



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 11 September 2024

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 11 September 2024

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Bass - Mr Ferguson

[10.01 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I advise the House that minister Ferguson is absent from the Chamber today due to personal reasons. I advise the House that during Question Time, I will take questions on the portfolio of Treasury. Minister Ogilvie will take questions on the portfolio issues of Small Business and Consumer Affairs.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

The SPEAKER - I recognise in the Gallery the presence of a former senator and federal minister, Mr Nick Sherry. Thank you very much for joining us today, Nick.

We also have one of our youth parliamentary participants from 2024, Lily Obod, who is here doing work experience in the Legislative Council and has come to see how work is actually done. We are delighted to have her here. Thank you very much for joining us, Lily.

QUESTIONS

Budget 2024-25 - Debt Repayments

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.02 a.m.]

Yesterday, you admitted that you have let Tasmanians down. Today, you have admitted that after 10 years you have completely lost control of your Budget. After inheriting zero net debt when you were elected, you have admitted today that you are now on track to rack up \$8.5 billion worth of debt. You will be spending more on interest repayments than the entire Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. You have made the selfish and short-sighted decision to put all the state's problems on the credit card. In doing so, you have mortgaged Tasmania's future. Why should future generations pay for your budget mismanagement and infrastructure blowouts?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - He has not yet even made it to the lectern yet, Mr Willie. Thank you, Leader of Government Business as well.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I acknowledge Lily and Mr Sherry as well, I look forward to our next coffee at our favourite coffee shop in Devonport in the near future.

The Leader of the Opposition speaks of letting people down, but this is an opposition leader who, for the last six weeks, has said that the Deputy Premier has a lot of questions to answer. Every single day he was out there saying that the Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Treasurer needs to answer these questions, et cetera. Here we are on the second day of parliament - absent.

Mr Winter - He is not here.

Mr ROCKLIFF - He was here yesterday.

Ms White - You are the Minister for Infrastructure.

Members interjecting.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Speaker. I am aware that the Deputy Premier is not here today for personal reasons and I am being conscious of that. I expect the Premier to be conscious of that as well in his contribution.

The SPEAKER - First of all, it is not a point of order. I ask the House to be cognisant of the reasons that minister Ferguson is absent today.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I was making the very considered point that not a single question was asked to the Deputy Premier yesterday, despite the fact you have been going out talking a big game over the last six weeks. The fact is, you have no guts, mate. That is the fact of the matter. No guts.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I ask the Premier to direct his commentary through the Chair and not directly to the Leader of the Opposition. I ask members on my left to be a little quieter.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Then, you had the gall to go out onto the parliamentary lawns and say that the Premier should take control of this project. We have taken control of this project, as I said yesterday. You are all talk, all smear, but you have no guts and no courage. That is clearly evident in the lack of questions to the Deputy Premier yesterday.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Speaker. The Premier so far has not got anywhere near the question. It is \$8.5 billion worth of debt we have asked about and he has not taken control of the issue or the question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Stop interjecting, member for Lyons. Also, leader of government business. Premier, the question was about the current Budget position and future payments. I draw you to that for the last 30 seconds.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, honourable Speaker, I respect your ruling. We are making sensible and sound decisions on behalf of the Tasmanian people. We have charted a sensible pathway to surplus. Now is not the time to reduce investment in key areas of priority - cost of living, health and housing.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - To repeat the question, it was: after inheriting zero net debt, the Premier has admitted to racking up to \$8.5 billion worth of debt. Why should Tasmanians' future be mortgaged to pay for his incompetence and mismanagement of the budget?

The SPEAKER - The Premier has answered by saying he is making the commitment he has made. If the Premier has something else to add, I will hear it. Otherwise, we will take it as the only answer to the question.

Mr Winter - I do not think he wants to talk about the Budget.

Mr Rockliff - I am happy to talk about it, mate. Ask another question.

The SPEAKER - If you are happy to talk about it, you can both go outside and do it. It is entirely up to you.

Budget 2024-25 - Debt Repayments

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.07 a.m.]

You have completely lost control of this Budget. Your deal with the Jacqui Lambie Network barely lasted three months before it imploded. You are no longer in control of this parliament. Your party is at war with itself. You have decided your political position is too weak to do anything about the rapidly deteriorating Budget position. There is a disaster for Tasmania's future and future generations from the Budget you are about to hand down. This is another Liberal minority government disaster. How can Tasmanians afford your minority Liberal government? Can you explain to Tasmanians why it is a good idea for Tasmania to be paying hundreds of millions of dollars in interest repayments just to service the debt?

The SPEAKER - I remind people that it is easier for Hansard to record the answers if we do not interject as much.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question. I will be interested in what the opposition leader says in six days' time when he delivers an alternative Budget for the first time in 10 years. That is what I will be interested in.

As I have said, we have invested in key areas of priority over the last number of years. The member might not have wanted us to invest in keeping people alive, well and in work during the pandemic, for example, with up to \$2 billion worth of expenditure.

I believe very firmly that an investment of \$600 million is critical to addressing the wrongs of the past in the failures of governments of all colours and the protection of our children and young people. We have chartered a sensible pathway to surplus and we will continue to do so.

Now is not the time to reduce investment in those key priority areas. Now is not the time to reduce investment in supporting Tasmanians through a cost-of-living crisis. Tasmanians, as indeed all Australians given the federal settings, are being crunched by interest rates and inflation. We are reaching in to support Tasmanians. Tomorrow's Budget will deliver \$460 million of concessions aimed at helping vulnerable Tasmanians.

The member can get up in his Budget reply next week, if he likes, and say that we should not be investing in any of that. What will also be included in our Budget tomorrow is \$110 million in new mental health beds. Globally, we are facing an enormous challenge post-pandemic to the mental health and wellbeing of communities across the globe and in Tasmania. Tomorrow we will be delivering investments in those key areas of priority, for example, mental health beds.

We will also include an additional \$20 million to maintain social homes across Tasmania, over and above existing investment on maintenance. This is manageable debt to keep delivering cost-of-living relief, health, housing and that key intergenerational infrastructure - which we spoke about yesterday in the Matter of Public Importance - a sensible pathway to surplus. This is not the time to reduce key investments in delivering on health, cost-of-living relief and housing or to have the austerity budget of 2011 from the Labor-Greens that essentially -

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

Political Donation Disclosure Laws

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.11 a.m.]

At your state conference a fortnight ago, Liberal Party treasurer Rod Bramich told members, 'It won't be business as usual under Tasmania's new donation disclosure laws'. He also implored everyone to up their efforts and get as much money in as possible before the laws come into effect next year. We know business as usual for the Liberals has been the interests of multinational corporations over everyday Tasmanians. You have had the likes of JBS showing up at fundraising dinners, you are mates with pokies barons and millions of party donations are kept secret.

The whole point of your government's legislation was to tackle dirty money in politics, but your party is obviously doubling down. Will you rule out any involvement in hustling for donations with big businesses and dodgy special interests? Will you also act to ensure the Liberal Party voluntarily discloses all donations over \$5000 that it receives before the laws take effect?

Mr Abetz - \$1.6 million. Dirty money.

The SPEAKER - The member has asked a question and members on my right will listen to the answer in silence.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and great interest in the Liberal Party state council, which was a tremendous success.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Leader of the Greens and the Leader of Opposition Business.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Peter Dutton gave a wonderful address on Friday evening. I met with the Leader for an hour prior to the Liberal Party function. We are working solidly alongside our federal leader, who is standing up for jobs, as we are as a Liberal government, whether that be mining, aquaculture, renewable energy or agriculture jobs. We will always stand up for jobs.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Members on my left, including Ms Finlay, the member for Bass, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I do not accept the premise of your question. It is laced with irony, given that a \$1.6 million donation was given to the Greens to effectively close down an industry.

Mr Abetz - The biggest ever.

The SPEAKER - Leader of the House, Mr Abetz, you can also be silent, and the Leader of the Greens.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I expect every one of our team to be out there engaged with industry, talking to people in Strahan who feel insecure about what is happening federally due to Greens' activism and the timid nature of a federal government that will not stand up for salmon farming jobs. That is who we are engaging with, first and foremost: the people and the jobs that are under threat because of you, because of the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation, who raise money day in, day out, to shut industry down. I will not have a bar of it. I expect each one of the people behind me, Dr Woodruff, to be out there every single day engaging with their communities and standing up for the workers around rural and regional Tasmania.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - Before I hear the supplementary, I will remind the Premier to direct his answers through the Chair in the hope that we will avoid the interjections. I will hear the supplementary - a not unexpected supplementary.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can the Premier attend to the question and confirm whether you will ask the party to disclose donations over \$5,000 that it receives before the laws take effect, if you have nothing to hide?

The SPEAKER - I wrote the question down. It was raised in the question. The question was about the donations that the party might seek. The issues of how the particular political parties in this place conduct their business is a matter for them. However, there is community interest because of the legislation, so I ask the Premier to address it in what form he can.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, honourable Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for the question. It is a pretty simple answer. We will comply with the law.

Affordable Housing - Fountainside Building

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS

[10.17 a.m.]

Last month you announced that the state government had purchased the Fountainside building from UTAS. At no point did you disclose that Homes Tasmania had made this purchase. In your government's own words, the purpose of Homes Tasmania is to fund affordable housing for people on low incomes and people at risk of homelessness. Not only has Homes Tasmania gone outside its remit to purchase a building that has nothing to do with social housing, the irony of Homes Tasmania outbidding Colony 47 in the process is not lost on people.

Your argument that this purchase would free up other housing does not stack up, as Fountainside was already 80 to 90 per cent occupied by health workers under a lease by the Health department. Housing visiting health workers has traditionally and appropriately been the responsibility of the Health department. Why is this now the responsibility of Homes Tasmania when almost 5000 people are languishing on the priority waiting list?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I have to say that I think many people in our community would be a little confused as to why Mr O'Byrne is concerned about housing for healthcare workers. I think most people in our community understand that that is a really important thing and that the government should be investing in it, because these people are healthcare heroes who provide services at the Royal Hobart Hospital as part of our key worker accommodation project. There will be healthcare workers who will provide services at the Launceston General Hospital as part of our key worker healthcare project that delivered 24 units at Punchbowl.

It does take the pressure off the private rental market. We have been able to secure that facility at Fountainside for the long term, so that those healthcare workers will have a place to go and so that future healthcare workers will be able to stay at that facility which is right next to the Royal Hobart Hospital. That is the best place for them. We think it is a wonderful opportunity.

It was such a secret that Homes Tasmania bought the building that I was the one who did the media event on it. It was not the Minister for Health, it was me. The photos were with me.

Mr O'Byrne - You did not say at the media event. They did a social media post the week after.

The SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, you can do a supplementary or a point of order.

Mr ELLIS - We were talking about having delivered the key worker accommodation project. It is not secret. It is a good thing. We are really pleased and proud to be able to back in action across the entire housing spectrum. This is the thing that we fundamentally disagree on, Mr O'Byrne. I know that. When we asked the community whether the government should take action across the housing spectrum, overwhelmingly the answer from the community is 'yes'. Yes, we should. We should take action for crisis accommodation. We should take action for social housing for people doing it tough. We should take action on affordable housing so that young families can have an opportunity to buy a home even if they are on a low income. We should take action to increase housing supply around Tasmania. We should take action to ensure that our key healthcare workers have a place to go after they have done a big shift making sure that Tasmanians are safe, healthy, and well. Those are important investments that we make in the future of this state.

We will continue to grow those opportunities. We think that there are big opportunities for us to be stepping further into the key worker accommodation space. I know that the Premier has met with key players on the west coast. We know that housing is a key constraint for some of our big resource industries that drive this economy in Tasmania. If Homes Tasmania, as a body that delivers housing for people around our state, is able to take further action in that space, then we will absolutely grab that opportunity with both hands. I think Tasmanians are waking up to the fact that we need to take action across the housing spectrum, and that is exactly what we set up Homes Tasmania to deliver.

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is not what you set up Homes Tasmania for. Why have you raided the Homes Tasmania budget when this is a Health responsibility?

The SPEAKER - I draw the minister to the original question.

Mr ELLIS - Honourable Speaker, we did set it up. I know you did not vote for it, but the parliament voted for Homes Tasmania because it enables us to take action across the housing spectrum. That is exactly what we have set it up for and want to deliver.

We want to take even more action for to key worker accommodation. I think a lot of Tasmanians look at other jurisdictions where there are dedicated bodies that focus on housing for their key workers, whether that is Defence Housing Australia or the government housing body in Western Australia. There are big opportunities to bring those services that are provided to our key healthcare workers together in one place. It does not raid the budget for Homes Tasmania. They are totally separate parts of our business. This is an arrangement that we have with the Health department and we are looking to make further opportunities available in that space. Our job is to deliver the 10,000 social and affordable homes for Tasmania. We can do that as well as deliver key healthcare housing for workers.

The SPEAKER - The minister can resume his seat. His time has expired.

Public Transport - Restoration of Cancelled Bus Services

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for TRANSPORT, Mr ABETZ

[10.22 a.m.]

Making sure public transport access is designed into new facilities is critical. It is especially critical for a mega-project like a stadium at Macquarie Point. However, there is little evidence you have done any real planning for public transport access to a stadium, nor for the transport issues commuters are facing right now, including congestion and in a cost-of-living crisis. Right now, we are 30 bus drivers short in greater Hobart and there is a broken wage and condition process for workers. You are responsible for a broken bus network, with 180 bus services cancelled every day, and that is just in greater Hobart. When will you restore these vital services? Is this not a bigger priority than funding a billion-dollar stadium?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Lots of issues there, unfortunately most of them incorrect. In relation to the services Metro seeks to provide, I have said on numerous occasions that there is a driver shortage. There is a driver shortage in Australia of 25,000 drivers. Tasmania is not immune from that. In south-east Queensland there is a shortage of 500 drivers. If we could get more drivers, we would be employing them. Metro has engaged -

Ms Burnet - You are doing nothing to retain them.

The SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Dr Woodruff - Throw your hands up and roll over.

The SPEAKER - Leader of the Greens, thank you.

Mr ABETZ - Unstoppable.

Dr Woodruff - I hope so.

The SPEAKER - I will allow that one.

Mr ABETZ - Metro has engaged in seeking new drivers. It has training sessions and is going out into the market trying to get as many drivers as possible. That is a situation the management is seeking to deal with.

The member referred to the cost-of-living situation. We are very cognisant of that. I thought the member could have at least had the graciousness of acknowledging the half-price bus fare, which is a genuine cost-of-living measure. However, it is in the nature of the Greens to never accept anything that might be positive from this government.

We know that the member is against the stadium, as are the Greens, because the stadium means infrastructure which means the Greens are diametrically opposed to it. Therefore, it is somewhat strange that there is a concern to get people to an infrastructure project they diametrically oppose. The government is looking at these matters. That is why the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor is being looked at as we speak. These are matters that are -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Sorry, minister, you led with your chin on that one.

Mr ABETZ - These are all things that are part and parcel of this government's strategic 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

Members interjecting.

Mr ABETZ - Continuous interjections from the Leader of the Greens. When will it ever stop?

The SPEAKER - Thank you, everyone. Could we hear the minister in silence?

Mr ABETZ - I indicate to the House that Metro management are concerned about the loss of services. They would love to have more drivers, and if the Greens, rather than throwing rocks, could indicate to us how we could get more drivers, we would love to hear from them.

Supplementary Question

Ms BURNET - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary, but I am not sure where you will go.

Ms BURNET - Apart from the analogy of throwing rocks, I think that is pretty -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - I am sorry, I cannot hear you. Member for Clark.

Ms BURNET - Apart from the analogy of throwing rocks - I think that was in poor taste - but the question remains: when will you restore these vital services?

The SPEAKER - I call the minister, but I understand that it is dependent on drivers. If the minister would like to put that on the record?

Mr ABETZ - Yes, it is. I think you read between the lines there.

The SPEAKER - It is not the answer you wanted, member for Clark, but I am not sure that it is not inconsistent with providing an answer.

Budget 2024-25 - Debt

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.26 a.m.]

Saul Eslake's report into the state of Tasmania's finances showed your minority government has completely lost control. He spelled out how your decisions have put Tasmania in a totally unsustainable position. Unbelievably, less than a month later the situation has deteriorated even further. There is now \$2.5 billion more debt than when Saul Eslake delivered his report. You have completely lost control. You have trashed Tasmania's finances and, with them, the Liberal Party's reputation.

Do you agree with minister Abetz that the current debt levels are distressing and require tough decisions for the genuine welfare of next generations, or are you too weak to put Tasmania's interests ahead of your short-term political survival?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I am very proud of our record over the last 10 years. Mr Willie, I would like you to point to areas where we should not have invested in regarding the pandemic, where we should not invest for protecting the safety of our children and young people. Name me a school around Tasmania - a public school - that we should not have invested in over the last 10 years. Name one. Name a public school we should not have invested in. When I became Education minister, classrooms were falling down around the students and teachers' ears. That is clearly evident as I travel around Tasmania.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The member for Franklin will cease interjecting, and members on my left will allow the member to be heard.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will have a sensible pathway to surplus. As I finished my answer yesterday, I was demonstrating the fact that in the 2011 budget, which some might remember fairly well in this House - I certainly remember it well - because 20 school communities were threatened with the closure of their local school. Nurses were sacked and hospital beds were put in storerooms. There was not a great deal of money going out the door for intergenerational infrastructure spend, including on roads.

The member mentions Saul Eslake. I met with Mr Eslake a couple of weeks ago and valued the conversation and the opinion of Mr Eslake.

Regarding 2010-2014, I note the raiding of the superannuation provision account, which is now costing our budget \$350 million a year. I thought you would be -

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I predicted your defensiveness, Mr Willie, because you are famous for your tweet where you spoke about the superannuation provision account, and you said it was purely a presentational change which had no impact on the state's financial position. In other words, it could not be raided.

Thank you for mentioning Mr Eslake. I cannot believe I got the question, in actual fact. I quote Mr Eslake on ABC Radio when he says, 'Under premiers Lennon, Bartlett and Giddings, all that cash was taken out and spent'. There is nothing there to offset that liability and so Tasmania has a big obligation. That was a big social media post fail on your behalf, Mr Willie, and can I say - do not get me started. I might have some time if you ask me a supplementary question on Labor's plan for budget despair with 11 accounting errors. I look forward to this being updated next week.

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time has expired and I am sure that he is waving that document because he is quoting from it and not using it as a prop.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will take the supplementary question.

Mr WILLIE - The Premier did not answer my question regarding whether he agrees with minister Abetz that the current debt levels are distressing.

The SPEAKER - That was the original question, Premier. I draw you to it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, minister Abetz, you can stop helping. Dr Broad, you can stop helping too.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can only imagine the distress of the debt levels, compounded by the fact of you raiding the superannuation provision account. If you had not taken the hay out of the barn and then burnt the barn down we may well be in a better position, in actual fact, Mr Willie.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Bass are both warned. This is only the second time I have had to warn people. Please do not have me ejecting anyone in this session of parliament.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. I am making a very clear point and unlike the austerity budget which constricted the economy - remembering the recession between 2010 and 2014 -

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

Budget 2024-25 - Debt Repayments

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.32 a.m.]

Your minority Liberal government has completely lost control. In 2014, you inherited zero net debt from Labor. In fact, there was \$200 million of cash in the bank. You have now been forced to admit that you have racked up \$8.5 billion of debt and counting. You have admitted there is no pathway back to surplus, just more and more debt, quoting the paper today -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. I am hearing the question in silence.

Mr WILLIE - and there will be no pathway to regaining the Liberal Party's reputation. Tasmania's finances are set to be the worst in the nation and that will be your legacy. Do you agree with minister Abetz that maintaining our lifestyle today at the expense of the next generation is intergenerational theft and selfishness writ large?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank Mr Willie for the question. I will repeat - about the investments we have made in intergenerational infrastructure over the last 10 years - we make no apologies for rebuilding schools, classrooms, new schools, upgrading hospitals - the Royal Hobart Hospital is an example of that - the Launceston General Hospital, the Mersey Community Hospital, and the antenatal centre in Burnie. There will be a new mental health precinct, all part of the North West Hospitals Masterplan, which I look forward to investing in for future generations.

I look forward to supporting vulnerable Tasmanians who have been crunched as a result of high inflation and interest rates as a result of those federal settings and reaching in to support particularly vulnerable Tasmanians. Regarding concessions, tomorrow's Budget will demonstrate \$460 million of record investment in concessions. I make no apologies for supporting Tasmanians through the energy increase, despite the fact Tasmania had the lowest regulated power prices in the nation.

We recognised the pain point for many Tasmanians, which is why we announced the policy last August and delivered the Renewable Energy Dividend in recognition of Tasmanians having built the Hydro, Tasmanians owning the Hydro, and when the Hydro makes money, Tasmanians save money.

I make no apology for that. I make no apology for investing in key areas of priority over the last four years, particularly regarding the pandemic. I make no apologies for investing, where we should, in recognition of failures of all governments of all colours over the last 40 years and ensuring that we are protecting - and have the systems and infrastructure in place - to protect our children and young people.

You can come in here and throw mud all you like, but as the alternative government, you need to demonstrate exactly to the Tasmanian people what you would do about the debt levels in Tasmania.

Mr Willie - Zero net debt when we left office. That is what we did.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can go back in the past if you like.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - To be fair, Premier, you are inciting these interjections. Please stop inciting interjections.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I say, we will have a sensible pathway to surplus. This is not the time for austerity measures. Regarding intergenerational infrastructure expenditure -

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

Housing - Residential Homes Target and Skilled Worker Shortage

Mrs PENTLAND question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS

[10.36 a.m.]

The latest report from Master Builders Tasmania shows that we are seriously under-delivering on the homes needed annually to meet the federal government's target of 1.2 million by 2029. The Tasmanian target should be 5100 new homes per year, but under your watch, only 2400 new homes were commenced in the last financial year.

We have a chronic shortage of skilled workers in the building and construction industry. What is your plan to boost residential builds, address the shortfall of 11,000 tradespeople in our state, and turn around the housing crisis?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and interest in housing and skills. It has been a key focus, when the Premier has shaped these ministries, to bring those leaders together - housing, planning and skills - so we can deliver the workforce we need to build the homes that Tasmanians are looking for. I will address the different aspects of the question.

First, Tasmania is on track for our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. As I mentioned yesterday, we delivered 3696 to July. That is a third of the target in a third of the time, which means that we are on track. The federal government have a target for 1.2 million new homes around the country, and while it is good to see that they have those aspirations, reporting yesterday in *The Australian* that they are currently, it is concerning that in two years of government, they have delivered a grand total of zero homes towards that target.

Certainly, we continue our negotiations with the federal government regarding the Housing Australia Future Fund and a range of different funding measures. Housing ministers across the country are looking to the federal government to step up into this space. They have set a target, but to this date they are yet to deliver even the funding that they promised through the Housing Australia Future Fund. That comes on top of cuts to every state in Australia, including Tasmania, other than the Northern Territory, to our National Housing Agreement.

We are doing our part. We are on track for our targets in Tasmania, but we know that there is more that the federal government needs to do. That being said, this Budget will be delivering on our 2030 Strong Plan. A key part of our 2030 Strong Plan is incentivising more building in Tasmania. That is through incentives like stamping out stamp duty for first home buyers. It is also about making sure we are backing in more medium-density residential developments so that we can deliver more homes at scale in our state by infill that is built around the infrastructure Tasmanians have already invested in.

There is a whole range of different measures, including our \$35 million Homes Faster package that is all about making sure we can boost the construction market in this state and incentivise people to get into a home of their own. Those are really exciting parts of our 2030 Strong Plan. It is why it is so important that we need to deliver on that plan for Tasmanians.

In terms of skills, we have made a range of massive investments. Our High Vis Army is a really innovative model where we are working alongside business and industry to take ownership of the training and the workforce development challenges that industries are facing around Australia. I have to say -

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

Marinus Link - Project Stability

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[10.41 a.m.]

Recently, the CEO of Marinus Link quit suddenly. There are now enough red flags about this project to suggest it could be the next TT-Line. Given the TT-Line fiasco and other major infrastructure project stuff-ups, confidence in the government delivering projects is low. Two Marinus CEOs have quit in less than two years and a Board chair also quit suddenly. There are major cost blowouts and delays. Despite the business case saying we need two cables to make it viable, we are now only getting one cable, but for the price of two. There is mounting dysfunction. Alarm bells are ringing. Are you in control of this project? Do you accept ministerial accountability for this project, or are we going to have another billion-dollar debacle on our hands?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and interest in this very large and vital piece of infrastructure for the future of Tasmania. The delivery of Marinus Link is a central feature of the government's renewable energy vision which underpins the development of new on-island generation, which we all want to see, providing energy certainty and growth for our industries here on the island and the opportunity to put downward pressure on prices for customers.

In Tasmania, we have our nation and world-leading renewable energy target of doubling our 2020 renewable energy generation by 2040. It is a substantial commitment we have made. Marinus Link estimates the project will unlock lower cost generation in both Tasmania and on

the mainland. We have a huge opportunity in Tasmania. Our hydro storages are what is lacking in every other jurisdiction in the National Electricity Market (NEM) -

Ms Finlay - What is the storage level at the moment?

Mr DUIGAN - those deep storages that we can sell at the highest and best use. It is a substantial opportunity for Tasmania.

The SPEAKER - Ms Finlay, you are under a warning. You can raise the issues of the minister's other failures in the portfolio as a question if you would like.

Mr DUIGAN - In recent times, Marinus Link has transformed from a wholly owned subsidiary of TasNetworks into a tripartite company owned by the Australian, Victorian government and Tasmanian governments. Marinus Link is making good progress, with recent announcements that a contract has been executed for the project's high-voltage direct-current cables and for a converter station.

We continue to have conversations with our shareholders in Victoria and the Commonwealth. We expect to see Marinus continue to move forward as Tasmania understands the implications through a whole-of-state business case which will be very important for us to examine as we approach the final investment decision for Marinus Link in May 2025. It is absolutely essential that we understand what the implications in that business case are for the state of Tasmania. I have a great deal of faith in the Board of Marinus. I am in very close contact with the Chair of Marinus and through our shareholder group where we have frequent updates about the ongoing -

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

Child Safety Officer Position Vacancies

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

[10.45 a.m.]

Two weeks ago in commission of inquiry response hearings, department staff presented information that showed 31 per cent of child safety officer positions across the combined north and north west were vacant. As if a third of positions being vacant was not bad enough, we have data showing the actual staffing situation is far worse than this. Accounting for staff on workers' compensation, long-term leave and extended sick leave, we understand real staffing on the ground has reached desperately low levels.

On 30 August, only six staff were at work out of a total of 39 positions. That is 85 per cent of positions unavailable to help children, and it is not an isolated instance. What will it take for you to pull out all the stops and address the severe staff shortages in child safety? When will you do the work needed to properly fill child safety positions and keep children safe?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member, Ms Rosol, for her question. In Foster Care Week I recognise all the foster carers and kinship carers across Tasmania, including Ms Rosol,

who have dedicated their lives and their homes to the task of ensuring that young people who cannot be with their own families are loved and safe. Thank you to them all.

I acknowledge - and I have spoken here before about this - our challenges with ensuring that we have a fully staffed child safety system across the state. That is why our government has invested in a \$4.5 million workforce package, including a payment of \$10,000 for eligible allied health professional employees and managers statewide, a market allowance of 15 per cent for employees in the north west, relocation incentives for employees moving to and remaining in the north-west region, as well as a package of scholarships and fee-free places in university and TasTAFE qualification pathways so that we are generating more workers for the future.

We also have a workforce strategy in accordance with the commission of inquiry recommendations spanning not just the government's own workforce but the whole sector, because you cannot separate the two when it comes to being in the market and attracting and retaining people. We have a child and youth workforce roundtable with the industry and with unions to ensure that we continue to meet the challenges of recruitment and retention in these critical areas.

I am pleased to say that the recruiting process, which has run in parallel with our workforce package, has successfully attracted over 100 suitably qualified applicants and we are in the process of shortlisting those, with a view to interviewing and securing appointments as soon as possible. They will be deployed to the areas of greatest need according to the positions that people have applied for. We will continue to recruit to fill gaps across the state and across the service.

I thank all our child safety staff, our advice and referral line staff, our youth justice workers as well, and the unit coordinators, the youth workers and the administrative staff who have supported them through this very difficult period to ensure that we are continuing to meet priorities for care, ensuring that our foster carers and kinship carers and the young people in their care have access to qualified people who know their cases and their needs and continue to attach them to the supports they need to live full and well cared-for lives.

We do have challenges but I think I can say, hand on heart, that we are pulling out all the stops, we are getting results and we look forward to filling the vacancies that we have.

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

King Island Dairy - Closure by Saputo Dairy Australia

Mr GARLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.49 a.m.]

Saputo Dairy Australia's recent decision to close the King Island Dairy next year was, as one King Island resident put it, 'A kick in the guts'. You said in February about the potential closure of the King Island dairy facility, 'That won't happen, not on my watch,' yet Saputo has announced it will close the King Island area in 2025, on your watch. In response, you announced that your government is providing immediate support to the company's workers, farmers and wider island community, is working with the company in an effort to find a new

operator for this iconic dairy and has established a response team which will work with the King Island community and business leaders.

Can you please inform the House about what immediate support is being provided, what the response team will be doing, what specific actions the government is taking to find a new operator and, most importantly, will you provide assurance that the dairy will not close next year and that you will protect the iconic King Island Dairy brand?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. We are both members for Braddon and have a very keen interest in the future of the King Island Dairy, and King Island more broadly. We will be pulling out all stops to ensure that the dairy does not close. It is not closed yet. Some of those opposite, from their commentary - and I am talking about the Labor Party - seem to think it is closed right now. It is not. We will do all we can to ensure the ongoing viability of the King Island Dairy. I stand by my comments that it will not close on my watch and we will pull out all stops.

We have announced a response team and my expectation is that we will convene on the island for the first time at the end of this week. I will be on King Island on Friday to meet with the mayor and affected employees and visit one of the affected dairy farms. There are four dairy farms on the island. Two are owned by Saputo itself.

I have engaged with the Coordinator-General for some time on developing a package to ensure that the dairy is attractive to a potential purchaser when we go the marketplace. There are good reasons we want to do that. The King Island brand is renowned for its purity and quality. It is a premium brand in that respect. We do not want to take a key wedge, the King Island Dairy and the products it produces, out of the that premium brand space because that would have a potential flow-on effect for the other key areas the island is renowned for: golf tourism, seafood and beef industries. It is important that we keep that holistic brand intact, and King Island cheese is an important part of that.

I have made it clear that I am disappointed in Saputo's decision. Notwithstanding that, we have engaged in a constructive way to ensure that they can support a transition to a new owner. I will be clear over the coming weeks about the support that is available and am interested in developing a model similar to the Caterpillar transition taskforce, when Caterpillar -

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

Budget 2024-25 - Confidence in Treasurer

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.53 a.m.]

Respected economist Saul Eslake showed last month that you have completely lost control of the state's finances. You have admitted today that the situation has deteriorated by another \$2.5 billion. Just three days ago, your embattled Treasurer said you would be restoring Tasmania's fiscal buffers. Today, he has admitted debt will be going up by more than \$1 billion

every year and there will be no return to surplus over the life of this government. How can anyone believe a word he says, let alone trust him with the state's finances?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for his question. I have outlined key areas of investment we will be making in tomorrow's Budget, that being cost-of-living relief, \$460 million worth of concessions - record concessions, I am advised. There will be \$110 million to support mental health services across Tasmania and an additional \$20 million to support housing. The Budget will deliver record cost-of-living relief and supports Tasmania's most vulnerable people while, at the same time, ensuring we are helping to develop stronger communities. That includes additional funding of almost \$1.4 billion, including \$469 million committed to health services and investment in health infrastructure; \$242 million for education and education facilities; \$105 million for community service organisations; and \$59 million for police and emergency services.

That is what you will see in the Budget. It will be a very good record to build on our existing very good record, where we picked up a train wreck in 2014 and rebuilt the economy. We rebuilt a forest industry that you closed down, sending 4000 workers to the scrap heap - I know you are sensitive about it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Premier, and thank you, Attorney-General.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order, honourable Speaker. My question is about the Treasurer saying he wanted to restore the fiscal buffers -

Mr Ellis - Boycott King Island. You should apologise.

The SPEAKER - Mr Ellis, do you wish to be warned as well?

Mr WILLIE - It is clear there will not be a pathway to surplus under this government. How can they be believed?

The SPEAKER - I draw the Premier to the question. He may answer it as he chooses, but you have made your point, Mr Willie.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I appreciate that. I will be giving our Treasurer a report on Question Time today. He will be most interested. He did not get a single question yesterday from the opposition on matters pertaining to his portfolio responsibility, which given the build-up, is astounding. All talk and no action.

Mr Willie - That is the defence?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Sorry, what was that?

The SPEAKER - Premier, you do not get to ask them questions. You get to answer the questions or resume your seat. It is entirely up to you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - All right. We will be -

Mr Willie - Fiscal buffers?

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Mr Willie.

Mr ROCKLIFF - delivering a pathway to surplus. Every state and territory government -

The SPEAKER - With that, the Premier can resume his seat.

Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department - Redevelopment

Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT

[10.57 a.m.]

In February this year, the Public Works Committee recommended the expansion of the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) emergency department (ED) at a cost of \$149 million, with increased capacity intended to meet growing demand over the next 10 years. In July, it was revealed that your government had trimmed this budget by \$19 million, significantly reducing the expansion of the emergency department. Three weeks ago, a leaked staff email made it clear the Royal's emergency department redevelopment has been further scaled back to the point that it will not be fit for purpose on completion, let alone in 10 years' time.

Given the much trumpeted infrastructure spend this Budget, what possible reason can you have for abandoning the necessary approved redevelopment of the emergency department at Royal Hobart Hospital? Why have you chosen to put a billion-dollar stadium before the health of Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her interest in health. I am pleased to be part of a Rockliff Liberal government that is delivering record funding into health: \$12.1 billion over the forward Estimates, \$8.3 million a day. We have employed 2500 extra health professionals in the last 10 years and provided more than 300 extra beds.

I am proud of the record, but there is a lot more to do. That is why we announced plans for a recruitment blitz during the election. We have now delivered 840 extra people into the healthcare sector on the frontline. There will be more people on the frontline this time next year than we have now. That 840 is a 165 net increase. I am pleased with that, but there is a lot more to do. In terms of health infrastructure, as the Premier has outlined, there will be further commitments in the Budget. I am pleased and proud of that and you will see more tomorrow.

You have referenced the Royal Hobart Hospital stage 2 and stage 3 redevelopments. I am aware of the concerns regarding the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital, remembering that we made commitments of an extra 44 doctors and 25 nurses. We have delivered on that already, since we have been elected, for the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department.

There have been no cuts to the Royal Hobart Hospital ED redevelopment. The budget was initially \$50 million. The budget is now \$130 million. I can advise that we are working through the design following advice from independent health planning consultant KP Health, which outlined the number of treatment points required in the ED to meet current and future demand.

I met with the Australian Medical Association (AMA) a couple of weeks ago about this issue, along with my department. Following a very productive discussion I can advise -

Members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - Speaker, I am trying to answer the question.

The SPEAKER - I am looking forward to you getting to it, minister, in your own time.

Mr BARNETT - I can advise that KP Health are undertaking further work on their data, which is now underway. I thank the AMA for the cooperative and collaborative discussions with my department and me. I have been working with the nurses' union at a round table just last Friday at the LGH, and two round tables with the Heath and Community Services Union in recent months. I am looking forward to ongoing discussions. We all want the same thing: to ensure that the next stage is fit for purpose for both now and well into the future. I look forward to working with them and our very valuable clinicians and the awesome healthcare workers who deliver the health care that Tasmanians expect and deserve.

Commission of Inquiry Implementation Reform Monitor - Timeline

Mrs BESWICK question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

[11.02 a.m.]

One of the key responses to the Commission of Inquiry into Tasmania's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings was the establishment of the implementation reform monitor. In June, the relevant bill passed through parliament and we have heard very little since. When will this critical role be filled and when can we start expecting reports from them?

The SPEAKER - Mrs Beswick, could I get you to come back and re-ask the question? I think a lot of people struggled to hear it. The Attorney-General did hear it and clearly has an answer. I am happy for him to jump up, but members are all looking very puzzled because they could not quite hear you. My apologies.

Mrs BESWICK - I was asking about the implementation reform monitor and when they will be appointed.

The SPEAKER - Thank you very much.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her ongoing interest in this matter. To confirm what the Premier said today and the Treasurer and I said yesterday, we are

totally committed to the commission of inquiry's 191 recommendations. The Budget will reflect that tomorrow with a very substantial commitment to ensure that child safety is front and centre. We have four decades-plus where we have failed our children in this state, and others as well, and we need to do better. We are committed to doing that and that is why we have a package of 54 legislative initiatives to address those concerns and implement those recommendations relevant in the commission of inquiry report, one of which was the child safety reform implementation monitor. That bill commenced on 5 July 2024 and it establishes an independent monitor to oversee and report on the implementation of the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry. It is very important and I know the member recognises that as well.

Regarding the establishment of that monitor, that is progressing positively. It is a crucial first step in ensuring we have the foundations to hold our government accountable. It is all about providing accountability for the public and institutions across our government. The monitor will help safeguard children in our care by providing independent oversight and evaluating the effectiveness of the measures as outlined in the commission of inquiry. As I have shared with the member previously, we have advertised that position.

A nationwide merit-based recruitment process is currently underway for the role of the monitor and applications closed on 3 August. That goes through an independent panel that has been appointed and I am very pleased to hear of that progress. It is a very important process and the selection of the right purpose person to fulfil that role is important. I think the member is very keen to know about that.

We will have more to say once that person is appointed. Based on feedback that I have received, I am very confident that person will be highly suitable for the role. We will have more to say at the appropriate time. I am more than happy to keep in touch with the member and other members in this place as we progress implementing the 191 recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

Tasmania's Young People - Future Prospects

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.05 a.m.]

Premier, young people are leaving Tasmania in numbers not seen since the 1990s. Every four days a plane load of young people are moving to the mainland. Is it any wonder when your minority government is selling out their future for your short-term political survival?

Mr Shelton - Was there a question in that? I do not think so.

The SPEAKER - Thank you very much but the former speaker will know that the member did say, 'Is it any wonder', which is actually the preface of a question.

ANSWER

Thank you, Speaker. What a negative, talking Tasmania down question that was. No aspiration, no inspiration, no policies.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. If members on my left wanted to put more in the question, they could have. Premier, please address the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Quite frankly, I am staggered that the alternative treasurer would get up and talk Tasmania down, particularly about young people in Tasmania who we are investing in and listening to regarding their future. I have made it very clear and been very open about the demographic shift in Tasmania over the last 53 years. The median age of a Tasmanian in 1971 was 20. It is now 44. The national average is 37, so we need to have a key population policy we invest in to change that demographic shift to a younger population and younger median age, which we are acting on.

A number of the initiatives in the population policy include housing affordability, allowing Tasmanians to put a 2 per cent deposit on their home, for example, and allowing Tasmanians up to \$29,000 in stamp duty relief for a \$750,000 home, and other incentives regarding medium density builds. I cover this off in -

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is no laughing matter, Dr Broad. This is a very serious policy matter but I would not expect you to have your head around it, given that you cannot count the number of people in the Chamber. This is an important policy point, investing into intergenerational infrastructure.

We are ensuring that we support the long-term education of our young people in Tasmania, extending our high schools to year 12 and providing greater and earlier access to education. Intervention for structured literacy is also increasingly important for the productivity of our state.

Dr Broad - Going backwards.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Dr Broad, that will do.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You can point to very negative matters if you like, but what we are about is investing in our communities, investing in young people, listening to the views of young people and we will continue to do so. What this Budget will clearly demonstrate is that we are investing in key areas of housing affordability to ensure that young Tasmanians can live, work and raise a family in Tasmania.

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

Budget 2024-25 - Debt Repayments

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.09 a.m.]

Tasmania has the worst performing health system in the country, our education results are the worst of any state and they are going backwards. We do not have enough housing. Major highways are filled with potholes. Major projects are endlessly delayed. What does

Tasmania have to show for all your debt? How are you going to address any of these problems now that you have mortgaged the state's future? Where on Earth has all the money gone?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is like we are having a conversation over the bar. I can point to a number of areas where key infrastructure improvements have been made. For example, I am hearing broad support for the Midland Highway upgrades over the last 10 years. I know the delays have been frustrating for some. However, I commend all the people who have worked on that highway, which is now far more efficient not only for cars but freight routes as well.

Mr Willie - I saw three cars changing their tyres near your place, Premier.

The SPEAKER - The member for Clark is warned.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is very good. Thank you, Josh. You are welcome to come in for a cup of tea, if you like. Can I say -

The SPEAKER - The Premier will refer to members by their names and invite them to tea outside of Question Time, thank you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I can point to a brand-new Royal Hobart Hospital that has effectively been built from the inside out. Your government could not even make a decision and lay a single brick on the new Royal Hobart Hospital.

The SPEAKER - Premier, I am listening.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Also, Mersey Hospital upgrades over the last decade and continuing. Minister Barnett was there the other day celebrating the progress of that antenatal centre. Upgrades at Smithton High School, a new Parklands high school, effectively \$11 million investments.

Mr Willie - Public services are at breaking point, economy is flatlining, working-age Tasmanians are leaving.

The SPEAKER - Mr Willie, I accept all those points but you are under a warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Investments of \$11 million in Latrobe High School, \$11 million in Devonport High School, an effectively brand-new Penguin district school, Legana Primary School bouncing out of the ground, and Brighton High School, which I look forward to visiting within the next seven days.

Huge infrastructure investments, as an example, but also rebuilding our health system. We have 2500 more frontline health professionals, for example, more teachers in our schools, our Year 11-12 high school extension program, investing in child and family learning centres. As a good example, Mr Jaensch was at West Ulverstone the other day opening a new child and family learning centre.

In each area of responsibility in and across government, I can point to key investments that will not only support individual communities but generations to come. You mentioned our health system. I am very proud of the record elective surgeries being delivered in and across our public hospitals.

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

State Revenue - Business Taxes

Mr JENNER question to TREASURER, through PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.13 a.m.]

I appreciate that the Premier is going to answer.

Saul Eslake's report in the state's finances has blown the lid off the diabolical mismanagement of Tasmania's funds. One suggestion Mr Eslake put forward was to raise revenue by raising taxes. I am fundamentally opposed to raising taxes for everyday Tasmanians, particularly during this cost-of-living crisis and when they are already doing it so tough. However, can you confirm that our several foreign-owned, multibillion-dollar companies operating in Tasmania have not paid tax for several years? Will you start taxing these companies the same way you tax Tasmanian companies and tax businesses, or will you continue to give tax breaks to these multibillion-dollar companies?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Can I agree with him about the fact that we are not going to introduce new taxes for Tasmanians, with particular regard to the challenge of cost of living, challenges that all Tasmanians are experiencing at this present time? We will reach in and support with concessions and energy bill relief and the like, as we should given the federal settings regarding interest rates and inflation and the impact that has had on many Tasmanians.

We have stamped out stamp duty, as I indicated to Mr Willie in my last question, in terms of buying their own home for the first time and have halved it for any Tasmanian looking to purchase a new medium density property off the plan, which I also mentioned. We have extended our payroll tax rebate scheme that supports about 3000 apprentices, trainees and youth employee placements each year. Giving the employers of these young Tasmanians some relief from payroll tax to ensure more people are getting into those vital trades is important so that this government can support young Tasmanians. I will pick up on Mr Ellis's point about the Hi Vis Army as well. What a great investment initiative supporting young Tasmanians.

That is what you would expect from a government that values the contribution of young Tasmanians and wants to ensure that young Tasmanians who are born here can continue to live here, work here and raise a family here. Also, people from elsewhere, be that globally or nationwide, to come to Tasmania to live to work and raise a family.

The SPEAKER - Premier, in order to avoid the pain that it causes Mr Jenner to stand, could I draw you to the question before he has to do the point of order he is attempting to get up for.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As far as foreign ownership goes, I will review the *Hansard* about the specific question about how much revenue has been raised.

Dr Woodruff - The fact that you do not tax big foreign capitalists.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Leader of the Greens.

Mr ROCKLIFF - From a taxation perspective, the Tasmanian Government does have a specific foreign investor duty surcharge. That is an additional amount of duty charge when residential on primary production properties is acquired either directly or indirectly by a foreign person. I can scrutinize the question and get some detail back to you directly, thank you, Mr Jenner. That is the information I have about foreign arrangements. We will always endeavour to keep taxes as low as possible to encourage investment in Tasmania and for Tasmanians, most importantly to invest in their own state.

The SPEAKER - I remind ministers that if they are going to take a question on notice or get back, it would be better if it is raised in Question Time if they came back to the whole House and take it on notice rather than an individual member to have some completion of the question.

Supplementary Question

Mr JENNER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr JENNER - The questions were not particularly answered and I was hoping that either he would get back to us or put them on notice.

The SPEAKER - Premier, you will take that further part to the question on notice. Thank you. I appreciate that. That concludes the unscheduled questions and we now go to Constituency Questions.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Franklin - Single Use Plastics Litter

Mrs PETRUSMA question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN

[11.18 a.m.]

Constituents in my electorate of Franklin have expressed concerns about the amount of single use plastic items ending up in litter and landfill. This includes things like plastic straws and cutlery, which can create problems such as pollution in our oceans. What is the Tasmanian government doing to address these concerns and to improve outcomes for our environment?

Richmond Police Station - Appointment of Full-Time Police Officer

Mr JENNER question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

This came from a constituent in Richmond. It has been over a year now since the Richmond Police Station has had a full-time police officer. Crime has spiked in the area. Only this week another two cars were broken into and there was a burglary attempt. When is there going to be a full-time police officer at the Richmond Police Station?

Tasmania's Forests - Conservation in Climate Change

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN

My question is from 15-year-old Skye from Sandy Bay. As a young person:

I'm concerned for the future of Tasmanian wilderness and whether future generations will get to witness the beauty of Tasmanian native forests. I am incredibly concerned for the ever-present threat that climate change poses to Tasmania. Floods, heat waves, wildfires and other natural disasters are all results of climate change and these events will only continue to increase in frequency if the Rockliff government does not intervene. I want to know why the government continues to pursue the destruction of these forests, which Forestry Tasmania continues to log and burn.

These forests are integral in combating climate change. They not only sequester carbon, but provide habitat for many of Tasmania's most iconic native species. Why does the Liberal government refuse to act to protect my future and the futures of young people across Tasmania?

George Town - Physiotherapy Services Proposed Reduction

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT

The president, committee and members of the George Town Auxiliary have expressed their serious concern to me regarding the proposed reduction in physiotherapy services at the George Town Hospital. Currently, the hospital is allocated physiotherapy services 2 days per week to support both inpatients and outpatients. This level of service is already comparable or below other regional hospitals and the reduction to one day a week will have a detrimental impact on the community.

The committee strongly believes that maintaining the current physiotherapy service level is crucial for several reasons. It will have a significant impact in the community, it will be detrimental to the impact of the hospital's throughput and it will lead to increased readmissions. The Nursing Director of Primary Health North has advised that the current funding to maintain the current level of physiotherapy services at George Town is no longer possible. The current physiotherapist has become a highly valued member of the community. In light of this, what will you do to ensure that there is enough funding at the George Town Hospital to -

The SPEAKER - The time for the question has expired.

Bushfire Rapid Response Preparedness

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN

I have a constituent who has expressed concerns, following the recent wild weather events, about how the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is preparing for the upcoming fire season. This is particularly relevant for my electorate of Lyons. His question is: what is the Tasmanian government doing to address being ready for a rapid response in the event of a wildfire?

Traffic Noise Monitoring Results

Ms BUTLER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

Francis from Longford would like to know the results of the noise loggers used to measure the decibel readings of traffic conducted by State Roads on Esk Farm and Valleyfield between the dates of 16 May and 29 May 2024, which have been withheld by State Growth.

Time expired.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Warnings to Members During Question Time

The SPEAKER - I remind members who have been warned that the warnings stay in place for the entire day, for further dramatic behaviours later in the day.

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Attendance of Legislative Council Minister for Budget Proceedings

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, which I will ask the Clerk to read:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council desires to inform the House of Assembly that it agrees to the request of the Assembly in its Message dated 10 September 2024 and has given leave for the Honourable Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Education and Minister for Disability Services; and the Honourable Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, and Minister for Parks and Environment, to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Estimates Committee of the House of Assembly in relation to the Budget Estimates and related documents.

C Farrell,
President,
Legislative Council
10 September 2024

Estimates Committees: Attendance of Ministers

The SPEAKER - I am in receipt of a further message:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council having passed the following Resolution now transmits the same to the House of Assembly, and requests its concurrence therein:-

Resolved, that the Legislative Council having appointed two Estimates Committees reflecting the distribution of Government Ministers' portfolio responsibilities, requests that the House of Assembly give leave to all Ministers to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Council Estimates Committee in relation to the Budget Estimates and related documents.

C Farrell,
President,
Legislative Council
10 September 2024

[11.25 a.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the last-mentioned message be taken into consideration forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ABETZ - I move -

That the resolution of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Resolution agreed to.

CHARITIES AND ASSOCIATIONS LAW (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Abetz, for and on behalf of Mr Ferguson, and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Climate Preparedness

[11.26 a.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: climate preparedness.

We have seen extreme weather events over the past fortnight, lived through by all Tasmanians. We know these events are only going to increase, both in frequency and in severity. These are climate-induced events, which is why it is such a shame this government did not see fit to appoint a specific climate change minister. I, like many Tasmanians, am also keenly awaiting the Budget to see what investment this government is putting into mitigating climate change.

We must acknowledge the work of the emergency services personnel, the extraordinary job they did in frightening situations. However, how much stress are these workers, both employees and volunteers, going to be under in the future as we see these events increasing? We have to make sure the Tasmania Fire Service, emergency services through police and the State Emergency Service (SES) are all fully funded. As I touched on yesterday, we also have to make sure that they have a safe workplace to be going to.

It was the SES's extraordinary work in flood preparation, the maps they prepared that were so accurate, that helped local governments such as the Derwent Valley Council accurately prepare for what was to come. We have to make sure they are fully funded to be able to do this moving forward. Having a minister such as a climate change minister could help with that.

It is good the government did appoint an IT minister because it is vitally important that Tasmanians can be connected when we are experiencing extreme events so they can access vital information via the TasALERT app or look up road closures on the police website.

We saw power lines go down. We are going to speak more about future-proofing infrastructure with Mr Garland's motion later today. There are many things we could do in terms of putting power lines underground. We do this for heritage values in towns such as Ross and Oatlands. We could be doing it to help future-proof infrastructure against bushfires as well. The community of Dolphin Sands, in Lyons, has been calling for this for some time.

We also have to make sure telecom towers have a backup power source. Workers should not be going out in isolated situations, in frightening weather, trying to hook up generators. We can have on-site backup power stations. As the federal government renegotiates deals on guaranteeing connections, which is not just on landlines, I hope the state government will be lobbying to make sure we have connectivity into the future.

Two of the most important things we have to do on the climate change front is to protect and restore ecosystems. We have to protect what we already have in Tasmania. That is an intergenerational obligation. That means our carbon-sequestering native forest, but also other kinds of ecosystems that have a lot less promotion than the native forests, such as our endemic peat soils in the south west. Functioning wetlands and saltmarshes also, if they are intact, do a tremendous job of mitigating flooding.

This leads me to restoring ecosystems, because ecosystems in their natural state help build environmental resilience against flooding. In the Derwent Valley, we saw a perfect example of that through the Derwent Catchment Project's work with their Willow Warriors, removing the willows from tributaries to the River Derwent such as the Lachlan and Tyenna rivers. Certainly, the Westaway Berry Farm, which is right on the Tyenna River at the forefront of the flooding, did not see the water level rise through their paddocks with the same amount of rainfall that they did when the willows were in place. We absolutely have to see an upscale in frequency and in efforts to restore ecosystems.

Funding is really important. The government has done a tremendous job in funding the communities that were affected, but one size does not fit all in terms of lump sum payments and there are isolated communities that are going to be extraordinarily out of pocket. Moving forward, we have to make sure we have a blueprint that can be adaptive so that Tasmanians are not out of pocket when we see climate disasters happen.

The greatest investment Tasmania can make for our future, indeed the future of the planet, is to mitigate the impacts of climate change, to rapidly upscale ecosystem restoration, to invest in future-proofing our infrastructure so that we as an island are prepared and our communities are kept safe and we all pull our way in our global duty of sustaining a liveable planet.

[11.31 a.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Children and Youth) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for bringing on this matter of public interest for us to discuss and debate today. I will start, as did the previous speaker, by thanking all the TasNetworks, telecommunications, SES and local government staff, the businesses, service clubs and volunteers of Tasmania and the good neighbours and citizens of Tasmania who have worked so hard for so long to keep people safe, restore essential services and provide food, power and shelter for those who have needed it and who continue to need it as we emerge from this last period of extreme weather events.

I will leave it to the experts to analyse the weather events, the meteorology of the last fortnight's weather, and every emergency service, utility and local authority to review the event and their responses to it to learn everything they can from it, which is what they do every single time, and through this, keep evolving their planning and readiness for future events. This is a normal and essential part of the emergency response system and we are very grateful to all those who are working hard on that as they themselves recover and rest up after an extremely busy period.

What everybody here accepts is that extreme weather events will occur more frequently and with greater severity in the future than they have in the past. Our institutions, infrastructure and industries need to continue to review and reset our expectations and plans for the future, taking advantage of the latest, most current and up-to-date projections of future climates that we need to be planning for.

That is why this government has produced and provided unprecedented funding and investment for Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2025, which includes \$250,000 to develop Tasmania's first-ever statewide climate change risk assessment; \$2 million to update Tasmania's fine-scale climate projections so that communities and industries can plan for local climate changes; \$500,000 to build the local government sector's capacity to respond to the

impact of a changing climate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; \$150,000 to research and develop sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans for the transport, waste, energy, industrial, agriculture and forestry sectors in consultation with business and industry and the broader community as well. There is also \$30,000 to address the impacts of climate change on the mental health of children and young people; \$50,000 to update Tasmania's enterprise suitability mapping; \$500,000 to develop climate change education resources for our schools; and \$400,000 to develop a whole-of-government policy framework to embed climate change consideration into all government decision-making, amongst a range of other initiatives.

All these investments are about ensuring that Tasmanians and Tasmanian decision makers are equipped with up-to-date information and understanding with which to make their decisions and plans so all decision making can be done in the context of a well-informed and evidence-based picture of the future we are planning for.

I do not think any decision maker at any level of government or any government service or anyone in our economy who is making serious decisions about the future does not understand the risks and the need for good information and planning for the changing climate they are operating in, certainly not this government. We understand and accept our responsibilities to do that and we are investing like no Tasmanian government ever has before in that.

I point to the capacity of ordinary Tasmanians and institutions such as our Neighbourhood Houses who know what to do when people need their help. We have provided extra resources to them just last week to support their efforts to feed Tasmanians who need it and to provide showers and battery charging for their phones as well, but they were already doing it. We are just providing the extra support that they need. That is how we have to approach things like our preparedness for climate change too, equipping Tasmanians to do what they know they need to do.

Time expired.

[11.37 a.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to rise this morning and speak on the Matter of Public Importance. I note that the minister talked about it being a matter of public interest. Part of my contribution this morning is going to be about the difference between when the minister said it is really important that our community is well informed and the difference between having an interest and dedicating importance and urgency to matters.

I will speak on the matter that is going to be raised by Mr Garland later in the day, so I will leave my comments about the response to the current emergencies we have seen to that time. I put on record and acknowledge that Tasmania has been proactive in addressing climate change concerns in Tasmania, largely due to our natural advantages, largely due to the extensive forests we have that act as carbon sinks. Also because of the investments we have made in things historically. We have a great legacy in our hydroelectric power but there is more to be done. There are foundations that are set but we cannot rest on our laurels. That is one of the things I will highlight in my contribution this morning.

The risks to not being fully prepared for the changes of our climate are these extreme weather events which we are seeing more frequently and are more intense. There is also, in my shadow portfolio of primary industries, concern about biosecurity. With the changing climate, there is changing ecosystems and that makes us more susceptible to invasive species and

diseases. In my area of fisheries, there is concern about marine heat waves. The marine ecosystem is under threat from the rising sea temperatures and that is a concern, both economically and to our community. As we transition, there is also some economic vulnerability we are seeing in Tasmania.

In terms of the opportunities, with the natural advantages of our state, we have fantastic opportunities here and great operators in agriculture. Our investments and our proud history in sustainable agriculture is something to be recognised.

The person who brought forward this matter talked about the concern with this government not having a minister for climate change. I am proud to be the shadow minister for climate change. It was only recently that the government recognised the importance of having a minister for science and technology, and as the shadow for science and technology -

Ms Ogilvie - Re-recognised again.

Ms FINLAY - It is only just recently, minister, that this government has stood up and recognised the importance of science and technology. Innovation and technology will be a key part of us being prepared for a climate-changing future. It would be really nice if the now-minister could demonstrate how serious this government was with their commitment to science and technology.

Yesterday, we received the timing for Estimates scrutiny. This is so important to this government that of all the scrutiny hours in the schedule, just half-an-hour is given to science and technology. I mean, come on, where are you serious about this? You do not want to have scrutiny because you do not believe in how important it is. You cannot bring your colleagues along to recognise how important science and technology is in Tasmania.

Members interjecting.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Relevancy to the matter of public importance, please.

Ms FINLAY - Innovation and technology is one of the four critical things that will ensure Tasmania is prepared for the ongoing concerns with climate change and our climate preparedness. It is in the government's documents. It is outlined as one of the key areas of importance.

However, what is at the top of the list is renewable energy. If this government is serious about its ability to make the most of our natural advantages and what Tasmania offers in terms of legacy and reputation, it will stop resting on the laurels of generations of Tasmanians that built the Hydro and put us in a position where we have a global reputation for our renewable energy. We have been known as a renewable powerhouse in the past. Last week we lost that to South Australia, which is now number one for that reputation, because every other state is aggressively investing in renewables to meet the requirements of the future. In Tasmania, the chart has flatlined. We have set a 200 per cent target, but we have flatlined because this government does not have the ability to bring on renewables projects.

This morning, we have heard all sorts of comments from all sorts of ministers about how important it is, and how they are going to work actively in the Budget. There is \$25 billion worth of renewable projects hanging in the wind in Tasmania because this government cannot

get out of the way, or cannot find a way to facilitate that environment, that investment in Tasmania. If this government is serious about our climate preparedness, they need to be serious about renewable energy and unlock the \$25 billion waiting in the wind.

Time expired.

[11.42 a.m.]

Mr FAIRS (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for her contribution and recognise the impacts the recent storm events have had on our communities. We, as a government, recognise that preparing for and doing our best to mitigate the consequences of such events is of great importance. That is why we are taking real action and working with all sectors of our community to adapt to climate change and seize opportunities that support growth and productivity across the economy.

I point out that climate change now sits within Energy and Renewables, which I know the minister, Mr Duigan, is proud to take responsibility for. It is given the same importance as any other portfolio area, and to assert anything other is just wrong.

We are delivering a climate change action plan to create a low-emissions future, including through reducing emissions and building resilience. We are also currently undertaking the first statewide climate change risk assessment to identify and prioritise climate-related risks and opportunities for Tasmania. We have provided investment to support the uptake of electric vehicles and improve our fleet efficiency and released the latest greenhouse gas report in August this year.

Under our Climate Change Action Plan, we have delivered tangible results to tackle emissions, improving knowledge about climate change and building resilience, including:

- A \$4 million grant to support farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 16,000 tonnes - equivalent to taking 7000 cars off the road.
- An \$8 million green hydrogen price reduction scheme, which will target the heavy transport sector, making zero-emissions fuel alternatives as a reality in Tasmania.
- \$600,000 for a grants program with Private Forests Tasmania to support landholders to reduce emissions by growing trees on farms.
- \$350,000 for Community Climate Change Action Grants to support communities tackle climate change.

The action plan builds on the significant investment of more than \$250 million in climate change activities already underway across government. In November 2023, the e-Transport package was launched, providing \$1.2 million in rebates to encourage the uptake of e-bikes, e-scooters and electric vehicles, including interest-free loans for home electric vehicle chargers. Funding of \$500,000 has been provided to the Local Government Association of Tasmania, as Mr Jaensch mentioned earlier, for a program to increase climate change capacity and capability in local government.

Further, the Minister for Energy and Renewables will release Tasmania's Climate Change Action Progress Report and the annual Climate Change Activity Statement later this year.

These actions show that the government is taking real action on climate change and is committed to continuing to do so.

[11.45 a.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for raising this important matter this morning. Climate change is real, climate change is here and it is impacting people now. It is not some far-off distant event that we have time to prepare for. We must be preparing now.

We have seen the impact of climate change this week with the weather events that have happened. I will raise some of the impact of that in Bass, and the ongoing impact. When I checked on the TasNetworks site this morning, there were still 12 outages in Bass, with 205 houses affected. That is 12 days without power so far. People have contacted me in great distress as a result of this. They are spending lots of money on generator fuel. They are having to use laundromats to wash their clothes. One person said they were desperate for a hot shower. Other people are spending great amounts of money on takeaway and eating out because they cannot prepare food at home. While the grants from the government are welcome and have been helpful for people, we know there is still a great deal of distress, stress and inconvenience for people, despite receiving funding.

We know that events like this will only increase as a result of climate change. We must be doing all we can to address carbon emissions in Tasmania and be prepared. We know the best thing we can do to reduce our carbon emissions in Tasmania is to end native forest logging. If we want to do anything to make a big difference to what we do as a state we can keep those incredible trees in the ground and ensure we are not releasing carbon into the atmosphere by logging our native forests.

We also need to be prepared and make sure we keep infrastructure in the best shape possible so we are ready for situations like this. We need to have systems in place and a plan, and make sure we are funding all these things properly so that the next time these events happen, and they will, we are ready and people are not left in difficult situations for days and weeks at a time.

I agree that climate change is a matter of public importance and call on us all, as a parliament, to take the action necessary to ensure Tasmania is prepared for what will come.

Matter noted.

MOTION

August-September 2024 Severe Weather Event

[11.48 a.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes:
 - (a) The severe weather event ("the event") that hit Tasmania at the end of August 2024 and continued over several days;
 - (b) the event left a trail of destruction and around 30,000 Tasmanians without power on 31 August 2024; and
 - (c) ten days later thousands of Tasmanians were still without power.
- (2) Appreciates the incredible work, after the event, of:
 - (a) Police, Fire and Emergency Services staff and SES volunteers; and
 - (b) TasNetworks staff restoring power to businesses and residents around the State.
- (3) Recognises:
 - (a) the extreme frustration experienced by thousands of Tasmanians having to wait so long to have power restored;
 - (b) the importance of TasNetworks reconnection teams to timely power restoration; and
 - (c) severe weather events are likely to become more frequent.
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Energy and Renewables, Hon. Nick Duigan MLC to establish an independent review into TasNetworks response to this event, with the opportunity for public submissions. The Review should focus on contingency planning, timely and effective management of the incident, restoration of supply, and include findings and recommendations on:
 - (a) the adequacy of TasNetworks staffing levels to respond to severe weather events;
 - (b) TasNetworks recruitment and retention strategy for staff, particularly those involved in reconnection after outages;

- (c) The adequacy of TasNetworks communication with affected customers after the event;
- (d) The adequacy of TasNetworks procedures to identify and prioritise the restoration needs of its customers; and
- (e) Regulatory or other barriers to TasNetworks investment in staff development training and disaster resilience.

I will be asking for a vote at the end of this motion.

During the past few weeks, Tasmania has experienced some of the most protracted severe weather events I can remember. We have all seen the trail of destruction left by this unprecedented wind and rain. Today, I will speak about the impact the destruction has had on the tens of thousands of Tasmanians who have been left without power over the past fortnight.

At its peak, on 31 August, over 30,000 Tasmanians were left without power. Six days later, that number was down to 8000. Incredibly, as of yesterday afternoon, some 564 customers were still without power across the state, according to the Premier.

This event has highlighted for everyone the importance of the TasNetworks reconnection staff, who have been working tirelessly to reconnect power for affected Tasmanians in near-impossible conditions. They say disasters bring out the best in communities and this is no exception.

However, they also expose any shortcomings in the agencies whose function is to assist people during this time. I have heard some harrowing accounts from people who were without power over that time, particularly from vulnerable elderly people or those with significant health conditions. Some of those waiting the longest for reconnection were in my electorate of Braddon in the north west. I have heard from people about the extreme frustration they have felt during this time, not just about the delay to get their power back but also about the inadequate communication from TasNetworks with their customers, who are literally and figuratively being left in the dark about when their power will be restored, about customers not able to get an answer because they were being told not to call TasNetworks because they were being swamped with calls, and about people having to wait, irrespective of their specific needs or their vulnerabilities, for days and days for their power to be reconnected.

It was the not knowing that really angered people and left them frightened. While I commend the Premier for the financial support he is offering to those affected, my concern is to ensure there are lessons learned from this severe weather event. That is why I am calling on the Minister for Energy and Renewables to establish a review into how TasNetworks responded to this event and how they can do it better next time so we do not have people waiting so long to be reconnected.

These events are going to become more frequent and good risk management means being prepared both now and into the future. Part of this preparation is about ensuring the very people who are responsible for reconnecting your electricity after these events are being recruited and retained by TasNetworks, yet over the past month, about 250 of TasNetworks' staff, almost a quarter of the organisation, have had to take protected industrial action to secure the employment conditions they want.

Despite what has been represented in the media by the CEO of TasNetworks, they are not after a 35 per cent pay increase. Over the past decade, TasNetworks staff have seen their income fall further and further behind their mainland colleagues, as the cost-of-living rises, to the point where they are now, according to the Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union (CEPU), paid less than all their mainland counterparts. The concern for this state should be that these line workers in particular are in short supply. It is a position in high demand all over Australia because of the nationwide increase in renewable energy and transmission line projects.

According to TasNetworks' annual report, 2023 brought a targeted focus on line workers. This niche skillset is challenging to source and secure in the marketplace and it therefore makes complete sense to grow our own talent. While focusing on apprentices is sensible, you cannot train apprentices without the experienced staff to train them. You might think that TasNetworks should be looking to retain their existing staff first and foremost and surely that means paying them adequately. This would avoid the perverse situation we are currently in where TasNetworks are paying subcontractors more than they pay their staff because they cannot recruit and retain existing staff.

What are TasNetworks staff seeking through this industrial action? They are not seeking a 35 per cent pay increase across the organisation. They are seeking an increase commensurate to experience. This would look like a 7.5 per cent increase for new apprentices, 18 per cent for someone who has a reasonable level of experience and up to 27 per cent to retain the most experienced and qualified staff, but it is not just the wages claim that is causing this disagreement. What workers have been asking for, for many years now, is for two separate enterprise agreements, one for field workers and support crews and one for the remainder of staff, rather than the current one-size-fits-all enterprise agreement they are currently using. Carving out two separate agreements will cost TasNetworks nothing and will go a long way to resolving this dispute.

The TasNetworks CEO has been telling us that paying their staff any more will drive up power prices. It is a familiar refrain, but is it true? I will be exploring that with Mr McGoldrick at the GBE hearings in December. According to TasNetworks' Statement of Corporate Intent 2022-23, they are aiming for a net profit of almost \$20 million for 2022-23 and are projecting the net profit to double to \$42 million in 2025-26.

Ultimately, it is a matter for the shareholder ministers to determine whether TasNetworks is striking the right balance of generating profit for the state or retaining and recruiting staff so they can adequately respond to severe weather events like the one we have just experienced. I am sure the shareholder ministers would benefit from being informed on this by an independent review so they can learn what TasNetworks are doing to ensure it has enough of these workers in the future to respond to events like this, but if paying the staff enough to retain them is going to cause a slight increase to power prices, there needs to be an honest conversation with Tasmanians about whether they are willing to accept slightly higher power prices or slightly lower profit margins for TasNetworks to ensure there are enough line workers to restore power in a timely fashion after these severe weather events.

Earlier this year, Victoria experienced two severe weather events which resulted in half a million people being left without power at its peak. About 3000 customers were without power for more than a week, with the last five properties reconnected on 24 February 2024, 11 days after the initial event. As with Tasmania, there was significant public frustration at the

size of the outage as well as the delay in reconnections in some areas. The government responded promptly with an independent expert-led inquiry which included public submissions so people could share their experiences. The panel provided an interim report after three months and a final report with a number of recommendations within six months of the event.

No doubt TasNetworks will conduct their own internal review, but I suggest this review needs to be conducted in public and needs to hear from the public. It needs to be presided over by independent experts so that next time this happens, TasNetworks will have the strategies and staffing in place to keep the public informed about reconnection, to get these reconnections done in a timely way and identify and prioritise those in need of urgent power restoration.

I call on the Minister for Energy and Renewables to establish an independent review into TasNetworks' response to this event, with the opportunity for public submissions. The review should focus on contingency planning, timely and effective management of the incident, restoration of supply and include findings and recommendations on one, TasNetworks' recruitment and retention strategy for staff, particularly those involved in reconnection after outages; two, the adequacy of TasNetworks' communication with affected customers after the event; three, the adequacy of TasNetworks' procedures to identify and prioritise the restoration needs of its customers; and four, regulatory or other barriers to TasNetworks' investment in staff development, training and disaster resilience.

I seek to amend my motion:

To insert after paragraph 4

- (5) This review must be completed within six months from today and published on the Government's website for all to see.

I ask members to support this motion so that we can get the best outcome for Tasmanians.

[11.59 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Deputy Speaker, may I speak to the substantive motion?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER - Because it is a truncated debate you can talk to both at the same time. It is the amendment we will be voting on first.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your lenience. I thank our incredible emergency response workers, the State Emergency Service (SES), police, firefighters, Ambulance Tasmania and other emergency service workers, as well as our TasNetworks staff and road contractors who have all worked around the clock now for almost two weeks to support Tasmanians during the recent storm events.

Tasmania was impacted by severe weather, particularly between 29 August and 2 September, with extended severe weather creating unprecedented damage to our electricity network. Today I am making this contribution on behalf of Mr Duigan as Minister for Energy and Renewables, who sits in the other place. Cyclone-class winds of up to 140 kilometres an hour were experienced here on mainland Tasmania and, in some parts, up to 187 kilometres an hour. They set a range of records in terms of wind speeds and wind gusts. Indeed, some of

those wind gusts are category 2 cyclone, which is noted in the Bureau of Meteorology as likely to cause major power outages when those kinds of events impact the landscape.

There was torrential rain, causing flooding in many parts of the state, but particularly the Derwent Valley, with the worst flooding in 50 years which cut off homes, roads and created widespread damage. In anticipation of the forecast storm event by the bureau, TasNetworks stood up its Incident Control System (ICS) on Sunday 25 August and subsequently prepared for the storm event, including working with the unions to halt industrial action.

We thank the community for their patience during this difficult time. We also thank the first responders for their tireless efforts, such as TasNetworks' staff working around the clock to reconnect Tasmania's power. There have been extensive power outages during the storm damage since 28 August, with severe damage to more than 20 per cent of the network. At peak, 47,000 customers were off. We acknowledge that there are still Tasmanians without power, with many of them having had to wait a very long time.

TasNetworks has restored power to over 200,000 customers. That is an extraordinary effort, with some customers experiencing multiple outages over this prolonged event. This equates to about 80 per cent of the TasNetworks' customer base. That gives you a sense of the extraordinary scale of the event we have just witnessed across our state. 44 per cent of these restorations were in the north, 36 per cent in the north west and 20 per cent in the south.

TasNetworks' customer teams took an extraordinary 41,000 calls, sent 150,000 text messages, received 45,000 online outage reports - thank you to Tasmanians for providing that intelligence - and the TasNetworks website had close to 170,000 visits in the period 29 August to 3 September alone. The sheer volume of customers impacted by the storm is unprecedented, and the TasNetworks team and staff have done an outstanding job in working around the clock to restore power and to communicate with Tasmanians.

To help support the response, the state government stood up the Recovery Committee, and SES assisted TasNetworks in contacting impacted customers and working with the Red Cross and Tasmanian Council of Churches' emergency management doing welfare checks, particularly on distressed customers. It was lovely to meet some of the churches' council at an evacuation centre in New Norfolk during the middle of the flooding. Thank you for that pastoral care provided to the community.

As well as the extent that vegetation and debris has affected the network, restoration has been impacted by how difficult it has been to access some areas due to flooding and fallen trees. In terms of TasNetworks' prioritisation and response, as TasNetworks gained access to previously dangerous and inaccessible areas, additional damage was becoming known, presenting challenges and, sadly, delays.

TasNetworks prioritises outages in determining the estimated restoration time. This includes using drone support for aerial patrols to assist with determining restoration works. The approach is always to make safe first, then to determine repairs at site and along the line. Prioritise and then restore. In relation to prioritisation of outages, feeder restoration was targeted to key priority areas - hospital and care facilities, emergency services facilities, and water treatment and other utilities. We thank Tasmanian households for being understanding when it comes to prioritising those absolutely essential and critical areas of need. TasNetworks was also conscious to prioritise circumstances that could have led to animal welfare issues,

noting the strong support and prioritisation of the dairy industry. The community was reminded of remaining safe around lines that had fallen, and to assume that they were live and to keep their distance.

TasNetworks' operation leads constantly reviewed the outages against damage assessment to determine an estimated restoration time. Other escalations are managed case by case in line with crew availability and repairs required. It is important to recognise that line work requires highly specialised skills and that workers must be accredited.

Working on live wires is extremely risky and therefore requires additional levels of skill and experience. TasNetworks' response to outages that were more severe and more extended than in living memory is to be commended.

However, TasNetworks has been extremely resourceful and dedicated in both managing staff and restoring power to thousands of Tasmanians. Victoria was also experiencing power outages affecting tens of thousands of homes and businesses during the same period, meaning that all their skilled resources have also been stretched. However, TasNetworks did manage to secure additional support from New South Wales, bringing in 22 crew members from interstate as surge capacity for this extraordinary event.

As outages were repaired in the south, 10 crews were also relocated to support northern recovery efforts. TasNetworks has also worked to source and provide generators where needed, such as to people on life support, ensure that health facilities and aged care homes have ongoing power, and support dairy farmers to manage animal welfare. TasNetworks continues to work with other businesses, whenever and wherever possible, to support their needs through this challenging time. TasNetworks have thrown absolutely everything at this. Can you excuse me, Madam Chair? I will double-check with the minister's advisers quickly.

Thank you, Chair, and I thank the House for your patience. It was disappointing to see a Labor politician, Helen Polley, attacking hardworking TasNetworks field crews. It has been disappointing for all Tasmanians to learn that TasNetworks needed to seek intervention from the Fair Work Commission to prevent the Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union (CEPU) from interfering in recovery efforts and compromising public safety. While Labor's leadership to rein in union behaviour has been missing in action, the CEPU leadership has been seeking to interfere in operational matters relating to the network. I am advised that includes instructing members to delay some power restorations and convincing some members to withhold normal cooperation.

Unfortunately, TasNetworks has had to make an application to the independent Fair Work Commission to fully suspend all CEPU industrial action for the next month. This application was successful and was important to put a stop to CEPU leaders seeking to unlawfully contradict and undermine TasNetworks' official instructions. This is extremely disappointing and does not repair the union movement's reputation with the wider community. TasNetworks' staff have a right to lawful industrial action under federal law. However, union leadership must play by the rules and lead industrial action safely and responsibly.

In terms of supports, the Tasmanian Government understands that the extended delays without power have been frustrating and difficult. We thank Tasmanians for their patience while power is being restored. We are acutely aware of the impacts of power outages and the

impacts those outages have had on people, which is why we have taken decisive and swift action to support those impacted, led by our Premier.

Several emergency relief measures have been activated:

- Emergency food grants for outages of longer than 72 hours, with more than 6000 grants paid into bank accounts, totalling more than \$2.1 million as of 7 September, with more to come.
- Temporary Living Support Grants of \$2000 per household where the principal place of residence has been without power for greater than seven days or is uninhabitable due to damage.
- Emergency assistance grants for Derwent Valley residents impacted by flooding.
- Funding for community organisations to provide food and water relief.
- Working with councils and community organisations to set up community centres.
- Commonwealth state disaster recovery assistance arrangements have been activated, enabling grants for local communities and councils.

I have been grateful to be able to work with federal minister, Jenny McAllister, on this important work, and we thank the federal government for their engagement. As I mentioned, we are also working with the Commonwealth on further financial support measures that may be required, including for small businesses, farmers and producers.

In addition to supports provided by the Tasmanian government, those impacted by extended power outages may be able to receive compensation through TasNetworks' power supply guarantee in addition to the government support grants. TasNetworks will also assist customers in making compensation claims through their insurance by providing a letter for their insurance company. For those who have a special case to make or have not been able to resolve their complaints with TasNetworks, they can raise them with the Energy Ombudsman as well.

On the conclusion of significant weather events such as this one, a decision is made at a state level as to whether to implement an independent review of an event and whether this is required based on the nature and scale of particular events. Each individual agency, TasNetworks, the telcos, TasWater and others who have had a part in responding to the severe weather event is required to conduct their own post incident review in accordance with their own policies and procedures.

For the SES, which is an area of my responsibility, this takes the form of an after-action review, whereby the SES will collect observations drawn from the pre-incident, incident, and post-incident actions across all the Australian Inter-Service Incident Management System functions. Through this, the SES will identify aspects of organisational performance that need to be sustained, improved or whether more deliberate action is required.

Our emergency services are learning organisations and every disaster is an opportunity for us to learn and continually improve. In relation to TasNetworks, it routinely reviews its procedures and seeks improvements after major events. This event will be no different, meaning plans for a review of TasNetworks response is already underway. I hope that provides comfort for the member who has brought forward this matter.

The TasNetworks board have requested this event's review include additional terms of reference given the scale and nature of the event and its impact on Tasmanians. While TasNetworks is still in the response and restoration stage, it is not appropriate to finalise terms of reference until all power outages have been restored and the emergency passed, because we are working through some of the most difficult parts of the restoration effort as we speak.

While TasNetworks is still in the response and restoration phase, it is intended that the terms of reference will be available next week. The review report will be available by the end of October and will be submitted to the Board. The Minister for Energy and Renewables will direct the board to make the review publicly available, noting any commercial-in-confidence matters will be appropriately redacted.

We consider it most appropriate to allow emergency response agencies and TasNetworks to conduct standard reviews in relation to their response to this event, which is consistent with standard emergency response protocols. Once those reviews are finalised, government commits to considering if there should be further reviews conducted in light of the findings and the recommendation of those reviews.

At this stage of emergency response and standard emergency response protocols, we believe it is too early for parliament to be determining what review should be conducted. We are still in this unfolding and prolonged emergency and those decisions should be informed by best-practice emergency management.

In regard to the amendment Mr Garland has moved, the government will not be opposing it but will be listening closely to the rest of the debate on that matter.

[12.15 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for bringing this motion on. It is an important motion and an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon the last few weeks and TasNetworks' response to it.

I acknowledge the impact of these storms. People did it very tough during these storms. People are still doing it tough and people will continue to do it tough for some time. The Greens are very grateful that there was not significant loss of life or serious injury to anyone by this storm. I note that the same storm event did lead to a death in Victoria, which is obviously deeply sad, but we can be thankful that in lutruwita there was not serious injury or loss of life. People still lost big via these storms, and I acknowledge the loss of property, damage to property, time off work and anxiety that these kinds of events cause, including ongoing anxiety in relation to the administration of trying to sort out the insurance claims, wrangling with insurance companies and the like.

This is a serious weather event and it has had significant impacts on people. We need to recognise that this is a consequence of climate change and that these climate-fuelled storms are going to get more extreme, more frequent and more damaging into the future. We have always

had storms and floods, but the science, the advice, the models - everything - is abundantly clear that we can predict more extreme weather events into the future with more frequency and more destruction. That is all sorts of different weather-induced events, whether it is fires, floods, droughts or storm surges and more. That is why, amongst many other things, we need to take action urgently to tackle climate change.

I acknowledge and recognise the efforts and the commitment of our emergency services personnel and the framework that sits around them as well, institutions like ABC local radio keeping people informed, local government, the emergency shelters that were provided and the road contractors that the minister mentioned. These are all critical elements of our emergency response framework and we need to pay tribute to those people. Others in this House, including the Premier and the minister, have made this recognition and on behalf of the Greens I echo the recognition of their commitment, their sacrifice and their dedication. It is dangerous, often very uncomfortable work. They find people in desperate situations and many of those people are volunteers. On behalf of the Greens, I offer my unconditional thanks to those people.

On that, Deputy Speaker, I will move a very small and I think very uncontroversial amendment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Bayley, we have to complete the debate on this amendment first before we move another one, so we will take a vote on the amendment before us now before we -

Mr BAYLEY - Mr Garland's amendment?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Garland's amendment. You cannot have an amendment to it. If you want to take a seat we will call for a vote on the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr BAYLEY - Deputy Speaker, I move an amendment - I believe I can do that now - to the now amended motion. I move -

In paragraph (2), leave out “work, after” and insert instead “work, during and after”.

I hope the House does not think this is pedantic, but the motion reads that 'we appreciate the incredible work after the event of ...' a number of emergency service personnel. I wanted to capture the fact that those people did amazing work during the event as well. I do not think I need to talk to that any further. I might take my seat and talk to the substantive motion after the conclusion of debate on this amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

[12.20 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the House for making that change because it is important we recognise the work emergency services and support personnel do. It starts before emergency situations and continues during it. We are debating what happens after it.

I acknowledge TasNetworks staff as individuals and as a collective. As has been discussed, they are currently in an industrial dispute with their employer. It is always unfortunate to see such disputes, but they are a natural and logical part of the industrial relations framework. It is entirely appropriate for workers to be advocating for their rights into the future, and that is exactly what TasNetworks staff are doing. They are advocating for pay parity with equivalent workers on the mainland. They are some of the lowest paid. Some of them are getting paid 30 per cent less than equal workers in other states, with that going as low as 50 per cent below in some cases. Industrial action was suspended during this storm event, which was a very welcome decision by the unions and those workers, but we respect their right to advocate for better pay and conditions.

We urge all parties to come to a resolution in good faith. That includes not only equity when it comes to pay with their counterparts in mainland states, but work health and safety: the conditions workers deserve to keep safe. These are people working in extreme conditions. They are working in a very dangerous industry in terms of high-voltage electricity and so forth. We must recognise that they deserve to be kept safe and that TasNetworks, to be a good employer, must guarantee its employees are kept safe.

The impact on Tasmanians has been profound. While there are a couple of small silver linings to this storm event in that farmers have received some welcome rain and the Hydro dams have been topped up significantly, there is a significant cost to the Tasmanian people. The media have had plenty of stories of people's experiences in this space, whether it be lost food, lost business, damaged property and so forth, cancelled shipping services: I was on Flinders Island when this happened and I know the ferry was delayed by weeks over there and that creates significant issues. The *Spirit of Tasmania* was delayed as well. The RACT has had over 600 calls regarding property damage. That was a report some time ago. I am sure there have been more. We heard about dollars spent on generator fuel, about lost phone coverage and the concerns of people with health conditions, and power outages. At its height, 47,000 people were without power, and, as we have heard today, there are still people without power, do not have capacity or having to spend more money on generator fuel, eating out and the like.

We need to be thinking about not only a review of TasNetworks and its preparedness and adequacy to respond to these kinds of incidents. We also need to be making sure we future-proof power networks. Ms Badger, the member for Lyons, spoke earlier in our private members time about the need to future-proof electrical infrastructure and the fact it is happening for heritage reasons in many places, whether it be Ross or Oatlands, where power infrastructure has been buried underground. The Dolphin Sands community has been calling for that because of their repeated risk and impact by bushfires. We need to make sure our power grid is future proofed to limit impacts when we have these severe storm events.

Similarly, things like community power grids, where we have a distributed network so that if part of a network does go down, the impacts are more limited. Community batteries, individual house solar and connected community networks is a way for the future. We have heard how mobile phone towers have lost power during this and other events. They clearly need to have backup power sources so those services are not lost to the community. We are ever reliant on our mobile phone services and we need to make sure they are resilient into the future. We need to make sure new easements for power infrastructure are not causing land clearing, not contributing to climate change through the loss of native forests or impacting on

important infrastructure. We need to make sure we have a grid that is future-ready for a situation where we are getting more and more of these severe storm events.

To the motion, the minister mentioned the internal review and the standard response when it comes to TasNetworks in terms of these kind of events. I see no reason why there should not be an independent review as well, conducted in parallel with anything internal by TasNetworks. We need to see that TasNetworks is held to account and scrutinised closely about its response to the emergency, and its response to the response - that is, how it is going to learn from this. The kind of things the member for Braddon has captured in his motion and proposition about an inquiry are entirely legitimate.

The adequacy of TasNetworks staffing levels to respond to severe weather events: these are not necessarily things we can expect TasNetworks to volunteer itself, whether it has substandard levels of workforce.

TasNetworks recruitment and retention strategy for staff, particularly those involved in reconnection after outages: again, as a House, we have to recognise that TasNetworks has an interest to demonstrate it is adequately funded and is adequately responding. Fresh, independent eyes on the views and actions of TasNetworks is appropriate.

The adequacy of TasNetworks communication with affected customers after the event is something that is going to be critical. We have repeatedly heard stories in the media this week about a lack of communication and uncertainty in the community about power outages and timelines for reinstatement. Communications in this day and age is critical.

The adequacy of TasNetworks' procedures to identify and prioritise restoration needs of its customers: again, we can expect TasNetworks to give itself the thumbs-up when it comes to its capacity and procedures to identify and prioritise restoration needs. It may find some small inadequacies itself, but I do not think it is going to give itself a bad rap when it comes to its response. We need an independent set of eyes to make sure we take ourselves out of the shoes of the network provider and have that independent review.

Regulatory and other barriers to TasNetworks' investment in staff development training and disaster relief: when it comes to staff development, the fact that TasNetworks is in an industrial dispute demonstrates that we need a level of independent scrutiny of staff management, development and training.

The amendment we just passed, making sure this call on government in relation to this review is time-bound and transparent, is also legitimate.

I thank the member again for bringing this forward. This has been an unprecedented event, but one we can expect to happen more often. The response has been credible but there will clearly be learnings we need to take from it. An independent review would allow us to make those learnings.

[12.30 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak on this private members' matter and, on behalf of Tasmanian Labor, to put on the record our gratitude for everybody who has worked so hard, in terrifying and devastating conditions to ensure that as quickly as possible services are restored to Tasmanians. It is no doubt that it has been a cross-

community effort from those we would formally expect who have been trained and prepared for moments like this, but also in our community where you see individuals and families reaching out in their street and their community and across their networks to make sure they are looking after fellow Tasmanians.

In our own local community of Bass, there have been repeated conversations of people in communities checking in with their neighbours, whether it be to provide their own home and bathroom for a hot shower or a power point to charge a device. I think the human side of this is important for some of us who have not had the power out to put ourselves in the place of others who have not had power, heating, or have not been able to look after the food they have had in the fridge. There are stories of people who had just done the weekly or fortnightly grocery shop and it had all gone in the fridge and freezer. I recognise there is support available now but for days, for many, particularly the older and vulnerable members of our community, there were people who sat quietly on their own, worried and scared.

The minister reeled off a number of statistics. I think they are important and speak to the matter before us today, but this is about reviewing the things that have happened, our preparedness, our action and our recovery, to make sure that where there are moments and opportunities to improve, we do. Stats are important, but I have heard stories of older and vulnerable members of our community who had no contact from anybody, so there might have been tens of thousands of text messages sent out into our community, but there were some people in our community who were left alone and left to the support and the care of their local community. That is something Tasmanians are renowned for and in these moments always become stronger and more deeply connected in, but we need to make sure that there are systems in place and that we have the technology in place so we can identify where these outages are, identify those people and recognise if they need extra support, not leave it to ABC Radio to try and connect people online, or to community organisations, but to thank them for that, it being a layer on top of what we can do technically within our state.

There is no doubt that the incidents we have seen are becoming more extreme and more frequent, not only in the rain and weather events but also with flooding events and our fire seasons. This has shown how important our public sector is and how ready they are to respond and support, at scale, in these moments. It is not just the people we see in their high vis and PPE in some of the horrific and confronting imagery we have seen of people leaning off wires and leaning off ladders and being out in floods, around trees, attempting to connect, but it is also the people in the radio rooms and the people doing the coordinating and the calling and the other essential parts of the system. When we are recognising people in the community, we need to recognise everybody, whether it be our Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, whether it be SES: everybody is recognised.

There are important and positive things to be gleaned out of this, but there are also, unfortunately, in these contributions in the parliament, times where I had notes that I did not want to use, but the minister made an attack on workers and made suggestions about actions of workers which are not okay to be left unresponded to. The suggestion that workers intentionally were on the go-slow is disrespectful to those people who have committed their careers and their lives and taken time away from their families to support our communities. As has been mentioned, there has been an unfortunate alignment of events where there is industrial action and a severe weather event, and those things have put pressure on the system, but not to recognise the importance and the right before the weather event for workers to be taking action

is wrong because for a long period of time there has not been the right respect shown to the investment made in workers doing critical things for Tasmania.

We are talking about our energy network and the systems that sustain not only families but industry in Tasmania. Whether we talk about pay parity, the same pay for the same job, or whether we talk about the training and investment - again a responsibility that this minister has been involved with. If we have entities in Tasmania that are not appropriately investing in training and taking on apprentices and are not appropriately maintaining - and it is not just a trade, it is a craft - these essential niche responsibilities in Tasmania, that is impacting the capacity for these organisations to protect and serve Tasmanians. It is also impacting the capacity for Tasmania to achieve its best economic potential. Without those skills, without the skilled workers in the right ratios to bring on the right number of apprentices and trainees, we do not have a network that is as strong and resilient as it should and could be.

Tasmanian Labor stands to support Mr Garland in the motion he has brought before the House today. Along with Mr Garland, we absolutely put on the record our appreciation for workers across all entities, those in formal positions and volunteers and community members who have stood up. We absolutely recognise the work of TasNetworks workers across their field operations and their administrative operations. We believe it is appropriate that we call on the minister for a review and to outline what those things are so that we ensure the adequacy of staffing levels, that we look into the recruitment and the retention strategies, that we check out the communications and what happens where we can support members of our community in these moments and look at the procedures and any other barriers that exist.

Tasmanian Labor stands in this place ready to ensure that Tasmanians are best served: that the Tasmanian network is strong and robust for the individuals in our community but also the businesses of our community.

[12.37 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - I rise to support the amended motion and congratulate the member for Braddon for bringing on this very important matter.

At the outset, I acknowledge those people who have been suffering cold and dark homes and businesses that have been severely impact by the massive disruption these storms have caused across businesses, homes and communities. I acknowledge and put on the record my best wishes to them. Hopefully, it is a nice and easy clean up, as best it can be given the circumstances, and that the insurance companies look after you and do the right thing and communities can get back to some form of normality, because we know there are some homes and businesses still not connected and that is obviously of great concern given the time that has elapsed.

I acknowledge the work of the TasNetworks staff and contractors and emergency service workers and community volunteers who worked in a time of crisis. Partly it is their job, but some of these situations are extremely dangerous. They are complex. On Father's Day a lot of dads were away from their families because they had to go and help other communities. I acknowledge all those people who chipped in and are continuing to chip in to assist people recover from what is a significant devastation.

I know I only have a few minutes and I think the member may want to sum up as well. I acknowledge the impact on Tasmanian community members and acknowledge and pay my

respects and thanks to all those workers and volunteers who chipped in and are continuing to work hard to get power connected and to restore some semblance of normality for them and their families.

The nub of the motion is an independent review. The minister who made a contribution on this said there already will be a review and it is normal and standard procedure that a review would occur after such an event, but this is such a significant event. This was one of the biggest disruptions communities have had for many years. This is an abnormal event, so a normal response from a minister or a department or a company is not acceptable or appropriate. Given the controversy over the last fortnight about the nature of the disruptions and ongoing industrial dispute, a level of independence in terms of the review is important. I thank the member for making sure the word 'independent' was put in there because we know that, from time to time, and not casting any aspersions on departments, they will review what they review. Sometimes it takes someone outside those organisations, and the day-to-day to and fro of organisations, to have a proper review. If it is an internal review and the review comes back saying, 'Oh well, we did 98 per cent right, 2 per cent we could have done better, we will try better next time', I do not think that will pass the pub test. People are very angry about what has happened and, quite rightly, want to understand whether TasNetworks, its contractors and emergency services did all they could to make good.

Some of the challenge is that, over the last 15 to 20 years, TasNetworks has contracted out and hollowed out its blue-collar workforce. I have been raising this in GBE scrutiny hearings for a number of years. I have asked TasNetworks, 'Will your contracting out and your reduction in your direct workforce have an impact on your ability to keep the lights on and keep the power on?' which is their job. The answer was clearly, 'Yes, no, it will not impact our service delivery'. We have had a significant event, there are lengthy delays and disconnections, and we have had to fly in contractors from interstate to plug the gaps. I would argue the answer to the question I posed a number of years ago at those hearings was fanciful in terms of TasNetworks' ability to deliver. The review should look at workforce capability.

For the minister to cast a shade on the union representing those workers and the industrial action, as if the union deliberately put on the industrial election when there was a storm, which is outrageous -

Mr Ellis - That is what the Fair Work Commission found.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is not what the Fair Work Commission found at all. The industrial action had already started before the storm. The union gave commitments that they would work towards the matter of safety and, based on my discussions with the union and those workers, they did all they could. I wish you would get more outraged about the fact that TasNetworks contracted out the work and, potentially - let us see what the independent review says - is not able to put the power on, rather than getting on the old hobby horse of conservative parties attacking workers standing up for their industrial rights.

It is not fair for the government to play politics and blame industrial action on this. If you genuinely respect and thank those workers, you would know they would not put life or property at risk. To cast aspersions like that is disrespectful and does nothing to assist in the resolution of the broader industrial dispute. People in Tasmania do not want politicians playing politics on this. They just want their power back on. They just want to have a GBE, a TasNetworks

organisation, providing the services it is paid to deliver and, in times of crisis, being there to reconnect them as quickly as possible. The independent review will assess this.

Based on media reports and comments from the union, and talking to line workers and field workers, they did all they possibly could to make properties safe and reconnect. To attack the workers and play politics with the workers in terms of their legitimate rights to take industrial action, to use this storm as a way to whack the union, is disrespectful and disgraceful. It does not bode well for a government that cares about what is an essential service, which is keeping the lights on.

I support the motion and thank the member for Braddon for bringing it on. I plead with the government to put down the cudgels and try and resolve this industrial dispute because, once you do that, the power stays on.

[12.45 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the members for Bass, Clark and Franklin for their contributions. I highlight that Tasmania is a little rock in the middle of nowhere, we all know each other and it is a two-way street. I know these workers personally. They voted to go back after they commenced their action because they knew what was coming. They put Tasmanians and the best interests of this place first and foremost, and we should be doing likewise for them. That is why I brought this on today. It is important to remember we are just one big extended community on this island and we should all work together and look after the best interests of all concerned, and not play politics. Thank you for your contributions.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

State Finances - Efficiency Dividends

[12.47 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes the Independent Review of Tasmania's State Finances by Saul Eslake found:
 - (a) "vacancy control' and 'efficiency dividends' are very poor strategies for achieving expenditure savings;"
 - (b) "'vacancy control' in practice means that 'savings' in employee expenses are achieved when employees leave (by not replacing them), rather than as a result of any conscious deliberations as to which roles should be retained and which abolished."
 - (c) "'Efficiency dividends' ... are a poor substitute for conscious decisions as to what services should continue to be, or no longer continue to be, provided," and

- (d) vacancy control programs and efficiency dividends "frequently result in services continuing to be provided with inadequate levels of staffing, leading in turn to greater inefficiency and lower levels of customer or client satisfaction."
- (2) Further notes:
 - (a) the Government's efficiency dividend is already in effect for the financial year 2024-2025; and
 - (b) the Department of Health, as the largest department, will be responsible for the highest quantum of cuts to achieve the efficiency dividend.
- (3) Orders the Premier, Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, to provide the House, by 11.30 am on Thursday 12 September with:
 - (a) the total value of the efficiency dividend that is being applied to the Department of Health in the current financial year; and
 - (b) an outline of the savings strategies that are being implemented in order to meet this efficiency dividend.

A lot has passed since we were last in this place and I moved a similar motion that was broader, which was across state government departments. We have had a change in the Jacqui Lambie Network. We now have more independents with more agreements with the government. There are a number of things that have changed from what the government and other members said at that time.

I know from when I was first elected in the other place that it can be intimidating fronting government members and the whole resource of government behind them. However, it is important to remind members that, in our Westminster system, the executive government is subordinate to parliament. In my contribution back in that time, I talked about a process I participated in in the other place called the production of documents. In the previous parliament, when it fell into minority when the member for Lyons, John Tucker, and the member for Bass, Lara Alexander, left the government, the parliament was requesting documents from the government. The Premier, at the time, asked the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) to do a review of other jurisdictions and said he would come up with a process that could be agreeable with the government and, potentially, the parliament to change the Standing Orders to have some process to do this. It is funny how that has disappeared, even though the parliament is now further in minority. Perhaps the Premier may revisit that this term because I do not think these sorts of motions are going to go away.

Moving back to the process I participated in in the upper House - the production of documents - we were fortunate to visit the parliaments of Victoria and New South Wales and talk about their systems. They are far more advanced than this parliament regarding the logjam between parliamentarians wanting to do their job and executive government being obstructive and they have formal processes in their Standing Orders to allow for the production of

documents. They went through some pretty landmark court cases to test things like the power of parliament to produce documents or order the production of documents and that is how they ended up with those sorts of systems.

Some of the newer members of parliament may be intimidated by government members and the resources of government, and we heard accusations in the break of members of parliament sharing their questions with senior ministers of the government prior to question time and other accusations of some members being too close to government. It is important to remind all members that the government is subordinate to the parliament. There are some people I really respect who came and gave evidence to the production of documents inquiry. There is a great report, great reading for new and experienced members of parliament, and a reminder that we are all students of Westminster and we should do everything we can to protect the conventions and traditions and the great system of government we have. Yes, it has its faults, but you only have to look across the globe to see that we are better served by our system of government than any other, in my opinion. The globe is a very uncertain place at the moment, yet Westminster parliaments have endured for a very long period of time and that is because of these traditions.

In that process we had people such as the former Solicitor-General, Leigh Sealy, come along and talk about principles like responsible government, which is not that the government needs to be responsible in terms of managing the budget - and we have had a bit of debate this morning about whether they are meeting that responsibility or not - it means that the government is responsible to the parliament and other members of parliament.

I will read a quote from the report from Mr Sealy, who I respect immensely. I will put on the record I worked with his wife Deb, who was a very good teacher and I have a lot of time for her. He says:

The so-called 'Westminster model' of parliamentary government is usually described as being a system of 'responsible government'. In this context, the term 'responsible' does not mean 'sensible' or 'prudent'. Rather, it describes what is perhaps the defining feature of Westminster model of government, that those in charge of the day-to-day management of affairs of government are answerable, that is to say, are 'responsible', to the elected parliament (and thereby to the electors) for their own actions and for the actions of those that they administer.

Accountability is ensured by the constitutional requirement that those who are in charge of the administration of government - the sworn ministers of the Crown - must also be members of one or other Houses of parliament and by longstanding custom or convention, it is the member of the House of Assembly who can satisfy the chief executive officer, the Governor, that he or she commands the support of the majority of members of that House who receives from the Governor a commission to form government and to 'advise' the Governor as to whom, among other members of parliament, the Governor should appoint to be ministers of the Crown.

Under the Westminster model, almost invariably a judge may not concurrently be a member of parliament or, as a result, hold office as a minister of the Crown. However, as previously mentioned, only members of

parliament are capable of being appointed as ministers of the Crown. Therefore, by definition, all ministers of the Crown are members of parliament and are consequently liable to answer questions from other members concerning the administration of government in accordance with the procedures and Standing Orders of the House of which they are a member.

We also heard from Associate Professor Richard Herr, a political scientist who taught me at university, but has also long been a feature of political science at UTAS. He has, from time to time, been involved in public discussion about a lot of these principles of the Westminster system and day-to-day politics. He said:

Responsible government means that the government is subordinate. It is responsible to the parliament. You cannot have a subordinate who has authority over the superior. The river cannot rise over its source and all that sort of thing.

He went on to say:

The supremacy of parliament requires that the government accept its position of being responsible to you, not telling you what it is going to allow you to do to be able to do your job.

I thought I would just go back and revisit that principle because it is an important principle of our system. Other members of parliament outside of the executive need to do their job.

If we go back to that debate, I talked about right to information laws and how I was upfront that the Labor Party was trying to get these savings strategies into the public domain so that the government is accountable and transparent through right to information. We have had success with one of those. We got the Police and Emergency department's saving strategy which was very detailed. You can see that the Police Commissioner is a very dedicated public servant and a professional. It is government policy to have these efficiency dividends. She had gone about a savings strategy that had been settled and had started communicating with her workforce about how that would work and there were concerns about the impact of frontline services and employees having to do jobs that would impact their frontline service, so I think it is important that I raise that.

The right to information laws in Tasmania are not particularly bad. I think they were revised about 15 years ago. The way they should work should be very good. It is the way they are being implemented that is the problem and we know that we have some of the worst wait times in the country when it comes to open disclosure and getting right to information requests. That said, members of parliament should not have to rely on right to information requests to get information from government that has no immunity.

I have sat on committees now for eight years where government has agreed that there may not be an immunity such as Cabinet deliberations, but the information may be sensitive in some way, it might be commercial, for example, but they have agreed to provide that to the committee in confidence to show they are being open about decisions being taken.

An important principle, along with responsible government, is Cabinet deliberations. I would not want to infringe upon Cabinet deliberations, but we do see governments from time to time who take a very broad definition of Cabinet deliberations and they will include all sorts of advice and reports that are purely factual in nature and say they are Cabinet-in-confidence when it does not reveal any deliberations of the Cabinet or a decision that has been taken, so there is give and take when it comes to that.

I have been frustrated by a right to information request, but as I said, as members of parliament we should not have to rely on that to get information that the government is claiming no immunity from. We had the Treasurer in the last debate say that he was not claiming immunity on these savings strategies because he knows that there is none. Once the department has a settled savings strategy, there is no immunity to that. I think it is important in terms of transparency that these savings strategies are made public. That is why I have downsized this motion to one big department, Health, so that perhaps newer members could have confidence to proceed with a smaller request, see that it is not going to bring the government down or ensnare the Premier in a trap and all these ludicrous claims that were being made.

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

MOTION

State Finances - Efficiency Dividends

Resumed from above.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, prior to the break, I was talking about how the Treasurer in the previous debate claimed no immunity on the savings strategies. We do not want to reveal cabinet deliberations - I take that responsibility very seriously - but the savings strategies, once settled, should be in the public domain. You are talking about cuts to public services - there should be transparency about that. We have seen that in previous years, and I will get to that in a minute. The other claim the Treasurer made at the time was that the Budget was being developed and it was highly disruptive. I do not think that claim can stand either. The Budget is being delivered tomorrow. All these things have now been settled.

In terms of transparency, in previous years - and I do not want to reflect on the Speaker or other members who were part of that government - but where we did see Budget savings strategies in the past, particularly 2012, there was a whole chapter in the Budget of savings strategies. A fair amount of transparency there - it had savings by dollar amount for each agency and how they were going to achieve it. Yet this government has a totally different policy, which is to have a line item in finance general and no transparency about how they are going to impact the public service with their policy decision. Newer members of parliament, you can find that on the Treasury website in the Budget archives. In years gone by - and I was not a member of the caucus then when those decisions were made - there was more transparency back then than there is under this current government.

There was mention of this in the previous debate, but we are not asking for the advice that goes into making these strategies. There should be frank and fearless advice from the public

service. Once this strategy is settled and agreed upon and the department needs to implement it, that is what we are after, the ones that have been signed-off on.

I was not around back then, but I will refer to Saul Eslake's report. I think there were some reflections, probably, from that time from outside of the House. I agree with Saul Eslake that when you are talking about the public service in Tasmania, it is a greater percentage of the overall share of the Tasmanian economy. If you do cut jobs from the public service, you are going to impact the broader economy. That was one of the things he mentioned in his report.

In terms of 'vacancy control' and 'efficiency dividends'- and I will acknowledge this report was commissioned as an agreement between the former JLN agreement and the Liberal Government - that is how this report came to be. There are members of this House who are responsible for this report becoming public and being commissioned, and I am sure that they have taken great interest in the contents of it. I will read what Saul said about vacancy control and efficiency dividends. He said they:

... are very poor strategies for achieving expenditure savings. 'Vacancy control' in practice, means that 'savings' in employee expenses are achieved when employees leave (by not replacing them), rather than as a result of any conscious deliberations as to which roles should be retained and which abolished. Often the result is that the employees who leave are those most able to secure alternative employment - employees that an agency would prefer to retain if possible - whilst those remaining are more likely to be those less capable of securing another job somewhere else.

'Efficiency dividends' - arbitrary reductions in budgetary allocations to departments and agencies -

That is what this government is implementing, a percentage for each department.

... without specifying what services are to be reduced or by how much, but rather leaving it to department and agency heads and their subordinates to determine how the savings are to be realised - are a poor substitute for conscious decisions as to what services should continue to be, or no longer continue to be, provided. In government, as in the corporate world, they frequently result in services continuing to be provided with inadequate levels of staffing, leading in turn to greater *inefficiency* and lower levels of customer or client satisfaction. All too often, decisions as to which employees are terminated or which services are discontinued are taken by the lowest level of management capable of taking them, rather than as an outcome of any conscious, strategic planning and decision-making process.

I would have thought, Speaker, that members who have forced the minority Liberal Government to produce or commission a report like this would be very interested in seeing some of these savings strategies that are going to be implemented by departments, to see if these things ring true.

I know that there's a member sitting in the House, and I have been following his public commentary that he is not going to support the Budget if there are cuts to frontline services. The way to find out whether there are impacts to frontline services is to get a hold of these

savings strategies and make a decision for yourself. In my view, there will be cuts to frontline services in the Budget. We have got enough evidence to suggest that. The Right to Information request the Labor Party received from the Police Department directly-

Mr Shelton - We will read your alternative budget with much interest.

The SPEAKER - Interjections from someone who should know better.

Mr WILLIE - It directly says that there will be impacts to frontline services. We have seen it in department documents that we are getting through Right to Information and also leaks we have seen from the departments. If you want to see a cut to frontline services, one that I know all too well is the emergency department redevelopment. The Health minister is here and he will deny that it is a cut, but it has been scaled down.

There are people within the hospital who have been very open with the cuts to frontline services when it comes to the emergency department and it not meeting current demand, let alone future demand. The Labor Party is the party of workers. I have had conversations with workers within the hospital. I have a fairly good understanding of what has been scaled down in that project. There was also an ABC article that said that the initial redevelopment plan saw us increase to 118 points of care throughout the emergency department and emergency short stay. The revised plan will only increase this to 94.

They said the emergency department was divided into two sections, 'River' and 'Mountain', with River for unwell patients who need to be seen in a bed and Mountain for GP-like settings for less acute patients. They said reconfiguration under the latest plans would see the emergency department lose two beds from River. They also said the River bed cubicles were currently too small to meet current health guidelines, but if they were not touched in the redevelopment, they did not need to meet the latest guidelines. 'Our River cubicles are too small to be effective care spaces,' they said. The reduced scope design document that was shared warns it is:

... for initial conceptual purposes only and should not be considered final or comprehensive. The design is subject to change as more detailed information becomes available and further design analyses are undertaken.

I know from my own conversations that there was supposed to be a trauma bay there. That is not going to be part of it. I heard that there was significant emergency department budget funding spent on - and the shadow minister for health might help me here - H Block, in terms of the stairwell and accessibility so they could have access to more beds. I think millions of dollars were spent on that, and that is not going to happen anymore. There are cuts to frontline services right there. That will be in the Budget: the scaling down of that project. The government can deny it is a cut, but when you are scaling it down, it is a cut on the original vision of that project. They need \$50 million extra. They are potentially going to spend \$50 million on a political fix in Devonport for a port because they did not get the necessary infrastructure organised. This is for an interim solution, not even a long-term solution.

I have concerns about the cuts that will be in the Budget tomorrow. Health is a very important area. In recent times I attended a Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) networking event. The Premier spoke at that. He talked about some of the things he has done in his time. One thing that alarmed me at that event was he said that when he was the shadow

minister for health, he had promised that Tasmania would be the healthiest state by 2025. He then joked that he did not think he would be around to have to deliver it. He may have been a bit tired or he might have been trying to have a bit of a joke, but I thought that was pretty ordinary.

Members interjecting.

Mr WILLIE - Sorry? We know you have form at TasCOSS events of being a little bit too open. The Premier mentioned that too.

Mr Street - Yes, honesty would be a terrible thing, would it not, Josh?

The SPEAKER - Could we both direct commentary through the Chair, please?

Mr WILLIE - The Premier talked about some community services ministers sharing a bit too much information in that same speech that he gave at the TasCOSS event. I wonder who he was talking about. Maybe a minister who apologised for the government's record and what they were delivering. You can interject, but this is what the Premier said at the TasCOSS event. There were a few eyebrows being raised around the room, I can tell you.

We know through our questions in this place that the government has refused to rule out some job cuts: pharmacists, went nowhere near it; neurologists, nowhere near it; catering staff, nowhere near it; radiologists, child psychologists, allied health, dental and other mental health positions. We do know about two nurses in the eating disorder clinic at the Royal Hobart Hospital who are going and two specialist infection disease cleaners, which is a huge deal that will impact other beds. There is obviously a lot of risk with infectious diseases. Cutting jobs like these is a false economy. We talked about this a little bit in the previous debate. If you cut child psychologists and a kid at a critical point in their development cannot get the care they need or deserve, and their mental health situation deteriorates, where are they going to end up? In the emergency department, where it costs a lot more and they have not had that community-based care they deserve that is interventionist, that saves government money down the track but also improves lives. It is a false economy to be cutting these jobs, which is why there needs to be transparency about it.

The Health minister, under questioning in Question Time, will not even give the dollar figure that has been cut from his own department. That demonstrates a lack of transparency. He is not even talking about the positions; he will not give the dollar figure; a very basic figure of the efficiency dividend being applied to his department. We can work it out as a percentage.

Over the break, I did some media saying there will be \$75 million cut from the Education department. I said in the press conference and the commentary that if the government denies it, tell us the real figure. Did the Education minister tell us the real figure? No, not at all. They said I was wrong, but they would not give a figure themselves. I do not know how you can say someone is wrong if you do not want to correct them properly. Lack of transparency, obfuscation.

This is an important motion, where we can get some of that transparency and information in the public domain, because it is Tasmanians who rely on these services and they should understand how the government policy decisions are impacting their lives. We have this power to produce documents - I have been through that. We have a system of responsible government. Members of the executive are subordinate to the parliament. When they are deliberately not

being transparent, and that is a decision they have taken along with the efficiency dividend, then the parliament has a job to hold them to account and demand that transparency, particularly before we have the Budget delivered.

We have seen it already in this parliament. We have the power to do it. We had a motion passed successfully about the UTAS move, and documents were produced. It did not bring down the government; it provided some transparency about that issue. Because of the developments we have had since the last debate, members should consider those things. The Budget was being developed. That is no longer the case. We had the Treasurer not claiming immunity. There is no immunity in this. We have had Saul Eslake's report and he has outlined his concerns about vacancy control and efficiency dividends. We have had governments in the past have whole chapters of budget savings in their Budgets when they went down this path. We have a current government that just has a line item and is refusing to say how it is going to achieve the efficiency dividend or cuts to the public service it is outlining. I think it is important that this parliament stands up to that and says that we will not accept that. If you are going to make these policy decisions that impact Tasmanian lives, you need to explain it and you need to be upfront about it. That is what this motion will do.

I have narrowed it down from a whole-of-government scope to a Health department scope so that newer members can potentially support this, see how it works and realise that some of the ludicrous claims being made by the Treasurer in the previous debate will not come to fruition. He was all about trying to scare new members into not supporting a motion like this, which is purely about transparency.

Time expired.

[2.47 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I have just circulated an amendment.

Mr Willie - I do not have it.

Mr BARNETT - I just put it on the table.

The SPEAKER - Could you please ensure that the member has a copy of the amendment.

Mr BARNETT - I will read it to you.

- (1) Leave out the words "Orders the Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP" and insert instead "Orders the Treasurer".
- (2) Leave out the words "11.30 a.m." and insert instead "'4.00 p.m.'".

Thursday 12 September 2024. I will circulate that and I have a hard copy here.

Mr Willie - I have it now, thank you.

Mr BARNETT - I hope that is amenable to the mover and others in this place.

Mr Willie - I would like to hear the justification.

Mr BARNETT - I will.

The SPEAKER - Do you wish to move that right now?

Mr BARNETT - I am moving that right now.

The SPEAKER - If you move that, we will start the clock on speaking to the amendment.

Mr BARNETT - I would like to speak to the motion.

The SPEAKER - You can if the amendment is relevant to it, but once you move the amendment, you have to speak to the amendment. That is why I was asking.

Mr BARNETT - All right, let me speak to the motion then. I will move the amendment -

The SPEAKER - You are not moving the amendment? You are on the motion right now?

Mr BARNETT - Not just yet. I am foreshadowing the motion.

The SPEAKER - I will allow that. In reality, the clocks have already changed. If we could just be aware of what we are speaking to, that would make it easier for the staff.

Mr BARNETT - In short, let us just kick it off here. As a government, we have a strong track record when it comes to being responsible as a government, and fiscal management is very important. Managing the budget is important. It needs to be sustainable. It needs to be a process where we consider what is best for Tasmania. That is what we are delivering, not just with our Health budget but across the board. We have a strong track record of investing in essential services. I will speak more about that shortly regarding health.

I note that the Treasurer will be here, standing at this place, at 3 o'clock tomorrow delivering our upcoming Budget that will continue to invest in those essential services with increased funding to support and increase those on the front line. I have said up hill and down dale in terms of the front line that there will be more on our front line this time next year than there are today.

Part of our fiscal strategy in the last Budget the Treasurer brought down - and congratulations to the Treasurer on that Budget - provided a modest budget efficiency dividend beginning in 2024-25. The Premier has made it clear. The Treasurer has made it clear. There will be more on the frontline for doctors, paramedics, nurses: those who deliver those essential health services. Likewise, police officers, teachers, and child safety officers.

We have had substantial consideration of what is best for our children. Just yesterday, the Treasurer and I were standing outside this place talking about the important role that we have as a government and as a community to ensure that our children are kept safe and provided an opportunity to thrive, grow and prosper.

An efficiency dividend in terms of providing a sustainable way forward is not unusual. This happens all around Australia, in all jurisdictions on the mainland, including at the federal level. This efficiency dividend of 0.6 per cent, 60 cents out of every \$100 of expenditure, is doable and a very sensible and indeed modest strategy to ensure that our departments and agencies deliver what is best for Tasmania.

I acknowledge the Saul Eslake report; the Treasurer has acknowledged that and the Premier has acknowledged that. The Premier has indicated he has met with Saul Eslake in recent weeks.

In short, we will not be increasing taxes for Tasmanians. I note that the CPSU said in response to the Eslake report:

We need to consider Saul Eslake's advice, increase our revenue by fair tax measures and review the breadth of programs the State Service delivers.

Does state Labor agree with that? Our government does not.

Mr Willie - It is not Labor policy to increase taxes or introduce new ones. You are the only one doing it; you have got a tax on the tourism industry.

Mr BARNETT - You are saying that you will not increase taxes or introduce new ones. That is state Labor policy, because I am sure this will be outlined in the alternative budget that will be delivered next week by the shadow treasurer. It will be fascinating to see that alternative budget and see the policy positions. We know what you took to the election, with billions of dollars in extra spending and \$2 billion of cuts. It is on the public record, that little red book. I will not hold it up because that is contrary to the Standing Orders, but we know about the little red book, the little red pamphlet - Labor's budget repair. It is all set out in there; it is on the public record. How are they going to deliver on that in their alternative budget? That will be fascinating for Tasmanians to see. Certainly, as a government we will not be increasing taxes on Tasmanians. This is not the time, as the Premier said this morning and yesterday, for those austerity measures.

The budget efficiencies are looking at ways we can get the best outcomes from the money that we spend in Health and across other sectors. We have the digitisation, hundreds and hundreds of millions in the Health space to improve efficiency and delivery of health services across this great state of Tasmania. I am very pleased that my departments are working their way through all that and delivering really excellent outcomes. I quote my acting secretary, Dale Webster, who I saw just a few hours ago and look forward to catching up with him again very soon. He has had a short and well-deserved break. When he spoke on this matter several months ago, he said, 'It is about making sure that our processes are rigorous and that the jobs we advertise are the jobs that we need'.

We have come out of the pandemic. It was a tough time during the pandemic. What we did as a government on behalf of the community was save lives and save livelihoods. I remember it very well. We even had a Cabinet meeting on Easter Friday of all days, because we had to do. We had to step up and step into that space to protect Tasmanian lives and protect and support Tasmanian livelihoods, and that is what we did. It was tough. Obviously, it was not all perfect, we did not get it all right, but we got through and I am proud of that commitment.

Likewise, I am proud of the commitment to the 191 COI recommendations. It makes complete sense to examine all our situations through the budget process.

With respect to Labor, as the Premier said, they had a full day yesterday to ask the Treasurer some questions but there was not one question. How incredible. For six weeks during the break, the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer were saying, 'We're going to ask the Treasurer this and ask the Treasurer that when he's back', yet when they are back into parliament on day one, not one question. That is why people sometimes refer to this place as cowards' castle because it was a cowardly act of state Labor yesterday and again today with the media comments they made with respect to the Premier and the Treasurer. They should be ashamed of themselves. It was a cowardly act and did not give the Treasurer the opportunity to respond to those questions, despite for six weeks, up hill and down dale, saying he is going to be scrutinised on this and scrutinised on that.

Tomorrow will be the day when we deliver a Budget that is absolutely necessary for our time in Tasmania. It will deliver a sustainable way forward, a pathway to surplus and ensure that we continue to invest in essential services and especially Health, Housing, Police and Education. With respect to Health, I am pleased and proud of the fact that since April this year we have delivered more than 840 extra people on that front line. That is a 165 net increase in that time. We are putting more on the front line. This is what is happening and despite Labor's relentless negativity, it goes on and on and on.

I was very pleased to be at the Royal Hobart Hospital ED more than a month ago now where we had made during the election campaign that commitment for 44 new doctors, 25 new nurses and they were delivered. Just over than a month ago I was standing there with the ED director, Dr Paul Scott, and others, and it was excellent hearing and meeting with those new doctors and nurses and knowing how pleased they were to be at the Royal Hobart Hospital, living in Tasmania, the greatest place in all the world to work, live and raise a family. That commitment has been delivered and the funding support for those new jobs will be in tomorrow's Budget.

There has been reference during the debate on the ED and, as I said this morning in an answer to a question, the Budget has gone from \$30 million up to \$130 million and we are working our way through that with the Australian Medical Association (AMA). I met with them just a couple of weeks ago with my department and there is more work being done by KP Health, the designers, the experts on these matters, and they are going to work through that, work with the AMA, work with those relevant and with my department to ensure that what we get in terms of that emergency department is not just fit for purpose for today but into the future. I am pleased about that. I am pleased about what we are doing across the state.

Just last week, the Premier unfortunately could not be there at the launch, but I thank the Premier for his leadership with respect to the North West Hospital Master Plan, a \$1.4 billion commitment, more than \$20 million over more than 20 years for the north-west coast. I was standing there at the Mersey Community Hospital, more than \$40 million expended. Absolutely brilliant. Increased access for outpatients, so people on the north-west coast will appreciate that.

Likewise, day surgeries and day procedures - endoscopies and the like - will be available at the Mersey Community Hospital. In addition, at the North West General Hospital, where it was great to be last week, further investments there include ones relating to the mental health

precinct. I have mentioned the mental health precinct in Launceston, adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital (LGH), 52 Franklin Street. This is the mental health precinct that state Labor was not aware was progressing. The day after their media release was put out by my shadow, we lodged the development application to demolish the current buildings to progress plans for the \$80 million mental health precinct. It is go, go, go. As Health minister, I am looking forward to continuing that work and getting on with the job, with the capital infrastructure to ensure we have the health services Tasmanians need and deserve -

The SPEAKER - With great respect, minister, I ask you to adhere to Standing Order 142, which requires you to be addressing the motion before the House, which is efficiency dividends and vacancy control. You have had 13 minutes on Health broadly. Could you move on to the actual debate?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I appreciate your contribution, Speaker, and will continue to speak about the motion before us and the importance of improving our health services. That is why the Budget tomorrow will deliver more detail with respect to the efficiency dividend, and those matters noted in clause 1 and 2 of the motion. This is being provided tomorrow by the Treasurer, not the Premier. As I have foreshadowed with that amendment, it should be provided by the Treasurer regarding those budget savings. The Budget is being delivered tomorrow, so rather than the Premier, it should be ordering the Treasurer. Likewise, the Budget comes down at 3.00 p.m., so there are no issues in any way, shape or form with responding to that. That is why I am foreshadowing the 4.00 p.m. timeframe, rather than 11.30 a.m. in the morning. It has to be reasonable, sensible, practical and fair. That is the reason for that.

In terms of roundtables, I will give the Chamber a bit of a heads up. People refer to me as the Minister for Roundtables. That is fine. I like roundtables; I want to deliver better health outcomes and it is good to get the feedback from those round tables. Just last Friday, I was with Emily Shepherd and the nurses' union. They had organised a roundtable, at my request, at the LGH to meet a couple of dozen or so nurses and representatives from the LGH, primarily, and they provided feedback. It was constructive feedback. It was collaborative. I was listening hard and I appreciated that opportunity. I look forward to more of those roundtables with Emily in different parts of the state and the nurses' union.

Likewise, I have had two roundtables with the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) in recent months, and the first one with allied health professionals. That was so productive and encouraging, getting that feedback on how we can deliver a better health system. I am not talking just efficiency control. I am talking about how we can deliver a better health system across the board.

Likewise with the paramedics, I think it was about two weeks ago, Robbie Moore and other colleagues in Launceston, and that was good. The other one was in Campbell Town.

I have a regular roundtable about the transfer-of-care delays with the unions and my department. That is likewise, appreciated. We have been working our way through that. We have had quite a few roundtables since the election on the transfer-of-care delays, and that has been working through. We have seen incremental improvements in terms of ambulance time and those on the ramp. We will end that ramping over that period of time, and we have had incremental improvements - 9000 hours over the 12 months through to 30 June, in fact. That means more time out on the road in rural and regional Tasmania, rather than on the ramps. That

is a 9000-hour improvement. You can see we have achieved those improvements and I am pleased about that.

I will now formally move that amendment to Notice of Motion 55, as I have circulated. I indicate that I am more than happy to have further roundtables. I have had a discussion with the member for Franklin with respect to having ongoing meetings with relevant unions and health consumer groups. I am more than happy to do that because I am sort of doing it now. I think that roundtable could consider any matters of concern, not just focus on one thing. I think it is a good, healthy thing. I am happy to discuss the department's current and future savings strategies, no problem at all. We wanted to work through the timing as to when that would occur. I am happy to kick that off on Friday 20 September. I have to rearrange the diary but let us be flexible and try and make that happen. Being a flexible minister, I am more than happy to support that if that comes back to this place in the terms I understand it to be in. I am more than happy to have further roundtables to listen and learn, to ensure we can get better health outcomes for the Tasmanians who need it and that they deserve.

The SPEAKER - There being no further speakers, I will put the amendment.

Mr Willie - I am happy to accept the government's amendment.

The SPEAKER - That is not on the record because you are standing in front of the Speaker's chair, which is also entirely unparliamentary.

Amendment agreed to.

[3.07 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, how long do we have for the debate? Another hour?

The SPEAKER - This debate expires at 3.47 p.m. You have 20 minutes.

Mr O'BYRNE - I know a number of people want to speak, so I will not go too long. I acknowledge the commitment from the member for Clark, Mr Willie, in terms of raising these important issues and seeking clarity, particularly about the Department of Health. The provision of health services to Tasmanians is of crucial importance and it is important that there is a level of transparency and accountability in terms of some of the proposals that will, no doubt, be articulated tomorrow afternoon in the Budget Speech and the subsequent Budget papers.

There is no doubt that the state's finances are under significant challenge, that there are some important decisions to be made to ensure that we have a sustainable budget position but also the government continues to provide the key services the Tasmanian community demands. There has been a number of references to the 2012 budget. That is quite triggering and traumatic. It was a traumatic process. I was on the budget committee and a number of very difficult decisions were made. I have reflected on those decisions in other debates and, over time, I will reflect more about those. I will not go through it, but I understand that the transparency of the decisions that were made were designed to ensure that there was a sustainable budget position. I will later talk about whether that was good or not.

In terms of this debate, it is important that we see the Budget in its totality; that there is a level of budget repair the government is able to deliver on the services that also ensures it supports the broader economy.

It is a balance, but going through Saul Eslake's report and seeing a whole range of commentators about the response from government to what are complex and difficult issues, it is crucially important that when governments give overall budget allocations, those people who are at the coalface, who are on the frontline, who are intrinsically involved with both the concept behind and the consequences of certain decisions, are engaged and given equal footing at the table so they can provide a critique of proposals put forward by government or departmental officials and that there is a public airing of that.

The minister foreshadowed an amendment to the motion that I have started to circulate early this afternoon to a few people which is designed to do two things. It is designed to get the savings proposals and strategies of government into the public domain, but in a manner which has those people who are most impacted and affected at the table to critique and work through and put a level of substance and depth to it. I will move the amendment in a minute, if that is what you are asking, honourable Speaker.

The SPEAKER - It would make everyone's life easier if we can see the amendment as soon as you are ready to.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, I am just flagging it; I will get there. The amendment is designed to ensure that there are people at the table and that there is an informed debate and the success or otherwise of those savings can be critiqued by those who understand it best. I acknowledge in Mr Willie's contribution the discussion about the frank and fearless advice and I accept that his genuineness in terms of his motion is not to go on a fishing expedition to try to create a political battle, although there is always a political battle when you deal with Health. It is designed to get the decisions that are being made and the critique. It is not about where there was a previous debate - and I do not want to reflect on the vote or that debate - where it really was, 'Let's get all the ideas out there'. That would not have been a constructive public debate about proposals either way on the Budget.

I move -

- (1) In paragraph (3) omit subparagraph (b)
- (2) Insert new paragraph;
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Health to convene a standing working group consisting of the Minister for Health, health unions, health consumer groups, and relevant departmental staff to raise any matters of concern to them, including any current or proposed efficiency measures, with such working group to initially meet no later than 5pm on 20 September 2024 and continue to regularly meet as agreed.

The SPEAKER - I am sorry, Mr O'Byrne, I think this is the reason that we needed to see the amendment. I wonder if you could approach for some advice. We have some technical issues. The advice I have received is that this House can order the minister to do something in this House but it cannot order the minister to do something outside of this House. It will be

a technical wording. Perhaps you would like to continue your contribution while we find a way through.

Mr O'BYRNE - But if the minister has accepted it?

The SPEAKER - The advice I have is that we can find some language.

Mr O'BYRNE - Or 'parliament calls on'?

The SPEAKER - If you continue, we will find some appropriate language we can allow.

Mr O'BYRNE - Okay, thank you.

Obviously, the budget papers will outline a number of cuts and a number of measures. We will see tomorrow afternoon. The Budget will be very clear on those.

In terms of the consequences, in my view the impact of those needs to be assessed in a manner by those who are most informed at the table, and that information will then be in the public domain. The advice from health unions I have spoken to about this concept is that it is not a roundtable. I am not sure if I like the image of just going around and around. I want a working group where you work on things. I will read the amendment into the *Hansard* again.

This place calls on the Minister for Health to convene the standing working group consisting of the Minister for Health, health unions, health consumer groups and relevant departmental staff to raise any matters of concern to them, including any current or proposed efficiency measures, with such working group to initially meet no later than 5 p.m. on 20 September 2024 and continue to regularly meet as agreed.

This meeting will be convened before Estimates. This working group will come together, they will have the Budget papers with them, they will have the savings strategies on the table and those health unions and consumer groups can provide a critique about the consequences of those matters. They will be in the public domain. They will be able to be prosecuted in public. This is not just 'show us your strategies' and then we go out and have a political argument via the media. What this means is that we will have those savings strategies and we will have those professionals at the table understanding the consequences, asking questions and getting clarification about what is designed to occur by these measures and what impact that will have on health workers, our health system and our community. That will provide information for us to be able to prosecute our questions during the Estimates hearings and beyond in the public domain and in those hearings.

Instead of having politicians making assessments, although we always do the best we can, I would rather get the advice and clarification from those who are the most impacted and that is consumer groups and those health unions. It is important when we are debating these things that we are debating from a level of information. As they say, we know a little bit about a lot of stuff and we rely heavily on professionals in the various fields to provide us with that advice. I think this is a mechanism which adds depth to this motion and provides a forum for those unions to have a voice. It is up to the government to listen.

Mr Winter - But no saving strategies?

Mr O'BYRNE - No, that will be covered in the meeting. That is what they will put on the table.

Mr Winter - The House will not get the tabling of the savings strategies.

Mr O'BYRNE - Those impacted will get them and they will be in the public domain, so it achieves both outcomes.

Mr Winter - Why would we not have the information tomorrow?

Mr O'BYRNE - I am trying to do it in an in-depth way. You are more than welcome to make a contribution.

The SPEAKER - The conversation across the Chamber will cease.

Mr O'BYRNE - The Budget strategy will outline the saving strategies and the committee will work on those matters and will have that information prior to heading into Estimates so that we are able to do our job to say we have heard feedback that this might have a significant impact, et cetera. I know that there are meetings from time to time, but this is purely about the budget savings. This is purely about the issues of budget and impact on service delivery within the Health department. It is consistent with the motion moved by Mr Willie and I think it adds depth and the ability for those unions to be at the table to work through those issues.

I know other people will want to speak. These are very important matters to do with the state Budget.

Mr Shelton - We should also be allowed to compare Mr Willie's alternative budget.

The SPEAKER - I am really getting close to warning the member for Lyons; he is being very chatty today.

Mr O'BYRNE - It would be interesting to hear your views on it as well, Mr Shelton. The amendment is made with goodwill. I have consulted with unions and they have appreciated the attempts to try to create a level of consultation about this. At that meeting, no doubt the strategies will be on the table and they will be in the public domain. I believe it adds depth to the motion.

The SPEAKER - Before calling the next speaker, I will explain the ruling behind having to change the language. Under the *House of Representatives Practice*, which is what we refer to in the absence of a Standing Order here:

The House has the power, within constitutional limits, to make a determination on any question it wishes to raise, to make any order, or to agree to any resolution. In the conduct of its own affairs the House is responsible only to itself. However, the effect of such orders and resolutions of the House on others outside the House may be a limited one. Some resolutions are couched in terms that express the opinion of the House on a matter and as a result may not have any directive force. However, this is not to say that the opinions of the House are to be disregarded, as it is incumbent upon the Executive Government and its employees and others

concerned with matters on which the House has expressed an opinion to take cognisance of that opinion when contemplating or formulating any future action.

I now call on the amendment.

[3.20 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I do apologise for the previous call when I was standing in front of your seat. I was seeking advice on this particular matter, on whether it was in order.

The SPEAKER - I appreciate that. It is just that Hansard could not record what you said.

Mr WILLIE - I know, but I was just informing the House while I was being disorderly at the time. It was good intentions.

Likewise, I think the member for Franklin's intentions are equally good. This amendment could add depth to my motion. I think a working group would be a positive, having people with the experience at the table discussing these matters with government. If we are going to add depth to the motion, we can do both. I propose an amendment to the amendment, which is to strike out clause (3), which is omit subclause (3)(b).

The SPEAKER - That is the amendment you are moving?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, that is the amendment I am moving. The reason for that is, I accept the member for Franklin's justification for this. I think it is a very good amendment. It is a pretty simple one.

The SPEAKER - You are still required to share it.

Mr WILLIE - We will provide that just as I keep speaking.

The SPEAKER - Could somebody assist him while he is on his feet?

Mr WILLIE - Thank you. I am still finding my feet in terms of amendments, and how they work in this House.

The SPEAKER - That is fine. It is up to your colleagues to help you if you are on your feet.

Mr WILLIE - We can do both here, where we get the certainty of the savings strategies being tabled in the parliament. We know that they are going to be public and that there will be transparency about that, and we can also get people with expertise at the table with government, working through these issues and how they are going to impact the health service. I do not know why we cannot do both. I think that if we approach it in this way, it strengthens the motion, and I am very supportive of -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. First, I allowed the Attorney-General and minister for Health to remove an amendment that he had moved and return to his existing one without requiring him to debate it. We will have a little bit of flexibility as well as we try to resolve what I thought the House was moving to - a collaborative result. If you could very quickly write out the amendment and hand a copy to the minister for Health, we can move on.

The SPEAKER - For those paying attention, the amendment moved by Mr Willie is to remove Clause (3) from the amendment moved by Mr O'Byrne, which will give effect to reinstating subclause (3)(b).

Mr WILLIE - Yes. Thank you for your indulgence, Speaker. I do believe we had an amendment to Mr O'Byrne's amendment from the floor at the same time where the order issue was being discussed. I provide that to the Clerk.

The SPEAKER - He has already read it. Pass it to the Attorney-General, please. I am sure the Clerks are on top of it.

Mr WILLIE - I know that there is a matter of goodwill about this. I will be reluctant to add my healthy cynicism of government and whether they deliver things. We know that in the past, there have been requests from different members of parliament for actions to be taken and that they are ignored. It is important that this House and the members of parliament exert our powers under responsible government to hold the government to account.

I did go into past histories about other savings measures in other Budgets where there were whole chapters of how savings would be achieved, a lot of transparency, dollar amounts for agencies. There were whole pages of it, of how they were going to achieve those savings.

We do not have the same level of transparency from this government. For newer members, it is a line item. That is all. Not a whole chapter and it is important to remember that we are talking about health services that Tasmanians rely upon, which are already under a lot of pressure without having to achieve savings. They cannot meet demand now.

I think it is important. Earlier in the debate, it seemed like the government was accepting of its position that it would table the documents, because they did amend my motion to change the person responsible and the time. I was okay with that. It looked like you were accepting of your position in the parliament. I think that we can do both here, and it strengthens the motion, the original motion, then everybody can walk away from this debate quite happy.

The SPEAKER - On the amendment, Mr Bayley. You are now on the amendment but moved by Mr Willie to the amended amendment moved by Mr O'Byrne to the substantive amended motion.

[3.26 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I will talk to the substantive amended motion, but also the amendment to the amendment.

The SPEAKER - I will allow that, simply because life is too confusing otherwise.

Mr BAYLEY - I am very cognisant of the time, and there are a few decisions we need to get through. I will make a contribution on behalf of the Greens and make it really explicitly

clear, from our perspective, that budgets are clearly a choice. They are a suite of political, of practical, and at times, ideological, decisions. We, as the Tasmanian taxpayer and Tasmanians who enjoy public services, either enjoy or suffer the consequences. What is not in a budget is just as telling and just as important as what is in a budget. It all adds up to tell a story about what governments prioritise, what they want to do, what they value and what they do not.

The thing that is sitting over this entire Budget discussion and the entire Budget narrative this year will be a billion-dollar stadium at Macquarie Point. That is what Tasmanians talk about whenever they hear 'budget cuts', whenever they hear 'vacancy control', whenever they hear 'efficiency dividends'. They know that sitting over that is a billion-dollar stadium that Tasmanians do not want, do not need, and cannot afford.

The public depends on the service of public servants, and when they are confronted with 'vacancy control' and 'efficiency dividend', it speaks to skewed priorities. Even the language of this is spin and disingenuous. 'Vacancy controls' equals not filling positions, which equals job cuts. 'Efficiency dividends' equals making savings, which means doing less. None of this is credible fiscal management.

Saul Eslake has been quoted extensively after publishing his report a week or two ago, and he calls these kinds of measures 'crude' and 'a very poor means of achieving meaningful and lasting savings'. To quote a couple of sections out of Saul's report directly, he said:

... cutting 'operating' expenses would have a bigger adverse impact on the Tasmanian economy, and on the most needy or vulnerable Tasmanians, than raising revenues by an equivalent amount ...

He says that:

The fact that Tasmania has found itself in an unsustainable fiscal position for the third time in less than four decades ... suggests that Tasmania needs stronger institutions and more robust rules around the management of its public sector finances.

A key finding of this review is that Tasmanian state public sector finances have, for some time, been on an unsustainable trajectory, and that in the absence of corrective policy actions, the condition of Tasmania's state finances will inevitably and inexorably deteriorate further. The Liberal government is sticking to this path and repeatedly denied that they are making cuts, but they *are* cuts. They are cuts to an already extremely stretched system.

The Greens called for and chaired an inquiry into ambulance ramping. The evidence that was heard in that inquiry was harrowing. This is the lived experience of budget cuts. This is the lived experience of the political choices not to fund certain things. It is both lived experience and impacts on patient care, and it is lived experience and impacts on our health professionals as well.

Let me just read into *Hansard* today, for the benefit of this Budget discussion, the experience of submission No.29 to that inquiry, which was a patient. They arrived by ambulance to the Launceston General Hospital from Bicheno, East Coast Tasmania, with 40-degree temperature, hallucinations, dropping in and out of consciousness, fever, abdominal pain and total lethargy. Ambulance staff could not get me into the emergency department on

the evening of the 5th to the 8th of September. I saw three sunrises from within the LGH waiting room and only then was I seen to by emergency staff.

Submission 32:

I'm 93 years old and two weeks ago I fell and fractured my pelvis. An ambulance was called and took three hours to get to me and I arrived in RHH at about 4:30 pm. I was ramped until nearly midnight before being transferred to the emergency department proper. I was then taken to a ward at 4 am.

They are 93 years old, Speaker.

Finally, just quickly, submission 1:

When we arrived at the LGH, I was wheeled in through the doors and treated in the corridor. I was then left to sit semi-naked in the waiting room. The staff grabbed me a blanket and told me there were no beds because they were full of people upstairs. My medical condition was then discussed in the waiting room. There was a lady in the waiting room who had a drip who I think had a miscarriage, but I can't remember the details now, so that lady needed a bed more than I did.

These are the experiences of Tasmanians who are suffering from inaction, underfunding and, in many cases, what could be only described as apathy. Also, our paramedics and health professionals are suffering mental ill health and other personal challenges by their experience. This is from submission 66 from a paramedic:

Personally, I have experienced more trauma whilst ramped than I will ever witness doing my actual job in ambulance, serving the community ... I have witnessed the questioning of a young victim of vicious and repeated sexual assault interviewed by police on the ramp, shielded from other patients and staff by a flimsy curtain.

These are the lived experiences and they are real lived experiences under our system, under extreme stress, and vacancy control and efficiency dividends will only inevitably increase the stress on the system.

The ANMF, in a recent *Mercury* Talking Point, said:

To add insult to injury, a vacancy control committee was established to reduce the size of the health workforce. Any cut to positions results in higher workloads for remaining staff and complete inefficiency.

HACSU, the health union, says:

The Health minister committed prior to the last election that he was going to fix the health system and it just shows that we're still in crisis when workers need to strike just to try to get the minister to listen. The fact remains we have massive staffing shortfalls in medical imaging and we simply cannot attract these vital health professionals due to significant pay disparity between Tasmanian medical imagery workers and their interstate counterparts.

We will support the amendment to the amendment.

The SPEAKER - I thought you were about to move yet another amendment.

Mr BAYLEY - No, I do not need to amend. On the substantive amendment of Mr O'Byrne, we recognise that a new paragraph 4 calling on the minister to convene this standing working group is a really positive initiative. I note and I take it, minister, you are agreeing to do this by suggesting that we say, 'calls on', so we have a commitment from you that this will happen. That is very good.

At the same time, the notion that an outline of the savings strategies that are being implemented in order to meet this efficiency dividend, 3(b), does add value to the knowledge bank of information that we as parliamentarians and the public have at their disposal to understand the state of the Budget. We will support the amendment to the amendment and then we will support the amended amendment.

I will make the point as well that we Greens will be issuing an alternative budget next week. We have done every single year. We are proud of our record on the alternative budget. Regarding Saul Eslake and his suggestions about revenue raising, we are right on board and have long called for bringing our tax system, mining royalties and other initiatives on aquaculture industries and so forth on par with the national average. At the moment, we radically undercharge those industries for the privilege of having access to our resources, whether that is our water, mining or mineral resources. We also want to make sure that the things we are investing in, such as subsidising the racing industry and other industries that are not in the public interest and are destructive to the environment, should not go ahead. They do not deserve the public subsidies they get.

I will leave a few minutes for others to talk to the amendment to the amendment. We are supportive of this and I thank Mr Willie for bringing this motion forward.

The SPEAKER - I will call Minister Barnett, who has indicated he is going to leave time available for other members. I will be noting that commitment and future calls will be based on how well that is adhered to.

[3.35 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Speaker, this is a Labor amendment to an amendment, so I hope having a government response to a Labor amendment would be amenable. I will try to be brief.

In short, I do not support Labor's amendment and I will tell you why. I support David O'Byrne's amendment, the member for Franklin. I did that in good faith and with goodwill and I support that. The motion as it reads -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - We have 11 minutes to get through this complex motion.

Mr BARNETT - I am trying to make it very clear and I support that. You are calling on the minister to have these meetings with the unions, the consumer groups, with my department and relevant members on matters of concern to those groups. Let us just read it here where it

says, '... including current or proposed efficiency measures'. That is what it is about and they are going to be discussing those things. We will have the first meeting before 20 September, Friday week, which is not long at all. I am very keen to support that and I did that in good faith and with goodwill. What Labor is doing here is trying another foil. The member for Franklin had an amendment to take out (3)(b) and put in that new paragraph, which I supported.

In short, I do not support Labor's amendment; it is unfair and unreasonable. You will get through these meetings that will be held regularly and I support that. I look forward to the feedback from the unions and consumer groups, and they will provide information to their members on those meetings and how productive they are and the like, so there is a lot of goodwill here. We had a lot of goodwill. There is a lot of collaboration going on and now, unfortunately, the Labor shadow has come through with a further amendment. You have already put forward the motion. You are getting pretty much what you want. By 4.00 p.m. tomorrow you will have the information.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The minister should not look horrified that people are interjecting on him when he speaks to them directly. He will direct his comments through me and members will cease interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - I am just saying you have your motion and we have an amendment from the member for Franklin which, in good faith, I accepted. I am looking forward to those meetings by 20 September. I do not think it is fair or reasonable to support this further amendment from Labor but I can see where you are coming from. I know what tricks you are up to, but there is a lot of openness and transparency. We want to be accountable and I think these regular meetings that the member for Franklin has recommended will deliver on those purposes.

[3.38p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Clark, Mr Willie, for amending the amendment because it preserves the very intent of the original motion. It does not ask for anything extra, it just asks the House to keep the intent of this motion.

In the original substantive part of this motion, the government committed to do two things. It effectively committed to tabling the savings strategies when it amended the time in which it would table them, in effect saying, 'We're happy to table them'. That is great. They also committed to holding a working group for health workers, which is a good thing. This amendment to the amendment preserves that as well. We can and we should have both of those things.

The choice for the House at the moment is whether this House wants to see the government's savings strategies. If this House wants to see the government's savings strategies into our healthcare system - which I think we all agree is in a serious amount of trouble at the moment, particularly with these cuts coming - if you want this House to see those cuts tomorrow, then you must back this amendment.

If you are interested in transparency, and a lot of people were elected regarding the idea of transparency, then you must back this amendment because it is about this House understanding what the government is up to.

In the substantive debate, Mr Willie spoke about how we wanted to see an outline of exactly what this government is up to with these \$50 million worth of savings; \$300 million over the next few years. A lot of that will be in health. Labor has been asking, and members of the crossbench and the Greens have been asking the government time after time to tell us what the total cost is of the savings strategies in health and what exactly is being cut. If we support this amendment to the amendment, we will find out tomorrow. If this amendment to the amendment is lost, we will not find out.

There is a health forum next week, which is great, but we can have both. I want to make it clear to all members that this is the opportunity to get to the bottom of this, to support our healthcare system, to support our healthcare workers, so that there can be some transparency and a magnifying glass put on this government, which has repeatedly refused to outline what the cuts and savings are going to be. Now is the chance.

[3.41 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I will not say as much as I was planning because I want to leave time for other members to speak. We have now had months of the government refusing to outline the quantum of cuts to the health system. We have asked time and time again in Question Time and failed to get answers from the government about how exactly they are going to manage the efficiency dividend, which is going to be put across the whole State Service, within the Health department.

We have asked direct questions about what kind of jobs are up for the vacancy control committee to consider not filling, what jobs are safe, what jobs are not, and we have not had clear answers from the government on that.

We have asked questions about infrastructure rollbacks. We have seen leaked emails from both the LGH and the Royal Hobart Hospital about their infrastructure plans being scaled back, and the government has denied that is the case, even with clear evidence to the contrary. We have tried to get that information. The government is saying it will be revealed in the Budget and through the meetings that the minister has agreed to have through the member for Franklin's amendment. The truth is it is easy to hide things in the Budget papers. We will see the Budget handed down in this place tomorrow. We will all be reading it with a fine-toothed comb, but it is possible to hide things like infrastructure spending rollbacks in the forward Estimates. It is possible to hide things like genuine cuts to frontline services through the way that the budget papers are written and expressed.

What this motion will do, if the amendment to the amendment is supported, is, as others have said, allow us to have both those things. We have already seen the savings strategies released through RTI for the Police department. I was going to read them into the *Hansard*. I will not do that now, but we have seen some of the things the Police department is considering to satisfy its part of the efficiency dividend. We are simply seeking that for the Health department as well. Those documents would already exist. It would be very straightforward for the government to release them, in addition to the Budget papers. That would allow the parliament - the opposition parties, the crossbench and government backbenchers - to properly scrutinise not just the Budget papers but the efficiency dividend that is already in place for this

financial year. That is what we want to see. That is what we would see if we had those papers tabled in this place along with the Budget tomorrow.

I commend the member for Franklin for moving the motion about having those ongoing meetings because we are not all experts in this place, ministers included. If you want to make good public policy decisions, you need to rely on the people who are experts. That does mean health unions, health workers and community advocates. We can have both those things. We can have ongoing meetings, where the minister can be informed by experts in the cost saving measures he is going to be implementing in his department, as well as allowing the parliament to have the information we need to properly scrutinise those cost savings ourselves.

I am disappointed in the minister, Mr Barnett, who suggested initially that he supported the tabling of that information by amending clause (3) himself, changing the name of Premier to Treasurer and changing the reporting time. We agreed to that in good faith. It does not seem honest now to go back and say that he would support removing the crux of this motion, which is to see the cost-saving measures for parliamentary scrutiny.

[3.44 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I was not going to speak, but I feel the urge to because this is a minister who, during the election campaign, said he would ban ambulance ramping. I, like Mr Bayley, want to talk about the ambulance ramping committee and the horrific stories we, as a committee, have heard from people right across Tasmania - not just patients, but clinicians and families, and of the trauma caused by the state of Tasmania's health system. This amendment put forward by Mr Willie is a commonsense approach. It enables transparency and for information to be provided to members of parliament that they need to make informed decisions. We are not in the business of propping up this government. We want to see all the information and facts on the table.

The other part of Mr Willie's amendment talks about bringing together key stakeholders from around the state to talk about the implications for the workforce and other key stakeholders through the change this government intends to make. That is a positive thing as well because they should have input into the way that services are delivered and funded across this state because they have firsthand experience, being frontline workers. In many senses, they are at the coalface providing services to Tasmanians and they deserve the ear and support of their government.

The minister said that just last week he met and had, I think he said, a 'collaborative' roundtable with healthcare providers. He forgot to admit the fact that nurses were on strike across the state last week because they are absolutely fed up. Many of them are completely burnt out from working overtime and double shifts. The continual stress on them and their families is making them leave the profession, as we see also with paramedics. The fact is this government has not funded the health system appropriately and it has not looked after our healthcare workers. The last thing Tasmanians and the Tasmanian health system need is further cuts. It needs investment and it needs a government that cares.

Time expired.

The SPEAKER - For clarity, I will explain what we are doing it at each step because there have been quite a few changes.

I put the amendment as moved by Mr Willie, which is to delete clause (3) of the amendment moved by Mr O'Byrne.

Amendment agreed to.

The SPEAKER - We are now on the amendment that has been moved by Mr O'Byrne. We do not need to have a vote on the technical amendment, which was to change orders to calls on because that was a technical matter dealt with by the House. The motion now before us is the motion moved by Mr O'Byrne as amended to insert the new clause (4).

Amendment agreed to.

The SPEAKER - We are now on the original amended motion that has now been amended twice. No, only once now because we have removed clause (3)(b). The motion as amended.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

State of the Environment Report

[15.48 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I advise that a vote will be required.

I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes:
 - (a) Tasmania is facing serious environmental challenges including the pollution and degradation of waterways, the impacts of climate change-fueled and extreme weather events, and the decline of iconic native species.
 - (b) environmental impacts create significant community concern and anxiety, pose substantial public and economic costs, and add uncertainty to industry and development.
- (2) Recognises the Tasmanian Government has a statutory obligation to prepare a State of the Environment Report every five years.
- (3) Further notes the last State of the Environment Report was released in 2009.
- (4) Agrees the Liberals have entirely neglected a basic requirement of governance by failing to produce a State of the Environment Report in both 2014 and 2019.

- (5) Understands a 2024 State of the Environment Report has – despite further delays – now been finalised and handed to the Minister for Housing and Planning, Hon. Felix Ellis MP.
- (6) Recognises the Liberals’ propensity to delay the release of important reports and findings as long as possible.
- (7) Further recognises the release of this report could be held off until November if the Minister chose to do so.
- (8) Acknowledges the Parliament and the community would benefit greatly by the release of the State of the Environment Report prior to the Budget Reply and Budget Estimates process commencing.
- (9) Orders the Minister for Housing and Planning to table the 2024 State of the Environment Report by 5pm 12 September 2024.

Tasmania's environment is undoubtedly its biggest asset. Whether you look at our branding campaigns such as 'Come down for air', or outside the tourism industry at our agricultural sector and even sectors the Greens do not support, the aquaculture and timber industries, they all trade on our pristine environment, clean water, clean air, and this being a really good place to be. Our environment is precious, it is our greatest asset, and it is incredibly valuable.

The substance of our motion today is to order the government to table the State of the Environment report. The State of the Environment reports are incredibly important documents. The report is prepared by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and is intended to further the objectives of Tasmania's resource management and planning system, in particular promoting the sustainable development of natural and physical resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity. The ongoing failure to deliver the State of the Environment report means that crucial decisions about planning, the Budget and the management of the state's natural resources are not properly being made by the government.

The last Tasmanian State of the Environment report was tabled in parliament on 16 November 2009. That is nearly 15 years ago. There is a statutory requirement for this government to review and publish a State of the Environment report every five years. The report is now 10 years overdue. There have been two statutory deadlines missed; one in 2009 and another in 2014. Each time they delay the Liberal government fails in their legislative duty to Tasmanians.

The State of the Environment report 2009 covers the reporting period between 2003 and 2008. That means the comprehensive data about our environment showing the trends of condition, the changes and the pressures on Tasmania's physical environment have not been provided for almost 20 years. This is at a time when we should be producing this report every five years. We are lagging behind. For a state that thinks it does environment well and for a state that trades so heavily on the environment, we are doing very poorly in transparency about that environment and what is and is not going well. We need that long-term data: we need those long-term trends so we can measure the declines, or hopefully the inclines, in the data being captured.

It is clear that recommendations made 15 years ago by the Tasmanian Planning Commission about how to improve the condition of our environment and how better to collect data and monitor our environment have not been implemented. It is clear that we cannot and should not be acting on data that is 15 years old. That was made very clear in an open letter from a whole raft of environment groups to the Tasmanian government when the State of the Environment report was received by this government. We need to be 100 per cent clear that sitting behind this motion is the fact that the State of the Environment report has already been received by government. It will be tabled in this House but the question is when.

The environment groups wrote:

The government's failure to publish the report in 2014 and 2019 has come at a cost. These reports stimulate local employment, scientific advancement, cooperation between sectors, growth in sustainable industries and inform public debate. Tasmania is now 10 years behind where it could have been. These reports would have helped Tasmanians protect their way of life.

That was on 30 August, just a couple of weeks ago, when the minister received the report from the Tasmanian Planning Commission. That is a delay from even the Planning Commission's original timeline in terms of receipt and delivery of the report.

I will touch on science denialism and cherry-picking of science by the Liberal government. This is not to say that we have no information at all about Tasmania's environment. There are many incredibly talented and committed scientists working to study our environment, report on it, blow the whistle on it in many cases and articulate what is happening in the environmental context in this state. There is good work going on, but what we need is a holistic review and report of what they are finding.

The government's continual misrepresentation of science has led to the demoralisation of our wonderful scientists and researchers who have been the ones on the front line desperately trying to convey to this government that Tasmania's environment is at breaking point while the government and industry cherry-pick elements to construct a false narrative that supports an anti-science outcome. This is of deep concern to so many people. The recent handling, for example, of the Brook report into the decline of the Maugean skate demonstrates this government's approach to science perfectly. The Brook report stated unequivocally that:

A major cause of the Maugean skate's population decline appears to be habitat degradation driven by a combination of low dissolved oxygen levels and deep-water turnover events, nutrient outflows from salmon farming and altered river flows due to hydroelectric operations.

The Brook report acknowledges that a confluence of factors is contributing to the decline of the Maugean skate - climate change, marine heatwaves, increased predation, impacts from recreational fishing, declines in genetic diversity and the ongoing habitat destruction caused by the salmon farming industry in Macquarie Harbour, but you would not know that by the way the government took this report and reported on it. Only one issue, the issue of the models used to inform population predictions of the skate, prompted a response from the government.

We have this outpouring of faux anger from government - and frankly, Labor - in relation to the actions of the federal environment minister. The federal environment minister has

legislative responsibilities, let alone her political responsibilities, not to oversee a single future extinction. She has legislative requirements under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to protect species and make sure that critically endangered species such as the Maugean skate do not go extinct, do not go further down the tube, yet we have this government pressuring the minister to make a non-scientific, purely political decision based on its advocacy.

In the 2009 State of the Environment report - the last one we saw in this place - it documented the trends and conditions and pressures on 30 environmental indicators in the period 2003 to 2008, including climate variability and change, threatened species and communities, pest species, water extraction, soil diversity and more. Not a single one of the 30 indicators improved their condition during the reporting period. Not a single indicator showed a reduction in environmental pressure during the reporting period. At best, a handful of indicators remained the same, while others had insufficient data from which to form a trend. In a climate and biodiversity crisis, having long-term reliable data that shows the response of our environment to human activities is absolutely crucial. The government has failed to release this data for over 10 years.

The reason we are bringing this motion forward today is not only because this government has this report - it has it in its hot little hands at the moment and is simply refusing to release it - but it is critically important we have this kind of data ahead of the Budget. We need to scrutinise this Budget. We need to scrutinise the investment that this government is making into the Environment department, the Threatened Species Unit, habitat restoration programs and a whole raft of different environmental initiatives that ultimately sustain and enhance our brand. We need to be scrutinising this government over what it is investing in and what it is not investing in. To think that the government has this report, years of work has been done, it has cost us presumably hundreds of thousands of dollars to produce this report, and yet we, the parliament, and the broader Tasmanian community do not have the transparency of that report being publicly available to put down on the table alongside the budget and this government's budget priorities. That is why we are bringing this motion forward today.

There is a statutory obligation - and I am sure the minister will talk about this - for the minister to table this report in this House within 15 sitting days. He received it on 30 August. I have not done the math but I think that means it might be in October some time before he is forced to table this document. We will see this document. It is not about whether we will or will not see this document 10 years later. The question is, will we see it in time for the Budget? Will we see it in time to scrutinise the investments of this government or non-investment of this government in the environment, and can there be transparency about why those investments are being made, how they were prioritized and how they were informed? At the end of the day, people can make a decision about whether those investments are well-targeted, whether there should have been more, or whether they should have been focused on something else.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission is the body that writes the State of the Environment report and the Planning Commission is a credible statutory body, but there have been questions raised in the past about whether it is the appropriate place to conduct this kind of review.

The Independent Review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission in 2020 raised questions as to whether or not the Tasmanian Planning Commission is the most appropriate

organisation to prepare the State of the Environment report. While many stakeholders agree that it was preferable for an independent organisation, separate from government, to prepare the report, due to:

Limited confidence in government agencies to accurately report information that may reveal negative environmental impact.

Some suggested that the Tasmanian Planning Commission:

... lacks the relevant skills, expertise and capability to access and analyse the relevant data.

Clearly, the Tasmanian Planning Commission needs to get in and has got in expert relevant expert advice external to its own ranks but there have been questions raised.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission has also not been sufficiently supported. The Independent Review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission found that since the last report was prepared in 2009, internal resources have been put towards implementing planning reforms and other functions while:

State of the Environment reporting is an important but demanding task that has become too onerous and tended to fall away.

Government funding to the Tasmanian Planning Commission to fulfil their obligations to complete the State of the Environment Report have not kept pace with the ever-evolving reporting standards.

Right to Information documents uncovered by The Australia Institute and the Environmental Defenders Office revealed that the reasons the Tasmanian Planning Commission could not produce a state of report since 2009 is because of insufficient funding.

We are missing statutory, legislated timelines for the production of a State of the Environment report simply because the government has not prioritised the necessary funding to the agency charged with delivering that report in the first place.

In 2019, the Department of Justice estimated the cost of producing the State of the Environment report would be \$1.25 million. However, the Planning Commission were given only \$500,000 in the 2023-24 State Budget to reproduce the report.

Concerns have also been raised by environment groups, including Environment Tasmania, about the government potentially providing direction to the Tasmanian Planning Commission on preparing the report.

That is why getting this document on the table is so critical. The Greens have been putting pressure on and talking about this for many years. We have been calling on the State of the Environment report together with other environment groups from across Tasmania to get this document published. We had to push and push for the government to commission it. Now it has been completed and now it has been received. We are trying to push and push to get it released before government.

It should not take pressure from the Greens. It should not take pressure from non-government organisations to force the government to produce a report that they are statutorily required to produce every five years. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that the Tasmanian Planning Commission is sufficiently funded to fulfil its functions so that Tasmanians have confidence that the information about the environment is being reported on accurately and in a timely manner. We did note that there was not only the decades-long delay from the Planning Commission, but there was a request for a several-month-long delay several months ago to finally see it deliver its report in August of this year.

Our motion is pretty simple. It notes that Tasmania is facing serious environmental challenges. We have just lived through one of the worst and most sustained storm events that the state has seen in many years.

We have just had a debate about the level of damage that was done, the challenges of restoring power networks to some 47,000 Tasmanian homes, and the challenges that TasNetworks has had and the communication issues. These are all costs to the Tasmanian people. Whether it is climate, whether it is from extreme weather events, whether it is the decline of iconic native species, we have some significant environmental challenges. They are of concern to our community.

Tasmanians love their environment. They really do love their environment. When they see and know that it is steadily declining, that not only adds a taint to our brand, but it adds angst to every single Tasmanian who cares. It is impossible to deny clause (1) of this motion, which notes that we have some serious challenges.

We recognise that the government has a statutory obligation to prepare the State of the Environment report every five years. That is simply a statement of fact. We further note that the State of the Environment report was last released in 2009. Again, simply a statement of fact.

We would like the House to agree that the Liberals have entirely neglected a basic requirement of governance by failing to report the State of the Environment report both in 2014 and 2019. This is undeniable. If you have a statutory obligation to produce a report and you do not do it, it is a failure of your obligation. The Liberals have absolutely, entirely, neglected a basic requirement of governance.

We understand that the 2024 State of the Environment report has now been finalised and handed to the minister. That has been confirmed publicly and is a statement of fact. We recognise the propensity for the Liberals to delay the release of these reports as long as possible, and particularly after the Budget. We further recognise that the release of the report could be held off until November, if the minister chooses to do so. That speaks to the 15 sitting days that he is able to sit on this report before tabling it in this House. We acknowledge that the community would benefit from the release of this report pre-Budget. I have been over that.

As a result, this motion is calling on the House to order the minister to table this report by 5.00 p.m. tomorrow. That allows us to take the Budget away in one hand, take the State of the Environment report away in the other, and we and the community can spend time analysing each of those documents and making our own call and our own analysis on what investments have been made, what investments have not been made and, as a result, how committed this government is to protecting the environment.

We know that Tasmanians care. Tasmanians have consistently stood up for the protection of their environment. They have stood up to defend the environment from destructive industrial developments. They have stood up to protect their environment from death by a thousand cuts. They stand up to restore their environment. There are thousands of people who are working on weeding programs, river restoration and broader landscape restoration projects as volunteers. People want to see a healthy environment because they are sustained by the environment. The environment is, unfortunately, not being sustained by us. That is the problem here.

Deputy Speaker, I commend the motion to the House. It is a pretty straightforward motion. This report sits with government already. It will cost them nothing and take zero effort to table it by 5.00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon. It is something that Tasmanians have been waiting not-so-patiently for, waiting in a very frustrated fashion, for a decade now. It is a document that will tell us a lot about the state of our environment, what our key challenges are, what the key opportunities are, and where the needs for investment and focus are going to be into the future. Importantly, it will show the trends over a long time.

There has been a lack of data over this 10-year hiatus, let us call it, and failure of the government to produce a State of the Environment report - but better late than never. The government has it. There should be absolutely no reason why it cannot make a commitment, it cannot support this motion, and it cannot, ultimately, deliver the State of the Environment report to this House tomorrow so it can be released publicly, so that it can be scrutinised, so the Tasmanian public can analyse its content, make their own judgments on this government's performance.

It is 10 years or thereabouts since this government was elected. It is 10 years since there was a State of the Environment report. It is time we had it on the table so that we can make a judgement about its performance and its priorities when it comes to the coming Budget. I commend the motion.

[4.10 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Skills and Training) - Deputy Speaker, I am delighted to be able to make a contribution to this motion. I say from the outset that our government will not be supporting the motion. We will be moving an amendment to the motion to make a minor change in relation to the date of the tabling of the report, and I will discuss that further in my contribution. We do think that is important. Our government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future outlines our commitment to getting the balance right for growing our economy, supporting jobs, particularly in our regional areas, and also protecting our state's much-loved natural environment.

The Liberals have clearly shown that we have won the trust of the Tasmanian community regarding getting that balance right. They rejected the one-eyed politics of the Greens that often puts regional jobs on the scrapheap, and they said that we need a better path. Tasmania is a blue-collar state and we are fortunate to live in the wonderful environment that we do. Making sure that we get that right for the betterment of flora and fauna, but also the Tasmanian people, is absolutely essential.

The State of the Environment report is an important means of documenting environmental findings across our state and compiling publicly available data into one place. I acknowledge the Tasmanian Planning Commission for their important work and the work of so many State Service agencies and authorities that have invested so much time and expertise

into the State of the Environment Report 2024. It is a document of over 600 pages, and that is clearly something that, as a minister and as a government, we are working through in a methodical manner so that we can then provide that to this House and the community in a considered way.

Our government is proud of our world-class parks, reserves, Crown lands, and businesses and workers that make sure that our economy continues to function well. Our environment is the envy of many across the globe. Despite the doom from Mr Bayley, I think that most people would recognise that Tasmania's environment is stunning, and that has been a big part of the stewardship of generations of Tasmanians. It is an unwitting tribute that many of the Greens pay to our foresters that they will often remark at the beautiful forest, the pristine wilderness that they walk amongst, only to find that it is a former forestry coupe that was harvested and regrown by foresters of generations past. I think it is a testament to the way that we do things in Tasmania, where we do get the balance right, and where we manage this magnificent place well. The doom and gloom from the Greens about what is one of the most remarkable stories of environmental management and also a strong modern economy that you will find anywhere in the world. We remain committed to managing these assets in a sound and sensible way, including by leveraging this natural and sustainable resource for the benefit of our state.

Our government strengthens the Environmental Protection Authority's role as an independent environmental regulator to further ensure comprehensive environmental monitoring and regulation. Further, we bolstered it in the 2022-2023 Budget with an additional \$10 million over four years to support its operations.

Tasmanians are fortunate that, wherever we live, we can enjoy the benefits of these natural areas. They also draw people from all over the world to experience the wonder of what we have here and that we have been able to steward for generations. As I say, despite the doom and gloom from the Greens who constantly talk our environment down in Tasmania, the world recognises our environmental stewardship as forefront among the community of nations. People come here to experience their wonder, showcasing our unique flora, fauna and landscapes, and benefiting our vibrant tourism sector, which is obviously a key driver of our economy.

We are committed to sustainable management of our environment, balancing that protection with sharing our unique places both with Tasmanians and the world, now and into the future. Tasmania's natural environment remains one of its greatest assets, and those from the Greens fail to recognise just what that means when it comes to all those people have managed it over generations.

In terms of native forestry, it is an area that I know well, and sustainable forestry management is part of the solution to climate change - not the opposite. It is part of ensuring that we have a healthy and strong environment, so that we can manage bush fire risk across our vast state. I have experienced this, having delivered the State of the Forest report, which is part of the input that goes into this important document - the State of the Environment report. That report demonstrates the strong stewardship across generations of forest scientists, logging contractors, timber mills and a whole range of everyday Tasmanians who make it their business to ensure that we have a healthy forest so that we can continue to enjoy it and benefit from it in terms of our prosperity.

Unlike the Greens, we do not agree that ceasing all native forestry is the best approach for climate change. We do not agree. They have never provided a plausible solution for mitigating bush fire risk, or for providing products that capture carbon naturally that can offset single use plastics. We never hear plausible solutions from the Greens for that because they do not have any. I think it is a sad reflection on just how unserious the Greens are on many environmental matters. That they oppose native forestry in this place, despite it producing beautiful forests, beautiful timber and some of the most sustainable fibre that you will find anywhere in the world.

Our strategy on this side of the House is informed by science, not opinions. It aims to balance conservation and to use and provide the optimal framework of atmospheric carbon reduction and timber production. Tasmania's large productive forest estate sequesters carbon and provides society with low emissions products.

More than half of Tasmania's forests, or almost 1.8 million hectares, are already protected in reserves. That is about half our state. For those who continue to talk our state down, name places that you think do it better than beautiful Tasmania. They often do not and they certainly cannot do so -

Members interjecting.

Mr ELLIS - The federal government has a target of reaching 30 per cent of landscaping reserve. We are already at 50 per cent. The Greens may want to talk down Tasmania, but the facts speak for themselves. I believe that there are serious flaws in the way that the Greens go about their work. I believe it does them no service, particularly when they talk down Tasmania's beautiful natural environment as well as our workers and our economy.

We have a huge amount of our forest, including estate plantation and regrowth forest, but timber plantation alone cannot provide for the full range of products to meet current or market demand, particularly as we move to phase out single use plastics.

Where timber is harvested from our native forests, it is done so in a sustainable way in accordance with our world class forest practices system. It was a pleasure to work in conjunction with the Forest Practices Authority (FPA) to provide the State of the Forest report to this parliament last year.

In any given year, only less than one per cent - about 0.27 per cent - of our native forests are harvested. Those are regrown with about 117 million tree seeds planted by Sustainable Timbers Tasmania (STT) every year.

It is an extraordinary record, and certainly far more than those interjecting from the Greens benches. Whenever wood is harvested, it is regrown. This means not only are we able to maintain our native forest estate in perpetuity - because a managed forest is a forest forever - but it also allows for carbon capture as those trees grow.

Our sustainable forestry management approach is reinforced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Our approach supports jobs in forestry, in contrast to the job destroying lockups of those opposite. Unlike Labor in Western Australia and Victoria, we do not intend to shut down our sustainable native forest sector. On this side of the House, we are committed to the long-term sustainable management of our forests for the benefit of all

Tasmanians. We will continue to support investment and innovation in our forest industry in both our native and our plantation sectors.

Tasmania is also one of the greatest places in the world to live, work, raise a family, and run a business. I hope Dr Woodruff is not going to complain about that being Tasmanian exceptionalism as well. We want to keep it that way, so that it is even better for the next generation and generations to follow. Tasmania is renowned for our clean air and water, our World Heritage wilderness, our strong economy built on premium exports and tourism, world-class educational institutions, and an enviable lifestyle that is founded on our beautiful natural heritage - the things that the Greens seem to deny.

We have a strong community that has always looked after each other to grasp our opportunities in being a small island state, to build a strong and resilient economy with more than 100 years of investment in renewable energy and world-leading net emissions profile. None of those things we would have if we followed the anti-science, anti-renewable focus of the Greens.

Tasmania is recognised globally for producing the highest quality export produce, products, resources, education, and tourism, all creating jobs and prosperity for everyday Tasmanians. Tasmania has what the world wants, and we are deeply proud and grateful for what we have been able to achieve together. We want to continue this success and make sure that our children, or our grandchildren, or our great-grandchildren continue to benefit from what our great state provides. We must look to the future when we make our choices and decisions for today for the best interests of future generations, and that is fundamentally what sustainability is all about.

In terms of planning, much of the State of the Environment report is about the natural environment, but it is an important opportunity to make a contribution in this space, and the government remains committed to the delivery of its significant planning reform agenda. We know that Tasmania is experiencing housing availability and affordability issues, just like the rest of the nation, and the planning system has a big role to play in how we address this.

While the planning system cannot guarantee the construction of housing, there are important steps that we can take to make sure that it is operating efficiently and that it backs in growth. All our reforms that are underway will assist with increasing the supply of housing in the right locations. Our Tasmanian Planning Scheme is well-progressed, with 24 of the 29 councils now operating under the single planning scheme, including some of our smallest, like the West Coast, Flinders and Tasman, right up through to our largest, like Launceston. Some councils, including in my neck of the woods, Burnie and Devonport, have been operating on the Tasmanian Planning Scheme for nearly four years.

We have already shifted our focus to the strategic elements of our planning system and have already commenced the review of our regional land use strategies, which I mentioned publicly the other day. Preparation of new regional land use strategies to plan for growth areas, and opportunities for increased density, for example. These strategies medium- to longer-term strategic direction for our regions, include informing where growth and redevelopment can best be facilitated in our cities and towns. They inform the zoning of land in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, establishing a suitable supply of land for housing. We expect to have the new regional land use strategies in place during 2025. A lot of work is underway or has already been delivered to support these reviews.

In 2021, we set aside \$3.45 million over the forward estimates to support regional planning. We provided \$1.45 million in total to the three regional bodies to help coordinate regional input into the review of the regional land use strategies. A further \$1 million in grants and funding has already been provided to undertake residential and industrial land supply-and-demand analysis, and to support councils undertake local structure planning.

In the meantime, we are also keeping the current regional land use strategies up to date. We have recently made significant amendments to the Southern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy and the Cradle Coast Regional Land Use Strategy to provide much-needed updates and flexibility to plan for growth. These complement significant amendments made to the Northern Regional Land Use Strategy, which rounds out our three in 2018 and 2021 to implement the Greater Launceston Plan.

We are looking at our decision-making processes, with our recently announced initiative to develop a new pathway to enable some planning decisions to be made by an independent development assessment panel, rather than elected members of a council. It is all about taking the politics out of planning.

Dr Woodruff - Yes, like you call scientists 'political'. That is a pity.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER - Comments through the Chair, please.

Members interjecting.

Mr ELLIS - I suspect Dr Woodruff's concerns are completely based on a lack of understanding of the proposed legislation, but I look forward to their usual NIMBYism in their contributions in that discussion. The government is providing an alternative assessment pathway through a priority development assessment panel for certain types of development applications, to be determined by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. Our partners in this important work will allow for the fair and timely consideration of developments that are a priority for Tasmania. We can understand why that might be a concern for the Greens. This is our commitment to take the politics out of planning to ensure certainty that planning applications are assessed on their merits.

In regard to the report, the Tasmanian Planning Commission provided me with the State of the Environment report on 29 August 2024. It is more than 600 pages long and it follows the former minister for planning's direction, under section 7 of the *Tasmanian Planning Commission Act 1997* of 4 October 2022 to submit a State of the Environment report by 30 June 2024. Subsequently, following a request from the Tasmanian Planning Commission for additional time to finalise the report, as Minister for Housing and Planning, I directed the commission on 16 June 2024 to submit to me the State of the Environment report by 30 August 2024.

The *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* provides that the minister in receipt of the State of the Environment report provided by the Tasmanian Planning Commission:

... must cause a State of the Environment report to be laid on the table of each House of Parliament within the first 15 sitting days of the House after the report is received by the Minister.

There is no ambiguity in the provision within the act. It was parliament's intention that the minister table the State of the Environment report in a timely way, but with 15 sitting days to do so. It is, in the government's view, fair to allow some time for the relevant portfolio ministers, many who are not the Planning minister, to familiarise themselves and their departments with the State of the Environment report, including recommendations prior to tabling.

As I mentioned, this is a document of more than 600 pages and has been two years in the making. This report, the first of its kind in over a decade, is extensive and it is comprehensive. The government is currently reviewing the report, including the recommendations contained within it, and once the report is tabled and released, including via the Tasmanian Planning Commission's website, we will have more to say about the detailed findings and recommendations.

I mentioned earlier, I have circulated an amendment to the motion, which I will step through. The amendment is:

Leave out paragraph (9) and insert instead:

- (10) Orders the Minister for Housing and Planning to table the State of the Environment Report 2024 by 5pm on 19 September 2024.

We think this is a reasonable timeframe and will certainly enable members in this House to have the State of the Environment report before Budget Estimates. We will be able to have that information available to them to ask all the relevant portfolio ministers their questions. It will also enable the relevant ministers to be able to consider this extensive report in a proper manner, as was set out by the act.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Excuse me, minister, we have not received one to be tabled.

Mr ELLIS - In closing, I thank the member for Clark for his interest in what is a significant report for Tasmania. We disagree with his unbalanced view of the Tasmanian environment and the need to ensure that we have strong economic growth in this place. The proposal as amended is definitely part of a typical challenge from the Greens to economic growth. This House needs to consider that seriously. Regarding the amendment provided to the House, we think that reasonable timeframe strikes, again, that right balance of ensuring that information is available prior to scrutiny, also that relevant ministers will be able to work with their departments to respond to the findings and recommendations of this very detailed report.

In closing, the government is planning for Tasmania's future and we are planning for growth while providing certainty and stability for Tasmanians, keeping our economy strong, supporting our regional communities, while protecting those assets that are important to us all.

[4.30 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker, and minister, thanks for your spray. I beg the question, what have you got to hide? You have the report; you articulate that your ministers have 600 pages to work through, but you are willing to give members of this House a weekend to work through it before Budget Estimates. It is not particularly charitable when you have the thing on your desk at the moment. It costs you nothing apart from a bit of additional scrutiny to table it now so that we have a fair opportunity to consider those

600 pages as well. I do not know whether your comment about timelines is a comment about ministerial capability to get across that information. They need extra time to get across that. You have had a couple of weeks already, and you are giving members of this House a simple weekend to work through it before Budget Estimates.

It is good to see you acknowledge scientists. I acknowledge advocates and activists because yes, Tasmania is stunning; yes, Tasmania is remarkable. However, in many cases, that is only because of the efforts of those who have stood up to the likes of your government and your actions and your policies that have kept it that way. An extended Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, reductions in the levels of native forest logging: people have fought you every step of the way. Do not worry, they are still fighting. It is ironic that you pick native forest logging as the one battleground to tackle in this place.

Let me just say up front that the State of the Environment report is bigger than just native forest logging. It goes to pollution and waste issues in the waterways. It goes to climate change. It goes through a whole range of threatening processes. However, your selective science when it comes to native forest logging is telling in itself. The reality is that science shows that native forest logging increases bushfire risk. I do not know what you are talking about when you say we have no solution when it comes to bushfires. That is what the science says: that native forest logging increases bushfire risk. Native forest logging also decreases species' habitat.

If you do not believe it, have a look at your own recovery plan, that your government's logo is now on, for the swift parrot. This is one of the most stunning little species that this state has. It has been in terminal decline for many years now and one of the reasons is native forest logging. If you do not want to take it from me, take it from your own recovery plan, which basically says that this species will see habitat loss and alteration due to forestry and land clearing, 'Loss of potential breeding habitat in Tasmania by clearance for conversion to agriculture'.

Native forest logging and intensive native forest silviculture practices continue to reduce the amount of available swift parrot nesting and foraging habitat and it therefore remains a significant threat to the continued persistence of the species. There you have it. This is why we need a State of the Environment report. On one hand, your policy agenda does one thing and on the other hand, the science and the scientists and some of your own documentation such as this recovery plan says a very different thing. That basically says we need to protect more swift parrot habitat if we are going to save the species in the future.

You trade on our net zero status as a jurisdiction. The only reason we have net zero is because we have got more forests protected over the last 20 years and because we reduced the amount of native forest logging. You say 50 per cent of Tasmania is protected. That is fabulous, but not all of that 50 per cent of Tasmania is protected from logging or protected from mining. In fact, you have a policy to reduce that 50 per cent to below 50 per cent. You want to log 39,000 hectares of some of the most spectacular and verified high conservation value forests and that will bring it below 50 per cent.

Mr Ellis - You did not include it in the deal that you were part of and you know it.

Mr BAYLEY - We do not support this amendment. We think it is entirely reasonable and entirely legitimate for the minister to table the State of the Environment report tomorrow. It is on his desk already. There is no reason why it should not be on ours. There is no reason

why we should not have an extra week to study those 600 pages so that we can see exactly what you are doing well and exactly what you are not doing well. We do not support this amendment. We think the motion stands strongly on its own two feet to have you table that report by 5:00 p.m. tomorrow 12 September.

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I will quickly make a contribution from Tasmanian Labor on the amendment. The minister is still within his timeframes in terms of producing that report by giving them another week and we think it is reasonable. There is more than a weekend for consideration. I do not think scrutiny on the environment is until Wednesday. It is within the timeframes. I find it less than genuine that the Greens, in scripting their motion, make comments that seem to be positive about things but then use it as a backhand to industry. We are willing to support the amendment today.

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

The House divided -

AYES 26

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis
Mrs Beswick (Teller)
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Jenner
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Ms White
Mr Willie
Mr Winter
Mr Wood

NOES 7

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

Amendment agreed to.

[4.43 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a contribution on the motion before us. While everyone is here, I have an amendment which I will circulate. I will do that first and then I will speak.

The SPEAKER - Would you like to speak to the substantive motion before moving your amendment or are you moving the amendment straight away?

Ms FINLAY - I will move the amendment straight away.

The SPEAKER - In that case, you need to read the amendment into the House and we will now be on the amendment.

Ms FINLAY - Brace yourself, it is complicated.

The amendment is:

Leave out paragraph (1).

Off the exchanges that have happened across the Chamber already on this item today, I was in two minds. I prepared an amendment and depending on the tone and the flavour of the conversation, I was either going to move it or not.

There was recently a conversation in the Chamber where we talked about the face value of commentary in motions. On face value, (1)(a) and (1)(b) are based in fact. There are concerns with the environment. There are some areas of concern with degradation of waterways, TasWater and spills into our waterways. There are concerns about our native species. However, when the Greens present this sort of information based in fact, but then stand and present with backhands to industry and to different sections of the community, it is not acceptable for it to remain in the motions of this place.

There are clauses in this motion that are true and which Tasmanian Labor absolutely supports. The balance of the clauses are correct and it is right that the government be held to account on these matters. We have already made an amendment and Tasmanian Labor agrees with that. However, we will not stand for veiled commentary of negativity to the many thousands of Tasmanians who do great work are in the industries that, in the main, support the economy of Tasmania. Tasmanian Labor seeks to remove clause (1) and I want to test that in the House now before speaking to the motion as amended.

[4.45 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, there is really only one word I have for this: pathetic. You accept that this clause is based in fact. I think if you reviewed the *Hansard*, it was the minister who introduced native forest logging and started sledging the Greens on our position in relation to native forest logging. That prompted a debate about the impacts and me reading into *Hansard* the evidence from the recovery plan for the swift parrot. This is a statement of fact, as you acknowledge. Whether the *Hansard* debate - what that reflects, this motion should stand alone. There is no doubt Tasmania is facing serious environmental challenges. The entire world is facing serious environmental challenges. We have just lived through a severe weather event that has delivered degradation to the environment. Whether it is lost trees, eroded rivers, escaped pollution from disposal sites, and so forth, it has delivered

an environmental impact that is a challenge. This clause should stand as written because it establishes the basis upon which the rest of the motion is written, and it establishes why the release of the State of the Environment report is so urgent.

We are facing these environmental challenges. We have not had a statutory report on this for a decade. We need to see it, and the motivation from our perspective of getting the report tomorrow - next week it seems, is so that we can properly scrutinise it against the Budget. We are going to have limited time to do that now. That is assuming the government supports the motion in the first place. We do not support this amendment. We think this is an exercise in denialism of a fact that adds important context to the motion. The motion itself needs to stand on its own two feet, and it needs to have that context written into it.

[4.48 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, this is a curious amendment to be proposing based on the vibe of the Greens' argument, when it was the minister who incited that, for lack of a better word, 'debate'. To remove both parts of clause (1) is of great concern. It neglects the seriousness of the environmental challenges we are facing right around the world. This is not just a silo in Tasmania, but Tasmania has a global responsibility to do what it can for the environment. That information is contained in the State of the Environment report, which we have to see. We all have a right to see it.

Paragraph 1(b) reads:

- (b) environmental impacts create great significant community concern and anxiety, pose substantial public and economic costs, and add uncertainty to industry and development.

They do. If the Labor Party stands for development, this clause has to stay in the motion. Industry is totally affected by the environment. Whether you agree with it or not, the changing climate and everything that is happening to our environment affects all the industries that operate in Tasmania, whether that is forestry in whatever capacity you are standing for, fish farming, including oyster farming and the salmon farms. They are all affected by this. For the Labor Party to propose taking that out is unusual. It is important that this parliament acknowledges the anxiety being caused by environmental impacts, be that to industry, but most importantly to the young people who put their faith in this parliament to look after the environment properly. The science says that climate anxiety is a thing and it is disproportionately affecting the young people who are inheriting the climate crisis. This motion also acknowledges that. We have a duty of care here to acknowledge it.

[4.50 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I think the other Greens have made a very comprehensive case. I will just add the previous State of Environment Report 2009. Maybe Ms Finlay has not read it and is not aware of it. One of the sections that report deals with is people and places. It deals with population and settlement patterns, energy use, waste, Aboriginal heritage. It deals with the impacts on communities. That is why it matters to understand what the state of our environment is, because we are all impacted. It is not something happening out there. It is an assessment of water quality. It is an assessment of water health, groundwater, geodiversity, and solar diversity.

How can agricultural communities - the ones which Ms Finlay is seeking to represent - understand the impacts for the future if they do not understand what the state of the soil environment is and if they do not know what the state of the water catchments are in Tasmania. We have had absolute silence for 10 years from this government - 10 years. We know nothing about the state of our river systems. That is exactly why that stuff needs to be in there. These are the facts that a State of the Environment report needs to deal with.

It is so far beyond a kind of political game that you are making this out to be. It is so far not that. It is a genuine deep desire from Tasmanians to understand what is the ship of Tasmania that we are living on, and how it is serving us into the future.

[4.52 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, my life has basically been entrenched in the environment. We will talk about forestry because that has come up today. What they did at the back of Wynyard, they cleared everything. They created monocultures. They laid down atrazines and poisons. When it rained, the soaking ability of that forest was gone. The wash that came out - you get an inch of rain out at Arthur River and now it goes up by a foot. What washed out the Tayatea Bridge was that fact. All those logs, all that debris, there was no water soaking ability of the forest. It was gone and it took out the Arthur River Bridge.

I was elected to this parliament on environmental concerns. I have worked closely with scientists on the fisheries. Rock lobster pluralists need 98.9 per cent water clarity quality to survive. Fish larvae - in the case of King George Whiting, 0.3 of a millimetre long - if there is a surface barrier in the way of oil or a foreign material, they die.

If we go back a bit further, Mount Lyell - the extraction machine there for the copper was designed to extract a 3 per cent ore capacity because the ore capacity there was near 100 per cent pure. Most of that copper ended up in Macquarie Harbour and killed the King River. The salmon farms in Macquarie Harbour, right now at this moment, are releasing up to a quarter of a million tonnes of untreated sewage that is going to the bottom. The effluent from the pulp mill at Burnie was what was killing the fish slough. The effluent from Tioxide turned the whole water orange. I could not fish east of Wynyard because the water quality was that poor.

Environment is everything. Whether you are talking about forestry, fishing or farming, we all rely on the environment to feed us, to sustain us and to go out and enjoy when we want. We have come from a very dark place. The environment has taken a heavy toll and right now, at this point in time, we have the ability to know what is right and what is wrong, what is bad practice, what is detrimental, but we still persist.

Since I have been in this Chamber, there seems to be a nature deficit disorder in the way that any project or anything that wants to get pushed through by big corporations. The environment does not matter. Let us not talk about the Ramsar Listing. Let us not talk about the seagrass birds.

We have a responsibility. Right now, the reason I am here is because the general community out there is accepting of where we are as a globe and as a country, particularly in this state, and what is important. Right now, they expect us to be able to make decisions that take the environment into account and also take the industry into account. Sure, we need jobs, but it should not be at the expense of one or the other. That is the role we have today. There

has to be a significant change in this Chamber if we are going to have the same things that we have grown up with, and our children are going to have those things into the future. It is very important that we get the balance right and what I have seen so far is the environment is second fiddle. I ask everyone in this Chamber to please reassess where you are, what you are supporting because the community out there are expecting better from us to make sure that we manage things efficiently and friendly going forward.

[4.55 p.m.]

Mr WOOD - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion -

The SPEAKER - We are on the amendment at the moment, the amendment moved by Ms Finlay to delete clause (1).

Mr WOOD - Yes, okay. Our government remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting Tasmania's natural environment and protecting our unique species. As the minister has already highlighted, the State of the Environment report is an important means of documenting baseline data, trends and risks right across our state. Tasmanian government departments, including the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, have played a significant role in contributing data and reviewing reports for 17 of the environmental indicators, as well as providing input through the preparation of the case studies and other feedback where appropriate. This important work has been carried out by the independent, pre-eminent Tasmanian Planning Commission, and the government thanks them for it. As the minister also indicated, this report is currently being reviewed by the government. Once the report is released, the government will have more to say about its findings and recommendations.

This government is proud of our world-class national parks, reserves and Crown lands. Tasmania is one of the few places on earth that is 100 per cent self-efficient in renewable energy. This began over a century ago with the building of the Hydro, built by workers from Tasmania and those from around the world. It has given Tasmania the great gift of being self-sufficient in renewable energy. As a result of this investment, and ongoing and sustainable management of our forests, Tasmania is way ahead of the pack. We were the first jurisdiction in Australia to achieve net-zero emissions and we have maintained this status for nine years.

Our government's ambition does not stop there. Our government is now working on our next milestone to be Australia's renewable energy powerhouse. As the world changes, we know that more clean energy will be needed to power our businesses, industries, cars, buses, barbecues, schools and cafes and many more. Tasmania can deliver this. We have so many advantages: our dams, our wind, our sunlight. Just like those who came before us we are building a sustainable and renewable future in Tasmania for Tasmanians.

Our natural environment is the envy of many and we remain committed to protecting our natural assets and our unique species. Our government has invested \$2.1 million to establish a captive breeding program for the Maugean skate, \$1 million to save the swift parrot, \$2.5 million to construct the orange bellied parrot captive breeding facility and ongoing funding to continue the Save the Tasmanian devil program. To build on this further, we have established a Tasmanian Threatened Species Fund with \$8 million over four years to directly support conservation activities for priority species.

We are committed to the introduction of a container refund scheme and are providing more than \$3 million through the Waste and Resource Recovery Board to support improvements to waste management systems. These will help remote councils, schools, industry and the resource recovery sector work towards helping Tasmania to be a place where nothing is wasted.

The SPEAKER - Member for Bass, I will ask you to try to turn your comments towards the amendment that is before the House, which is the removal of clause (1). You can seek the call on the substantive motion before the House when it comes up again, but the motion we are debating at the moment is the removal of clause (1). Standing order 142 requires that we are relevant to the matter. I have given a fair bit of leeway. Just find a way to link it back or we can do the vote and I can give you the call again.

Mr WOOD - Thank you. Tasmanians are fortunate that wherever we live, we can enjoy the benefits of these natural areas. They also draw people from all over the world to experience their wonder, showcasing our unique floral fauna and landscapes.

This government has a strong track record for investing in our parks and reserves, with significant funding to ensure it remains some of the best places in the world. We recognise the global significance of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) and we want to ensure it is experienced, celebrated and shared with the world. The TWWHA encompasses exceptional natural beauty and contains biological and geological features of outstanding global significance, containing a diversity and uniqueness of flora and fauna. It contains exceptional cultural heritage, reflecting the long occupation of the area by the Tasmanian Aboriginal people stretching back more than 40,000 years. We strive to manage the area on behalf of the Australian Government and the world in a way that respects its natural and cultural heritage values. It would be fair to say that the Tasmanian government is doing the heavy lifting when it comes to funding the important work of protecting the TWWHA. It regularly contributes over and above the funding received through the partnership agreement with the Commonwealth.

However, we would also welcome the Greens, who we know are passionate about these important regions, to lobby the federal government to help fund protecting the TWWHA for generations to come. This government also recognises the importance of best-practice planning. To this end, we have completed a new management plan and tourism master plan; we have implemented the TWWHA biosecurity strategy, the natural values climate change adaption strategy; and fire management plan.

Tasmania's future is strong, our visitor economy has constantly proved its value and importance for every corner of Tasmania, but we cannot take this for granted. Tasmania is in a strong position as a visitor destination and the time is right to consider our long-term vision and direction. Through our long-standing partnership with industry, we have been carefully considering this and planning for our future. In our 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy, we recognise what is special about Tasmania, what we intend to do to protect that and how we will realise our future vision. We are committed to sustainable management of our environment, balancing protection with sharing our unique places, both with Tasmanians and the world, now and into the future. We have so much more to offer. Tasmania is unique in so many ways, envied for its natural beauty, history and heritage, small and undeveloped places and the strong sense of community created by the people who live here and care deeply about protecting what is special about their island home. Our visitor economy is supported by interstate and

international visitors as well as Tasmanians travelling around our state. Visitor and population growth forecast indicate that our visitor economy will continue to grow -

Ms FINLAY - Standing Order 45, relevance.

The SPEAKER - Standing Order 45, relevance, applies to Question Time. Standing Order 142 applies to debate. I do note that you only have about six lines, but I will note that I asked you before to come to the amendment before the House. I ask you to make the choice now. You can finish it if you want, but you are outside of the request that I have made of you.

Mr WOOD - Okay, I will resume my seat.

[5.04 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, there is never more a clear example of the failure of politics that we are debating an amendment like this to a motion like this on a matter so important. Whilst I do not agree with everything that Mr Garland said, I recognise his passion. If you pull back, the principle he is pursuing in terms of the balance between the importance of the environment to industry, to our community, to everything that we do is fundamentally important. When you look at the face of (1)(a) and (1)(b), if you strip back all the politics, no one can disagree with that. I speak to farmers, fruit growers, a whole range of people in my seat of Franklin who would never, ever even give a Greens a preference of a vote - but who would not be able to argue with that principle. For us to be here, it is so frustrating, because there is a long history of Greens and the Greens movement moving Trojan horse motions.

Dr Woodruff - Like the Labor Party has never done this, to be fair.

Mr O'BYRNE - You continue to interrupt all the time. Let me finish my point. I am about to give them a whack as well.

The SPEAKER - Alright, both of you will stop having a conversation or you can both go outside and have it. I am happy to warn people and kick them out.

Mr O'BYRNE - Honourable Speaker, I apologize.

An element of Greens campaigning is creating Trojan horse motions which create the outcome. For a Labor Party that has a strong history of environmental protection and support over generations, to be here at this point - look at the face value of clause (1) in the motion. Traditionally it is a Labor Party position.

Ms Finlay - If you poke a little bit the reality comes out.

The SPEAKER - Ms Finlay, you are also under a warning that still applies.

Mr O'BYRNE - The issue is that we have a motion with which virtually everyone agrees, if you look at the words. The debates then degenerate into 'he said, she said'. My point, and yet another example of people's frustration with politics, is that this is an element of a motion which should be unanimously agreed to, because industry people are concerned about the environment. Industry people are concerned about the impacts of climate change.

Here we have a motion which should be able to be agreed with but with the history of the politics of Trojan horse motions and the knee jerk reaction to assume and second guess, people will just see the motion, look at the motion, and disagree or agree with it. If people get up on the debates and put their personal positions, criticize them for that but the motion, if passed - amended or unamended - will be the point that this place recognises.

I do not believe there is a greater example of the frustration of people with the politics than how it is played out on the environment and the industry debate. This is a prime example of it and it is disappointing that we are here.

The SPEAKER - Any further speakers on the amendments? If not, I will put the amendment.

Dr Woodruff - Divide.

The SPEAKER - You cannot call a division, you have won.

Mr Ellis - Did you say 'noes'?

The SPEAKER - Sorry, the 'noes' have it. I called it for the 'noes'.

Mr Ellis - Divide. I will double check. This is Labor's amendments?

The SPEAKER - It is Labor's amendment. Paying attention would be really useful for all members at this point. I called it for the noes because they made much more noise and they won it on the voices. If you wish to divide, that will end the debate because we will go straight into the final vote divide.

I remind you all that you are still being heard around the Chamber and the building while you are having conversations. Whilst the standing orders do not apply in the same way for the *Hansard*, take your arguments outside at the end of it.

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

The House divided -

AYES 25

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis
Mrs Beswick
Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs (Teller)
Ms Finlay
Mr Garland

NOES 8

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Burnet
Mr Garland
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Rosol (Teller)
Dr Woodruff

Ms Haddad
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Jenner
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Ms White
Mr Willie
Mr Winter
Mr Wood

Amendment agreed to.

[5.14 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, the outcome of this afternoon is that the intention of the Greens is to have the State of the Environment report tabled. That will happen and there is a series of items in the motion that remains that identify where the government has not been able to deliver things that were required.

We know that the biggest challenge to the environment is climate change. We know that the biggest opportunity to address climate change is renewables. What we know is that the Greens do not support renewables. If not renewables, what? When you poke just a little bit for the intention of these items when they are raised by the Greens, then you actually get to the issues that they are trying to raise. Today in conversation, there has been discussion about whether it is native forestry, aquaculture, agriculture, mining or forestry. What Tasmanian Labor believe is that the best way to support our environment is to address climate change. The best way to do that is with renewables.

This government, unfortunately, have not got a good track record there, because there are \$25 billion worth of investments waiting in the wings in Tasmania to help us address these issues to support the environment in Tasmania. What we also know is that, because this government a year or so ago put a moratorium on the salmon industry, it created a void for opportunities like the Greens to rise up and attack the incredible and amazing people that work in that industry. We know that there is great work happening right across Tasmania to support the environment. Yes, as has been stated by many, whether you are in agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, mining or renewables, you love the environment and the place that you work with, and you want to do whatever you can to support that.

It is important that this government table the State of the Environment report. It is important in five years' time that they do it again. It is important that this government, that this place, see the priorities for Tasmania, take action for the priorities of Tasmania, find a common interest where we can all agree on what is good for this place that we love, for the lifestyle that we love, for the climate, and for the natural assets that we have that are our advantage. Unfortunately, this government lets it slip away. We used to be the renewable powerhouse of the country. Last week, South Australia overtook us in that area, because other states are aggressively investing in that transition between coal and renewables. Tasmania is resting on

the laurels of generations of investment where great people did good work to develop the Hydro. Although they set a target for 200 per cent in Tasmania, they have done nothing, and we have flatlined, creating the biggest risk to our community and also to our economy.

Tasmanian Labor are happy with the outcome of this motion before us. We are happy that the government will be required to table the State of the Environment report. Most importantly, we stand for protecting the great environment of Tasmania and our natural assets, and at the same time, supporting industry - industry that do what they do to support the environment they work in. On the West Coast of Tasmania, they are doing incredible things and getting great results with the oxygenation project, doing really good work and leaning on science to understand the real facts and figures regarding the Maugean skate. We know that across Tasmania we have incredible world-leading scientists finding the data, finding the information, and doing the important work to protect this environment, to protect our communities, and protect industry. We have -

Time expired.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Autism Tasmania

[5.19 p.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes:
 - (a) there are over 4500 people in Tasmania on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) with Autism; and
 - (b) according to Autism Tasmania's latest annual report: "In Tasmania, autism is the second-most prevalent disability, and one in four families are impacted by autism."
- (2) Acknowledges the impact services like Autism Tasmania, whose goal was "helping Tasmanians on the autism spectrum and those who support them achieve their best outcomes", have in supporting those with autism and their families.
- (3) Recognises the devastation felt by families who were supported by Autism Tasmania in the recent closure of the service due to the withdrawal of funding from the Department of Social Services.
- (4) Further notes that the Government has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars for the establishment of a football team in Tasmania.

- (5) Calls on the Tasmanian Government to prioritise funding to services for neurodiverse Tasmanians in order for them to achieve their full potential.

Our roles as members of parliament are to be the mouthpiece on behalf of our constituents. To do our job properly as members of parliament, we must advocate on behalf of all Tasmanians, particularly those in our communities that are finding it hard to advocate for themselves. Part of our jobs is to ensure that all Tasmanians are provided with services and facilities they need to support them. Those living with disabilities like autism, and the families that desperately look after them, need and deserve our support.

The news that both Autism Tasmania and potentially Disability Voices Tasmania are being shut down due to a lack of federal funding is a devastating blow to all neurodiverse and disabled Tasmanians. Obviously, this is an issue close to my heart, as I touched on in my inaugural speech. I have friends, family and me who suffer from being neurodiverse.

As you can imagine, I am well aware of what it feels like to be isolated because of how you either think or act. Consequently, the impact of receiving little or no support that neurodiverse individuals desperately need can be catastrophic.

All neurodiverse Tasmanians deserve support from this government and it is our responsibility to see that they get it. According to Autism Tasmania, over 4500 Tasmanians with autism are on the NDIS, affecting one in four families.

Additionally, more than 26 per cent of Tasmanians live with a disability. This is not a niche group, but a substantial segment of the Tasmanian community. Despite this, services are actively being defunded and closed. The benefits of properly funding services for neurodiverse people extend far beyond those who are neurodiverse, investing and properly funding inclusive education programs that help those who are neurodiverse reach their full potential and become more inclusive in our communities.

The unemployment rate for autistic people in Australia is 31.6 per cent - that is almost six times the rate of those who are neurotypical. There are multiple reasons for this, but ultimately it comes down to the lack of support during school, childhood, workplace, and in our communities.

For all the above reasons, it is imperative that funding for these organisations for neurodiverse people, and their families, are not cut. Autism Tasmania is Tasmania's peak body for autistic people and their families. With Autism Tasmania being forced to shut down, Tasmania is now the only state without a peak body for autism, and we should be ashamed.

Not only do we have a moral imperative to properly fund services for people who are neurodiverse, we have an economic one. Studies have shown that early intervention programs can significantly reduce the long-term cost associated with untreated neurodevelopmental conditions.

In 2022, the ABC reported on a story about a mother who was forced to move from Tasmania to access specialist care and services for her three-year-old son who had started to develop signs of autism. In the report, she stated:

I had started to become concerned as the language development was not really coming along, and I became more concerned when he started developing sensory issues. We have tried every occupational therapist we could, and they all said there are waiting times for at least 18 months.

I was told there were no paediatricians accepting patients with behavioural issues, and we could not even get onto their books.

The story goes on to say that after months of rejection, the mother could not wait any longer for the support. She decided to make the heartbreaking decision to move away from her family and go to the Gold Coast to seek help.

This is a tragic indictment of how the government has failed those with autism in our communities. This report was written in 2022, and instead of improving support services for neurodiverse people and their families, the government has allowed what services there are to be defunded.

Another tragic story from a Tasmanian family who are now looking once again to move from Tasmania to another state to seek help for their children. This is part of the letter she wrote:

In October 2023, the Tasmanian government passed a motion to hold an inquiry into women's and children's health. Motions can be useful, but actions are better. As an allied health professional and a mother of two, I have seen firsthand the impact of the overwhelming, underfunded system.

It is widely accepted that early intervention for children with developmental disorders is vital. The keyword here is early, before children turn seven. But in Tasmania, families can be waiting many months to get on the assessment list. Sometimes, it can be years.

If you are lucky enough to get a priority appointment with a public disability service, parents must choose between two waitlists: either allied health services or assessment. If you choose the much-needed allied health services for your child because they are not available in your community, then you cannot be on the waitlist for an autism assessment. An assessment in the private sector is around about \$2000.

Parents have no other option but to run the gauntlet of the NDIS application process, and that means getting a stack of documentation together and to get these documentations, you need access to allied health professionals. Any parent who has attempted to locate a health professional will tell you that most have long waiting lists, similar to the public health system. Parents desperate to secure services for their children often seek support from their GP but, again, GPs are in short supply in Tasmania. Parents and GPs alike face the frustration of trying to locate the services of a paediatrician with open books and so, what do parents do? Those who can afford it look interstate for a paediatrician, but because of the conflicting state prescribing rules, they will not always be allowed to prescribe medication as needed.

With so many Tasmanian families struggling between the decision to put food on their table and fuel in their car, how many can afford to pay for private services required for a NDIS application or an autism assessment? How many children are falling through the cracks and not

being assessed so that they can get the vital help they need? I do not have the exact numbers, but I do know it is too many.

Neurodiverse Tasmanians deserve and need access to specialist services and facilities, and education. Education is what almost always leads to future employment. Neurodiverse people are far more likely to be unemployed or unemployable than those who are not. In the same way this government and the opposition both believe we need a high-performance centre so Tasmanian athletes can reach their full potential, just as important - and in my humble opinion, more so. We need those services for our neurodiverse people to reach their full potential.

This brings me to my next point: priorities. With the release of the Eslake report, we now know that the government is in a position where they cannot have their cake and eat it too. Now, more than ever, the government must prioritise. Although I would love a state AFL team, there is simply not enough money for the government to build a brand-new multi-million-dollar stadium and accommodate them, and also fund essential services.

For individuals who are neurodiverse and their families, support services like Autism Tasmania are absolutely essential. The government talks a lot about keeping Tasmanians in Tasmania, but that does not seem to apply to neurodiverse people. We must commit to supporting the proper funding for these essential services. Together, we can build a world where everybody, regardless of neurodiversity, has the opportunity to thrive in Tasmania. Thank you.

[5.29 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons, Mr Jenner, for bringing this motion forward today. The Greens will be supporting this motion as it raises an important issue for a large number of Tasmanians who are neurodiverse, and it calls for the government to do better for them. There are as many as 17,100 Tasmanians on the autism spectrum, and the recent closure of Autism Tasmania is a devastating outcome for them. Over the past 33 years, Autism Tasmania has provided critical support, advocacy and assistance to individuals on the autism spectrum and their families across the state. As the motion states, 4500 Tasmanians with autism receive funding from the NDIS. Not everyone with autism needs or wants NDIS support, but this gap potentially speaks to how challenging it can be for neurodiverse people to access the supports they need. This further highlights the importance of having a well-functioning and supported peak advocacy body. The need for this service in Tasmania is high.

According to a 2024 Autism Tasmania public submission, the Tasmanian autistic community consistently has among the worst outcomes of any disability and vulnerable population groups, including low rates of school completion with high rates of school refusal, high rates of underemployment and unemployment, extreme rates of mental ill health, including a seven times greater risk of suicide, poor health outcomes, with a 20- to 36-year life expectancy gap, and extreme levels of marginalisation and social isolation.

Despite these facts and the clear need for advocacy and support they attest to, the Tasmanian government continues to claim that it simply does not have the money to fund services like Autism Tasmania, or that doing so is the federal government's job. Yet, somehow, it can find hundreds of millions of dollars for a football stadium that will cost far more than the already outrageous \$750 million they have quoted. Let us not mince words; we all know that

this project will blow out to close to \$1 billion and the true price tag for this stadium will be astronomical. Meanwhile, services such as Autism Tasmania and other services like Disability Voices Tasmania that change lives and provide support to those in need are left to crumble due to a lack of investment.

This is a government that continually puts big flashy projects ahead of basic needs. It washes its hands of responsibility for services like Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices Tasmania, instead pushing the blame onto the federal government and claiming that it is a Commonwealth issue. However, when it comes to securing funding for projects like a new stadium or a Tasmanian AFL team, this government is suddenly more than willing to put up the money and lobby at the national level. The contrast is stark and shameful. The Greens believe that there should be no abdication of responsibility when it comes to safeguarding the rights of Tasmanians, especially vulnerable Tasmanians.

Earlier this year, the Greens wrote to both the Premier and the Minister for Disability Services urging them to make a strong submission and attend the hearings of the Senate inquiry into the recent federal government NDIS legislation changes. Disability service advocates have made it clear that they fear these reforms will only create further gaps in services for those who desperately need them, especially in Tasmania but what response did we get from the Government? A lukewarm, half-hearted answer and a no-show at the hearings. The Minister for Disability Services stated that Tasmania made a joint submission back in May, before the closure of Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices Tasmania, with the Council for the Australian Federation, but this was nothing more than a generalised response pulled together with the exclusively Labor state governments. The word 'Tasmania' did not even feature in the report, and there was no specific focus on the unique needs of Tasmanians. The state government missed a crucial opportunity to advocate for our people. The fact that the minister did not even bother to attend these hearings in person speaks loudly about her commitment, or lack of. How can this government claim to support disability services and Tasmanians living with a disability when they do not even show up when critical opportunities to speak present themselves?

The lack of proper representation and advocacy from our state government is a disgrace, and the failure to keep disability services running in Tasmania is just the latest example of government negligence. Peak bodies that have been providing a valuable service for Tasmanians living with disability, working closely with autistic individuals and their families to ensure equity, fairness, and understanding, are now closed. With their closure, people with disability and their families are being left without crucial support networks and Tasmanians are being forced to look elsewhere for help. Tasmania is now the only state without a peak service for autism. Families should not have to move states to get the support and advocacy they need.

Autism Tasmania's closure leaves a massive gap in services. Smaller volunteer-run groups like the Regional Autistic Engagement Network, while admirable, simply do not have the funding or capacity to fill that void.

The government's constant passing of the buck is unacceptable. The Minister for Disability Services claims that the federal government's decision not to extend funding to disability organisations is to blame, but where is the state government's advocacy? Where is their plan to ensure that Tasmanians are not left behind? It is telling that this government will fight tooth and nail to bring a football team to Tasmania and throw hundreds of millions of dollars at a stadium but will not boldly and publicly advocate for the federal government to

maintain funding for essential disability service providers like Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices Tasmania.

The Greens have long called for proper investment in neurodiverse communities and for the state government to step up and take responsibility when it comes to supporting Tasmanians with disabilities. Instead of pouring billions into an unnecessary stadium, the government could invest that money into services that would make a tangible difference to people's lives.

This is about more than just a lack of funding; it is about the government's failure to prioritise the needs of its people. Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices Tasmania have either closed or are providing much-reduced services without the government speaking up for them to be funded. We need a government that will stand up for all Tasmanians, especially our most vulnerable, and ensure that services like Autism Tasmania receive the funding and support they need to thrive. It is time for the government to stop hiding behind excuses and to put Tasmanians first.

We call on the Premier and the Minister for Disability Services to urgently intervene and provide immediate funding for services and peak bodies that will meet the needs of people who live with disability. We call on them to make a real commitment to the long-term support of neurodiverse communities across the state. Anything less is a failure in their duty and the people of Tasmania deserve better.

[5.37 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for coming forward on this important matter. It is very serious. I will speak tonight and represent the views of the Minister for Disability Services, the honourable Jo Palmer, who is in the other place.

On behalf of the government, I recognise the member for Lyons', Andrew Jenner, remarks on the motion. I will speak to the different aspects in the motion and address some of those concerns and will highlight the importance of these matters to the government. I will outline what we think is appropriate and fair. I will absolutely acknowledge the federal government's role in terms of Disability Services through the NDIS and other ways including primary healthcare and the like. I will also acknowledge the state government's very important role in helping and supporting Tasmanians who deserve healthcare across this great state.

The member for Lyons is correct in stating that autism is the most prevalent primary disability identified by Tasmanians receiving NDIS support. That support does come through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The statistics I have as of 30 June 2024 is that there are 5312 Tasmanians in that category receiving NDIS support, accounting for 36 per cent of Tasmanian participants. That is the advice I have received. I am happy to pass that on. Additionally, it is estimated that between 2 to 3 per cent of Tasmanians are in this category, which translates to somewhere between 11,400 to 17,100 people with autism.

Regarding the second part of the motion, we certainly acknowledge the important role that Autism Tasmania has played in supporting many Tasmanians on the autism spectrum and their loved ones and I note the objectives of Autism Tasmania. It is the peak independent voice for the Tasmanian autism community and it is committed to improving the lives of adults and children on the autism spectrum and supporting their families and carers in improving community awareness, acceptance and understanding of autism. We work closely with our

members in the extended autism community to advocate for equity and fairness. The community based, not-for-profit incorporated association and registered charity, and the optimal outcomes for all autistic Tasmanians is their vision. I acknowledge that and thank them for their work. The government acknowledges that advocacy that has been demonstrated over some time.

On the third part of the motion, it is always a difficult decision for a business or an organisation to enter into administration. As a government, and certainly on my behalf, our thoughts are with the staff and members of the organisation who have been affected by the decision taken by Autism Tasmania and the subsequent liquidation of the organization. I am aware that the government, through the Minister for Disability Services, has previously advocated on behalf of Autism Tasmania to the federal government. I put that on the record and reiterate our expectation that some of the Tasmanian contribution to delivery of the NDIS is provided to support disability services providers in Tasmania. In addition, through the Department of Premier and Cabinet Community Partnerships and Programs Area, the Tasmanian government officials have worked with Autism Tasmania to understand the organisation's position and whether any appropriate action could be taken.

I am advised that any NDIS participants who were accessing services or support through Autism Tasmania have been supported to choose an alternate service provider.

With respect to clause (5) in the motion, I thank Mr Jenner for the motion and also using the term 'neurodiverse Tasmanians'. As we know, neurodiversity extends beyond autism and many of us in this place have either friends or family members in that space. I am one of those who has a family member in that category, not in the first relationship, but a cousin. I recognise that. We have had a wonderful relationship for all my life and I put that on the record.

In terms of the neurodiverse Tasmanians, it also encompasses ADHD. This is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, commonly known as ADHD. Our government recognises the importance of providing support to neurodiverse Tasmanians as we work towards the goal of creating a safe, inclusive society where all neurodiverse people can fully participate in all aspects of society. I commend Simon Behrakis, the Member for Clark. On 18 June in this place, standing right here where I am standing now, he publicly made very clear his strong advocacy for people with ADHD and shared his personal story. He is in the chamber tonight. I acknowledge his courage and commitment in coming forward to share that, and then to be an advocate for people with ADHD and their families and to seek a better world and community for those with ADHD. I cannot pay enough credit to Mr Behrakis for that commitment.

As a result of that leadership and with the support of this parliament, the committee was established some months ago. It is now progressing through the important work of receiving submissions. I understand many submissions have been coming in, which is excellent. The committee is due to report by the end of March next year.

Speaking as a government member and as the Health minister, I know the honourable Jo Palmer will also be very keen to see that report when it comes through. I am sure it will be really thoughtfully done, and the report and recommendations will be very seriously considered.

At a national level we have talked about the NDIS and how that is an important part of the fabric of our society. There has been a draft national autism strategy by the Australian

government and it forms part of this goal of supporting our Tasmanian community. The development of this strategy was a key recommendation from the Senate Select Committee that was referred to earlier by the member for Bass, Cecily Rosol. The committee recommended the strategy should address whole-of-life needs of people with autism and how they align with other national strategies and be informed by the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission. It is my understanding and advice that the Tasmanian Government submission to the Draft National Autism Strategy was submitted in June 2024.

Following feedback through a public consultation process, the draft strategy is being further refined. I am advised that it is expected to be presented to the Federal Government by the end of this year. The strategy identifies four key outcomes: social inclusion, economic inclusion, diagnosis supports and services, and health and mental health. I am interested in all those, but particularly the latter, as minister for Health and Mental Health.

A draft strategy was based on the co-design process and involved consultation with people with autism and their families, carers, advocates, researchers, and other stakeholders. More than 2,000 people provided written feedback or attended consultation events across Australia between September through to November last year.

Underneath that draft national strategy, I am advised there will be three action plans. There will be an evaluation framework and a plan for how people in this category will continue to be involved as the strategy is put into action. We also have a Disability Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill currently being debated in the upper House. This legislation provides an important framework for the safeguarding and inclusion of all Tasmanians living with disability, including autistic Tasmanians.

Our government supports provision of a range of disability services and disability service organizations across Tasmania through a financial contribution we make to the Federal Government through the NDIS. In 2023-24 I am advised that our funding contribution to the NDIS was over \$280 million. That is a very significant contribution on behalf of the taxpayers of Tasmania. A portion was allocated by the Federal Government to several organizations in Tasmania, including Autism Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Government's commitment to our financial contribution has never wavered and our funding increases every year. This funding is distributed by the Federal Government through a competitive grant round. The Tasmanian Government does have an expectation of our allocation assisted disability organizations to provide necessary services across the state. I know Jo Palmer: she cares, she is a very diligent, dedicated Minister for Disability Services. She has extensively lobbied the Federal Government. I know that. She has talked about that. That has continued over a long period of time.

I acknowledge the honourable Bill Shorten and his commitment to the people of Australia over a long period of time. I put that on the record. I served in the same parliament as Bill Shorten and I was involved as a senator at the Beaconsfield Mine disaster so many years ago. Bill Shorten visited there on a number of occasions. I put that on the record.

I note that a new organization, the Regional Autistic Engagement Network, has recently received funding from the Premier's Discretionary Fund. This will assist with technology support as the organization, led by autistic Tasmanians with varied and deep lived experience,

gets off the ground. I understand the organization recently applied for a federal government peer support and capacity building grant round.

Across the state, we also have the Tasmanian Autistic Diagnostic Service (TADS). TADS is a free community service led by a team of allied health professionals including psychologists and occupational therapists who provide comprehensive assessment diagnosis for children and young people under 18 years of age who are suspected of having autism spectrum disorder.

Our Government recognizes the need to support Tasmanians as they navigate the ADHD diagnosis process and the additional supports required after an official diagnosis is received. As I said, Simon Behrakis has shared his story some months ago, and bravely did so. I really appreciate that commitment. As a government we do provide support and services there. I will share more about that very briefly in a moment.

In the five years to 2021, the government increased the number of paediatricians and child health mental medical specialists employed in our health system by 32 per cent. Allied health professionals in school can also play a vital role in supporting neurodiverse students. Our 2030 Strong Plan outlines our commitment to providing \$500,000 to fund 20 additional scholarships for speech pathologists - I have a vested interest there, having married a speech pathologist, Kate, who still works in our schools - speech pathologists and psychologists to support costs associated with their study and secure their employment with the Tasmanian government for three years. However, we acknowledge more needs to be done, which is why our government has taken strong action. We recognise that challenges exist with the health sector workforce to meet the needs of Tasmanians. Our Health Workforce 2040 Strategy outlines our plans to shape our health workforce that meets the needs of Tasmanians now and into the future.

We have a Disability Health Strategy to be released in the near future, I am advised, and that strategy is Tasmania's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of those people living with a disability, including those on the autism spectrum. In terms of the strategy and the health system, it includes people with disability and their families and carers, providers of disability support and advocates.

In June we announced a parliamentary committee, thanks to the leadership of the member for Clark, Mr Behrakis. I thank all members of the committee for participating in that.

Part of our election campaign included a commitment to employing two new general practitioners with special interest in ADHD. We will roll that out as we progress that important work. That will be provided in public outpatient clinics across Tasmania, north and south. We will also be making regulatory changes to allow GPs with special interest to prescribe the appropriate medications. That is an important step forward.

As Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, I am committed to progressing that. I commend Jo Palmer, Minister for Disability Services, for her leadership and her efforts, and I thank the member for bringing this motion forward.

[5.52 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I am glad to be able to provide a contribution on the member for Lyons' motion today and indicate that the Labor Party will

support the motion. It raises something that is important to many Tasmanian families, and that is the support required by people who have autism.

As we have heard other speakers say, and as Autism Tasmania has made clear, roughly one in seven Tasmanians is autistic. As Mr Jenner has outlined, there are over 4500 people in Tasmania who are on the NDIS scheme who have autism, but that would not represent every person in Tasmania who has autism. There would be many thousands of others, I anticipate, who are not on a NDIS package. At least one in four families is affected by autism in Tasmania. There has been an increase in diagnosis of autism over recent years. That does not mean an increase in prevalence; it means an increase in awareness and understanding of autism, and it is a very positive thing. I believe that neurodiversity is becoming much more understood by medical practitioners, by community service providers and by individuals. More and more people are becoming aware of some of the signs of neurodiversity and making sure they do what they can to access services and support people in their families who are neurodiverse.

Autism Tasmania has pointed out, in some of their documentation, that people who are autistic, and their families and carers, often experience unfair social, economic and emotional burdens and are recognised as one of the most disadvantaged groups requiring complex supports. Much of that support had, until recently, been provided by Autism Tasmania, who have very sadly lost their funding. I acknowledge that it was federal funding, under the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) part of the NDIS. Disability Voices Tasmania also lost its funding. For those two organisations, their only source of funding was the ILC funding through the federal Department of Social Services. Brain Injury Association of Tasmania also lost its ILC funding in that same funding round, which ended at the end of June this year. Brain Injury Association of Tasmania had other sources of funding so has not had to close its doors, but for Autism Tasmania, that is exactly what it has meant. Its doors have closed, the staff have lost their jobs and the thousands of Tasmanians who relied on Autism Tasmania for support no longer have that organisation to rely on.

I raised this issue recently when I met with the federal ministers Bill Shorten and Amanda Rishworth in Canberra. Mr Shorten is the minister for the NDIS. He recently announced his retirement from parliament in February next year to take up a new position. I think that is an enormous loss for the NDIS because he has enormous passion for reforming the scheme and making sure that it supports as many people with disability across Australia as it can. I wish him all the best. It is a huge decision to end a long and successful parliamentary career. I wish him well in his new role as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra.

I raised this issue with Mr Shorten. I raised it with Ms Rishworth, the Minister for Social Services, when I met with her. Funding for the ILC grants comes through her department. She was aware of the loss of funding to Autism Tasmania, as well as Disability Voices Tas and the Brain Injury Association of Tasmania. Those organisations are invited to apply for a new form of funding, foundational supports, but that form of funding under the NDIS will not come into existence or be available for organisations to apply for until next financial year. I think it is unfortunate that there has been that 12-month disconnect, because for small organisations like Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices Tasmania, there is no way for them to continue to operate for those intervening 12 months. They will not be around. They are not around now. They certainly will not be around in time to apply for a foundational support grant next year.

In the meantime, what that means is that organisations like Autism Tasmania have had to close their doors, and families are already feeling that. I have spoken to some families with

autistic children who are moving to Tasmania in the not-too-distant future, who were already in touch with Autism Tasmania and ready to be reaching out to them for support once they moved to this state. They are now feeling quite lost and at sea because they know that organisation, sadly, is no longer going to be there to provide them that support.

This potential loss of funding was known to the state government for a very long time. There is a real disparity in funding of peak bodies and service-providing organisations in Tasmania. Many receive a mixture of state and federal funding. The state government has known about this and could have acted ahead of Autism Tasmania losing that ILC funding. It was known that was a possibility. I am disappointed in the state government because the state government, along with the Labor Party and I believe the Greens and, potentially, the Jacqui Lambie Network, I am not sure, all signed a pledge during the recent state election pledging that they would provide state-based funding for Autism Tasmania. I will read a little bit from that pledge. It was a candidate's pledge ahead of the state election on 23 March 2024. It said:

I agree that autism is a priority. When elected, I commit to funding Autism Tasmania. The Tasmanian government needs the help of Autism Tasmania. We must ensure that the many reforms to national programs and local services work for autistic Tasmanians, their families and carers. We must build on and not waste what we have already achieved.

Importantly, the pledge was:

I commit to funding Autism Tasmania for \$300,000 per year for three years, and ensure that autistic Tasmanians, their families and carers have uninterrupted access to vital services, support and resources, and a grassroots voice for advocating for them.

That pledge was signed by the Labor Party, which did not form government. It was also signed by the Liberal Party ahead of the 23 March election, and it was up on the Autism Tasmania website. It was in media releases from Autism Tasmania which warmly welcomed that commitment from the Liberal Party. It is disappointing to know that, despite making that clear election commitment, the Liberal Party has walked away from Autism Tasmania, and walked away from autistic people in Tasmania in failing to provide what it said it would during the state election campaign, which is a \$300,000 grant over three years.

It is not a huge amount of money. Many peak bodies receive double or triple that amount of money to support the Tasmanian people that they represent in their particular cohort of the community services sector. That commitment was made by the Liberal Party and it has been broken.

As we know, Autism Tasmania provided support to thousands of Tasmanians. They raised those issues with the state Government, noting them before the election. I was going to read more of it in, but I will leave time for other people to hop up and have their say on this important motion. I note that they raised with the state government, or with all parties vying to form government at the election, the fact that they might lose that funding. They are desperately asking for the state government to step in and provide continuity of funding so that what has happened, which is them having to close their doors would not. In fact, that is what has come to pass.

Mr BARNETT - Point of order, Speaker. The Tasmanian Government did not commit to fund Autism Tasmania during the election. The Premier wrote to Autism Tasmania. I make that very clear, and I think you might want to consider -

The SPEAKER - The member has other opportunities to correct the record. There is not really a Standing Order that allows him to do that.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. I take that very seriously. If that is the case, I will withdraw that criticism. It does come as a surprise, because at the time that they lost their ILC funding, I reached out to Autism Tasmania, as did my colleague, the member for Pembroke and former shadow for disability. We were told quite clearly that both major parties had signed that pledge. If I am wrong about that I will withdraw those comments and take it on face value from the minister, but that does shock me. I recall it was in the last few days of the election campaign that Autism Tasmania did breathe a sigh of relief.

As is often the case with pledges that organisations ask major parties to sign, it is a relief when they have both major parties signing that pledge. From the perspective of the organisation, it does not matter which party forms government, because they are assured of that funding. I will stand corrected if that is not the case, but I am very disappointed, because I did understand that that pledge had been signed by both major parties and others as well. That is disappointing. If I am wrong about that, I apologise to the House and to the community. It still stands that Autism Tasmania did raise the very real possibility that they would lose that ILC funding with the parliament before the election and before that did come to pass.

Autism Tasmania pointed out to parliamentarians at that time that due to the range of national reforms, any new Tasmanian government was now responsible for leading the design, integration and delivery of community services like never before. They said it is not good enough to go back to what we did before. Changes affect every portfolio area: education, health, justice, transport, community services. The days of a small disability portfolio with low or no budgets are gone. That is a really important and pertinent point that was made by the former CEO Donna Blanchard when she made it very clear that the work that Autism Tasmania did affects and benefits autistic people and their families across every part of society. The support of organisations like Autism Tasmania is vital, whether it is at work, accessing services, catching a bus, or accessing education.

Before I finish, I will also touch on something that the minister spoke about, which is the Regional Autistic Engagement Network, or RAEN. This is an organisation that was founded three years ago and continues to be an autistic led community organisation. Over the last two years, RAEN has grown into an essential peer networking service for the Tasmanian autistic community with over 400 autistic community members online and upwards of 11 regular peer gatherings per month, with many more in development. They are currently expanding to a statewide delivery of peer group advocacy and educational services. They said that building on the history and passion of Autism Tasmania, RAEN has been working frantically since the breaking news of Autism Tasmania's closure to fill the gaps left for the autistic community. They are in contact with grassroots organisations and advocates across the state and are currently operating entirely with volunteers to ensure that the community has a safe space to retreat and process the recent news of the defunding of Autism Tasmania, as well as to seek reassurance and information on behalf of volunteers and people who they are supporting.

They said that they are currently incorporating and intend to seek funding to fill the essential gap in support services that autistic Tasmanians are currently experiencing. I welcome the announcement from the minister that they have received some state government funding and have applied for other state government funding as well.

They note that their peak organisation may be gone, but the community need remains. They did note that they are small, disability-led organisation who will continue to work tirelessly within their capacity to bring autistic communities together and fill the gaps that they can of the invaluable service Autism Tasmania delivered for over 30 years to the Tasmanian community, while they await further clarity.

They also note that they are a small and volunteer-led organisation, and they relied on the work of Autism Tasmania to survive and to be able to deliver that peer-led work. Without that peak body in existence, the work of RAEN, notwithstanding with some funding, is going to be very challenging, because they did rely very much on Autism Tasmania as the peak body to support their work.

I will finish with a quote from a member of RAEN, Riley Williams, who wrote to members of parliament, and I think also to the media, about the risk to the community of the discontinuation of government funding to Autism Tasmania. Riley Williams said this:

Autism Tasmania has meant hope, kindness, and solidarity. My involvement has greatly improved my mental health and well-being. To engage with people just like myself is profoundly meaningful. Many people are dependent and reliant on the services, facilities, and capacity of Autism Tasmania.

In the case of RAEN, RAEN has been dependent on the resources and facilities of Autism Tasmania to build a community network. Many folks are individually dependent on the support of Autism Tasmania. Groups like RAEN do not have the capacity to fill these gaps.

What this means is that with the insolvency of Autism Tasmania, the result for the Tasmanian autistic community is a sudden increase of psychological, physiological, and existential burden.

Personally, this is all quite heartbreaking for myself, and processing the implications of all this will take time. But if we are at all to recover, affiliated advocacy groups will need to find a way to absorb this sudden shock. Managing and mitigating the effects of this is paramount to the health and well-being of the Tasmanian autistic community.

They wrote that open letter, and I supported that letter with a letter to minister Rishworth, as well as a letter to minister Palmer, adding my voice to the value of the work that RAEN conducts on behalf of people in Tasmania with autism and the very important role of peer-led advocacy and support work. Also, recognising that without the peak body of Autism Tasmania, their work will be challenging going forward.

I commend the member for Lyons for bringing on this motion. We look forward to supporting it and, as I said, there are opportunities for the state government to not only advocate

to the federal government, as I have, for these organisations to be in receipt of continued funding, but also to find state-based funding to ensure continuity of service.

A diversity of funding does protect organisational integrity, as we saw with the Brain Injury Association. It has not been easy for them to lose their ILC funding, but they have not had to close their doors, as Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices have because of that being their only source of funding. A mixture of funding is always a welcome thing in a community organisation and a not-for-profit organisation because it does provide some surety that some services, at least, can be continued.

If Autism Tasmania had a mixture of state and federal-based funding, they may have been able to limp along for that 12-month gap before being able to apply for foundational support funding under the federal scheme next year. Sadly, that is not the case. It is good that Mr Jenner has raised these important matters in the parliament today, and we are happy to support.

Motion agreed to.

WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME

The SPEAKER - Mr Jenner, the debate having been concluded, you can opt now to either bring on another private members' matter or waive the remainder of your time.

Mr Jenner - Honourable Speaker, I will waive. I am not really sure of the procedure too much, so I am not prepared.

The SPEAKER - That is absolutely fine, it is simply an option. Government minister who is in charge at the moment, you may choose now to either call on the next private members' time or go straight to Government Business. I note that there is time to deal with any other government business later on. You only have eight minutes.

Mr Barnett - Honourable Speaker, Notice of Motion No. 66.

The SPEAKER - You cannot call that one on, because it is not in your name. What you could call on is government business for the last eight minutes, or you can now agree that I can proceed to the next item of the House. If the House is content, we can proceed to the next item of Private Business.

Mr BARNETT - I agree with that. Thank you.

MOTION

Labor - Alternative Budget

Mr BEHRAKIS - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House: -

- (1) Recognises in the ten years they have been in Opposition the Labor Party have failed to deliver a single alternative Budget.
- (2) Notes that in 2024 the new Opposition Treasury Spokesperson has the opportunity to break the tradition set by his predecessors.
- (3) Further recognises that during the most recent election campaign, the Labor Opposition admitted that their costings included \$2 billion in 'identified savings'.
- (4) Calls on the Labor Opposition to provide the House with details of where these cuts will come from, in the form of a detailed alternative budget by the end of the parliamentary budget session.

Mr BEHRAKIS - I advise that a vote will be required.

I am pleased to move this motion in my name and make some comments in support of what I think is a pretty simple proposition for this House to consider and make a determination on. This motion has four simple points, and members can read it for themselves.

To summarise, in the last 10 years of opposition, the Labor Party have not delivered an alternative budget. That is a fact.

Mr Winter - Neither have any Liberal Party anywhere in Australia.

Mr BEHRAKIS - This is a new year, though, and we have a new opposition treasury spokesman. Fact. Mr Willie has the opportunity to break that tradition.

Labor costings during the election campaign included \$2 billion in 'identified savings'. It is another fact. The motion before the House calls on Mr Willie to provide details of where these savings would come from, in the form of a detailed alternative budget. There is nothing complicated about that. There are no stunts, there is no fancy wording or tricky language. It is a genuine opportunity for Labor to drop their negative attitude and seriously show that they are an alternative government capable of running the state. Otherwise, they will be shown-up by the Greens once again.

Members interjecting.

Mr BEHRAKIS - The Greens provide an alternative budget every year, and I look forward to hearing from the Greens on this motion. They can speak for themselves, and we fully expect to see an alternative budget from them. I, and others behind me, reserve the right to disagree to much or all of it. I expect that, at the very least, the Greens will put a stake in the

ground and lay out what they would do and how they would do it if, heaven forbid, they were put in charge of the Treasury.

Our government has a strong track record of responsible fiscal management. We have invested heavily in essential services since coming to government, and we are continuing to invest.

Dr Woodruff - It is really offensive that you are doing this. Some people are waiting for the bill that is meant to be on.

The SPEAKER - No, I am sorry. There is government members Private Members' Time.

Dr Woodruff - The government indicated to us that they were going to forego it.

The SPEAKER - I am not aware of that. Mr Behrakis, please continue.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future makes significant investments into health, education, housing and cost-of-living relief.

The government's fiscal strategy has served us well and has been a cornerstone of our strong, responsible fiscal management. It provided us with the budget flexibility to respond to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw this government fund an unprecedented investment of more than \$1.5 billion in social and economic support that reached all areas of the Tasmanian community.

Our fiscal strategy was praised by Moody's Investors Services following the 2023-24 Budget. It is a resounding endorsement of the improvements that we have made, and I encourage Mr Willie to read it. Let us take a look at how Labor intended to fund its \$3.6 billion in election promises. Cuts. Big cuts - \$2 billion in cuts, and a so-called plan that they could not even manage to release without almost a dozen critical costing errors.

Labor should not come in here and lecture us on responsible budget management. They have no right, and they have no plan.

Mr Willie - We left no debt when we left office. You have \$8.5 billion worth of debt.

Mr BEHRAKIS - We could talk about what things were like when Labor left office, Mr Willie.

Mr Willie - \$8.5 billion worth of debt. It is eyewatering.

Mr BEHRAKIS - And a 7.4 per cent unemployment rate. This is a big test for the Labor Party. Some of these savings are no doubt imaginary or unachievable, but it was clear that those opposite were prepared to take the scalpel to services to pay for their extravagant promises, including an estimated \$173 million in cuts to health services. It is simply not possible to make cuts of that magnitude without having a huge and massive effect on public services and confidence.

To the crux of the matter: when will Mr Winter and Mr Willie deliver Labor's first alternative budget? Those opposite have no credibility on economic or financial management.

They have not provided an alternative budget in more than 10 years. They are no alternative government. We want to see Labor's alternative budget. Tasmanians want to see Labor's alternative budget. What is their plan to increase revenue without raising or introducing new taxes? Here is your moment, Mr Willie, to break that tradition.

In opposition, the Liberal Party religiously sought leave to table their alternative responses to prove that they were an alternative government. Mr Winter can criticise all he wants. The Labor Party can continue to talk down the state, but without laying out how they will do the things that they do, what their alternative plan is, they are no alternative government.

[6.16 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I think the member for Clark did not even go quiet for five minutes. You would have thought that a government that had a good story to tell would want to spend government time talking about their Budget and their plans for the state. They are the actual government. Yet they are wasting parliament's time with a rubbish motion like this because they are desperate. I do not blame them. Their budget management has been appalling. They are desperate to take the focus off their own budget management to the point where we are debating silly motions about the opposition who is not in government.

I thought that conservatives would care about traditions, uphold conventions and care about Westminster traditions. There is no parliament in Australia where there is an alternative budget tabled. There is a Budget reply. The member for Clark's federal colleagues, Angus Taylor and Peter Dutton - they do not do an alternative budget. They do a Budget reply, an accepted convention under Westminster systems. I would have thought that conservative politicians would want to protect traditions in this place, rather than trash them. It is my understanding - and I am sure other members in this place understand this too - that this is a made-up thing: an alternative budget.

It was Michael Aird, as the treasurer, used to goad the opposition into doing an alternative budget, and they were silly enough to fall for it. It is a tactic of government to take the focus off government and their own record and their own delivery of the Budget. I believe that Michael Aird - I am getting some strange looks here from the Speaker - Peter Gutwein, his opposition spokesperson, was silly enough to fall for it. It took the focus off the government at the time. He used to come up with a work of fiction: things that were not deliverable.

In the first year of the Budget, when they were in government, they did not deliver half of the things they said they would. Regarding suppliers and consumables, they promised \$119 million of savings over four years and did not deliver it. They messed up the figures on carbon tax credits. They double counted those. He also said that he was going to cut 500 jobs but did not say where they were and somehow got away with that. It was a work of fiction, and we are not going to fall for that, because you are desperate to take the focus off your own budget management. It is not an accepted convention to do an alternative budget. It is a completely made-up distraction. It is government spin, and it is in an environment where we have a respected economist, Saul Eslake, who has produced a damning assessment of the state's finances under this government.

When we left office, there was no net debt. There was \$200 million of cash and investments in the bank. Saul Eslake himself said in his review that the state's financial position, which is set to be the worst in the nation within the next three years, is entirely down to the current government's policy settings. They have been to three elections and have promised

\$1.4 billion at each election - \$1.7 at the last one, but one of those years is not in the budget - with no plan to pay for it. They are racking up the debt on the credit card. They are mortgaging Tasmania's future, making future generations pay for their budget mismanagement. That is effectively what the Premier said today in Question Time. What do they have to show for it? An economy that is flatlining. We have projected job losses from the Access Economics report by Deloitte. We have seen 5000 jobs lost since the Premier sent the last parliament into minority. He lost two members of his team. We have had public services that are now at breaking point. Not a day or a week goes by where we do not see a workforce in some sectors striking because they are saying that this government is not supporting them to deliver the services that Tasmanians deserve.

We know that the outcomes are some of the worst in the nation. Whether it is education - you can look at me like that, member for Clark. You brought this silly motion on; I am just speaking to it. We have the worst education results in the country to the point where only 53 per cent of our year 12 students achieve a certificate. We have the worst health outcomes in the country.

We had the Premier, as opposition health spokesperson, promise that Tasmania would be the healthiest state by 2025. He laughed that he would not be around to see that being delivered. We are nearly in 2025 and we lag the nation. It is an absolute disgrace. Regarding our health services across Tasmania, there is not a day that goes by where we do not hear some story of someone waiting in an emergency department for up to 60 hours. I heard on the radio the other day that this happened to an older member of the community with an acute mental health condition. It is an absolute disgrace.

They want to come in here and lecture us about some mythical alternative budget that they fell for in opposition that takes the focus off the government. What Tasmanians care about is the actual Budget. The one that delivers the services that they care about. What they are seeing under this government is record debt, record deficits, \$1.5 billion was the deficit last financial year. This is nearly five times the deficit that was carried through COVID. It is an absolute disgrace.

This is their record. No wonder they want to talk about anything else in government time apart from their record. If they had a good story to tell they would be marching in here with motions about the budget and how good their outcomes were and how Tasmanians were living a better life.

We are going back into a cycle now from the 1990s where there are now too many working age Tasmanians leaving the state for better opportunities elsewhere. The last net interstate migration figures showed that there were 15,805 Tasmanians who left the state, that was 3271 more than moved here and about 70 per cent of them were working age Tasmanians.

That is a tragedy for our state. It is a tragedy for the economy and our society. We need a good mix of population here. We need people contributing to the economy, contributing their skills, paying taxes and helping to deliver the services that Tasmanians care about. There are too many that do not have confidence in this government to deliver that anymore and they are leaving for better opportunities elsewhere, better pay and conditions elsewhere and better services being delivered elsewhere.

Mr Fairs - They are going to explore life.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and if they come back, that is great but unfortunately the statistics say -

Mr Fairs - Some do come back.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, Mr Fairs. I am glad you feel comfortable enough to interject but that will do.

Mr WILLIE - Member for Bass, they are not coming back in the numbers we need them to. Since 1998, we have not seen figures like this.

Mr Fairs - It has always been like that, Mr Willie. There is nothing new.

The SPEAKER - Mr Fairs you will cease your interjections or be warned.

Mr WILLIE - It is alright. He can talk about Tasmanians leaving and that being a good thing. That is up to him.

Mr Fairs - I did not say it was a good thing, I said it is life.

The SPEAKER - Order, Mr Fairs, you are warned. You have an opportunity to do a contribution if you wish.

Mr WILLIE - In the Member for Clark's contribution, I heard that he was rewarding the Greens for their alternative budget and saying how good it was. The Greens come up with some very kooky ideas and he can support that if he wants to. They want to smash industries and smash jobs and tax the place into oblivion. That is up to the Greens. If the member for Clark says that is a good thing and that their alternative budget is something that we should all look up to, that is up to him as well.

We will not fall for it because you are a desperate government that is in your fourth term. You have fallen into minority. There has been a 12 per cent swing against you. It is no wonder that you want to take the focus off your Budget tomorrow and the delivery in your record.

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

The House divided -

AYES 21

Mr Abetz
Ms Badger
Mr Barnett
Mr Bayley
Ms Behrakis
Mrs Beswick
Ms Burnet
Mr Ellis
Mr Fairs (Teller)

NOES 11

Dr Broad
Ms Brown
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Mr Garland
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms White

Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Jenner
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Pentland
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Ms Rosol
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Wood
Dr Woodruff

Mr Willie
Mr Winter (Teller)

PAIRS

Mr Ferguson

Ms Haddad

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER - What a brave new world we are entering.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, given the government has things that they want to do, perhaps they could be silent and let us get on with the business of the day.

WAIVER OF PRIVATE MEMBERS TIME

[6.33 p.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 42(d), I indicate that government private members' business is waived for this day's sitting.

RACING REGULATION AND INTEGRITY BILL 2024 (No. 10)

Consideration of Legislative Council Amendments in Committee

DEPUTY CHAIR - Does the committee wish to deal with the amendments separately or all together?

Ms HOWLETT - Separately, Deputy Chair.

Clause 9

Functions of Commissioner.

Page 25, subclause (1), paragraph (k), after "to make"

Insert "best practice".

Ms HOWLETT - Deputy Chair, I move -

That the amendment of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

This landmark legislation will strengthen the Tasmanian racing industry, deliver on a key policy commitment and will provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose model for regulation and integrity. It delivers the largest integrity reforms in decades through the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill, which is based on evidence and industry best practice, as recommended in the Monteith review. I am happy to note the constructive amendments made to the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill, in response to the matters raised in the other place. As a result of its progress through parliament, the bill has been strengthened in a number of ways.

Clause 9 identifies that the Tasmanian racing integrity commissioner will make best-practice standards that provide for any matter relating or incidental to the conduct of racing, including but not limited to integrity in the racing industry and animal welfare. Where appropriate, its language is now more directory.

The bill also recognises now, in clause 53(1), that the commissioner is to make standards. Previously, the bill was merely permissive. As a consequence of its constructive scrutiny, other amendments were made, and other amendments were not supported by the parliament. Those not supported included other proposed amendments to clause 53. Some would have qualified that kind of standards that the commissioner would have set.

For example, in respect to clause 53(3)(f), parliament agreed that the commissioner would set standards for the unqualified welfare of animals, including standards for the keeping, treatment, care and handling of them. For example, parliament agreed that it was not necessary to add that the treatment would be humane. I repeat the government's view that, by identifying welfare and care, the bill makes implicit that the standards may be humane, or that they may be better than humane, as our understanding and expectations for welfare of animals develops.

Another amendment was proposed to clause 53(4), which could have obliged the commissioner to have regard to best-practice industry integrity and animal welfare standards. Parliament did not make this amendment. It was not necessary because clause 53(7) already allows the commissioner to adopt, either wholly or in part, and with or without modification, either specifically or by reference, any such standards, rules, codes, guidelines or other documents as may be applied in the commissioner's discretion, as could be standards from industry or elsewhere.

A similar amendment was proposed to clause 53(9), but not moved. It would have mandated that the commissioner's standards be consistent with best industry and animal welfare practice. That is also already in the commissioner's power. The bill also already recognised that the standards must be consistent with the public interest, and the public interest contemplates what is and what may become best practice.

Amendments were also proposed to clause 59(1). That clause described the commercial and administrative functions of Tasracing. The Greens proposed that Tasracing should promote an effective, efficient and humane racing and breeding industry. The government is pleased to note that the welfare of animals is addressed in section 59(2), which identifies Tasracing's integrity and animal welfare functions. These are functions of the Tasracing integrity unit.

Section 59 is split not in order of priority, but to allocate specific functions to the unit to perform free from the commercial and administrative arm of Tasracing.

Amendments were also proposed to prescribe the skills, attributes and qualifications of the new statutory office. Parliament agreed that the chief racing integrity officer, who will run the integrity unit, must have a demonstrated understanding of the racing industry. This is a legislative assurance of the government's expectations.

In addition to the commissioner's power to set standards for the training of persons in the racing industry, the bill was amended so that the stewards would be required by law to have the qualifications necessary to perform the functions of a steward. That is also a legislative assurance of the government's expectation.

The bill gives the racing integrity committee functions that relate to animal welfare. I note that the bill requires a committee to have skills, experience, and knowledge relevant to its functions. The bill was also amended so that the Commissioner must not wager in Tasmania or have or obtain a proprietary interest in an unretired racing animal. That is a further protection against any actual or perceived conflict of interest for the occupant of that role.

The government supports that arrangement. The government also thanks the parliament for constructive improvements to the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board. The first improvement relates to the discretion of the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board to suspend penalties and decisions pending appeals. That discretion cannot be exercised where the penalty was imposed or decision was made because of a serious risk to the welfare or health of an animal, the safety of any person, or the integrity of the Tasmanian racing industry.

Improvements were also made to clause 88 to ensure that the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board is not free to refuse or receive evidence. I am also pleased to note that the requirement in clause 75, which was the Appeals Board consulting with regulators and administrators on at least two occasions per year, was retained unmodified. It is important for the Appeals Board to understand trends of concern in the exercise of those parties' duties. Important provisions for the publication of information and for the protection of those providing information to assist the commissioner were retained.

The Government thanks the parliament for ensuring that the provisions in the bill about those matters are appropriately balanced and modern. For example, the bill was amended in this place to require reports of the commissioner's inquiry findings to be tabled by the Minister for Racing in the parliament. It recognises that emission of information may be appropriate, including to protect public scrutiny, the privacy of personal or financial affairs, or the right of any person to a fair trial.

The Government thanks the parliament for its input, scrutiny and for its support. With the progress of this legislation and royal assent to come, the parliament should look forward with the government to its implementation.

[6.42 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Chair, thank you to the minister and the other place for, as the minister said, enhancing the bill. I will speak quite broadly, as the minister did, in general terms about the enhancements that have been made.

Overall, what we have been presented with is a deal that makes Tasmanian racing better, makes Tasmanian racing have a much closer eye on animal welfare and better processes and systems for integrity. This bill does all the things that are really important to me as a supporter of the racing industry. What the Legislative Council did was enhance the bill even further.

The requirement that the commissioner now needs to have experience in racing is something that this place debated and could not come to agreement on, but the other place has done a good job. With the support of the government, I acknowledge that they came to that view as well. One of the key issues that the racing industry has seen over the last two or three years in particular has been successive directors of racing with no experience in racing. In fact, we are up to nine of them now with no experience in racing, overseeing a racing industry. We would not expect that in any other industry. We would not have a police commissioner with no experience in policing. We would not expect this anywhere else but apparently it was okay in racing. The changes that were initiated by Labor and then supported, not in this place initially but in the other place by the government, are very good changes: excellent changes.

The other one is about the work that was done by Kevin Ring and the Jockeys Association about the treatment for appeals. The resolution that has come through as part of that has enhanced the bill again. I thank the minister and her office for finding a way through that we could all agree on. The other place has done a very good job. I heard a comment last night and I wrote it down because I thought it was so important. It was a great point made in the other place and it was about the Office of Racing Integrity. It was by Cassy O'Connor, the member for Hobart in the other place, and she said this about the Office of Racing Integrity: 'Thank God it is going to be abolished'.

It was not lost on me that it was the Greens, along with the independent member for Clark who opposed the bill and wanted to keep the Office of Racing Integrity (ORI), but then we heard the former leader of the Greens, the member for Hobart in the other place, last night saying, 'thank God it is going to be abolished'.

I agree with Ms O'Connor. Those comments are absolutely spot on. Thank God it is going to be abolished. However, I believe there should be a reflection from members who did not want to support these reforms: members who did not want to support enhanced animal welfare and integrity functions because of politics that were being played; reflection about whether they want to let the perfect be the enemy of the good, because that is what they did by not supporting this bill.

You might not support racing and I acknowledge that there are those in the community and in this place who do not support racing. That is your decision. That is up to you. I do not agree with you, but you are entitled to it. What you are not entitled to do is to argue the points about the Office of Racing Integrity and their successive and shocking failures on animal welfare, and shocking failures to hold people to account. People like Ben Yole Racing, which has now been relicensed to continue to operate. You cannot then vote to keep the Office of Racing Integrity.

What sort of integrity do you have when you are making decisions like that: when you are voting to keep those people in those positions?

You cannot say you support animal welfare; you cannot say you support integrity but vote against enhancing those two things. That is what happened in the House last time and I do

not think it should be allowed to stand without making comment about it. The enhancements that have been made more broadly to this bill are very good. This bill gives us a real opportunity to get on top of some of the issues that are plaguing this industry as well as the integrity issues. That is why we strongly support the bill. We strongly support the enhancements.

[6.47 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Chair, we did not support the bill. We tried to amend the bill to put animals and the welfare of animals firmly front and centre in it. This is an industry which only exists and survives on the back of the animals it uses to make a profit for people's pleasure. It exists at the expense of the animals that are being used, that are living their lives in the service of people who are making money out of them. For a bill that seeks to improve the racing industry to not have the welfare of animals at its heart is deeply rotten.

That is why we did not support the bill. That is why we still do not support the bill. It is why we tried really hard to improve the bill to make sure that it is not just a reformed racing industry that has the profit making, PR and productivity of the racing industry as a core objective. However, this bill does not have the welfare of animals as its core objective too.

That is deeply wrong. It is distorted to even pretend that it is somehow going to improve the lives of animals who are being used by the industry. It is possible to have written this bill so it could have done that, but to not accept that we need an industry that will be humane in its treatment of animals? That does not just treat animals as units of production? This is how they are being used: not by every single person in the racing industry, but by the majority of the big greyhound trainers and racers and the majority of the big horse racers and trainers.

They are using animals like units of production for making money. That is why, just for people who are watching, if they did not understand what Dean Winter, the leader of the Opposition was talking about and why the Greens did not vote for this bill, that is why. We tried really hard to amend it.

Here we are with some amendments that have come down from the Legislative Council, including some excellent amendments that Ms O'Connor managed to move which put animal welfare back into this bill in places where it was not. We will be supporting those amendments. Regarding some of the other minor changes in the bill, we will come to that when we get to those clauses.

[6.51 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON - Chair, the clause 9 amendment inserts the words 'best practice' into the bill. I take this opportunity to respond to some of the commentary that the minister and the Leader of the Opposition have made about my opposition to the bill. I will state that there is no doubt that I do not think that ORI is at all a fit and proper organisation or authority or has done a good job at all. I have been incredibly critical of ORI. It is fundamentally flawed. I believe what we are doing in this bill is simply replacing a fundamentally flawed authority with a fundamentally flawed model and authority in there.

Ms Howlett - That is not true. I do not agree.

Ms JOHNSTON - I accept that the minister does not agree. Of course, she would not agree because it is her bill, but that is the view that I know many in the community who are

particularly concerned about animal welfare feel very deeply and strongly about. I do not agree that ORI is a shining example of integrity. I often refer to it as the ironically named Office of Racing Integrity. I do not believe that we are replacing this with a better model and I would like to have seen a better model.

Ms Howlett - Shutting down the whole industry, that is a better model, is it not?

Ms JOHNSTON - I sat quietly during your contribution. I ask that you give me the same respect. Whilst I acknowledge there have been a number of amendments moved to try and improve this bill, I still fundamentally believe that the model is flawed. It does not put animal welfare at the centre of this industry and I believe it cannot, because it is an industry that is premised on entertainment based on the exploitation of animals.

The Legislative Council have made a number of amendments. I welcome a number of those amendments, including the insertion of 'best practice' in clause 9, but I remain concerned about at least one of the amendments. I believe it replicates an amendment that Labor moved in this place in the initial debate and I do not support that at all. I return again to the fact that this is an industry premised on the exploitation of animals for entertainment purposes. It is not for food production, as other members seemed to indicate. It is for entertainment purposes; for gambling purposes. Animals are being exploited in the most cruel of ways.

The integrity model that this bill establishes does not address the fundamental concerns of animal welfare activists and advocates. There are a number of holes in this particular model that we can drive a truck through regarding transparency and accountability. They were made abundantly clear in my contributions in the earlier debate, so I will not repeat them now, but it is safe to say that this model does not fix the issues about the Office of Racing Integrity. It is merely replacing it with another fundamentally flawed model.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 53

Integrity and Animal Welfare Standards

Page 68, subclause (1).

Leave out that subclause

Insert instead the following subclause

- (1) The Commissioner is to prepare and issue standards including, but not limited to, standards relating to integrity and animal welfare.
- (2) The Commissioner may prepare and issue Standards as a result of a request of the Minister under section 54.

Ms HOWLETT - I move that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr WINTER - Just briefly, Chair. I agree wholeheartedly with the animal welfare standards and the requirement. If I recall correctly, this is the requirement about best practice for animal welfare standards, which again is an enhancement. I wonder if the minister could

comment on the frustration I have while we are talking about this issue. The frustration I have is the Murrihy review and elsewhere. There was a commitment from former ministers for Racing and from TasRacing that we would have an equine code of practice.

Ms Howlett - It is coming.

Mr WINTER - We still do not have it, minister, and it has been an awfully long time. I had a photo of Ben Yole's property sent to me only yesterday, which cannot possibly pass any form of equine code of practice. It cannot possibly pass any form of equine welfare standards.

It is not Greens groups or anti-racing people that raise this with me. It is people in the industry who cannot believe it is allowed to happen. They have their paddocks immaculately maintained. They make sure there is enough feed for their animals because they love their animals and, frankly, they want them to race fast. For those reasons, they have great facilities set up so that their animals are well looked after. They see the Ben Yole property - or I should say the Wayne Yole property at the moment - and cannot believe that any trainer worth anything would look after - or fail to look after - their animals that way.

I wonder if the minister can make a comment and update the House, given that we are on this clause and it is a really important issue about how far away this equine code of practice is. It is really important for the industry.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for your comments. The equine code of conduct will be finalized by the end of October.

Mr WINTER - Great. Thank you.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 67

Appointment of Chief Racing Integrity Officer

Page 94, subclause (1).

After "a suitably qualified person".

Insert ", who has a demonstrated understanding of the racing industry,".

Ms HOWLETT - I move -

That the amendment of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Mr WINTER - I am very supportive of this change; someone has demonstrated an understanding of the racing industry. It is not the amendment that I put up in this place, and I understand there has been some flexibility from the government on it, which I deeply appreciate. It goes to the heart of the issue again, which is these directors of racing who have no idea about the racing industry and have performed incredibly poorly over the last few years. I do not mean to name names here, but it is frustrating.

At the moment, the Director of Racing has relicensed Ben Yole Racing against the wishes of the entire industry, it must be. He has relicensed him despite the Murrihy review having found that he breached animal welfare conditions or practices by literally beating horses in a wash bay. In part, he admitted to that: a systematic beating, flogging of horses with earplugs in. That is what he admitted to.

There have been findings of race-fixing and team driving. It has been found by Australia's premier Steward, Ray Murrihy. You have these findings. They were given to the government back in November last year. We are in September, and we have a Director of Racing and an Office of Racing Integrity who want to relicense the bloke who did it. We got the two drivers who were also found to have participated. They are still driving in Tasmania 10 months later. More than two years after the actual offences in some cases. It is still going. It goes to the heart of an Office of Racing Integrity and Directors of Racing who do not know what they are doing.

This came to my attention today, and my goodness me, it has upset me greatly. I have permission from the person to talk about it in *Hansard*. I am not sure if the ministers are aware of it, but Brooke Hammond contacted me today. She has received a letter from Neil Finnigan, the Chief Steward. It says:

This correspondence is to inform you that the Office of Racing Integrity stewards require you to attend an inquiry over alleged inappropriate internet posts. The inquiry will be conducted at the Office of Racing Integrity Prospect Office -

Et cetera, with the date. Ms Hammond believes, and I believe, that it is in relation to a post she made responding to me. In a post regarding the relicensing of Mr Yole, she said:

This decision is once again a disgrace to this industry. This bloke has himself admitted to doing intra-articular injections, which is only legal if you have a licensed veterinarian. He is not. That alone should have been enough to rid the industry of this disgusting individual, let alone the alleged race-fixing, animal welfare issues, et cetera. Once again, ORI equals nothing to see here.

That is what she said on the social media post. I said:

He admitted to what happened in the wash bay and they still let him race.

Which is true. She said:

All part of the training regime, it would seem. It's getting harder and harder to find reasons to reinvest and stay in this industry with the actions of ORI and that stable.

Ms Hammond's comments reflect the vast majority of the harness racing industry and they reflect my opinions, too. This is the second person that ORI has gone after for engaging with me on social media. The other one was Matthew Cooper, who responded to another social media post by me. He has also been attacked by the Office of Racing Integrity and rubbed out from participating.

Ms Hammond is a highly respected person in the racing industry, a member of the Launceston Trotting Club, with a close association with great people like Chester Bullock. Her livelihood and participation in this great industry is being threatened by the Office of Racing Integrity, threatened again by people who do not understand, who want to attack the people who call them out. It is okay for Ben Yole to participate in this industry, despite the fact that he has abused animals, fixed races and organised team driving. It is fine for him to participate, but if you are brave enough to call out this office, then an attempt will be made to rub you out from the industry. It is a disgrace. It should not be happening. What on earth is going wrong when we have great people in this racing industry like Brooke being attacked by the regulator for telling the truth and calling it out. This situation cannot keep happening. Ben Yole cannot be allowed to train again. Those two drivers should not be driving, yet they are.

The recommendations of the Murrihy review do not say, 'Don't do anything about it', which appears to be what the minister is alluding to. We need to get these people out of the industry, if it has any integrity at all. It gives more fuel to those people who want to shut it down. It is the fuel they need and they pretend the actions of those individuals represent the actions of everyone, which is not true.

I have seen the minister intervene only recently with Robbie Walters. I saw her write to the Office of Racing Integrity and heard her answer questions, say she was going to write and organised so that Mr Walters could not participate in this industry and would not be licensed. However, she has not intervened on the Yole matter. She has not and she will not. I wonder if she will intervene on Brooke Hammond, who is being attacked by the regulator, a regulator who does not understand racing, by a director of racing who does not understand it either; does not understand the heart of the problems that have plagued this industry for far too long.

What is the minister going to do about it? She is always there for the events and I am pleased with that. However, she is not there when the industry desperately needs her, and they desperately need her on this.

You cannot have an Office of Racing Integrity that is rubbing people out for telling the truth and allowing the people that did the deed to continue on. You cannot have great people like Janet Ainscow, who is again under attack by her own employer for comments that she is making, calling out only the truth. Janet Ainscow, the steward -

CHAIR - Leader, can I draw you back to the question at hand.

Mr WINTER - You are quite right. This is all about the lack of understanding of racing by the director of racing, which is directly relevant to clause 67. The director of racing does not understand the role these stewards play. Their role is to tell the truth. Janet Ainscow has always told the truth. She told the truth about her neighbour's property, she told the truth when she told the Office of Racing Integrity and the director of racing about the evidence she had received from another driver. She told the truth, and telling the truth in the Office of Racing Integrity has meant a loss of her livelihood, a loss of employment, a loss of hours. That should never have happened to her. It is a disgrace.

Ms JOHNSTON - Chair, I will keep my comments brief. I recognise the concerns of the Leader of the Opposition. What he has unveiled tonight is deeply disturbing. However, I opposed a similar amendment in this place initially and I will oppose this one as well. I believe there is a cosiness among those who are participating or understand the racing industry. To

insert this particular provision into the requirements of a chief racing integrity officer suggests a cosiness and relationship between someone who is there to uphold integrity within the industry and the industry itself, which I believe has been a problem in the way the Office of Racing Integrity and those within that office have operated.

Whilst I agree that Mr Yole is, perhaps, a bit of an outlier, there has been what seems to be a protection racket for a number of those in the industry. I refer to Anthony Bullock, for instance, who the industry has gathered round and wrapped in protection. The Office of Racing Integrity and those in the industry with a demonstrated understanding of the racing industry have protected him because he is too big to fail. If Mr Bullock fails, then the greyhound racing industry collapses because he provides so many of the runners.

I am, therefore, deeply concerned if we insert the provision that the person who is a chief racing integrity officer needs to have a demonstrated understanding of the racing industry because I believe that establishes a relationship of cosiness with an industry that is supposed to have independent oversight. It troubles me when Scott Brunton was clearly in breach of thoroughbred racing rules that the industry protected him and the Office of Racing Integrity turned a blind eye. That cosiness between a regulator and the industry itself is deeply disturbing.

I believe it is an unnecessary inclusion in the bill. There is nothing stopping the person who is appointed having an understanding of the racing industry, but I believe making it a requirement is erring. I would be deeply troubled if the appointee to the chief racing integrity officer had a close relationship with the racing industry because I believe that would fuel the concerns of animal welfare advocates about the cosiness. When blind eyes are turned to serious breaches of racing regulations, that can be one explanation for it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 68 -

Appointment of stewards and other racing officials

Page 96, after subclause (1).

Insert the following subclause:

(1A) Tasracing may only appoint a person as a stipendiary steward under subsection (1)(a) if the person has qualifications that are necessary to perform the functions of steward.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I move -

That the amendment of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms HOWLETT - I recommend that clause 79 be agreed to.

Clause agreed to.

Ms HOWLETT - I recommend that clause 85 be agreed to.

Clause agreed to.

Ms HOWLETT - I recommend that clause 88 be agreed to.

Clause agreed to.

Ms HOWLETT - I recommend that clause 89 be agreed to.

Clause agreed to.

Ms HOWLETT - I recommend that clause 99 be agreed to.

Clause agreed to.

Amendment to Schedule 1 -

Ms HOWLETT - I move -

That the amendment to schedule 1 be agreed to.

Council amendments agreed to.

Resolution reported.

Reported the Committee had resolved to agree to the Council amendments.

Resolution agreed to.

**EXPUNGEMENT OF HISTORICAL OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL 2024
(No. 10)**

Further Consideration in Committee

Resumed from 10 September 2024 (page 128).

[7.12 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Chair. I am reading in our amendment to section 19B clause (6)(c)

- (6) The Secretary is to arrange for -
 - (c) the services of State Service officers and State Service employees employed in the Department; and
 - (d) facilities; and
 - (e) other assistance -

to be made available or provided to an independent assessor to enable the independent assessor to make an assessment.

19C. Submissions in relation to compensation

- (1) After a person has been appointed as an independent assessor, that person must cause a notice to be published, inviting public submissions in respect of compensation payable under this Act.
- (2) A notice under subsection (1) is to -
 - (a) be published in a newspaper circulating generally in the State; and
 - (b) specify the day by which submissions may be made, being a day not less than 30 days after the notice is first published in a newspaper.
- (3) The independent assessor must consider any submissions received under this section before providing the Premier with a report under section 19D(1)(b).

19D, Determination of compensation payable.

- (1) An independent assessor must, within six months after the independent assessor's appointment -
 - (a) conduct an assessment; and
 - (b) provide the Premier with a report that recommends a method for calculating the amount of compensation to be paid to eligible participants.
- (2) The method for calculating an amount of compensation under subsection (1)(b) may -
 - (a) vary according to different factors or circumstances; and
 - (b) include indexing on an annual or other basis.

19E. Compensation order

- (1) Within 30 days after being provided with a report under section 19D(1)(b), the Premier must prepare a draft order which specifies the method for calculating the amount of compensation to be paid under this Act to eligible participants.

- (2) The method specified by the Premier in a compensation order must be the method recommended to the Premier by the independent assessor under section 19D(1).
- (3) The Premier must cause a draft of the compensation order prepared under subsection (1) to be laid before each House of Parliament on the first sitting-day of that House after the day on which the draft order is prepared.
- (4) After a draft order has been approved by both Houses of Parliament, the Premier must make an order in the same terms as the draft order within 30 days,
- (5) A draft order is approved by a House of Parliament -
 - (a) when the House passes a motion approving the draft order; or
 - (b) at the end of 5 sitting-days after the draft order was laid before the House if no notice of motion to disapprove the proposal is before the House; or
 - (c) if such a notice is before the House at the end of that period when the first of the following occurs:
 - (i) a notice is withdrawn;
 - (ii) the motion is negated;
 - (iii) a further period of 5 sitting-days ends.
- (6) A compensation order made under this section -
 - (a) is a statutory rule for the purposes of the *Rules Publication Act 1953*; and
 - (b) is not an instrument of a legislative character for the purposes of the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1992*.
- (7) The Premier may only amend or revoke a compensation order to give effect to a recommendation of an independent assessor under section 19D(1).

19F. Compensation for charges expunged before initial compensation order

- (1) This section applies in respect of a charge that is expunged before the initial compensation order is made.
- (2) The Secretary must, as soon as practicable and in any case within 3 months after the making of the initial compensation order, notify the

person who applied to have the charge expunged that compensation is payable under this Act.

- (3) If an applicant who receives notification under this section confirms that compensation is to be paid under this Act, the Secretary must, as soon as practicable and in any case within 3 months after receiving confirmation, pay compensation to the person whose charge has been expunged.
- (4) The amount of compensation payable under this section is to be calculated in accordance with the initial compensation order.

19G. Compensation for charges expunged after initial compensation order

- (1) This section applies in respect of a charge that is expunged after the initial compensation order is made.
- (2) The Secretary must, as soon as practicable, and in any case within 3 months after a charge has been expunged under section 12(6), pay compensation under this section to the person whose charge has been expunged.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not apply if the person whose charge has been expunged notifies the Secretary in writing that the person does not wish for compensation to be paid to them under this section.
- (4) The amount of compensation payable under this section is to be calculated in accordance with the compensation order in effect at the time.

19H. Ex gratia payments.

If an ex gratia payment is, or has been, made by the State to an eligible recipient in respect of a charge, the amount of compensation payable to that eligible recipient under this Part in respect of that charge is to be reduced by the amount of that ex gratia payment.

19I. Cessation of expungement

- (1) If the Secretary makes a determination under section 20(1) that a charge has ceased to be expunged, the Secretary may determine that any compensation that has been paid under this Part in respect of that charge is to be repaid.
- (2) If the Secretary makes a determination under subsection (1) that compensation is to be repaid, that compensation is a debt due and payable to the Crown by the person who received that compensation.

19J. Incorrect compensation pay

- (1) In this section -

original compensation amount means a compensation amount paid under this Part to an eligible recipient;

variation amount, in respect of an expunged charge, means the difference between the varied compensation amount for that charge and the original compensation amount paid for that charge;

varied compensation amount, in respect of an expunged charge, means the compensation amount for that charge as varied under subsection (2).

- (2) If the Secretary is satisfied the compensation payment paid in respect of an expunged charge under this Part was calculated incorrectly, the Secretary is to vary the compensation amount payable in respect of that charge and is to notify the person to whom the compensation has been paid of that variation.
- (3) If the amount paid as the original compensation amount in respect of an expunged charge is greater than the varied compensation amount for that charge, the Secretary may recover the variation amount from the person whose charge has been expunged as a debt due and payable to the Crown.
- (4) If the varied compensation amount payable for an expunged charge is greater than the original compensation amount paid in respect to that charge, the Secretary must pay the variation amount to the person whose charge has been expunged.

19K. Payment of outstanding amounts

- (1) The Secretary must enter into an arrangement for a liability outstanding to the Crown under this Part to be paid by installments.
- (2) The Secretary may write off the whole or any part of a liability to pay an amount to the Crown under this Part if satisfied that any action or further action to recover the outstanding amount is impracticable or unwarranted.

Thank you, members. That is the end.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Leader of Greens, in 19K you said the secretary 'must' enter'?

Dr WOODRUFF - Did I say that? It should be 'may' enter. Yes.

Then there is new clause B which is also to follow clause 8.

New Clause B

To follow clause 8.

A. Section 22 amended (No compensation payable other than under this Act)

Section 22 of the Principal Act is amended by omitting "If a" and substituting "Other than as entitled under this Act, if a".

I thank the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for their work in preparing those excellent and well considered amendments. For everybody who has provided input and all the members who will speak to the bill have had an opportunity to have an input and I think everyone has had it for two weeks now or thereabouts. We have had some good conversations with people and that is really pleasing.

I will run out of time in a moment, Deputy Chair. I have comments on each of those subsections to the clause. I will wait to hear the minister's comments and any other members and then I will speak to them.

Sitting Times

[7.22 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Deputy Chair, pursuant to Sessional Order 18A, I move -

That for this day's sitting the House shall not stand adjourned at 7.30 p.m. and that the House continue to sit past 7.30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Mr BARNETT - Deputy Chair, I thank the Leader of the government for moving that on behalf of the government, which is something that we would like to do to progress these amendments and to continue with the bill to see if we can do this as soon as possible.

I have discussed with the Leader of the Greens on behalf of the government, and we are willing to progress this accordingly.

I acknowledge again as I have done personally in the Chamber, Rodney Croome. I appreciate his presence here and for obvious reasons with his longstanding interest and advocacy in this space as I shared on my second reading summing up yesterday. I appreciated the opportunity to meet with Rodney a couple of months ago. We do not agree on everything, but there is much we do agree on. I appreciated that it was a productive and enjoyable meeting.

I will summarise the government's responses with respect to the Greens' amendments, and an indication we do not support those amendments. I will outline the reasons why and hopefully that will assist colleagues in this place.

On 6 August we delivered the second reading speech for the expungement bill. The motion was made to adjourn that bill for debate until 10 September to allow the Greens time to

draft those legislative amendments. We have now heard those from the Leader of the Greens. I appreciate that time frame.

In terms of that, the bill responds to the independent review in 2017. It commits to all the review's recommendations except for the proposal to establish a one-off ex gratia payment for applicants who have had their charges and convictions expunged. As previously advised, our government does not support a complex compensatory scheme being established within the act. We do not support the Greens further proposed amendments. They have been tweaked further since the original amendments were put forward and the existing and currently operating ex gratia payment framework in section 55 of the *Financial Management Act 2017* is best suited in our view to respond to matters under the expungement act, given the low numbers of applications and the administrative cost of setting up a separate compensation scheme.

There has also been very little uptake to eligible community members to expungement, with no successful expungement since the scheme was established in 2018. The review noted the expungement scheme, whilst important, only catered for a very small number of people. Only 96 people in total were convicted of homosexual offences with no relevant prosecutions after 1984. If the Greens suggested compensatory scheme is established and is feasible, its establishment costs will be more than those arising compensation payments to eligible applicants. In fact, there may never be a person to benefit from these amendments, but we do not know.

The government and the parliament have previously considered the issue of compensation at length. Whilst there may be various national and state-based schemes relating to child sexual abuse in institutions, that means there are no financial redress or compensation schemes in place in any Australian jurisdiction for expungement of historical offences. So nowhere on the mainland of Australia. Victoria, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland and also New Zealand all have provisions drafted similar to Tasmania which provides that a person who has a conviction or a charge expunged is not entitled to compensation on account of that conviction or charge being expunged. All Australian jurisdictions, like New Zealand, reflect the general principle that convictions for offences that are later repealed do not give rise to a right of compensation and so the Greens amendment would be certainly a very important precedent.

Our government also considers the Greens' amendments are technically deficient. I will expand on that one. It does not follow the review's recommendation as compensation rather than ex gratia payment is proposed. So first, if the Greens' amendments were intended to respond to the reviewer's recommendation that is to establish a two-tiered automatic ex gratia fixed payment, it does not do that. Their compensatory process proposed in the Greens' bill is overly complex compared to what was anticipated in the review.

The review's recommendation suggested a two-tiered ex gratia payment structure that distinguished between applicants who had charges still present on their record and a reduced level for persons where the expunged charge was not on their criminal record. The payment would be available automatically on the finalisation of an application where the secretary has determined to expunge an arising charge or conviction. The fixed amount of these payments was to be determined by government for the scheme. Instead, the Greens' amendments propose that a compensation payment, not an ex gratia payment, is provided to applicants.

This is to be calculated by a method to be established by an independent assessor. This difference is important as an ex gratia payment is an act-of-grace payment that does not seek to compensate for loss and does not require the admission of liability. An ex gratia payment, as recommended by the review, is not designed to compensate the person for losses, but reflects a non-legal liability of the state such as an expression of regret. The compensatory model proposed by the Greens is inconsistent with the general legal principle that a person who was convicted of a repealed offence is not entitled to compensation on the repeal of an offence.

It also leaves entirely open what an independent assessor might compel the minister to set out in the orders proposed by the amendments. For example, an independent assessor might recommend a claimant be compensated for any lifetime loss of income. These kinds of claims are very difficult to determine given their long-term historical nature. How would a person demonstrate that a relevant conviction had a direct link to their subsequent employment, for example? It is likely that reviewers considered this kind of approach as problematic which is why the recommended fixed amount ex gratia payments and not this kind of compensation scheme.

The independent assessor appointment process - while the government has concerns with the drafting in respect to proposed section 19B, the section establishes a process which requires the Premier to appoint an independent assessor within three months of the first expungement decision by the secretary to enable the determination of compensation to be payable to eligible recipients, which makes sense.

First, why would the appointment and later determination be made by the Premier? The Attorney-General administers this legislation. Further, why does section 19B(2) allow the Premier to appoint an independent assessor at other later times following the report of the first independent assessor? Strange. This would appear to potentially allow the Premier to make different appointments until possibly satisfied with the report that they receive. The amendments also do not provide for necessary matters such as a provision for terminating an appointment for cause such as misconduct.

Three, no method of objective criteria for the calculation of compensation. The government has concerns with the drafting with respect to section 19C. Section 19C creates a process for seeking public submissions as to the payable compensation amount, and there are no objective criteria in relation to establishing the method for calculation. It is unclear on what grounds the independent assessor will determine the calculation method for compensation under the proposed model; for example, are the payments intended to be compensation for damages, personal injury, or injustices, or are they a symbolic payment? As mentioned above, this could lead to claims for lifetime loss of income which would, in practice, be very hard to determine and calculate.

Under section 19C(2), the independent assessor is to publish their invitation for public submissions in a newspaper - a single newspaper circulating generally in the state. Such provisions would normally require publishing in all three regional papers. I have a number of other concerns to share, but in light of the time, I will pause there to allow others to make a contribution. Then I will add further to the concerns that we have with the Greens' amendments. I thank the Deputy Chair.

Ms WHITE - Deputy Chair, I rise to speak to the amendments that have been circulated by the Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff, and can indicate the Labor Party's support for them.

There are a number of points that have just been raised by the Attorney-General that I am sure the leader will respond to, but if I will touch on some of the things that struck me from that contribution.

One of the arguments that the government has made is that there are very few people who would benefit from such a scheme and, therefore, it is a costly exercise that is not necessarily worth undertaking. I remind the parliament that the report also found that since the decision by this parliament to expunge historical offences, there has been no public advertising to tell people that they can have these historical offences expunged and, perhaps if there had been, more people may have made application.

The Attorney-General talked about the fact there were 96 prosecutions. He did not say specifically what those prosecutions relate to, but I presume that is in relation to homosexual behaviour and cross-dressing, whereas what we are also discussing in this amendment bill is the expanding of the offences that are captured, that are related offences that might have been due to somebody's homosexuality, it might have been due to somebody's cross-dressing behaviour and, therefore, arguably more than 96 prosecutions occurred. Those are related offences and those are related impacts on individuals who might be able to access a scheme like this.

The Attorney-General said nowhere on the mainland is there any kind of ex gratia payment available to people who have been convicted of an offence and had that expunged because they were homosexual or cross-dressing. 'Nowhere on the mainland'. Deputy Chair: nowhere on the mainland was it criminal for somebody to be in a homosexual relationship or cross-dress until 1997. Tasmania is the last state in the country to decriminalise homosexuality and cross-dressing and that makes us unique. Perhaps nowhere on the mainland has found it necessary to take this step because nowhere on the mainland was criminalising this behaviour until the 1990s and that is also why it is different.

The Attorney-General made some other references. I will not go to them all because I am sure the Leader of the Greens will. He spoke about matters, including that the amendments before us provide the powers with the Premier to make decisions about appointments, and to make decisions about the compensation order, and notes that the act is under the purview of the Attorney-General. If that is a significant challenge, then we can amend that. I think that is a fairly simple amendment to replace 'Premier' with 'Attorney-General' and deal with what may be inconsistencies in the amendment compared to the rest of the amendment bill.

The other point that was raised was the amendments do not have a provision for the ability to remove an assessor for misconduct. Again, an easy amendment can be moved if we need to have a provision like that.

I know there are other matters that you plan to raise in further contributions, and you ran out of time but I do not think anything that you have raised so far is insurmountable for this parliament to work together to make the necessary changes so that we can provide for compensation to those people who have been wronged by previous decisions of this parliament.

I do not believe that there is anything so problematic in what has been shared by the Attorney-General that would prevent us from making some simple amendments to ensure that these amendments before the Chair can be adopted into the substantive bill before this House.

Fundamentally, as I said yesterday in my remarks and my second reading contribution, this goes to the opportunities parliament has to make a statement about what matters to us and how we treat people in an inclusive state. The community who are most directly impacted by this are the ones who most benefit from any of these changes, including the ones that this parliament is already seeking to support from the bill that was shared, tabled, and debated already by the Attorney-General.

This further enhances the importance of this issue because parliament should come together and not only recognise that what happened was wrong and that we should expunge the record, which has occurred, but also broaden provisions to make it easier for people to access and recognise their related offences that might be in connection to their homosexuality or cross-dressing. Also to make redress, financial redress, acknowledgement that for some people, the impact of these laws had a profoundly detrimental effect on their wellbeing and, in some instances, their financial ability to look after themselves or provide for their family because it could have had an impact on their employment or their prospects of employment.

I believe the principle is sound. If there are ways we can improve the amendment so that it works to meet the concerns raised by the government, then we should have that conversation about how we do that tonight.

Mr BARNETT - I will just outline a few other points in response to the Leader of the Greens to have a comprehensive understanding of the government's concerns with the amendments before us.

The next point one that I was sharing is the difficulty in determining a compensation method payable. The government is concerned with the drafting with respect to section 19D. Section 19D currently provides that the method of calculating an amount of compensation may vary according to different factors or circumstances and may include indexing. The government considers the development of such a method will be arbitrary where there may be no successful applicants to consider, and the experiences of future applicants will not necessarily be the same, although admittedly common characteristics may arise. There are no other compensation schemes for expungement anywhere in the world, to our knowledge, to draw upon. I will make that point, as I shared earlier, about other interstate jurisdictions.

In terms of the next concern, the government is concerned with the operational intent of section 19E. Section 19E(1) says the Premier must prepare a draft order. Section 19E(2) says the method specified by the Premier must be the method recommended to the Premier by the independent assessor.

Section 19E(5) provides that the Premier must then make the order after it has been approved by parliament. Given the bill requires the Premier to specify the method recommended by the independent assessor, it is not clear what the intention of parliamentary approval of the order is, as there are no grounds specified for disallowance. For example, is the intention to allow parliament to disagree with the independent assessor's method? In any event, the disallowance triggers the appointment of another independent assessor under section 19B(1)(b) and another six-month process involving public submissions and a report to the Premier.

It seems like an unnecessary and expensive duplication of a public consultation process when the submissions to the first assessor could simply be considered by the second assessor

or, more sensibly, the first assessor could be required to reconsider their advice to the Premier if the order based on their first advice is disallowed by Parliament.

Section 9E, sub-section (7) says that the Premier may only amend or revoke a compensation order to give effect to a recommendation of an independent assessor. The bill does not provide any parliamentary oversight of an amendment or revocation process. Given the order, when made, must be the method recommended by the assessor, the purpose of providing for an amendment of the order is unclear.

It is considered by our government that the expungement legislation, as tabled, appropriately responds to the recommendations of the independent review. I just make the point that we support all the recommendations of the independent reviewers. It would appear that all of us around this chamber do so, apart from this particular recommendation 13 and the compensation provision for which the Greens have brought forward an amendment, which is, as I say, inconsistent with the independent review, report, and recommendation. It is absolutely inconsistent with that.

The original bill does contain important changes, and we will continue to update the legislation where necessary, to ensure it is consistent with our community's expectations and contemporary legislative processes. I note there are a number of legislative amendment bills that go through this parliament each year, and that is an opportunity for doing so.

It will improve the expungement of historical offences scheme to provide better support to affected persons whilst ensuring only relevant and appropriate convictions are expunged. The Secretary of the Department of Justice makes independent decisions under the act. The Secretary advises that any successful applicant's case can be referred by the Secretary, with the applicant's consent, to the Treasurer, with the Secretary's advice that an appropriate ex gratia payment be considered.

The Secretary prepares a report each year on the operation of the act under Section 30. This report will include information on the outcomes of such referrals. This can inform the parliament whether any further process or legislative amendments are necessary to meet the objectives of the independent review.

In summary, if I can just recap and put it in a very short few words, the government's view is that these amendments from the Greens, while well-intentioned, are inconsistent with the independent review, its report and recommendations. They are certainly costly to establish and administer and they are unclear in their operation.

I therefore recommend to members to oppose the amendments. I thank the Leader for the Greens and others for their contribution to this chamber.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. I rise tonight to express my strong support for the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Greens. I believe these are incredibly sensible, but mostly, important amendments to the bill, and an obvious oversight in the bill itself that the government has presented. The offences were morally wrong and they had a profound and significant impact on Tasmanians. We have, as a result, a moral obligation to redress.

The fact that the bill, as it currently stands, does not do that is simply not good enough. It is another moral wrong. I strongly support the amendments by the Greens. Whilst I am not

surprised at all by the government's response, it is disappointing and it is predictable. So predictable, in fact, that many of the arguments put forward by the Attorney-General have been addressed in a very handy fact sheet - and I acknowledge the presence of Mr Croome in the gallery with us today - by Equality Tasmania because these are highly predictable but not strong arguments for opposing these amendments.

The principle that convictions for offences that are later appealed does not give rise to a right of compensation, I heard the Attorney-General say, for instance, is simply not correct. These are convictions for activity that should never have been unlawful in the first place. They were morally wronged individuals. There should not have been convictions in the first place.

We are putting cross-dressing and homosexuality in the same categories as stealing children from their families or the failure to stop child abuse: a form of harm inflicted by the state with no exonerating circumstances.

It is important that we address these moral wrongs, and the only way to do that appropriately is to provide a financial redress scheme within the bill. The Attorney-General responded that there is compensation available through other avenues and referred to ex gratia payments available under section 55 of the *Financial Management Act*. Again, this is an inappropriate mechanism for seeking redress for a moral wrong. Not only do these individuals who have been deeply harmed and profoundly impacted by the conviction in the first place have to apply for the expungement, but the process of expiratory payments requires another bureaucratic process to go through which would further traumatise. The government talks about being trauma-informed in their practices. I believe that not accepting the amendments in this bill will require people to go through a further traumatic experience. That is unacceptable.

The argument that there are no other states that do this is not an excuse for inaction. We should be leading the nation on this particular matter. We were the last state to repeal this offence. We caused the harm for the longest time. We have a duty and a moral obligation to act on this. This amendment is so incredibly important. If we pass this bill without this amendment, then what it says is that we are not truly sorry for what happened. We do not believe that the profound impact is significant enough to warrant financial redress. That is not appropriate. I believe that what we did was morally wrong. The only way to go some way to addressing that is to provide the financial redress. I strongly support the amendments.

Mr O'BYRNE - Chair, I voice my support for the amendments. There have been a number of pieces of work that have been undertaken. I have provided some feedback to the Leader of the Greens to ensure that we could facilitate a better, clearer outcome in terms of the amendments, and how they will practically impact the process of seeking compensation and that redress for the harm that has been done by government institutions. I acknowledge the briefing I had with the department working through some of the technical aspects of that and the consistency that we seek to apply. I thank the Leader of the Greens for acknowledging that feedback.

I acknowledge the work that has collectively been done to have a suite of amendments that give practical effect to what is desired, and so that we make right what has been wrong.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, I really appreciate members who are all trying to get this wrapped up by 8.00 p.m. It is so important. I have not acknowledged Rodney Croome here. Thank you, Rodney, for coming tonight.

I will address the government's comments on our amendments. I do not think that there is a great degree of sincerity in some of the stuff that you have talked about. It has been two and a half weeks. You could have proposed amendments to some of those things beforehand. There has not been any communication. Anyway, here we are now.

When you are arguing the benefits of the ex gratia scheme over the compensation scheme, that falls very short. The former Abuse in State Care Scheme in Tasmania was delivered through ex gratia payments. That scheme had clear documentation and application processes, and an independent appointed person to assess individual claims. If the government intended to deliver an ex gratia scheme we would have seen some announcement or detail about it. Instead, the government has basically said there is nothing stopping someone from asking for an ex gratia payment. The government has made a lot about recommendation 13 relating to ex gratia payments. That recommendation says that payment should be available automatically on the finalisation of an application and should be an amount determined by the government to be appropriate. The government has not set an amount and has not issued a Treasurer's instructions or guidelines or any other instruments stating that a payment should be available automatically on the finalisation of an application.

In short, the government has shown no intention of enacting the recommendation for address through ex gratia payments by your actions.

The parliament does not have the power to establish an ex-gratia scheme and is why we proposed a mechanism available to us as a parliament. It is somewhat hypocritical for the Attorney-General to point to a minor variation from the independent review's recommendations that this amendment of ours represents, especially when the government has failed to deliver on any aspect of that recommendation whatsoever at all and has not shown a genuine intention to provide action.

The Attorney-General has also made some competing claims, including claiming the cost of setting up the compensation scheme may be more than the payments made through the scheme. First of all, this seems unlikely. The process simply involves setting a compensation formula and then making a payment based on that formula when someone's expungement application is approved through an existing process.

The government has not made any case regarding how that would be expensive. On the face of it, I cannot see how it would be. The other argument you and others in the government have made is the compensation provided may be far more expensive than ex-gratia payments. First of all, this amendment provides that the compensation formula would be a disallowable instrument. Parliament could disallow any order that provided for compensation that either House or the parliament thought was going to be too exorbitant.

On the one hand, there is conflicting messaging here from the Attorney-General and you are trying to argue it will be excessively expensive to have a compensation scheme. At the same time, on the other hand, you have been arguing the compensation will be so small it would be lower than the costs to administer the scheme in the first place.

Attorney-General, you also suggested that proposed section 19(b)(2) would allow for the Premier to repeatedly appoint independent assessor after independent assessor until they finally got an outcome they want. First, it is the parliament who ultimately decides whether to approve an order, not a premier or an attorney-general. Ironically, I might have more faith in the Premier

than possibly the Attorney-General and although I do not see eye to eye with the Premier on all matters, I do not think he would be obstinate, petty and recklessly commission assessor after assessor.

Premiers have a great deal of power. If Tasmania had a premier who was going to do something like endless commissioning of assessors, that would be the least of our problems. It is also something that could happen on any other manner of regulation and disallowable instruments. It does not seem practical to fetter the executive in this way and the behaviour of the Premier is ultimately held to account by the party room and the parliament, the people of Tasmania, and I do not think that is a realistic hypothetical situation.

On 19(b)(2), I will explain to other members, this was not included in our original drafting request. It came about after a suggestion there be a periodic review of the order although, and despite the government's warning about administrative burdens of a compensation scheme, we have been quite consistent in ensuring the costs are reasonable. I think the model we have provided is a prudent one.

It is our view that given the likely scale of the scheme, a periodic review would be an unjustifiable cost. We wanted to make allowance for the government to make amendments to the order in any unforeseen circumstances if they occurred or, for example, if an error became apparent in the order. We are persuaded that a mechanism to do that was prudent, which is why we included 19(b) that allows the Premier to have an order reviewed if that would become necessary.

Attorney-General, in 19(c) which you mentioned, you also noted that it is not clear what grounds the assessor would use to determine a compensation calculation method. That is exactly the purpose of appointing an assessor. We do not believe we are suitably qualified to put forward an arbitrary method ourselves. The assessor will be a suitably qualified person and will undergo a public consultation, determine the suitable amount and parliament will then be able to disallow it.

The other point I wanted to make was your point about the fact there is no other expungement schemes that have occurred and that this is the first scheme. I just want to make the point: when was the first child sexual abuse compensation scheme? There has to be a first for everything. This is the first and this would be great; this would be historic. We have the opportunity to do this. As Ms White said, we have novel circumstances in Tasmania and that is why it has come to this point. It was recommended. This is the mechanism which is based on the best evidence we have and the excellent drafting - the Office of Parliamentary Counsel will set us up and provide parliament with the opportunity to make the final decision about what the compensation methodology is. Let us not forget it comes back to us and it gets it started for those people who have been waiting, some of them for decades, for the healing this will provide.

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 9 and 10 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

EXPUNGEMENT OF HISTORICAL OFFENCES AMENDMENT BILL 2024
(No. 10)

Third Reading

Bill read the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House does now adjourn.

Answer to Question - State Revenue - Business Taxes

[7.59 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, On behalf of the Premier representing the Treasurer today at Question Time, I provide the following answer to a question posed by Mr Jenner. The answer is as follows.

Tasmania imposes a range of taxes, including payroll tax and land tax and duties and the relevant legislation. The tax regimes under these acts are administered under the *Taxation Administration Act 1997*.

Under Tasmania's taxation laws, foreign companies, including foreign natural persons, foreign persons, foreign trusts and foreign trustees hereinafter called, 'foreign persons', are liable to pay the relevant taxes and duties. In fact, in some circumstances these foreign persons are liable to pay an amount of tax which is greater had that foreign person not being foreign. These additional amounts are referred to as surcharges under Tasmania's taxation laws. They include the Foreign Investor Land Tax Surcharge, or FILTS, under the *Land Tax Act*, as well as the Foreign Investor Duty Surcharge (FIDS), under the *Duties Act*.

Foreign companies are not exempt from the operation of Tasmania taxation laws by virtue of being foreign. Tasmanian legislation does not provide for an exemption from the application of Tasmania's taxation laws by virtue of the relevant entity's multinational-ness, to coin a phrase. There may be legislation at the federal level that exempts foreign entities from the application of federal taxation laws, but this is not to the extent that it excludes applicable Tasmanian legislation.

In relation to the question, 'Will you start taxing these companies in the same way you tax hundreds of local companies and businesses?', we will continue to tax these companies in a way that continues to ensure that foreign persons pay any additional tax, or rates of taxes, that the state of Tasmania imposes on those foreign persons, including FILTS and FIDS, by virtue of Tasmania's taxation laws, over and above those that would be applicable to Australian-domiciled companies.

Science and Technology Directions

[8.01 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Science and Technology) - Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to rise to speak a little bit about the fantastic science and technology sector. I start by saying what great engagement I have been able to have with the sector. I have hit the ground running. It is important to make a callout, particularly, to TasICT and its board, which I have met. I thank David Mills and Russell Kelly specifically for all their good work in corralling, agitating and moving the sector forward, and for their work in having the Minister for Science and Technology reinstituted. I am feeling quite humbled to come back into this role and very happy and ready to work hard.

In the past few weeks, I have, as I said, met with the board of TasICT. We have started to talk about strategy and what needs to happen across the sector, particularly for Tasmania. We know it is a \$1.7 billion industry. It is important to our little state. We are globally connected like everybody else. I will reflect on some of the conversations I had in the Chamber today about science and what has happened with the floods. We heard a little about telecommunications towers.

For those new in the Chamber, it is worth sketching out a little bit of my personal background in the communications sector so that there is a sense of where I have been with this in a professional level. I formerly worked for Telstra. I have said that on the record. I am being open about that so everybody knows. I have worked in France, Indonesia and the USA, including Silicon Valley. I started life as a lowly IP lawyer but most of my career has been in commercialisation. It is commercialisation that I believe is where Tasmania can achieve a lot of great things. We are blessed with amazing geography and our university owns an array of radio telescopes, which enables us to do a lot of incredible research and work through space technology.

Those who have been watching, will be aware of a company called Geoneon, which is able to use the science of remote telemetry to track climate change and measure in a very refined way climate change on planet Earth. A great little Tasmanian company. We have Hensoldt, which is also a space tech company. Hensoldt is working somewhat in partnership with the University of Tasmania across that research capability in those radio telescopes. They are able to trace the movement of objects in the sky, In particular, in relation to space junk they are doing incredible work as well. The kids love hearing about that.

We have companies such as Fortifyedge. I was out with Peter Padd the other night. He had some representatives of Samsung USA in town. They are in good commercial negotiations. Peter Padd's company does incredible sensor technology and that technology is on the mission to Mars project. He has strong relationships, both with Australian technology research entities, universities, but also through the States, as you would expect, with space tech, including NASA. It is wonderful to welcome the big American companies in town to look at what we are doing here at a local level.

I was very happy last week also to go and visit the Adam Walker Studios. Adam Walker has a studio set up above Cat and Fiddle Arcade, where they are working on lots of great games for the gaming industry. It is a burgeoning industry. We do some funding of that through the Arts portfolio. Small screens, big screens, any screens; when it is digital information and digital technology, it can range across all those things. A great area for us as a small state as well.

We heard a little bit today about the response to the floods and communications needs. Obviously, everybody here is aware that telecommunications are a federal government responsibility. I have been at them like a bit of a terrier. I feel that we are being let down in relation to telecommunications investment and provision from the federal government. If you look at other states and territories, you will see that we are not being kept up to date with the latest technology, in particular, subsea cable technology. People in the Chamber will understand that I have been at this a very long time. We, as a state, have put money on the table. There is more work to do there. Our best-case scenario would be a direct international subsea cable connection. It costs a lot of money. The feds have to come to the party. When you look at what is happening on the eastern seaboard of Australia, the technology, the investment being made by the federal government, we see that Tasmania deserves a lot more. We deserve to be kept up to speed with the latest tech.

I am also pleased to bring that technology flavour to some of my other portfolios. I think this is the fun part, particularly in relation to the arts sector. There is lots of opportunity. Digital technology allows you to create great recordings of music. Everything now is about communication and the ability to share that tech with everybody. Our IP businesses are clean, green, innovative, and great for Tasmania's future.

During the election campaign, I was pleased to announce our strategy for advanced technology industries. It is quite in-depth. It roams across southern oceans research, Antarctic, defence, space: all the industries that are now converging with that connection with technology. Our goal is to foster research and industry collaboration and create opportunities for sectors to work more closely together.

You will hear me talk a lot about Team Tasmania, which is something we need to do specifically with the University of Tasmania and the STEM reinvigoration of the Sandy Bay campus. My understanding is that that has a broad range of support across parties and across layers of government. I am very happy to be leading that work and encourage everybody in this House to make sure we do all we can to make sure that STEM education and technology education is the best it can be and that we are building a strong ICT and advanced technology sector in Tasmania.

Salmon Farming - Misrepresentation of Science

[8.09 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to bring some sunlight tonight into the murky and deceitful narratives that multinational fish farm companies are sowing in Tasmania in their effort to completely control our publicly owned waterways. Nothing less is at stake than the survival of a species; the Maugean skate.

It is an ancient creature, a remnant from the time of dinosaurs, that has lived in the dark depths of Macquarie Harbour, eons longer than humans have walked planet Earth. When Cooke Canada and Brazilian JBS and Sealord took over Huon, Tassal and Petuna, they brought in John Howard's nephew, Lyall, to head up Salmon Tasmania. His job was to reshape an in-fighting local salmon industry into a modern, global, profit-focused machine. Lyall Howard has a history of working for companies to deploy a narrative first used by Big Tobacco, then perfected by the fossil fuel industry, to plant seeds of confusion and mistrust in science and use this to delay action addressing their critical climate and biodiversity crimes.

The deliberate and malicious misrepresentation of science is dangerous. It wounds the morale of our wonderful scientists and researchers and it results in distrust in our institutions. Ultimately, companies misrepresent scientists in the service of maintaining business as usual and for accelerating hyper industrialisations. Underneath that is the real motivation: to protect the profits of their industries and keep them operating regardless of the environmental destruction that they are causing.

It is not surprising, as Federal Labor is poised to make a decision to protect the skate from extinction, that Big Salmon have paid for a narrow review of the model that predicts the rate of the Maugean skate's extension trajectory. The review was not directed to look at the decade of eminent scientific research by UTAS and IMAS scientists into the industrial salmon farming operations in Macquarie Harbour. That long research has comprehensively shown the damage and the dead zones caused by intensive farming as oxygen levels in the harbour have plummeted.

The handling of Professor Brooks's report shows perfectly how industry and government are working together -

Ms Finlay - Shame.

Dr WOODRUFF - as cherry picker and construct a false narrative that supports the anti-science outcome they need to maintain an industry that is driving a species to extinction.

The SPEAKER - Ms Finlay, you are under a warning.

Ms Finlay - We allow shame. I can say shame.

The SPEAKER - You question me. We allow shame, but please do not interrupt. You are on a warning.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Brooks report clearly said that a major cause of the Maugean skate population's decline appears to be habitat degradation driven by a combination of low dissolved oxygen levels and deep-water turnover vents, nutrient flows from salmon farming and altered river flows due to hydroelectric operations.

The companies have focused on one of Professor Brooks' comments that the population viability analysis of the skate prepared by the federal government in 2023 has 'potentially overstated the skates decline'. They have used the report to push for research to start again from the ground up. You guessed it - let us hold more workshops, let us bring together more experts and let us do more modelling, all to make more predictions about precisely when the Maugean skate will become extinct, because the science is clear, if salmon farming continues in Macquarie Harbour the skate will go extinct. The extinction of a species rarely results from just one single cause. Climate change, the loss of genetic biodiversity, marine heat waves and increased storm events are all contributing to the decline of the skate, as noted in the Brook report.

The Maugean skate may have been able to respond to these threats - as may other animals on the planet, they are all suffering these threats - if they were the only threats facing them, but instead their numbers are dwindling as they asphyxiate in the polluted waters of Macquarie Harbour. Delay does not benefit the skate. Delay only benefits the profits of foreign owned Sea

Lord, Cooke Aquaculture and JBS. The losers will be the Maugean skate, all non-salmon life in Macquarie Harbour and everyone who has a heart that grieves at the idea of trading a species, life for company profits.

Some of those people are Tasmanian owned businesses who have recently formed a business alliance for the Maugean skate. They are afraid for the future of the skate and afraid for what its potential extinction could mean for our, and their Tasmanian brand.

Spring Bay Mill, Tas Ethical, Eagle Hawk Drive, Falk, The Trig on Mount Arthur. Giant Tree Expeditions, Keep Tassie Wild, Designed Full, Red Parker, WILDPEAK, Honey Tasmania, Chatto Wines, Serpentine Wildlife Park, Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary, Wild Island, Little Farm Cottage, Tasmania Distillers, Plants for Tasmania Nursery, Wild Island Women, Tassie Bound Tours, the Agrarian Kitchen, Gerard Castles and Associates, The Spotted Quoll. These are all businesses that are opposed to the harm that is happening in Macquarie Harbour. The idea that opposition to salmon farming is funded by mainland millionaires, which is part of a dark anti-Tasmanian conspiracy to destroy Tasmanians' jobs, is a lie that has been perpetrated by salmon multinationals. The only millionaires who are pouring millions into salmon propaganda campaigns in Tasmania are the tax evading, foreign owned employers: the salmon companies who are globally renowned for their corrupt practices and environmental destruction. If anyone wants to have a look at JBS's corporate history go online. It is writ large Cooke Canada too.

The overwhelming public opposition to salmon farming in Tasmania is from ordinary Tasmanians: ordinary Tasmanians who are angry over decades with the salmon industry's destruction of their waters and way of life. Their power comes from their outrage at seeing the beauty that we have all known reduced to waters practically devoid of life except for green slime and brown snot weed.

The Greens represent these people who are fighting to protect what is precious, what is unique, and what is mesmerisingly special about the life in our marine waters. I will call out the spin. We will call out the false narratives. We will call out the misrepresented science. We will stand up against corporations that are hell-bent on profits before people and the planet. We are going to keep fighting so that the Maugean skate can survive and be here for millennia to come when we will all be gone.

Salmon Farming - Misrepresentation of Science - Response to Dr Woodruff

[8.16 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening on adjournment to make a contribution in response to what has just been presented by the Leader of the Greens. It absolutely backs in our decision this afternoon to make an amendment to the motion that was placed by the Greens, which was a veiled threat, a backhand slap, as I said this afternoon, to the industry of Tasmania. Whether that industry be forestry, mining, renewables, agriculture, or aquaculture, the Greens just have this standard play, which is to put the reputation of good people into disrepute: to talk down amazing Tasmanians who give their hard-earned efforts into their local communities, local families, local sports clubs, local bakeries, local hospitals, and local schools, doing great things for Tasmanians who equally love the environment that they work in and equally care about the quality of the environment they work in.

I will respond to two things that were said by the member just now and then also make some other positive contributions about this great industry in Tasmania. The first is to question the Leader of the Greens. Are you putting into question the reputation of Barry Brook? Barry Brook is a renowned expert with high regard who has done an important job and raised questions about previous work. You come into this place and question the misrepresentation of his words. Well, with Barry's permission, I read to you what he says about the work on the Maugean skate.

For the record, Barry Brook is a conservation ecologist in the discipline of Biological Sciences at the University of Tasmania and a senior researcher in the field of biodiversity, ecology, and global change. He is also specialised in the use of population viability analysis for extinction risk assessment for over 30 years. This is his expertise; these are his credentials. He wrote to me recently and indicated that he was engaged earlier this year by Salmon Tasmania to provide an independent review of the 2023 Population Viability Analysis (PVA) and its scientific context. He has provided me and others with a copy of that report, which has been published and spoken about in the media just recently.

In short, his analysis found that the reported outcomes from the modelling were essentially baked in by the choices made when selecting the baseline parameters for the 2023 PVA. This meant it was not predictive and did not allow for proper assessment of either the causes of decline or the likely impact of conservation management interventions. In other words, the 2023 PVA results were effectively a preordained outcome and cannot be relied upon to draw firm conclusions about the future of the Maugean skate.

In his view, to assure the long-term success of any conservation plan for the Maugean skate, the whole exercise must be redone from the ground up. The report was circulated, and his 30 years of professional expertise grounded the report. There is an executive summary that outlines 10 areas of concern that he raised. There is only limited time tonight, so I will make contributions on those again at another time but in summary, he says, after his recommended actions:

The conservation of the Maugean skate, Macquarie Harbor, and beyond necessitates timely and coordinated actions that address both ecological and socio-economic factors within a collaborative framework involving all stakeholders. It is not a time to take any irreversible actions given the dearth of current data relevant to the situation. Instead, improved monitoring and research, restoring and regulating habitats, and adopting adaptive management practices, there is scope to develop effective and sustainable strategies to protect this unique species. Ongoing commitment and comprehensive efforts are essential to ensure the long-term survival of the Maugean skate and the preservation of its critical habitat in Macquarie Harbor.

Now, the Greens will not accept that. The Greens will try and undermine someone's credibility, but the reality is he, in his own words, backs his report, backs the position that there is more work to be done, and that we should not make knee-jerk, politically motivated decisions that will impact an industry, impact communities, impact families - mums and dads and kids - in communities in regional Tasmania where that sort of effort and that sort of community is much required for our whole state economy and our state community to work. These are the words of a person who has dedicated his career and his life to this work and must be heeded.

The other work that is being done by our incredible scientists at IMAS is the oxygenation project on the west coast. You do not hear the Greens talking positive about the outcomes of this and saying, 'Well, isn't it great, actually, that our scientists that we are proud of have been able to work with industry to do great work in Macquarie Harbour and are seeing positive outcomes.'

We know that similar approaches are being used elsewhere. We know that the methods of reoxygenation are positive and making an impact. They started with really minimal inputs, and they sensitively increase those inputs over time. They have had a positive impact to the point where they are confident that they will not only match the amount that salmon is using of oxygenation but will be able to use that to increase the quality of the harbour environment.

The other thing that I will make a comment about this afternoon is that it is really easy for the Greens from their position at the crossbenches to just throw rocks to people and throw rocks at industry all the time without regard or care for what impact they have in the community. It is not just the salmon industry - there are a number of factors that are impacting the quality of the environment at Macquarie Harbour that must be seriously considered.

Yes, it is acknowledged that salmon is one of the contributing factors in the harbour, but it is alongside climate change. We have talked a lot about climate this afternoon and we have talked about science and the environment. It is also acknowledged that recreational fishing has an impact, the legacy mining effluent that sticks to the sea floor has an impact and the flows from Hydro. Hydro effectively pumps low oxygen, sometimes referred to as dead water, down the Gordon and into the harbour. It has an impact - some say substantial - on the oxygen drawdown in the harbor - but where is *their* investment in this?

There is a cloud hanging over the salmon industry. The people are fighting really hard to protect their way of life and the things that they have done over generations. Sometimes it is fathers and sons and their sons working in this industry alongside each other, building community. What we want to do is see Hydro step up. Have they fully investigated and disclosed their impacts? Are they investing and doing the work?

The salmon industry is incredible. We are lucky to have people invest in Tasmania so that we can continue to sustain jobs in regional Tasmania, and they should be supported.

Time expired

Ride For Nature

[8.23 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - I rise tonight to talk about Ride for Nature and celebrate the incredible achievement of son and father duo, Ned and Phil. Ned and Phil are in the chamber with us tonight, and I acknowledge you both for your efforts, and say thanks for your resilience and financial contribution to a couple of incredible charities.

Ned and Phil just rode pushbikes from Neika to Garramilla, Darwin. For those of us who saddle-up as often as possible to ride to work, despite the weather, occasional lack of enthusiasm and niggling injury, or the time pressures of the day, this is an incredible effort. For those of us who do not, it is almost incomprehensible.

At 5.00 a.m. on 10 May, in the dark and rain, Ned and Phil left home in Neika, stopped by the ABC studios in nipaluna to do an interview, then headed over the Central Plateau bound for the *Spirit of Tasmania* and the Top End.

Three months later, on 31 July, which is World Ranger Day, Ned and Phil pedal into Garramilla at the end of the journey, reunite with family and tuck into lunch and an end-of-the-line interview with ABC Darwin.

In between, they tackled rain, hail, headwinds, road trains and side trips that saw them pedal well over 5000 kilometres in the name of nature conservation, supporting rangers, and raising awareness. Not taking the most direct route, Ned and Phil sidetracked over the Central Plateau, took the Oodnadatta Track, hit Mataranka hot springs, and swung past Litchfield and Daly Waters to take in some familiar country for Phil. They timed their arrival in Darwin on the one day of the year dedicated to celebrating the work of nature and culture conservation rangers.

What started as a window of opportunity for a father-and-son holiday was turned into a challenge and an act of activism. Ned is 14 and Phil turned 50 on the road. Phil worked as a ranger in the Territory and has a strong affiliation with the challenge and reward of being a ranger. Rangers are the silent frontline workers in our parks and reserves, managing land and sea, caring for country, saving species, facilitating tourism and science and performing roles too often unrecognised and under celebrated.

If being a ranger in the territory is tough, in Africa and Asia it can be downright dangerous. Rangers put their lives on the line to protect wildlife too often the target of poachers. At its heart, Ride for Nature is adventure activism. It raises awareness and dollars for the Thin Green Line Foundation, inspired by the 2007 documentary, *A Journey*, by Sean Willmore, to showcase the life and work of rangers around the world. The foundation raises money to support a raft of programs and initiatives that in turn support rangers. From financial support to improve the operations of rangers with the provision of contemporary equipment critical to performing their role, to supporting the families of rangers lost in the fight to conserve the future of species under threat, the Thin Green Line Foundation supports remote and at-risk rangers and their families. The Thin Green Line reports that around the world, 150 rangers a year are killed in the line of duty. Over 1,000 have lost their lives in the last decade.

Ride for Nature also supports a cause closer to home. Phil works for the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC), an incredible local nature conservation charity focused on protecting nature on private land, both on its own reserves and in partnership with landholders. Anchored in science, the TLC runs a variety of land conservation programs and community engagement to protect natural values on this island. Launched in 2001, the TLC has grown into one of Tasmania's largest private freehold landowners. It owns over 90,000 hectares and targets areas of the highest conservation value.

As a not-for-profit, TLC raises all the funds it needs to purchase property and manage it in perpetuity. TLC owns land from Recherche Bay to St Helens, to the wild west coast and the historic Gordonvale deep in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. TLC has also partnered with Aboriginal people to see private land purchased and returned to their ownership, for the use of Aboriginal community and the management by local Working on Country rangers. With a vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in nature conservation with the

support of the public, the TLC has grown to be a much-loved and critically important part of the nature conservation fabric of lutruwita.

Riding to Darwin, Ned and Phil raised over \$52,000 of a \$100,000 target via a MyCause crowdfunding page. Just search MyCause Ride for Nature and you will get your opportunity to donate to this inspiring project and very deserving charities. Aside from three months on the road with his old man and generous contributions to some very good causes, a spin-off bonus for Ned is using the ride to progress his Duke of Edinburgh. For over 60 years, the Duke of Ed is a leader in non-formal education through its flagship Duke of Ed framework. As a gold recipient of the Duke of Ed scheme over 35 years ago, I can attest to the value of this program and the resilience and initiative that it instils in young people. It has a serious expedition element and in my time that involved organising and undertaking remote trips into the Tasmanian wilderness. For Ned, with 5,300 kilometres on a bike under his belt, I reckon he has the expedition element of the scheme's requirements well and truly sewn up. This trip should see him all the way through to gold and beyond.

To Ned and Phil, I have to say I am envious of the opportunity you created for yourselves as a father and a son duo to spend so much time together in such an intense and excellent adventure and the bond, understanding and shared experience it must have created.

I note from one of the interviews that I listened to, there was not a day that you did not say that you could not saddle up and make tracks for Darwin. There were days that were hard, but none that you could not face. That is quite an inspirational achievement. I am also chuffed to hear your stories of generosity and the support you received along the way: punters shouting you a meal, hotels and campgrounds donating a bed, a support crew helping out with the hardest bits. That is so heartening but that does not diminish your achievement and I take this opportunity to congratulate you on such a massive accomplishment. Good on you and thank you.

To get a glimpse of the journey, follow @ridefornature24 on Instagram or Phil and Ned's Ride for Nature on Facebook. There is a visual record of the adventure and a written log of the journey. If you can donate, it is not too late to get on your bike and help them hit the \$100,000 target.

I finish tonight with the words of Ned, because really, this is his and Phil's story to tell. This is Ned:

As hard as it was here was nothing I'd rather be doing at the time. I miss friends and family, but it was well worth it in the end as I gained perseverance and many great life skills.

I'm proud to have done it and raised so much money for such good charities.

Members - Hear, hear.

Life Without Barriers YouthARCH Program - Circular Head

[8.30 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I listened to the Premier in Question Time this morning elaborating on his government's plan to fund more mental health beds in tomorrow's state Budget. Tonight, I will speak about a program that I want to see continue to receive funding in tomorrow's state Budget and this program is the state government funded Life Without Barriers YouthARCH program, which is focused on better mental health services for young people across Circular Head.

The YouthARCH Project is a community-based mental health outreach service which provides care and support to kids between 12-18 years old with mild to moderate psychosocial and emotional distress. In the Circular Head community, the reality is that many young people are presenting to this program for the first time for support and already experiencing complex mental health issues. There is a lack of referral options doing outreach in the area for these young people. Therefore, ARCH is servicing those young people for quite a long period of time.

I understand that there has been a big demand for this pilot service over the last three years. Unfortunately, though, the funding for this program finishes in November 2024. The program has been run by one clinician who has been working part-time across Circular Head, accompanied by a fourth-year social work support student. I understand that, since commencing, the part-time clinician has seen over 60 young people in one-to-one support, some with existing diagnosed mental illness requiring psycho-education therapy and the majority having never seen a counsellor before.

Young people attend sessions weekly at school or in a community setting, reducing the need for transport and disrupting parents working schedules. In addition to one-on-one support, YouthARCH has delivered mental health activities to over 120 students across numerous educational settings, as well as attended numerous events in community settings in consultation with other support workers to build better mental health literacy and awareness across the Circular Head region.

The majority of referrers are not mental health clinicians, rather school educators or community service workers with limited mental health assessment experience. A recent survey that provided feedback from young people, carers, and service providers has been extremely positive, with the strengths identified as a smooth referral process, no waiting times, good communication with the referrer, it is person-centred, tailored to the individuals' needs, flexible, friendly and kind. Improved suggestions included more hours, more days of the week, and expanded service to include up to the age of 25 years, and higher acuity and outreach to homes. I will share into the *Hansard* some of the comments that were received during that feedback:

I enjoy being able to have a safe place where I can open up and not feel judgment towards any of my thoughts, words or actions, being able to let everything out and talk about it out loud.

Circular Head receives limited services and options, especially for youth mental health, so continuing this contract would be of significant benefit to the area. The YouthARCH clinician is a remarkable person who relates well

to our students. She is fabulous at communicating with staff and offering support and we need to keep this program going for the youth in our community.

Of note is the number of young people who are experiencing multiple complex issues. The impact of significant and critical incidents in a small community is profound and has had a lasting effect on family systems and the wider community. In small community settings, it can take time to gain trust in services and often services are not equipped to spend the time required to develop those key relationships. The level of complexity that the YouthARCH collegiate holds is significant due to other services not reaching in, due to a lack of outreach option or limited engagement in a more regional area in Tasmania.

I will touch on a few of the areas that have caused a stress across the region. That includes problems with adjusting to the social environment, such as social exclusion and rejection, perceived targets of discrimination, negative childhood events, literacy discord with teachers and classmates, and underachievement. Other significant issues include self-harm and suicidal thoughts, criminal and legal issues, drug and alcohol issues, social isolation and lack of opportunity to access resources due to the remoteness of the community, limited transport and socio-economic status.

The community requires ongoing support to build their capacity to access mental health difficulties and services and advocate for the most appropriate referral for their young people. I am bringing this issue to the parliament and advocating on behalf of the Circular Head community. The community are seeking ongoing support from the Tasmanian Government for this program to meet the ongoing demand in the region in the current 12- to 18-year-old cohort, and in expanding a service to youth in the 18- to 25-year age bracket, and also considering supporting children in primary school prior to mental health issues becoming more complex.

I want to see this important community program continue. We committed to continuing this program at the last election as one of our commitments across the Mental Health portfolio. I strongly encourage the government to continue this vitally important program for the Circular Head community. I hope to see that it in the Budget tomorrow. It is not a large amount of money, but it is making a significant difference to the lives of people in the Circular Head region. Thank you.

Vale Michael Sharpe

[8.35 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to honour the life and legacy of Michael Sharpe. Michael was the eldest son of John and Margaret Sharpe. He was one of eight children: four boys and four girls. He was born in Nottingham, England, at the end of the war. His father was in the RAAF and his mother in the RAF. He came to Australia at six months with the war brides.

A man who dedicated his life to service and community, Michael began his career in the Commonwealth Public Service, working in the Attorney-General's department and the Department of Education and Science. He was later appointed Manager of the Careers Reference Centre, where he played a pivotal role in establishing the Careers Reference Centre in the AMP Building in Hobart, providing vital guidance to countless Tasmanians seeking

career support. He followed this as manager of the Commonwealth Employment Service Glenorchy office.

In a major career shift later in life, Michael embraced a new path, retraining as a counsellor and chaplain, where he offered pastoral care and counselling across Tasmania to employees of companies such as Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, Norske Skog, Metro Tasmania, Trust Bank and Hydro Tasmania. From 1997 to 2013, serving as a chaplain, Michael provided crucial support to officers and staff of the Tasmanian Police Service and Tasmania Fire Service during some very challenging times. Michael offered steadfast support and dedication to the officers of these services.

Michael's ability to connect with people and his deep commitment to community service has left a lasting impact on all he encountered. This was both in his working life and in the voluntary roles he engaged in. His legacy of kindness, compassion and service will be remembered by many across the community, where his contributions touched countless lives and provided comfort, inspiration and guidance to those he interacted with, particularly those in need. Michael took on the role of primary homemaker during the 1980s, which was progressive for that time. This enabled his beloved wife, Mary, to reignite her career in pharmacy where she served as Tasmania's chief pharmacist.

Michael Sharpe passed away on 23 August surrounded by his loving family, my second family. He is survived by his devoted wife of 54 years, Mary - they knew each other for 60 years after meeting at school - sons John and Damien, and daughters Christina and Sarah, and seven grandchildren: Fearghas, Harriet, Hamish, Owen, Ava, Nicholas and Eloise.

He left a profound impact on those fortunate enough to know him and even those who never met him felt his influence through the many stories shared by those who admired him so much. His wisdom, humour, friendship and love enriched the lives of many and his presence will be deeply missed across the community.

Members, today we remember Michael Sharpe as a man of immense integrity, generosity and dedication to his community. He had a well-lived life and his legacy will continue in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him. He will be missed. Vale Michael Sharpe, 28 March 1946 to 23 August 2024. May he rest in peace.

Tasmanian Football Finals

[8.40 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to reflect on a special time of year. September is finals time.

The SPEAKER - I thought the finals were cancelled when Collingwood was out.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, in the local league it is finals time. September is always a culmination of close to probably 10 months of hard work by football clubs heading into the grand final.

Last weekend, the Southern Football League, the women's SFLW, held its gala day, its grand finals for division 1 and division 2 at North Hobart Oval. In the division 2 game,

Claremont women took on Hutchins. Claremont undefeated all year. Hutchins, the young upstart team who have really showed some form during the year. They have been on quite an amazing development program. They took it right up to Claremont, who were clearly favoured to win. A close game, but in the last quarter Claremont pushed the pedal down and motored away. I congratulate both Claremont and Hutchins for their performance in the final. I congratulate the Claremont Football Club.

In division 1, we had an absolute thriller at North Hobart. We had North Hobart playing Kingborough Tigers. Kingborough Tigers was the favoured team. They had been the standout team for the year. They had beaten North Hobart in a semi a fortnight earlier and North Hobart went in as strong underdogs. In tricky windy conditions, with the occasional shower of rain and glorious sunshine, North Hobart, with seconds to go, kicked a miraculous goal to just pip the tragically unlucky Kingborough Tigers. That is a back-to-back defeat at the hands of North Hobart.

The North Hobart women managed to triumph with a three-peat in the SFLW division 1, which was a significant effort, given that North Hobart had had been wracked with injuries and also selection. A number of their players had been picked up in the state team, in the Devils team that was playing that weekend. Kingborough also had a few players as well, but hell of a game on Sunday, two games on Sunday. An absolute thriller with 30 seconds to go. I acknowledge Tubes Taylor from Triple M and his commentary, which was befitting of the spectacle it was.

This weekend we head into the men's grand final, the Southern Football League, where in the Colts, in the under-19s, we have the Huonville Lions, who are favoured. They are taking on the Southern Storm, who are the Cygnet, sort of Kermadie-Channel side. That is going to be a cracking game first up. In the reserves, we have Brighton Football Club versus Sorell. Brighton is an amazing story. A number of years ago they only had a reserves and a women's team. Now they have come back with great force and they will be taking on the Sorell football team in a grand final for the reserves.

In the big game, we have Cygnet versus Lindisfarne. Last year, Cygnet won, against the odds, in a game called the Miracle in the Mud. It was a very wet day at North Hobart and they were playing Huonville Football Club. Huonville had been undefeated all season, going in red-hot raging favourites. In fact, I picked them at this very lectern on the Thursday night before that grand final and bestowed the kiss of death on the Huonville Football Club, and I personally apologise to Todd and the Huonville Football Club for bestowing that kiss of death on them. Cygnet were over six goals down halfway through the second quarter, when the last ray of sunshine rolled across North Hobart and the rain set in and then, goal after goal after goal, Cygnet came back and won in a miraculous game. It was a heroic effort and it has been dubbed one of the greatest grand finals in SFL history.

Cygnet won in the mud against Lindisfarne in Cygnet a fortnight ago to go straight into the grand final. Lindisfarne, in an absolute thriller, beat Huonville on Saturday to get into the grand final, in tragic circumstances again for Huonville. I did not bestow the kiss of death at that game. I just wanted a good game for footy. This weekend, Lachie Watt, the coach for Cygnet, and Trey Westbury, the coach of Lindisfarne, are up against each other, which will be a magnificent game at North Hobart. I picked Huonville because they were the favourites last year. I cannot pick Cygnet because they will never forgive me if I pick them. I am just hoping for a great game. I think Cygnet will probably win, but Lindisfarne will have a hell of an effort.

I acknowledge that the Southern Football League is a volunteer-run league. These are families and communities that come together, that love the game, that build great networks and strength within each other. Football clubs are magnificent places. It is where we go to celebrate, where we go to enjoy the game that we love. We build networks and friendships. In times of crisis, it is usually the community football clubs that step up and help out our communities. Whether it is deaths in the family, tragic moments, or crises in our community, it is usually, particularly in the SFL, sporting clubs that step up and provide that support. This will be a culmination of a great season. It will be a big match at North Hobart. There will be thousands there watching the game.

I wish the teams - all six teams playing on the weekend, the five clubs - all the very best for Saturday in what will be a magnificent festival of football.

R U OK? Day

[8.46 p.m.]

Mr FAIRS (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to again proudly speak about 12 September 2024. That is because it is R U OK? Day. A matter of months ago, I first spoke about this matter because a, in my opinion, great Tasmanian by the name of Stephen Moore has pledged to ride his bicycle 200 kilometres in one day for R U OK?

At that time, I wanted to get the word out and hoped others would donate to his cause. Stephen was aiming to raise \$1000 for his campaign. After the word spread through many channels, the last time I spoke on this in Adjournment, Stephen was on track to raise more than \$8000. I can now report he has raised more than \$20,000, which is just fantastic. I am very proud of his efforts and certainly want to recognise them. Stephen sets off tomorrow at 6.00 am, nice and early, leaving Woolworths in George Town at six. Then he makes his way to Woolworths in Scottsdale, Mowbray, Launceston, and Legana, and then back to George Town, a ride that is going to take him 10 to 12 hours to complete.

As we know, Tasmania is not flat. In fact, that particular area of Tasmania, as most of us will know, is very hilly, and he is certainly up for a massive challenge. I certainly wish him well. In fantastic news, Tasmania's known cycling legend Richie Porte is planning to join him for part of the ride. I think that is absolutely fantastic. Absolutely amazing. In fact, Richie, I know this for a fact, used to prepare for the Tour de France and other endurance races by cycling the sidling and roads of Scottsdale all the time.

I certainly want to make sure that everyone is safe and pleased. Motorists, if you are around that area, please keep an eye out for Stephen and Richie. Give them a toot as you go past, and feel free to stop and donate as well. It is awesome that someone like Richie Porte is getting behind R U OK?.

Now, the question was, and I will refresh people's memories, why Stephen is doing this. He pledged to do this ride in honour of a great friend and colleague who sadly took his own life. Stephen told me at the time that his friend suffered with mental health issues most of his life, not that you would know it.

R U OK? Day is a national day of action when we highlight the importance of meaningful R U OK? conversations and remind all Australians to start them at any day of the year, not just

tomorrow. The R U OK? mission is to inspire and empower people to meaningfully connect with those in their world and lend support when they are struggling with life.

The work focuses on building the motivation, confidence, and skills of a help giver, the person who can have a meaningful conversation with someone who is struggling. R U OK? contributes to suicide prevention efforts by encouraging people to invest more time in their personal relationships and building the capacity of informal support networks - friends, family, and colleagues - to be alert to those around them to have a conversation if they identify signs of distress or difficulty and connect someone to appropriate support long before they are in crisis. Anyone can make a donation to ride for Ben at the course. All you need to do is go to www.areyouok.org.au/fundraisers and you can find the info there. Sadly, I will not be there tomorrow to cheer him off or welcome him back but Steve, I am with you all the way in spirit. I am sure he is catching some Z's now before his big ride. I know I would be if I was attempting to do it.

Steve, you are a true local hero in my book, having the courage to not only honour your mate by setting up this event and doing it, but for raising valuable funds for such a great cause on R U OK? Day. I send out a huge shoutout to all Steve's sponsors, volunteers, and people who have donated either goods or are attempting to ride with Steve, and possibly Richie if you are joining for that part of the journey. I know Steve appreciates all your support, as I do as well. Good luck Steve, we are so proud of you. I look forward to catching up with you soon to hear all about your ride. Go get it.

Exploration Drilling Grants Initiative - Concerns

[8.51 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, On 28 August, on behalf of the Greens, I wrote to the Auditor-General raising our concerns of the Liberal Government's Exploration Drilling Grants initiative. This decision was not made lightly and it comes off the back of multiple years of questioning through Budget Estimates by the Greens and numerous rights to information requests, which have raised questions over whether the grants program is being managed appropriately.

Since the program began, 58 per cent of these grants have gone to just 10 companies, with about one in every six dollars paid to one single company. It is not normal for a program to repetitively award grants to the same recipients, and it is unusual that 50 per cent of funds were not even acquired.

In the face of a rapidly worsening budget situation, it is crucial now more than ever that all public funds are being spent appropriately. Does the world's largest tin producer really need money from the Tasmanian public purse? These concerns really do raise the question whether the scheme is being effectively managed or if it is merely a PR exercise.

One of the repeat beneficiaries of this grant scheme is proposing a bauxite mine at Reedy Marsh in my electorate of Lyons. Now this proposal comes with great implications and so rightfully there is large community opposition due to the significant impact on property value, lifestyle and potential health hazards posed to the locals. There are also various endangered and threatened animals that would be put at increased risk. These include the wedge-tailed eagle, which may have already been disturbed by early exploration and land

clearing in the area. Spotted quolls, Tasmanian devils, wombats and hairstreak butterflies have also all been documented in the area.

I echo the calls of the residents of Reedy Marsh for there to be further independent surveys completed to adequately assess the mine's possible impacts and so to ease that community's concerns, or to highlight that this is just the wrong location for the project. Such surveys include assessing the costs for bringing all the local infrastructure up to the necessary requirements to cope with the mines, such as widening the roads.

This community will not stand for Tasmanians paying to facilitate the development when they do not have certainty that it will genuinely benefit them, or that they will not face health implications or that this proposal will not destroy their unique local environment.

A similar situation is unfolding up the road in Mole Creek, where there is a mine proposed under kooparoonia niara/the Great Western Tiers.

This proposal sits atop a karst system, a highly sensitive living underground ecosystem. In 1963 Dr Joe Jennings, considered the father of Australian karst science, stated to the Australian Heritage Commission that:

Australia as a whole is not well-off for karst caves. The Mole Creek area ranks among the most valuable. Indeed, it could be argued that it is the most valuable single cave area intrinsically.

In the years since that statement on the karst system values, the real unique values of that system not just in Australia but globally have been realised and recognised. Various development proposals in the comparatively small landscape system have rightfully been declined due to the area's sensitivity. But we are not talking about large landscape scale, extractive developments in this area that have been knocked back. These are everyday agricultural projects like private select logging or building farm dams.

Naturally, the locals are very concerned that should this mine be approved atop the karst system; it would set a destructive precedent for all major developments irreversibly impacting this unique environment. Like the Reedy Marsh proposal, there is major structural improvements that are required on bridges and road infrastructure to cater for the truck movements. In this area, that would mean that valuable farmland would need to be acquired, and so lost, to facilitate road widening. Next door to the proposed mine site there is a new eco-tourism business. In fact, it opened on the weekend. Now they face operating a business promoting a quiet countryside retreat overlooking a mine site.

These are just two abbreviated examples of really poor mining proposals. We can and must do better in Tasmania and now is the time to do it.

Mining is a rapidly changing industry around the globe in the face of climate change and altering values of various minerals that are required for various industry transitions to the low or no-emissions future.

If this government was serious about contemporising the Tasmanian mining sector, they would welcome an independent review of the Exploration Drilling Grant Scheme to ensure that it is the best use of money from the Tasmanian public purse. If they were serious, they would

be reviewing the state's aged legislation to ensure that it is fit for purpose to ensure that it facilitates a mining industry that is as beneficial as absolutely possible to Tasmanians and to the people who are coming to do business here and to limit impacts on the environment. It is, after all, the understanding and the recognition of our impacts on the environment that are causing climate change and are driving the global change for the mining sector. We can and must do better.

Reproductive Health Leave

[8.56 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, this evening I wish to raise the issue of reproductive health leave. What is the purpose of reproductive health leave? It helps ensure any person, regardless of their reproductive health challenges, can fully and meaningfully participate in work, and in turn are afforded the social and economic security they rightfully deserve.

Reproductive issues do not only affect women. They do not occur only at a certain stage of life. It is far broader than that. It allows all workers to deal with a range of reproductive health issues including contraception, endometriosis, fertility treatments, hormone therapy, hysterectomy, menstruation, miscarriage, pregnancy, polycystic ovarian syndrome, screenings for breast and prostate cancer, termination, vasectomy, just to name a few.

The introduction of reproductive health leave will see most benefits in female-dominated sectors, including education, social work and disability care, but productivity impacts reach much more broadly.

Recently with you, honourable Speaker, I took part on a panel with other parliamentarians at the annual Unions Tasmania Women's Conference and there I announced that the Tasmanian Greens want to introduce 12 days of reproductive health leave for those who need it. This campaign is also being publicised this week by the National Health Services Union.

Since May, Queensland public sector workers now have access to 10 days reproductive leave per year which also covers preventative screening for breast and prostate cancer, vasectomies and hysterectomies.

For the reasons of greater understanding of impacts and desire for greater productivity, it is only fit and proper that working Tasmanians also have access to this type of leave. At the Unions Tasmania Women's Conference, we heard the ordeal of a woman with chronic endometriosis, multiple operations, debilitating pain and difficult symptoms to control that impacted on her work in general life.

Here is the life story of a constituent named Akanksha -

The SPEAKER - I apologise, the time being one hour since the commencement of adjournment, the member's time has expired. The time for debate has expired.

The House adjourned at 8.59 p.m.