in November last year that he was in big trouble and yet, as the Integrity Commission report stated, he did not make himself available until after the election to answer those charges, to stand in front of the Integrity Commission and defend himself.

As I argued last night, and I reiterate, I believe that the electors of Braddon should have had the chance to make their own judgments about his ethical conduct.

Mr Hidding - He wasn't allowed to speak about it.

Dr BROAD - Yes, but he could have made himself available to answer those charges. It was November last year and it says that he did not make himself available because he was too busy in the lead-up to the election. He could have gone to the Integrity Commission and cleared it up. If the Integrity Commission had decided not to publish before the election that would have been out of his hands. He could have cleared this up at the earliest possible moment in November last year. He could have sought some advice, gone to the Integrity Commission and defended himself. Instead, it was not until something like June this year when he fronted the Integrity Commission to mount his defence. The people of Braddon should have had the opportunity to make a judgment on his ethics and so on.

We heard the Premier today in question time say it is up to the people of Braddon to decide if Mr Brooks should sit in parliament. Of course that is the case. Mr Brooks was validly elected - no doubt. The numbers in the system mean he was validly elected. However, if he decides to continue in parliament the people of Braddon will not get a chance to judge this for another three years. For three years this shadow will be hanging over his head before the people of Braddon can make a judgment on his ethical conduct.

Ms O'Connor - Is that the 'foreseeable future'?

Dr BROAD - I am guessing that is the foreseeable future. I believe strongly that the people of Braddon should have had the opportunity. With that in front of the people of Braddon they could have made a decision about his ethical conduct and if the people accepted they could have made their own judgment and if he stood in this place we would probably be having a slightly different argument, but he chose not to. He did not avail himself to the Integrity Commission until the middle of this year. There is now another three years before the people of Braddon can make that judgment and I believe that is something we should reflect on.

Mr Brooks should reflect on that himself. His conduct has been quite obviously a cover-up and we know that in scandals like this it is always the cover-up that is the problem. It is the pattern of behaviour where instead of 'fessing up' and making admissions, owning your guilt, being honest with everybody, when you have a pattern of behaviour where you attempt to cover up, to delete, to remove evidence and then suggest a course of action that relies on tampered evidence, that is not ethical behaviour or something that can be allowed. That is something that should preclude you from being in this place. Mr Brooks should consider his options because they are very limited and the path ahead for him will be very difficult.

[12.55 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I support this motion and will add a few comments. We have heard chapter and verse all the pieces of the Integrity Commission's report that the Premier failed to read into the House. I will run through a few more because it really calls into account not just the behaviour of Adam Brooks when he was a minister and following that time when he was being investigated, but this points to the integrity of the Premier.

This whole, sad history of failure to uphold standards of ethical conduct falls directly on the Premier's head. He is responsible for setting the standard. It was, frankly, shameful and embarrassing to hear him point back to the realms of history to come up with examples from other parliamentary periods when members of parliament have behaved badly. There is no doubt members of parliament have behaved badly many times. I believe former premier, Robin Gray, behaved very badly. It is interesting how the Premier picks amongst the crumbs and selects the ones which will try to paint him and his Government in the best light.

Madam Speaker, there is no gilding the lily on this one. Under this Premier, under his term, it will be a stain on him as a leader while we have this comprehensive failure at every single opportunity to uphold a standard of integrity, the standards of ethical conduct which every member in this House should abide by.

The Premier took no action when former minister, Matthew Groom, misled parliament. He took no action when the previous primary industries minister, Sarah Courtney, breached the ministerial code of conduct by not declaring her personal and highly conflicted relationship with her department secretary for at least months - by all credible beliefs - including an overseas jaunt to China with that person using taxpayer money, and we are expected to believe everything that happened during that period was above board. Tasmanians are not fools. Instead of the Premier taking action against that clear breach of the ministerial code of conduct, he rewarded Ms Courtney's poor judgment, lack of discretion and failure to inform him in time with another ministry.

When this Integrity Commission report came down we found that former minister Adam Brooks misled the parliament three times, lied to the Premier, lied to the Crown Solicitor and took steps to remove evidence from any investigation into the ministerial code of conduct. What a

surprise that the Premier has refused to take any credible action and do anything serious that would demonstrate to Mr Brooks, his parliamentary members of Cabinet, the other people on his backbench, the House and the people of Tasmania that he stands for integrity and a government that is ethical. It is no surprise because everyone who has been watching would have expected the Premier to take such a highly political, self-interested step. There is no other way of looking at it because if a person has the confidence of their convictions they act accordingly. The Premier clearly is not acting according to a conviction or belief about ethical behaviour.

Motion agreed to.

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

MOTION

Liberal Government Plan for Tasmania

[2.32 p.m.]

Mr HIDDING (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes that on 3 March 2018 the Tasmanian people re-elected a majority Liberal Government to deliver on its Plan to take Tasmania to the next level.
- (2) The Plan that was overwhelmingly supported by Tasmanians is delivering positive results, including the most confident business environment in the country, the fastest growing economy in a decade and over 15 000 new jobs.
- (3) Due to responsible budget management, the majority Liberal Government is continuing to deliver on its Plan to rebuild essential services, invest in infrastructure to support our growing economy and continue our strong focus on law and order.
- (4) The Labor-Greens opposition has failed to articulate any clear plan or policies that will improve the lives of Tasmanians.

Madam SPEAKER - Is a vote required, Mr Hidding?

Mr HIDDING - Yes, it is.

Madam Speaker, 270 days ago, the Tasmanian people voted overwhelmingly for a majority Liberal Government to continue its work, after the previous four years in rebuilding -

Ms O'Connor - Define 'overwhelmingly'.

Mr HIDDING - It was the biggest vote for a long time.

Mr O'Byrne - You lost two seats.

Mr HIDDING - Under the vagaries of our system, those things happen. It was a very big vote of confidence in wanting us to continue our work after the previous four years to rebuild the economy, to create jobs and to continue to boost investment in essential services. We have worked very hard over the past 270 days to deliver results and deliver the agenda we committed to at the election and it is working. We now live in a Tasmania that is no longer at the bottom of the pile, as it was under the former Labor-Greens government.

I want to focus on the economy. Tasmania has had the fastest pace of economic growth and has the best performing state economy in Australia. Business conditions rank the highest in the nation. This is a very important index. Business conditions include things like political stability, tax environment, government policies and regulations, workforce quality and availability of the right people, public policy settings such as wages restraint, the available capital and -

Ms O'Connor - Say it like you mean it, Mr Hidding, say it with conviction.

Mr HIDDING - I thought I was. We also need decent transport, a good transport system, and across the business sectors to have exceptional confidence. Business confidence is the strongest in any state. The latest Sensis Business Index shows that Tasmania has the highest levels of business confidence in Australia for metropolitan and regional businesses.

A moment ago, I said we would want a vote on this. We will not be requiring a vote because this is an open-ended debate and there are more speakers to come.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Hidding, if there is unanimous agreement not to vote, that is okay.

Mr HIDDING - I am sure we can all live without it.

Business confidence is the strongest of any state. The latest Sensis Business Index shows that Tasmania has the highest levels of business confidence for Australia for metropolitan and regional businesses. This is an extraordinary outcome for Tasmania and it shows, as it is essentially a sentiment index, that sentiment is unrelentingly positive through all levels of business. Everybody can accept that sentiment is an ephemeral thing. It can go up and down. It is consistently high in this state. Business confidence to invest over the last four years is proving to be a good decision.

Ms O'Connor - Where did that money come from, most of it?

Mr HIDDING - That is an existential kind of economic question.

Ms O'Connor - No, it is not.

Mr HIDDING - This is private capital being invested in Tasmania at a higher level than ever before. This is because business conditions rank the highest in the nation, business confidence is the strongest in any state and consumer confidence is higher than all states. We have the trifecta of sentiment, which is underpinning our outstanding economy.

Export growth has skyrocketed. It is three times the national average. It could be argued we are coming off a low base but that low base was after 16 years of Labor and Labor-Greens government. We have taken export growth to the stratosphere.

Tasmania's financial management is extremely strong. This is the result of a strong majority Liberal Government that focuses on the things that matter to Tasmania. In the business sector in Tasmania, no-one seriously believes that Tasmania would or could be in this position under a Labor-Greens government. We know of the disastrous state of the economy under the former government and we have seen in recent weeks that Labor is still led by the nose by the Greens. That is what people suspect, that the Greens tail is still wagging the Labor dog. There is regular evidence of that in this House.

The best thing we can do for Tasmanians, other than give them a strong business sector, is to give all Tasmanians a decent chance at the dignity of employment. Employment transforms a family. Employment provides an income that is largely a regular income of the same amount every fortnight or every month, however people are paid. It allows them to plan their future, allows them to make decisions to buy their first, second or third home and that is what keeps the economy ticking over. It provides the dignity to a family of having breadwinners in that family who have a reason to get up, get out of bed with confidence and go to work with their fellow workmates and deliver for Tasmania in whatever field they choose to work.

I know a number of people in the civil construction industry and the people they have employed, whether they be traffic signallers, operators of machinery or general labourers, who are happy in their work. It is a great industry to be in. This is only one industry I am selecting because of the very strong investment in civil construction projects in Tasmania. That is a very strong sector.

Only four-and-a-half years ago that sector had no idea of their future. They were concerned about mainland companies taking all their business. They are now strong and confident. They were encouraged by the government at the time to invest in new machinery to do the things they do better, more efficiently and to a higher quality. They were encouraged to make profits and to build their balance sheet so they could compete with mainland interest. To a great degree that is precisely what they have done. Strong, confident companies are employing many hundreds of people in many cases. The dignity of employment at that level is something to behold.

I note the Minister for Infrastructure was at the Bridgewater Trade Training Centre last week. He was reflecting on a program called Driving for Jobs. I had the great privilege of setting that program up. It came from my realisation that public transport in Tasmania was such that if work was available even slightly outside the cities, it was very difficult to find young people to work for you unless they had a driver's licence. With the average age of young people these days getting a driver licence around 20, we had a problem with employment, particularly after years 11 and 12. Often in applying for jobs, people were asked whether they had a driver licence. 'No, I haven't.' 'I'm sorry, we can't talk to you because you won't be able to get to work.'

The Bridgewater Trade Training Centre and the Jordan River Learning Federation have embedded into their program from year 9 on a program of driver and road safety education that starts early. As soon as they possibly can, they get on the road and get their hours up. The aim of the policy is that when people leave the college they will leave with the requisite learning certificate - it could be a certificate 2 or a certificate 3. Let us say they leave with a certificate 2 with a driver licence pinned to the back of it; fully employable. The civil construction industry is saying that is exactly what they are after. If they are to do a job on the Midland Highway, people

are unemployable if they do not have a driver licence. It is a linear job. They have to go from here to there. They have to be able to pop up and down the Midland Highway. We are reconstructing the Midland Highway to a very high standard.

Ms O'Byrne - Will it be four lanes? I was wondering because I saw the sign and I thought it meant they were going to build a four-lane highway.

Mr HIDDING - I remember the sign too. The building the sign was on was pulled down. We put a four-lane highway right through it, past Devon Hills.

Ms O'Byrne - The Midland Highway is not a four-lane highway. You may be misleading the House.

Mr HIDDING - We looked where the sign was and thought, 'This will be a good spot for a four-lane highway.' That is exactly what we did.

Ms O'Byrne - I am not convinced that saying to people that you tricked them is where you want to go today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr HIDDING - We have seen incredible growth in jobs. More than 250 000 Tasmanians are now in work; 15 100 more than when we were first elected. That is an outstanding statistic. It is one everyone in this House should acknowledge. You do not have to congratulate; you just acknowledge that it is a fact.

Ms O'Byrne - It is a pity most people have to have three or four jobs to make ends meet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Conversations should cease.

Ms O'Byrne - He asked us to acknowledge it. We were being helpful, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr HIDDING - At one stage under the previous government the number of Tasmanians employed decreased by 10 000. That was a hammer blow to many families in Tasmania.

The unemployment rate is 5.6 per cent, down 1.9 percentage points from the March 2014 election. The ANZ Stateometer for the September 2018 quarter projects further declines to 5.2 per cent next year. We look forward to achieving that.

Participation rate is 60.8 per cent, 0.72 percentage points higher than when we were first elected. This means that more people are joining the workforce, confident about finding a job. One of the reasons we have a high employment rate is that Tasmanian businesses are hiring. The number of job vacancies in October 2018 grew 17.7 per cent, compared to October 2017. This is the highest growth rate in Australia and nearly 30 times the national job vacancy growth.

Less than two weeks ago the ABS released gross state product data, reporting that Tasmania's economy grew by 3.3 per cent in 2017-18, the fastest it has grown in a decade and the fastest of any jurisdiction in Australia on a per capita basis. Since being slammed into recession in 2012-13 under Labor and the Greens, the Tasmanian economy has grown by around 9 per cent. The economic growth was underpinned by household consumption growth of 2.9 per cent annual growth; that is a

confidence growth. Business investment growth of 17.5 per cent annual growth is a confidence growth. Machinery and equipment investment of 49.2 per cent annual growth shows that Tasmanian businesses are gearing up and are expecting continued growth. The civil contracting industry is not just relying on government projects. There are many private sector projects out there, particularly large construction jobs.

There we are; confidence is underpinning the sentiment in the business community. One of the confidence conditions is that banks are prepared to lend. I am informed by my friends in business that bank managers are very friendly to Tasmanian businesses. The banks are on board. The banks understand that the risk profile in Tasmania is far lower than anywhere else in Australia. We do not have the boom and bust cycles; we have had genuine growth that underpins our economy so financiers are looking for more and more investments in Tasmania.

According to the Deloitte Access Economics' investment monitor, investment in Tasmania is leading the nation at 32 per cent growth for the June 2018 quarter and 44 per cent compared to June 2017. The report also notes \$1.8 billion worth of commercial projects under construction that I already referred to, and \$2.8 billion worth in the planning stages. That is a very exciting forward look into what is going to take place.

Not everything in the planning stage is built immediately or ever, but people are expending very substantial amounts of money in the planning stages with the expectation that all other things being equal, they will continue on that path. We will enjoy watching a great percentage of the \$2.8 billion in the planning stages coming to bear.

A similar measure, private new capital expenditure, confirmed investment in the June 2018 quarter, was 31.1 per cent higher in real terms than the previous year. Tasmania was the strongest growing state, significantly outperforming the national average of 1.3 per cent annual growth.

These are a lot of statistics, but the point is that this is the proof of the matter. This is us being benchmarked against the rest of Australia, against other business units and economic units around the nation, whether they be a state or a territory, or even city to city. On the stats, we are going gangbusters. The latest Sensis Business Index reported that Tasmania was the only jurisdiction in which confidence increased amongst small and medium businesses in the last quarter. Business confidence in the state is now the highest in the nation. Moreover, according to the survey, Tasmanian businesses are responding well to the Government's policies too, rating our policies the most popular in the nation for the fifth consecutive quarter.

This is in stark contrast to the period of the Labor-Greens government when, at one stage, two out of every three businesses felt that the government was working against them. The ANZ Stateometer for the September 2018 quarter said 'Tasmania is the best performing state according to the ANZ Stateometer', 'Tasmania grew at above trend rate', and, 'consumer confidence in trend terms is above all other states'. The October 2018 Commsec State of the State report confirmed that Tasmania has the fastest annual pace of economic growth and kept its fourth position overall. Tasmania leads the nation on equipment investment and population growth that is the highest in nearly eight years. Under the Labor-Greens government Tasmania was ranked dead last.

Mr Bacon - Eight years, 10 years. You've been going five years and you point to this record of eight or 10 years ago.

Mr HIDDING - It is an important benchmark.

Under the Labor-Greens government Tasmania was ranked dead last on key economic measures. Standard and Poors highlighted the Government's strong budget, saying:

We view Tasmania's financial management as extremely strong.

... Tasmania's experienced management team and exception liquidity coverage continue to underpin the state's credit worthiness.

... we still expect Tasmania to achieve solid operating surpluses.

We turn now to industry and sector performance. Tasmania's export sector is booming and there is no doubt that Tasmania has what the world wants. The 2018 quarter Deloitte Access Economics report stated:

Export growth has skyrocketed, bucking the trends seen at a national level.

It also said:

Exports and growth continue to outstrip the nation, with the total value of exports in the year to September 2018 growing 26 per cent compared to the previous year.

That is turbocharging exports growth - 26 per cent is extraordinary over one year and it is the highest they have been in over a decade.

In September 2018 the trend value of retail trade grew to a record \$548.6 million, the forty-seventh consecutive month of growth. Over the year to September 2018 retail trade grew 5.7 per cent compared to September 2017, which was the second-fastest annual growth rate in Australia. Retailers well remember the dark years under Labor in which retail spending contracted each and every month. Between November 2009 to March 2011 there were 17 months of contraction. There was no confidence in the operation of governance in Tasmania. From October 2011 to October 2012 there were 13 months of contraction. Retail spending was plummeting and so was investment in the retail trade sector.

In the tourism sector, the Hodgman Liberal Government's plan to grow tourism is working. Tourism Tasmania's latest Tourism Snapshot shows that in the year to June 2018 there are more visitors spending more in the Tasmanian economy. Visitors increased by 2.2 per cent to 1.3 million, with 1.08 million from interstate. Total visitor nights increased to 10.9 million and visitor expenditure increased by 6 per cent to \$2.4 billion. In the year to June 2018 the number of international visitors increased by 21 per cent - extraordinary growth - to 300 700, the highest number on record according to Tourism Research Australia International Visitors Survey 2018. At the same time the total visitor nights increased 32 per cent to 5.23 million and expenditure increased 21 per cent to \$552 million - all extraordinary numbers. In 2016-17 tourism directly contributed about \$1.4 billion to the Tasmanian economy, an increase of 20.2 per cent for the year. The total direct and indirect contribution of tourism to Tasmania's GSP was the highest share in the nation, and that comes from the state Tourism Satellite Accounts 2016-17.

In the portfolio of Building and Construction, the solution to the housing shortage is to build more houses and the following statistics in dwelling approvals commencement of work done confirm that the Government's long-term plan is definitely working. In September 2018 dwelling approvals increased 11.2 per cent compared to September 2017, while building approvals in

Australia as a whole declined by 12.9 per cent. Tasmania is the only state with annual dwelling approvals growth, increasing our housing supply. The average number of dwelling approvals in the year to September 2018 was 248 per month. This is 78 more dwellings approved on average per month than in the last year of the Labor-Greens government. In the year to September 2018, the total value of building approvals grew a massive 44.9 per cent, which was nearly 10 times higher than the national growth rate.

In terms of commencement, completions and work done, over the year to the June 2018 quarter, new dwelling commencements and completions increased at highest annual growth rates in Australia. Commencements were 29.1 per cent annual growth rate in trend terms and completions were 22.2 per cent annual growth rate also in trend terms. In the June 2018 quarter, the value of residential building work done increased 30.4 per cent compared with the June 2017 quarter, nearly eight times higher than the Australian average. In terms of housing finance, as at September 2018 Tasmania is the only jurisdiction in Australia in which the number of housing finance commitments grew compared to September 2017. The number of first home buyer finance commitments in Tasmania in the year to September 2018 increased by 13.8 per cent compared to the previous year. We have seen extraordinary success in this portfolio and we commend the current minister and the previous one. With numbers like that you should be very proud and we wish you the best in your ongoing role.

The Deloitte Access Economics business outlook report for September 2018 quarter confirmed that business conditions lead the nation and confidence is high. Tasmania's business conditions rank the highest in the nation and that robust confidence has flowed through to the slightly faster growth in prices and wages relative to the rest of the nation.

In terms of population, another key economic driver, we have a policy to grow population in Australia. We are determined to get there. It is a stretch target without question for a small state like this, but to 31 March of this year Tasmania's population grew by 1.02 per cent - that is 5300 people - to 526 663. Such growth is over three-and-a-half times higher than the last year of the Labor-Greens government. There are now 13 000 more Tasmanians than in March 2014 when we were first elected. Net interstate migration added 2196 in the year to March 2018 quarter, an increase of 54 per cent compared to the previous years.

Quorum formed.

Mr HIDDING - As to population we saw net interstate migration of 2196 people in the year to March 2018 quarter, an increase of 54 per cent compared with the previous year.

I turn to budget management. This is something Tasmanians understand. They have come to understand in the last four-and-a-half years that a strong plan for Tasmania's budget, a strong commitment and strong discipline in budget management throughout the Government builds confidence in the business sector. It is one of those business conditions we are rated on, which is the strength of our budget management in the public sector in Tasmania.

The Hodgman Liberal Government's long-term plan for Tasmania is working and we are continuing to build the future for all Tasmanians with the 2018 Budget. We are forecasting operating surpluses in every year but a return to fiscal surplus in the last two years of the forward Estimates. We will continue to deliver modest, responsible surpluses that provide an appropriate buffer against adversity or the unexpected. We will continue to live within our means, spending less than we earn. The Government remains committed to sticking to our overall fiscal strategy.

Recently, the credit rating agency, Standard & Poor's, reaffirmed Tasmania's AA+ credit rating and the state's stable outlook.

We have maintained a disciplined approach to our 2 per cent wages policy, central to our responsible approach for fiscal management, and Tasmanians understand this. Unlike Labor, we will not be spending money before it is received on public sector wage increases that run ahead of the cost of living.

Mr Bacon - Are you definitely going to give a pay cut?

Mr HIDDING - Unlike Labor, we will not be spending money before it is received on public sector wage increases that run ahead of the cost of living.

Mr Bacon - Are you admitting it is a pay cut?

Mr HIDDING - Labor has no credibility on budget management and does not understand the difference between recurrent and capital expenditure. Consistently in this House, we hear statements that make no sense whatsoever that reveal that they still stick to their policy of, just fund it, and we will find the money somewhere. That is the difference between this and that side of the House and we are working our strong balance sheet to invest in job-creating infrastructure -

Mr Bacon - It is so strong, people have to take a pay cut.

Mr HIDDING - Labor wants to add to recurrent spending by increasing public sector wages that would drive us into deficit. The 2004 risk report shows that under the Labor-Greens government, we were on track for \$1.1 billion in deficits and over \$400 million in net debt. It is proven, they have no credibility whatsoever with the Tasmanian people in providing advice upon us managing the state budget. We delivered what that government could not. In 2015-16, we delivered the first surplus in seven years and the best result in a decade.

Mr Bacon - You say a decade, again. You have been going five years; half of those years are yours. I do not think he understands statistics.

Mr HIDDING - This shows they are out of touch, they have no plan and they have no understanding of good budget management. This is something Tasmanians understand; strong budget management by the Hodgman Liberal Government is something we get a big tick for in the community.

The good news is that, with the growth in working families, those working families understand how hard it is to manage a household budget. They do it and they expect it of their state government and they expect it of their local councils. They are vicious with those councils when they perceive they are not living within their means. They also have a very well-developed view about how a state government should manage finances because they consistently raise it with me in my electorate.

I turn now to infrastructure, which I have an understandable interest in. Tasmania is on the cusp of an economic golden era. Over the next four years, we will invest a record \$2.6 billion into job-creating infrastructure to set our state up for the 21st Century. While it creates jobs, it is not the point of the expenditure. The point of the expenditure is to increase the quality of life, the liveability of Tasmania with infrastructure that keeps apace with the state's growth. This includes

\$1.1 billion in roads and bridges projects, over \$476 million for hospitals and health, more than \$205 million for human services and housing and over \$192 million for schools and education.

It is an exciting future for schools and education in Tasmania. I am delighted to continually reflect on the commitment to new schools, particularly at Brighton. I attend the Brighton Primary School end of year assembly and there are usually two large classes of children graduating. They need a high school in that lower Southern Midlands area. They deserve a high school in that area to graduate to from their own school.

I will reflect briefly with you on the great job in St Helens. The new St Helens Hospital is approaching completion. It would be open for Christmas if necessary. However, it is not prudent in the middle of a high-pressure time, when population doubles or trebles in St Helens. You would not want to be moving to a new hospital in that period. You would want some bedding-down period. The plan is to open the new hospital in a functional sense, which will be the smartest regional hospital in Australia by a long shot. It is a very good design, being expertly delivered by Fairbrother. There is a degree of excitement in the area about having a first-class hospital.

It reminded me, when I was in a naming ceremony for the new sailing boats for the St Helens Sailing Squadron on Saturday, it took me a full two hours to drive to St Helens on a Saturday morning.

Mr Bacon - Is that the SS Llewellyn, what was it called?

Mr HIDDING - No, these are the new sailing boats, the sailing dinghies. Are you talking about the rescue vessel?

Mr Bacon - I thought you said it was a naming ceremony.

Mr HIDDING - A naming for the new sailing dinghies.

Mr Bacon - So, none were named after David Llewellyn?

Mr HIDDING - No, I didn't pick up on that. It is time he had a ship named after him.

Mr Bacon - He has had a couple named after him.

Mr HIDDING - He should not have a ship named after him because the last SS Llewellyn was the PV *Fortescue*, which was a sensational story in its own right. It was a story that kept on giving when we were in opposition. It was a police vessel that reflected the government. It did not go anywhere, it cost a fortune and it leaked. No, there were no boats named Llewellyn.

I went to the naming ceremony and it took me a full two hours to reach St Helens. If somebody is quite ill in St Helens, a road ambulance takes a long time over winding roads. That is why the air ambulance is often tasked. With so many retirees moving to that area, the new hospital, a \$12 million infrastructure commitment by this Government, will be greatly valued by everybody in the Break O'Day region.

This year's Budget also includes a package of measures that will support the creation of over 9300 jobs including 4500 apprentices and trainees, and our infrastructure program will support thousands of more jobs in that broader economy.

I pay my respects to the civil construction industry as they come up to their Christmas break. As I say every year, do not take too much of a Christmas break; this is the period for road sealing, the warm time of the year. We encourage you to get as much done as you can possibly can over the summer period so that unsealed roads are completely minimised over the long winter. They understand that it is expected of them as Tasmanians. They are up to the challenge because they are a very responsible and accomplished sector.

The Budget also forecasts a positive economic outlook with strong economic growth, a growing population and a healthy labour market. We have been disciplined and responsible. We have been able to manage financial shocks such as bushfires and floods and continue to balance the Budget.

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

[3.11 p.m.]

Mr BACON (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for bringing on this motion. I also thank him for leaving it open and not seeking a vote today. It is one that we can debate for the next three-and-a bit-years if he is around all that time. I hope he is; I enjoy his company in the House. He is a member of the House who has been here for a long time. He has a lot of experience. He always takes things in good humour. We hope to see him here for the full four years of this term of government. I hope this motion is open for that full four years as well.

This is a Government that is big on spin. It has been their hallmark for getting on towards five years now. You only have to look at the way the Government talks about different statistics. The member for Lyons referenced a lot of different statistics in his contribution; some were the best they have been in eight years and others ones were the best they have been in 10 years. Five years of that time had been under a Liberal government so it is not much of a boast to say that you have things back to where they were under a Labor government.

There is nothing you can point to show that things were not at some point better under a Labor government; that shows exactly what this Government is worth. We hear much talk of the election; I congratulate the Government on their re-election. There is no doubt that they won the election 270 days ago; they keep counting down how many days it was. But that was the high point of the Hodgman Liberal Government in anyone's mind.

What we have seen since the election 270 days ago is scandal upon scandal and chaos throughout the public service. You only have to look what is going on in our health and hospital system to see this is a government that is bereft of any ideas to solve the health crisis that they have created.

That is in just one area of the Government. We have had the scandal around Mr Adam Brooks, the member for Braddon. The Integrity Commission report came down yesterday. Any reasonable person's reading would say that this is someone the Premier should have nothing further to do with. He should not have tried to sweep it away with a couple of minutes on indulgence after the Integrity Commission report was tabled. This is someone who, as a minister, repeatedly lied to the Premier, the Crown Solicitor, the Tasmanian Parliament and the Tasmanian public.

We know that the Integrity Commission wanted to interview Mr Brooks in November of last year. I am not sure how this happened but the election was not until March. Mr Brooks could not appear before the Integrity Commission; delayed all this beyond the election, which is all very good

for the Liberal Party. Mr Brooks was re-elected. The Premier still has not answered exactly what he knew before Mr Brooks was preselected, before the people of Braddon had a chance to cast their vote.

We know that is not the only scandal that has beset this Government since they came to office. There has been Ms Courtney. They call it a 'minor' breach of the Ministerial Code which has never happened before. It was either a breach of the Ministerial Code or it was not a breach. We now have a 'minor' breach. Lying to the Premier for a month is a 'minor' breach.

Mr Hidding - You cannot use that. That requires a substantive -

Mr BACON - I thought it was admitted?

Mr Hidding - No.

Mr BACON - It has not been admitted?

Mr Hidding - You have just accused a minister of lying.

Mr BACON - I thought she had admitted to lying.

Mr Hidding - It is inappropriate.

Mr BACON - Misleading. Sorry, I withdraw the word.

Ms O'Connor - 'Withholding the truth.'

Mr BACON - Withholding the truth from the Premier for a month. She continues in Cabinet; moved sideways into another position. This is a government that is in chaos. They have been back in chaos for 270 days.

The only person on that side of the House with a smile on their face is the Treasurer. He knows what all this means. He will be shuffling up four seats soon. We all know that. We had Mr Barnett put his tick firmly in Mr Gutwein's column in question time yesterday.

Mr Gutwein - He has got you hypnotised.

Mr BACON - He has got me hypnotised, there is no question about that. Family members of his have moved into my street. We could not be more pleased about that. We think our property values are going up on the back of that. We think Mr Barnett is doing a fantastic job. We know that he is going to back Mr Gutwein when push comes to shove. We know Mr Gutwein was flexing up in question time yesterday. We wish him all the best.

We think it is time for a new leader of the Liberal Party. It is time for a new premier in Tasmania. We think Mr Gutwein has what it takes. This is a man with the strength of his convictions. We want him to take over from the Premier and pick a few more fights he cannot win, as he did with TasWater. That is what the Labor Party wants to see and we hope to see it sooner rather than later.

What we have seen from this Government is spin over substance every time. We hear about budget management when we have spending growth that is out of control.

The Treasurer is in breach of the first point of his own fiscal strategy. He says that he is going to keep annual expenditure growth below the annual growth in expenditure long term, I think over 10 years. He sets unrealistic expenditure growth targets every year. He misses them every year by an order of magnitude. This is someone who cannot get spending under control. The only way he has managed to get the budget back in order is by huge growth in revenue. We have seen him squeeze more and more money out of GBEs.

We saw it initially with Hydro Tasmania -

Mr Gutwein - You were saying I had sacked people.

Mr BACON - Did I say that? Is that what I said?

Mr Gutwein - Twelve months ago. Yes, you did. We cut teachers and nurses.

Mr BACON - Yes, you did. Two teachers from every school, that is true. That was my next bit.

Mr Gutwein - Sorry, I do not want to interrupt you. Keep going.

Mr BACON - You would agree, though, Treasurer, you have never yet hit your target on spending growth.

Mr Gutwein - We have hit every target we wanted to.

Mr BACON - No, you have not.

Mr Gutwein - We have.

Mr BACON - So you publish that as your target and do not hit it because you do not want to?

Mr Gutwein - We set budgets and then we ensure that -

Mr BACON - You blow them every time. All you have to do is look at point 1 of the fiscal strategy. The Treasurer is in breach of that. He knows that. He will not admit it, which is a bit of a shame. It is time that he came clean. We know the fiscal strategy of keeping annual expenditure growth below the long-run growth in revenue has been missed for the last two years. He has never hit his expenditure targets yet.

We know that it is all spin and no substance when it comes to the budget. There will be consequences from the Treasurer squeezing money out of our government business enterprises. We saw it with Hydro Tasmania; \$75 million was squeezed out of Hydro Tasmania in the Treasurer's first budget. At the time, the Tamar Valley Power Station was valued at \$75 million. The Treasurer will tell you that is a coincidence. But we all know that dividend was contingent on the Government selling the Tamar Valley Power Station. That led to the Treasurer and his colleague at the time, Mr Groom, plunging the state into an energy crisis.

This is a government that has benefited from good economic conditions, good national conditions, and good international conditions. We have seen a very low Australian dollar. We have seen low interest rates. We have seen a government that is well and truly welcome to praise what has happened in terms of business confidence, and other areas in the economy; jobs growth, things like that. That is completely fine, but we want to see a bit more honesty on the other side. We want to see not only acknowledgement of jobs growth, but we need to talk about some of the longstanding problems in Tasmania, issues around the participation rate, underemployment, and wage growth. Tasmanians who go to work every day deserve to get wage growth that is over and above the cost of living. What we heard from the member for Lyons is that he is proud that all public servants are going to take what is effectively a real wage cut.

They have put forward a 2 per cent wage cap while inflation is running at 2.7 per cent. That means nurses, teachers, other allied health professionals and other hardworking public servants are going to take a pay cut over three years. Each and every year their living standards are going to be eroded by this Treasurer and this Government. That is not good enough. This Government may have the right to boast about economic stats, but we also want to see them turn around and say we are going to need economic reform in this state to set us up for the long term. The Government cannot point to one single thing they have done in five years that will set us up for the long term here in Tasmania. There is nothing to address participation, nothing to address underemployment and certainly nothing to increase low levels of wages growth. In fact, what they have done with their 2 per cent wages cap is show that they are determined to see hardworking Tasmanians take a pay cut each and every year they are in government. That is not good enough and I do not think the Tasmanian people think that is good enough either.

This is a state where our health and hospital system is in crisis. We have teachers out on strike because of workload issues and having to take a pay cut. They know they cannot provide the education Tasmanian students need under this Government and they are telling the Government that it is time to hit the negotiating table. This is another fight that the Treasurer has picked. He is out of his weight class yet again, like he was with TasWater, and will be found wanting when it comes to the resolve of public sector workers making sure that they get not only a wage increase above inflation but better working conditions. We also want to see our schools resourced better so that teachers' workloads are more effective for them to have the best impact on our young Tasmanians as possible.

The member for Lyons also talked about infrastructure. As the former minister for infrastructure he took a range of policies and promises to the election. We are still to see any update on the underground bus mall, apart from the new minister saying it is probably going to be 'at grade', which the shadow minister for infrastructure tells me is code for at street level, which, if you go down to Elizabeth Street, is what I think you have right now, which is why I suppose there is no money attached to it.

Mr Hidding - You can have a tunnel underneath.

Mr BACON - It does not mean that? Okay. We have seen a promise around a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet, a promise around light rail for the northern suburbs of Hobart and a big promise around the Bridgewater bridge. None of these are being taken seriously.

Ms O'Connor - Promises on gun laws as well - weakening them.

Mr BACON - I was about to get to that; we are doing infrastructure first. There is no doubt that many big promises were made by the Government when it comes to infrastructure. We have not seen any progress on any of those projects in 270 days. We are having a debate about the 270 days of the re-elected Hodgman Government. What I would say is in that 270 days we have not seen any improvement in infrastructure, particularly around those projects that were promised during the election.

There is still no progress on light rail. This is a huge opportunity for Tasmania, particularly for the south of the state when you look at the problems we have when it comes to finding housing for Tasmanians who may be looking for public housing or low-income housing. The rail corridor is a huge opportunity, but there is no commitment from this Government to make it a reality. We have seen no business case put forward on the Bridgewater bridge. We have seen - and you would have to admit that the Labor Party has done this as well - about 450 press conferences out at the site promising a new Bridgewater bridge, but under this Government, there is still no business case.

Mr Hidding - This time it is funded.

Mr BACON - It is funded, but there is no business case. You would wonder what the point of Infrastructure Tasmania is if they cannot get to work on any of these projects.

The other promise the member for Lyons took to the election was watering down Tasmanian gun laws and putting us in breach of the National Firearms Agreement. This was a secret policy Mr Hidding tried to take to the election. I am not sure why this election policy was not made public in a much more open and transparent way; that opportunity was there. Mr Hidding, and through him, the Premier, did not take that opportunity. It seems that promise is now dead in the water and will not be delivered on in spite of what was said before the election. It is just another example of 270 days where the Government cannot seem to get anything right.

As this debate on motion 131 is left open, there is an opportunity over the next three-and-a-bit years; I am not sure what 365 times four is but if you take away 270 from that figure that is how many days are left of this Government. I hope in that time we can see more progress on the things Mr Hidding spoke about because it is all spin with this Government when it comes to budget management and the economic statistics Mr Hidding talked about. We want to see more action and less spin from this Government. There is plenty of time left. With a new leader and premier and with someone who is willing to 'flex up', as he calls it, we can see more progress. We need someone who has not checked out, as a lot of people think the current Premier has done.

Mr Hidding - Who said 'flex up'?

Mr BACON - The Treasurer.

Mr Gutwein - That is what health does - flexes up and flexes down.

Mr BACON - The Premier has shown no interest in fixing the health crisis and the would-be premier has not until this week, but he has managed to find \$105 million. That will not do anything to fix the Health budget. You only have to look at the commentary of the AMA and other health experts to see this is an area of the state budget that is unfunded in the region of \$130 million a year. The Government has had a report from KPMG, a secret report, for 18 months. They have ignored it up until now. The Treasurer has shown no interest in health for the first four-and-a-bit years of this Government, but now he wants the Premier's job he is finally taking an interest in the Health

portfolio. We think that is positive. There is no doubt it is time for the Health minister to go, but it is good to see the Treasurer finally take an interest in health. We want to see him move up to the number-one chair, become the Premier, have an interest in health and have a genuine desire to fix this crisis, listen to the health professionals, commit the funds needed to fix the black hole in our health system, release the secret reports - I think we are up to about five secret reports now - that the Minister for Health refuses to release.

We want to see a government that takes health seriously. They can talk about budget surpluses all they want but if they are underfunding Health by \$130 million a year, we know they are not taking it seriously. We urge Mr Gutwein to act, move on the Premier and become the leader of the Liberal Party. He is the only one on that side with a smile on his face but we know he is at least someone who will try to get on with the job rather than checking out from this very important role.

[3.29 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a very entertaining contribution. Thank you, Mr Bacon. What a ridiculous notice of motion, Mr Hidding, and I am glad it will be open-ended on the books. It does not anywhere in there mention human beings, like the Tasmanian people who elected your party in minority to serve Tasmania, and it is riven with untruths.

First, there is no Labor-Greens opposition. If there were, we would probably have a pill-testing regime through the House this afternoon.

Mr Hidding - You're right, it is Greens-Labor.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - No, we are very different from the Labor Party, just as we are very different from you. It is important there is diversity in this place, Mr Hidding. It is untrue to say we have failed to articulate any clear plan or policies. We have laid on the table in this place every year, going back to Christine Milne's days, an alternative budget for Tasmania that is a clear vision for the future.

Time expired.

MOTION

Public Sector Wage Cap

[3.31 p.m.]

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

That the House -

- (1) Supports nurses, teachers, park rangers, allied health workers and other public sector workers in their right to take industrial action.
- (2) Agrees that the actions of these workers have been responsible, measured and designed to demonstrate the value they provide to the community.

- (3) Recognises that the 2 per cent state wages policy was introduced in 2011 following the Global Financial Crisis and in response to contracting revenues.
- (4) Acknowledges that State taxes and GST receipts are growing again and private sector wages increased by 2.8 per cent in the year to September 2018.
- (5) Further recognises that CPI is increasing at 2.7 per cent, which means the 2 per cent wage offer from Government is actually a wage cut.
- (6) Further recognises that Tasmanians deserve a pay rise that keeps up with the cost of living.
- (7) Calls on the Government to scrap the wage cap.

I bring this motion on, given the industrial action that continues to escalate right across Tasmania from public sector workers because the Government has refused to negotiate with them in good faith. This motion will call on the Government to scrap the wages cap, which is the sticking point at which our public sector workers feel agreed. The Government has maintained an austerity wages policy when, according to the Treasurer, we are in a golden age.

To provide some context and history for those who might be listening to this debate, the wages policy of a 2 per cent cap was first introduced into Tasmania in 2011. That happened in a time when the state was responding to declining revenues as a consequence of the global financial crisis. The Hodgman Liberal Government would have us all forget about the global financial crisis and the consequences that flowed from that to the state government, the entire Tasmanian economy and the national and international economy. The global financial crisis had a severe impact on the state's revenue and its ability to fund essential services, which is what prompted the 2 per cent wages cap. It was a response to an issue at a time. It was never the intention that the 2 per cent wages cap be extended in perpetuity, which is effectively what the Hodgman Liberal Government are now proposing.

The offer on the table from the Government is that public sector workers, our nurses in our hospitals, our teachers in our schools, park rangers, allied health workers and a range of other public health workers, will accept a 2 per cent wages cap for another four years. That will take that wages cap from 2011 until 2022, for more than a decade. It is an austerity wages position this Government wants to inflict on Tasmanians, remembering this was a response to a point in time.

The motion we have brought on today calls on the Government to scrap the wages cap in recognition of this and the wages offer they put on the table do not keep up with the cost of living. We have CPI increasing at 2.7 per cent in Tasmania right now, when the wages offered by this Government are 2 per cent. Even Mr Hidding acknowledged in debate on the previous motion that their wages offer does not keep up with the cost of living. It is designed explicitly in such a manner. What a heartless government.

We have a crisis in the health system, nurses doing overtime, workers compensation claims increasing, 2300 teachers walking off the job in the north and the north-west yesterday and thousands more today. Teachers do not strike, they do not walk off the job, but they are doing it because this Government is arrogantly refusing to come to the table and negotiate in good faith. By

refusing to budge on the 2 per cent wages cap, this Government is disrupting parents, disrupting communities and placing further pressure on the provision of essential public services across this state because the workforce is under siege by this Hodgman Liberal Government.

You only have to take a look at the comments from teachers and nurses. These are not militant unionists, as the Government would label the industrial action being taken at the moment. These are the workers and employees of the government. These are ordinary people who have pursued their passion for teaching, caring, or for looking after our parks; providing services to the Tasmanian community and who deserve to be remunerated for that. We have an issue recruiting and retaining the best and the brightest in this state when the wages offered to public sector workers are lower, by \$10 000 a year on average, than their mainland counterparts. That is a serious issue for this Government to address. As a community across Tasmania, we should all be calling on the Government to scrap the wages cap.

Looking at some of the comments made by teachers over the last few days, I would like to reflect on comments shared by a teacher from Exeter Primary School, Sallyann Geale, who wrote about why she is taking industrial action, published in the *Mercury* on Tuesday. She outlines why she, along with her colleagues and many other members of the Australian Education Union, have decided to strike this week and to take industrial action. It is because they feel the Government will not listen to them unless they take this type of action. I would like to read from some of the comments she shared in the paper -

So, as a practising teacher who is striving to do my absolute best for my students while struggling to cope with this current workload crisis, I think about what I would want for my child? And of course the answer is that I'd want the best.

And that's why, like all my fellow education workers, I am taking stopwork action in a bid to get the government to act on educator concerns.

As a teacher I cannot be a bystander. I cannot sit back and hope that someone else will fix these ongoing problems that are limiting our students' futures. And I cannot sit back and hope our government at some time will throw a few measly resources in our students' direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you can sense from that her frustration. It was evident in the speeches given by teachers, educators and principals today at the rally here in Hobart, and there was another at Sorell, that teachers who have taken stop-work action because they are utterly frustrated with this Government's arrogant attitude toward them and their colleagues that they do not deserve more than 2 per cent, that they do not deserve a wage that keeps up with the rising cost of living. These are the people who are educating our children. These children are Tasmania's future. This has to be a priority for any government.

Surely, after an austerity wages policy in place since 2011 and at a time when we have the Treasurer trumpeting a golden age and budget surpluses, he can no longer use the argument that he needs to apply restraint to wages to manage a challenging budget or a challenging economic circumstance. The fiscal reality is different than it was in 2011.

I will continue reading the words of Sallyann Geale, the teacher at Exeter Primary School's contribution in her opinion piece in the *Mercury* -

When educators attend stopwork meetings, it's because they're fighting for a quality education for their students. It's because they know that the best chance their students have in life is a quality education. Education opens doors, it's life's game changer.

Sallyann concludes by saying -

So the next time you read or hear in the media that this industrial action is purely about teachers wanting a 3 per cent pay rise or about rabid union officials stirring up members, know that those claims are just spin.

Know that the real story is this. Education workers - principals, teachers and support staff - are fighting for a quality education for Tasmania's students - your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends.

Know that education workers will not be bystanders and hope that someone else will fix these ongoing funding shortfalls that for too long have beset and negatively affected our students. And, know that because enough is enough, we must all get right behind this action that is solely about seeking a quality education for our Tasmanian students. If you haven't done so already, it's time to get on board.

It is quite plain to me. Perhaps it is not plain to the Government yet. This industrial action is not abating. It is not going to stop. The teachers, in the industrial action they took today with other public sector workers, made it clear they will continue to take action for as long as it takes. All they want is for the Government to come to the table and bargain in good faith and not have a predetermined outcome. By coming to the table and saying all they are going to get is a 2 per cent pay rise over the next number of years sets a limit to how you can negotiate. That is not good-faith negotiation, especially when CPI is rising at 2.7 per cent per annum and we know that the offer made by the Government is simply not keeping up with the cost of living.

If we look to the comments made by the Education Union yesterday about the industrial action that was taken in the north of the state, where 2300 teachers walked off the job, it is extraordinary. It has not received as broad coverage as it should, probably because the Government has been plagued by scandal after scandal over the last couple of days, but it is extraordinary. A total 2300 teachers walked off the job yesterday in the north and north-west and today thousands more walked off the job in the south. These teachers are striking because this Government refuses to come to the table and bargain in good faith. I have not met a single teacher, principal or education support worker who takes industrial action lightly. In fact, just last week - when did the Education Union come to parliament?

Mr O'Byrne - Last Friday.

Ms WHITE - Last Friday when the Education Union came to parliament and hosted a forum for us we heard directly from those at the front line. I found their stories to be a combination of incredibly inspiring but at the same time incredibly distressing because of the challenging circumstances in which they are required to do their job and the inadequate resourcing that is provided to assist them to do that, the complexity of the children in their classroom, the wait times they have before they can get professional support, whether it be from a school social worker, psychologist or speech pathologist, and what this means for the learning outcomes of children in

the public education system. There were teachers who spoke in that room who were moved to tears because of the challenges they face and the bullying tactics engaged by this Government who fail to recognise their workloads and the teachers' desire to provide a better outcome for students in the education system.

We know from the action taken yesterday and the comments from Australian Education Union state manager Roz Madsen that this action will not stop unless the Government changes its attitude. They can run all the full-page glossy ads they like in the newspapers. How much is it costing the taxpayer for the Government to run its propaganda in newspapers? Full-page ads in the dailies - what a waste of money. We have the Education Union saying:

This is likely to be the biggest industrial fight we will have. We are powerful and are here for as long as it takes to secure a fair outcome.

All they want is a fair outcome. If you look at Tasmanian wages compared to interstate counterparts, you would be shocked to learn that, on average, Tasmanians earn \$10 000 per year less than the average Australian worker. In fact, the ABS statistics show the gap between the average wages paid to Tasmanian public sector workers and their counterparts on the mainland has increased from 24 per cent to 27 per cent since the election of the Liberal Government in 2014. Not only is the Liberal Government proposing a real wage cut because the offer on the table does not keep up with CPI, but they are happy for the wage gap between Tasmanian workers and their mainland counterparts to increase rapidly under their watch.

Over the past four years, average public sector wage growth in Tasmania has been the second-lowest of any Australian jurisdiction, and yet this Treasurer says it is a golden age. This Treasurer has benefited from massive increases in federal government payments, with total revenue increasing by almost \$3 billion over his first four years as Treasurer. You cannot say there is not the ability for this Government to prioritise and value its workforce if that is what it wanted to do. The Treasurer needs to urgently change his approach because there is no-one to blame for this industrial action except the Government and the arrogant way they have treated workers right across the public service.

The Tasmanian public sector - workers in health, education, parks, child protection - are the lowest-paid workers in the country, facing massive housing cost increases, and even the Treasurer's own prediction in the budget was that CPI would rise more than his 2 per cent wages offer. Whether you are looking at the budget papers or the ABS data, no matter which way you paint it, what the Government is offering is a wage cut for the public sector in the state.

When the Government knew they were in a bit of a difficult position trying to argue the 2 per cent wage cap, the Treasurer came into this place and misled everyone regarding the average wage paid to public sector workers. He came in here and said that the average public sector worker earns \$110 000 a year. I have heard just last week from teacher assistants who earn \$25 000 a year, caring for some of our most vulnerable children with very complex needs, on contracts with no permanency. They go from term to term, often relying on Centrelink to get them through those periods when they are not at work because there is no permanency with their jobs. They often work two or three jobs to get through the whole year, earning \$25 000, and the Treasurer came into this House and said the average wage for public servants is \$110 000.

Why did the Treasurer do that? It was because he wanted to deliberately deceive the public. He wanted the public to think that the public sector workers were just there, shining the seats, behind

desks, pushing some papers and not really earning the money they are paid. He wants to portray them in a particular way, disregarding the fact that public sector workers include the nurses who attend to our children when they are critically unwell and presenting to the emergency department. He did not want to talk about those people. He did not want to talk about the teacher assistants who earn \$25 000 a year in insecure work, caring for the most complex children in our community at times.

He talked about some abstract idea of what a public servant might be and claimed that they earned \$110 000 a year, and then said, 'That is \$40 000 a year more than the average wage of most Tasmanians', so not only did he portray them inaccurately, he then tried to pit public sector workers against private sector workers. The division this Government employs as a tactic time and time again was even engaged by this Treasurer to try to wedge public sector workers as part of the industrial campaign they are now taking. Fear and division - character traits of a Liberal government that we have come to know all too well, unfortunately.

Despite the Treasurer saying that public sector workers earn on average \$110 000 a year, he could never truly and accurately justify that figure. If you look at the latest available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, you will see that Tasmanian public servants earn an average wage of \$74 000 a year, which is pretty consistent with what those in the private sector earn, so there is no division between the public and private sectors and there is no way for the Government to try to use that as an argument to pit the private sector against the public sector. It is a false assertion used by the Treasurer to try to defend his indefensible 2 per cent wage cap - unless the Treasurer gave everyone a \$30 000 pay increase in the last 12 months, but I do not think that is the case.

Mr O'Byrne - Just out of the generosity of his own heart.

Ms WHITE - I do not believe that could possibly be true.

Now we have the Treasurer trying to change tack again. Now it is not a 2 per cent wages cap, it is a 6 per cent over three years wages policy. Six is a bigger number than two so that must be a much more generous offer than a 2 per cent wages cap. We are not that stupid. The public sector workers you are pitching this at are not that stupid either. What they see is a government that is belligerent in its approach to this issue, refusing to engage in good faith and refusing to come to the table in a meaningful way to help resolve the industrial action being taken right now, right across the state.

It is not only by teachers. Last week this Government crowed about the fact that they had been in office for 263 days. At the time the Premier said that he had been the Premier of this Government this term of 263 days, there had been nurses outside the Launceston General Hospital taking industrial action for nearly exactly half of that time. For the last 270 days, nurses have been outside the Launceston General Hospital every single day for about the last 150 days. That is about half the time you have been in government, since you were elected in March this year.

This Government has a woeful relationship with the public sector workers right across the state at the moment. The fact you have thousands and thousands of teachers walking out, nurses taking industrial action for over 150 days straight outside the LGH, and now rolling industrial action taking place outside the Royal Hobart Hospital, the North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey Community Hospital is a clear visual demonstration of their anger at this Government, at your arrogance and at your refusal to come to the table and negotiate in good faith.

It is a pretty simple concept. It means you come to the table without having a pre-determined outcome. If you continue to retain a 2 per cent wages cap, you will continue to come up against workers in all of these sectors. They feel aggrieved by this Government, its arrogance and its ignorance of very real concerns about their workplace conditions and that they are some of the lowest paid public sector workers within their respective professions. That will make it hard for us to recruit and retain across a whole range of professional services.

The public sector unions have started a very organised campaign called Tasmanians Need a Pay Rise. They recognise that it is not only about their jobs, it is about the jobs of their fellow citizens, whether they be in the private or the public sector. It is about acknowledging that all Tasmanians deserve a pay rise. They want the Government to scrap the 2 per cent wages cap. They realise that you cannot have an austerity wages policy for over a decade. That is what this Government is proposing if you continue to push ahead with your 2 per cent wages cap in negotiations. It will have been in effect since 2011 and it will continue for a decade.

This is another case where the Government has to give serious consideration to what its next steps might be. It could be that we see an act of contrition from the Treasurer, as we saw with the TasWater argument, which he held onto for about two years. He went so far as to tarnish the reputation of those who headed those organisations in this place, under the privilege of parliament, pushing ahead. He came back this year - a change of tack: what do you know? Working in collaboration with people gets results. What a surprise.

Mr Bacon interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. You are interjecting on your Leader.

Mr Bacon - Yes, I apologise to my Leader.

Ms WHITE - We hope the Government recognises the importance of this motion today and votes to support it and scrap the wages cap. The alternative is looking pretty grim. Thousands of teachers are taking industrial action, thousands of nurses are taking industrial action and public sector workers who have very quickly learnt that a Liberal government will not look after them and will not look after the people that they serve as public servants to the state of Tasmania.

The facts do not lie: this wages policy does not keep up with the cost of living. It is draconian to continue an austerity wages policy at a time when we are apparently in a golden age. It is disrespectful to the workers. The Government really needs to take a serious look at itself.

I spoke about the industrial action that the nurses were taking outside the LGH but it is not limited to the LGH. As of 17 November, they passed by resolution that they will no longer agree to undertake overtime and double shifts on Monday every week for a two-month period. Further to that they are also refusing to do other overtime and double shifts, which will impact on surgical lists because the staff are exhausted. They cannot keep being asked to work shifts that extend beyond what is reasonable, often without a break.

On Monday, we saw 11 ambulances ramped at the Royal Hobart Hospital. There were 14 there at one stage and seven workers for Ambulance Tasmania worked between 12 and 14 hours without a single break. We are in a crisis situation here where our emergency responders are working 14 hours straight with no break. They are driving vehicles at a fast pace to respond to whatever concern may be raised in the community and then trying to provide the best quality care they can.

They are fatigued, they are exhausted, and they have had no food. In some cases, who knows if they have had a drink of water? These people are going to end up in the emergency department if we do not look after them.

It was not an isolated incident. There were seven workers on Monday where this was their reality. The number of ambulances ramped at the hospitals in Hobart, Launceston and the north-west hospitals has become the new normal, unfortunately.

Staff from Ambulance Tasmania are now being rostered to work on the ramp. This is unbelievable. They are not people who are going out on road to respond as they ordinarily would. They are being asked to work on the ramps. This is work in the corridors. This is not a place you want patients to be in the first place. Ambulance Tasmania staff are being rostered to stay in the corridors with patients on stretchers so their colleagues can go back on road. Those trucks can go back into the community so we do not have situations like on Monday, where the closest emergency response in Hobart was from Nubeena or the east coast.

This is not the kind of Tasmania that my colleagues and I, and the community, want to live in. It is not the kind of Tasmania that we should be advocating for. We need something better than this. One of the best ways we can help to achieve it is to respect the workforce who deliver these essential services that support our community.

The first thing the Government has to do is negotiate in good faith on the enterprise bargaining agreements currently before them rather than taking a belligerent attitude forward, which they have maintained now with some pride. That is extraordinary. They seem proud of the fact that they have a wages policy that dictates a 2 per cent cap at a time when you have staff doing overtime, double shifts, fatigued and walking out of the job because they cannot get the Government's attention any other way.

What will it take? What is it going to take for you to come to the table and negotiate in good faith? It is not a big ask for you to say, 'We hear you. You have made your point. The budget is in surplus. We have money. We can afford to properly remunerate you now. Let us stop the industrial action because we commit to scrap the cap. I know they will not accept anything less than that. That is the fact of the matter. Unless you commit to scrapping the cap, you are not negotiating in good faith and the industrial action will escalate. You need to be mindful of what that means for the Tasmanian community. It is your fault that these workers have to take this action. It is your fault that teachers in their thousands walked off the job yesterday and today. It is your fault that nurses have been protesting outside the Launceston General Hospital now for over 150 days straight. It is your fault, because you are too arrogant to listen to them and negotiate in good faith and understand the concerns they have raised.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we can only hope that the Government comes to the debate today and agrees they will scrap the wages cap. The evidence quite overwhelmingly shows that what they are proposing is a real wage cut at a time when the cost of living continues to grow at a much faster rate than the wages offer on the table. The Government cannot, with any credibility whatsoever, argue that we are in a golden age if it does not recognise, value and remunerate those very people who contribute to the success of our state.

[4.01 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we will be supporting this motion brought on by the Leader of the Opposition supporting the unions' collective campaign

to have good-faith negotiations and for the wages cap to be scrapped. We still have not heard from the Treasurer any sound justification for not entering into good-faith negotiations with the people who are the glue of our society, our public sector workers. What this is all about, at the end of the day, is respect, and it is a lack of respect for the state's many, many thousands of public servants that has driven this industrial campaign.

I have had conversations and briefings with union leaders as well as the people they represent who are working out there looking after our kids, looking after people who end up in the emergency ward, dealing with community safety, and it is clear that this industrial action was the last resort. It was entered into out of a deep sense of frustration, of not being valued and of being misled. How galling it must be for those thousands of people who go out every day and work for and on behalf of the people of Tasmania to hear the Treasurer of the state say we are in a golden age. A golden age for whom? Not for the thousands and thousands of public sector workers who hold this state together.

The issue here is that it was seven years ago that the 2 per cent wages cap was put in place as a responsible measure of fiscal discipline for which we in government copped a slapping from the union movement. It was not easy to do, but we recognised that as a temporary measure it was necessary. That was in the context of a global financial crisis and a recession that had reached Tasmania, a small island state.

Seven years later and public sector workers are still on a 2 per cent wages cap, while in this place in 2016 they had to watch as this Government brought on legislation to give members of parliament a pay rise at the wages price index. The Liberal Government of the day brought in legislation to this place, agreed with itself that politicians deserve a pay rise set at the higher level, which is the wages price index, and tells the thousands of people who go out and work every day to make Tasmania a safer, more educated and healthier place that they can get nicked and sit on 2 per cent a year. To add insult to this total lack of respect, we have the Treasurer using taxpayer funds to mislead the people of Tasmania about that 2 per cent cap, to treat people as if they are stupid and add up 2 per cent year on year for three years and put it out there that public sector workers are getting a 6 per cent wage rise over three years.

What Mr Gutwein did not say in those taxpayer-funded advertisements is that members of parliament, under legislation they brought in, will get between 8 per cent and 9 per cent over that same period. It is one rule for the Liberal elite and it is another rule for the thousands of people who every day in this state go out there and work hard out of a sense of public duty. It is contempt for the institution of the public service we are seeing here, and is in stark contrast to the motion we debated previously in government members' time that was all about the money, the economy, jobs and growth. Those principles are being increasingly rejected by the people of Australia because in broad terms, they recognise we live in a society, not an economy.

We never hear government ministers get up in this place and talk with real heart and feeling about community and what community means, about human values, decency, sharing, inclusiveness and respect. We do not hear about that; we only hear about the money. It is always about the money and it is galling.

Mr Hidding - With you it's never about the money, that's the problem.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Hidding, you are again being dishonest in this place. As a minister of the Crown for four years, I successfully administered a portfolio working alongside some fantastic

people in various government agencies whose work I valued and respected and to this day remain thankful for. I administered those portfolios and those very large budgets in Human Services, respectfully, carefully, cautiously but also through the lens of a set of values. The only thing these people value is money. It all comes down at the end of the day to the dollar, like we live in an economy, not a society, not on a planet. It is galling every time. It distresses me on behalf of our children that we have a party of government in this country that classifies people into two categories, lifters and leaners. No-one will ever forget former treasurer Joe Hockey -

Mr O'Byrne - Sloppy Joe.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. No-one will ever forget that because what it said to people living on the breadline or the socioeconomic margins was, 'You have no value because you do not earn enough. You are a leaner, while we, the party of government, are the lifters and we lift on behalf of corporations, our donors, private enterprise and any developer who turns up.'

I want to talk a little today about some of the people who are the glue of our schools and in our education system, and that is the admin support staff in our schools. Too often it is not appreciated how they are the glue that holds schools together.

Ms O'Byrne - Hear, hear. They are good people and do an amazing job. We talk about principal stress but that plays right down into that whole administrative stream.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right. We had a fantastic conversation the week before last, which was organised by the union. I met Breana from Lindisfarne, Michelle from Rose Bay, Karen from Rose Bay, Angela from the CPSU, Kate from Margate, Amanda from Launceston College and Janelle from Prince's Street Primary. Thirza White was also there.

The story we heard, of the change of duties, the increase in workload, the increased complexity of the students schools are dealing with, and they were very confronting stories. We take administration staff in schools for granted but so much of the school's business would not be done without them. Principals would fall over. School populations are shifting, but there has not been an examination of the statement of duties for administrative and support staff in our schools since 2008. For a whole decade, we have not had a look at the workload, the stresses or the capacity of our administration staff. Like so many public sector workers in Tasmania, they feel undervalued, unheard and unsupported by the Government of the day.

There are administrative staff in our schools, highly-skilled staff, who, for the love of their job, have stayed in a school that has seen its student population increase from 350 to 450 students with no extra administrative support for that school. For anyone here who is a parent and has taken their children to school, you know the administrative staff are the front line of dealing with parents, students and the complexities of the school's working environment. We heard at the meeting the other day that the Minister for Education and Training will not sit down with these extraordinary public sector workers.

Mr O'Byrne - I cannot understand it. He cannot even to talk to people.

Ms O'CONNOR - He cannot even talk to people and that goes to the arrogance and the lack of respect. Partly, it goes to fear because the ministers of the day and the Treasurer are afraid to have to confront the reality of what this 2 per cent wages cap is inflicting on people such as the administrative staff in our schools. It is arrogance to not negotiate in good faith or have a really

good look at the workload, the changing nature of administrative work in schools or the increased complexity of many of the students who come into schools.

It must be fear of hearing the facts. Apart from arrogance and disrespect, there is no justification for a minister not sitting down with one of his key stakeholders or having the respect to talk to administrative staff in schools and find out how it is going for them. The take-away from the meeting I had the other day is that schools are almost at breaking point, from the principal through to the teachers, the support staff and the administrative staff. It is all held together because of the quality and the commitment of these public sector workers, who we entrust our children to every day when we send them to our schools in the public education system.

We have administrative staff now having to undertake first aid, having to change peg-feeding for students with disabilities. We have administration staff in schools who simply do not take a break during the day. They just do not. It might be that their conditions require they take a break but they care so much they often do not take a break because if they did, the work is not done. The newsletter does not go out. Awareness of the circumstances of a student who needs looking out for, contact with parents, will not happen unless the administrative workers stay on the job.

The wages cap should be scrapped and Tasmanian public sector workers need a pay rise. I do not think the Treasurer fully understands he is going to lose this fight. He is going to lose it because of the determination, the remarkable will and collectivism of public sector workers across all fields in Tasmania who have had it up to their chins with being disrespected and undervalued. They have taken this rolling, sustained industrial action in order to bring the Government to the table.

The Government will have to come to the table. The Premier and the Treasurer will have to come to the table. If the Treasurer thinks he can dig in and not negotiate in good faith, not commit to scrapping the 2 per cent cap and sail through to the next election without industrial strife at his back, he is mistaken. Mr Bacon is right. The Treasurer sees himself as the anointed one for the Premier's job, for the top job. That is hubris, as we know, but he has been putting staff on, who understand that it could be 18 months, it could be two years, but everything will change.

Mr O'Byrne - I understand there has been a change in demeanour as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Do you think there has been a change in demeanour?

Mr O'Byrne - I have nothing to compare it to, I was not here. From what I hear, he is trying to be more statesmanlike, trying to prepare for the role. It is not working, is it?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, yes. That is right. He does not do statesman all that well. A real statesman would have the humility, because it is a quality of statesmanship to be humble, receptive and empathetic, and the political foresight to sit down with the unions, with public sector workers, and negotiate in good faith.

Mr O'Byrne - And to know when you are done.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, to know when you are done, to see the future and understand there is only pain ahead for the Government.

In a way, public sector workers do not have much to lose. They are stuck on 2 per cent. They are disregarded by the Liberals in Government. They have sought to achieve good faith negotiations

and meetings with ministers. They have nothing to lose now. I predict the thousands of public sectors workers represented by the unions undertaking this campaign will win. Those unions are the Community and Public Sector Union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the Health and Community Services Union, United Voice, the Australian Education Union and United Firefighters Union. Have I missed anyone, Mr O'Byrne?

Mr O'Byrne - Nurses. Nursing and Midwifery.

Ms O'CONNOR - I have the ANMF.

Mr O'Byrne - Professionals Australia, and you will have the AWU and the AMWU.

Ms O'CONNOR - AWU, Electrical Trades Union, yes.

Mr Gutwein likes to 'other' people, and 'othering' is a term that loosely describes boxing a group of people and using language in such a way that encourages misunderstanding and potentially vilification of people. Mr Gutwein 'others' union members and he 'others' unions. He spends a lot of time in this place union-bashing, allowing himself to believe that unions of themselves are a standalone entity. They are not. The unions represent the workers. For public sector workers the unions are their voice, and a strong voice they are, with a long campaign of successful industrial action in Tasmania when they have had governments that either disrespected public sector workers or made decisions that impacted negatively on the lives of public sector workers.

I want to close with a statement from a TasTAFE teacher who was at the Australian Education Union forum on Friday, which the Leader of the Opposition attended, and as I recall, almost every member of the parliamentary Labor Party. There was not a single Liberal MP or minister in sight, apart from Madam Speaker, who had the grace to accept the invitation to at least hear the stories and to listen.

Mr O'Byrne - I heard the Premier ran down the stairs and didn't come in.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, but just before the Premier scuttled past, the Treasurer slunk past. Both the Premier and the Treasurer had enough time that day to pop in and listen but of course did not have the humility or the respect to do so.

This is testimony that was given at the AEU forum by Ben Wright, who works at TasTAFE and teaches carpentry in the construction and allied trades team. He has been at TAFE for over 10 years and this is what he has written:

TasTAFE teachers delivering training on campus and on the job are under-resourced and work many hours of unpaid overtime, which is leading to high levels of stress. One example I can give you is of what happened recently to our teachers from the plastering department. For the past 12 months these teachers have been vocal at staff meetings that with the industry about to boom they would require a sessional staff member to help with the workload. Ongoing assurances were made from his educational manager that at the end of 2018 there would be room in the budget for a sessional teacher.

I pause to point out that plastering is a skill set that we are short of here, so why is the Government not supporting TasTAFE to train Tasmanian plasterers? That is not what is happening; in fact it is the reverse. I continue with Ben Wright's letter:

During a recent monthly staff meeting it was raised again by one of the plastering teachers that the plastering team was struggling to complete all their work and stress levels were through the roof. The EM (educational manager) was asked when Tas TAFE would be advertising for another teacher. The educational manager replied that there was no money in the budget and further added that, 'If he didn't like then he should go back to the industry'. With the lack of respect shown he was blown away.

On the Monday of Show Week, this is what happened. A teacher with 12 years' experience, who for the past seven years has co-trained the winners of the national plastering competition, as well as the gold medal winner of the 2018 Apprentice Skills Challenge held in Perth, put in his resignation to HR as he could take no more if no extra help was to be provided as the statewide workload was unmanageable. The sixth of November was this teacher's last day, and we held a morning tea as a send-off. As soon as he began to speak he broke down in tears, apologising for leaving his carpentry teacher hanging, but felt it was his only option left. It was a very sad time. The remaining teacher left has informed his education manager that they will not find another plastering teacher to fill Andrew's position and that next year he will be forced to also resign and go back to industry.

Under the Liberals at the federal and state level we have seen a continual erosion of public vocational training and a continual undermining and underfunding of TasTAFE that has real-world consequences for the society we live in but also for the economy. We have a government that is bleeding TasTAFE, pays it lip service, continues to support the tsunami of money that is coming into the private sector and so many dodgy operators in that sector whilst running down TasTAFE. It is a philosophical antagonism towards public good, public services and public ownership of public assets.

I will close now because I believe the Treasurer, Mr Gutwein, would like to get up and do some more union-bashing and make some more excuses for not having enough respect for the state's public sector workers. I cannot say I am looking forward to hearing it but like everybody here and watching today, we will endure it.

[4.26 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Deputy Speaker, first I want to put very firmly on the record that we respect our public service, we acknowledge that they work hard. In fact, that is one of the reasons why when I read Sally-Ann Geale's article in the paper I thought there was a lot in there that I can agree with. The point I want to make and the facts that need to be put on the table here are that when we came to government, if you consider what the member just said and contributed to this debate in the last hour, things must have been extraordinarily bad back in 2013-14. If you look at what has occurred since in our schools, we want to do more, but in our schools right now today -

Ms O'Connor - What about those 266 teachers you sacked in your first year?

Mr GUTWEIN - Right now today there are 142 more teachers in our schools than there were when we came to government. There are 193 more teacher assistants in our schools today from when we came to government. They are the facts. If you look at the health system, there are more than 800 staff over and above what were employed in the health system when we came to government in 2014. Of that, more than 500 are nurses, there are more than 100 doctors and more than 100 allied health specialists.

Mr O'Byrne - How many of those positions are unfilled?

Mr GUTWEIN - You raise that as if it is a cross we should bear. In any organisation there will always be attrition and positions that are open. When you look at the FTE count - not the head count because that is even more - there are 800 more staff employed in the health system today than there were in 2014. There are 120 more beds open. That is the equivalent of injecting into the health system a medium-sized hospital, the equivalent of injecting another Mersey hospital into the health system in four years.

I know that means nothing to you on that side because it does not suit your politics.

Mr O'Byrne - That's not fair or true.

Mr GUTWEIN - It does not suit your politics. When you make comments, as the Leader of the Opposition did, about people working overtime and being exhausted, just think about how exhausted they were and how much overtime they were working back in 2014 before we started recruiting and building the numbers.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker; I believe the Treasurer has just misled the House under standing order 181. I am entitled to finish my point of order. The Treasurer has just misled the House. He said that the government was recruiting for public sector workers in 2014. That is a complete untruth. The 2014 budget contained multiple cuts to the public sector. Tell the truth.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will explain. In terms of the education system what did we do there?

Ms O'Connor - You cut the guts out of it. At the end of 2014, they kissed their music and theatre teachers goodbye.

Mr GUTWEIN - No, we did not. We ran a workforce renewal program, which at the end of the day provided the opportunity for older teachers to take an opportunity to leave the service and it enabled us to employ new graduates. Compared to where we were when we came to government, we have 142 more teachers in our schools, 193 more teacher assistants.

The position that we have taken very clearly is that we would much prefer to employ more teachers and more teacher assistants, and to employ more nurses and more doctors. Every 1 per cent of additional wage increase costs the state around \$28 million a year, compounding to \$56 million in the second year. By the time we hit the fourth year the total impact across the forward Estimates was around \$285 million. That 1 per cent wage increase does not employ one more additional person.

Dr Broad - Might help retain a few.

Mr GUTWEIN - We are having no trouble retaining them. We have 142 more teachers in the system today than when we first started.

Importantly, in terms of recruitment, we recently went out for 52 new teaching roles. We had more than 600 applicants. How you can possibly claim that we have a recruitment or a retention problem is beyond me. Again, it does not suit your politics.

Mr O'Byrne - It is not the first thing that is beyond you. You just rack 'em up.

Mr GUTWEIN - It does not suit your politics. You know that, Mr O'Byrne. You know as well as anybody on that side that a 1 per cent wage increase that will cost \$28 million a year does not employ one more public servant. If we were to spend that money, as we want to, on employing more teachers, more teacher assistants, more people into our health system, we will create real jobs. We will reduce the amount of overtime and reduce the amount of stress that our public sector is facing at the moment.

We think that a 2 per cent wage increase is fair and reasonable. When you read the stories from teachers - Sallyann Geale is a perfect example. Good on her for having the courage of her convictions to write that article. When I read it, there was not a lot in it that I disagreed with at all. In fact, what parent would be happy to know that the teacher who fronts each day to educate their precious child has a workload that allows them to function only on a couple of cylinders? Exactly. That is why we want to hire more teachers. That is why our policy at the election was for 250 more teachers and 80 more teacher assistants.

Ms Standen - What about Lara Gidding's op-ed? Did you agree with that?

Mr GUTWEIN - They wail from the backbench over there. What we are talking about here is going to the heart of the problem. A teacher has written to the newspaper and made the case for more resources, very clearly, in my mind. She even makes the point - and I do not think I am verballing her - that it is not about the 3 per cent; it is about more resources so they have more time to spend with the kids. What does our policy do?

Ms Standen - They spend the time with the kids now; they are just not paid for it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms Standen.

Mr GUTWEIN - It provides more teachers into the system. In terms of the wage offer we recently made to the AEU, which took them a handful of hours to reject -

Ms White - It was not a wage offer. It was the same cap you have always had.

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of the wage offer that we recently made to the AEU, which actually goes to the heart of the concerns that they, purportedly, have been raising on behalf of the members, when I talk to teachers, they do not say to me, 'We want a 1 per cent wage increase over and above your 2 per cent.' They want more resources in the classroom and that is exactly what we want to provide. I will go on -

Ms White - Please do; you are doing a great job.

Mr GUTWEIN - Sallyann Geale goes on -

Tasmanian students deserve teachers who are appropriately supported and valued by their employer.

They are valued by their employer. We want to provide them with more resources so they can do their job better and more easily. Then they can provide the quality education that teachers like Sallyann Geale want. That is exactly what we put on the table 10 days ago, and it was rejected out of hand.

The 2 per cent wages policy brought in, in 2011, has been called 'draconian' and 'an austerity framework'. Let me put the facts on the table for you. Since 2011, up until September of this year, the average CPI has been 1.7 per cent over that period. If you look at the period since 2014, the average CPI has been 1.7 per cent for that period. You cannot, as the Leader of the Opposition did, look back seven to eight years and claim that it is a draconian policy and that it is an austerity policy. Quite clearly, it has provided a better-than-CPI outcome right through that period.

If you look at the wage price index through that period, Tasmania has done very well both nationally and within the state in terms of wages growth. The wage price index for the last 12 months had us with one of the highest outcomes as far as wage price index was concerned for the financial year.

You have to look at the facts; you cannot make things up and use language that -

Ms White - Over the past four years, average public sector growth in Tasmania has been the second lowest of any Australian jurisdiction.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Ms White, you have already spoken for half an hour on this issue.

Mr GUTWEIN - You cannot come in and make things up. The wages policy has not been an austerity measure; the wages policy has not been draconian. As I said, I do not believe that our teachers are clamouring for the 1 per cent. What the teachers want are the resources that Sallyann Geale is calling for in the schools and that is exactly what we put on the table.

I want to spend a moment on the offer we made to teachers. For primary school teachers: to reduce their contact hours from 22 hours to 20 hours. That brings them in line with high school teachers. They have more time to plan, more time to focus on the work they want to do, and more time to be prepared. I know the vast majority of our teachers want to provide the best possible education that they can for our children.

We offered to employ an additional 95 specialist teachers over and above the 250 that we have already said we are going to recruit, which is on top of the 142 who are already in our schools.

The unions, certainly Labor and the Greens, do not want to consider the outcomes that resourcing schools and hospitals by ensuring that we put more staff into either Health or Education or other services that we need. They do not want to consider that. They want to run a political argument about a wages policy.

I agree with some of the points Ms Geale made about skilled and committed education workers and I recognise that they are prepared to go the extra mile for their students. The point she also makes is that schools cannot provide a quality education if they are bit resourced with the staff they need. That is exactly why we have gone to the heart of what the unions claim they have been

wanting for their staff. That is, more resources, more teachers in the schools and more nurses in the hospitals. It is exactly what we have put on the table.

I cannot be clearer than this. A 1 per cent wage increase that costs \$28 million a year and compounds to cost \$285 million over a four-year period will not put one more person into our schools. Whether they be teachers, teacher aides or other support staff, they will not put one more person into our hospitals or our parks service or into Service Tasmania. It will not provide any of the resources people like Sallyann Geale are asking for. The point that seems to be lost on the other side is that you can have a fair, reasonable and affordable wages policy or provide those resources the schools want and the hospitals need, but you cannot have both.

Consider that the Commonwealth has a 2 per cent wages policy across the country. Consider that Western Australia, because they had wage increases significantly above 2 per cent and closer to 3 per cent and 4 per cent in the past, is now in a position of a \$1000 flat wages policy. If you are on \$50 000 a year, you are given a 2 per cent increase. If you are on a \$100 000 a year, you receive a 1 per cent increase.

Mr O'Byrne - Budgets are a different circumstance over there and they are in negotiations with the public sector unions. Don't change the information. That is misleading the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - They led themselves into that. They did not have an eye to ensuring their budget position was sustainable, which is exactly what we have.

We want to ensure we can resource the public servants we need and that we can do it in an affordable, ongoing and sustainable way. I come back to this argument of recruitment and retention.

Ms Standen - Please do. You don't seem to get it.

Mr GUTWEIN - You seem to be blind to the evidence of what is occurring. There are more teachers in our schools. There are more teacher assistants in our schools and there are more nurses, more doctors and more hospital orderlies. We have more public servants today than we had when we came to government in 2014.

Ms Standen - That is just because people want to stay in Tasmania.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms Standen.

Mr GUTWEIN - We are not having an issue recruiting or retaining public servants. As to recruitment -

Ms Standen - Like an elastic band, it will snap eventually.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will use your words. You said, it is like an elastic band, it will snap eventually. I presume you are talking about staff and the conditions they work in.

Ms Standen - People can accept austerity wages while there is real justification for it.

Mr GUTWEIN - I made the point and again you are blind to it. A 2 per cent wages policy has delivered increases above CPI throughout the last period, since 2011. If you look at inflation over the last 12 months, the year average of 2.1 per cent was broadly in line with it. You have grasped the last quarter's WPI and CPI numbers. You know that CPI, WPI, GSP and SFD are looked at on a financial year basis. You understand but you are not prepared to accept it. You will grasp any number you can to try to make your case and create a political argument.

We want to provide a wages policy that is fair, reasonable and affordable and enables us to go through the recruitment process. This is to ensure, when we hear claims of overtime or stress at work, we are in a position to recruit the people we need into the jobs we have, to ensure they can take on and reduce the workloads of those currently working in our schools and our hospitals. That is exactly what we have been doing over the last four-and-a-half years, more than 800 into health, more than 142 teachers into our schools and 193 teachers' assistants. The other side is blind to the fact that things must have been very, very bad when we came to Government. You have made claims today regarding overtime and stress, but there are more teachers, teacher assistants, nurses, doctors and specialists -

Ms O'Connor - The problem is that you have not sat down with any of the representatives of public sector workers. You are living in fantasyland.

Mr GUTWEIN - We have undertaken ongoing discussions with the public sector unions.

Ms O'Connor - When you say we, you do not mean you, do you?

Mr GUTWEIN - That has never occurred under governance in the past.

Ms O'Connor - I beg your pardon?

Mr GUTWEIN - That negotiation -

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, he is misleading the House. I negotiated with deputy premier, Paul Lennon, and with other public sector unions in 2004. Political leaders have negotiated -

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order.

Ms O'Connor - The Treasurer has misled the House again.

Mr GUTWEIN - That is probably why we ended up with out of control expenditure in that period prior to the GFC and you had no capacity to withstand it.

I will move an amendment to the motion before us. I will read it and provide it to the Clerk.
Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That motion 130 be amended by leaving out all words after 'That the House', and be replaced with -

- (1) Recognises and appreciates the role of Tasmania's public sector employees and that it is in the best interests of the State and all Tasmanians that an agreement is reached.

- (2) Calls on the Tasmanian public sector Unions representing public sector employees and the Government to sit down at the table and negotiate a wage agreement that will deliver a positive outcome for the whole of Tasmania.

The two offers we have put on the table are fair and sensible and go to the heart of what public sector workers have been telling us they would like to see as part of their agreement. They want their agreement to be more family-friendly. We looked at that and we put an offer on the table that increases paid parental leave from 14 weeks to 16 weeks. It increases paid partner leave from one week to three weeks, enables them to redirect recreational leave and parental leave where compassionate or bereavement conditions apply, and establishes flexible employment policy arrangements and supporting guidelines.

We want to: improve superannuation contributions and provide super contributions for workers on workers' compensation during unpaid parental leave; introduce a new youth employment program, whereby we will allow young people post-year 12 entry, with TasTAFE training and suitable qualification, paid and other opportunities for permanent employment following the program and targeting diverse groups to ensure we provide opportunities for all.

Something that has been on the table with previous governments and has never been dealt with is the issue of permanency. We want to offer the conversion of fixed-term employment to permanent where there has been a continuous period of at least 24 months where there have been three or more consecutive fixed-term periods of employment.

Ms O'Connor - You're the people who put everyone on contracts. Wow.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - We want to enable leave cash-out, other salary-sacrifice options and a facilitative clause in the agreement to enable further broadbanding of positions.

We believe, in concert with a sensible and affordable 2 per cent, that that is a very good offer for the public sector. We are not having recruitment or retention issues. I have spoken about the teachers and we believe what we have proposed goes to the heart of the issues being raised with us by teachers. They want their workload reduced, they want more time to plan their lessons and engage with the children and students they teach. Therefore we put on the table that we would reduce the instructional load for all primary school teachers from 22 to 20 hours a week. This would be nation-leading and it goes to the heart of the issue that teachers like Sallyann Geale are raising. They want to have more time to prepare, they want to be able to work with their students and they do not want to feel overworked and stressed. We are going to the heart of it. In terms of the offer to the AEU, an additional 95 specialist teachers will be recruited over the 2019 year by the end of the year, with a view to beginning in the 2020 year to go to the heart of the issues being raised.

From reading Sallyann Geale's article, there is much I agree with in what we are attempting to address and are taking on board because we want to ensure we can provide a workplace that a teacher like Sallyann Geale is asking for. If we take 1 per cent and add that over and above our current wages policy, that \$28 million we would spend in the first year will not employ one more teacher. It will not put on more teacher aide. We believe we can provide a wage increase which is fair, reasonable and affordable at 2 per cent, whilst at the same time being in a position to put on

the additional resources teachers are asking for, nurses are asking for and doctors are asking for. But you cannot have both; the budget is not a magic pudding.

We want to provide a wage rise, we think it is fair, but we want to provide those additional resources. We acknowledge it when people raise concerns like too much overtime or not enough time to plan and prepare for a lesson. In terms of the offer we have taken forward to the Education Union and the other public sector unions, we think it goes right to the heart.

Ms White - Just scrap the cap.

Mr GUTWEIN - I come back to the Leader of the Opposition's interjection, who has only one view on this, which is that a 1 per cent wage increase over and above the 2 per cent is what is required.

Ms White - No, it is about sitting down and negotiating in good faith.

Mr GUTWEIN - We have a wages policy which we believe is fair and reasonable and we have policies we took to the election we are now rolling out which will see 250 more teachers employed. I listened carefully to the debate and the contributions from both the member for Clark and the Leader of the Opposition, and over and over again if you read *Hansard* you talk about workload, you talk about stress, you talk about overtime. What we are doing is providing -

Mr O'Byrne - A fair day's pay.

Mr GUTWEIN - a fair day's pay, as you have just said, but importantly the resources that go to the heart of the issues that public sector workers have been raising. We think that is very fair and reasonable and we know it is affordable.

When I look at the policies we took to the election in terms of health, in the 2018 budget we outlined that we would recruit 478 extra full-time equivalent health and hospital staff to meet increasing demand. On top of that, there would be 120 more nursing graduates, 42 regional paramedics, 192 more teachers, 80 teacher assistants, 125 more police, more child protection officers and more rangers.

By sensibly managing our budget we can ensure that we provide for our staff reasonable pay increases in line with other jurisdictions broadly, and that is before taking into account what occurs with increments. Those staff that receive increments, and there is a large proportion of our staff that do, the increases annually that they will receive will be in many cases, including the 2 per cent, between 3 per cent and 7 per cent, so the argument that we are not paying our staff reasonably does not stack up. The argument that we are running an austerity wages policy does not stack up, especially when you look back not just to 2014 but to 2011 and take on board the facts.

The amendment I have moved provides the opportunity for this parliament to request that the public sector unions representing the members come back to the table with the Government.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - You are like a broken record. You have nothing to offer in the debate except that you want to see political uproar and discord, because that suits your aim. I refer you to what I thought was a very well-written piece by Sallyann Geale, where she goes to the heart of the issue.

Ms White - By Lara Giddings? That was a very good op-ed.

Mr GUTWEIN - Do not mention Lara Giddings. We know what happened in the budget when she was Treasurer so let us be clear about that. I read that article this morning and thought what a joke.

Regarding the article raised by the Leader of the Opposition which I have raised in here as well, we want to fix these challenges. We want to employ more people in the schools. We want to ensure that our teachers have the resources that they need. We want to ensure that our hospitals are well resourced. With that, I hope the House will support the amendment I have moved.

[5.00 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this amendment to the motion is a disgrace. For the last six to nine months the Treasurer has denigrated public sector workers up hill and down. We do not support the amendment.

Time expired.

The House divided -

AYES 11

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Hickey
Mr Hidding (Teller)
Mr Hodgman
Mr Jaensch
Ms Petrusma
Mr Rockliff

NOES 11

Mr Bacon (Teller)
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

PAIR

Mr Brooks

Ms Houston

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The result of the division is 11 Ayes and 11 Noes. I therefore have to use a casting vote. In accordance with standing order 167 I cast my vote with the Ayes.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The question now is: that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 11

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Hickey
Mr Hidding (Teller)
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NOES 11

Mr Bacon (Teller)
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PAIR

Mr Brooks

Ms Houston

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The result of the division is 11 Ayes and 11 Noes. I therefore have to use a casting vote. In accordance with standing order 167 I cast my vote with the Ayes.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MISUSE OF DRUGS AMENDMENT (DRUG ANALYSIS) BILL 2018 (No. 62)

Second Reading

[5.08 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - 2R) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

We are building on the experience and evidence of other countries around the world to introduce a safe, legal framework for drug analysis in Tasmania. This bill amends the Misuse of Drugs Act 2001 by inserting a new Part 4A to establish a legal framework for lawful drug analysis pill testing. The bill establishes a drug analysis advisory committee that would include clinicians, police, community services and paramedics and would advise the minister on matters related to drug analysis.

The new Part 4A establishes a system for the issuing of permits and licences for conducting drug analysis. It provides penalties for a service that breaches a permit or licence condition, including being able to revoke a permit or licence and disqualify those services from delivering drug analysis services. This bill sets out the circumstances when a person would not be liable for a drug offence under the act. Specifically, a person would not be committing an offence if they were delivering a permitted or licensed drug analysis service or if they were using that service. In the case of a person procuring a pill testing service, they would still be committing an offence if they possessed a trafficable quantity of an illicit substance.

The purpose of this bill is to make sure that more kids get home safe after a festival. That is the bottom line.

Pill testing services have been operating in some form for around 25 years in a number of countries. It first emerged in the 1990s in the Netherlands and is now part of that country's official drug policy. Similar initiatives are in place in Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and in some states in the United States. Importantly, they are now also available in some capacity in the ACT.

The Liberals continue to trade in misinformation in relation to pill testing. They have consistently argued that it would condone illicit drugs; that it would lead to a culture of implicit endorsement of illicit drugs and would lead to an increase in the number of people using illicit drugs. In fact, that is a totally misinformed view because exactly the opposite happens. This is now well established from the evidence of the ACT and of the other countries that I mentioned.

The people who peddle that misinformation are at least two decades removed from the youth drug-taking culture, and they are two decades removed from the new approach to providing information and pill testing. That means that people are exposed to an extensive and comprehensive education about illicit drugs and pills before they are able to undertake pill testing. It also is an indication that people with those views are completely misinformed about youth culture.

Youth culture today is highly informed; social media keeps young people very well connected. They are fully plugged into information through social media. But the problem is that the information they get access to - that we all get access to - is not always correct. Young people do not want to put harmful things into their mouths; that is obviously true. Young people are informed, and want to be informed, about what they put into their bodies.

Young people also go to music festivals to have fun; they go to enjoy themselves. They go to have a positive experience. Festival pills people take are labelled 'recreational drugs' because people take them typically at parties when they are recreating. Those people are usually not part of a regular illicit drug-taking culture. It is a different group of the population.

Ms Archer - Really?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, really. There is so much information about this but since you have eaten into so much of our private members' time, I do not have time to go into that evidence. It speaks volumes about how unplugged you are to the evidence about this issue.

Ms Archer - Do not reflect on what I would know about the topic.

Dr WOODRUFF - I am reflecting on what I think you know from the ill-informed comments that you made, Ms Archer.

Because of that, these young people are an especially vulnerable group.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Please stop interrupting.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Typically, young people taking pills at festivals are highly naïve about drug effects. They have typically little or no idea about the contents of what they are putting into their mouths. They usually have no information or idea about the dangers of mixing drugs. They would not understand the toxic and life-threatening contents black market drugs are now being regularly diluted with. These people are very much influenced, as we all are, by what their friends are doing. When they are not well informed, they are typically trusting and, sadly, gullible. This group of young people may be well off or they may not. They are potentially my kids, your kids, our kids. They are always somebody's kids.

The point is that this bill is about trying to keep them safe. Pill testing in the form that it is undertaken at festivals gives respected, reliable professionals privileged access to young people. In order to get a pill tested in that situation, a young person would have to sit down first with a well-informed member of the community and hear about the risks of illicit drugs. In the ACT where a pill-testing trial has been run and found to be overwhelmingly successful, the drug information is provided in combination between health professionals and law enforcement officers. I hope you are listening to this, minister, because you have both portfolios of Health and Police.

It is the united desire of law enforcement officers and health professionals in the ACT to reduce drug-related harm to young people. That means they are working collaboratively together and providing young people with information about harm. Often in this situation, that encounter with the drug educator is the first engagement a young person has ever had with information about the risk of illicit drugs.

Pill testing gives people enough information to change their behaviour. By providing reliable information in conjunction with pill testing, we know that more people change their minds and they walk out choosing not to take the pill.

Ms O'Connor - It saves lives.

Dr WOODRUFF - The evidence is that pill testing reduces the consumption of illicit drugs. Through education it changes the way people use drugs. It reduces the number of people who use at all, because a proportion of people walk out and refuse to take them. It reduces the number of people who mix drugs, which is a particularly dangerous activity.

Pill testing is actually the ultimate in viral counter-marketing to a youth drug culture. It gives young people information about the dangers inherent in an illicit drugs market. It deters them from using drugs. The evidence from other jurisdictions is that they pass this information on to their friends. That is the important thing. It provides information in a viral way out to a community of people who are particularly hard to educate about risk.

Young people, more than any other group in the community, are prone to thinking they are invulnerable and are not that interested in thinking about their mortality.

Pill testing is an amazing lever, a huge opportunity to get health professionals in a one-on-one conversation with a young person to explain what is happening in their life, and what may be in that drug, and the dangers of taking an unknown substance.

Given the nature of the illicit drug market, which is a black market, there is almost no way for police to get information about the substances being traded in the community. Pill testing provides police with much better knowledge about the illegal drugs that are available, far more than they are able to get themselves. It is simply not possible for the police to have access to the drugs being sold in the illegal drug market.

From the evidence of research overseas and from the ACT we know that pill testing changes the black market. Products that have been publicly outed as dangerous leave the market. That is because when information goes back into the community that a particular drug has a highly dangerous toxic substance in it, people stop buying it altogether. They may never purchase a drug like that again, or they may purchase another one, but at least they stop being exposed to a highly dangerous product. There is evidence this puts pressure on illegal manufacturers, perhaps preventing them from putting toxic adulterants into their drugs.

We consulted widely on the drafting of this bill. We spoke to Harm Reduction Australia, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council, and the Drug Education Network, who produced a fantastic and comprehensive paper on pill testing and the evidence behind pill testing. We spoke to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. The Salvation Army are up against the hard end of people trying to recover from addiction in their drug treatment programs. We spoke to the Community Legal Centres. I recognise Ben Bartl in the Chamber today. Ben is a fantastic outspoken advocate for all people through the community legal centre movement. His work is exceptional.

Since our pill-testing bill was tabled last week, it has been publicly supported by the Youth Network of Tasmania, the Tasmanian branch of the Australian Lawyers Alliance and, yesterday, Dark MOFO. Dark MOFO's Creative Director, Leigh Carmichael, wants Tasmanian festivals to be able to offer legal pill testing to save lives. He said, 'We know drug use happens, particularly in environments like music festivals, so we must do what we can to reduce the risk of harm or death ...'. He urged all political parties to stop playing politics with young Tasmanians' lives.

We took advice from Dr David Caldicott, a highly respected emergency clinician at the ACT's major Canberra hospital and who is also a member of the Consortium for Hospital-Based Testing Services. The ACT has now undertaken a formal pill testing trial. After running that trial, a recent survey of ACT residents found 85 per cent of people in the ACT support pill testing. That is a substantial understanding that this is about protecting people's lives and reducing harm. The evidence of that study comprehensively shows that it does both those things.

Dr Caldicott coordinates the life-saving drug analysis testing program that has been in place in Canberra since 2013. It now happens, as a matter of course, for any patient admitted to the emergency department for a drug overdose. They do a drug analysis test of the patient and the results are given immediately to clinicians and to police, who are involved in essential first-line response to people who may be overdosing in a community. It is like a canary in the coal mine. It points to the possibility of a cluster effect, where more than one person may be exposed to some toxic substance that caused a person to overdose. The person, once recovered, is provided with the information about what caused them to overdose. They return to the community and circulate that information among their networks so that people know and are less exposed to harm.

This is the sort of good work we could have in Tasmania if we pass this bill and establish the ministerial advisory committee, which is a cautious and conservative way of approaching this - we are not suggesting the establishment of a pill testing trial that does not have a framework of support -

with advice from a range of experts in the community about how that trial should be conducted. This suggests we bring together as a state and we recognise this is so important, a ministerial advisory committee with all the key stakeholders. They will sit down, use the evidence, have the conversation and prescribe the conditions under which a licence may be granted to a service to conduct pill testing or drug analysis. They will prescribe the conditions under which a permit could be issued so that a festival such as Dark MOFO could, on a one-off basis, can conduct pill testing.

In writing this bill, we have built on the experience of these other jurisdictions, and the ACT. We have learnt from them that we need a legal framework and a space for all the stakeholders, the police, the clinicians, the paramedics, GPs, alcohol and drug agencies and festival organisers, to work out the evidence to establish the best conditions under which a permit and licence could be issued.

Dr Caldicott from the ACT was invited last month to outline that state's pill testing approach and the evidence behind it to the Ambulance Australia's Tasmanian Branch. Members present were overwhelmingly in favour of this bill being introduced in the ACT and of that approach. They know it will decrease their workload. Having pill testing available at music festivals frees up paramedics and volunteer ambulance resources to focus on heart attacks, dehydration and all the other injuries that occur at these large public events. This bill is not about condoning or seeking to normalise illicit drug use. It is about giving people enough reliable health information to change their behaviour.

When we drafted this bill, we anticipated that it would be a long shot to get the Liberals over the line. We assumed that, unfortunately, the Liberals would continue to remain opposed to this life-saving, harm reduction measure. Despite the overwhelming evidence this approach works and the strong community support to put the health of young people first, we know this Government continues to be committed to an ideologically punitive approach to illicit drugtaking and that they have closed their mind to protecting young people from harm.

I was totally unprepared for the Labor Party's response. It is really disappointing that the Leader of the Labor Party, Rebecca White, is not in the Chamber to hear this.

Ms O'Connor - But health is their number one priority, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Funny you should say that, Ms O'Connor, because the Tasmanian Labor Party passed a policy to support pill testing at their annual conference two years ago this month. Members reportedly cheered when the HACSU Secretary, Tim Jacobson, moved for the party to adopt a health-based approach to recreational drugs and to support pill testing at music events. Either I am grossly politically naive, or I have an enduring belief that people will do what they say they will, but I honestly thought Labor would work with us to craft the best possible bill on pill testing. I offered briefings to Ella Haddad, Shane Broad and Rebecca White but none of them took up the opportunity to have a conversation.

Ms Haddad - That is unfair, Rosalie. You know why that it is.

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not say that five minutes before speaking to this bill is a conversation, Ms Haddad.

Ms Haddad - You know why I could not attend a briefing with you on Monday, Rosalie. It is quite unfair.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I made myself available all weekend to have a conversation about it.

Dr Broad - All weekend. What are you talking about?

Dr WOODRUFF - Before you, Ms Haddad, I handed it to Ms White when I tabled the bill and indicated I would make myself available for a briefing at any time.

Dr Broad - We do not know when you are going to bring it on.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is clear the Labor Party was not intent on working with the Greens to craft the best possible bill that could be passed by this House. It is clear that when Dr Broad went straight to the media and called it a political stunt, it was fairly rich coming from a party that has printed out 3000 pictures of a Health minister, stuck them onto parliament lawns and filmed it with a ridiculous soundtrack over the top. It shows a wilful amnesia to our public statements about pill testing, since we returned from the winter break. He calls it a stunt, and they have failed to remember we have been talking about this for four months. I find that surprising. The Labor Party also slammed it for being badly drafted and not based on evidence. I have outlined the extensive consultation this bill has been through with all the key stakeholders and the mountain of evidence for this conservative and inclusive ministerial committee approach. The stakeholders were passionately hopeful that finally politicians would put the health of young people first.

I would like to hear from the Labor Party who they consulted with to form their position. Was it the Alcohol and Drug Services? Was it the emergency doctors who they spend so much time talking to? Was it the Lawyers Alliance? Was it festival operators like Dark MOFO? What about all the Labor members who were jubilant about their party's pill-testing policy commitment?

I think we all know the answer. The Labor Party consulted with their spin doctors and decided they would rather throw their own party's policy under a bus than support a Greens bill. This is a self-sowing political position from Rebecca White, the Leader, who stands in this place every day telling us Labor puts health first. This is from a Labor Party that once had a proud, evidence-based health-first harm-reduction policy. It is the same Labor Party that supported at the federal level in the 1990s a world-first and world-recognised harm reduction approach to drug use that led to Australia's outstandingly successful response to the AIDS crisis. They have held that position for decades, but how times have changed. They now seem to have taken up the Liberal's failed zero-tolerance approach to illicit drugs.

On the shoulders of the Labor Party members is the responsibility for Tasmania not having a legal framework to establish pill testing today, because if the Labor Party had made an effort and crawled over and had a conversation with us and done anything they wanted to amend this bill, Madam Speaker, it would have been up to you to put your ethical lens over the bill, to consider the issues, and make an assessment about how you would vote. But clearly that is a fairly pointless exercise to go to that effort when it does not have the support from the Labor Party to continue with their policy commitment.

Responsible law-makers, as we are, should do everything possible to keep young people safe. Young people have always indulged in risky behaviour and we feel a law-and-order approach to drugs will not stop festival overdoses or deaths and neither will stern warnings, but good education in the right circumstances might. When it comes down to it, would we not want to do everything we can to make sure people are not putting dangerous, life-threatening things into their bodies? I commend the bill to the House.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

[5.33 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Speaker, we can all acknowledge this is a complex policy and legal area. I do not believe the bill has given proper consideration to this aspect of the act. You have your policy position but there are a number of health and law enforcement issues. If we had sufficient time, and maybe we will if I can get through my notes, I am sure the Police and Health minister, my colleague and Leader of Government Business, Mr Ferguson, would like to address those issues.

As Attorney-General and first law officer, I would like to concentrate on the construction of the bill itself in the little time remaining. I feel duty bound to do so because it is not just about policy, as we know, and I keep drawing the House's attention to this fact.

The bill purports to create a legal framework for lawful drug analysis at events and festivals. However, it is unfortunately poorly drafted for a number of reasons, and I will explain what I mean by that. The purpose of the Misuse of Drugs Act 2001 that this bill seeks to amend is to prohibit the misuse of drugs and activities associated with the misuse of drugs and for related purposes. It appears to the Government that the intention of this bill is unrelated to the purpose of the Misuse of Drugs Act given it purports the focus on harm minimisation. However, the issue runs deeper than that.

The bill does not address the interrelationship between the Misuse of Drugs Act and the Poisons Act 1971, as set out in section 4 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 2001. The Poisons Act 1971 provides for, amongst other matters, the regulation, control, use, possession and prescription of certain substances and plants. This bill is silent on possession offences which exist under the Poisons Act for schedule 4, declared restricted substances, schedule 8, narcotic substances, schedule 9, prohibited substances and schedule 10, substances. As such, these offences would still apply.

In any event, an exemption from offences under the Poisons Act for the intention of pill testing would be in contravention of Tasmania's and Australia's obligations under the International Narcotic Control Board's Civil Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961. Tasmania is particularly sensitive to any potential breaches of the single convention. We have established and maintained a world-renowned poppy industry which is dependent upon compliance with INCB requirements and associated Commonwealth licensing. It is apparent that no thought has been given to such issues, which is why I am drawing the House's attention to it because it is important.

The bill proposes the establishment of a drug analysis advisory committee. The proposed membership of the committee is not consistent with modern governance practice of appointing members for expertise rather than association or representation from particular stakeholder organisations who may have a vested interest and not be impartial in their decision-making. This would be fraught with danger, given the broad nature of the functions of the board which is proposed by clause 38L(7).

One of the proposed functions includes reviewing the operations to the proposed part, that reviews should be undertaken by impartial bodies or persons who have no vested interest in the matter.

Ms O'Connor - And what is your proposal?

Ms ARCHER - I would like to get through this because I am sure Ms Haddad and many other members would like to speak to this.

Another proposed function includes advising the minister on matters related to drug analysis. Potentially only one of the proposed members of the committee would have technical knowledge of drug analysis technology. This would not be adequate for the stated purpose. There is also a range of issues around how the committee is expected to function from an operational perspective.

Importantly, the bill does not address the issue of liability. Pill testing could present liability issues if participants were to suffer adverse effects from drug-taking after they had -

Greens members interjecting.

Ms ARCHER - I ask the Greens member to allow me to finish because I listened to her in silence although I disagree with a lot of things she was saying. Pill testing could present liability issues if participants were to suffer adverse effects from drug-taking after they had taken part in a trial. The pill user could sign a written indemnity in the form of a waiver before having the pill tested, but an issue could arise if the person is already under the influence of the drug, as the person may not be able to give informed consent. There is also a lot to be proscribed and, as a consequence, without draft regulations there are a lot of unanswered questions regarding this bill. We obviously do not have regulations.

All of those issues aside, the fact remains that the use of dangerous drugs is a serious public health issue and there is no safe use for any illicit drug. That is why the Government will not be supporting this bill.

[5.39 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, let me begin by explaining that Labor is committed to evidence-based policy and the policies of harm minimisation. We are committed to tackling illicit drug use with prevention programs, early intervention, effective treatment and harm-minimisation policy, but we will not be supporting the Greens bill today.

Members may not know that for some years I worked in the alcohol and drugs sector for an organisation that promotes and endorses the principles of harm minimisation and I understand them well. In a nutshell, harm minimisation refers to a three-pillared approach in dealing with the use and misuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in the community. The three pillars outlined in the national drugs strategy of harm minimisation are demand reduction - that is to prevent the uptake or delay on the onset of the use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs and reduce misuse; supply reduction, efforts to prevent and reduce the reduction and supply of illegal drugs and to control manage and or regulate the availability of legal drugs and harm reduction: efforts to reduce the adverse health social and economic consequences of the use of alcohol tobacco and other drugs.

Harm reduction is not a dirty term. Its main focus is reducing the amount of harm that is experienced by individuals, their families and the community as a result of drug and alcohol misuse.

Members interjecting.

Ms HADDAD - You wanted to hear my views. I am happy to share them.

Harm reduction comes in many forms and is not limited to drug use. For example, we have road rules to reduce harm from motor vehicle accidents. We require the wearing of seat belts and

bike helmets for cyclists and the like. In everyday use, harm minimisation is commonsense and widely accepted. Similarly, there are harm reduction measures in place when it comes to legal drug use. For example, we have restrictions on where people can smoke cigarettes; liquor licensing laws and wide promotion of standard drink intake recommendations. Again, these are viewed positively in the general community but when harm reduction measures are raised in the debate about the use of illicit drugs we are often faced with strong opposition. Harm reduction does not condone or condemn either licit or illicit drug use but acknowledges that despite efforts to control supply and demand, people will still and do still use drugs. In recognition of this, harm reduction policies recognise that society benefits from efforts to reduce the harms associated with drug use.

To be clear, harm minimisation policies do not endorse the use of illicit drugs, rather they recognise that people will continue to break the law. We must have a holistic policy setting and a health-based response to tackling issues concerning drug and alcohol use. An example, of a harm reduction program is the needle and syringe program or NSP which is a harm minimisation program that provides free sterile injecting equipment to people who inject drugs. The implementation of needle and syringe programs around the world represents one of the most successful public health measures ever embarked upon. They began in the 1980s as a reaction to the increase in blood-borne viruses like HIV and Hepatitis C. Injecting drug use was identified as one of the most common ways these viruses were transmitted. They also started with predictable opposition, naysayers arguing that provision of sterile injecting equipment would somehow condone the use of illicit drugs and would increase the uptake of drug use while not having an impact on blood-borne virus rates. Nothing was further from the truth; the figures speak for themselves.

In Australia, where we provide what is internationally recognised as one of the best needle and syringe programs, we have very low rates of HIV and Hepatitis C. HIV rates amongst people who inject drugs in Australia are around 1 per cent whereas they can be as high as 50 per cent in countries without NSPs. HIV rates continue to be relatively rare in injecting drug use and wider communities with Australian rates steadily decreasing over the years.

Needle and syringe programs do not only present a social- and health-related success but they are also economically a good idea. For example, these figures are a few years old but nationally \$130 million was invested in needle and syringe programs around Australia which not only prevented tens of thousands of individuals from contracting these blood-borne viruses but it has also meant a long-term cost saving to the health budget nationally of \$7.8 billion in saved treatment costs. In more simplified terms that means for every one dollar spent on the needle and syringe program, four dollars is saved in later treatment costs. Those figures are from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. In Tasmania the Department of Health funds several community organisations to provide them, including Anglicare, the Clarence Community Health Centre, Youth and Family Focus, just to name a few.

That is not to say government should give up on the fight against the spread of illicit drugs. Far from it. We should continue to support law enforcement to effectively target the spread of organised crime and the tackling of illicit drugs. To be clear we must stop thinking of this solely as a law and order issue. Drug use is a health issue and people's lives are at stake.

What should governments do? Governments should bat away the usual hysterics and implement programs that have a real focus on harm reduction. How about providing genuine diversionary programs for drug offenders, like the court-mandated drug diversion court that operates in the Magistrates Court? It diverts people found guilty of drug offences to health

programs instead of custodial sentences. Or how about the police diversion programs that exist in many states for drug-related offences?

Labor calls on the Government to provide better support and treatment for people seeking drug and alcohol treatment programs. It is no good to simply demonise people who use drugs or to have a law and order approach of lock them up and throw away the key. I will never support such an approach.

We need well-funded, accessible residential rehabilitation programs so that people can seek and receive the treatment they need. We need more funding for counselling programs so that people are not left on long unwieldy waiting lists for months. We need more public education programs, which is part of the harm minimisation approach.

This is a priority. It needs to be a public health education priority. However, the Opposition will not be supporting this bill today for several reasons. First and foremost, this is simply not the way to go about implementing this policy. In fact, in some ways bringing on this bill puts the implementation of harm minimisation programs like this back years.

I say this because this bill is a blunt instrument. It creates a layer of administration but does not contain the policy depth and background to make it work. Make no mistake about it, this might be seen as a controversial policy area; however, it appears that the Greens have failed to adequately consult prior to drafting their bill, as has been the case in other states and territories that have considered this approach. That has been played out in the debate that we have seen over the last little while.

In a rush to take advantage of the state of the parliament in an attempt to get media attention for these issues, they insist on bringing this on for a one-hour debate in the last sitting week of the year. This approach will likely set the issue back years and give the Government an opportunity to put this and other harm reduction minimisation programs on the backburner. Further, if it did pass the parliament, we know this Government would do nothing to implement it in a pink fit.

I quote from the recent media articles since the bill was tabled.

Ms O'Connor - Four months ago.

Ms HADDAD - Not four months ago; the bill was tabled on 22 November.

A briefing was offered on Sunday as the briefing was unable to be conducted on Monday.

Dr Woodruff - It was only out of desperation, Ms Haddad, because nobody had got back to me.

Ms HADDAD - It was tabled on 22 November.

Ms O'Connor - I flagged it at the Greens state conference in September.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. I would like this to be a bit more orderly than it is. Thank you.

Ms HADDAD - It may surprise you, Ms O'Connor, I was not at the Greens state conference. The bill was not tabled four months ago - the bill was tabled on 22 November. However, what we have heard from the Police and Health minister, Michael Ferguson, is that pill testing would legitimise illegal drug use. He said -

Ms O'Connor - Suddenly you have faith in him.

Ms HADDAD - No, I am quoting what he said because I do not agree with it, Ms O'Connor. If you let me finish what I am saying, what I am saying is this Government would not implement this.

If this bill passed both Chambers of this parliament, there is no way it would be implemented by this Health minister who has a Nancy-Reagan-esque approach to drug use, who tells people that the only drugs that should be taken are those prescribed by a doctor and dispensed from a pharmacy. Those are not my views. I do not share those views, with respect, minister.

The Just Say No to drugs approach has not worked. The war on drugs, started in the Reagan era has not worked, with respect, Minister for Health. Rene Hidding, the former police minister, said that Government will not provide quality assurance for drug pushers. These statements are quite ridiculous. They are particularly concerning, as I said, and are reminiscent of the Reagan era in the 1960s of Just Say No to drugs. That is an ineffective and a laughable policy, but what it tells us is that this Government would not implement this no matter what.

This is not the way to implement a harm minimisation program like this. In doing so, in pushing a bill like this in a one-hour debate, it pushes the argument back years. Yes, I have consulted with people in the sector. I have spoken to festival promoters who said they did not feel consulted. Their comments about playing politics were aimed at every political party, including the Greens, not the Labor Party alone. This has simply an attempt to get media attention on an issue that they see as popular and not an attempt to get this policy up and running in Tasmania.

I respectfully suggest that the Greens direct their anger towards the Government, not the Labor Party, for pointing out the problems with this approach. The Government is failing to present a comprehensive well-supported drug and alcohol policy. I have consulted, as I said. There are many harm reduction programs available. I encourage the Government to continue to work with opposition parties to promote harm minimisation and harm reduction programs. Putting through something like this in a one-hour debate is not the way to drive policy. It is a top-down approach that has not brought the community alongside and it will not work. For those reasons, I passionately reject this bill and put on the record the reasons for that. This attempt by the Greens is not to get this up and running in Tasmania, it is simply to make a point.

[5.50 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I will be brief because there are only 10 minutes left of this debate. I want to provide Dr Woodruff with an opportunity to briefly wind up, if possible.

When Ms Haddad spoke, a person came into the front of my mind and that was Peter Garrett. Peter Garrett went into the Labor Party thinking he could change the Labor Party. What happens to people who go into the Labor Party thinking they can change it? The Labor Party changes them. I flagged the pill testing legislation we are debating today at the state conference in September. We have spoken about pill testing in this place on a number of occasions; it is our policy, it is Labor's

policy and we have this garbage from Ms Haddad, from a party that says health is their number one priority, yet they are abandoning young people on this legislation.

It is evidence-based legislation and it is soundly drafted. Opposition parties were offered a briefing and did not accept it. We have Ms Haddad talk about harm-minimisation and the needle and syringe program. For goodness sake, a safe, effective, legal pill testing regime is a harm-minimisation measure.

Ms Haddad, they have done it to you before and they will do it again. The Labor Party bloods its new members by making them do dirty, dishonest stuff. What they did in the blooding of Lisa Singh in the Lennon Government was to stand her up to ask a Dorothy Dixier on the pulp mill because they knew she did not support it. They blooded her and they got her. We see this from the Labor Party over and over again and it is so frustrating. As a lawmaker in this place who has worked with the Labor Party, who has been in here for 10 years, over and over and over again, I see hand-wringing, bleating, waffle, and when a bill that would save young people's lives is before this House -

Members interjecting.

Ms O'CONNOR - The Labor Party says that because the Liberals will not support this legislation, they will not either. Gutless, gutless, gutless. You should be embarrassed.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'CONNOR - I remember when you and I both worked for Duncan Kerr. He would be appalled.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I ask the Labor frontbench to be more disciplined. Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am passionate about this because I am really worried about our children who go to festivals, and they do take drugs. We can tell young people not to do this but it is like telling them not to have unprotected sex. It does not work. They do not listen to us, so we need to provide a safe, legal framework to save the lives of young people.

The Falls Festival starts on 28 December this year and there will be no safe pill testing regime in place. We could have enacted one if members in this place were prepared to work together to save young people's lives. This legislation is a health-based response. It is a harm-minimisation measure. It is soundly drafted. If health was Labor's number one priority, they would back this bill.

[5.54 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I will make a brief contribution. First, the Liberal Party has been clear on this. One thing the Leader of the Greens and Dr Woodruff will grant me is that the Liberal Party have been consistent in this area. We have said, and I stand by the statements of the former police minister and by my earlier remarks that were jeered at by the member for Clark, who seems to think it was a weird thing to say, that drugs should

only be taken if prescribed by a doctor. That is a pretty mainstream reasonable argument to be making strongly backed by the medical profession, parents, police and health practitioners. To rubbish that with some reference to a Nancy Reagan-esque era diminishes what could have been a quality debate.

I took note of what my colleague, the Attorney-General, had to say about the quality of the bill without taking anything away from her remarks that pointed out some of the flaws in the legislation. There is a bit of quality to this that is a bit better than some of the other rubbish the Labor Party has brought into this House. I will confine my remarks to that, with some compliment to the author of it. Even if the bill itself were robustly written, this Government will not support it for the reasons we have already articulated. I can only join with Dr Woodruff and Ms O'Connor to draw the point that Labor Party is off in another universe on this. They are trying to have it each way. On the one hand, you are trying to say you sort of agree but on the other hand you are recognising that you do not want to run the gauntlet on this, that the Tasmanian community is not with you on this and you do not want to be out of step with the Police Association, for example. What you are up to is so nakedly obvious.

We were asked these questions at the election and we said we would not implement this policy. It is not safe. I do share that sense of obligation with Ms O'Connor, who wants to save lives. We do, too. You should not pillory, and I direct these comments to Ms Haddad and others, the safe message and the health promotion and prevention message. That has not cast the Labor frontbench in any glory at all, the way you have tried to characterise this is because of your defensiveness. As Health minister, I support harm-minimisation strategies and that is demonstrated through our continued commitment to the needle and syringe program, to the hepatitis strategy in my commitment across the range of health portfolio responsibilities.

When you say stupid things like 'ideologically punitive approach', you have misunderstood it. The legislation needs to mean something. From a police perspective, it is not an ideologically punitive approach to drug users. It is targeted where it needs to be, particularly with the pushers. The problem with the Labor Party position on this, shared somewhat with the Greens, is that this provides a quality control commitment to drug pushers and that is a problem. I do stand by that.

In reference to the Labor Party, we are solid on providing more rehabilitation detox support. The 31 extra drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds we have announced at a cost of \$6 million to taxpayers shows that Labor's mealy-mouthed promises in this area pale into insignificance. The euphemism I have heard when referring to recreational use of drugs, that young people 'just want to have fun' at music festivals is very problematic. The parliament is here to make good law to keep our community safe. I have this on authority and the clear message is that the use of illicit, dangerous drugs is a serious public health issue. There is no safe use for any illicit drug.

Ms O'Connor - Oh, good. All the young people listening to this today will stop now that you have said it.

Mr FERGUSON - The advice I have from police that I want to share with you is this: permitting on-site pill testing sends a contradictory message about the risks related to the use and possession of controlled substances.

Ms O'Connor - Abandon them to pop into their mouths whatever they buy. Honestly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr FERGUSON - There is a place for positive health promotion and genuine prevention measures but it is not good to give drug pushers a commitment to test their product. Let me ask you a quick rhetorical question in the minute remaining. Let us say a pill is tested at a music festival or some other event there and it does not identify heavy metals or components that not advertised by the drug pusher, what then? Is the message that this drug is now safe to take? You are taking a life into your hands at that point. I cannot explain the Labor Party's politicking on this, but for those reasons, from a policy point of view, we do not support the intent of this legislation.

The House divided -

AYES 2

Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

NOES 20

Ms Archer
Mr Bacon
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad
Ms Hickey
Mr Hidding (Teller)
Mr Hodgman
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Ms Standen
Ms White

Second reading negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Purpose of Legislation - Pill Testing

[6.06 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I was cut short because of a reduction in our time but I want to make some general comments about the need for policy in this place that is based on evidence. I am not reflecting on the bill that was just voted on. I would not do that but I want to make some general comments about the purpose of introducing legislation into this place.

The manifest purpose of every single bill that we bring before this House ought to be the welfare of the Tasmanian people. It ought to be about securing their safety and the future of everybody in this state. Not only should we be legislating about the big issues to do with climate

change, we should be legislating about the small things that matter to people in their everyday life, keeping people safe from the big threats and the tiny ones.

People put pills into their mouths, whether we like it or not, whether we tell them to or allow them to, or whether we deny them the right to choose what to do with their own bodies. There are many positions we can take, but fundamentally I would have thought that everybody in this House, every political party, would understand that reducing risk and harm should be our first principle. I am so disappointed to have experienced today the slithering and weakness of both the Labor Party and the Liberals when it comes to doing what they stand here and say they have been elected to do, which is to look after the welfare of the people in their electorate.

We know that people elect you to parliament to do the things that you say you will do, and it is deeply disappointing to see members of the Labor Party come in here with policies that have been passed at their own party conferences on a matter that is the same policy issue and to vote against it without trying to engage in the process of parliament and amending the legislation to make it the best possible bill it could be.

It has been a tiring few weeks, but that is the job of parliament. We have to rise above tiredness and we certainly have to rise above party politics. I am very disappointed to see the actions of the Labor Party here today and resting on harm reduction as something that is the basis of something they have done.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, under standing order 135 - having spoken on the main question a member may not enter upon the same question. The member is straying; reflecting on us.

Dr WOODRUFF - I hear what the member is saying.

The honourable Brendon Nelson, who was a member of the Labor Party and responsible -

Dr Broad - Brendon Nelson? It was the Liberal Party.

Dr WOODRUFF - I beg your pardon. The architect of harm reduction policy.

The Labor Party has had a long tradition of harm reduction. Evidence-based policy is something that the Greens hold very dear. I had thought that that was the bedrock of the Labor Party when it comes to their policies on harm reduction but it seems that they are dependent on the politics of the moment and not on the science and the evidence underlying them.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report - Legal Costs

[6.11 p.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, in question time this morning I committed to seek advice and provide an update to House on the legal costs incurred by Mr Brooks in relation to matters before the Integrity Commission.

I can confirm that, consistent with advice provided by the Solicitor-General, that the Government agreed to indemnify Mr Brooks for reasonable costs incurred as a result of carrying out his duties as a minister of the Crown. By convention a minister is entitled to be indemnified for

his or her legal costs in matters that arise in the discharge of his or her office. Mr Brooks has been reimbursed a total of \$57 888 in legal fees.

I am advised there are further costs outstanding; however, now that the Integrity Commission matter has concluded and the final report tabled in this House, I have asked the Solicitor-General to review the original payment and further invoices to determine whether the indemnity should be provided. Having received the advice the Government will disclose all costs in due course.

Risdon Vale Medical Centre

[6.12 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to a petition that I tabled in this House on 26 November with 177 signatures from the residents of Risdon Vale and surrounds. The petition drew to the attention of the House the lack of resourcing at the Risdon Vale Medical Centre which has led to a decline in the number of GPs and reduced opening hours to treat local patients. It requested the House to encourage the Health minister to work with a service provider of the Risdon Vale Medical Centre to increase the number of GPs available to treat local patients as well as extending the opening hours of the medical centre.

This petition arose after I wrote to Mr Ferguson on 27 September, which I followed up on 8 November. To date there has been no response, other than an acknowledgement on 3 October. Some two months has elapsed. I also flag that this issue was raised more than 12 months ago by Lara Giddings' office on 20 October and followed up on 13 November and 8 December 2017.

The letter that I wrote to the minister said -

Dear Minister

I am writing on behalf of the residents of Risdon Vale regarding access to primary health care at the Risdon Vale Medical Centre.

I understand that the Clarence Integrated Care Centre was opened in 2011-12 replacing the former Clarence Community Health Centre site in Bayfield Street, Rosny Park. Further, I am aware that an agreement was finalised in January 2009 for the Department of Health and Human Services to receive funding from the Australian Government for the GP super clinic (brought under the umbrella of the ICC), and that the Tasmanian Government through DHHS contracted IPN Medical Centres to run both the Clarence GP Super Clinic and the Risdon Vale Medical Centre.

I understand that initially there were three GPs at the centre but now only two remain - and that due to leave arrangements and other unforeseen issues the Centre is usually staffed with one GP.

I go on in that letter to ask the minister whether the service agreement between IPN and the Tasmanian Government is publicly available and whether it could be disclosed. Patients have told me that there is a two- to three-week waiting time in that community for the service and the books are now closed to new patients. As a consequence of under-resourcing the service is unreliable, forcing families with young children, the elderly and others with chronic or complex diseases to travel - that is if they have transport and can find affordable practices to visit.

People are choosing not to present to a GP. I spoke to an elderly woman who, after a fall, rather than presenting to the GP because she was not able to get into that practice, went to bed for four days without medical attention. That is very dangerous for an elderly woman living on her own.

There are two GPs practising at the service but one is over 80 years old. There is no succession planning. Potentially this service also impacts on other services like the pharmacy, which is unable to dispense medications for more than three days. For example, on long weekends, if the medical centre is closed on a Friday, they are unable to dispense medications for the fourth or subsequent days.

What will it take to get this Health minister to respond to this issue? Will he disclose the service agreement between the Tasmanian Government and IPN? Will he confirm that the expectations of the Tasmanian Government, as well as the people of Risdon Vale are not being met? Will he now ensure to an increase in the number of GPs and service hours and guarantee continuation of this valuable service, the Risdon Vale Medical Centre?

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

[6.16 p.m.]

Mr BACON (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight in response to some information provided by the Premier to this House after the ongoing debate over the last couple of days about the behaviour of the disgraced member for Braddon, Mr Adam Brooks.

We now learn that the taxpayer has had the pleasure of footing the bill for Mr Brooks' legal bills to the tune of \$57 880. This is an absolute disgrace. There are a couple of points that need to be made here: not only that this \$57 880 has been paid, but this morning the Premier did not even know about it. We are talking about someone who lied to the parliament and then repeatedly lied to the Premier of Tasmania. He lied to the Crown Solicitor, deleted 125 emails from his account and then suggested the Premier do an audit on that account to cover up the fact that he was acting as a shadow director of his own mining company while he was the mining minister - something he repeatedly denied he was doing - and the taxpayer get to pay for the pleasure.

This is disgrace. This is a premier who is out of control. He cannot keep his ministers in line. Then, when they lie to his face and lie to the Tasmania people, the Tasmanian people get to pay for the pleasure. This is a government that is out of control.

The member for Lyons said today that to date this Government has been going 270 days. This is the kind of thing we can expect. More than one minister has lied to the Premier, their own leader, the Premier of this state. Now we find the Government paid nearly \$60 000 in legal costs and the Premier did not even know about it.

If you want to ask, 'Has this guy checked out or not?', you need no starker example. This Premier has no interest in leading this state. The only person on that side who wants to lead the state is the Treasurer. It is well past time the Premier stood down and gave him a go. He could not do any worse. At least he wants the job.

We are talking about someone who misled the parliament and in the dead of night double-deleted all of their emails so they could, in a very cute way, suggest we do an audit into their email accounts. He then hid behind that for two-and-a-half years and hired different special counsels to do

his legal work for him. You have to have the best when you get yourself into a pickle. This multimillionaire cannot even pay for his own legal advice.

This is unbelievable. This is the Liberal Party out of control. The Premier did not even know Mr Brooks had his legal costs paid. The Government is trying to claw some of that money back, now that it has been uncovered on the second last day of this session of parliament. If the Opposition had not asked, would this money have ever been disclosed? Would this money have ever been sought to be returned to the Tasmanian taxpayer? Of course, it would not.

This is a government that is hell-bent on secrecy, a lack of transparency, lie after lie. They think they can get away with it. You need coercive powers from the Integrity Commission and Microsoft to get involved before these lies ever see the light of day. Then we still have a premier who thinks it is okay to pay \$60 000 for the pleasure of being repeatedly lied to. This Government is a disgrace. This is not a premier; this man has checked out. He has no interest in doing the job. If he has no interest in it, he should stand aside and give the Treasurer a go. At least we know he would flex up and have a go. This is not over. This money should be repaid. The Premier should get up in question time tomorrow and commit to seeing that this money is repaid. This is a disgrace.

Australian Forest Contractors Association

[6.20 p.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Resources) - Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the work of the Australian Forest Contractors Association and congratulate the industry achievers who were recognised at a special dinner in Launceston last Friday.

The Australian Forest Contractors Association was established in 2002 as a national peak body for forest contracting businesses. It has a strong tradition of recognising and celebrating the important contribution that those in the industry have and are making. I was proud to represent the Government along with 100 guests at the Hall of Fame and annual dinner. We were there to recognise those who have served the industry with distinction, with service awards, inductions into the Hall of Fame, and the highest recognition of industry icon, awarded for leadership, innovation, ingenuity and setting out to achieve a better future for our industry. It was a great celebration and a wonderful opportunity to recognise the dedication of contractors.

Two leading industry members were elevated to industry icons, Karen Hall and Kevin Morgan. A proud north-east resident, Karen's commitment to the industry has spanned 35 years. She began working as a forestry contractor with her late husband Ken in the native industry and their business adapted through innovation, research and development, in line with the many challenges which have been facing the industry over the past 25 years.

Much of Mrs Hall's involvement has been representing the industry through a range of committees and groups. She was both a founding and passionate Tasmanian member of the Timber Communities Australia organisation, which played a critical role in supporting industry and the communities which rely on them. Mrs Hall has strongly promoted the importance of women working in forestry and has created avenues to support them. She was entered into the Honour Roll for Women in 2011 for her service to business.

The industry also celebrated Kevin Morgan's elevation to industry icon. A northern Tasmanian, Kevin Morgan entered the timber industry shy of his thirteenth birthday, receiving his first pay cheque of £1. He was supervising a sawmill by the time he was 16 years old.

It is worth noting that as Mr Morgan's timber career progressed, so too did his competitive cycling, going on to become the first Tasmanian to represent cycling at the Olympics at Mexico in 1968. After the Olympics, he served as an artilleryman in Vietnam before returning to Tasmania and the timber industry.

In the mid-1970s, with his own sawmill, Mr Morgan began growing a business that has supported hundreds of Tasmanians over four decades and continues today. He entered cable logging in native forests and radiata pine and was the first independent cable operator in Tasmania, in time harvesting up to a million tonnes annually. Along the way, Mr Morgan has been a keen supporter of industry associations, including as a director of the Tasmanian Logging Association.

I am pleased to congratulate Kevin Morgan and Karen Hall in the parliament and thank them for their service to an industry with strong support and proud heritage in our state.

I would also like to honour the latest Hall of Fame recipients who have been working in the industry for at least 25 years. This year the association honoured five Tasmanians with the recognition, including Karen Hall adding to her industry icon award, as well as Phillip Boss, Kevin Muskett, Geoffrey Muskett and the late Douglas Bowen, and from New South Wales, Stephen Cox and Gary Bergin. The association also announced its latest recognition of Service to Industry Awards to Tasmanian Mark Sealy and Victorian Gary Kennedy, who have supported forestry contracting businesses and contributed to the ongoing success and progress of the industry.

The association's annual celebration is an important way for those of us who support the industry to recognise the people within forestry contracting and the very important role they play within industry and their communities. Forest contractors play a key role in the sector through specialist harvesting or haulage services that help our wood growers get their product to market and bring returns to their local communities. With the timber and forestry sector an important part of the Tasmanian economy and social fabric, providing career paths and livelihoods for thousands of Tasmanians in regional areas, we are proud to have been part of this year's awards and congratulate all of the inductees.

Bob Brown Foundation and Patagonia Environmental Petition

[6.25 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I have the great pleasure tonight to table the largest environmental petition in Australia's history. It is not in the correct form of the House -

Madam SPEAKER - You need to seek leave to present that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, it is not a petition in the form but I seek the leave of the House to present Australia's largest-ever environmental petition. It is the coordinated work of the Bob Brown Foundation and Patagonia and has on it 252 000 signatures, which is just under half the population of Tasmania.

Ms Courtney - Cassy, can I clarify if that is the one that has been seen by us? No?

Mr Ferguson - We haven't seen it. Do you want to show us the petition?

Ms O'CONNOR - Sure. Just while other members are having a look at it, Madam Speaker - and it is a legitimate petition - in June 2018 Patagonia, an outdoor company, and the Bob Brown Foundation launched a campaign calling for Premier Hodgman to nominate takayna/Tarkine for World Heritage protection. Over the following months 252 000 people as at midday on 27 November signed the petition. Just over 72 000 were Australian residents and the remaining were from 136 countries around the world, and parliamentary records and the research that has been commissioned show this is indeed the biggest environmental petition ever tabled in Australia's history.

This is no longer a local campaign. The Tarkine as a wilderness and place of extraordinary natural and cultural heritage is a place that people all over Tasmania, Australia and the world recognise for its extraordinary universal values. It is a wilderness on our doorstep and tragically for the Tarkine and all those who defend it, it is a wilderness that the old parties in this place want to log, mine and, from the Liberals' point of view, open up 4WD tracks and close tracks in the Tarkine that would damage, often permanently, sacred archaeological treasures of Tasmania's first peoples. The Tarkine, or takayna, is one of the world's great wildernesses and is under threat at this very day. There are rainforest reserves and conservation areas in takayna that this Liberal Government wants to log. They want to let logging companies in to log myrtle, sassafras and celery top, those extraordinary trees that are part of our rainforest estate in Tasmania.

It is very disappointing to everyone who participates in this campaign that the Premier would not take the time to receive this petition that was started in June. Patagonia and the Bob Brown Foundation were seeking an opportunity to meet with the current Premier, Will Hodgman, to hand over this petition, but that opportunity was denied, which is why we have brought it into the House tonight.

For members who have not paid attention to the details of this beautiful place right here on our doorstep, the Tarkine is a 495 000-hectare region in north-west Tasmania and one of the last undisturbed tracts of ancient rainforest in the world. It also includes one of the highest concentrations of Aboriginal archaeology in the hemisphere with evidence on that coastline of Aboriginal heritage dating back tens of thousands of years.

This area is critical habitat for 60 of Tasmania's rare and endangered species, including the Tasmanian giant freshwater crayfish, the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and the iconic Tasmanian devil. Despite the takayna/Tarkine's immense archaeological and cultural values it remains unprotected and at the mercy of destructive extraction industries including logging and mining.

The Minister for Parks and current Premier, Will Hodgman, has the responsibility to protect this landscape in perpetuity as a World Heritage Area and national park that is owned and managed by Tasmania's first people. Researchers have already identified that takayna/Tarkine meets several of the 10 outstanding universal values criteria for world heritage listing. A world heritage area designation would benefit the ecological and cultural integrity of the landscape and it would create economic opportunities for the north-west coast community as a result of increased sustainable tourism.

I commend the petition to the House. I also, on behalf of the Tasmanian Greens, thank the Bob Brown Foundation, the Tarkine National Coalition and Tasmanians and Australians from all walks of life who defend that beautiful place, recognise it is a wilderness that is precious to the world, to our children and our grandchildren and will defend it with their last breath, so extraordinary is the takayna/Tarkine. I commend the petition to the House. Further, I acknowledge that Tarkine

defenders gathered in their hundreds on the lawns of parliament last night. I congratulate them and thank them for bringing their protest and their campaign back to the lawns of parliament.

If you would like to prevent the largest environmental petition in the country from being tabled, do have a crack at it, Mr Barnett.

Mr Barnett - We support you tabling it and we would like you to show us the petition.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. I will find the front page. They are the words on the front page of the petition. If you are happy for me, in good faith, to bring that back to you tomorrow, I will do that. Thank you, Mr Barnett.

Leave granted.

Mr Adam Brooks MP - Integrity Commission Report

Bernie Banton AM - Anniversary of Death

Australian Record Industry Awards

[6.32 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I go to the original thoughts around my adjournment speech, and the remarkable contribution by the Premier on the adjournment outlining the \$57 888 payment reimbursing the legal fees of Mr Brooks, a man who deliberately misled parliament, who lied to the Premier and the Solicitor-General time and time again. He deliberately misled the House, not in conducting the duties of a minister but in trying to save his own skin. The average wage of a teacher assistant asking for a fair wage increase is \$25 000. There are a couple of teacher assistants' wages in that sum. All we have is a Premier who was very disappointed in his minister, apparently very disappointed, and he paid a heavy price.

Mr Bacon - Here is a cheque.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, there it is, one of the richest men in Tasmania is given \$57 000. There is more to come, apparently, based on the Premier's contribution. This is the average wage in the seat of Braddon, around \$57 000. It is not even the cheque the Treasurer is going to pay for the legal bills Mr Brooks racked up for lying repeatedly to the Tasmanian parliament, to his Premier and to the people of Tasmania. What an absolute disgrace.

Mr Bacon made this point previously - if we had not asked about that detail in question time today, would we have ever known? This is a secretive, deceptive and slimy Government that does not have the ticker to do the right thing by the Tasmanian people. Mr Brooks' comments on his own Facebook page are a disgrace, 'I have been completely exonerated.'

Mr Bacon - Nothing to see here.

Mr O'BYRNE - 'Nothing to see here. I do not agree with all the findings. I told the Premier I will not be seeking a ministerial position if it is offered'. It has nothing to do with the Premier. The Premier should appoint the ministry. We hear the tough guy, and how he handled that yesterday was disgraceful. The report was tabled just after 11 a.m. He spoke on indulgence and, for the first three minutes, said, I have been cleared, it is nothing to do with me, I am okay. He gave the media

around half-an-hour to read a 70-page report and immediately gives a press conference taking questions on it. How gutless. The lack of accountability in this place is disgraceful. The fish rots from the head. They are led by this Premier, who has not got the ticker and who has had minister after minister lie to him, repeatedly, with absolutely no consequences.

Dr Broad - Who should I make the cheque out to?

Mr O'BYRNE - That is right. Unbelievable. To stand on the adjournment and meekly say, read it in and I will update the House later because there is probably a little bit more coming his way: indemnifying a minister in his role who was found misleading and lying to an Estimates Committee, covering up and frustrating the investigation for two years. He was zombie-walking simply to kick it past an election so he could get another four years. What a disgrace.

Dr Broad - That is \$463 per email deleted.

Mr O'BYRNE - I would not mind that job. I would do that.

I acknowledge that yesterday was the 11th anniversary of the passing of Bernie Banton AM. Bernie was a social justice campaigner and a leading political campaigner for many workers who contracted asbestos-related diseases at the hands of James Hardie, a multinational company that misled their workforce, the community and governments across the world for decades with regard to the dangerous implications of working with asbestos-related products.

Bernie, who was suffering from asbestos-related diseases was, sadly, taken by peritoneal mesothelioma after years of campaigning for justice. He campaigned for himself and thousands of other James Hardie workers seeking justice and compensation for diseases they contracted, through no fault of their own, through workplace exposure while working for a company that knew this product would kill. The company knew this product would kill the workers at James Hardie's factories and mines that handled these products and they knew very well it would impact on the families of those workers. Workers were cuddling their kids in their work gear, with asbestos related products all over them, when they arrived home. The exposure to those workers and their families was a crime and thousands upon thousands of families have been affected by this company that for many, many years hid the risk of asbestosis. The company hid the impacts of that and deliberately sought ways, legal and otherwise, to stop people seeking legal and fair redress and compensation for the diseases they contracted.

It took someone like Bernie, working with his union and Greg Combet, the then secretary of the ACTU, who worked year after year raising these issues and finally brought the company to justice and to establish a fund. Sadly, it did not save Bernie's life. I will never forget the moment when the campaign was at its height and James Hardie had not signed on the line and committed, the federal government, the health minister of the time, Tony Abbott, referred to him as pulling stunts and that he was not true of heart. This was said of Bernie, as straight as the day is long and a fair, compassionate man fighting for justice. Tony Abbott later apologised but it goes to show that justice is never easily won.

When you seek fairness and equity in this world against the powerful, it is never freely given. It is something you have to fight for and something you have to join in with others, to balance up the imbalance of power in these relations. I will never forget standing next to Bernie's widow, Karen Banton, in 2012 when, as workplace relations minister, we introduced the asbestos compensation scheme in Tasmania to allow workers who had contracted asbestos-related diseases through their work environment to get access compensation that was just, but the legal means and

tactics of companies related to James Hardie and others sought every legal opportunity to stop workers getting fair compensation for their illnesses in this industry. On behalf of the Tasmanian Parliament, on the eleventh anniversary, we acknowledge the passing of a great social justice warrior. Vale, Bernie Banton.

Tonight the ARIAs - the Australian Record Industry Awards - are on, and three Tasmanian acts are up for a number of awards, the Wolfe Brothers, Luca Brasi and Courtney Barnett. The Wolfe Brothers are a rocking country outfit. They have a lot fun, they really work hard and they are great guys. I have seen them at Longley and Kingston; they are locals down that way. They regularly turn up and support a whole range of community events. They are decent fellows and we wish them all the luck in world and hope they can come back with awards.

Luca Brasi is a great young punk outfit, originally from St Helens but now based in Hobart. I had the fortune for me but misfortune for them in terms of the result when we played against each other in the RecLink Community Cup, an annual football match between a bunch of A-grade celebrities and C-grade politicians like myself playing against musicians to raise funds for RecLink that fund sporting opportunities for people -

Mr Jaensch - C-grade politicians like yourself?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes. It is good fun. The other politician was Mr Gaffney from the other House, a champion footballer, and in the last game he received best on the ground. We won three games in a row and Luca Brasi played for the Rock Dogs. They are very passionate about their music and their sport, they love the RecLink Community Cup and they are up for a number of awards and we wish them well. They are a great bunch of guys. Last time I saw Tye Richardson he was protesting out the front here to scrap the cap for public sector wages because he works in the Education department.

A big shout out to Luca Brasi and the Wolfe Brothers and also Courtney Barnett, a former Tasmanian artist. I have never met Ms Barnett but I know people who know her well and apparently she is a cracking human being. We wish the Wolfe Brothers, Luca Brasi and Courtney Barnett all the best at the ARIAs and hope they bring home some awards for Tasmania.

Trout Fishing in Tasmania

[6.42 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, it is an honour tonight to be able to speak about the importance of Tasmania's world-class trout fishery. As many here know, I have been a very keen trout angler since I was a boy, being raised at Hagley on the Meander River, and I have spent many hours searching for that wily brown trout as a young boy in those growing-up years. I also enjoyed fishing in the early days at Low Head and on the east coast.

In terms of trout, I have had the opportunity to be a former board member of the Freshwater Anglers Council of Tasmania and a board member of the Tasmanian Angling Hall of Fame at the Salmon Ponds at Plenty. It is a delight and an honour to support the wonderful historic and vibrant Tasmanian sector as Minister for Primary Industries and Water and to support the trout fishery.

Dr Woodruff - Support them by listening to them.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The first trout came to Tasmania in 1864, 154 years ago as a result of the pioneering efforts of James Youl of Symmons Plains. There were several unsuccessful attempts prior to the successful voyage of 12 000 miles from England to Plenty via Melbourne on board the *Norfolk* and the HMVS *Victoria* from Melbourne to Hobart.

On 21 January 1864, the *Norfolk* left England carrying more than 100 000 salmon and trout, packed in moss in the ship's icehouse. These live trout and salmon first arrived in Tasmania on 20 April 1864. They were raised at the Salmon Ponds at Plenty by William Ramsbottom and that is not far away from my office in New Norfolk and the Salmon Ponds is a very special part of Tasmania.

Trout were never intended to be brought to Tasmania, only salmon. However, trout became far more successful. After breeding, they were transported to lakes all over Tasmania, with the Great Lake being stocked in 1870. Trout from Plenty were later used to establish hatcheries throughout Australia and New Zealand. This story illustrates the enterprising spirit of colonial Tasmanians, the can-do attitude that did not let failure get them down, and something we should strive towards today, that is for sure. The salmon ponds at Plenty are now the oldest continuously operating trout hatchery in the southern hemisphere, continuing the legacy of Youl, Ramsbottom and all those other visionaries and volunteers that brought trout to Tasmania.

Tasmania has over 26 000 anglers and, of those, 5000 mainland anglers and overseas anglers each year, which is terrific. The Hodgman Liberal Government has frozen the cost of the inland fishing licenses for a further four years from 2017-18. Planning is well underway now for the new \$300 000 program to build and upgrade toilets and amenities at popular fishing locations. Proposed sites include Bronte Lagoon, Four Springs Lake, Lake Crescent, Little Pine Lagoon, Penstock Lagoon, Woods Lake, Tungatina Lagoon, Lake Binney, Bradys Lake and Lake Augusta. I was talking to an angler the other day seeking an update on where these facilities will be built.

We have \$200 000 to support the Anglers Access Program starting next year and are looking forward to that rolling out because that is very popular for anglers to be able to access the relevant trout fishery. These upgrades also focus on the potential and actual venues for the world fly-fishing championships in 2019, 12 months from now. We will host that from 30 November to 8 December 2019 and the Hodgman Liberal Government is contributing \$100 000 to support the 2019 championships, which will be held and based out of Launceston at a number of rivers and a number of lakes, as I have mentioned. This is terrific news for tourism businesses and any business involved in the visitor economy, not just for northern Tasmania but across the state.

That is why the Hodgman Government is supporting it through Events Tasmania and providing that funding support. I should note there are other wonderful sponsors including Hydro Tasmania, Gold Wind and many others. Up to 30 trout fishing teams will be participating in the championships and about \$2.5 million or more will be pumped into the state through the cost of accommodation, hospitality necessities, restaurants and the like.

The event aligns with Tasmania's natural environment and the international exposure generated will further enhance and promote Tasmania as a world-class not just fly-fishing destination but a trout fishing destination, and it will have benefits for years to come. John Diggle from the Inland Fisheries Service said the event will have long-lasting benefits for the state, while Luke Martin from

the Tourism Industry Council commented that the event would also generate awareness for Tasmania, resulting in repeat visitors.

I congratulate Malcolm Cross and his committee at Fly Fish Australia Inc., who prepared for the successful bid to FIPS-Mouche, the international body responsible for fly-fishing events. They have secured Tasmania successfully and Launceston is the host city for the event. Just yesterday Premier Will Hodgman and I met with Malcolm Cross and his committee from Fly Fish Australia and the FIPS-Mouche representative, Eduardo Ferraro, all the way from Italy, and they were very commending and positive about the wonderful destination and trout fishery that will be hosting the world fly-fishing championships in 12 months' time. Twelve months from today this world-class trout fishery will be acknowledged and noted and it will be a great boost for Tasmania and tourism as well. I congratulate them on their efforts.

Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania

[6.49 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to raise a concern that has been brought to my attention by the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania. Yesterday they issued a press release. It is dated 27 November and is in relation to comments made by the Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson, last week. I will read the entire press release into *Hansard* for members' interest because it is quite a serious concern they have raised and they have asked for Government to provide a response. Since it was issued yesterday, I have not seen any response from the Government to the concerns of the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania. The press release reads as follows:

Rural medicos urge Minister to deny worrying comments on doctor training

The Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania says it is 'very disappointed and concerned' with comments attributed to the Tasmanian Health Minister, Michael Ferguson MP, that it is not the State Government's role to provide training for doctors working in the state.

The minister's comments were reported in a news grab on ABC radio last week and were in response to an RDAT media release expressing concern at the Tasmanian Government's decision not to continue to fund an important rural generalist training program for the state.

This Program has been training doctors with a strong mix of advanced skills for Tasmania's rural communities, but its future is now very uncertain.

We are deeply concerned at the comments attributed to Minister Ferguson that it is not the State Government's role to provide training for doctors in Tasmania, RDAT President, Dr Eve Merfield, said.

We call on Minister Ferguson to publicly confirm that there is a role for the Hodgman Government in training Rural Generalist doctors for Tasmania and that it will continue to fund the Tasmanian Rural Generalist Training Program.

It is very disappointing and worrying that Minister Ferguson feels it is not the State Government's role to provide training for the doctors who will work in the

numerous state-run rural hospitals around Tasmania, not to mention also working as much-needed GPs in their rural communities.

A recommendation in the report, Acute Health Services in Tasmania, released yesterday by the Parliament of Tasmania's Legislative Council Government Administration Committee, recommended that the State Government continue to engage with key representative groups to 'identify opportunities to better utilise nurse practitioners and medical staff such as rural generalists'.

Continuing to fund and expanded Tasmania's Rural Generalist Training Program would bring enormous opportunities - not only in providing better access to health care for rural Tasmanians, but also in keeping more Tasmanian trained doctors in Tasmania.

While Tasmania's Rural Generalist Training Program is now under threat of closure, other state governments across Australia are seeing the value of Rural Generalist Training and getting right behind it.

This has been most notable in Queensland, where the state government has been running Rural Generalist training for years, and delivering a steady stream of doctors to work in Rural Generalist-run small and medium-sized hospitals around Queensland.

Queensland's approach has delivered to rural communities across the state a strong and sustainable medical workforce with a range of advanced skills to meet the needs of those communities.

This is a model that could be used to run the Mersey Hospital, which has been plagued by staffing shortages and relies heavily on expensive locums. It could also transform the Mersey into a Rural Generalist training hub, enabling more of Tasmania's doctors to gain the skills needed to go out and work in the state-run rural hospitals around Tasmania.

Whilst there is work currently underway at the federal level to develop a national Rural Generalist Pathway, its success will rely on states supporting Rural Generalist training at the local level.

The Tasmanian Government also has a responsibility to Tasmanian rural communities to provide doctors who can undertake comprehensive health care, including inpatient care, in its state-run hospitals.

We urge Minister Ferguson to get behind Rural Generalist training in this state before more and more future rural doctors leave Tasmania for the mainland.

Madam Speaker, I thought that was a serious-enough issue to raise tonight and to read in full for the House's attention. I ask the Minister to provide a response to the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania. I have not seen anything in media releases issued by the Government today on behalf of the minister, or anything printed in the press. It may be that I might have missed it; there has been quite a lot happening today. Nonetheless, this is a very serious matter that goes to the provision of health care in rural and regional Tasmania.

The statements by the minister reported last week on ABC radio have concerned the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania. The state has indicated they are withdrawing funding for this program at a time when other states are supporting it. Given the challenges that we see across the state of communities accessing GPs and the provision of GP care in some places such as St Helens, down the peninsula, even places like New Norfolk, it is the most important time for the Government to provide access to primary care, particularly GPs with rural generalist skills, and help to take pressure off the hospitals, which are at crisis point every single day.

I urge the minister to provide an urgent response to the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania to clarify whether their concerns are accurate, and whether the Tasmanian Hodgman Liberal Government is ceasing its funding for the training of rural generalists in Tasmania.

The House adjourned at 6.55 p.m.