



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 15 September 2020

REVISED EDITION

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

QUESTIONS

JobKeeper - Effect on Tasmanian Economy

Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.03 a.m.]

In the Public Accounts Committee on 28 August you and Treasury officials were unable to say how many Tasmanians were in receipt of JobKeeper payments. We did learn, however, that 15 000 Tasmanian businesses are receiving wage subsidies. That is 40 per cent of all Tasmanian businesses. In just a fortnight the federal Liberal Government will begin to wind back wage subsidies at a time when businesses are still subject to strict social distancing restrictions and border closures. Why could you not tell the Public Accounts Committee how many thousands of Tasmanians will be affected by this decision and can you now tell the parliament how many Tasmanians currently receive JobKeeper support?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question.

I have recently been spending time out in the electorate catching up with people and I have noted the cautious optimism that is very present in our community. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will recognise that.

Last week I met with a number of businesses, and with some accountancy firms that deal with small to medium businesses. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that in the main they felt that many of their clients were going okay - in fact, better than okay. Retail expenditure in July was up 18 per cent on the previous July. That tells me that Tasmanians are confident, and are cautiously starting to step back into the economy.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk down our economy. At this time, when things are somewhat fragile in Tasmania, but underpinned by cautious optimism, we should be supporting business and attempting to build confidence rather than tear it down as the Leader of the Opposition wants to.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 45, I draw the Premier's attention to the question which is, can he update the parliament on how many Tasmanians are in receipt of JobKeeper. I ask you to draw his attention to the question, please.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. That is not a point of order. I do draw the Premier's attention.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, it does not surprise me that the Leader of the Opposition would jump to her feet and try to stop me from answering the question about the cautious optimism that is quite evidently starting to permeate across our business sector in Tasmania.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, from the answer provided at the Public Accounts Committee, the arrangements with the federal government is via the firms themselves. The number of more than 15 000 firms was provided at the Public Accounts Committee. I have no further information about the number of individual JobKeeper payments.

The point I make strongly is, in many cases we are seeing small and medium business return to similar levels of turnover they had prior to the virus impacting and prior to the shutdown. That is good news. There is no doubt that many small businesses will make the transition from JobKeeper to a position where they are, once again, paying wages to their employees. . That is exactly how the system was supposed to work: we would step ourselves out of this slowly and cautiously, and people would return to work.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, in the last month's job numbers, more than 13 400 Tasmanians who had lost their jobs in May at the peak of the pandemic are back in work.

We will continue to work with the business sector. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: do not try to tear down confidence. What you should be doing is talking it up. What we need are businesses that are prepared to employ, and prepared to continue to work within the rules, challenging as they may be at times. Tasmanians are turning up in droves to support our small businesses. I hope you can get on board with that.

JobKeeper - Effect on Tasmanian Economy

Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.07 a.m.]

Information provided to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 by the federal Treasury department, has revealed approximately 3.5 million Australians were receiving JobKeeper in June, and that 1.8 per cent of all recipients were Tasmanian. This equates to a massive 63 000 Tasmanians, a significant proportion of our total workforce.

The scaling back of wages subsidies at the end of the month is set to have a dramatic impact on Tasmania's economy. It will have flow-on effects for consumer spending and business confidence. Do you agree that it is too early to scale back JobKeeper? What efforts have you made to convince the federal government to continue JobKeeper at the current rate?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I have not seen the evidence provided to the Senate Select Committee. I do not have the number you quoted this morning in front of me.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - I make the point that the system is working. Right now, in Tasmania, we have small businesses that are returning to similar levels of turnover to what they had prior to the pandemic. We are seeing businesses that are able to operate and we are seeing Tasmanians turn up in droves.

With regard to the federal government's plan and JobKeeper and JobSeeker, I support the process they have put in place. We need to return our businesses back to a point where they are able to employ of their own right, where Tasmanians who do not need the supplement, do not receive it. That is the nature of the system that is in place.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition - and I made this point to the shadow treasurer in terms of the numbers he was seeking at the Public Accounts Committee - do not try to frame up an argument that is going to detrimentally impact confidence. That is exactly -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - The system is working. Our economy is starting to grow again, turnover for many businesses is returning to post-pandemic levels. Tasmanians in the main are cautiously optimistic as we step out of this. The Opposition should support this. Our economy, our small businesses, are returning to a more normal level of operation. That is what JobKeeper was supposed to do - provide that transition - and that is exactly what will occur.

Political Donation Laws - Public Release of Report of Review

Ms O'CONNOR to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.11 a.m.]

Today is International Day of Democracy. Do you agree transparency and accountability are key to a healthy democracy? The report of the deliberately narrow review into Tasmania's political donations laws, confirmed as the weakest in the nation, has been sitting on your Attorney-General's desk since late last year. Why has it been gathering dust for nearly nine months now? When will this review report be made public? Do you support strengthening Tasmania's political donation laws in any way, shape or form before the next election?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question and her interest in this matter. I am sure it has not escaped the Leader of the Greens, or anyone else in this place, that we have had a pretty difficult six months which, as I have just indicated, Tasmanians are now coming out of it and starting to look cautiously optimistic. My focus has not been on a pathway to public funding -

Ms O'Connor - Don't deflect - that's not what the review is about.

Mr GUTWEIN - My focus has not been on public funding of elections, which the Leader of the Greens knows full well -

Ms O'Connor - This is a pathetic answer from you.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor. Through the Chair, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - My focus has been on the path that has occurred in every other state and territory jurisdiction that has moved on this. In the interest of openness and transparency the Leader of the Greens should put firmly on the record that she understands what she is asking for is a move to publicly funded elections.

As to the report, I have not turned my mind to it because I have been trying to get on top of this virus and keeping Tasmanians as safe as I possibly can. What keeps me awake at night is not troubling myself with whether you want to move to public funding. It is whether our aged care system is going to provide the protections we need.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 45, relevance. The Premier is dissembling. It is the same answer he gave last time. Could he tell the House when the report of the review will be made public? That was the question.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you, that is not a point of order. It is up to the Premier as to how he answers.

Ms O'Connor - His answer has nothing to do with it.

Mr GUTWEIN - It has everything to do with it because my focus very clearly has been on ensuring that we keep Tasmania as safe as we possibly can, and that we grow our economy and step carefully back to a place where people can employ Tasmanians.

I will make the point that the Leader of the Greens is talking about nine months. Every single country that has opened up post-COVID has had a second wave - every single country, every single jurisdiction -

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order on relevance. The Premier is making a completely irrelevant point. Could he tell us when the report of the review will be released?

Madam SPEAKER - I have already ruled on this. That is out of order. The Premier is allowed to answer that question any way he sees fit.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, rather than concerning myself with the move to public funding that the Leader of the Greens and those others -

Ms O'Connor - You are dissembling to distract.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I urge you to be quiet.

Mr GUTWEIN - in this place who want to introduce a new way of dealing with elections, they know full well that what will happen is that we will have to take funding out of health or education or other services.

In answering the Leader of the Green's question, I have not turned my mind to it because I have had other matters, as has my Cabinet, where we have been working as hard as we possibly can to protect the oldest and most vulnerable population in the country to a point where, as I have said, Tasmanians now are cautiously optimistic about the future.

The pathway we have laid out is working. We will have a budget later this year that those on the other side of the House know will unfortunately be in significant deficit and we will be carrying significant amounts of net debt -

Ms O'Connor - Let's see the report.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, warning one.

Mr GUTWEIN - My mind and the mind of my Cabinet has been on those matters that are important to Tasmanians right now - keeping them safe, getting our economy going, and framing up a budget that will deal with some very difficult challenges.

Job Creation and Rebuilding the Economy

Mr ELLIS to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.17 a.m.]

Can you provide an update to the House on how the Government's plan to support job creation, rebuild Tasmania's economy and deliver a strong budget is working? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon, the newest member of this place for his question. I wish I had his skills in the way he can present and I acknowledge his efforts in delivering his inaugural speech.

We can be cautiously optimistic that the Government's plan is working. We have taken decisive action to protect lives and livelihoods and have put in place the largest support package out of any state or territory jurisdiction in the first half of this year, over \$1 billion. Our construction blitz of \$3.1 billion is stimulating demand and building confidence. There is a cautious and quiet optimism now in Tasmania.

More Tasmanians are returning to work, more home loans are up, more houses are being built, and retail trade, as I said a moment ago, is at record levels, up 18 per cent on what it was 12 months ago. A total of 13 400 Tasmanians have returned to work. In the fortnight to 22 August jobs increased by 1.3 per cent, the highest growth rate in the country. The

Sensis Business Index showed our businesses are the most confident about our economy in the country and this is flowing through our economy.

In July, new home loans grew 13 per cent, first home buyer loans grew 14.8 per cent, building approvals were up by 50 per cent on June last year and were 28 per cent higher than July last year, the highest monthly and annual growth rates in the country. The average number of dwelling approvals that are being approved per month is now 270, slightly more than last year. I can see on the face of the shadow treasurer that he wishes it was not true, but it is slightly more than last year - 23 a month more than two years ago, and, interestingly, 100 more per month than what it was six years ago. We have already received 260 home builder applications; another 42 have been received for substantial renovations. There have now been 61 pre-approved by the State Revenue Office.

The building industry has highlighted the significant spike in inquiring the signing of contracts as a result of the new home stimulus. In its latest magazine - and I know I cannot use a prop, just to flash that to the parliament - Tasmania is leading the way. In this latest magazine, the HIA notes -

With the announcement by the state and federal government of their respective stimulus measures, it now appears that Tasmania will remain relatively unscathed ... with Tasmania the first state to pass legislation to sign an agreement with the federal government, giving effect to the stimulus, it is clear that it is leading the way.

Yesterday, *The Examiner* reported that some housing companies have backlogs already starting to build. The plan is working. A strong construction sector builds confidence and flows over into other parts of our economy. As I have said on many occasions, the best way to build aggregate demand is to have a strong construction sector. That is what is beginning to occur.

Retail trade in July was \$656 million, more than 18 per cent higher than July last year: the highest annual growth in the country. The shadow treasurer will bumble his way through this, but we went into this before the pandemic with one of the strongest economies in the country. The growth rate was the strongest last year. We had a strong balance sheet. At the end of the last financial year, only a few months ago, we were the only state and territory jurisdiction in the country not to have net debt.

Mr Ellis asked me about alternatives. We have seen Labor's attempts at alternatives, wanting to talk down confidence in our economy and run a new scare campaign every other day. It was only last week that he claimed that 300 retail jobs had been lost over the month. If you read the ABS report properly you would have seen that they grew. This so-called COVID-19 recovery plan was not costed -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 48, the Premier has had sufficient time to answer a Dorothy Dixier. He is now running it over five minutes.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. I will now give the Premier an extra minute for that unnecessary interjection.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Our plan is working. We are stepping out of this sensibly, cautiously, responsibly. As a result, we are seeing jobs returning, and Tasmanians being cautiously optimistic at being able to go about their communities with some confidence. Our COVID-19 measures are working.

It was great to be out on a weekend to watch kids playing sport, to watch marshals doing the right thing and keeping crowds separated and working with people to keep Tasmanians safe. I thank those people who take on that task because it is all helping this state to recover.

We have challenges in front of us. We are going to have to work very hard. I ask the Opposition to at least try to find positives where there are positives and not to be negative all the time. We are in a good place. We need to continue working hard to ensure that we can get to a better place. I hope the Opposition might, for once, not criticise every step we take.

Repatriation of Tasmanians from Overseas

Ms OGILVIE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.24 a.m.]

Our people are stranded overseas and we are poorer as a nation due to our delay and wilful reluctance to act with guts and speed to bring Australians home. It is embarrassing, it is wrong and it is un-Australian.

Young Tasmanians stranded overseas are crying out for help. Tasmanian parents want action. Mental health is suffering and we need to normalise travel. Tasmanians expect that you will use your power at National Cabinet to bring our people home.

How many Tasmanians are stranded overseas? Will you set up a transit process and a purpose-built quarantine facility in Tasmania to enable all returning Tasmanians to quarantine in their home state?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Ogilvie for that question and for her interest in this matter. I know she has worked hard to assist some Tasmanians to return.

One of the challenges that we have is that the virus is still raging around the world. In fact, positive case numbers continue to go up. Unfortunately, the number of deaths continues to increase. In the processes that the federal government has put in place they have set caps. Those caps to some degree have been affected by the challenges that have been faced -

Ms Ogilvie - I think the states have set the caps have they not on their hotel quarantine?

Mr GUTWEIN - No, the federal government has set the caps and they have placed caps on certain states on how many arrivals they can have.

This does not need to be said but I will say it for the benefit of the House: the Victorian situation changed dramatically because Tullamarine was taken out of the mix. I share your desire to ensure that as many Tasmanians and Australians as possible can come home, but the settings the Prime Minister has put in place on our international borders, with moving early when he did and using the island status of Australia, was one of the most significant decisions that was taken -

Ms Ogilvie - Sure, but that was six months ago.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms Ogilvie, could you do that through the Chair, please?

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, I can understand Ms Ogilvie's desire to see an outcome from this but you cannot look at this devoid of the facts. The facts are that around the world the virus is continuing to rage. At a federal level, they have an eye to that. They have put in place a range of caps for states to manage and work their way through. I noted that the Western Australian Premier recently called for something similar. I presume that is why you are asking me today?

Ms Ogilvie - Yes, that is part of it.

Mr GUTWEIN - He has raised that issue with the federal government. I am certain this matter will be discussed at the next National Cabinet meeting. I would like to see as many Australians and as many Tasmanians as possible have the opportunity to come home. We will work with the federal government on the steps that might be taken, with a clear understanding that it is about the nation's security that these decisions are being made.

We will continue to work through DPAC with DFAT, when circumstances arise. In the last week DPAC has been working on a number of cases where there are some very difficult challenges.

The national borders will remain, as it should, a matter for the federal government. As a state we can feed into that. I would like to see more opportunity provided, but with that the risk does increase. The more people you bring back from overseas then that risk will increase.

I will take on board the member's suggestion noting that there is some public discourse already about that nationally. I am sure we will have a discussion on it at the next National Cabinet meeting.

Marinus Link

Mr O'BYRNE to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.30 a.m.]

The federal government has made yet another fast-tracking announcement for Marinus Link. We have lost count of the times the federal government has announced this project will be fast-tracked. While the federal government continues to make these announcements the state government is progressing at a glacial pace. With companies and communities

concerned about the time it has taken to upgrade transmission lines and the time it has taken TasNetworks to deliver financial closure in the Marinus business case, we still do not know who will pay for the \$3.5 billion project, who will own it, and when it will be built. Marinus Link is an exciting project for Tasmania and it is too important to fumble.

The fact that the State Government was not quoted in the story dropped by the federal government in the media today indicates a growing rift between you and the federal government. Can you explain what exactly is being fast-tracked, who will pay for the project, and when construction of Marinus Link will actually begin.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is a fantastic question.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - It is a fantastic question about Marinus Link and our energy policy which is delivering jobs, investment and increased confidence. Our policy is delivering lower cost, reliable, clean electricity, and that is what the rest of the nation wants. That is what we have in Tasmania.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - How excited we are. How energised I am as an energy minister for Marinus Link on behalf of all of us, because it is going to unlock a host of renewable energy projects across Tasmania with a clear focus that will deliver \$7 billion of investment, thousands of jobs, and will cause downward pressure on electricity prices.

On behalf of the Gutwein Liberal Government we welcome the Prime Minister's announcement today that Project Marinus is one of three critical projects that the federal government will work with states to accelerate via a \$250 million investment program. This is good news for my shadow spokesperson.

The Prime Minister's announcement today is that these links will help put downward pressure on prices and shore up the reliability of our energy grid. The federal government is squarely focused on bringing down prices, keeping the lights on - something the Labor Party and the Greens never did - and reducing our emissions with these interconnectors.

The Prime Minister said these interconnectors bring us a step closer to that reality. That is exactly what we have to offer: low costs; reliable, clean electricity. We are on track to our target of 100 per cent. By 2022 we will be self-sufficient in clean electricity with a target of 200 per cent - a world-first. We are excited we are on track.

Regarding Marinus Link and the Prime Minister's \$250 million announcement this morning, let me make it very clear that we are in the final stages of completing a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Government with respect to Marinus Link, and in particular the design and approvals phase, taking it through the financial investment decision. How pleased we are that the Prime Minister has identified it as one of the priority infrastructure projects for Australia. The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and all of us on this side of the Chamber are very excited. The Marinus Link is one of the top

15 projects for all of Australia. In addition, AEMO, the Australian Energy Market Organisation, has identified it as an actionable project through the design and approval process, the first 750 megawatt cable, the second 750 megawatt cable -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - This is the result of the hard work of this Government delivering for Tasmania.

We are setting in place a foundation for a new chapter in jobs, investment and renewable energy projects, delivering for Tasmania, with downward pressure on electricity prices and improved energy security. This is good news and I am pleased to back it in on behalf of our Government.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr BARNETT - Mr O'Byrne keeps interrupting. He should be more confident and pleased and say congratulations, well done to both the Australian Government and the Tasmanian Government for taking this project a step closer to fruition. We are stepping closer to that billions of dollars of investment and further thousands of jobs, and this is already under way through the design and approval process.

I am pleased to advise that the MOU is in the final stages of concluding and we are excited about that. We are on top of this and we will continue to promote the benefits of Tasmania. You will see more when the MOU is released.

Right to Information Requests - Alleged Misleading by the Government

Ms O'CONNOR to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr BARNETT

[10.36 a.m.]

Freedom of information is fundamental to a healthy democracy. This right to information is enshrined in law to stop politicians making up their own minds about what the public should know. In two recent cases, right to information disclosures have shown in black and white that you have misled the Tasmanian people.

First, our RTI on duck hunting showed your own departmental experts strongly advised against proceeding with this year's duck season, a fact that you refused to admit under parliamentary questions, even while you referenced other parts of that same advice.

Now we have received an RTI from Forestry Tasmania that shows there was a planned five-week closure of the Styx Road, a direct contradiction of your shrill denials.

Accountability is another tenet of a functioning democracy but so far, rather than admitting fault and apologising, your response to these matters has been to double down on

your mistruths. Will you today, on International Day of Democracy, stand up and correct the record on these issues? Will you apologise to the Tasmanian people for the disrespect you have shown to them and to our democratic processes?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader for the Greens for her question. This question is coming from the Leader for the Greens and from a political party that wants to put thousands of Tasmanians out of work. They have a policy to close down our native forest harvesting sector. The implications of that -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 45, relevance. This is completely irrelevant to the question asked. I ask you, please, to draw the minister's attention to the question.

Madam SPEAKER - As you know, that is not a point of order. I cannot put words in the minister's mouth.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Speaker, they do not like to hear the truth. This is coming from a political party that has an objective to put thousands out of work. This is during the most significant economic and health crisis of our generation.

Ms O'Connor - We are talking about your total dishonesty.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor, I urge you to calm down.

Mr BARNETT - This political party has a policy to put thousands of Tasmanians out of work. It is shame on that political party during this challenging time for all of us, economically, socially, environmentally and health-wise. They have a policy to lock-up more of our forests. They have a policy to put many thousands of Tasmanians out of work, and it is on the back of the Labor-Greens policy that was implemented where two out of three forestry jobs were lost. They took the industry to its knees. They have destroyed regional communities, thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars invested.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, I implore you, under Standing Order 45, to direct the minister to answer the question, please. He has gone nowhere near it. It is the same tired garbage we get every time.

Madam SPEAKER - You are a very experienced woman and you know that is not a point of order. I cannot put words in the minister's mouth. I ask him to try and be relevant.

Mr BARNETT - That is what I was saying, Madam Speaker, that this House of parliament approved the permanent timber production zone land that was specifically set aside by both Houses of parliament -

Dr Woodruff - That is nothing to do with the question.

Ms O'Connor - You have been busted lying twice to the people of Tasmania.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr BARNETT - including this political party, that would provide wood for our wood supply in the coming years

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr BARNETT - that would supply wood in the coming years including for Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

Let me be very clear that I was advised by Sustainable Timber Tasmania that they had no immediate plans to harvest any coupe adjacent to the Styx Road or close the road in mid-August. The following is a statement from Sustainable Timber Tasmania -

Sustainable Timber Tasmania can confirm that it has no immediate plans to conduct harvesting activity adjacent to the Styx Road.
Sustainable Timber Tasmania has made publicly available its Three Year Wood Production Plan. This Plan has identified areas for future harvesting, including hardwood plantation thinning -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I am concerned the minister is now misleading the House. We have an RTI from DPIWE which shows that what he is saying is untrue.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, on the point of order, you have ruled on this now twice and the member has not even raised a standing order. It is disruptive and disorderly. I ask that you protect the minister's ability to answer the question.

Ms O'Connor - To keep lying?

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, while I have not brought attention to that unparliamentary language, it seems that the minister would want it to be withdrawn. We are instructed to not use that language. Regardless of whether you ask the member to withdraw, it should cease. It is inappropriate and unparliamentary.

Madam SPEAKER - Yes, I agree. It is most unfortunate and I do not like people being accused of being liars. It is not a point of order. Please resume, minister.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. That type of language is most inappropriate.

Dr Woodruff - What is inappropriate is you continuing to mislead Tasmanians.

Madam SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, please.

Mr BARNETT - It is not appreciated. I was reading from a Sustainable Timber Tasmania brief.

Madam SPEAKER - Yes, and I am trying to hear you, minister.

Mr BARNETT - It says:

Sustainable Timber Tasmania has made publicly available its Three Year Wood Production Plan. This Plan has identified areas for future harvesting including hardwood plantation thinning and native forest harvesting adjacent to the Styx Road in the Tyenna Valley near Maydena.

A scheduled plantation thinning adjacent to the Styx Road, coupe TN052K, was delayed in early August with harvesters taking longer than expected at their existing location, resulting in the need to re-schedule the operational order of plantation thinning harvest activity.

Ms O'Connor - It says you're going to close the road.

Mr BARNETT - It continues -

It is anticipated that the plantation thinning will now occur at TN052K sometime in 2021.

Sustainable Timber Tasmania is committed to working with neighboring land managers to provide alternative access for the Big Tree Reserve if a road closure is required, and will work to minimise the impact on local tourism operators.

Ms O'Connor - You said there was no plan for road closure.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I am sorry but you are really becoming infuriating. That is warning number two.

Mr BARNETT -

Sustainable Timber Tasmania recognises the access and multiple use the forestry network provides and routinely works with local tourism operators to minimise impacts of harvesting operations around the state.

That is the end of the brief. I will make it very clear that I was not aware of any potential -

Dr Woodruff - How do you explain the fact that the -

Madam SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, you know the rules.

Mr BARNETT - I was making it very clear I was not aware of any potential plans STT had for managing plantations in that area. Despite having the leaked email in question and knowing full well that the contingency plan was for a plantation thinning operation, the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation knowingly made the inaccurate claims that giant native trees were being harvested.

I say shame on the Greens, who chose to spread misinformation and create fear during the greatest health and economic challenge in a generation simply to further their own political agenda. The decision to not proceed with this plantation thinning operation was made prior to the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation alarming local businesses and creating a media event to advance their own selfish goals.

Launceston General Hospital - Bed-Block and Understaffing

Ms O'BYRNE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.44 a.m.]

For months Tasmanian health professionals have been working tirelessly to hold the health system together in the middle of the pandemic. However, the consequences of your Government's deep budget cuts did not go away. They were temporarily pushed from the headlines. Doctors at the Launceston General Hospital have now reached breaking point. Registrars at the LGH have provided a devastating account of conditions at the hospital in a letter sent to the Tasmanian Health Service management. They write -

The General has been a part of this community since 1863 and right now it is at its lowest ebb ... As a group we can no longer be silent about the safety of our patients ... We come to work each day knowing our work place is not safe for patients and that we will be forced to give sub-optimal care ... Our patients have died unnecessarily ... because we have not had the appropriate space to treat and monitor them.

How many patients have died at Launceston General Hospital as a result of chronic bed-block and understaffing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for her question. I also sincerely thank all the staff at the LGH and across the north and the entire state for what they have done during COVID-19. The collaboration we saw at the Launceston General Hospital, both in the public sector but also with clinicians who worked across the private sector, was impressive. We saw them as a community hospital providing support to the north-west when the North West Regional Hospital closed. The Launceston General Hospital bore the brunt of that closure and the collaboration was extraordinary. I again put on the record my thanks to those staff members.

With regard to the content of the letter, I will continue to engage with clinicians at that hospital. I know how important it is to the member who asked the question and all our northern members and the northern community. It is a key part of our community and has been for generations, which is why this Government has continued to invest in that hospital. We have seen 440 additional FTE staff at the LGH since we came to government. We have seen more investment into the capital infrastructure onsite, new ward 4K has started through its first phase and we are continuing through second phase.

With regard to the question pertaining to the physical capacity of the hospital, this is why we are doing a LGH master planning program -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that the minister is talking about the LGH but the question goes to the contents of a letter that says patients have died unnecessarily. I ask the minister to turn her attention to what is a significantly serious statement by the department.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you, but I believe the minister was trying to address that and said she would work in conjunction with them.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I am confident that as a government we will continue to make sure we are doing the best we can to support our hardworking clinicians to make sure they can deliver safe services. I can commit that we will continue to do that because -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise, but if I can remind the minister, the question was how many patients have died as a result of chronic understaffing and bed-block.

Madam SPEAKER - I am pretty certain the minister heard you. It is not a point of order.

Ms COURTNEY - Madam Speaker, I appreciate that question from the member who closed a ward at the LGH when she was a health minister.

I can reassure the House that this side of the Chamber will continue to invest in the people, it will continue to invest in staff, and it will continue to do all we can to support our clinicians to deliver safe services in that hospital.

Economic Recovery - Apprentices and Trainees

Mr STREET to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.48 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Government is supporting more apprentices and trainees to keep our economic recovery on track?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question and interest in this matter. I know those opposite are aware that this Government has placed a very strong focus on supporting and creating jobs as we rebuild Tasmania. Connecting people to jobs and reskilling is a key element of our COVID-19 recovery. I am pleased to update the House today on how our plan for increasing our skilled workforce is working.

In a promising sign of recovery, Skills Tasmania data has confirmed that 366 brand-new apprentices and trainees commenced in July this year, despite the challenge and disruption

caused by the pandemic. That figure of 366 new apprentices and trainees is almost on par with last year in July 2019, in fact only 1 per cent lower than then. Employers are once again taking on apprentices and trainees. This is a real sign that our economy is strengthening and business confidence is improving.

Our pipeline of apprentices and trainees was, like other jurisdictions, hit very hard by the pandemic. In May we saw a 30 per cent drop in commencements. To turn that around is an extraordinary achievement. The most recent data shows Tasmania continues to have the highest completion rates in the country. This means apprentices and trainees are more likely to complete their training in Tasmania than anywhere else in the country.

These results do not happen by accident. I thank industry, business, and our employers for their confidence and their optimism. State and federal governments are supporting our employers, apprentices and trainees and registered training organisations through what is a very difficult period. We have made it easier for employers to manage apprentices and trainees while in hibernation. We have ensured apprentices and trainees have continued training even when on suspension. We have assisted private RTOs with flexible funding arrangements and support for innovative delivery methods. Nationally, additional apprentice and trainee incentives are providing significant support for our businesses.

We are partnering with the federal government to deliver \$21 million for training placements. JobTrainer will deliver up to 7000 additional free or low-cost training placements for Tasmanians across TasTAFE and private providers in areas of need and areas of jobs growth. We want to deliver the maximum number of low-cost or fee-free placements for Tasmanians, which means utilising both public and private providers.

This side of the House is proudly supporting job creation and job security for Tasmanians. We are supporting our vocational education and training sector and we are investing strongly in TasTAFE. We will continue to do so. Unlike the confidence-busting alternative over there, this Government is getting on with the job.

Launceston General Hospital - COVID-19-Safe Conditions

Ms O'BYRNE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.52 a.m.]

As you have heard, doctors have broken their silence about the unacceptable and dangerous conditions at the Launceston General Hospital. Bed block at the LGH was already the worst in the country but presents an even greater risk in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a letter to hospital management, registrars have warned that overcrowding in the emergency department has made social distancing impossible. I quote again from that letter -

Tasmania has been isolated and protected since closing the borders and gaining control of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be a tragedy if the disease took a foothold in our community again due to a lack of appropriate waiting spaces for patients with respiratory illness.

It has also been revealed that a negative pressure ward needed to isolate suspected COVID-19 cases does not actually work because it has a broken fan and has not worked for the entire period of the pandemic response. How can you explain the fact that one of Tasmania's major hospitals is not COVID-safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Since the prior question of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition I understand that this letter has been received by local leadership. I have not seen this so it is very difficult for me to comment on the content of a letter that I have not read yet.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - Quite clearly it would be inappropriate for me to speculate on a letter that I have not read because I have not received it. That is my understanding. Obviously the matters raised are serious. I will make sure that they are looked into immediately by the secretary of the department. The safety of the clinicians and the safety of our patients is my highest priority.

Mr O'Byrne - Then why is this letter such a surprise?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Through the Chair and let us be fair.

Ms COURTNEY - This is why we have worked day and night this year to make sure that our hospitals and our staff are prepared. We know how dangerous COVID-19 is. We have seen that across the north-west coast. We have seen the impact on our hospitals and our communities. We are seeing it across Bass Strait. The Government is keenly aware of how serious COVID-19 is. This is why we take our decisions and our advice from Public Health. It is why we are continuing to ensure that our escalation plans across our hospitals, including PPE and training continue to be embedded. I want our hospitals to be safe. I want our clinicians to be safe. Most importantly, I want Tasmanians to be safe.

Economic Recovery - Infrastructure Program

Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.55 a.m.]

Now that we are building our greater recovery, can you provide an update to the House on how the Government's infrastructure program is delivering economic stimulus and building confidence in Tasmania's construction sector?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. It is a question of interest to Tasmanians and our civil construction sector. I am pleased to provide an update to the House.

It is vital that our Government maintains a steady and strong pipeline of construction work on our roads and bridges. That is exactly what this Government is doing, by ensuring our civil construction and engineering sector can see a significant program of work, particularly with greater insight in work that is coming to tender. The Government plays an important role in providing industry with the confidence and the certainty to maintain employment, to grow their employment base of their workers and apprentices and to invest in their own businesses. Consistent with what the Premier said earlier today, that is the positive optimism that we are seeing in our business sector.

With more than \$827 million in roads and bridges work coming up over the next two years, they will need to grow their businesses and to grow their employee base and contractor and subcontractor base as the program rolls out. Our roads and bridges program is just one part of our \$1.8 billion program across government over the next two years, which will deliver an estimated \$3.1 billion in activity and support the employment of 15 000 Tasmanians. It is a fantastic pipeline of work. We have the strong endorsement of industry for this work.

Mr O'Byrne, it did not take long for you to start muttering -

Mr O'Byrne - They are begging you for it. Can you just get it out the door?

Mr FERGUSON - Mr O'Byrne joined me and the Minister for Building and Construction at a fantastic event just two weekends ago, the Women In Infrastructure event, which was hosted by a range of organisations but principally the Civil Contractors Federation. They were glowing in their praise of the work pipeline coming through: our strongest supporters. As I quipped during the evening, we got endorsements from the Civil Contractors Federation president, and glowing praise for Denise McIntyre and her fantastic work as acting general manager of roads in the department.

I would like to inform the House about how those tenders are going. The following tenders are now open for bids from industry, that includes our election commitment, the shoulder sealing works on the Batman Highway. That is now open. Our \$10 million replacement of the Apsley River Bridge on the Tasman Highway; now open. The first package of works from our election commitment to upgrade the Bass Highway west of Wynyard; now open. Bridge upgrades on the Murchison Highway; now open. Our election commitment to build a new overtaking lane between Dianas Basin and St Helens Point Road on the Great Eastern Drive; now open. The realignment of the Bass Highway between Somerset and Wynyard, the demolition of the old Scamander Bridge, and pedestrian access improvements; now open.

That is about the pipeline of work, making sure you have tenders coming out consistently in a way that supports employment.

There is another tender that is currently open, although I am sure those opposite might be wishing I had forgotten about it. We are talking about the Bridgewater bridge -

Mr O'Byrne interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - There he goes, the 'groan' is back. That tender is now open for business. While the Labor Party spent the money for that project, we are now actually in the market through the early contractor involvement to shortlist two potential head contract parties to enter into that stage. While the successful tenderer will need to be a tier-one construction firm, we expect that a significant portion of the workforce and materials that will be used to build this once-in-a-generation project will be Tasmanian. This is 576 million reasons why the local construction sector can have confidence, and does have confidence, as we build our way to recovery and will involve thousands of workers across a range of disciplines and industries.

In the coming weeks there will be more projects going to market. In summary this includes the implementation of on-road travel information systems - that is the digital technology to support greater navigation of our roads; the duplication of the East Derwent Highway from Geilston Bay to Sugarloaf Road. Construction of the Campbell Town underpass -

Ms White - Hear, hear.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you. - the Bruny Island ferry terminal upgrades; our election commitment to duplicate Evandale Road from Breadalbane to the Launceston Airport and the first of the two Kingborough park and rides. The first one is at Firthside. Upgrades to Binalong Bay Road and the junction upgrades at the Otago Bay Road intersection with the East Derwent.

Mr O'Byrne - What is happening now?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr FERGUSON - These are things that you could have built when you were infrastructure minister but you chose not to.

Investing in this infrastructure is investing in jobs and these projects will support hundreds of jobs. Frankly it would be good if members opposite joined in with the enthusiasm and the support noting that your Leader did call for us to spend less on infrastructure. Cue point of order. It is vital and it is on the record and it is always open to the member to correct the journalist at the *Mercury* who faithfully quoted her.

The contrast with the prophets of doom opposite could not be clearer. The tenders that are currently closed and are being awarded in coming weeks will see the employment of more Tasmanians.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order -

Madam SPEAKER - Your point of order will be useless because I think the minister is about to sit down.

Ms O'CONNOR - Standing Order 48. Yes, he has just clocked over six minutes.

Madam SPEAKER - I will take a point of order. Go on, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - I made it. Six minutes of self-congratulation.

Mr FERGUSON - As I conclude, the contrast could not be clearer. We know that the Greens are not keen on roads and bridges. We understand that. We know that the Labor Party has no policies and in fact is conflicted between spending less on infrastructure or more. They are churning out these misleading claims with their media releases down at Salamanca HQ but we have a proud record. We intend to maintain it. I know it is hard work.

We will never take our foot off the accelerator as we support the Tasmanian economy and as we rev up the construction and engineering sector. We have the support of industry. We have the support of this Government compared to the shameful record of members opposite who were spending more than \$100 million less than in our first years in office. We will maintain the effort for the Tasmanian economy.

Launceston General Hospital - Access Solutions Outcomes

Ms O'BYRNE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[11.02 a.m.]

Many of the actions the doctors have called for to address the problems at the Launceston General Hospital were already agreed outcomes of the Access Solutions meetings in June of last year. In October of last year you committed to rolling out changes to the LGH to reduce bed block and improve patient flow. You said -

I will be attending a workshop in coming weeks with LGH key staff to develop a plan for improving patient flow drawing on the AG report and the Access Solutions plan.

Almost a year later, can you explain why changes have not been implemented and that according to our doctors the situation at the LGH has only become worse and is at the lowest ebb of its history.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Yes, the Access Solution work that was started by my predecessor Michael Ferguson and continued by this Government by me as minister has been important. We have seen initiatives rolled out across a number of our hospitals including at the Royal Hobart Hospital where the Access Solutions were initially targeted. However, there were important learnings that we are rolling out across the entire system.

As Ms O'Byrne has outlined, late last year we were looking at how we could implement these learnings in a local context at the LGH because we know that each of our emergency departments, each of our patient flows at our hospitals, and at our district sites are different across our entire health system. We are therefore looking at how we can optimize the outcomes for the LGH for that ED and most importantly for patients.

Many of the initiatives that were identified have had to be paused during COVID-19 while we have been responding to a global pandemic.

Ms O'Byrne - You have not initiated them.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - I can reassure the House and the member that I am committed to the Access Solutions outcomes being implemented across the LGH and across our district sites because we know that it has been locally led. We had constructive input from a number of different areas across the hospital and a number of clinicians. I reassure the Opposition as well as all members of the northern community, that this Government is committed to the LGH. It is why we are doing a master planning process. It is why we are progressing Ward 4K and why we have employed hundreds more professionals to work at that hospital.

We understand there is still more work to do to support our hard-working clinicians and to support Tasmanians who need our care. We will continue to ensure we are delivering high quality health care for Tasmanians while we are robustly responding to a global pandemic.

COVID-19 - Emergency Management Leadership

Mr STREET to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[11.05 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the emergency management leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular at the department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin, Mr Street, for his question. The last six months have been an exceptional period in Tasmania. The past six months have been the most challenging times we have ever experienced as Tasmanians. I am proud of the way Tasmanians have responded and adapted as a community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the unprecedented restrictions on every day freedoms and the difficult circumstances experienced by many, we have worked together to bring COVID-19 under control and undoubtedly saved many lives.

I thank all Tasmanians for their individual commitments to the response. It is important that we maintain stable, trusted leadership through this period. Today, I am pleased to advise the House of the reappointment of the Commissioner of Police, Darren Hine, for a further two years. Commissioner Hine has provided outstanding leadership, guidance, commitment and advice through the most significant and extended emergency and the greatest threat to the health of Tasmanians in our lifetime. Commissioner Hine has more than 40 years' experience in law enforcement and emergency management including 10 years as Commissioner of Police.

As the State Controller, he has also been responsible for establishing the strategic objectives and priorities for the overall coordination of the response to the COVID-19 emergency and has ensured that all agencies are properly discharging their responsibilities in contributing to the response arrangements. In this role, he has been instrumental in solving problems associated with the emergency response and establishing priority and coordination of the resources to support recovery and relief. We will continue to face the challenge of COVID-19 for a long time and I am grateful that the Commissioner has agreed to stay on in this role.

Tasmania is a very stable and safe place right now in our response to the global pandemic. Now that we are in good place, we need to maintain it. It is time to plan for long-term COVID-19 response structures and I fully support the State Controller's strategy for the way forward.

While Mr Hine remains the State Controller, he has delegated the statutory tasks of the role to the Deputy State Controller and Deputy Commissioner, Scott Tilyard. While COVID-19 is under control, the Commissioner's focus will be on strategic planning in the event of concurrent emergencies. We must be ready to respond to the threat of concurrent or hazard emergencies including bush fires and floods and the competing demands on our resources.

COVID-19 has proven that Tasmanian emergency management arrangements are scalable and flexible. They are underpinned by partnerships at every level and enable effective coordination across key partners of key players.

I thank the Commissioner and his State Control team for their dedication and commitment in keeping all Tasmanians safe.

**Launceston General Hospital and Mersey Community Hospital -
Additional Resourcing**

Ms DOW to MINISTER FOR HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[11.10 a.m.]

Labor has repeatedly warned that the slashing of hours at the Mersey Community Hospital would have knock on effects to other hospitals including the Launceston General Hospital. Last month we asked you to detail what additional resources would be provided to the LGH to manage increased demand. You failed to answer the question and accused us of scaremongering. Now registrars at the LGH are speaking out about the consequences of your decision, and I quote -

As the Mersey Community Hospital's ED was scaled back, presentations to our hospital (which was already beyond capacity) increased significantly.

They go on to say:

... working with this increased workload in a department that is constantly bed-blocked is unacceptable, dangerous, and unsustainable.

I will ask you again: what additional resources have you provided to the LGH and the North West Regional Hospital to manage increased demand and what progress have you made to reinstate the Mersey Community Hospital's 24-hour emergency department?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am delighted to provide an update to the House on the Mersey Community Hospital. I know it is a hospital that is not only well loved by the local community but many Tasmanians alike. It is why I visited the hospital on Sunday to spend time speaking to staff to reassure them of the Government's commitment to that hospital but also to understand their concerns and ideas about how we can make that hospital sustainable. This Government wants to see that ED open 24/7 and I am committed to doing it.

As we have heard previously in this place, the reason we had to cease the hours that we had was so we could ensure we were delivering a safe service. That has been the content of questions earlier today and the safety of our service delivery is absolutely paramount.

With regard to service delivery at the Mersey ED, I can provide the House with an update that both the secretary of the Department of Health and the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Lawler, are visiting the Mersey Community Hospital this week to speak to staff and look for solutions. We are providing more resources for the ED. We are boosting the number of permanent doctors for the Mersey ED and we are also delivering immediate staffing solutions. The head of the State Service has recently approved the payment of a market allowance for THS employees from other regions taking up short-term positions in various areas in the north-west region. We are also contacting appropriate locums who have recently worked at the Mersey Community Hospital recently.

Regarding our recruitment efforts, I can update the House that we have commenced a further national and local advertising and recruitment campaign to hire additional emergency medicine specialists. We are partnering with Brand Tasmania to develop an integrated promotional campaign, including the use of multimedia channels. We are in the throes of the annual registrar recruitment campaign and are advertising for career medical officer vacancies.

We are taking action. I am taking action and the secretary is taking action to deliver that community hospital. I want to be very clear that I am committed to that hospital. This side of the Chamber is committed to this hospital, which is why we delivered a record funding agreement to ensure it can continue. The secretary of the department is committed to that hospital, which is why she is up there this week talking to staff.

My question for the House is the commitment of that side of the Chamber to the Mersey Community Hospital, because -

Ms White - Are you serious?

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms COURTNEY - the Leader of the Opposition's newest member, Dr Bastian Seidel, said in a tweet in 2016:

Tasmania's Mersey Hospital exists due to political pork-barrelling and parochialism. Now we pay for it all.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. We are in an important and frightening period at the LGH right now. Staff are saying that they cannot cope. The member has repeatedly asked what additional resources have been put into the LGH while they take the Mersey patients, because they are saying they cannot cope.

Madam SPEAKER - As you would appreciate, that is not a point of order. I ask the minister to continue.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am responding to the member's clear question about what we are doing about the Mersey emergency department.

When Dr Bastian Seidel did that tweet he also linked to a *Mercury* article that said the Mersey should never have been built.

It was the child of the worst kind of parochial politics and has remained so ever since.

The article he tweeted went on to say:

From a policy point of view, the decision to build it makes no sense whatsoever.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Hansard cannot record this clearly with this chatter.

Ms COURTNEY - Madam Speaker, the actions of this side of the Chamber say we are committed to the Mersey Community Hospital, the North West Regional Hospital, the LGH and the Royal Hobart Hospital. We have built more, we have invested more and we have employed more. Those opposite sacked nurses and cut people from our health system.

Time expired.

ON-DEMAND PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES INDUSTRY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 34)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Ferguson** and read the first time.

TABLED PAPER

Subordinate Legislation Committee - Scrutiny of Notices Issued under the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the following report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation -

Scrutiny of Notice issued under section 20 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal Act 1913); Scrutiny of Notice issued under section 23 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Mineral Resources Development Act 1995); and Scrutiny of Notice issued under section 18 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Supreme Court-Rule Committee).

Report received.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health in the North

[11.19 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: health in the north.

I cannot commence my contribution without saying how appalled I was at that response from the minister. At a time when we have doctors talking about their concerns, the minister chooses to play that kind of politics. Quite frankly, she should concern herself more with the correspondence coming from doctors at our coalface now than tweets from four years ago. If cheap political points are the only way you can get through this, Minister for Health, you need to have a good hard look at yourself. In the absence of a proper response you should be listening to the LGH emergency registrars who have said the situation is unacceptable, dangerous and unsustainable.

I could take this time to say so much about the minister's response but I think the most powerful thing I can do, and my colleague, the other member for Bass, Ms Houston, will do is to read into *Hansard* the letter from these registrars:

We the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) Emergency Registrars are your emergency doctors, we are the hospital's emergency doctors, we are our community's emergency doctors. We are privileged to do the work we do and are mindful of the trust that our community places in us to deliver high-quality care in their times of most need.

As a group we can no longer be silent about the safety of our patients. Our Emergency Department (ED) is under immense strain. It has the worst bed block in the country. We come to work each day knowing that our workplace is not safe for patients and that we will be forced to give suboptimal care. This does not have to be the way. We urge you to act immediately to improve our hospital, one that Northern Tasmanians are so proud of.

We are a dedicated group of professionals and have repeatedly demonstrated this by our commitment to our community during the turbulent time of COVID-19. We have risen to the challenge time and time again, when our colleagues in the North West were in trouble, we remained determined. As the Mersey Community Hospital's ED was scaled back, presentations to our hospital (which was already beyond capacity) increased significantly. Anyone that comes through our doors will be cared for. We will continue to treat those who are unwell as best we are able. However, working with this increased workload in a department that is constantly bed-blocked is unacceptable, dangerous and unsustainable.

Morale amongst colleagues is low and continues to decline.

The Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM) in 2019 determined that the Launceston General Hospital had the worst access block (bed-block) in the country. In 2019 57% of patients who were admitted were bed blocked. Over a third of these patients were bed-blocked for over 24 hours. The situation is untenable and needs decisive action to be taken.

ACEM makes it clear that bed-block is a whole-of-hospital problem requiring a whole-of-hospital solution. They conclude that the systemic failures of the Tasmanian Health Service causing bed-block are 'outside of the control of the emergency departments' (ACEM, 2019). The ED is constantly improving processes and we recognise the huge strides that have been taken by the ED management team in the past two years to improve patient care. However, we as a department can only do so much.

Our beds are occupied by admitted patients waiting to go to a ward to get the care they need, the care they deserve. Admitted patients are forced to spend days when they are at their sickest in a 24/7 department which is noisy, bright and frequently traumatic. We are forced to see our patients, our families, our community, in the waiting room, on chairs in corridors, in ambulances, on ambulance stretchers, ramped in an 'airlock' or in a security room. There is often little or no option to maintain patient confidentiality in these areas.

We are forced to assess patients in areas that were not designed for patient care. Assessment of our patients falls far below an acceptable standard when done in a chair, or on an ambulance stretcher. If we do need to examine a patient it often has to be in corridors with security cameras. These cameras are not monitored by clinical staff, they are monitored by contracted security staff. This is not acceptable, this is not appropriate, this is not what our community deserves.

Bed-block places both staff and patients at risk. Daily occurrences include:

- The taking of blood and insertion of cannulas in overcrowded areas and corridors, placing us and our patients at an unacceptably high risk of needle-stick injuries.
- Having mentally unwell patients in overcrowded and overstimulated areas, who due to their illness may become aggressive and at times violent due to this environment
- Giving opioid analgesia and other medications in unmonitored areas where there can be a delay in recognising adverse effects
- An inability to properly assess patients leading to an increased risk of medical error

Our patients have died unnecessarily, they have died because we did not have the appropriate space to treat and monitor them. Several adverse outcomes have reported through the SRLS system and some changes have been made to minimise the risk. However, the key change of ensuring appropriate clinical space and staffing has largely been neglected.

The waiting room often has at least twenty patients, with only a Triage Nurse and another Registered Nurse dedicated to care for them. These two nurses are required to triage new patients, start investigations, to treat and monitor the entire waiting room. These are the highest risk, most acutely unwell, most undifferentiated patients in the hospital and yet they have nursing ratios that would not be tolerated in any other ward.

A patient recently died in the waiting room under these circumstances. It is the general feeling amongst staff that if he had been in a monitored area his deterioration would have been noticed well before his death.

It is unacceptable that our community in their final hours must be ramped on an ambulance stretcher away from their family. The ED has so little available space that at times our community cannot have their loved ones by their side, when they are at their most vulnerable, when they are told news that will be life changing. At times the only place to tell our patients bad news about their illnesses is next to an intoxicated patient who is yelling and aggressive. We want to provide excellent care to our community, we are compassionate, we always strive to be better. We can do this better; we need to be able to do this better; right now we can't.

Our waiting room, once suitable, is no longer. Patients at risk of significantly readily contagious respiratory disease are forced to sit with patients with no respiratory disease at all. Our patients in the waiting room are often immuno-compromised, are often being treated for severe diseases such as cancer, or other terminal illnesses. This is not good enough. Tasmania has been isolated and protected since closing the borders and getting control of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be a tragedy if the disease took a foothold in our community again due to a lack of appropriate waiting spaces for patients with respiratory illness.

Public Health advice worldwide since the start of the pandemic has been consistent about the need to socially distance in order to save lives.

Time expired.

[11.26 a.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the MPI that has been brought in today. It is important. That is why, when I became aware of this letter in Question Time today, I committed to asking the secretary of the department to ensure that all those matters are looked into. They are very serious matters.

As has been outlined by Ms O'Byrne, the staff at this hospital have performed an extraordinary role over the past eight months. What they do in business as usual is extraordinary, but to put COVID-19 on top of that and to have been on the frontline in our response in the north, responding to patients who have coronavirus, I am in awe of what they continue to do.

As I do not have a copy of the letter, I am going via the quotes from Ms O'Byrne that she read into *Hansard*. She talked about the compassionate care and striving to do things better. I agree with that. I agree we always need to strive to do things better.

I have stood in this place as Health minister for a little over a year and have always said that we can improve the way we do things in Tasmania. We can make sure that we are continuing to invest in our staff. We can make sure that we are investing in our facilities. That is what we have delivered and that is what we will continue to deliver. I acknowledge

that there are challenges with the physical set-up of the Emergency Department at the Launceston General Hospital. This is why we are embarking on a redevelopment of that site. The master planning process had commenced earlier this year. We have received our public submissions. Sadly though, because of COVID-19, this work had to pause. I reassure the House that this work has recommenced because we know how important it is.

As has been highlighted by the matters that were read by Ms O'Byrne into the Chamber, I acknowledge that there are parts of this hospital that we need to do more to support. That is why we have committed tens of millions of dollars to this hospital for capital development. It is why we are doing a master planning process, which includes clinical and community input to ensure that the way we invest in this site is appropriate for service delivery now and into the future.

We have seen that already delivered through 4K and the stage 1 development that we have seen at this site. Having seen the fabulous area that we have and the way that will service our young people, particularly our young people who have mental health challenges, it is a credit to the team there for what has been produced.

It is never easy to do a redevelopment on an existing site. To the team who led the construction as well as the very patient clinical staff, I am very appreciative. The outcome for that community is extraordinary. I am pleased that I have received a lot of positive feedback from patients about not only the physical infrastructure, but the high quality care they get from the staff there, who have been incredibly dedicated in delivering important care, particularly during COVID-19 when things have been challenging. We have also seen practical developments there, such as a carpark, which is obviously needed in that part of Launceston. We have also seen investment from the federal government in the Holman Clinic with CT scanners and linear accelerators. While we will continue to respond to COVID-19 and the very real needs of Tasmanians in protecting our community, we are continuing to get on with the work we need to do to improve our service across the entire health system.

I am committed to achieving that. I want, in my time as minister, to ensure that we deliver real and meaningful outcomes for patients and staff. What has been demonstrated to me as Health minister in 2020 is that what we have been able to achieve has only been possible because of the collaboration and willingness of our staff across the health system to engage positively. It has been a humbling experience being able to work with people putting aside all agendas to make sure that our highest priority is the care and the welfare of Tasmanians. I commend everyone for the work they have done.

It has been, as I said, a humbling experience to see the power that can be achieved when harnessing everybody together for a unified goal. We have seen that achieved during COVID-19. We will continue to strive towards that as we continue our preparations for COVID-19. We will ensure we are freeing up resources to continue doing the work that we need to do to improve quality across our health system. As Ms O'Byrne outlined in one of her questions, Access Solutions is a big part of that. We have seen real gains in many areas to support patient flow. Indeed, we have seen ComRRS delivered in our community. I have spoken to patients and staff who support the ComRRS initiative about not only what it does to alleviate bed block in a hospital, but what it does for the quality of care of the patient who gets to be cared for in their home or in their residential aged care facility. The meaningful difference that can have on that individual and that individual's wider family is extraordinary.

This is about people. All the solutions we are talking about, all the tens of millions of dollars we talk about investing is ultimately about people. This is ultimately about Tasmanians being cared for in high quality facilities with staff who feel supported, who feel trained, to make sure we are continuing to deliver the highest quality health care for Tasmanians. That is my objective, that is my goal. I will continue to strive towards that.

Time expired.

[11.33 a.m.]

Ms HOUSTON (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, we in the north love our LGH. It is very much a part of who we are. The people of Bass have long been aware of the challenges faced by the LGH's emergency department. Many have had first-hand experience there. Concerns over the cuts to the LGH have been raised here time and time again. Now a group of dedicated LGH emergency doctors are so concerned about the situation, about bed block, about the safety of patients, that they have put their concerns in writing, outlining the unacceptable conditions to the THS management.

The words of these doctors have greater value than anything I could say on the matter, so I will continue to read from the letter where my colleague left off -

Public health advice worldwide since the start of the pandemic has been consistent and solid about the need to socially distance in order to save lives. Our community are unable to do this in our ED. They are unable to do this in our waiting room, they are unable to do this when ramped, they are unable to do this in treatment areas. Patients have chosen to wait outside in the middle of winter rather than put themselves or others at risk. We do not have the workspace to socially distance. We want to behave in the best interests of public health, we want to set an example for our community. We are unable to socially distance, we are unable to protect each other at work, we are unable to protect our community.

The COVID-19 pandemic gave the hospital a valuable opportunity to change. We started to change several processes; however, these changes proved only transient and normal service has once again been resumed. We need to be prepared for future waves or a future pandemic. Our 'fast-track' area was designed to be a negative pressure ward. This does not work.

A lack of allied health staff and diagnostic services after hours delays diagnosis, treatment and increases a patient's length of stay. If, at a weekend, a patient requires any sort of allied health to be safely discharged, they must wait in hospital until Monday. Patients requiring radiology or pathology overnight require us to call in radiographers or scientists, who often must work the next day. Patients with mental health conditions, some of our most vulnerable patients, are often forced to wait for extended stays due to the lack of a dedicated mental health clinician overnight.

It is now over to you, Mr Daniels, to improve the care of your community. Your community needs urgent changes to its beloved LGH. "The General" has been a part of this community since 1863 and right now it is at its lowest ebb.

Would you consider it appropriate if your loved one was having a heart attack and the only place they could be treated was in the waiting room? Would you be happy to see an elderly relative spend 4 days in a busy ED not being able to sleep, becoming delirious and more unwell than when she came to the hospital? Would you be happy to have life changing news broken within earshot of strangers? The answer is no. It is not acceptable. We understand that improving bed-block will take significant effort and cultural change. Areas that we feel need to be urgently addressed to improve the situation include:

- The effective utilisation of all available beds in the region. Ensure that private hospital beds already purchased by the THS are running at a capacity. Reinstate a dedicated patient flow team with an understanding of rural facilities to actively identify and arrange the transfer of stable patients to peripheral hospitals
- Improve the availability of diagnostic services after-hours. We need pathology and radiology on-site 24 hours a day, it should not be an on-call service
- Ensure that allied health staff, especially physiotherapy and the Hospital Aged Care Liaison Team (HALT) are available over the weekend
- Having appropriate mental health services available 24 hours a day
- Having a waiting room that allows for social distancing to reduce the risk of infecting our most vulnerable
- Ensuring timely access to inpatient specialist assessment and review
- Improved access to 'hot' specialist clinics for both the ED and local GPs
- Ensure long-stay hospital patients (if appropriate), are transferred to different less acute facilities
- Ensure appropriate clinical space for ED staff to thoroughly assess and treat patients, which ensures safety, compassion and privacy
- Fix the negative pressure in our 'fast-track' area, to help us prepare for a 'second wave'
- Introduce and publish reporting of 12-hour and 24-hour length of stay in ED. Have - and publicise - a target for their reduction.

We are always happy to meet with you to further discuss our concerns. LGH staff are compassionate and incredibly dedicated, currently working in a hugely challenging environment. We all need to pull together to solve this crisis. We all want to solve this crisis. Our community deserves a hospital that allows every person to be cared for at the highest standard. Let's give it to them.

This is signed by 22 doctors. It is not just one or two.

I have to say at this point it surprises me that this letter or the contents of it and the issues that it raises -

Time expired.

[11.40 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, anyone who has anything to do with the Launceston General Hospital will know that the quality of care provided by the staff there is enormously high and the caring and very compassionate way that they deal with the manifestly inadequate resources that they have at hand to care for sick patients is exemplary.

The problem with the Launceston General Hospital has nothing to do with staff and everything to do with the continual underfunding and under-resourcing of that hospital by the Liberals in Government. The Liberals came into Government and clawed \$220 million out of the health budget in the first year and due to the community outrage at these major cuts to the health system subsequently put a mere \$110 million of that back in.

The Liberals have always undervalued the public health system. Anyone who watched the penny drop for the Minister for Health and the Premier throughout the coronavirus pandemic in Tasmania, and with the north west COVID-19 outbreak, would expect them to understand how essential it is to have a well-resourced, functioning public health system. Anyone who has watched that would realise how behind the eight ball the Liberals have been, and how slow they have been to catch on to the truth that we must resource, respect and control a health system that is owned by the people, and provides the people with the priority services they deserve when they need them. Unless we do that we are fundamentally missing the purpose of our role as members of parliament and particularly the role of those in government.

I notice the previous health minister is here listening in the Chamber and he too will have had the penny drop watching this Government's scramble to muster the appropriate resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Tasmania. It is the systemic supporting and resourcing of public health that keeps it resilient and able to respond effectively in crises like we are seeing at the moment. The inquiry into the north west outbreak has not been completed yet. However, the evidence from the interim report of the Director of Public Health and the evidence of submissions make it very clear that a fundamental problem with the north west hospital was not the staff or anything to do with their behaviour. The problem was the culture and the funding of a culture which make it difficult for people to respond with the expertise and the resources that they need to keep themselves safe, to keep their patients safe and to care for and treat and make the people who come into the hospital as well as possible.

The public health system in the Launceston General Hospital has been particularly badly served by this Government. I am sure that the other members in the opposition have the same issues that I have as the Greens spokesperson for health. We write letters to the minister about issues that come up and repeatedly they are not even responded to. I refer to my letter of 2 March to the minister about the problems with the critical shortage of essential equipment in the Launceston General Hospital, in particular the cardiac telemetry units that are essential for monitoring a wide range of life-threatening conditions.

We were contacted earlier this year by a patient who was admitted to the LGH with symptoms of a transient ischaemic attack. The registrar informed the patient's relatives that monitoring could not occur for the 48-hour period that was recommended because there was a shortage of units meaning that the telemetry unit machine was only available for eight hours.

I asked the minister how many cardiac telemetry units were available at the LGH, and whether they were sufficient according to the medically required adequate number for monitoring, but I did not receive a response. I have been contacted about an extremely serious issue from a woman whose brother was admitted to the LGH recently, was discharged, then readmitted and later died. She was writing because of her experience of the failure of the LGH to provide proper discharge assessment advice.

That has led to a series of truly appalling experiences for her 85 year old brother when he returned to his home. He was unable to care for himself. His environment was dangerous and was known to be insufficient.

The push to discharge patients and the lack of discharge assessment is a very concerning issue at the LGH.

Time expired.

[11.47 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I begin my remarks on this matter of public importance by paying tribute to our nurses and healthcare professionals right across Tasmania. Madam Deputy Speaker, you would know very well the challenges faced by healthcare professionals in Tasmania and also the extraordinary work they do each and every day caring for our community.

COVID-19 has been hardest on our elderly and our healthcare professionals, in terms of the disease burden they receive when they are caring for people and the difficulty of trying to manage healthcare during the middle of a pandemic.

To all of our nurses, our healthcare professionals and our doctors - we thank you for the care you provide for our community. We know we will come out the other side of this pandemic and we will be able to grow our health services and continue to contribute to the good health of our community. We know that good health is one of the foundations of a decent life and I know of the fantastic work that so many people are doing in my community in the north-west.

I met with the community rapid response team based in Ulverstone and the fantastic nurses who are working every day, looking after people right around the electorate of Braddon and the north-west coast. Those nurses have been going into aged care homes and into people's own homes to provide the care that they need. During the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, when so many hospitals were without staff, those nurses were stepping into the breach and performing fantastic work. We want to grow our healthcare capacity in Tasmania and take our hospital and our healthcare system to the next level. We need to continue to build and grow and find our way through the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have invested \$8 billion over the last four years and this year during the middle of the global pandemic we put in another \$600 million because we need to battle the coronavirus. We are all in this together and we need to provide good healthcare services for people in the north, the north-west and right across Tasmania because it is critical to the future of our state. It is also critical that in rural, remote and regional areas people are able to get the care they need in a timely manner.

We put 50 new jobs into the north-west for nurses, allied health and doctors and we have recruited new paramedics. I know some of them very well. The paramedics have mostly been focused in the north-west, particularly with the coronavirus outbreak that we sadly experienced there but they are also right across our state in our rural and regional areas. We are talking about places such as Longford, Deloraine, St Helens and Bicheno, and those communities know that once you have dedicated, hardworking, trained professional people who can get you to hospital in time and get you the care you need, it makes it a heck of a lot easier to live in a rural and remote area, some of the most wonderful places to live in the world.

We have also been investing heavily in aeromedical coverage and capacity and I see this every day in my electorate as I drive past the Mersey hospital. People can see the \$2 million helipad we put up there that is helping connect people in Devonport, Latrobe and Ulverstone areas to healthcare right across the state where there is capacity, skills, specialists and the care that they need. They know they can get an airlift and can find their way to that care.

We have upgraded the North West Regional Hospital and the services people can receive there. There are eight new beds for people in acute and intensive care, four new surgical beds, extra cancer beds and fantastic new machines that are able to provide the care people need in new ways that can defeat cancer, which is such an insidious disease, that people had not considered previously. It is fantastic to be able to see those things in the community of Burnie and the north-west coast. Every Tasmanian has a cancer story and to be able to provide the care in your own local community makes life so much easier, not only for the patients but for the families as well, who we know are so critical to the recovery of any person suffering cancer.

There are also new rehab beds at the Mersey which are providing vital support for people with drug and alcohol issues in our area as well as mental health, which is becoming an increasingly important factor for our young people. If we can provide these services in our local area that can only be a good thing.

I want to touch on the Launceston General Hospital as well, with the \$20 million we have put in to developing the new 4K ward, the two negative pressure rooms and the first of its kind bariatric room for young people at the LGH which is providing valuable services for any young people who, heaven forbid, would be struggling with healthcare issues so early in their life. It is fantastic to see that in a regional area you can get those kinds of services. It is important that we continue to build and grow. There is also a new school room that has been set up in the LGH because our nurses, our healthcare professionals, are people too and so are the patients. We know that if kids can get an education, even when mum or dad is sick or when mum or dad is trying to care for those people in our community, then they will be better

off and our community can come together in such a way that we can rally around those people and give their kids the education they so richly deserve.

The global pandemic has been hard on everyone right around the world, and in Tasmania particularly in the north, but we are always going to bounce back and keep fighting to make sure that people can get the healthcare coverage they need in the north-west, in the north and right around Tasmania, because it is critical to providing the care that people need.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

DANGEROUS CRIMINALS AND HIGH-RISK OFFENDERS BILL 2020 (No. 28)

Second Reading

Resumed from 27 August 2020 (page 96).

[11.57 a.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I had about a minute to go last time and had really concluded the comments I needed to make on the bill. However, I had put on the record a few questions here and there throughout my contribution in the last sitting week and I look forward to addressing those as we go through the summing-up comments from the minister.

[11.58 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, our courts in Tasmania have had the power to detain prisoners indefinitely for a long time; I believe the TLRI referenced back to the turn of last century. Generally, indefinite detention of a person can be the result of two different types of orders, depending on the time at which the order is made. Indefinite detention refers to legislation that enables an order to be made at the time of the sentence for an offender to be detained indefinitely. The term 'preventative detention' is used to describe legislation that will require an individual to be detained beyond the date of expiry of their sentence through an order made during the period of the offender's incarceration. Both of these are directed at protecting the community from dangerous offenders and the potential for those people to reoffend.

We recognise that the use of indefinite and preventative detention of a person beyond the time at which the person has served their criminal sentence is a contentious and divisive issue. Indefinite detention necessarily involves balancing a number of potential conflicting rights, the right of the victims and the right of the broader society to safety and an assurance of safety from a person who is a known serious offender and also balancing the rights of the offender themselves to freedom after serving the sentence of imprisonment imposed on them by the court.

Since the introduction of indefinite detention provisions in Tasmania there have been 12 applications for dangerous criminal declarations and, of these, nine applications were successful and resulted in dangerous criminal declarations being made. There have been

three unsuccessful applications and the most recent of those was in 2013. Of those offenders who have been declared dangerous criminals, four have made application for the discharge of their dangerous criminal status and only one was successful in their bid. However, the Tasmanian dangerous prisoner regime as it stands at the moment contained in the Sentencing Act 1997 had never been reviewed before that point, even though it has been criticised by a number of bodies including the Supreme Court bench and advocates for its review such as Greg Barns.

The previous Attorney-General, the late Vanessa Goodwin, was herself concerned about these issues and was involved in a referral to the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute which undertook a comprehensive review of the deficiencies contained within the Sentencing Act relating to the power to detain prisoners indefinitely. They also did a detailed analysis of legislation from other Australian jurisdictions that have dealt with that significant issue. The bill we have before us is seeking to address the deficiencies that have been uncovered in the existing dangerous criminal legislation that the TLRI outlined in their 2017 report. I understand that the 10 recommendations in that report have been substantially accepted with some minor changes.

I want to outline the recommendations that came from the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute as they have described them. It is a very important piece of research that the TLRI undertook. All their research is important, of course, but it is important for such a serious matter, which throws away a fundamental right for a person to regain their freedom after they have served the sentence that has been placed on them by the courts for their offending behaviour.

It is appropriate that serious and thoughtful consideration is given to balancing the rights of the offender and the rights of the community and previous victims of the offender to safety and an assurance of safety. The 10 recommendations, what the TLRI proposes and what is contained within this bill seek to provide a fair balance of those rights and the community with the safety we all desire.

The TLRI notes that there should be a higher threshold for a dangerous criminal declaration to be prescribed than currently exists within the Sentencing Act, and the current test within the act that the judge must be of the opinion that the declaration is warranted for the protection of the public should be repealed and instead the test should require that the court must be satisfied the offender is a serious danger to the community. That danger may be because of the offender's character, past history, age, health or medical condition, or the nature and gravity of the serious offence or any special circumstances.

Their second recommendation was that the amendments need to make very explicit the standard of proof that is required in order to impose a dangerous criminal declaration. There should be a higher threshold than is currently in place to remedy an apparent inconsistency between the current legislative standard and judicial practice. That recommendation would bring us into line with other jurisdictions, particularly Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory on this matter.

The third recommendation is that they recommend an amendment to provide a comprehensive list of factors that must be considered by a court in making a decision about whether to make a dangerous criminal declaration, that the act should require the court to

consider the risks of serious harm to members of the community if an indefinite sentence were not imposed and the need to protect members of the community from that risk.

Dennis J Baker has written a long and considered paper. He is a lecturer from the Faculty of Law in Kings College, London. The paper is entitled Punishment without a Crime: Is Preventive Detention Reconcilable with Justice? and was published in 2009 in the Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy. Mr Baker talks to recommendation 3 from the TLRI which goes to ensuring the need to protect members of the community from risk. He is speaking in relation to high-risk offenders and the opportunity to provide extensive monitoring and to release a person on parole into an electronic monitoring regime, which he says strikes a balance between the offender's interests and harm prevention. Measures such as electronic monitoring are not censoring and are reconcilable, he argues, with fairness. The alternative, he says, is to subject children, women and others to the unfairness that would flow from releasing offenders that clearly continue to pose a real risk. He says given that passive victims are not in a position to alter or control the situation, it is fair to subject the potential aggressor or the controller of a person to the unpleasantness of civil confinement and extensive supervision rather than subject children and others to the injustice of becoming the victim of a serious sex crime.

I think he has captured the reasoning really well in that statement and that is fundamentally underlying why we need to have legal ability to restrain high-risk offenders so that they are not allowed to come into contact with the people who they hold power and control over, or people who they have previously violently offended or assaulted prior to their term in prison.

It removes their having any opportunity to have access to the person. It provides a measure of safety and reduces the anxiety of women and children who have already suffered under an offender's hands.

It importantly removes the potential for an offender released into electronic monitoring to come into contact with people. Even viewing or the feeling that they might see the offender in a public place would place many women and children who have suffered an offence in a state of extreme anxiety. That anxiety is often ongoing and something they hold with them all the time, if they know the person who has so damaged them has been released from prison.

Electronic monitoring is an opportunity in the digital age that is fit for purpose. It provides an ability to strike the balance between securing the rights to safety for women, children and others who may be at risk and the right of the offender to have far more freedom than would be offered to them if they remained in prison.

The fourth recommendation from the TLRI was that the act be amended to clarify that it is intended to create both an indefinite, at the time of sentencing, detention regime, as well as a post-sentence preventative detention regime. The post-sentence preventative detention regime is what this bill provides with electronic monitoring and other parole requirements that could be imposed on the offender. We support them.

The fifth recommendation of the TLRI was that the act be amended to provide that where a post-sentence application is made and the convicting sentencing judge has ceased to

hold office or other special circumstances exist where they are not available to make a judgment, that another judge can hear the application for a dangerous criminal declaration. That is the major change that this bill brings. That is an important logistical, practical, inadvertent error in the Sentencing Act that this bill seeks to fix, which we support. It makes no sense that it is not possible to take this preventive measure simply because the judge is no longer there.

The sixth recommendation from the TLRI was that the current act should be modernised to remedy existing deficiencies that the separate provisions for sex offenders not be enacted. Their view is that all should be captured within the recommendations that they have proposed and not have separate conditions for sex offenders.

The seventh recommendation from the TLRI was that the amendment is needed to ensure that dangerous criminal declarations conform with human rights and criminal justice principles in relation to onus and standard of proof. They recommend that consistency be obtained with other jurisdictions in relation to two aspects. First, that the prosecution should bare the onus of proof on an application for imposing a dangerous criminal declaration, an application for discharge as well as a periodic review of a dangerous criminal behaviour declaration.

The second aspect of the standard of proof at each of these stages is that the court ought to be satisfied by acceptable cogent evidence and to a higher degree of probability that the offender is a serious danger to the community. These amendments would bring us in line with other jurisdictions, in particular Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The eighth recommendation from the TLRI is that the act provide a list of factors to be considered in determining whether to discharge a dangerous criminal declaration. Those factors should be the same as those that are considered when imposing such a declaration in the first instance so that the court has sufficient guidance on the appropriate factors to be considered when determining whether to discharge a dangerous criminal declaration.

The listed factors should be whether the nature of the offence is exceptional, the offender's age and character, any medical, psychiatry or other relevant reports, the risk of serious danger to members of the community if an indefinite sentence were not imposed, the need to protect members of the community from the aforementioned risk and any other matters that the court thinks fit.

The ninth recommendation of the TLRI is that the act be amended to enable the court to impose both pre- and post-release conditions on discharge of dangerous criminal declarations. Pre-release conditions would enable a court to discharge declarations subject to offenders undergoing treatment programs or achieving results in such programs or participating in reintegration programs design to equip them with the skills that they need to re-enter the community.

The tenth and final recommendation is that the amendment should provide a system of periodic review for dangerous criminal declarations to ensure that the appropriateness of the ongoing detention of offenders is revued at reasonable intervals. It should provide for a revue of application of the offender or the DPP a year before the expiration of the offender's nominal sentence and subsequently at two-year intervals.

That is what the TLRI recommended. In the bill before us that is substantially what has been introduced. The main changes are that the judges who made the sentence are no longer needed to hear a dangerous criminal or high-risk order case. The second one is that there is now a higher test required for a judge to make a determination. That is there must be a higher degree of probability rather than it simply being warranted, which is currently the case. Queensland, Victoria and Northern Territory use this test; the higher degree of probability.

As recommended by the TLRI, the bill also creates a review mechanism such that 12 months from the end of a dangerous criminal sentence the Supreme Court is required to undertake a review and there is also, to guide this process, the high risk offenders committee, which will be involved, as I understand it, in the assessment of all high-risk offenders in prison, so once that committee is established they will assess all high-risk offenders in prison, identify those that they consider may be high-risk offenders, and then make recommendations to the DPP to make a high-risk offender order on the release of that inmate from their sentence. The DPP will then make a final decision about that case.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are satisfied with the treatment of the recommendations that were made by the TLRI as contained within this bill. This has been a long process of consideration and we understand there was support from stakeholders in the way the bill has been drafted and the contents of it.

I would like the minister to perhaps talk through, if she has any information she can provide, about the number of people who may be considered high-risk offenders, a little more detail about the review process that will be undertaken, and the possibility of an offender making an application between a review for a reassessment if they do not agree with the assessment that was made.

Thank you to the staff for the high-quality briefing they gave and the time they provided to answer our questions. We are happy to support the bill that is on the table.

[12.23 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill and commend the minister and her department for their efforts in developing this comprehensive bill. As a government we took a very strong set of policies on law and order to the last election and we are proud of the fact that we are fulfilling those commitments. Whilst we might disagree about the ways in which we do it, I think we all in this place agree that Tasmanians deserve to live in safety and free from the impacts of crime as much as possible. As a government we have taken a tough on crime approach and we make no apologies for that.

To date, this Government and the Attorney-General have already made significant changes to legislation that help to achieve our aim of being tough on crime and helping community members live in greater safety. Some of the legislation we have already introduced includes successfully passing new legislation to protect vulnerable victims, including the creation of a new offence of 'persistent family violence', as well as other important measures to support victims and vulnerable Tasmanians.

We passed legislation to address one-punch or coward's punch incidents, sending a strong message that those cowardly acts of violence will not be tolerated. I have to say the

prevalence of these attacks is a scar on the community, and as someone who knows multiple people who have been victims of these attacks, I know how happy they were to see the changes to the legislation that were passed in relation to that.

We have amended section 194K of Tasmania's Evidence Act 2001 to provide victims of sexual assault with the right to speak out publicly. I commend the victims of sexual assault who so strongly campaigned for those changes and put on the record that I have recently become aware that someone who taught me is now a convicted paedophile. To see the strength of his victims in coming forward and speaking about what they went through was stunning, to be honest, in the courage that they showed. It was also really important in bringing that man to justice. I commend the Attorney-General for those changes to the Tasmanian Evidence Act. They are really important.

We have modernised the language used in the Criminal Code in a number of sexual crimes, especially those involving young people, to better reflect the true nature of those crimes. Whilst that might seem superficial, to have a crime of 'maintaining a sexual relationship' with a child on the statute books was completely unacceptable. There is nothing about that situation that is a relationship and we need to make sure that not only do we prosecute people for these crimes but that they are held to account with a better understanding of what they have done.

We have made multiple reforms as a result of our commitment to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, and I know that there are more coming. We have also legislated to ensure there is a member with policing experience on the Parole Board. Whilst it is great that that change has been made, it is quite confronting that we had a Parole Board that was making decisions on releasing people into the community yet the board did not have any policing experience on it when it was making those decisions.

The Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offenders Bill 2020 will add further to this Government's strong performance on law and order. In the lead-up to the 2018 state election, as a government we released our law and order policy which committed to reforming Tasmania's dangerous criminal declaration laws and introducing a second-tier scheme that would subject offenders to intensive monitoring post-release, including electronic monitoring and other forms of supervision to help protect the community and ensure offenders do not reoffend. I am pleased to confirm that this bill delivers on our election commitment.

The bill has three main features. First, the bill confirms that an application for a dangerous criminal declaration may be made at the time an offender is convicted or sentenced for a crime involving violence or an element of violence, or at the time they are serving a custodial sentence for that crime, or a custodial sentence for another crime that is being served concurrently or cumulatively with that sentence.

The new provisions remove the current requirement that a dangerous criminal declaration may only be made by the convicting or sentencing judge, allowing greater flexibility for the Director of Public Prosecutions to make an application when it is warranted. I am assuming that means that if somebody is sentenced for a crime and then exhibit behaviours in jail which worry the prison officers, they can alert the DPP to this situation so that they can reassess whether an application needs to be made, which is really important

because not all dangerous behaviour is going to be exhibited just at the time of the offence. Obviously prisoners are being observed 24 hours a day and so it is important that assessments can be made of their behaviour whilst they are in jail as well. If that means that we then need to apply for a dangerous criminal declaration it is important that we can do so.

Second, the bill provides for a second-tier scheme which enables the DPP to apply for a high-risk offender order in relation to serious offenders who do not meet the threshold for being declared a dangerous criminal but nevertheless may pose a risk to the community if no supervising conditions are in place when they are released post-sentence. The bill provides that the safety of the community must be the court's paramount consideration in determining whether to make an HRO order.

Lastly, the bill establishes the High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee which will include representatives from the departments of Justice, Health, Communities Tasmania and Police, Fire and Emergency Management. The bill provides for these agencies to cooperate and exchange information as required to manage and supervise offenders who are subject to HRO orders. The committee will also facilitate behavioural reports, management reports and risk assessments in relation to offenders, which will inform the DPP's decision on whether to apply for an HRO order and be provided to the Supreme Court when HRO order applications are made and when reviews of dangerous criminal declarations are taken.

I am not one of these people who thinks that people need to be sent to jail and cannot be rehabilitated. Prison needs to be a place where people are rehabilitated, but we also need to accept that the length of a sentence does not necessarily allow for the full rehabilitation of somebody who has been sent to prison. If an assessment is made that these people have not been rehabilitated or still pose a risk to the community, it is important that the provisions in this bill are in place.

[12.30 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions. It is always difficult when we split a bill to remember what contributions were made. It gives us an opportunity to go back and look at *Hansard* to ensure we have captured all of the questions that have been asked by members in their contributions. Hopefully, we have been able to adequately do that today.

As I go through contributions, some of the questions were similar questions asked by a few members. I will try to identify those as best I can while addressing the numerous issues that have been raised.

First, in general clarification about the bill, a number of comments were made by Ms Ogilvie and Ms Haddad which suggested to me that there might be some confusion or misapprehension about certain aspects of the bill. I will take the opportunity to clarify those so we have on the record for my second reading contribution and the act's interpretation distinct clarity around the provisions of the bill. It may be useful to provide some general clarifications now that will assist in responding to the specific questions raised.

In relation to indefinite detention and preventative detention, the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute paper, which we have been referring to as the TLRI paper, noted that the terms 'indefinite detention' and 'preventative detention' are often used interchangeably as both

types of schemes operate to detain an offender for an indeterminate amount of time, based on the potential for future offending and with the purpose of protecting the community from dangerous offenders.

The TLRI paper drew a distinction in noting that orders for indefinite detention are made at the time the offender is sentenced and enabled the offender to be detained indefinitely, while an order for preventative detention is made during the offender's period of incarceration and enables the offender to be detained beyond the expiration of their sentence.

The TLRI noted that while the current dangerous criminal provisions in the Sentencing Act are framed principally as an indefinite detention regime, it has been accepted that they can theoretically be applied for preventative detention with a judge making the order while an offender is serving their sentence. The TLRI recommended that any reforms to the dangerous criminal provisions should explicitly clarify their operation as both an indefinite detention and preventative detention scheme, with declarations able to be made at the time of conviction or sentencing or while the offender is serving their custodial sentence.

The bill implements this through clause 6(1)(c), which clearly sets out the timing for when the court may declare an offender to be a dangerous criminal.

Ms Haddad suggested in her comments that bill's high risk offender provisions create the post-sentence detention scheme, but that is not the case. I clarify that. It is the dangerous criminal provisions that will operate as both an indefinite detention and preventative detention scheme.

The high-risk offender order provisions do not provide for any sort of detention at all. They establish a post-detention scheme for supervising offenders in the community.

Ms Haddad - Can I ask by interjection, and you may already have it as an answer - the question that I was asking last sitting week was whether only people who have -

Ms ARCHER - I have a whole heap of -

Ms Haddad - I will wait.

Ms ARCHER - I am happy to see if I have not addressed your questions, because I think if we go through this systematically it will, I am sure, deal with all the queries.

In relation to the timing of review applications for dangerous criminals, Ms Ogilvie, Ms Haddad and Dr Woodruff all made some remarks in relation to the timing of reviews of dangerous criminal declarations. I would like to clarify how the timing of the reviews will operate under clause 9.

Clause 9(2) provides for mandatory reviews of dangerous criminal declarations to be initiated by the Director of Public Prosecutions. For any offenders who have become subject to dangerous criminal declarations that are made under the new legislation, clause 9(2)(a) will apply and the DPP will need to apply for a review within 12 months before the expiry of all relevant custodial sentences in relation to that offender. For example, if an offender's relevant custodial sentences were for a cumulative total of 10 years in prison, the DPP would need to

apply for a review after the offender had served nine years but before the full 10 years had been completed.

Where an offender has been sentenced to a fixed term of imprisonment for their dangerous criminal offence, and the court subsequently convicts them for another crime and imposes a custodial sentence that is cumulative with the existing term of sentence, it will effectively extend the period before the DPP must make that initial review application. It is not unusual for that to happen because offences occur within the prison environment for which police get called in. Further charges can be laid and, of course, heard in court while someone is serving existing prison time.

The policy intent is that the application for the initial review is not made until the offender is approaching a point in time when they would have been released from custody were it not for the declaration being in place. There are five offenders who are currently detained indefinitely pursuant to dangerous criminal declarations that were made under the current or previous legislative provisions.

For each of those offenders their relevant custodial sentences have already expired and they only remain in prison by virtue of their dangerous criminal declarations. In accordance with clause 9(2)(b), once the new provisions commence there will be a three-year period within which the DPP must apply for an initial review in relation to each of those five offenders. Clause 9(2)(c) will apply to all declared dangerous criminals regardless of whether the declaration has been made under the new act or previous legislation. If the dangerous criminal declaration is not discharged as a result of the initial review, the DPP must subsequently apply for further reviews, making each application within three years of the most recent decision refusing to discharge the declaration. This means that every offender's application will be regularly reviewed by the Supreme Court.

What I am about to address was raised by all of you and Dr Woodruff in her contribution today. In addition to these mandatory periodic reviews that are made upon application by the DPP, the bill provides for an offender to apply for a review pursuant to clause 9(3) of the bill. Unlike the periodic reviews initiated by the DPP, there are no specific time frames that apply to review applications made by offenders. However, they must meet two requirements. First, an offender may not apply for a review until after the initial review initiated by the DPP has taken place and a court has determined not to discharge the dangerous criminal declaration. Second, the Supreme Court must grant leave for the offender to make the review application on the grounds that exceptional circumstances apply to the offender.

Ms Ogilvie asked what would constitute exceptional circumstances. While that will always be up to the court - I know Ms Ogilvie would be aware that it is for the court to determine based on facts that apply in each individual case at a given point in time. An example of exceptional circumstances might be where an offender suffers a permanently disabling injury or illness whilst incarcerated that significantly reduces the likelihood that they would pose a serious danger to the community if not detained in prison. For example, that might be something that is a more obvious example but warranted as being exceptional perhaps in the eyes of the court to consider.

It may be appropriate to grant leave to the offender if the court is satisfied that there has been some significant change since the most recent review that may affect the outcome and that the interests of justice require a court to reconsider the declaration at an earlier stage rather than waiting until the next periodic review that would be initiated by the DPP. I want to stress that there are periodic reviews by the DPP, but there is still that mechanism for an offender to apply as well, providing they satisfy those two requirements. I believe that part of the bill definitely strikes the right balance in relation to reviews and I hope I have answered that to everyone's satisfaction.

I now want to address the difference between parole orders and high-risk offender orders to provide absolute clarity. Parole orders and high-risk offender orders both enable an offender to be supervised under conditions in the community as opposed to prison, but there is a difference in the period during which those conditions remain in force.

An offender who is granted parole by the Parole Board is still serving a sentence for their relevant convictions but they are permitted to serve that sentence in the community rather than in prison. Once the remainder of the sentence has been completed, the offender is no longer subject to the parole order and any conditions attached to it. On the other hand, a high-risk offender order is made by the Supreme Court and commences operation when the offender is no longer subject to a sentence and not in custody. In contrast to parole, the conditions imposed under a high-risk offender order continue to apply to the offender after their custodial sentence has expired, so there is a massive difference between the two.

There is a possible overlap between the periods applying to parole orders and high-risk offender orders. An offender who is released on parole to serve out the remainder of the custodial sentence that relates to a serious offence as set out in Schedule 1 of the bill could potentially be the subject of a high-risk offender order application by the Director of Public Prosecutions. However, the existing parole order and its conditions would be taken into account by the DPP in deciding whether to make an application and would also be considered by the court in determining whether it is appropriate to make a high-risk offender order. Those circumstances would be relevant.

In general, it is anticipated that there would be minimal overlap between the cohort of offenders granted parole and the cohort of offenders for whom high-risk offender orders would be appropriate. The fact that it must be considered by the Parole Board under section 72(4) of the Corrections Act 1997 means that parole would not be expected to be granted to an offender who is considered to be a high risk to the community. In contrast, the making of a high-risk offender order specifically requires the court to be satisfied that an offender does pose an unacceptable risk of committing another serious offence unless a high-risk offender order is made, so again, there are differences between the two.

Community Corrections will have responsibility for managing offenders released into the community subject to high-risk offender orders, as they do with prisoners released on parole. Should any offender be subject to both kinds of orders, Community Corrections will be in a position to ensure that there is a cohesive and coordinated approach to the management and supervision of them.

I want to turn to other matters that were raised by Ms Ogilvie and in this context also Dr Woodruff. Will electronic monitoring be available for offenders who are made subject to

high-risk offender orders? I note there was also a reference at that time to the Corrections Amendment (Electronic Monitoring) Bill 2020 which had been debated in the House earlier in the August parliamentary sitting. The scope of that bill is confined to orders made by the Parole Board and the amendments to the Corrections Act itself that arise from the bill do not have any application to high-risk offender orders. As I was pointing out the difference between parole order and high-risk offender orders, similarly that bill does not apply to high-risk offender orders, only to conditions set by parole.

However, the bill currently before the House does provide for electronic monitoring to be imposed by the Supreme Court as part of a high-risk offender order, so it can still be a condition. It is just under different instruments. In this context it is pursuant to clause 37(2)(b) and the conditions set out there are discretionary as distinct from mandatory conditions that the court must specify in accordance with clause 37(1), so again allowing the court the flexibility to use that discretion.

I should also note that while approximately 100 to 120 prisoners are released on parole annually, based on a review of available data it is anticipated that an average of only 27 prisoners each year may be eligible to be considered for a high-risk offender order application. That specifically addresses Dr Woodruff's question in relation to how many we estimated. It is really only a guesstimate but 27 prisoners is not a high number and based on the available data that is what we think would be a ballpark figure that may be looked at.

The eligible group includes a person serving a sentence for a serious offence. Whether an individual in this group is subject to an application for a high-risk offender order would depend on the DPP's view of whether the application is merited. Again, it is relying on the expertise of the DPP and the fact that it is a serious offence, which stands to reason. We are not talking minor offences here if you are high risk.

As an example, an offender may technically be eligible because they are serving a custodial sentence for a serious offence. However, that crime may represent an isolated incident, with the offender's circumstances and other offending history and mitigating circumstance indicating that they pose little or less risk to the community. An eligible offender may also have demonstrated a genuine commitment to rehabilitation while in prison or may have been an exemplary parolee when released into the community. That is the whole aim; we want people to rehabilitate and no longer pose a threat to the safety of the community and indeed their victims and other survivors of some of the most heinous crimes. That is the main aim and we have some successful cases in that regard.

These things are assessed reasonably and fairly and ultimately the DPP's considerations must include whether the statutory test would be met for a high-risk offender order to be made. In other words, would the court be satisfied to a higher degree of probability that the offender possesses an unacceptable risk of committing another serious offence if not kept under supervision? There is a reason for that. We are seeking that someone have their liberty impacted upon so we need to ensure there is an appropriate test established. The DPP will need to make a decision as to whether to apply to the Supreme Court for a high-risk offender order in each case. It will be for the court to determine whether the order is warranted and, if so, whether electronic monitoring is an appropriate and necessary condition, depending on the individual circumstances of the offender.

It is proving to be very successful in monitoring offenders. If you can monitor someone's movements 24/7, then we can ensure the safety of the community more effectively than relying on past systems with people reporting to certain places. For these reasons it is anticipated that the additional demand for electronic monitoring resulting from high risk offender order provisions coming into operation would be relatively modest. This will be closely monitored by Community Corrections over time, but there is no doubt we do have the capacity. It is an appropriate time to be introducing this, and because the system is fully implemented now. It is appropriate to implement this long-standing government policy which was also an election commitment.

Both Ms Ogilvie and Ms Haddad made comments about the need for rehabilitation of prisoners whilst they are in prison. They asked what opportunities are available for the rehabilitation of offenders while they are serving a custodial sentence, and whether prisoners have any difficulty in accessing rehabilitation programs. I have also made some observations in that regard. Although not directly relevant to the clauses in the bill, I am very happy to confirm some of these with the House. It gives me an opportunity to talk about the good work of the Tasmanian Prison Service. I thank those staff for their hard work and ongoing commitment. I particularly acknowledge the Director of Prisons, who I know is deeply committed to the rehabilitation of prisoners. He recently did an op-ed on this and it gave great insight into his character. He has a job to do in terms of incarceration, but also has a strong view on the rehabilitation of prisoners, and I thank him for all of his work. I also thank Community Corrections, as a vital element of the corrections system, particularly with the introduction of electronic monitoring.

I assure the House, and the public, that we are now doing more than ever before to ensure offenders are successfully rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community so they can become law abiding citizens. Under our Government, there has been considerable investment in both staff and infrastructure at the TPS. Investment in the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Tasmania is a priority of government, and of myself as minister.

There is no doubt that alcohol and drugs are a scourge on our society. It is always on the increase, and we need to respond to that. We need to ensure we have prisons that can adequately deal with these programs. That is one of the reasons for increasing the capacity of our service with a northern prison. With the Southern Remand Centre coming online as well, clearer classification of those prisoners as well as pre-conviction and pre-sentence offenders, is vital to the construct of our service.

The Alcohol and other Drug Treatment Unit we have within Risdon offers intensive rehabilitation to prisoners with ongoing and long-term alcohol and/or drug use issues. The TPS drug and alcohol counsellors provide individual intervention to prisoners who identify as having alcohol or drug use issues. Often it is both.

Specialist alcohol and drug counsellors are employed to work directly with individuals in the prison. Holyoake also provides a drug and alcohol service to prisoners, namely the Gottawanna program. All women prisoners in the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison have access to individual drug and alcohol counselling and that has been something I have wanted to focus on.

A suite of rehabilitation programs including those related to substance abuse will also be available in the northern regional prison once the facility is fully operational. We have an opportunity in the design phase of that prison to ensure we have a purpose-built unit.

Ms Haddad - Minister, can I ask if you mentioned the specialist unit at Apsley? Is that reopened at the moment?

Ms ARCHER - Yes. I will get back to you about the date it but it came back on line earlier than predicted.

The review process was dealt with as quickly as possible and I stand to be corrected, but I recall it was a priority of mine and was conveyed to the director that the review be done as quickly as possible. It is an operational matter so I could do no more than that and indeed my recollection is that they did finish it earlier than expected and so Apsley came on line earlier than predicted. If I am incorrect, I will correct the record after lunch.

I will mention briefly, other types of intervention vital to rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. Access to skills, training and education and therefore the prospect of employment, is often the key to successful reintegration into the community, as well as housing, family support and other support mechanisms.

The TPS is working with TasTAFE and Libraries Tasmania to establish a Tasmanian prison education strategy to improve opportunities to participate and increase engagement in education, training and learning for prisoners. The TPS also offers the Connect 42 circle of security program which members will know was formerly called Chatter Matters, established by Rosie Martin. It is a parenting attachment course that focuses on reflecting on parenting. It has a high level of success. Her Excellency the Governor, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and many members of parliament including me, have had the opportunity to attend graduations from the course. I thank Rosie Martin and her team for their work. It was a wonderful initiative and I was very happy to lobby for some funding. We managed to put that in the budget a few years ago and it has remained.

The TPS provides individual support to link prisoners in developing positive relationships with family and community, prior to release. This is provided as one-on-one through clear planning and support which is completed by the reintegration team.

Parent and family reintegration supports prisoners to address unhealthy relationship behaviours and develop health relationship attitudes. This is completed by a one-on-one support as well as peer group sessions.

Connection with community service support is established prior to release with the Through Care Planning occurring pre and post release. These programs are highly successful but people have to want to participate. These behavioural changes cannot occur without full commitment from the prisoner. We see a high success rate for those who are willing to change and develop those good relationships again. It is very difficult for some prisoners because they have not had the best role models in their lives.

The Tasmanian Prison Service intervention programs unit is concentrating on interventions focused on the drivers of crime. The TPS continues to deliver the EQUIPS which stands for Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practise, Succeed.

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

DANGEROUS CRIMINALS AND HIGH-RISK OFFENDERS BILL 2020 (No. 28)

Second Reading

Continued from above.

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Speaker, I was explaining the EQUIPS program. which stands for Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practise, Succeed. It is a suite of programs relating to addiction, aggression and general offending behavior and was developed to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Tasmanian Prison Service intervention program's unit staff have regular clinical supervision, undertaken by experts in the field of sex offender treatment and general violence treatment to ensure best practice is applied to all programs delivered to prisoners. Offender treatment programs are supported by other interventions known to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, such as education, training, employment and reintegration services.

There is also the work in training aspect of our program. Participating in work gives prisoners and detainees the opportunity to learn and develop skills, give back to the community, and prepare for reintegration, as well as reducing their risk of reoffending when released. Having a reasonable likelihood or a prospect of employment is one of the major keys to reducing the risk of reoffending.

Wherever possible, work at the TPS is aligned to vocational training to improve business employability upon release. Some examples of the linkages between work and vocational training are cleaning, food handling, hospitality, construction, horticulture and textiles. Some of those high demand areas such as food handling, hospitality and construction are the focus at the moment.

Employment related courses such as first aid are also widely available. The TPS continues to monitor the number of prisoner work positions and other programmed activities in accordance with the continual rise in prison population.

As an example, the redevelopment of Division 7 of the Ron Barwick Prison not only brought it up to standard, but also enabled it to deal with prisoners who are aged and prisoners with disabilities. During the redevelopment we utilised those prisoners interested in taking part in training, whether they already had skills or they were interested in obtaining skills or further developing skills. That process was highly successful. One of the builders who came in said he would not hesitate employing some of the prisoners in the future, which I thought was a really positive comment, and gave those prisoners an opportunity, not only to gain extra skills, but also have contact with an employer or future prospective employer in some cases. There are examples of workplace courses outside the prison but this happened

within the prison environment, and meant that some who may not have had that training opportunity at that stage of their prison sentence, could participate.

There is also the TasTAFE expansion, so prisoner education and learning remains a critical aspect of the Tasmanian Prison Service's work to assist prisoners to reduce their risk of future re-offending. TasTAFE and TPS have agreed to expand education services within Risdon Prison and it is very advanced. This is part of a broader prison education strategy where strategic conversations are continuing between key stakeholders including Skills Tasmania, Libraries Tasmania and TasTAFE on an integrated prison education model. This model will offer greater opportunities for prisoners to access foundational education support and accredited vocational training, providing employability skills and improved reintegration outcomes upon release.

The prison education integration project is closing and both the TPS and TasTAFE are working towards implementation at Risdon. I will have more to say about that soon. Vocational education and training in the prison will be overseen by an education manager employed by TasTAFE. The education manager will be responsible for the new improved delivery schedule. TasTAFE's flexible delivery model aims to increase engagement, participation and retention rates in vocational education and training offerings across all prisons with a focus on language, literacy and numeracy, and digital literacy skill development for obvious reasons. Course schedule design is around qualifications through attainment of skill sets allowing for qualification completions and a seamless transition to a TasTAFE campus post release.

When I became Minister for Corrections this was something I felt was sorely lacking in our prison system and, indeed, previous governments had dismantled the TasTAFE program. We have been working on putting that back together and increasing the number of courses offered within Risdon Prison. It is a difficult site to work with because we have to retro fit things with course design but we have been able to come up with a really good model. The Minister for Education and Training and I will be making further details known in due course. One of the absolute keys to reducing recidivism is to ensure that we train and re-train in some cases to ensure that people have a reasonable likelihood of successfully obtaining employment.

Before I move on to the next question I will soon need to request an extension of time of say 10 minutes, so that I can clarify an issue about the Apsley Unit for Ms Haddad. As I said the Apsley program has recommenced, but COVID-19 has changed the delivery format. The program cannot be delivered in the large group setting. We are not able to do that in any type of program setting for that matter and many of the courses needed to be changed. The prisons are still being assessed for the programs and undertaking it on an individual basis but not in a large group setting. It is hoped that the need for isolation within the TPS will stop in coming weeks and that we will be able to pursue a return to the unit based Apsley-run program in due course.

A number of things needed to happen at Risdon Prison to allow for isolation units of prisoners and those coming in to prison for the first time. Those measures, although very strict, have meant we have not has any positive cases of COVID-19 in the prison.

[2.39 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the member continue to be heard for a further 10 minutes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, Mr Street. I hope to get through all of the questions that were asked and possibly avoid the need to go into Committee, if that is the will of the House.

Ms Ogilvie stated that there were circumstances several years ago where some prisoners were not able to immediately leave prison when their custodial sentences expired due to a lack of suitable accommodation in the community and whether I could provide an update on how these issues have been resolved.

I can again confirm that the Government has prioritised and explored ways to improve access to housing for people returning to the community following a period of imprisonment. As part of 2017-18 Budget we committed funding to provide assistance for transitional support and accommodation. This meant in January 2018 the Department of Justice and the Salvation Army finalised an agreement for the delivery of a specialist through care reintegration program called Beyond the Wire.

Beyond the Wire offers a multi-partner through care service for higher and complex needs individuals who are exiting prison and who have chronic accommodation support needs. It is providing those exiting prison with access to case management, service coordination and planning commencing pre-release. From its commencement until the end of July 2020, 84 participants have been accepted into the program. As part of its funding commitment the Government has introduced a prisoner rapid rehousing program. This initiative provides those exiting the TPS with transitional accommodation. Tenants are provided with support from Beyond the Wire to transition back into the community to access and maintain stable accommodation and to address issues which may contribute to reoffending.

These programs have resulted from a collaboration between a number of non-government organisations. I take this opportunity to thank them. They provide statewide access to the services provided by each organisation, namely Anglicare Tasmania, CatholicCare, Colony 47, Hobart City Mission and Salvation Army Tasmania. They all do fabulous work.

Ex-offenders leaving prison and requiring housing assistance also continue to receive support through Housing Connect, a one-stop shop for all Tasmanians in need of housing assistance. All prisoners may now request a housing needs assessment through Housing Connect up to 30 weeks before their estimated release date. That is done in advance of their release.

I will try to deal with other matters raised by Ms Haddad in some order. The HRO orders that form the basis of the second-tier scheme were not anticipated in the TLRI report and diverge somewhat from how post-release conditions are dealt with in other states and territories. The TLRI's 2017 paper did focus on Tasmania's dangerous criminal provisions and provided an analysis of issues relating to indefinite detention and preventative detention. While the TLRI paper identified the need to be able to impose conditions on an offender once a dangerous criminal declaration had been discharged, it did not include extensive analysis of

the full range of schemes operating in other jurisdictions that provide post-detention supervision of high-risk offenders in the community.

Extended supervision schemes of this kind currently operate in all Australian states and territories except Tasmania and the ACT. Some of those schemes, such as Victoria's Serious Offenders Act 2018 and the updated provision currently before the Western Australian parliament, are the result of new legislation that did not exist at the time the TLRI released its paper but which has been considered by the Government in progressing these reforms. We have taken that more holistic approach rather than just focus on the TLRI paper.

In developing this bill, the Government has met its commitment to introduce a second-tier scheme that applies to serious offenders. It is important to understand that the new high-risk offender provisions operate both as a step-down mechanism from a dangerous criminal declaration and as a step-up mechanism for other serious offenders who do not meet the high threshold required for indefinite detention but who nevertheless pose an unacceptable risk of committing another serious offence if not kept under supervision.

I have been through how that gets assessed and what the court powers are. The bill establishes a clear connection between both tiers. This is reflected in clause 14(2), factors the court must consider when reviewing a dangerous criminal declaration, which include consideration of whether the risk proposed by the offender may be appropriately mitigated by imposing an HRO order that rather than keeping the offender detained pursuant to the declaration. It is actually a better outcome.

The capacity to make an HRO order when a dangerous criminal declaration is discharged enables the imposition of strict conditions on the offender so they can be effectively managed once released into the community. It responds to the intent of the TLRI recommendation that a court should be able to impose post-release conditions following discharge for the declaration.

The HRO framework is therefore flexible and provides for consistent treatment of offenders needing post-release supervision by serving two purposes. First, it enables for post-release conditions to be applied to discharge dangerous criminals as contemplated by the TLRI. Second, it enables post-release conditions to be imposed on other high-risk offenders after they have been released from custody.

Ms Haddad said there are some concerns that the HRO provisions fall into the descriptions of schemes described by then Justice Kirby in his dissenting opinion in *Fardon v Attorney-General for the State of Queensland* 2004 High Court case and quoted some remarks from that judgment that referred to, for example, the indeterminate detention of prisoners in Germany in the 1930s. Ms Haddad indicated that some concern had been expressed to her that the proposed HRO provisions may establish a scheme that falls into a similar category.

I note that case was concerned with the operation of Queensland's Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003 and specifically whether the preventative detention provisions in that legislation were constitutionally valid. I emphasise that the proposed HRO provisions do not provide for the detention of an offender. As I have already clarified in this summing up: an offender who is subject to an HRO order will reside in the community but will be supervised according to conditions that the court deems appropriate to ensure the safety of

others in the community. In that respect, the everyday impact on the offender is not dissimilar to being released on parole as I have also observed, and there is no reasonable basis for drawing comparisons between the proposed HRO provisions and the examples of detention schemes that then Justice Kirby was referring to in the Fardon case.

What are the circumstances in which the DPP can apply for an HRO order? Dr Woodruff touched on this as well. Ms Haddad specifically requested clarification of the circumstances in which an offender may be subject to an HRO order. As mentioned earlier, the HRO provisions will operate both as a step-down mechanism from a dangerous criminal declaration and as a step-up mechanism for other serious offenders.

Clause 32(1) of the bill provides that an HRO order application may be made in relation to a person who is, at the time of the application, a relevant offender. Relevant offender is defined within clause 23 of the bill and includes a person who is in custody pursuant to a dangerous criminal declaration. This means that where an application has been made to review an offender's dangerous criminal declaration, the DPP may apply for an HRO order in the event that the declaration is discharged to ensure that the offender is not simply released into the community without any kind of supervision conditions in place. This provides for the step-down operation of the HRO orders referred to previously.

The definition of a relevant offender also includes an offender who is serving a custodial sentence for a serious offence as set out in Schedule 1 of the bill or for a breach of an HRO order or interim order or a custodial sentence for an offence against the law of another state or territory or the Commonwealth that is being served concurrently or consecutively. In those cases, an application for an HRO order can be made by the DPP but it may not be made earlier than nine months before the offender's sentence of imprisonment is due to expire. This provides for the step-up mechanism as it covers offenders who are not currently declared dangerous criminals but who nevertheless pose an unacceptable risk of committing another serious offence if they are not subject to supervision.

Similarly, if an offender is already subject to an HRO order, an application may be made for a new order within the last nine months before the current order is due to expire.

I am sorry to advise the House, I may need further indulgence because I still have four matters to address from questions asked.

[2.50 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the member be heard for a further 10 minutes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms ARCHER - Madam Speaker, I am referring to every question and issue that has been raised so I am in the House's hands in that regard. I do not see that it is unreasonable. I am very happy to go into Committee if members would like to.

Ms Haddad asked if it is anticipated that there will be a limit on the number of times that an HRO order can be renewed. The HRO orders are not renewed under the bill. However, the Director of Public Prosecutions may apply for a new order in relation to an offender within the nine months prior to their current HRO order expiring, so there is a technical difference there.

That distinction is important because in applying for a new order the DPP must supply up-to-date information to the court, including new behavioural reports, management reports or risk assessment reports in relation to the offender that have been facilitated by the High-Risk Offenders Assessment Committee. The DPP cannot simply rely on the information that was provided at the previous hearing.

Similarly, at the time that it makes its decision the court must consider whether it is satisfied to a high degree of probability that the offender poses an unacceptable risk of committing another serious offence unless the new HRO order is put in place. In doing so, the court must once again consider all of the factors listed under clause 35 and not merely rely on its previous determination order.

There is no limit to the number of times the court may make a new HRO order. It comes into effect when the current order expires, providing for an extension of the period during which the offender is subject to supervision and conditions. However, it is important to recognise that the normal actions and processes that the committee, the DPP and the court must undertake in preparing for and hearing an application remain the same and are not modified or compromised.

Ms Haddad also asked where a person is made subject to an order under the bill, could clause 41 of the bill operate to preclude that person from seeking compensation from the state if they were subsequently found to be wrongly convicted of the crime forming the basis of the order? It is a good question. Clause 44 of the bill is not intended to preclude any person from seeking compensation that may arise from a wrongful compensation. It is simply to protect the person who undertakes in good faith the functions and responsibilities that are required of them under the act - for example, members of the new High-Risk Offenders Assessment Committee and the work they would be doing.

Similar protection has been legislated for members of the Parole Board and State Service officers and employees whose services are used by the board under section 67 of the Corrections Act 1997. Such provisions also exist in the comparable legislation for other jurisdictions. For example, section 26 of the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 NSW, section 315 of the Serious Offenders Act 2018 Victoria and section 88 of the High Risk Offenders Bill 2019 WA, the latter of which has almost completed passage through the Western Australian parliament.

With the exception of the ACT, Australian states and the Northern Territory do not currently provide a statutory right to compensation for persons who are exonerated on the basis of a wrongful conviction. The primary means of restitution in such cases is by way of an ex gratia payment. The capacity to make such payment is not compromised by clause 44 of the bill.

To briefly address two matters from Dr Woodruff: she asked about the numbers of dangerous criminal applications. I would like to clarify some inaccuracies that were in the

TLRI report to which Dr Woodruff referred. That was not your fault but it was in relation to the number of applications as well as some updates since that report was released in 2017. We are not quite sure why the figures were slightly incorrect but statistical analysis can sometimes do that, I am sure.

There were 16 applications, including five under the previous provisions in the Criminal Code. Nine declarations were made, five were under the Code; five declarations were refused, all under the Sentencing Act provisions; one application was withdrawn; and one application is currently before the court. Dr Woodruff wanted clarification of the numbers of applications made in Tasmania to date - the numbers are there.

Finally, Dr Woodruff, I note that you said that the High-Risk Offenders Assessment Committee would make recommendations. I want to clarify that that committee will not actually make recommendations as to whether an HRO order application should be made. It will provide reports that the DPP will consider, so the committee will be there to provide the information to the DPP, and it is solely the decision of the DPP to apply for an HRO order.

Dr Woodruff - It is the decision of the DPP, that's right, but I thought the committee recommended -

Ms ARCHER - Not recommend, no, only provide the information. The DPP makes the assessment as to the application and then the ultimate decision is by the court.

That committee will save an enormous amount of time for the DPP and his office, because you can imagine the enormity of work that goes into gathering, compiling and determining what the courts need to be gathered and compiled. That administrative work will fall to the committee and be provided to the DPP who assesses and then goes about his work by way of delegation to other officers in that office, and then making application, and then the court making the ultimate decision as per the act. I wanted to clarify the use of that term.

With that, I thank members of the House for their indulgence in allowing the extension of time. I also thank the department for their thorough work in progressing this, much of which was done pre-COVID and then it stopped because we had people seconded to other areas within government because of COVID, to a large extent, until recently. This work is still able to progress despite COVID because of it largely having been compiled over a number of years now. This is not something that happened overnight, so I thank them for their dedication and hard work on this. I stress that many of the things I am able to bring forward, despite COVID, were under way and we have now been able to finish them off. It simply has had to be a matter of prioritisation of how far advanced we have been with things.

Ms O'Connor - Have a chat to the Premier about walking and chewing gum at the same time.

Ms ARCHER - That is precisely why I am saying it, Ms O'Connor, because anyone can think I can just pluck things out of thin air but a lot of work goes into these things and reviews, and the other matter that was referred to in question time is no different.

I thank my office, as always, for their work and support throughout the enormity of work we deal with and have put through this year, and particularly during COVID the

enormity of the emergency provision work we had to work on as well. I take this opportunity to thank them for that. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (FURTHER CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 16)

Second Reading

[3.00 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The Financial Management Act 2016 commenced on 1 July 2019. The Financial Management (Further Consequential Amendments) Bill 2020 has been drafted in order to make necessary amendments to a small number of other Tasmanian statutes to ensure that there is consistency between those statutes and the Financial Management Act. These amendments are in addition to amendments that were made by the Financial Management (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Act 2017.

The bill ensures the consistent use of terminology between the Financial Management Act and other Tasmanian statutes. In order to do this, the bill amends a number of terms used in other statutes. For example, as the Financial Management Act introduces a single fund Public Account, instances of the use of the term 'Consolidated Fund' will be amended to 'Public Account'. Similarly, references to the 'Special Deposits and Trust Fund' have also been changed to refer to an 'account in the Public Account'. The bill also removes some redundant terms and redundant legislative provisions.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it took me a while to keep up because it was such a long second reading speech. I think in the equivalent debate back in 2017 the then shadow treasurer, Mr Bacon, referred to the shortest second reading speech. I did not have the clock but I reckon that might have been quicker in terms of the contribution then to the contribution now. It does beg the question why the amendments that are proposed in this bill were not dealt with in 2017. That is a moot point; we are here now.

We will not be seeking to go into Committee. We will not be moving any amendments to this bill. We will be supporting the bill, but on matters of financial management it is important that the Premier and Treasurer takes the opportunity to put some truth and some facts into the debate around the financial management of the state.

Whilst it has been strong government mantra that the books and the budget bottom line were in a strong position heading into COVID-19, we make the point that there is no doubt

we are looking down the barrel of a very tough set of circumstances and a tough period for the state's finances in managing what is unquestionably a massive shock to the budget and the economy. There will be some big decisions that will have to be made.

For the Premier and Treasurer to get up in this place and say we were well prepared and had a good balance sheet to respond to could really not be further from the truth. The March update identified that not only was the net operating balance in \$100 million of deficit but we were on a trajectory of \$1.5 billion net debt at the time, which is a significant hit and does not allow the Government to take as many steps and support as many initiatives as it can in response. The only equivalent time we can compare it to is heading into the global financial crisis. There is no doubt that the global financial crisis had a massive impact on the nation and the state's economy and budget -

Ms Ogilvie - And the Great Depression.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, and the Great Depression. There have been a number of shocks to the Tasmanian budget but in more recent contemporary history the only time you could compare this to would be heading into the global financial crisis. In that 2008-09 budget, the then Labor government handed down a budget which had over \$1 billion negative net debt, so that is a positive, not in a Donald Trump negative positive sense, but it was over \$1 billion in reserve to respond to those difficult times and that budget forecast over \$100 million in surplus for that year.

The global financial crisis was a significant hit to the state budget and the state economy. There was a capacity for the state government at that time, combined with the federal government, to respond in a period of time that could manage as best we could the impacts of the global financial crisis. We know the COVID-19 economic impact will be more significant, so the challenge is greater but our capacity is nowhere near as it should be and it could have been had we had someone who was managing the financial books in a way that could prepare for it.

There is a long history of Liberal governments in Tasmania spending the money that was left to them and almost frittering away the hard work of Labor governments that had gone before them. Look at the Gray government and the state of the budget that they left the then following Labor-Greens government at the time. Look at the Groom government and the Rundle/Milne government. It took Labor years to pay off that level of debt.

Whilst there was no doubt in the last couple of years of the previous Labor government that there were some financial difficulties and we ran deficit budgets, at no stage did we go into net debt.

Ms O'Connor - It wasn't a Labor government.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr O'BYRNE - We were in the Treasury. Regarding the condition we left the books in, there was \$200 million negative net debt, so we were not heading towards a net debt trajectory and that provided a framework and a foundation for the incoming Liberal government.

Prior to COVID-19, we were on a trajectory of significant net debt. We know that and it was reported in the Revised Estimates Report that was released in February that there was a significant net debt that was forecast by the state Government at that time.

We need to also look at the Fiscal Sustainability Report which was released by Treasury in October of last year. That painted a bleak picture, no matter how you looked at the scenarios they painted. They made a number of assessments and painted a number of scenarios based on low expenditure, high revenue and low revenue, high expenditure, but also a low level of expenditure growth which, had it been continued at 2.5 per cent each year, even with that low level of expenditure increasing each year, we would be heading towards significant net debt.

This was the report that saw the light of day. You can only imagine the report that was initially done for the Treasurer and what was finally produced for public consumption. I reckon the first report must have been a shocker because if this is the best they can do after consultation with the Treasurer's office, no matter which scenario you looked at, we were heading towards significant net debt.

At the time we raised concerns with the Treasurer about the state of the budget and our capacity to respond to economic and budget shocks, and it was pretty clear at the time in the response from the Treasurer that he thought it was an interesting report but was very dismissive of it. Even on the basis of a small 2.25 per cent expenditure growth, we would be heading for over \$4.5 billion of net debt by the early 2030s. For a budget our size, that is a significant issue that the state had to respond to and having a Treasurer basically dismissing the report of his own Treasury and articulating, 'Oh well, money's cheap at the moment and we'll make a whole range of decisions that will get us through that'. Even with a modicum of increase of 2.25 per cent expenditure growth over those years, we would be in significant financial difficulties.

As part of the dismissal of that report by the Treasurer, he said there would be a whole range of significant decisions the Government would make in response, so there is what the Government says and then what the Government does. In the four years prior to and including this financial year just gone, the Government had significant issues with its own targets and its own outcome. In the 2016-17 year they predicted an increase of 2.25 per cent or thereabouts of expenditure, but they blew it out to over a 5.5 per cent increase in government expenditure over that financial year.

The following year they said, 'Take us on trust this year. In the 2017-18 year we will only spend about 2.5 per cent increase in expenditure across whole of government'. Again, over 5 per cent increase in spending. In 2018-19 they committed to the Tasmanian people that they would only spend 1.5 per cent increase on total government expenditure and, bang, just under 6 per cent growth in expenditure. Amazingly last year, in the 2019-20 financial year, they predicted a zero per cent increase in the government expenditure and we saw a 4 per cent increase in government expenditure.

I am reminded of a comment at the time when Michael Aird was Treasurer and the member for Bass, Peter Gutwein was the shadow treasurer; he levelled the complaint at Michael Aird saying, 'You don't have a savings problem, you have a spending problem'.

That has rung true with this Government. What that has done has meant that we could not arguably be worse prepared for an economic shock to the budget and the economy. The money that could have been used out of cash and savings to respond to the economic crisis is diminished. Therefore, the situation that we will face in the coming financial year across the forward Estimates will mean that we will go into net debt, we will go into net debt for longer, we will go into net debt harder, and there will be more pain for government services, and there will be more pain for the Tasmanian community. This is because the Government has not managed the books in a responsible way to ensure that we had enough in the tank to respond like the equivalent time when Labor was in government and in the 2008-09 budget we had negative net debt of over \$1 billion in the bank ineffectively to respond to that.

Ms O'Connor - Nothing to do with financial management. It was rivers of gold from the GST.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please, Ms O'Connor.

Mr O'BYRNE - Still, if you look at the revenue that this Government has had from rivers of gold from the GST since coming to government: significant increase in GST, significant increase in stamp duty, significant increase in raiding revenues from the GBEs - same situation but no savings. In the equivalent period when Labor was in government yes, there was an increase over that period with the introduction of the GST. We paid off the Liberal debt and we had enough money in the bank to respond to a global and economic shock for this state.

Completely different situation that we are facing now. For example, there has been a 400 per cent increase since this Government has come to the Treasury benches in raiding revenue from the GBEs. We saw the most unusual circumstances when the board of Hydro flagged the dividend policy and flagged the actions of government for special dividends in their report. It was the first time in years that they flagged an issue. Effectively, what the Government had made them do is to borrow money to pay a dividend. Some people call that laundering money. That was the issue that Robin Gray had when he did the exact same thing with Forestry Tasmania in the 1980s. It was called the forestry laundering. You cannot load up your GBEs with debt, arguably make them unsustainable, to fund a dividend program to fund your spending, without having a responsible approach to the bottom line.

That is one of the issues. There has been a massive increase since the global financial crisis in GST coming into the state. A massive uplift in revenue across all the key indicators and it has been spent every year. Every year the Government has said trust us on our commitment and expenditure, we will be reasonable, we will be appropriate, we will cut the cloth to suit the task. But bang! - they blow the revenue expenditure every time.

They predicted over the forward Estimates that not only in 2019-20 was there to be no increase in overall government expenditure but in 2020-21 they were going to reduce expenditure by 1 per cent; in 2021-22, they would go to 1.5 per cent; and in 2022-23, 2 per cent. They have not even come within a bull's roar of meeting their expenditure targets over the Treasurer's Annual Financial Reports across 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20.

This is a government that cannot be trusted on their commitments. The very thing the combined worst-case scenario from the Treasurer's own Treasury Department fiscal sustainability report, which is high expenditure to respond to the COVID-19 needs and the stimulus that will be provided, and also the low revenue, because we know the national economy will be impacted by the slow down and GST revenues will be impacted. The high expenditure and low revenue scenario, the worst case scenario painted by the Treasurer's own Treasury department, is now the reality that we face.

The Treasurer recklessly dismissed the findings of this report. It was an interesting report and it does not take into account Government's actions. What the community of Tasmania did not take into account was the fact that we need to prepare for economic shocks. No-one can prepare for global panic and fear. There is no doubt about it. No-one could prepare or predict for a GFC. What you can do is ensure that if there is an economic shock you have enough in the tank. Sadly, this Government had a spending problem and has not heeded the warning from the Treasury in that fiscal sustainability report. The Treasurer ignored the flag that was being raised by his own department and we now find ourselves in a situation where we are heading towards significant net debt. That net debt position in the budget this year would not be as bad if we had some money in the bank to respond to it.

We know that the budget was already in deficit, as I said, to the tune of \$100 million in the March update which was a part of the May report that was released to the public. The other mantra that the Government talks about is that the economy was strong pre-COVID. There is no doubt that some elements of our economy were strong going into COVID. The figure that you use is in the GSP report, and change and figure in the 2018-19 year. There is no doubt that in the middle of last year we were travelling okay, but to quote the Treasurer in 2018, about state final demand, 'The state final demand is a key economic indicator of the state's economic performance'. Well, state final demand for the December quarter was negative 1 per cent. We contracted. The state final demand shrunk by 1 per cent and we had the worst growth in Australia in that December quarter. Not by a little bit, by a lot. We were down 1 per cent.

Mr Gutwein - No, we did not go down 1 per cent. You are making that up.

Mr O'BYRNE - Not at all. South Australia was 0.2 reduction; Western Australia was 0.2; the Northern Territory was 0.3 increase; Queensland was 0.2 increase; New South Wales was 0.5 increase; and the ACT was 0.8 increase. In Tasmania, our state final demand shrank by a long way. Two of those in a row and you have a technical recession.

The state final demand heading into the March quarter was 0.6 per cent, so the state marginally avoided a technical recession. The Government - like all politicians - is very quick to work towards the statistics that we like and suit our argument, but at the end of the day you have quoted state final demand as a key figure. The December quarter was bad for the state. It was negative and that is the reality we face. Heading into COVID we were not in as strong a case as the Government would have us believe.

The other mantra of the Government is that they are going to build our way out of this with a blitz. They are very good at making a series of announcements. We saw the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport today announcing all of these projects that are yet to be built. The litany and the list of failed projects and non-delivery of projects is legend in Tasmania.

The civil construction industry celebrates any announcement but what they really would celebrate is delivery of these programs. In the economic and fiscal update from May, which is the March quarterly report, the government budgeted \$700 million purchase of non-financial assets, yet they only delivered on \$300 million. A massive fail in infrastructure projects. It has been delayed. The list is very long: Hobart Airport exchange roundabout upgrade; the Southern Outlet fifth lane; Mac Point; Marinus; public housing; the northern prison; the duplication of the south-east corridor; the mythical Hobart underground bus mall; the new Tamar bridge; the Burnie Port; the Hobart rail corridor; and the vessel replacement program for the *Spirit of Tasmania* is in disarray. In terms of ferries on the Derwent, we know what has been announced recently is nothing like what this Government committed. It is no Metro service with integrated ticketing and connecting to services on both sides of the river. You cannot believe a government when they say that they can build us out of this COVID economic malaise when they cannot even build before COVID hit. This is a financial management bill, but it is about time the Treasurer came to the table and was honest with the Tasmanian people about the state of the budget heading into COVID.

Do not say that we have a strong balance sheet when we do not, in comparison to heading into the global financial crisis. Arguably we were prepared for the GFC because we did not go into net debt at any stage. Yet we were on a trajectory of net debt even before COVID hit, so we were not prepared for any economic shock. We know the impact of the COVID will be much greater than the GFC, but even if it is similar to the GFC, we are still not prepared. We still do not have money in the bank to respond to that kind of hit to the state budget and to the state economy.

We ask that the Premier be a bit more up-front and honest. Do not tell Tasmanians that the budget is tickety-boo and that we have a good balance sheet to respond to the challenges because that is inaccurate. It leads people to believe that the pain that will be brought by this pandemic will last a shorter time than it actually will, because we know, the inability of the government to prepare for economic shocks has left us exposed and the pain will last longer.

We support the bill.

[3.21 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, we will be supporting the Financial Management (Further Consequential Amendments) Bill 2020 as we supported the first financial management act that went through here four years ago. This is a tidy-up bill, it is making sure that there is consistency in the terminology and the language in relation to changes that were made in the legislation four years ago. I am not going to spend very long speaking on this bill because there are two other significant pieces of legislation that we need to get through this afternoon.

Mr O'Byrne, I listened to your contribution and it raised the question in my mind, which always comes up: what would you do differently? I listened to your rewriting of the Lennon/Aird years with great interest. When Paul Lennon was premier and Michael Aird was treasurer, and David Crean before that, there were veritable waterfalls of gold coming in from Canberra from GST receipts. The national economy before the 2008 financial crisis was going gangbusters and the Lennon government spent money like drunken sailors. By the time the election rolled around in 2010, there was not very much left. While Mr O'Byrne might like to describe the years between 2010 and 2014 as a Labor government, they were

not. It does not matter how many times you try to rewrite history, it was a Labor-Greens government, and in 2011 we delivered one of the most difficult budgets, I believe, that has been handed down in this century in the Tasmanian parliament. We grinned and gritted our teeth and we bore it.

That makes it even more galling to have a former member of that government come in here and try to pretend it was a Labor government when there were two Greens ministers in Cabinet, holding firm, as difficult as it was, with the premier of the day, despite some termite problems in the Cabinet room.

Mr O'Byrne, I still look forward to hearing how you would do things differently if you want to be the treasurer of Tasmania. I understand you have learned all the terminology, but I did not hear anything from you about how a Labor government would do it differently. I believe that is what the people of Tasmania are entitled to hear.

The state budget will be delivered in November, and the Greens will again deliver a fully costed, alternative budget which will lay out our vision for Tasmania's future. Again, undoubtedly, we will have carping from the Labor benches but no documentation or laying out of a vision that they could be held to. That is distressing.

We are going to have to start thinking as a state and as a parliament about making sure that there are structural changes embedded in our society and our economy that are basically compelled on us by having to respond to a pandemic, and all the social and economic distress that that causes as well as transitioning our economy into a very rugged, resilient economy in the face of increasing global shocks and uncertainty. We are going to have to do things differently here in Tasmania, in Australia, and around the world.

My heart broke for the children this morning when I read the national news from the Prime Minister. While California, Oregon and Washington are aflame in the same way that the eastern seaboard of Australia was late last year and early this year, you have the Prime Minister of Australia saying we will have a gas-led recovery. I know how that affects young people. They find it distressing because they know that gas is a fossil fuel and a gas-led recovery will increase Australia's emissions. We are already one of the worst performers on the planet for our contribution to global emissions through the amount of coal that we dig up and export, and burn here. You have the Prime Minister of this country saying our recovery will be gas-fired. It is bordering on criminal negligence to inflict that kind of economic model on this country in a time of climate crisis when, at the same time, you have a mental health crisis, among young people particularly, in response to the pandemic and climate.

Young people are already being shafted by the system. In Tasmania, last time I checked, we are edging up to 20 per cent youth unemployment. We have a housing crisis and young people who have no hope in their hearts of owning their own home. We have young people telling their parents they cannot really see the point in studying because the planet is stuffed anyway. They do not have time.

We went down to the Denison Valley behind Geeveston last Thursday where Forestry Tasmania does log giant trees; we filmed one. There was a young bloke there, Jack, who works with the Forestry Watch scientists. He is very bright and engaging, and he is passionate about tackling climate. He is passionate about protecting the forests. I said to

him, 'Jack, you have this great brain, what are you going to do with it? Are you going to go to university?' He said, 'I do not have time. I have thought about it. I could have got into university. I do not have time. There's too much to do'.

We have a whole generation of young people here who are in a state of high distress, who are being shafted by the system. They were, of course, the first ones to lose their jobs in tourism and hospitality when the pandemic hit. They are looking at what is happening on the west coast of America with the heaviest of hearts. They see the Arctic is burning, as is the Amazon, as is the Congo. Then they hear from their Prime Minister that he really does not care about their future. That is the only message thinking young people will take out of the economic plan that has been laid out by Prime Minister Scott Morrison after he got his cabal of fossil fuel interests together to formulate a COVID-19 recovery.

I hope that somewhere along the road to Damascus, the Prime Minister, Mr Morrison, turns around and looks at his own two beautiful daughters and has another good, hard think about it. By committing this country to more fossil fuels and a gas-fired recovery, we are consigning young people to the bleakest of futures. We can do better. We can certainly do better in Tasmania.

Despite the fact that the interim report of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council did not mention climate action, I have some hope that we will do things differently here. We are living in a financially constrained set of circumstances at the moment. What Tasmanians have seen is that if the Government has a crisis to deal with and it has people's wellbeing at heart, it will respond. The Tasmanian Government has responded to people's needs. Then you have, at a federal level, the Prime Minister winding back the coronavirus supplement out of JobSeeker and cutting JobKeeper.

Again, it is negligent. It is all about priorities. It is not about balancing the budget. If the Prime Minister can threaten to build a new gas-fired power station to replace Liddell coal-fired power station, you can certainly afford to give young people more hope for the future and make sure there is more money in people's pockets during a pandemic emergency.

I did the holiday at home thing with the kids and took them to the west coast. It was really uplifting to see so many Tasmanians -

Mr Gutwein - They are out and about.

Ms O'CONNOR - They are. It was amazing. We pulled up at Montezuma Falls. As we were driving in I thought we might have the place to ourselves as it was a Saturday and I thought it would be quiet. There were 16 cars in the carpark. They were all locals because they all had local number plates. Obviously no one here is travelling.

We need to make sure that JobSeeker and JobKeeper are retained at the higher rate, because to a significant extent I posit that money is helping to keep Tasmania's economy alive. Tasmanians holidaying at home and making that extra effort to spend in small businesses is actually an act of love as Tasmanians. We want to see these businesses not only survive but flourish. I fear that the Tasmanian Government is going to be nobbled in its endeavours to make sure that there is enough stimulus in the economy by the actions of the Morrison government.

I hope that the Premier, when he is at that National Cabinet table, is advocating for retaining JobSeeker and JobKeeper at their current rate in order to look after Tasmanians and to look after Tasmanian businesses.

I also hope, given Mr Gutwein is the Minister for Climate Change, that when he is talking to Scott Morrison, even if you could get him out of the space of other people who might use the information against him, get in his ear about this stuff. Over the course of the past six months you have probably developed relationships and respect at a national level. There has to be a better way forward than what we are being presented with.

Young people need to know that their governments are reshaping the future in a way that works for them and not for their political donors. I will not go onto donations right now because I really want you to have this conversation with the Prime Minister and think about the kids.

While I veered off track a bit, it all relates to the way we manage money. This year's state budget is going to be a hard one. It is going to be quite politically challenging because there will be decisions that may need to be made and we are not that far from a state election if it is held in 2022. There is a lot of talk about it being held earlier.

If the Government makes sure it is investing in wellbeing, is serious about a housing-led recovery and is protecting those public services and investing money in people, I think in the main Tasmanians will accept a hard budget because everyone in the community to some extent or another is paying a price through this pandemic. Most young people I know have lost their jobs. I have been encouraging them to go and pick fruit this summer. I think it is a fantastic work opportunity for young people. I hope there is a communications module going out to encourage particularly young Tasmanians to get out there and help make sure we get the fruit off the vines and the trees. That is very important. This completely uninspiring but important bill has the Greens' support.

[3.36 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, those words were a little harsh; I am sure it is quite inspiring to those who like to get the detail right. It is a bill to synchronise language across a number of other bills.

I could speak at some length about our economic situation but I want to try to raise it up a level and talk about the work we should be doing while we have this hiatus period in the dome or bubble. I am getting a sense as I move around my electorate - and I am sure other members are as well - that people are feeling very secure that there is sufficient money around, but we all know it cannot last. We know that we are going to have to migrate out of this phase and yet we are not quite sure how to do that. That is the key question that we should be dealing with strategically as leaders in this state and in this House. We saw some of that leadership and strategic thinking happening during the pandemic when we had to do it on the fly. But now we have the time to do it properly and we need to knuckle down and start getting that done.

I have a few issues I will roll through but one of the issues I would really like us to focus on is the situation of women in Tasmania and working mothers in particular. I love to

come in and talk about this issue because, like many people in this place, I am living the scenario. I think that women have had it a little bit tougher during the pandemic than others. Working mums, home schooling, trying to keep their job, working from home - all of those issues are really enormous to do overnight in a pandemic to make that change.

We know that women's superannuation continues to be a terrible blight on this country. I say this as somebody whose first job was in Paul Keating's new superannuation department in Canberra helping establish the SIS Act - the *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act* - back in the day. At that time there was a great energy around superannuation and what it would do for us all heading into retirement and that it would provide freedom to enjoy retirement. What has actually transpired is that we have steadfastly as a community, as a society, ignored the fact that women's working lives are fundamentally different from men's. We have other responsibilities, it is just the way it is, and as women move in and out of the workforce they are just not able to accumulate enough superannuation to match the kinds of dollars that men are coming out with.

There are statistics out there and we know that this is a fact. I have said in this place before that if I could do one thing for Tasmanian women during this pandemic it would be to put \$20 000 into each one of their superannuation accounts and catch them up. That would include me because I do not have enough either; I will be working until the day I drop dead. I am worried about that. We women are all in the same boat, particularly widows who are living in large houses who want to and are able to stay in their family homes but who cannot afford it, whether it is rates increases or they are on fixed incomes. As one person it is much harder to manage.

If we want to start addressing our property issue, particularly for families who need larger places, we are going to have to start dealing with this issue of making sure that there is appropriate accommodation for older people who want to move out. My friends in the real estate industry tell me that part of the problem, part of the challenge, is not just the cost of moving, the cost of selling and transacting in the property market at that stage of your life, but it is really hard to find an appropriate apartment that has street-level access and is part of a local community, where you can walk to the shops and still be a part of the community.

We have these philosophical and community challenges on our plate that we really have to start addressing at a human level. Some of it is economic but some of it is about community and grassroots living and the way we look after and care for each other. That is one of the reform agenda ideas we should be considering.

The next one is more specific to legislative reform. The way this bill is drafted has triggered some thoughts about how we can contemporise the body of legislation that we have sitting on the record. Every so often we will see a raft of bills come in and consolidate a way for repeal. I did an exercise a few years ago around regulatory burden and looking at how we have increased the volume of legislation that we sit across in this place. I looked at some of the models in other jurisdictions and other levels and layers in both the Australian federal parliament but also the United Kingdom and others. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was very helpful with this work as well.

The legal profession went through a great re-energisation in the 1970s and 1980s around getting rid of all that ridiculous Latin that nobody could understand and making

legislation very accessible. There are some things we can do in the way we manage the corpus of our legislation to do a similar thing. If we are going to do consequential amendments, let us do one that puts gender-neutral language through all of our legislation. We still pick up the odd bill here and there that just has the male gender in it. I know that the Acts Interpretation Act would overlay that but let us just fix it, so when we read it we all feel included.

As you know, I am very interested in the issue of borders, normalising travel and how we start moving to that. When the pandemic started we thought that it might just pass through, but we are seeing that it is going to hang around for quite a while. Just last night, my sister in London and my brother in Sweden let me know that their borders have been open to each other, which is interesting because they are both areas where we felt there were some pretty hotspot-type activity happening and that is not just their nightlife, the hotspots. They have opened up to each other, so it is interesting just keeping tabs on that.

I am quite concerned about some of the nuance and culture we have around our public discourse with being part of a state or being a part of a country or both. Prior to the pandemic we truly all felt Australian first and then our state second, except perhaps when the rugby was on or some other state of origin sporting event. When we have that and it gets in the way of an Australian response, we have work to do. We need to look at how to get back to that federation table and strengthen that. How we open up again freedom of movement, how we do that stuff with state borders, is a really important issue.

I am putting to one side the health management of it which always has primacy, but going forward, if we were to prepare for something like this that may happen again in the future, what would be the framework that we would have ready to pull out and put into place across the nation? What lessons have we learnt? How have we built resilience? How do we manage these things? Let us hope it never happens again but if it did what would we look like?

If you look at Taiwan's response, they responded to the SARS virus and then when this came they were more tuned into it. Some of that has to do with their geographic location and their political situation.

Ms O'Connor - And they are an island and they have a woman leader.

Ms OGILVIE - We love an island. Islands are fantastic. So in normalising travel, how would you quarantine? How would you do movement? What does the 1 December deadline look like? Who is going to pay for all of this? These are issues are of great concern.

On Friday and Saturday nights in Salamanca - because I am out and about with the kids and I see it - we have young people out and about regardless of whether the clubs are open. As a mother of young people who are just getting to the stage where they might want to go out to pubs and clubs, I feel more comfortable knowing that at least they are indoors and there is some degree of supervision. I am concerned if my daughter, as she gets older, is out and about on the streets. The lines to get into clubs and restaurants are too long and people are being turned away. I am a bit concerned about it and I wonder whether it would be worth us having some concierge-type people around Salamanca keeping it safe, like we might do on

campus, just to make sure that this new way of socialising that the kids have found how to do is safe and there is some modicum of supervision.

I agree with Cassy O'Connor and the Premier on climate change. I have a slightly different model in my mind on how we might structure something but I am open to all of those discussions. I was very interested and excited recently to visit the hyperbolic and hyperbaric chambers. I had a good laugh at the end of the tour about the fact that we work in the hyperbole chamber: a fabulous gag that we all enjoyed.

From my electorate's perspective it is all about jobs. We want the Marinus Project, we want the *Spirits*. We want them built as much as possible in Derwent Park, Glenorchy. That is what I am after and I will not be taking prisoners on that. I will be pushing very hard.

The digital economy is an area in which we can have stratospheric growth. We can really drive some economic activity. We can do it COVID-19 safely. We are clever and expert at programming, IT systems integration, academic research, maritime research, space. We have it all here. Let us get that landed on Macquarie Point so we can bring the ships in again alongside and do some of this shipbuilding work.

I was pleased that the kids were allowed to dance at their formals. It was a great decision. Thank you everyone who worked very hard on that. As a final somewhat humorous aside, during the pandemic my trailer got stolen. I understand that trailers are being rebirthed so I look forward to seeing it returned at some point, perhaps with a load of firewood upon it. That humour covers the fact that if there are people who are having to do that it tells me that not everybody is doing okay. If we are having to find wood and sell wood we still have some serious problems. I would like to see more of the love shared around in that regard.

I look forward to talking to you more about supply chains and how we are going to address those, particularly in the modern slavery context. I will save that for another speech. I support the bill.

[3.50 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the bill has been drafted in order to make necessary amendments to a number of other Tasmanian statutes to ensure that there is consistency between those statutes and the Financial Management Act. For example, it introduces exchanging public account for consolidated fund.

I commend the Premier, the Cabinet, his staff and the department for their efforts not only with this bill but for their ongoing support and commitment to all Tasmanians. Over the past seven months during the COVID-19 pandemic, at the heart of every decision the Premier, the Cabinet and the departments have made have been Tasmanians.

They want to make sure that every Tasmanian is safe. They consider wellbeing and that our businesses have economic security. The only way that we are going to rebuild a stronger Tasmania is through us all working together and looking out for each other. That is why the Government, under Mr Gutwein, has provided the most generous financial, economic and social support in the nation. It is also why we will continue to support our hard-hit businesses and industries.

The Government has invested record amounts into essential services for Tasmanians. It has invested more money into health. The Premier and the Cabinet invested more money into education and safety. They have employed more doctors, nurses, paramedics, teachers and police. There is also our \$3.1 billion construction blitz around Tasmania, which will underpin around 15 000 Tasmanian jobs.

They are also implementing PESRAC's 64 recommendations in its interim report. This is complementing a raft of initiatives that we have already rolled out to help Tasmania recover. This has seen 13 400 jobs return since the height of the pandemic's impact in May. The Government wants to thank and acknowledge the hard work and support of all Tasmanians who continue to support local jobs and businesses as we grow our economy and build Tasmania out of this unprecedented pandemic.

Before the pandemic 23 200 jobs were created since we came to government. Our economy was ranked first in the nation according to CommSec. We were also one of two states to see economic growth in the March quarter. Tasmania was the most confident state for businesses. According to the CommSec State of the State's July 2020 report, Tasmania's economy was the best performing in the nation -

Mr O'Byrne - It is an internal comparison, not a point to point comparison.

Mrs PETRUSMA I note the carping from the other side but it is a fact that Tasmania led the nation on relative population growth, retail trade, equipment investment and our low unemployment rate.

Tasmania was also second on construction work, dwelling starts and new automobiles. For Mr O'Byrne's benefit the report said -

For the first time since October 2009, Tasmania holds the mantle of the best-performing economy in its own right and is ranked first outright on the CommSec rankings. Three months ago Tasmania shared top spot with Victoria.

Despite what Mr O'Byrne has said today, it is important to note for the record that under the previous Labor government, Tasmania was ranked last. Last overall for eight consecutive reports from July 2012 to March 2014 and last on all eight measures in the July and October 2013 State of the State reports.

In contrast, this Government's policies are the most popular in the nation. They have been the most popular in the nation for the Sensis Business Index for 11 reports in a row. That equates to nearly three years' worth of reports, with 62 per cent of businesses considering the Government's policies supportive.

Before the pandemic, the Sensis Business Index of March 2020 also found that Tasmanian businesses were the most confident of all states. A massive 61 per cent of Tasmania's small to medium businesses were confident. However, under Labor, business confidence was rock bottom, the lowest in Australia. Tasmania was number one before, and

under the Premier, Mr Gutwein, and the Tasmanian Liberal Government, we can be number one again because in uncertain times, Tasmanians are looking for certainty and safe hands.

After six and a half years in opposition, as Ms O'Connor stated, Labor has failed to deliver a properly costed alternative budget. They have no long-term plan for Tasmania. In the four years I was in opposition, under our current Premier and Treasurer, we delivered an alternative budget every year. For six and a half years, Labor has not delivered one alternative budget so we look forward, maybe as a Christmas present, to you producing an alternative budget this year. They consistently come into this place and scaremonger on jobs and employment at a time when so many Tasmanians are worried about job security. Instead of coming in here and supporting the investment we have been making, all they do is continually talk Tasmania down, when we should all be working together.

I acknowledge the great work that Ms O'Connor, under the Greens, has been willing to do with this government, because Labor is anti-jobs. They are consistently talking down and opposing significant job-creating projects like the northern prison and our approach to the new TT-Line ships. The question is, why are they opposed to the new northern prison? It will support 1000 extra jobs but it will also deliver an economic boost of \$500 million to the region at a time when northern Tasmania needs it most. It will also improve outcomes for prisoners and their families. On the *Spirits* replacement, Labor is again running an anti-Tasmanian anti-jobs campaign and their campaign to not support the new *Spirits* is not supported by the federal Labor party members or the unions.

Today they are in here again trying to rewrite history and pretending they have some sort of financial management credibility when they are ignoring our economic and social support package, valued at over a billion dollars - the largest in the country as a proportion of our economy.

This Government has been willing to invest that \$1 billion into this economy because we know that the only way to get our budget back on track and to grow business confidence and to create jobs, is to grow the economy, and that is what we are doing.

This bill goes across quite a few different portfolios because it changes a number of different statutes. Some of the ones I will focus on today include infrastructure and transport, finance and state growth.

The Government believes it is critically important that we maintain a steady and strong pipeline of construction work, which is why our roads and bridges program is central to our building program. By ensuring our civil construction and engineering sectors have a significant program of work, the Government is playing an important role in providing industry with the confidence and certainty to maintain employment and investment in their own businesses.

Over \$827 million in roads and bridges work is coming up over the next two years, and this will help them to grow their businesses as the program rolls out. Our roads and bridges program is only one part of our \$1.8 billion program over the next two years which will deliver an estimated \$3.1 billion in construction and is expected to support 15 000 jobs.

Tenders have recently closed and more are expected to be awarded soon for construction in the coming season. These include the two contracts for the final sections of the Midland Highway, deferred tranche of upgrades on the Great Eastern Drive, and a tender for the upgrade of the Midway Point intersection. We also have a range of tenders currently open for bids including shoulder sealing works on the Batman Highway, the replacement of the Apsley River Bridge on the Tasman Highway, the first package of works on the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah section, bridge upgrades on the Murchison Highway, a new overtaking lane between Dianas Basin and St Helens Point Road on the Great Eastern Drive, the realignment of the Bass Highway between Somerset and Wynyard, and the demolition of the old Scamander Bridge and provision of pedestrian access improvements.

These tenders are closing this month and are expected to be awarded later this year.

In addition, the tender for the new Bridgewater bridge is currently open. This is the project that Labor, when they were in government, and when Mr O'Byrne was minister, failed to get off the ground. Under this Government, it is now open for the first stage of the procurement process for a request for a proposal that will short-list two potential head contract parties to enter into a competitive early contractor involvement stage. While this successful tenderer will need to be a tier one construction firm, we expect that a significant proportion of the construction workforce and the materials that will be used to build this once in a generation project, will be Tasmanian. This project is \$576 million worth of reasons why the local construction sector can have confidence as we build our way to recovery.

A big program of forward tenders will continue to provide industry with confidence. For example, in coming weeks, there will be even more projects going to market including construction of the Campbell Town pedestrian underpass, duplication of Evandale Road from Breadalbane to the Launceston Airport, and upgrades to Binalong Bay Road.

In my electorate of Franklin, there will be the implementation of on-road traveller information and land-use management systems between Kingston and the Tasman Highway which will modernise the drive experience on these roads, as well as duplication of the East Derwent Highway from Geilston Bay to Sugarloaf Road and junction upgrades at the Otago Bay Road intersection with the East Derwent Highway.

It is essential that we keep investing to ensure that these roads and bridges, ports and railways as well as our hospitals and schools are kept in great condition. Investing in our infrastructure is investing in Tasmanian jobs, because it is predominantly Tasmanian firms and Tasmanian tradespeople that will be doing this work and will benefit from our investment. By putting money into the pockets of our construction industry partners, they in turn will spend money at Tasmanian shops and other businesses right around the state, helping to keep even more Tasmanian businesses and their employees going through these difficult times.

This Government, the whole way through over the last seven months, has acknowledged the enormous toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has had and will continue to have both on our businesses and on thousands of Tasmanians across our state. The private sector is critical to rebuilding and growing our economy and that is why this government is committed to assisting Tasmanian businesses through this period and beyond.

The Tasmanian Government announced yesterday, an extra \$60 million for loans to assist Tasmanian businesses to recover, adapt and grow. This new loan scheme is built on the

success of the previous \$50 million COVID-19 business support loan scheme which has already assisted over 350 businesses during the height of the pandemic. The new loan program is targeted at retention of jobs as well as entirely new projects and investments that would generate new jobs and apprenticeships. This will help grow Tasmania's economy as we want to see businesses in a strong position, to build resilience and capacity across all sectors of our economy.

During this time, the Government has worked closely with the Office of the Coordinator-General and the Department of State Growth as well as the Tasmanian Development Board to support private sector projects that deliver valuable job creation and economic outcomes for the state. The Government is also providing financial support to assist businesses to undertake commercially sound initiatives that deliver sustainable benefits to Tasmania, particularly jobs.

One good example of this is the new state-of-the-art secure medical cannabis facility at Tasmanian Alkaloids that we supported with a \$10 million commercial loan and the new Tasmanian stock feed facility we supported with a \$6 million loan.

We are strong supporters of job-creating investment through our commitment to red tape reform and our support of investment continues to be unwavering. The first tranche of this initiative passed through parliament in June with the passage of the Building and Construction Regulatory Reform Amendments Bill 2020 with a second tranche planned for later this year along with the supporting regulations. Strong progress also continues to be made in delivering on both the Hobart and Launceston City deals including a lot of initiatives in the electorate of Franklin.

To further assist our local businesses to create jobs and to stimulate the economy to deliver growth, the Government's Buy Local policy is working hard to enhance opportunities for local suppliers. I note that on 31 July 2020 the Government made a number of improvements to the Buy Local policy to reduce red tape as well as to increase support for Tasmanian businesses in the community more broadly as part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I note that a new test for tenders worth \$100 000 or more allows for greater focus on Tasmania's social and economic factors when government agencies evaluate competitive procurements and that this test is weighed at 25 per cent of the total procurement evaluation criteria, up from 20 per cent for the previous local benefits test. I also note that to further increase opportunities for Tasmanian businesses, the Government has also raised the low value procurement threshold from \$50 000 to \$100 000 which allows more flexibility to directly approach Tasmanian businesses where local capability and capacity exists.

I have placed these few examples on the record today in regard to this Government's strong financial management policies and initiatives to show that only the Tasmanian Liberal Government understands the importance of investing in infrastructure, building confidence and reducing red tape.

It is clear that we are getting on with the job instead of carping from the opposition sidelines over there. The fact is that Labor consistently and deliberately fudges the facts about the Government's infrastructure project rollout to suit their misleading claims. I can clearly remember my first four years in this place when Labor continually had a shameful

record of infrastructure investment delivery, whereas this Liberal Government is spending on average nearly \$100 million more per year than the former Labor government and the former minister O'Byrne and our supportive policies are being warmly recognised by businesses compared to when Labor was here and was ranked dead last.

Mr O'Byrne - You're better than this, Jacquie. Come on.

Mrs PETRUSMA - On that note I commend the bill. I also commend the Premier, the department and his staff -

Mr O'Byrne - You are better than this.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mrs PETRUSMA - and all of Cabinet for the great work they are doing in making sure that Tasmanians are not only safe and healthy but also that our future is economically secure.

[4.07 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions on a bill that has been called unremarkable but is important.

Ms O'Connor - Also uninspiring.

Mr GUTWEIN - Uninspiring, unremarkable but important. I will start by thanking members for their contributions, especially Mrs Petrusma for her interest in these matters and the support she provides me as a parliamentary secretary. Some contributions were less inspiring than others but I might start by first and foremost thanking members for their support for this bill and for assisting us. This is now the second time that amendments have had to be brought forward but, at the end of the day, there are significant pieces of legislation that exist across government and I am certain there will be a time in the future when some obscure act is picked up with the Consolidated Fund in it or it refers to the Special Deposits and Trust Fund and both matters will be picked up and changed then.

Mr O'Byrne - How many acts did it actually change in the end? About 20?

Mr GUTWEIN - I do not have that answer but it is a significant number and this bill covers a range of acts. I want to first remark on the fact that once again Ms O'Connor and I are on a similar ticket here -

Ms O'Connor - Oh, no.

Mr GUTWEIN - in terms of the situation that the Labor Party finds itself in without having the courage to produce an alternative budget. Whilst I have on various occasions in this place described some of the ideas that are captured by the Greens alternative budget as kooky -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, a badge of honour.

Mr GUTWEIN - the thing I have always believed in this place, from the day that I started here, is that you have to stand for something. The alternative budgets that we brought down provided us with an opportunity to actually lay out what we supported, what we did not support and, importantly, how we would fund those things that we did support.

The Greens, albeit having some kooky ideas that are captured in it, every year bring forward a document that demonstrates what they stand for and, importantly, how they would pay for things. That is what political parties in this place should do. I hope Mr O'Byrne has used some of the down time he has had whilst the pandemic was under way to consider what he might do in terms of an alternative budget when the time comes around later this year. It is almost an act of political cowardice if you are not prepared in this place to lay down those things that you support, those things that you do not support and, importantly, how you would fund those things that you want to do different from the Government because otherwise all you can do is whinge and carp.

I encourage the Labor Party to bring down an alternative budget and will wait with bated breath, I am sure, for that event to occur. I have said in this place on many occasions that whingeing is not a platform. It is not what people expect of their political parties and unfortunately that is something Tasmanians are coming to accept from the Labor Party: they will throw rocks, whinge, but not demonstrate what they would spend money on.

I will deal with just a couple of issues. I do not want to get into a debate on climate other than to say that it is worthwhile pointing out that the Prime Minister has announced a gas program today. I do not have it at my fingertips in here, but I understand from what I have read that a gas plant will be 50 per cent to 60 per cent more efficient than the old coal. As part of a transitional program, I can understand why the Prime Minister is doing what he is doing. Not everybody is blessed with the opportunity that we have and, I have made the point on many occasions, that over the last 80 years the investment that has occurred in Hydro stands this state in good stead and it is important that we build on that legacy. It is exactly what the current Energy minister and my Cabinet and I are intending to do. I believe the Marinus Link provides us with a fantastic opportunity and the fact that it has been identified by the Prime Minister as one of the three significant interconnectors in this country that needs to be fast-tracked and brought to market as quickly as it can is an important further step.

Regarding the commentary around the budget position that the state brought into the pandemic crisis, I make the point that we had a very strong economy compared to other jurisdictions. Mr O'Byrne makes an artform of cherry-picking numbers that suit an argument he wants to put. He knows full well that in regard to state final demand, whilst we were barely flatlining in that December quarter, in real trend terms about 0.02 per cent was the decline, largely driven by the fact that a range of capital projects timed out and then in the March quarter the new capital program stepped in. It is a timing issue.

Mr O'Byrne - It doesn't change the result, does it? So negative state final demand in a quarter is a timing issue.

Mr GUTWEIN - In terms of the cherry-picking that Mr O'Byrne engages in, if you look at the four quarters - and state final demand or gross state product should be measured across the course of a year - for the period for the 12 months to the end of December 2019 compared to the previous 12 months to December 2018, New South Wales was 1.3 per cent,

Victoria 2 per cent, Queensland 1.3 per cent, South Australia 0.8 per cent, Western Australia 1.1 per cent and Tasmania 3.4 per cent.

Interestingly enough the series changed from where they used to provide a trend series, which was something that as a small state previous treasurers have relied upon, to seasonally adjusted and removed the trend series. If you look at the growth we had from December 2019 to March 2020 quarter, New South Wales was negative 1.5 per cent, Victoria was negative 0.1 per cent, Queensland was negative 0.3 per cent, South Australia was negative 1 per cent, Western Australia was 0.9 per cent and Tasmania at 0.6 per cent. Out of all of the states we came in second in terms of our economy.

As I say, Mr O'Byrne will grasp at anything in attempting to make a point and I encourage him not to. We went into this with a strong economy. It is not just me; it is economists widely that say that.

Regarding our budget position, Mr O'Byrne knows full well that we had a strong balance sheet going into this and that is a statement of fact. At 30 June, if you look at net debt and you remove the impact of leases which are an accounting treatment that was brought in in the last budget period, if you look at the amount of cash that we held at 30 June it was \$526 million in net cash and investments. At 30 June, we held more than half a billion dollars worth of cash after we had provided back to businesses with payrolls under \$5 million, to businesses that were in the hospitality or tourism sectors their entire year's payroll tax waived, plus on top of that significant spending through the \$1 billion package we brought down. We still held more than half a billion dollars worth of cash in the budget once you exclude leases. In fact if you wind leases in for accounting treatment we still held nearly \$200 million worth of cash in an accounting sense.

None of this is of any import to the shadow treasurer because he is inclined to be as negative as possible. He is almost as negative in here as he is out in the electorate when he is speaking about his Leader, to be frank, from what I have heard.

Mr O'Byrne - That is just rubbish.

Mr GUTWEIN - The whispers are starting.

I thank members for their support for the bill in front of us. It is an important bill, albeit uninspiring and unremarkable, as it has been described. As I have said I expect at some stage in the future to be back in this place as other acts are bound to have a requirement for a change in terminology. Right across the breadth of government with the thousands and thousands of pieces of legislation that are in place, I am certain that there may be a time when we might need to change something from 'consolidated fund' to terminology that fits with the financial management account. That is to be expected.

With that, I thank Treasury and the officers there for the work they have done and my office for its support and commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

EVIDENCE (CHILDREN AND SPECIAL WITNESSES) AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 31)

Second Reading

[4.21 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read a second time.

Throughout the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse we heard stories from survivors of their daunting experiences engaging in the criminal justice system. We heard about the harrowing nature of child sexual abuse offences as being generally committed in private, with no eyewitnesses and no medical or forensic evidence capable of confirming the abuse. We heard about the importance of a survivor's evidence in a criminal trial, with that evidence typically being the only direct evidence about what has occurred.

From the work of the royal commission, we learned that achieving justice in a criminal investigation and prosecution for child sexual abuse often hinges on the survivor's ability to give clear and credible evidence. We learned about the impact of trauma on memory and the limits of traditional methods to accurately assess credibility in child sexual abuse cases.

I wish to take a moment at the outset to again acknowledge and thank those victims and survivors who have bravely and selflessly shared their experiences so that we may identify where we need to improve the law and practices, and act to ensure that Tasmania's children and our most vulnerable are safe from those who would perpetrate sexual violence, and that they can be confident that our criminal justice system provides every opportunity for them to achieve justice.

We know that many survivors and victims of all types of sexual abuse find engaging in the criminal justice system prohibitively difficult, so much so that it can be a barrier for some people to report the abuse they have suffered to authorities, and where they do come forward, can affect the prosecution of the perpetrator of the abuse.

Participation in the criminal justice system is especially difficult for children, for adults who were children at the time of abuse and for many other members of our community with particular vulnerabilities and needs. These victims and survivors have contributed to the extensive research undertaken by the royal commission and we must listen, learn and act upon what they have told us of their experiences. It is incumbent on every government to support survivors and victims of sexual abuse to come forward and bring those who would prey upon our most vulnerable members of the community to justice.

Our criminal justice system has changed significantly over time. It has demonstrated the ability to adapt to new technology, science, behavioural awareness and community expectations, especially in improving the way in which crimes are investigated and criminal trials are conducted.

Reforms such as the introduction of audiovisual recording of police interviews, the use of fingerprint and later DNA evidence, the introduction of restrictions on questioning about matters such as a victim's sexual history, and more recently the pre-recording of a victim's evidence are but a few examples of significant and important changes to the criminal justice system over the last few decades. Today the utility of these reforms is unquestioned.

That is why I am pleased and very proud to introduce the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill 2020 which will establish the legislative framework for the use of witness intermediaries or communications experts in Tasmanian courts.

This bill fulfils the Tasmanian Government's commitment to establish a pilot intermediary scheme in direct response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in its Criminal Justice Report, and the work of the Tasmania Law Reform Institute in its 2018 report 'Facilitating Equal Access to Justice: An Intermediary Communication Scheme for Tasmania?'.

This bill will build on our previous reforms as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and further strengthen Tasmania's criminal justice system by introducing skilled communications experts who will work alongside lawyers and judges to ensure that vulnerable witnesses participating in the criminal justice process are able to communicate to the best of their ability.

These communication experts are called witness intermediaries. Witness intermediaries are neutral officers of the court and will support prosecution and defence lawyers to ensure that vulnerable witnesses are asked questions that they can understand. They will make sure that vulnerable witnesses have access to the materials they need to express themselves in answering questions and they will make sure that vulnerable witnesses have the time and space they need to communicate their best evidence.

Witness intermediaries have been successfully utilised in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Closer to home, in recent years witness intermediary schemes have been introduced in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and most recently in the Australian Capital Territory.

Tasmania's pilot intermediary scheme will commence in March 2021 alongside the commencement of the legal year and operate for three years. It will undergo a thorough evaluation to ensure its effective operation and review its scope.

To manage the implementation of the scheme, the pilot will apply to children and adults with a communication need who are victims or witnesses in proceedings relating to specified offences; that is, sexual offence matters and homicide matters. Under the pilot, witness intermediaries will be made available to Tasmania Police during investigation of crimes and in proceedings in both the Magistrates Court and Supreme Court.

To support the use of intermediaries in court proceedings, the bill amends the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001 by giving the secretary of the Department of Justice the power to establish and maintain the intermediaries panel. A person may be included on the panel if the person has a tertiary qualification in psychology, social work, speech pathology or occupational therapy, or the person has qualifications, training,

experience or skills suitable for the performance of the functions. This will ensure that people such as teachers with specialist knowledge and experience are eligible to act as intermediaries.

Under the bill, the functions of an intermediary include assessing an eligible witness's communication and other related needs and to prepare and provide an assessment report. A witness intermediary will also provide recommendations to the court and any lawyer appearing in the proceeding as to adjustments to be made in the proceeding.

A witness intermediary assesses the functional communication skills of a witness through observation, conversation of general topics and activities appropriate to the age and skills of the witness. The assessment includes a witness's vocabulary, ability to concentrate, ability to understand complex questions, ability to accurately agree or refute statements, their general understanding of timing and sequencing of events, and management of anxiety and arousal levels.

After assessment, the witness intermediary prepares an assessment report which will include recommendations to the judicial officer as to the type and style of questioning, the need for breaks, the preferred naming of body parts, as well as other adjustments such as the use of body maps, language charts and communication devices.

The assessment report is considered by the judicial officer in order to determine whether an order for the use of a witness intermediary in the proceedings should be made. The bill gives the judicial officer the power to order the use of a witness intermediary if, having considered an assessment report, the judicial officer is satisfied that the use of an intermediary will assist the proceeding. For example, a witness intermediary may assist proceedings if their assistance will facilitate the witness giving their best evidence and reduce retraumatisation.

Once the use of a witness intermediary order has been made, a ground rules hearing must be held. The requirement for a ground rules hearing was specifically recommended by the royal commission and enables the court to consider the communication and other related needs of the witness and gives directions on how the proceeding must be conducted to meet those needs fairly and effectively. Importantly, the bill provides a witness intermediary must act impartially when performing the functions of the role and requires them to take an oath or affirmation before acting as a witness intermediary in a court proceeding.

The bill also gives children and adults with a communication need the same rights as an 'affected child' and 'affected person' under the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001. This ensures that children and adults with a communication need have the same rights as other vulnerable people participating in the criminal justice system, such as to the use of a support person, the admission of a prior statement, the conduct of a special pre-recorded hearing and the taking of evidence via audiovisual link.

The bill extends the definition of 'affected person' to include 'prescribed witness' under section 331B of the Criminal Code Act 1924. Section 331B requires a preliminary proceeding order only be made if, in the case of an affected person, the court is satisfied that exceptional circumstances require the witness to give evidence on oath in a preliminary proceedings.

The bill also amends section 8A of the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001 to prevent a defendant directly cross-examining a witness where a witness intermediary order has been made and clarifies the role of a person appointed by the court to assist cross-examination.

The bill clarifies that the application of the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania's income, assets and merits test does not apply to an order under section 8A(3) and provides the director of the Legal Aid Commission with notice to enable the management of potential conflicts and appropriate allocation of staff.

The bill also consequentially amends section 19 of the Legal Aid Commission Act 1990 to clarify when the commission is to provide legal aid to a person in accordance with a section 8A order.

Vulnerable people in our community are over-represented as victims in our criminal justice system. They have communication needs that impede their interactions with police, lawyers and the courts. They are children, people with disabilities, people dealing with mental health problems and those managing the impact of trauma.

The ability for perpetrators of crimes against the community's most vulnerable people to escape justice because of those vulnerabilities is especially heinous. The Tasmanian Government is committed to making sure that every vulnerable Tasmanian can effectively participate in the criminal justice system. Every measure that can assist such perpetrators to be brought to justice should be implemented.

This bill is quality evidence-based reform and yet another example of our Government's strong commitment to ensuring that the voice of every Tasmanian is heard, understood, and acted on.

I commend the bill to the House.

[4.33 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to contribute on behalf of the Labor Opposition to the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill 2020. We will be supporting this bill.

As you have heard in the Attorney-General's second reading contribution, this bill makes amendments to the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act of 2001, the Criminal Code 1924, and the Legal Aid Commission Act of 1990, and establishes a legislative framework for the use of intermediators in Tasmanian Courts. It arises partly in response to several of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommendations, one of which was to establish witness intermediary schemes. It is also as a result of work done by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute some years ago, which investigated the issue of intermediary schemes and made several recommendations to government about how a scheme might look in Tasmania.

I note that it is a pilot scheme and will run for three years. I imagine like the Opposition the Government will be very interested to see how the scheme operates over those

three years of the pilot and to make observations about whether the scheme can or should be expanded.

The bill amends the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act and defines the scope of the pilot scheme. It will apply to all children under the age of 18 participating in the criminal justice system who are victims or witnesses in sexual offence matters or in homicide matters. It will also apply to adults with a communication need participating in the criminal justice process who are or were victims or witnesses in sexual offence matters or homicide matters.

It is important to note that the scheme is not intended to apply to defendants and I will talk about that in my comments later on.

The bill goes on then to define what communication need means and how it will be applied to determine whether an intermediary will be used for those particular people who will be eligible for that support going through the court system. It will allow the secretary of the Department of Justice to establish and maintain a panel of people who the secretary considers are suitable to be witness intermediaries and form the intermediaries panel. I understand that there will not be a limit on the number of people who can be credentialed to be a part of that panel. The intention is to ensure that the right intermediary can be selected for any particular victim, witness or other person who will be assisted by the use of an intermediary in the courts. That is a very important part of the design of the pilot namely that there will not be a set number of people but rather the scheme will be able to operate flexibly enough that the right person can be chosen to support any particular person going through the criminal justice system.

The bill goes on to set out the functions of a witness intermediary including providing an assessment report and providing recommendations during a specified proceeding to the judge and any lawyer appearing in the proceedings as to adjustments to be made to the proceeding. It provides for circumstances in which a judge can make an order of an assessment report to be prepared, and gives the judge the power to make an order that a witness intermediary be used in respect of a particular witness in a specified proceeding, if having considered an assessment report the judge is satisfied that the use of a witness intermediary will assist the proceedings.

It also gives that prescribed witness as a person being assigned an intermediary to assist them with the same rights as an affected person or an affected child under the act.

It also provides that the judge must direct that a ground rules hearing be held for that prescribed witness prior to other proceedings. That was also a recommendation from the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute and something that has been highlighted as extremely important in the operation of intermediary schemes in other jurisdictions including the United Kingdom.

Importantly, the bill also amends section 8A of the act to prevent a defendant from being able to directly cross examine a witness. That is a very important part of the bill. In the event that a defendant is self-represented, the concept that they would be able to question a witness or question a victim in the court would be very disturbing and counter intuitive to the good delivery of justice. It is important that those amendments to section 8A are being

made to ensure that a defendant will not be able to cross examine a witness who is being assisted by an intermediary.

As we have heard from the minister in her second reading contribution, it goes on to make provision for a self-represented defendant in that kind of scenario to be represented by the Legal Aid Commission.

In preparing my comments on this bill I reflected on the report provided to Government by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute. I believe it was a reference made by the former Attorney-General, the honourable Dr Vanessa Goodwin, some years ago and the report was finalised in January 2018. In that report the institute noted that where intermediary schemes are utilised around the world, they are generally very well regarded. They looked in particular at England and Wales where they said the intermediary special measures that were put in place in those jurisdictions had been described as extremely useful in advising those at court how best to communicate with witnesses, ensuring that witnesses understand questions and that their answers are also understood.

There were pilot schemes at the time of the report being written by the Law Reform Institute including in New South Wales. One witness involved in that pilot scheme in New South Wales commented that their experience had been that both defence and Crown, had been very open to the assistance of the witness intermediary.

The use of the terminology 'witness intermediary' rather than 'children's champion' is one that is encouraging defence counsel to see the witness intermediary as what they are intended to be, that tool of communication to enable the witness to give the evidence in a succinct fashion and in a way that enables the communication. The use of witness intermediary is what has been happening in court in that jurisdiction and was seen as very positive.

They looked at the evidence around Australia and internationally on intermediary schemes. They also looked at the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse that recommended that state and territory governments should all establish such schemes. They commented that reliance on intermediaries clearly had advantages over relying solely on counsel to phrase questions appropriately or on judges to disallow inappropriate questions. Neither have the same degree of knowledge about particular witnesses that intermediaries have and that may be critical to ensuring that questions are framed appropriately.

They said that reliance on an intermediary therefore may reduce the intensity of the trial judge's role, engaging and being alert to questions that are inappropriate for particular witnesses. Additionally, a particular advantage of intermediary schemes is that unlike a simple witness supporter or a traditional interpreter, an intermediary can help the court by identifying communication problems during questioning and with the court's permission, to help resolve them. That goes to the heart of the intent of an intermediary scheme, that is to assist the court in ensuring that witnesses and victims, in this case, and in this pilot coming before the court, are able to give their best evidence and are in the best interests of justice being served.

It is important that the threshold is not a high one, in that witnesses and victims who are going to be a part of accessing the support of intermediaries will not be required to have a formal diagnosis of a disability, for example, but rather will be able to participate in the pilot scheme, even if their communication difficulty is something that might be temporary or transient and potentially as a result of the trauma surrounding the case that they are involved with.

The Law Reform Institute concluded that on the evidence to date, at that time, where they are properly funded, properly resourced and adequate intervention of scope is allowed, intermediary schemes do offer significant potential for facilitating the reception of evidence of people with communication needs. They went on to note that it is important that resourcing is there and that the Western Australia and New South Wales experience demonstrates that it is not enough just to make statutory provisions for intermediaries, but the necessary infrastructure, including a sufficient number of trained intermediaries and the availability of training programs, is essential to the success of an intermediary scheme.

This is about creating equality in access to justice. There are some criticisms from stakeholders in the narrowing of the recommended scope of such a scheme that was made by the Law Reform Institute in its report 2018. That is precisely what we heard from the minister: that the pilot scheme is going to be limited to witnesses and victims. It will not be extended to defendants going through the criminal justice system.

There is at least some argument to say that limiting it only to some people facing the court system creates a differential access to justice. In some of those other jurisdictions that have already implemented intermediary schemes, overseas and interstate, that experience does show that intermediary schemes work best when they are available to all parties.

It is important to note that the role of the intermediary is to assist the court. The person is not there to be direct advocate or representative of the person who they are assigned to but rather to assist the court in the best administration of justice. For that reason, I think there is argument at least to look through the pilot phase at potentially being able to expand the scope, ideally expanding the scope of the pilot but certainly in time to be able to reflect on the pilot with a view to extending the scheme to all people coming in contact with the criminal justice system. In doing so that will mean an improvement to accessing justice. It is about providing a package of special measures to improve that access to justice and to improve how courts overall deal with people who have experienced trauma and people who are experiencing trauma still by going through the criminal justice system and who have communication needs.

What the Law Reform Institute noted in talking about the package of supports it recommended is that it includes methods for identification of need, use of interim and pre- and post-trial hearings, use of advanced directive to regulate witness examination processes during hearing and trials, as well as video recording of people's testimonies in the absence of a jury.

The aim should be to create the fairest justice system possible. It might be politically more palatable to provide this assistance only to victims and witnesses and only for certain types of offending. However, figures from community sector organisations that work within the prison show that up to 90 per cent of inmates have some kind of communication issue.

That is not all disability but it could also include literacy, communication issues, dyslexia, other forms of disability, acquired brain injury and other co-morbidities.

It is a staggering figure that potentially 90 per cent of inmates in the adult correction system have some kind of communication issue. In the best administration of justice ideally a scheme like this would be extended to all people coming into contact with the criminal justice system and for any kind of offending. I can understand the need for the Government to be able to do this in a way that is politically and financially more achievable. Possibly that is part of the rationale for limiting it to particular types of offending and to particular types of people coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

For the sake of the debate on the bill it was relevant to note those high numbers of people who are inmates in the criminal justice system who suffer from some kind of communication difficulty who would benefit from the use of an intermediary, such as those proposed in the scheme. To reiterate, the intermediary is there to assist the court. It is not an added advocate or representative of the person using the intermediary but rather it is there to ensure that the court can deliver justice in the best way possible. Other jurisdictions where the scope is narrow show that they do not necessarily provide the best access to justice possible.

I welcome this pilot scheme and welcome the support that will now be provided to children and to adult witnesses but note that is within the limited scope of the pilot. Ideally, the pilot could be expanded or perhaps mid-pilot it could be reviewed and expanded. Ideally it would be encouraging to know whether there is a view in the future to expanding this pilot so that intermediaries can be used, along with a package of other support measures across the criminal justice system to ensure that all people in touch with the criminal justice system are doing so in a way that means they can give their best evidence: that the court can be assisted to the best degree it can be to ensure access to justice and to ensure that people are able to present their best evidence at every point in the criminal justice system.

I would like to talk about how some other jurisdictions have approached their intermediary schemes and this was drawn from the work of the Law Reform Institute from 2018. They noted that in New Zealand, for example, there have been a number of courts that have been trialling the youth intermediaries and that was possible under section 80 of their Evidence Act 2006 that they had been appointed for both defendants and witnesses with communication impairment.

They quoted one example from a 2015 case where a complainant with Down syndrome and significant language impediments was facing the court. The court noted in that case that the accused's right to a fair trial is a keystone of our criminal justice system. It is not the only keystone, but people with intellectual difficulties and challenges should be able to come to our courts and present their evidence in a way that is tailored to their needs to ensure that the trier of fact can be as competent as possible, that the answers are true answers, and that is what has occurred, rather than the witness being confused and challenged by the questions being asked.

They noted that it did not appear to be routinely or consistently used across New Zealand courts and that there appeared to be some doubt that the provision could be applied

to developmentally normal children. I do not usually like the use of the word 'normal', but that is the word used in that report -

Ms Ogilvie - Which report?

Ms HADDAD - The Law Reform Institute's report. They also noted that they may not have communication difficulties within the meaning of that section, and on that note, I would like to reflect again on the fact that the proposed pilot scheme here is much more flexible. There is not the need for any particular diagnosis for people and, if I am remembering correctly, it will be a decision for the court to be able to commission those reports from experts who can recommend that the court would benefit from that witness having an intermediary available to them.

That criticism of the New Zealand set-up and approach hopefully will not apply in Tasmania within the limited scope of the pilot for the very reason that people will be able to have an intermediary assigned to them, even if they have a transient and temporary communication need that might be triggered very much by the trauma surrounding the criminal case they are involved with.

South Africa also has a mechanism for the appointment of intermediaries for vulnerable witnesses under the age of 18 years. In that jurisdiction, intermediaries sit with witnesses in a separate room aside from the courtroom, they listen through an earpiece to the questions from the prosecution and the defence counsel who are in the courtroom, and they then explain those questions to the witness. The court is then able to observe the witness but the witness cannot see or hear what is happening in the court. Similar versions of that South African approach have since been adopted in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

I believe that is a facility that is available and hopefully employed as often as it can in criminal cases in Tasmania, so that particularly vulnerable witnesses do not have to sit in the courtroom and are able to give their evidence sometimes from within the building, but certainly not from within the courtroom.

Israel has a slightly different approach. They have a presumption that children will not testify in court and the presumption was enacted in the same legislation that enacted their intermediary scheme involving what they call 'youth interrogators', which has a pretty conflict-inducing name. That youth interrogator has a highly interventionist role in the proceedings and they are the only people who may question the children specified as vulnerable or adult vulnerable witnesses. In other words, it removes those vulnerable witnesses or vulnerable people in the criminal justice system from having to be questioned in the normal criminal justice way that can be extremely adversarial, aggressive and extremely intimidatory and frightening to people, especially if they are coming in to the criminal justice system for the first time and that is their first experience of the criminal justice system. That system ensures that that normal method of questioning is not available to the court when an intermediary is assigned, so in those cases intermediaries would be the ones who are asked the question.

In the Law Reform Institute's report they talked about that interventionary role that some jurisdictions have taken in implementing their intermediary schemes. It will not surprise the House to know that in Norway and Iceland, as is often the case in northern

European countries, they have a very different approach to justice and criminal justice. In Norway their approach is that for children up to 16 or in some cases up to 18 years of age, and other people who are vulnerable witnesses within a court system are concerned, they have created a part of their criminal justice system called Barnehus or Children's House. There are a number of these that have been created around Norway and are financed collaboratively by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Police, the Ministry of Health and Care Services and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

The aim of those Children's Houses is to provide comprehensive investigative processes and support services for designated victims of abuse, including investigative interviews, forensic examinations, medical treatment and follow-up for children and families. It is a very collaborative approach that many jurisdictions around the world are trying to move towards, not just in the criminal justice system but in social services, social policy, education policy and health policy.

The recognition is increasing worldwide but in many cases implemented in northern European countries which are often a few steps ahead of other parts of the world in implementing these very collaborative approaches that involve a whole range of departments as well as community to make sure that people have the right services around them when they need them. I know there have been several attempts of those kinds of wraparound service policies to be implemented across Australia over the years but we have much we can learn from those northern jurisdictions, particularly when it comes to criminal justice.

Iceland has a similar model to Norway. In fact the Norwegian model was based on one established in Iceland, which is again a child-friendly, interdisciplinary and multi-agency centre where the professionals from each of the disciplines are required to work with that young person or vulnerable witness under one roof. They have a particular focus on support for child sex abuse victims and survivors and they had some really remarkable results in terms of starting to work with young people at all levels of the criminal justice system in an early intervention way which provides safe opportunities for children to disclose abuse when they otherwise might not have done so in a more traditional criminal justice adversarial system.

In the case of the very small country of Iceland, which I believe has a population around about the size of Tasmania or maybe even a population slightly lower than Tasmania's, they have implemented a very child-focused and interdisciplinary style of approaching criminal justice, including a Children's House approach similar to Norway and other northern European countries.

I thought it was worth speaking about the benefit of the fact that the Tasmanian scheme will not be as limited in assessment of who can access an intermediary or when courts can access an intermediary and how. I note the minister has said in her second reading speech that that it is very much the intention that it will be available to people without a diagnosis of any particular communication disability but will be available when courts determine that someone coming into contact with the criminal justice system needs that.

I wanted to ask the minister about some of the traditional cultural barriers to the criminal justice system. I recently attended a conference via Zoom. The key note address was presented by a woman named Nyadol Nyuon. She is an amazing Australian of African

descent who is a strong advocate for the rights of women and girls in the criminal justice system as well as people from various other international and ethnic backgrounds. She made a comment during her address about cultural differences in approaching the criminal justice system, particularly for Sudanese young people. She described the fact that looking down is a sign of respect and deference to people in authority. A witness of that ethnic background giving evidence in a court might spend a lot of time looking down and avoiding eye contact with the judge or with people asking questions. In a traditional western adversarial criminal justice system that might come across as evasive or avoiding questions, or as some sign of dishonesty when in fact the opposite is true.

Ms Archer - They are also very scared of police, culturally scared of police.

Ms HADDAD - Yes. That is right. I have no doubt that Tasmanian and Australian courts and police systems are catching up with culturally different approaches to criminal justice, and also different factors at play that might mean that somebody's presentation in a court room setting is not interpreted in the way that it is being experienced by that person. I am interested to know whether that might be one of the ways in which an intermediary can be assigned to deal with some of those cultural differences and barriers.

I also note information that was shared online by an autism support organisation, explaining in succinct terms the diversity of people who are on the autism spectrum. They start by saying that autism is a spectrum, and that different behaviours and manifestations of how we talk to one another can be part of a person having autistic characteristics that can be directly contradictory to one another and may often not necessarily be what people assume is part of an autistic presentation. They made a simple table and explained on one side what are autistic traits and on the other side what are also autistic traits. As an example it is an autistic trait not to make eye contact, but equally it is an autistic trait to make forced and intense eye contact. Similarly it can be an autistic trait to be extremely sensitive to physical sensations. It can also be an autistic trait to be unaware of pain to the point of injury. It can be an autistic trait to have low empathy or it can be an autistic trait to be so hyper-empathetic that you feel other people's emotions too. It can be an autistic trait to have a monotone voice. It can be an autistic trait to have an over expressive voice. It can be an autistic trait to be non-verbal. It can be an autistic trait to be hyper-verbal at a young age.

That is another example of a person presenting to a court system with varied communication issues. For that reason it is an important part of this pilot that it will be available to people with all sorts of different communication needs and not be limited to a specific list of factors which the parliament or a court might initially consider reasonable to expect an intermediary to be needed. Hopefully the pilot will be implemented in a flexible way enabling people to access support for a range of different communication needs, whether those needs are permanent or temporary, in the interests of assisting the court to ensure that there is equal access to justice.

I will complete my comments by reiterating our support for the bill and the fact that Labor very much welcomes the announcement of this pilot scheme and in doing so also notes the limited scope of the pilot.

We hope there will be an assessment of the pilot scheme, and that the implementation of a permanent scheme will allow universal access to people coming into contact with the

criminal justice system, so that the courts can ensure they are not delivering unequal access to justice. Rather, the courts should be assisted to ensure anyone coming into contact with the criminal justice system is able to give their best evidence and be dealt with in the fairest way possible.

With those brief comments, I conclude my remarks on the bill and welcome the pilot scheme. I look forward to seeing the results of the pilot, and being informed about its implementation over the coming three years. I hope to see assistance provided to people, particularly in cases regarding sexual offences and homicide. I respect and admire people who are survivors of child sexual abuse who have the strength and the bravery to come forward with their stories, particularly to the royal commission but also to other investigations that have happened over time. Through their sacrifice and their strength in sharing their stories, they are helping all Australian jurisdictions to improve not only their criminal justice systems, but also our systems of education and health, our systems of community services, and all services that governments provide and fund to ensure that kind of abhorrent and widespread abuse can never be repeated.

[5.07 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens will be supporting the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill 2020. It is good, strong legislation and is absolutely necessary.

While we are today enacting a pilot witness intermediary scheme, I have no doubt that the scheme will prove to be of significant benefit to survivors and victims, but also to the administration of justice, and that the pilot scheme will need to be extended.

Like quite a few members of this place, in my life and in my work, I have come into contact with a number of people who experienced sexual abuse as children. I had a very close family member who was sexually abused as a child. She is no longer alive and I am sure that is a direct and tragic consequence of the abuse that she experienced at the age of six.

What we know about the effect of sexual abuse on children, is that it afflicts every part of a person's subsequent life. It is life-limiting, it affects every life choice a survivor makes, it impacts on their commitment to education, their capacity to secure employment, their ability to earn a living, to find a secure home and to establish lasting relationships.

It affects how survivors relate to the world and the people around them. More than anything else, it affects how the survivors relate to themselves, because with sexual abuse of children, a strong and recurring theme is one of shame, self-loathing, self-harm and a deep feeling that no one will help you, because no one did when you were a child. There is that sense of being almost an outsider to a system that you feel has shut you out. That is why it is so important that parliaments enact legislation that provide true access to justice but are also sensitive to the person.

We need to have a whole system response. When we talk about trauma-informed care we need to do more than say the words. We need to understand the profound and devastating impact that trauma, created by sexual abuse, has on children who grow into adults. Some of those children will have found justice through the justice system. Some of those perpetrators will have faced retribution. Some of them do not make it.

Only last week I sat down with a survivor of child sexual abuse. Every aspect of her life has been impacted by what she experienced in her late primary school years. She lives in public housing, she has too few friends, and she has some difficult relationships with her children. She still has not found justice. We are trying to help her find that justice. At the age of 61 this individual has never really had the space created for her where she could tell her harrowing story. Indeed, tragically, as it is for too many child victims of sexual abuse, her mother did not believe her at the time, which compounds the harm and compounds the trauma.

This legislation will help to remove some barriers for survivors and victims accessing justice. There have been some significant reforms go through this parliament, as the Attorney-General said, over a number of decades now, but particularly in the past 10 to 15 years. We have a bill that we are debating this afternoon, the Working With Vulnerable People Act, which I enacted as minister in 2013. We have removed the statute of limitations for survivors of child sexual abuse to take civil action. We have legislated to remove the protection of the confessional for paedophile priests as we should.

The Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was an absolutely necessary act of national truth telling, contrition on the part of the state for failing these children. It also provided the pathway forward so that we can be sure that we are creating child-safe organisations and child-safe communities. This legislation is another import step down that path.

The bill establishes the witness intermediary program for prescribed witnesses, that is children or adults who are survivors of abuse as a child, or adults with other communication needs. They will be supported through the court process in giving their evidence by witness intermediaries who will need to be impartial and compassionate skilled communicators. They then work with the witnesses, the lawyers, the judges and any other agency who may come into contact through the court process.

When we consider what the term a 'prescribed witness' means by definition of the act, we are talking about people who have experienced deep trauma, who are battling, in many cases, anxiety, depression, addiction, as they carry the burden of unspeakable crimes. It is that unspeakability of what happened to these children that demands of us a program like a witness intermediary program. This legislation is sensitive to survivors and victims, as it needs to be.

I have a couple of questions in the provisions of the bill. I want to thank the small team of people who gave us a briefing the other day, for the clarity of your briefing and your patience, and also the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute which undertook the foundational work for this legislation, and the late Vanessa Goodwin, the previous, very good Attorney-General.

When we talk about the meaning of a communication need, while the legislation does not require a diagnosis of a particular condition that may point to a communication need, I am curious to understand whether within this clause, when we talk about the meaning of a communication need, a witness who is to give evidence in the specified proceeding will be taken to have a communication need if the quality or clarity of evidence given by the witness

may be significantly diminished by the witness's ability to understand process or express information.

Beyond a language challenge, which is provided for in this clause, that is if someone is from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, this clause -

applies regardless of whether the witness's communication need is temporary, permanent or recurring; the degree of severity of the witness's communication need changes over time or due to circumstances, or the witness's communication need is caused by disability, illness, injury, trauma, or some other cause.

That final subclause provides very significant scope in the determination of whether a witness will be assessed and designated as a prescribed witness who is able to have the support of a witness intermediary.

My question to the Attorney-General is, if someone has been so traumatised by what they have been through that they have difficulty articulating what happened to them, can you confirm that, within the scope of this clause, that trauma of itself can provide the grounds for inclusion to be a prescribed witness under this provision?

We can recognise that a witness maybe prescribed because they are a child, they may have a cognitive impairment, there may be a developmental issue, but my understanding from that briefing is that this section will capture people with a specific mental health need. For people who carry within them the deep trauma and scars of child sexual abuse, I would hope that that of itself is enough to allow the judge to make an assessment that a witness can have that support. I note that in the assessment report, section 7I, the judge is not compelled on the basis of an assessment of the report to make an order if they are satisfied it is unnecessary or inappropriate to make the order or the witness does not wish the order to be made, or the making of the order would be contrary to the interests of justice. This is where, as I understand it, minister, the respect for the rights of a child come in to have a say in whether they want that witness intermediary assistance during an evidence-giving process.

For those of us who followed the royal commission and a number of its hearings and read as much as we could of the testimony and the subsequent recommendations, we recognise that this journey towards making sure that children are safe in institutions and our communities is a long way from over. While governments are progressively giving effect to the recommendations of the royal commission, in many ways there is only so much the law can do to keep children safe and it becomes a whole-of-community responsibility. I am certain that this parliament will see other legislation come before it to give effect to other aspects of the royal commission's work or to improve legislation we have already enacted.

Before I wind up I acknowledge that the Minister for Education and Training has initiated an independent inquiry into how the Department of Education responds to the risk of abuse in public education facilities, including TasTAFE. I am going to talk to the minister about this at some point this week, but I had a briefing last week. I share the concerns of survivors about how the scope of this inquiry could be narrowed where it will become forward-looking, because there is a very real risk here that if we do not make sure the independent reviewer is given the greatest possible scope to invite survivors, family and other

members of school communities who may have important information to come forward about historical abuse, we run the very real risk of retraumatizing people, because the royal commission did not deal with the public education system.

The royal commission's work was focused on institutions such as the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Salvation Army and a number of other institutions where for periods the abuse and harm of children was rife and systemic. The royal commission did not deal with Tasmania's Department of Education, for example, and we know that historically there were children who were harmed by employees of the Tasmanian Education department. We have to make sure that those survivors or family members of victims are invited to give testimony to the independent inquiry process because unless you confront what happened historically, not only are you potentially depriving survivors of justice, but it is very difficult to map a clear safe path forward in our schools and other public educational institutions.

I know that the Minister for Education and Training feels passionately about the safety and wellbeing of children. I simply encourage him to make sure that he gives that independent reviewer, whoever they are, the greatest possible authority to conduct that review process in a way that is sensitive and rigorous, and that Tasmanians who experienced abuse in a public education setting historically are respected and invited to be heard. It will be that knowledge and testimony which will help us as Tasmanians - this parliament, the minister and the department - to make sure that our outstanding Department of Education has the most robust child-focused, trauma-informed responses in place for every child who goes through the education system in a public setting in Tasmania.

With those few words, I am very glad to say the Greens will be supporting this legislation.

[5.25 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the bill. I congratulate the Minister for Justice on her work, and also the other parties in this place for their support and also their heartfelt words and personal stories. Child sexual abuse unfortunately touches the lives of too many people in Tasmania and Australia. It does not matter who you are or where you come from, it has an extraordinary impact on victims, their families and the people they love, so it is very important that we do as much as we can to support those people.

This bill will introduce a pilot intermediary scheme aimed at supporting children and vulnerable adults to successfully give evidence in certain criminal proceedings. In my contribution I want to provide a bit of background about how this pilot came about and the work of the Tasmanian Government, through the child abuse royal commission response unit, to provide redress to victims. We know that little children are sacred and the extraordinary and devastating impact that widespread child abuse can have on families and communities needs to be stamped out and we need to do all we can to support those people.

On 15 December 2017 the royal commission released its final report containing its recommendations. The final report is extensive. It is 21 volumes including preface and executive summary and three reports released earlier by the royal commission and makes 409 recommendations to improve the prevention, identification and response to institutional child sexual abuse. On 20 June 2018 the Tasmanian Government tabled its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse where the Tasmanian

Government accepted, in principle, 281 recommendations of the royal commission requiring action by state and territory governments.

The Tasmanian Government has acknowledged the immense courage it takes for survivors to speak about their experiences. I note in particular the Leader of the Greens' personal experience with a close family member. You could see the bravery that it takes to raise that in this place, so I commend her on a very heartfelt speech.

The royal commission highlighted the failings of the past and provided institutions with a body of work that will help us to protect our community's most vulnerable people from the impacts of abuse.

As the Attorney-General has stated, this bill stems from the recommendations from the royal commission's criminal justice report. On 15 December 2019, the Tasmanian Government released its second annual progress report and Action Plan 2020 on implementing the royal commission's recommendations. The progress report builds on the foundations of the first year progress report and Action Plan 2018-19. The second annual progress report and Action Plan 2020 outlines the Tasmanian Government's activities to implement the recommendations of the royal commission for 2020, including the Child Safe Tasmania project which creates a legislative framework for child safe standards and a three-year pilot intermediary project which is providing communications assistance for children and vulnerable witnesses to promote best evidence in the criminal justice process. The Tasmanian Government will release a further progress report and Action Plan 2021 later this year.

A number of actions came out of the royal commission. One of the most important was the National Redress Scheme. On 1 November 2018 the Tasmanian Government commenced participation in the National Redress Scheme for institutional child sexual abuse. The Tasmanian Government has committed \$70 million towards its involvement in the National Redress Scheme. This participation acknowledges the wrongs that were done to many Tasmanian survivors and allows Tasmanian organisations to take responsibility for the abuse that happened to the children in their care. May we never see its likes again.

To date, 225 Tasmanian survivors have been offered payments of redress under the National Redress Scheme, with 198 offers accepted, resulting in over \$12.6 million in monetary payment for victims of abuse in Tasmanian Government institutions. As at July 2020, 2852 applications have been finalised nationally, including 2795 payments made totalling around \$229 million, with an average payment of around \$82 000.

I will address the participation of non-government institutions in the redress scheme. At the recent Ministers' Redress Scheme Governance Board, ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to ensuring that survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, have access to redress. The ministers noted on 1 July 2020 the announcement by Ms Ruston publicly naming six institutions that failed to signify by the 30 June deadline their intent to join the scheme and that this number has since reduced to four. The ministers also noted that the Commonwealth, all state and territory governments, and 224 non-government institutions are participating, covering more than 51 000 sites across the country. Furthermore, 158 institutions named in applications or in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse have committed to joining the scheme by 31 December 2020.

It is incumbent on all non-government institutions to take responsibility for child abuse that occurred within their organisations and ensure that these shameful practices are never repeated and that any child in their care is safe.

The Government takes this matter very seriously. That is why in March 2019 we introduced a new policy for non-government organisations which received government funding but have not voluntarily joined the National Redress Scheme. Under the policy, the Government will transition out of funding agreements with taxpayer organisations that have significant liability for child sexual abuse under the National Redress Scheme and who have not taken steps to voluntarily join that scheme.

It makes it clear that if a non-government organisation receives Tasmanian Government funding and is liable for claims of child sexual abuse, it must opt in to the National Redress Scheme and enable survivors to access justice.

As part of the Government's ongoing Child Safe Project to implement a legislative framework for child safe standards in Tasmania, the compliance of all funded non-government organisations with child safe policies and procedures to prevent, identify and respond appropriately to child abuse is continuing.

I congratulate the Attorney-General and the Premier on the strong approach to making sure all institutions own up to what has happened. If they want the support of the Tasmanian people then they need to follow community expectations and provide redress for those who have suffered in their care.

I turn now to family violence. It has been raised in the debate on this bill so far. The intermediary pilot applies to victims and witnesses involved in sexual offence matters and homicide matters as well. The awful reality is that some of the cases that will require a witness intermediary will involve family violence. Everyone in our community has the right to live free from violence.

On 1 July 2019 in line with the fourth action plan, the national plan, the Tasmanian Government launched Safe Homes, Families, Communities action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022. Under this plan the Tasmanian Government sets out a \$26 million three-year whole-of-government commitment to progressing long-term change in the attitudes and behaviours that led to family and sexual violence in the first place. This commitment was bolstered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic whereby the Tasmanian Government committed a further \$2.7 million in family violence response across a range of key support areas. That is across the government and the non-government sector.

In our first term of government we enabled an Australia-first trial to electronically monitor family violence offenders. The Tasmanian trial to electronically monitor family violence perpetrators was an Australian first in that we were the first jurisdiction to pass specific legislation to place electronic monitoring devices on family violence perpetrators as a condition of a family violence order. I mention this as a review of the trial program so far has demonstrated some astounding, exciting and encouraging figures.

Of the 73 perpetrators involved in the trial, 52 were subject to electronic monitoring for at least six months. The preliminary trial results suggest that there is a 70 per cent reduction in assaults, an 80 per cent reduction in threats, an 89 per cent decrease in allegations of emotional abuse, and a staggering 100 per cent decrease in reports of stalking. Anyone who has encountered such a horrific and traumatic thing as stalking knows that that could only be a good thing. Additionally, the trial saw a 7 per cent reduction in family violence incidents across the state and an 82 per cent decrease in high-risk family violence incidents.

The trial also looked at offending patterns by perpetrators after their GPS tracking signal had been removed. Of the 52 perpetrators who had been monitored for at least six months, 80 per cent did not reoffend following the removal of the GPS tracking device. What this data tells us is that the electronic monitoring not only modifies perpetrator behaviour while being monitored but after the removal of that device recidivism is reduced, keeping our community safe.

These are preliminary results. We look forward to the outcome of the independent review of the trial which is being undertaken by the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies, with a final evaluation report due later this year. I will be watching that with close interest.

This pilot intermediary scheme represents significant progression in how vulnerable people can be supported through the criminal justice system. Giving evidence can be stressful at the best of times, but particularly so when you are a child or a vulnerable adult. I congratulate the Attorney-General and her team and the legal community for the work they have done on helping this pilot become a reality.

[5.40 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Speaker, I particularly thank the member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, for that contribution and going through the history. It is a timely reminder of the work that has been done not only by the royal commission but our response as a government to that. Our responses have often been nation-leading as well. I have been very proud to lead those reforms and some of them have been very complex. Some of them have been long-awaited reforms, particularly for survivors of child sexual abuse, many of whom - and I know Ms O'Connor touched on this - are a lot older now but still bear the scars and will do so right until the day they pass away. The reforms that we have brought in in this place have been very thought-provoking at times to say the least, and we cannot begin to imagine the trauma.

I always admire Ms O'Connor's ability to draw on personal experience because I do not like giving personal experiences myself, but let us just say that there are all sorts of drivers for all of us as members of parliament, some of them very deeply personal reasons for being driven to do what we do.

Ms O'Connor - I do try to avoid it as a rule. I try not to talk about myself.

Ms ARCHER - Yes, but today you shared. I am not quite sure if you mentioned what particular family member it was so I will not go there because I know who you are talking about.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, you do.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you for that and I thank all members for their support for this very needed bill in terms of having practised in criminal justice. I know we have a member of our team who has extensively practised in criminal justice and heads up our unit, to which Mr Ellis referred, who has done a lot of work and has headed up the work in relation to the national redress and all of our responses to the royal commission's work, and that is Amber Mignon and her team. They do wonderful work and this is no exception to that and, indeed, members have acknowledged the thorough briefing they have provided.

In summing up - and I will address a couple of issues raised by Ms Haddad and Ms O'Connor - I want to highlight some excellent examples of how witness intermediaries have been instrumental to cases interstate and overseas. It is really important to place some of these things on *Hansard* so that anyone referring to this debate can get a good, clear picture of the use of intermediaries and how they are quite distinctly different from legal representatives and what their purpose is.

The first example I will cite is the use of dolls, models or figures. I am obviously not referring to cases here, just circumstances. A deaf victim was able to successfully act out an action scene during his testimony using three wooden figures that were multi-jointed. He had initially attempted to describe the incident using sign language but was unable to do so and the use of figures enabled him to be animated and exact.

Another example is the use of speech cards. Writing and drawing was used when working with an adult witness who had suffered a stroke which had caused expressive difficulties. She was supported when giving her evidence by being able to write the words down. Another example is the use of an alphabet chart. A person with cerebral palsy was able to report a crime to the police through the use of finger spelling and gestures with an alphabet chart. In the last session of parliament I made a contribution on the adjournment about my friend and constituent Nell in relation to her cerebral palsy, and I can see how the use of an alphabet chart could be very useful.

This example was talking about the rules of the court and the fact that many children at school learn that it is okay to guess when answering a question. The rules of court visual aids help children remember that they cannot guess in court and there are certain rules that you need to follow - that is, tell the truth. That is very useful for young children.

Another example is the use of body maps. A 10-year-old child in a sexual offence matter is given a body map to clarify names of body parts without asking the child to indicate locations on their own body. Another example is a visual aid frequency. An adult with a learning disability was successfully able to tell the jury how many times an event occurred by pointing to a frequency visual aid.

Another one is a visual time line with Post-It Notes. It is a very simple mechanism. A child victim became very confused during cross-examination when he was questioned about events over two school years. Different colour pens and Post-It Notes were used to pinpoint and support the verbal questions about which summer holiday, which school year, and which place he had gone to.

Other aids have been used, and I will use this as a final example. This one comes from the United Kingdom and relates to a child witness who was very distressed and anxious about giving evidence at court. During the assessment with the witness intermediary, the intermediary discovered the witness became calm when her grandmother knitted, so the judge made a direction at the ground rules hearing for a court attendant to sit at the back of the courtroom and knit. During the trial, the witness was calm and able to give her evidence clearly and effectively, again something you probably would not expect to happen in court but they successfully managed to obtain accurate evidence from that child witness. Hopefully those will serve as some examples of exactly what can be done to ease the pressure and the burden and the trauma of giving evidence in court.

In closing, Ms Haddad asked whether we would consider an extension to the scheme during the pilot phase.

Ms Haddad - During or after.

Ms ARCHER - Yes. It goes without saying, obviously, it is a pilot scheme and a significant reform to criminal procedure - I think we can all agree on that - and indeed the criminal justice system in Tasmania. We need to ensure it is implemented safely, appropriately and without risk of unintended consequences, particularly negative outcomes on criminal trials and to child and vulnerable witnesses.

A steering committee will monitor the implementation of the pilot and emerging issues, including areas of need, and it is contemplated that the scope will be considered during the operation of the pilot and will be the subject of review and evaluation.

I consider that with a pilot scheme it is good to confine it to a group or groups, which we have done. It was originally thought to have only children, but obviously in these cases, they are often adults and vulnerable as well. Hence the reason for ensuring that we have at least that cohort to start with. It is quite extensive, as I will get to when I am answering Ms O'Connor's question.

Ms Haddad asked how the criminal justice system deals with cultural barriers. She gave that example of the meaning of making eye contact in Sudanese culture. We have all experienced that because we do have a decent size Sudanese population here, particularly in southern Tasmania and in our electorate of Clark. I made the observation that they often avoid eye contact because their experience with law and police is very frightening, often the subject of corruption. They cannot trust police, historically. That would explain the lack of eye contact.

The criminal justice system faces challenges to respond to a change in community and societal expectations. There are a number of ways that the courts can be informed about these issues, including through legal practitioners, witness assistance officers and, in cases where intermediaries are used, through the advice of intermediaries.

Under the intermediaries scheme, there is an opportunity to discuss the management and impact of these issues at the Ground Rules Hearings but they are also matters that may be identified and managed by the courts from case management.

As to whether they fit within defined circumstances will be a matter to be determined as to trauma and other matters. In many of these cases, there will be that. If it was only that cultural barrier and they did not qualify then that is something that would be the subject of the pilot scheme review.

Ms O'Connor asked if someone is so traumatised by what they have been through that the trauma impacts the ability for those people to communicate, can that provide the grounds for inclusion. The simple answer is yes. The definition is specifically drafted to account for people who have a communication need in those circumstances, arising out of their trauma. We are going to see a number fall within that category, unfortunately.

I also confirm that the provision reflects the rights of a child to be heard. Before the order is made, the judge is to take into account the wishes of the child.

I thank members for their thoughtful contributions. I also thank Amber and Grace who are with us today from the department, particularly Amber and her team for the continual work in implementing the 409 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I do not know how many we have crossed off our list, but it has been substantial in the period of time we have been introducing these reforms, both civil and criminal.

The priorities have been dealing with many of these criminal matters and criminal reform. The support and words of encouragement from survivors who for a long time did not hear that their voices were heard is something that keeps me going. One of the comments made to me after the last reform I introduced was, 'We feel like we are heard now'. That is a nice point to end on. It is nice to be able to introduce and enact laws that achieve that.

I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

TEACHERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 50)

Second Reading

[5.55 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The objective of the Teachers Registration Act 2000 is to regulate the registration of teachers in Tasmania. A person must not engage in any teaching activities or services unless authorised by registration, limited authority to teach, or under the direct supervision of a registered teacher.

To grant registration or a limited authority to teach, the Teachers Registration Board must be satisfied of a number of things, including that the applicant is of 'good character' and is 'fit to be a teacher'. The purpose of these assessment and screening requirements is to ensure as far as possible the safety and wellbeing of children in Tasmanian schools and TasTAFE.

This Government has a strong track record of prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children. As members will be aware, the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 created a centralised regulatory system that provides for the background checking and registration of people who work, or want to work, in various regulated activities with children and vulnerable people in Tasmania. The aim of the act is to keep children and vulnerable adults as safe as possible by reducing the incidence of sexual, physical, psychological and emotional harm or neglect.

Since January 2017 Tasmanian teachers have been required to be registered under the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act. A teacher cannot be registered under the Teachers Registration Act, or indeed be legally employed as a teacher, if they do not have a current registration to work with vulnerable people, and nor should they be.

It has come to our attention that if a person has their registration to work with vulnerable people suspended or cancelled by the registrar, or they choose to voluntarily surrender it, the Teachers Registration Board currently does not have the power to immediately suspend or revoke that teacher's registration, despite the fact that it is a requirement in the act to have a current registration to work with vulnerable people to be registered as a teacher.

Rather, the board is required to conduct a time-consuming and resource-intensive disciplinary process to remove a teacher from the register, despite the fact that the person cannot fulfil an essential precondition for teacher registration. Meanwhile, we could have teachers in classrooms placing Tasmanian children at risk of harm. Likewise, an individual could be offered a job by an employer who is unaware of their status due to the time lag in removing them from the register of teachers.

This bill will close this loophole and ensure greater protection for children by allowing the Teachers Registration Board to immediately suspend a teacher's registration if that teacher no longer holds registration to work with vulnerable people in Tasmania or the equivalent check in any other jurisdiction. In this scenario the bill does not require the Teachers Registration Board to hold an inquiry or to give the teacher a right to respond prior to suspending teacher registration. This is because there is a need to act quickly to remove a teacher from the register. Natural justice is served by the requirement under the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act that procedural fairness is afforded to a teacher in determining whether to suspend or cancel registration to work with vulnerable people.

Under the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act the registrar must give a person written notice if intending to suspend or cancel a person's registration. The notice sets out the grounds for the proposed suspension or cancellation and gives the person 10 days to provide written reasons as to why their registration should not be suspended or cancelled. This process will have happened prior to the Teachers Registration Board taking action to remove the teacher from the register of teachers.

This bill also amends the Teachers Registration Act to allow the Teachers Registration Board to participate in a range of important data-sharing initiatives for educational, research and other purposes as set out in regulations. To date, there have been no appropriate mechanisms in the act to allow such sharing.

As Minister for Education and Training I am committed to taking action to deliver a quality education workforce for Tasmania. Education is an essential foundation for Tasmania's future prosperity and for sustainable community and social outcomes. Teachers are one of the biggest influencers of student success. Therefore, quality teaching practices are critical to improving student learning and educational outcomes in Tasmania.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

National Threatened Species Day

[6.00 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise to commemorate national Threatened Species Day which was held in Tasmania on 7 September as it was in every state of Australia. It is held each year to commemorate the sad death of the last thylacine known to be alive in 1936. This Threatened Species Day was marked with a sad official announcement of the extinction of the smooth handfish, a species endemic to Tasmanian waters and the first modern marine fish on record to vanish. Vale smooth handfish.

We have no drawings or record of its visage or its character. We have no information of the beauty that it contributed to the web of life, but we can be sure that it played its part in the ecosystem and its loss would have been noted. That extinction emphasises how sensitive families of fishes are to environmental disruptions.

All handfish are affected by habitat destruction and pollution, but the scientists say the biggest threat to handfish is warming waters which are a direct consequence of the climate crisis. Despite the biodiversity crisis and the inexorable increasing climate heating which we are experiencing and which no part of this Liberal federal government seems to be making an effort to bring down - in fact the announcements yesterday were shocking for everyone who is aware of the realities of climate crisis - the federal government at this point in time is putting all its money into the COVID recovery and restarting anew with more energy, the gas industry, which if they have their way would be another enormous contributor of fossil fuels to the atmosphere when we have no time. We have to be doing everything we can to bring them down.

Despite these crises and the impacts on all natural systems we are seeing on the mainland of Australia after the fires and fights over trying to protect the koala, this madness is expressed in Tasmania by the policies, the actions and the inactions of the state Liberals, who clearly have not learned the lesson of the tragic extinctions of the thylacine and the smooth handfish. Their policies are hastening hundreds of other plants and animals in Tasmania along the pathway to extinction.

Our state of threatened species in Tasmania is in a very dire place. The Liberals came to office and dismantled the expertise in DPIPW's Threatened Species Unit. In 2014 it had 15 expert, experienced full-time staff and today it has effectively zero. The unit still has a phone number but do not bother calling it - it rings out and diverts you to somewhere else. Not only are the Liberals cutting resources to threatened species protection, they are doing everything they can to increase the pace and destruction of critical wildlife habitat.

Our native forests are home to rare, threatened and endangered species but they are being clear-felled at an accelerating rate, including critical forest communities that are habitat for masked owls, swift parrot and the giant blue lobster. Along with Forest Watch, last week Cassy O'Connor, the member for Clark, documented gigantic ancient trees in the Styx that had been felled and then burnt whole on site, clearly too large even to be able to be dragged from the coop. So while threatened habitats have been destroyed, the government's legal requirements to make recovery plans for threatened species have been all but abandoned. Some 640 species of plants and animals are listed either as rare, vulnerable or threatened but only 40 of those have a plan to recover those populations to head them away from extinction: the recovery plans for those mere 40 are either based on flawed population estimates or are totally non-existent.

Even the recovery plan for one of our most loved and iconic animals - the glorious wedge-tailed eagle - is more than 10 years out of date. The estimated population of less than 1000 birds, which was distressingly low, is a decade on. In a cynical tick-a-box approach to protecting the environment, the government chooses two animals to back in the race for its species survival in Tasmania: the Tasmanian devil and the orange-bellied parrot.

All money and all PR and media releases are focused on those two animals. Well, good on those animals, and we must do everything we can to protect them, but there are 638 other listed animals that do not get a look in. We need contemporary population data and updated recovery plans for all of those 640 animals and plants, and all the others that we are not even doing the research to update and reclassify.

When it comes to threatened species we do not get a second chance. Order of Australia Medallist, Sarah Lloyd, will be receiving her medal from the Governor this Friday at an official ceremony to celebrate her lifetime services to our country as a naturalist. Sarah recently spoke up for the strong documented natural values of the Westbury Reserve on Birralea Road, a bird and rare plant haven including the rare blue pincushion *Brunonia australis*, fungi, slime mould, mammals, invertebrates and all manner of other things. She issued a media release noting that when he was minister for Environment in 2019 Peter Gutwein said -

Tasmania's unique wildlife is one of our greatest assets and the Hodgman-majority Liberal Government is committed to protecting our threatened species to maintain the health of our eco-system.

Well, Madam Speaker, as Ms Lloyd said -

What meaningless and hypocritical statement could we expect to have seen given the government's lack of due diligence in selecting Westbury Reserve as the alternative northern prison site.

As she rightly says, it is sheer vandalism to destroy the values of that site. If we do not learn from the mistakes made with the thylacine and the smooth handfish, we are doomed to repeat them for so many other plants and animals that we all love and want to keep with us into the future in Tasmania.

Healthcare in Regional Areas Southern Beaches Neighbourhood Watch

[6.08 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, on 20 March I presented a petition from approximately 804 residents of Tasmania requesting that the House call on the Tasmanian Liberal Government to introduce nurse practitioners at the New Norfolk Hospital and advocate to their federal counterparts to reschedule New Norfolk under Medicare and to modify it from a national to a level 5.

Standing order 63 requires a response to be tabled within 15 days of its communication to the Premier and I expect that would have occurred on the same day. Today is the 13th sitting day since 25 March so the Government has until Thursday to table a response. I do note though that they have had nearly six months to consider the petition, and could have provided a response at any time given the high degree of interest in the community about this matter and the need to make sure our regional areas have access to adequate health services.

It could be argued that this is even more critical at a time of the pandemic. I remind the House why it is so important and why regional health care deserves closer attention and the people living in regional Tasmania deserve better services. We have all seen the extraordinary pressure on our hospitals not just due to COVID but even before that with ambulance ramping, unacceptable wait times in the emergency department, and patients not receiving care within clinically recommended time frames.

The provision of appropriate and safe primary health care services close to where people live can take pressure off our acute hospital system and also afford better outcomes for people's health.

I will read a letter by Bill Dermody that was sent to the *Mercury* last year. Bill was a key instigator behind the petition. Bill's letter was titled 'New Norfolk nurses could help ease ramping' -

The Derwent Valley covers 4103 square kilometres and has a population of 10 290. Central Highlands has a population of 2141. There are no after-hours or weekend health services so people are unable to present at the New Norfolk District Hospital and there are no after-hours medical services so people are unable to access a general practitioner. This means there are no other options but to present at Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department either by travelling by car or by calling for an ambulance.

Provision at the New Norfolk District Hospital for nurse practitioners 24 hours a day, seven days a week, would dramatically address these problems. This system has been introduced in other states and has dramatically

reduced unnecessary presentations at major hospitals and ambulance call-outs and provided better health outcomes for those who won't present at the major hospitals and have to wait for days to see a general practitioner.

This would not only be an advantage for the Derwent Valley/Central Highlands communities but for the issues impacting the Emergency Department at the RHH and ambulance ramping.

Bill has been a tireless advocate for the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands and for regional healthcare services, but sadly this Government has treated him with disdain. Since the tabling of this petition in parliament on 25 March, Bill has been in contact with the Government on no less than nine occasions to ask for a meeting to discuss issues relating to the petition and the lack of health services in the Derwent Valley and the Central Highlands community. Do you think he has ever had a meeting? No, only some glib response acknowledging receipt of his email.

He has contacted the Minister for Health, Sarah Courtney, on five occasions with no luck. He then contacted Guy Barnett, Liberal member for Lyons, on four occasions. He did not even get a response from Mr Barnett until the last occasion, where he was told his request would be forwarded to the Minister for Health.

I cannot understand why the Government would have such disregard for a concerned member of our community who has a legitimate worry about health services in this state. He is working hard at identifying solutions and wants to meet with the Government to discuss his ideas. Bill is not a newcomer to health. He has worked in the sector most of his life. He knows what he is talking about, but it seems the Government, sadly, has no time to listen to him.

I will continue to work on behalf of those 804 residents who signed the petition calling on the Government to improve regional health services. I will make sure their voices are heard, even if the Government thinks they do not have to listen to them. They deserve to be heard, they deserve an answer and under the Standing Orders of this House, the Government needs to provide them an answer by this Thursday.

Further, I acknowledge the effort of volunteers in the Southern Beaches community who have recently formed a new Neighbourhood Watch group. It is an initiative of Okines Community House and this community-based crime prevention program aims to minimise preventable crime and promote closer community ties. It is not the first time the community has had a group but the last one wound up many years ago. This new group has been inspired to help neighbours get to know one another better, look out for one another and report suspicious activity to the police to help improve community safety.

The group has been conducting 'cuppa with a cop' and have held two so far. These are relaxed and informal opportunities for the community to meet their local police officers and to raise any concerns.

The Southern Beaches Neighbourhood Watch has a strong emphasis on community harmony and inclusion and they want to improve community safety by encouraging community members to report any issues or concerns they have in an endeavour to contribute

to positive community solutions. Valerie and Joe, two founding members of the re-formed group, spoke on ABC radio in August about the need to be vigilant but not vigilantes.

Recently I was pleased to attend a meeting and was very impressed to see the strong engagement from the community with the group and the terrific support from the local police. I commend the volunteers and Okines Community House for their initiative and energy in re-establishing the Southern Beaches Neighbourhood Watch group and agree that when we all work together to strengthen our community, we can make it a safer and better place for all of us.

Overseas Travellers Help-Line

[6.14 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, before I commence, I thank the Premier and everybody in the State Government for the establishment of the Overseas Travellers help-line which has been very effective in helping people return. A huge amount of work has gone into that from a state level which is a new thing for us to do as a government.

I rise with good news of an email and a photo of the Blythmans, who worked very hard to return home from the Philippines on their flight into Hobart today. It is worthwhile to capture on the record the work that has been done across quite a few families and many countries and jurisdictions to help people during this pandemic. It all started with the fantastic and fabulous young fellow, Max Quick, who happened to be on his gap year when the pandemic hit, travelling with his guitar through Argentina and getting himself into a seriously difficult position over there.

The difficulty of course from a state perspective is that you think international travel is a federal issue and what can we do, but we found a way. I reached out to my barrister friends in Sydney, they reached out to their barrister friends and Foreign Affairs friends in Argentina, and with the help of the back channels you can use with Australians abroad who are very loyal to each other we were able to assist him and that family. We have seen the trajectory of this problem as it has grown, a little like the frog in the boiling water. At first it seems a simple thing that people are stuck but as it goes on longer it becomes much worse.

The people who are stuck were not travelling for fun when the borders came down. They went to see family relatives who were ill, they went to go to funerals, they were travelling for work. Every single family and every traveller has a particular different set of circumstances. What people forget is that when you are removed from your home state and your circumstances here you are also removed from your GP, your healthcare provider, you are disconnected from your education or work opportunities and all of these things can be very stressful. I thought it was worthwhile running through some of that and being clear to people that this is not a situation in which we should apportion any sort of blame or negativity to people who are stuck. In fact, we should be saying to those people, thank you so much for your patience and staying where you are and making do because your sacrifice over the last six months has enabled us to get safe at this end.

Now it is time to bring these people home. I have been absolutely outraged like the rest of the nation in relation to the airlines and the price gouging issues going on. I know everybody who loves a free market economic scenario would say of course they are going to

put their prices up; we have capped the number of people who can come home. That has created a backlog of demand, there is limited supply and of course the prices are going to skyrocket, but they do not need to. That is a choice that the airlines are making.

I have written to Rod Simms of the ACCC and drawn this to his attention and suggested to him that he has jurisdiction by way of an investigative review by the ACCC over these organisations who all have offices in Australia, particularly as many of the transactions for these tickets are occurring in Australia.

One of the other issues that arose very quickly is the question of how we are catering for people who might want to come home. I have had a series of very serious concerns and issues raised with me, particularly with mothers travelling with babies and young children about the nature of their travel and their accommodation. All of us who have travelled on any sort of aeroplane with a screaming baby would understand it is a stressful experience. We all do our best but it is hard in itself, so if we have mums travelling with babies and toddlers by themselves for whatever reason having to travel solo and then going into a quarantine situation, we have to provide some pastoral care, some nursing care and some support.

From what I am hearing is it is very hit and miss about where these young families can go and whether they even get access to some sort of kitchenette facilities, child facilities and the ability to warm up a bottle at 3 a.m. in the morning. We all know how that night is going to end if you cannot do that.

I have been a very loud voice about this. In fact, on that issue I wrote to the Prime Minister because I thought it was so serious. I know he is a family man so I said, 'Dear Prime Minister, we can do so much better than this. We need to start normalising these arrangements. We have been at this for six months now. We can be more strategic and smarter about how we do it'.

I spoke this morning about bringing people home. Can we look at ways of doing safe transit through our international ports? Let us not forget Tasmania was an international port for quite some time. We had our New Zealand connection. We can do this stuff. Let us work out how to do it better. I have talked a little bit about going to get our people. We are Australians, we do not leave our people behind. Can we use the air force? I see Mr Albanese has come out today and made the same suggestion and good on him. We should use them.

The other option - and I have been looking at this and speaking with people in the industry, even though I understand the reluctance and concern around this - is looking at international shipping and the capacity to bring people from faraway ports where the duration of the voyage would serve as quarantine. Do we need to establish our own quarantine facilities locally? We probably do. We are probably looking at the new normal of how we run these things, bearing in mind, of course, that we are one nation after all but we manage quarantine with other issues such as the transfer of animals, agricultural goods and services and products.

Many years ago I went to live and work in Silicon Valley and took my dog with me, which was a crazy thing to do but I did. We managed it then.

Time expired.

Unions Tasmania - COVID-19 Recovery Survey
Radio Station LAFM - 90th Anniversary

[6.21 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I rise on two matters tonight. The first is the Unions Tasmania report that was released this week on the COVID-19 recovery survey which was conducted between June and August 2020 and asked workers across the state about COVID-19 pandemic impacts and priorities for Tasmania's economic and social recovery.

Nearly 2000 workers completed the survey, with respondents strongly indicating they want to see an inclusive recovery plan that invests more in public sector services, targets sustainable new jobs and addresses both economic and social inequality in Tasmania. The respondents found that they strongly identified that the focus of government policy both at federal and state levels on supporting businesses without giving direct consideration to the outcomes for people who work in them as a vehicle for economic inequality in our state which need to be addressed.

For an extended period of time prior to the pandemic, you would be aware that too many workers did not see the benefit of headline economic growth and as a result many Tasmanian workers were already economically vulnerable coming into the pandemic. A wide range of examples were cited by respondents, particularly things such as insecure work flourishing while wages stagnated or even went backwards to many of the lowest-paid workers in Tasmania. The development of Tasmania's workforce stalled with cuts to TAFE and apprenticeships. Discrimination and exploitative work practices such as wage theft went largely unchecked and some respondents blamed the Tasmanian Government's protracted bargaining process and steady cuts to its own workforce, even as their workload climbed, for poor outcomes for workers as well as the communities they serve.

The two most common work impacts of the pandemic for respondents was lost work or increased workload and work stress, impacting their personal life. Close to 60 per cent of workers want investment in more public services, 74 per cent want a multifaceted plan that supports all workers, and 83 per cent of workers want an inclusive recovery to address social and economic inequality. Increased workload and work stress are the top two ongoing job impacts.

This is an informative piece of work that all members should take the opportunity to have a look at because Tasmanian workers clearly want investment in good quality services. They want secure work and they want a government that is going to demonstrate it is planning for those jobs of the future. That old norm of insecure work, stagnating wages and under-resourcing skills and training is definitely holding our state back.

The research reflects many of the elements of Labor's COVID-19 recovery package including the issues around investment in TAFE and free training. There are 63 000 Tasmanians in receipt of JobKeeper and their future becomes more and more precarious as this Government continues to fail to back them in its desire to back the federal government.

The other issue I wish to raise tonight is also about workers, but those at the radio station LAFM, which was formerly 7LA based in Launceston. In December they will celebrate their ninetieth year on air. Most of you who do not live in Launceston and the north-east would probably not understand the profound impact this radio station has had on our community, but during whatever time we have been experiencing 7LA has always been there.

In June 1930 the then Postmaster-General who went on to be Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, granted a licence to a newly established station in Launceston, 7LA, and we owe a debt of gratitude to its founder, businessman Norman Findlay, who invested heavily in this new form of communication. The introduction of commercial radio transformed the lives of northern Tasmanians, exposing them to information and a new cultural expression that newspapers could not do. As the shadow minister for women I particularly want to emphasise the importance of 7LA to women because they were a pioneer in production and broadcasting by women. Not just the sort of token segments that we used to see in the early days of media on cooking or knitting or pregnancy, these women broadcasters sent a very powerful message to women listeners across the north that they were valued and that their contributions were important.

I suspect these women - both staff and listeners - indicate why 7LA's charitable work has always been so successful. The community rolls in behind every time they ask. Organisations like the Launceston General Hospital, disability providers, sporting and community clubs have all been beneficiaries of this hard work. As with many organisations, there are those at the front of house that we all know in media and there are others behind the scenes.

There are in fact two staff members at LAFM who deserve our thanks for over three decades of service each: Judy Pilgrim and Mark Nightingale. Both have seen changes not in just ownership but content delivery. They have seen managers come and go but people like Judy and Mark have kept the place ticking. I want to thank them for their dedication in broadcasting and wish LAFM are very happy 90th birthday.

World Suicide Prevention Day R U OK? Day

[6.26 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Madam Speaker, last Thursday, 10 September, was both the World Suicide Prevention day and R U OK? Day. Members would have reflected on that day, as I did, where it was an opportunity to reflect and remember those who have died by suicide, to honour their memory and to do anything we can to prevent suicide in the future.

One of the areas that members may be involved with was Lifeline's virtual Out Of The Shadows walk, which I know many people around Tasmania participated in. It was my pleasure to also visit Latrobe High School and meet students involved in a Keeping Connected campaign within the local school. I met some terrific young leaders in the school. I had a great chat to Charlotte who took me through the four R U OK? steps which is (1) R U OK?; (2) listen without judgment; (3) encourage action; and, (4) check in.

I also met some terrific young chaps with very big mullets. Coby, Rhino, Gaff, Liam and Tobes were a great gang. Mullets for Mental Health was their action, a campaign to ensure that all the students understood the importance of conversation, connection and promoting mental health and suicide awareness in their school. They were terrific young people. There was great engagement from the whole school at recess when I was there talking about mental health and suicide prevention and people asking each other if they were okay. That was great leadership from the school and individuals.

Last Friday evening I joined some of my colleagues, Mr Jaensch, Mrs Hiscutt and Mr Ellis, in the Burnie Out Of The Shadows walk. I thank Debbie King for organising that walk. Deb has had a very personal experience with losing a loved one to suicide. This is the eighth year that Debbie has been involved in this walk. It was not a great evening in terms of weather, but despite the complexities of COVID-19 she was very determined to see this through and make sure it went ahead. She did with the help of Roslyn Evenett, who is the North West Suicide Prevention Trial Site coordinator.

Over the past few years Deb has organised a safe space for people within Burnie Park, where one year we unveiled seats, next a lamp post. With the help of Roslyn, the North West Suicide Prevention Trial Site funded the book of life, as Deb calls it. It is a stainless-steel sculpture in the shape of a book, with all the key numbers that people can access should they be in distress and need someone to talk to within the north west coast.

I commend Deb on her wonderful initiative over so many years. It was good to see the contribution of many members of the community that supported that event.

With Mental Health Week coming up in October, it is timely to remind ourselves of the role we can each play in making a difference in the lives of those who might be struggling. Every death by suicide is a devastating loss for our children, our parents, our family, friends, workmates and whole communities.

Members may have read an opinion piece by Mitch McPherson last week talking about the broader impact and the effect on the whole community from this important issue. It is important to recognise that the reasons people take their lives are complex, are not always connected to mental illness and there can be a range of circumstances.

We are working hard with the Health Service and our community partners across all levels of government to ensure that all Tasmanians know that help is available and where to go to receive the compassionate support that they need. No one should feel alone.

A new Lifeline service, Tasmanian Lifeline 1800 984 434, is available. People who feel stressed, anxious about the future, finding social isolation a challenge in these COVID-19 times, or simply in need of a friendly understanding voice to talk things over, then advice, information, comfort and reassurance is what is on offer here.

All Tasmanians can play a role in suicide prevention by giving people a sense of belonging or feeling connected. Reducing stigma, listening without judgment is so very important and showing compassion and instilling hope. It is important to develop all our

skills to support someone in crisis, including to encourage the seeking of professional help if required.

We can each make a difference by regularly checking in with the people around us and encouraging discussion, especially if there is something going on in their life, if they are having a tough time, experiencing major changes in their circumstances or if we notice any changes in the way they are behaving.

It is important to get help early. Help is out there. For crisis support, Lifeline Australia is an example. It is ready to help on 13 11 14. I thank all those who have involved themselves with recognising and reflecting on such an important day as 10 September, World Suicide Prevention Day and R U OK? day.

Dr Jennifer Sanger - Withdrawal of Scientific Paper from Publication

[6.33 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about the scientific paper that has been withdrawn from the journal *Fire*, and reflect on a story in *The Advocate* on 31 August under the headline 'Study sparks bush battle'. One of the contributing authors, researcher Dr Jennifer Sanger, says in the article that the retraction of this paper due to some big errors was the fault of incorrect public information provided by the state Government.

Dr Sanger says, 'We had to withdraw our paper because what we called plantation wasn't plantation' referring to classifications the researcher had gathered from the Government's public resource list map. They say, 'What we hope to do is get access to forestry maps and then do some research and then republish it'. She goes on to say, 'For us, the issue with the forestry maps is particularly frustrating'. Blaming Sustainable Timber Tasmania for errors in a scientific paper is not the problem here.

The issue is not with the maps. The issue is that the scientists did not check that the maps were accurate. That is what the problem is, going on their word that that was the fault.

I have done this sort of work. I have looked at aerial photos. I have looked at land use maps. I have done this sort of work when I was working for CSIRO sustainable ecosystems looking at land use and the impact on fertiliser run-off and so on. The one thing I did differently when I looked at the land use map in Tasmania is I looked at it, drove around the different catchments in the state and realised there were significant errors with those maps. What did I do? I corrected the maps and subsequently published results which have not been withdrawn.

The issue with these scientists is not the fact that the maps were wrong. The fact is that they put their name to it and they did not check. That is a fundamental error and it is not the blame of Sustainable Timber Tasmania. In fact Sustainable Timber Tasmania did not receive a request for the data, so the authors did not ask the holder of the data whether it was accurate or whether they had any updated maps. They did not ask and Bob Brown in the end chimes in:

Environmental campaigner Bob Brown called for the Government to release the forestry data to the public.

He has been backing in the authors of this paper and the calls based on this paper to end native forestry not only in Tasmania but in Australia. Why would Bob Brown chime in on something like this? If you look at the actual paper and go to the funding, you will find that the research received no external funding but the publication fees for this now retracted paper were paid for by the Bob Brown Foundation and the Wilderness Society. Why would Bob Brown chime in on this and come to the defence of someone like Jennifer Sanger?

Ms O'Connor - Dr Jennifer Sanger. Show some respect.

Dr BROAD - You show some respect. You are an absolute howler at this.

Why would Bob Brown come in and defend not only the paper which he helped to fund, but why would he come in to defend Dr Sanger, who is a research associate at the University of Tasmania? In Dr Sanger's disclosure statement on a piece that she put into the conversation online it says that Dr Sanger works for the Bob Brown Foundation. One of the authors of this paper actually works for the Bob Brown Foundation.

I have seen the Greens member who interrupts me constantly every time I talk about forestry come into this place and seek to discredit the science of someone like Dr Martin Maroney because he works for Forestry. He is a scientist who worked at that time for Forestry Tasmania. That is outrageous. You cannot have that, she says, he is the Government pet scientist and all the other language she uses. His paper has not been withdrawn. His paper still stands that talks about how much carbon there is in a rainforest or wet eucalypt forest, and yet when the Bob Brown Foundation funds research one of the researchers who works for the Bob Brown Foundation blames Sustainable Timber Tasmania because they could not be bothered checking that their data was accurate and now have embarrassingly had to withdraw it - that is all fine, nothing to see here. Yet when we have rigorous science done by people in the forest industry, that is outrageous. You cannot accept that. This is the rank hypocrisy of the Greens and it has to end.

Forestry is a science. There is sustainable harvesting of forests in Tasmania and we constantly see propaganda from people such as the Tree Projects who also have connections I think with the Bob Brown Foundation and Dr Jennifer Sanger. There are all these pictures, for example, of log trucks with logs on them and saying things like this is old-growth forest. I have seen pictures of piles of pine logs from plantations in their propaganda and then they quickly realise they have made a mistake and then delete it. You have to be pretty quick on capturing some of this stuff. They have this so-called old-growth forest being trucked to a sawmill. The owner of that sawmill counted the rings. These trees were 70 to 80 years old. Were they old growth? Yet it appears on the propaganda of the Tree Projects.

What we are seeing here is a strategy to fund this sort of science. We have all these groups and you think these groups are all different people. You think that the researcher, Dr Jennifer Sanger, the Bob Brown Foundation and the Tree Projects and indeed the Greens are all separate entities, but they are not. They are all interlinked. They are all the same group. We are not talking about many multifaceted different community groups from all of Tasmania complaining.

What we are seeing is a massive industrial scale astroturfing operation and they are using science to try to end native forestry. In this instance, they have definitely been caught out because they did not take that crucial step which any scientist should do and that is check your data.

Comments by Dr Broad on Logging of Forests
International Day for Democracy
Right to Information - Proposed Closure of Styx Road and Duck Hunting Season

[6.40 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - 'Well said', says Ms Butler, the member for Lyons when Dr Broad got up and smeared scientists who are doing research in the public interest. I will point to the words of a scientist who has far more credibility, heart, rigour and respect in the community than you, Dr Broad, and that is distinguished UTAS Professor Dr Jamie Kirkpatrick, who said in June this year -

The clear and overwhelming evidence is that logging makes forests more flammable. These are the findings of four peer-reviewed published scientific studies from four institutions in six years and of multiple scientific reviews.

Dr Broad, right now I could not be bothered with you but I will tell you what, you will keep and I will be in here tomorrow night to respond to your smear of scientists working in the public interest and your denial of an obvious scientific truth that if you log the bejesus out of something you dry it out and make it more prone to fire.

Dr Broad - Check your data.

Ms O'CONNOR - Dr Broad, you will have to live with yourself when you are old. I will sleep quite comfortably.

Madam Speaker, today is International Day for Democracy and in a time of pandemic it is even more critical that we nurture and protect the foundations of our democracy. I point to the United Nations International Day of Democracy publication which warns about fighting misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, which have mushroomed in the crisis. It is true that mistruth and misinformation is what fosters public anxiety and distrust of government. When you are in the midst of a crisis, faith in government is critical.

What we have in this place is a serial misleader in the minister, Mr Guy Barnett. I go now to an issue which may be out there in the community. People are not talking about this at great volume but as elected representatives we have a responsibility to be truth tellers. If we are going to make statements as ministers of the Crown, where the Governor anoints us as a minister of the Crown and says we are 'trusty and well beloved' - they are the words on the ministerial seal - you want to come in here and tell the truth. Mr Barnett is a serial misleader.

I go to the issue of Styx Road closure and have sought the leave of the House. I have passed on the right to information documents we have right now I seek the leave of the House to table two RTI documents. One of them is from DPIWE which relates to the truth about

the proposed closure of the Styx Road and the other is also from DPIPW which points to the department's advice to close the duck season on Crown land this year, advice that was apparently ignored by the minister which he pretended he knew nothing about and then he signed off on the duck season.

Let us go to the time line here. On 14 July we have an email from Sustainable Timber Tasmania so-called, but as we know their trading name is actually Forestry Tasmania, confirming planned closure of the road. The subject line is 'closure of Styx Road' and the RTI from STT says -

A plantation thinning operation at TN052K on Styx Road is scheduled to commence in early August and for safety reasons we would like to close the road for a period of approximately five weeks.

Once the Bob Brown Foundation - much maligned by the member for Braddon, who really has some real issues with respecting nature - heard from tourism operators that Forestry Tasmania wanted to close the road, they wrote to the minister. The Bob Brown Foundation wrote to the Premier, Mr Gutwein, raising concerns about the Styx Road closure on 31 July and we have a copy of that email here sent at 5 p.m. on 31 July.

On 1 August, the next day, the Bob Brown Foundation issued a media release just before 8 a.m. The media release references the letter to the Premier and the proposed road closure. Two days later, on 3 August, Mr Barnett issued a media release including 'environmentalists have completely baseless claims' and saying there were no plans to close the Styx Road. In fact, he said they were completely baseless, completely untrue and what it turns out to be is that they were completely true. Forestry Tasmania wanted to close the Styx Road for a logging operation.

We lodged a right to information request and we got it back from DPIPW. On 26 August the right to information request disclosed the Sustainable Timber Tasmania (STT) so-called correspondence which confirmed the Styx Road closure. On 4 September, the *Mercury* ran an article about the road closure. On 14 September, Mr Barnett doubled down on his previous claim and today in parliament, what we had was a minister of the Crown trying to get around the fact that he is pinged by an RTI that showed that he had, on government media release letter-head, at best misled, at worst knowingly told an untruth to the people of Tasmania and the media about the proposed Styx Road closure.

In parliament today, the minister stated that STT was planning to close the road but changed their plans in early August. No, they did not. They changed their plans very quickly after the Bob Brown Foundation wrote to the Premier. That might have been early August but it was not on the basis of any independent decision on STT's part. From STT, quoted by the minister in parliament today -

A scheduled plantation thinning adjacent to the Styx Road, coupe, TN052K, was delayed in early August ...

We know that. The Bob Brown Foundation wrote to the Premier on 31 July. Also, today -

The decision to not proceed with this plantation thinning operation was made prior to the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation's alarming local businesses and creating a media event to advance their own selfish goals.

The point to remember here is that Mr Barnett initially said there were no plans to close the road, and that it was a completely baseless accusation. We just heard the same sort of vilification and untruth from the minister that we have heard just then from Dr Broad.

Now we know there is a plan. Now, apparently the decision not to close the road was changed in early August after the Bob Brown Foundation wrote to the Premier of Tasmania expressing concern.

Madam Speaker, do you want me to lay these on the table?

Madam SPEAKER - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am very happy to do that.

Madam SPEAKER - I can put the question that leave be granted to table the papers.

Mr BARNETT - Point of order, Madam Speaker, seeking leave.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Barnett is very sensitive on us tabling the evidence of his perfidy.

Madam SPEAKER - I have put the question.

Leave granted.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you very much. I understand why Mr Barnett is sensitive about us but he is a serial misleader. I table the following papers -

- Letter from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment to Cassy O'Connor, dated 25 August 2020 in relation to a right to information decision in respect of Sustainable Timber Tasmania and coupe TN034G; and
- Documents released under Right to Information by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment in relation to wild duck hunting.

Time expired.

**Right to Information - Proposed Closure of Styx Road and Duck Hunting Season
Dr Jennifer Sanger - Withdrawal of Scientific Paper from Publication**

[6.48 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker I am pleased to respond to the baseless and incorrect allegations made by the Leader for the

Greens, member for Clark, and note that with respect to the tabling of the papers, it is a pointless exercise as they are public documents. It is clearly a publicity stunt from the Greens. We have no issues whatsoever with the papers because they are all on the public record so she can table them.

I reject those baseless allegations out of hand with respect to forestry -

Ms O'Connor - Which ones? Which ones are not true?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. Ms O'Connor.

Mr BARNETT - and with respect to ducks.

I commend Dr Broad for his contribution with respect to the dodgy science that has been withdrawn and has been found to be factually and in many other respects, incorrect and dodgy research.

Ms O'Connor - That is a lie.

Mr BARNETT - That point was well made by Dr Broad.

Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight I will speak on a variety of matters in the electorate of Lyons, which I am privileged to represent. I have my electorate office in the town of Deloraine, in the heart of the Meander Valley, and my second branch office is in New Norfolk. I visited some constituents at Red Hills last Friday, 11 September. I had the honour of seeing some of the great work which had been made possible through the latest round of Landcare Action Grants.

I have been a very strong advocate of the Landcare Action Grants and Landcare, since my time in the Senate starting in February 2002. Now I have the privilege as Minister for Primary Industries and Water to support that effort. We have doubled the funding at Landcare Tasmania to \$960 000 over four years and have increased funding for Natural Resource Management to \$4.2 million over four years. This is happening under our Government and I am very pleased.

I was pleased to catch up on the property of Tim and Pip Schmidt at Woodlands at Red Hills and appreciated the opportunity to catch up with Janet and Ian Mitchelson who are part of the Quamby Bend Landcare Group. I have known Ian for many years and it was great to catch up with them and also Sam and Stephanie Trethewey from the Tasmanian Agricultural Company, Denorlan. I had not met with Sam or Stephanie previously. It was good to meet them with their fresh and new ideas. Congratulations to Steph on her impending second child.

I also met with Rod Nightsy of Landcare Tasmania and Peter Stronac, deputy CEO of Landcare Tasmania. We discussed the \$75 000 grant through the Tasmanian Government for work at the Greater Meander Valley productivity zone and enhancing agricultural productivity and profitability. The grant is also increasing landscape connectivity through the establishment of shelter belts and biodiverse corridors in this highly productive part of Tasmania, specifically the Meander Valley.

There are more than 20 Landcare local land owners taking part in this particular project and Landcare Tasmania are involved in training the various participants and other members of the community to undertake future works. They are very involved in the riparian and wetland restoration. There are other funding grants for Landcare Action Grants. We have weed management protecting and revegetating habitat, erosion works to improve water quality and fencing to protect and enhance biodiversity. A lot of work is being done.

I also acknowledge TFGA, Peter Skillern, Nikki Abel and Landcare Tasmania in terms of their support in delivering these important programs.

I also mention the successful launch of the Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme preferred design option. That is \$65.8 million scheme released last Friday. It was great to catch up with George Gatenby from Barton who hosted us in the Northern Midlands and meet with Richard Burbury, Chair of the Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme and Andrew Kneebone and others from Tasmanian Irrigation and many farmers in Campbell Town who were there at the community meeting that day.

It is 11 500 megalitres of high water surety irrigation water and much needed jobs - 60 during construction and more than 130 ongoing. Water is liquid gold. We are delivering and it is very exciting. The promise of future productivity going forward is fantastic. Our Government has increased our commitment to \$85 million for tranche three and the first five tranche three irrigation schemes are well on the way. I will have more to say about that in the coming days and weeks.

The Longford citizenship ceremony - well done to Jorje Moran from Spain and thanks to Mary Knowles. We were very pleased that we were able to do this in a rural and regional town. John Tucker was also there. It was great to be able to celebrate his citizenship. He was very excited with his wonderful partner. He lives at Nile and has a background as a chef and is involved in his local community. We are very excited and a special welcome to him.

Finally, it was great to catch up with the Longford District Little Athletics Club in Longford last weekend. They have over 100 athletes registered, with many of those each week participating in the spring/summer athletics program. It takes place over a range of months but they were training there last week. It was great to catch up with them. I was on the high jump and I did not straddle the high jump myself but the kids were hard at it and really enjoying it. The four different clubs are represented there at Longford - Longford, Hadsphen, Carrick, Perth and Evandale - and it is terrific to be able to support them and well done to all the committee.

Time expired.

Brighton SES

[6.56 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I was honoured to attend a training session with the members of the Brighton SES last night. They are a brilliant crew and a very professional, positive, supportive group of people. They are really good mates and are very dedicated to serving their community. The Brighton SES has 21 volunteers providing the

community with activities such as road crash support, storm and flood response, search and rescue, traffic management, public events management and coordination, communications, driving, navigation, unit administration operations support and leadership. We can all rely on the SES.

Unit manager and SES state training assessor Peter Geard has been a member of the State Emergency Service since 1975 and also helped to form the Brighton SES in the same year. A long-time Brighton resident and Brighton councillor, Peter Geard is responsible for both internal and external training of all unit members. This training includes safety and operations, building and vehicle maintenance and budgeting. Peter is also a training instructor at the Brighton Fire Brigade. The Brighton Council is very supportive of the Brighton SES and are always more than happy to assist with purchasing of new equipment, administrative assistance and back-up if the volunteers require. It is a really positive partnership.

The Tasmanian State Emergency Service provides emergency assistance to hundreds of Tasmanians 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and this would not be possible without the support of the estimated 550 dedicated volunteers across the state who have saved the lives and property of countless Tasmanians.

I place on the *Hansard* the names of the volunteers I met last night. They are John Jones, Ross Johnston, deputy unit operations manager Dean Plummer, Connie Jones, unit manager Peter Geard, Danny Price, Nicholas Brockman, deputy unit administration manager Andrew Walker and Ryon Smith.

**Paul and Lisa Burnell -
2020 HIA Australian Professional Medium Builder Renovator Award**

[6.57 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to congratulate Paul and Lisa Burnell and the team at Ronald Young and Co Builders on winning the 2020 HIA Australian Professional Medium Builder Renovator award. Paul and Lisa purchased Ronald Young in 2011 and the business has been operating in Tasmania for over 50 years. I was very fortunate to join with other members in celebrating that milestone recently at Hadleys Hotel where many stories were told about the journey of the company and the amazing work and dedication they have shown to not only being the best they could be but providing families across southern Tasmania with a good quality home that they can live in.

They are great people. I have known Paul for many years. We played football together. We played against each other initially and that was not enjoyable for me because he was a far better footballer than I. I was tasked with trying to stop him and could never do it. I quickly learnt that I had to play with him to benefit from his football prowess and we played together at the Sandy Bay footy club.

The company currently employs 15 permanent staff and engages 150 contractors and suppliers. Not only do they build quality homes, they have a very strong focus for their staff on health, safety and wellbeing and as former workplace safety minister when they took over

the company I witnessed significant steps that they took to lift the health and wellbeing of their workplaces across many building sites in southern Tasmania.

Paul has not only contributed to his company, he was also a former president of the HIA and Lisa is also a member of the regional executive. They are a quality couple leading a quality team, producing significant outcomes for many people across southern Tasmania. Not only are they worthy recipients of the state award, they are worthy recipients of the national award and on behalf of all members of parliament I congratulate them for their work and wish them well for the future.

The House adjourned at 7 p.m.