

Tuesday 28 May 2019

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

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of grade 8 students from New Town High School. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Budget 2019-20 - Underpinning the Economy

Ms WHITE question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.03 a.m.]

You described your latest Budget as the one you are the proudest of, but the reality is that it is a train wreck that exposes your financial mismanagement and budget incompetence. It fails to look after Tasmanians. It burdens Tasmanians with \$1.1 billion in debts. It cuts another \$450 million from a public sector you have already cut to the bone. The AMA has described your health funding as a stunt. Kym Goodes from TasCOSS described your handiwork like this -

The 2019/20 State Budget points to a government in denial of the reality Tasmanians see every day. The quality of life for many people is worse now than it was when this Government first took office in 2014 ... This is not the game-changing budget Tasmanians need. The Government knows it, the Treasurer knows it and Tasmania's 17 000 job seekers know it.

Will Kestin from the National Disability Services described your mismanagement and said -

Virtually there has been no increase and no spend within the disability sector locally and that unfortunately is going to have some terrible repercussions for Tasmania.

You should be embarrassed by this Budget. How can you claim that this is the Budget you are most proud of?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her interest in the budget. I very much look forward to seeing her alternative budget later this morning.

Let us be clear about what this Budget does. This Budget underpins the economy: record spending of \$3.6 billion worth of infrastructure; \$2.8 billion of that in the general government

sector. It will underpin roads, bridges and importantly schools, dams and hospitals. This Budget underpins 10 000 jobs -

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - That side of the House is familiar with that number. The last time they were in government 10 000 jobs were lost. This Budget unashamedly invests into infrastructure. Importantly, it will underpin our economy, so that we can generate the revenues we need to invest record amounts into health, education and into looking after those Tasmanians who are most in need.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Can we have some discipline, please?

Ms O'Connor - They are in a worse situation now than they were when you came to government.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - Nearly 13 000 new jobs have been created since the Liberal Party came to government; 13 000 more people with opportunity in front of them unlike what happened when the member who interjected was in government; then 10 000 jobs were lost. Tasmanians were leaving the state in droves. As I said last week, the only people who had secure jobs were the ones selling tickets at the airport or at the TT-Line ferry.

This Budget underpins our economy and unashamedly is an infrastructure budget. That side of the House do not like building things.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - They started in 2006 with the Royal Hobart Hospital. By 2014, they had not laid a brick. That is their record on that side. There is nothing to be frightened of when you go out to build things. This Budget will build roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and dams. Unashamedly, this Budget will underpin our economy, support the creation of 10 000 new jobs and, importantly, it will generate the revenues we need to continue to invest record amounts into health, education and looking after the nation.

Budget 2019-20 - Net Debt Position

Ms WHITE question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.08 a.m.]

Your disastrous and incompetent train wreck of a budget exposes the massive lie that you have peddled to Tasmanians for more than a year before you released it. You promised Tasmanians that the state would not go into net debt. If you need reminding, this glossy brochure that you released before the election, says in point 5 -

We will remain net debt free.

The Budget you handed down last Thursday, the Budget that you claim as your proudest achievement, charts Tasmania on an irresponsible downward drive into \$1.1 billion in net debt. Your financial incompetence has now been laid bare. Why did you break this important core promise?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I remind that side of the House that we lost more than half a billion dollars' worth of revenue, which again begs the question of that side; what would they do? They have an aversion to building things.

Ms White - You cannot even talk about your budget.

Mr GUTWEIN - On this side of the House we had to make a choice and that choice was either to change down a gear or to change up a gear. What we did, unashamedly, on this side of the House is change up a gear and invest \$3.6 billion into infrastructure to underpin our economy -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. The Treasurer is having to raise his voice, which is not good.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can understand why they do not want to hear about this budget. It is a great budget; it will underpin our economy. Importantly, it will support 10 000 jobs, further growth in our economy that will generate the revenues we need to invest record amounts into health and education and look after those most in need. On this side of the House, we make no apologies for the settings of our budget. On this side of the House, we are going to unashamedly invest in infrastructure to drive our economy, to create the revenues that we need for health and education and to look after Tasmanians in need.

Budget 2019-20 - Essential Services Funding

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.11 a.m.]

Since your Government came to office, the elective surgery waiting list has soared, along with time spent in the emergency department, yet there is no new money for health in this year's budget. The number of children in out-of-home care is up significantly yet there is no new money for child safety. Twelve hundred more people are languishing on the housing waiting list and waiting times have blown out to a year. Beds in hallways are being advertised to rent yet there is no new money for housing in this year's budget. TasCOSS confirms more Tasmanians are in more economic and social distress since your Government came to office. These Tasmanians have never felt the warmth of your Treasurer's 'golden age'. How can you be proud of a budget that has so little heart?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member of the question. It is not true to say that there is not money in this budget for important essential services. This will continue what have been record investments by our Government into the essential services that Tasmanians need and to protect those most vulnerable in our community, and doing all we can to allow them better access to health

care, better education, and better child protection services. This is only possible because our budget is back in good shape now, a far cry from where it was when we came into government.

Because our economy is strong, because we are a growing state investing in infrastructure to support the growing demands on our state, but also to create more jobs, there is increased demand and we are responding.

Members interjecting.

Mr HODGMAN - It is not accurate for the Leader of the Greens to claim that we are not investing in these important areas when we are.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order - relevance. I pointed out to the Premier that there is no new money in those areas of portfolios so it is the Premier who is being misleading. Thank you.

Madam SPEAKER - It is not a point of order as you would be aware. Thank you, Premier.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. More arrant nonsense from the Leader of the Greens to assert, and it just is not so. When it comes to the areas that she has outlined I would like to put some facts on the table because it sounds like the Leader of the Greens has not even read the budget papers that were tabled in this parliament last week.

In health, this year's budget contains an \$8.1 billion investment over the next four years. It is a top priority for this Government. We have increased health spending each and every year - a record 32 per cent of the budget is now dedicated to health when a decade ago it was just 25 per cent.

With respect to children and youth services, we are continuing to deliver on our commitment to help protect Tasmania's most vulnerable with additional funding allocated in the 2019-20 state Budget. Since 2016, the Strong Families, Safe Kids redesigned project delivering a range of new actions to improve outcomes for children, particularly those young people and their families at risk, is being supported by additional resources and funding in our budget.

In housing, in recognition of the increasing demand for social and affordable housing, the Government has allocated almost \$68 million in the 2019-20 Budget to boost supply of new social and affordable homes. We have brought money forward. We have \$125 million Affordable Housing Strategy, our action plan stage 2 of that, \$10 million of the funding was brought forward with a total allocated in this financial year to \$40.5 million.

Those facts repudiate the claims of the Leader of the Greens and, perhaps, we will see today who has more credibility when it comes to opposition in terms of an alternative budget. We are not expecting a lot from Labor, of course. We know there will be one from the Greens and it will be interesting to see what their priorities are.

When you look at these facts, when you look at the additional investments by this Government in those essential services, it is only possible because our economy is now strong; because we are managing our budget well; and because we live within our means. We are able to meet increased challenges and new challenges confronting government, including writedowns of revenue, natural disasters, and a decline in GST receipt. All these things will be managed by this Government, as will be taking on debts. Net debt will fund generational infrastructure to support our growing

economy to support our growing state, to support the demand that now exists in Tasmania which has population growth, which has more people in employment now, 13 000 more jobs, and a lot more travelling the state.

Madam Speaker, our state is heading in the right direction. There is much more to do; we recognise that. This Budget does have a heart. Infrastructure is not a dirty word -

Ms O'Connor - What about housing?

Mr HODGMAN - It is affordable housing, it is into hospitals, it is into our schools, it is into essential services as well as doing things to support our economy, reduce traffic congestion and protect the Tasmanian way of life. That is exactly what this Budget does.

Budget 2019-20 - Net Debt Position

Mr BACON question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 a.m.]

You said last year that Tasmanian was in a 'golden age'. Now, following your Budget incompetence, and your irresponsible overspending with nothing to show for it, Tasmania is heading towards \$1.1 billion in net debt. You have burdened each and every Tasmanian with \$2000 in debt. How did you possibly arrive at this point? How did you incompetently, carelessly squander Tasmania's self-described 'golden age' and why are you recklessly loading Tasmanians with such a massive debt?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for his interest in this particular matter.

I will come back to where I was a couple of minutes ago. Unashamedly, we are investing in our economy - unashamedly, because it obviously appears to have missed the shadow treasurer's attention that we lost more than half a billion dollars' worth of revenue. We have made choices and the choices on this side of the House are to invest more into infrastructure, to underpin 10 000 jobs. They are the choices that we have made on this side of the House. Our economy is growing strongly - 3.3 per cent the previous year, 2.75 per cent expected this year, 2.75 per cent expected next year - it is a strong economy and that strong economy needs infrastructure and services and it will create more jobs. In creating more jobs, we will see more transactions and we will see more revenue, which will ensure that we can invest record amounts into health and education, and looking after the most disadvantaged.

It is not that long ago that the other side of the House supported net debt. In fact, their percentage in terms of the appropriate levels of future net financial assets, that is net debt, will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that neither the state's investment needs or the state's financial stability objectives are unreasonably compromised.

I can come back to the points I made a few moments ago. We make no apology for building things. Once again, I will make the point: in 2006 they started to rebuild the Royal Hobart Hospital or to build a new one - they could not quite make up their minds. By 2014, what had happened? They had not laid one single brick.

On this side of the House we are going to build more affordable housing, more schools, invest in our hospitals, and we are going to build dams that in 100 years people will still be drawing water from. This is intergenerational infrastructure that will underpin our economy. It will create jobs and, importantly, it will generate the revenues we need to invest record amounts into health, education and looking after the most disadvantaged. We make no apologies on this side of the House.

Budget 2019-20 - Investing for Growth

Mr SHELTON question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.21 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the state Budget is maintaining the momentum and investing for growth in Tasmania?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to talk about what is the next important step in this Government's long-term plan to grow our economy and create more job opportunities for Tasmanians, to invest more into our schools, into our hospitals, into the infrastructure our growing state needs, to keep cost of living pressures down, and to protect the Tasmanian way of life.

This Budget points to the fact that our economy is still very strong. Almost 13 000 more Tasmanians now have a job compared to when we came into government in 2014. Our reputation as a destination for visitors and the reputation of our products in export markets has never been stronger. There is much more to do and the budget papers and economic forecasts show that there are headwinds in the national economy, which we must acknowledge and plan for to maintain the momentum and growth in our economy and to invest strategically so that the benefits of a strong economy are enjoyed by more Tasmanians who are able to participate in it.

It is also a fact that through no fault of this Government - and like a number of other state governments including Labor governments - there has been significant writedowns in revenues. We will carry some debt but we will have the lowest level of any state in the country. It will create jobs. It is a policy that was endorsed by the Labor Party in their 2018 election campaign, when they said, and I quote, 'Labor will take a responsible approach to managing their debt'. I accept this is a 2018 election commitment -

Ms White - You said you would not go into net debt - a broken promise.

Mr HODGMAN - Is that another one of your election commitments that you have abandoned like your signature pokies policy? I do not know, but we will find out in an hour or two, won't we?

This Budget also invests record amounts into infrastructure. It is wrong for anyone to suggest that a budget that invests strongly in infrastructure does not care about people. While there are very important and significant investments in our road networks within this Budget, which will make our roads safer to travel on and reduce traffic congestion so people have less time in their cars and more time at home - there is an unprecedented \$6 billion in infrastructure - it also goes to building the schools, the hospitals, the affordable housing, the public housing our state needs, and to better

protecting Tasmanians in need. These investments in infrastructure will not only respond to the demands of a growing state but will also create more jobs.

This infrastructure budget that you are opposing does those things. It will create 10 000 more jobs for Tasmanians. I do not know why the Labor Party would so instinctively oppose this without considering the broad benefit this Budget will deliver for our state, including the most important investments in essential services.

I know the Leader of the Opposition has referred to some commentary in response to the Budget. We know that budgets will not always be universally supported but it is important to acknowledge those who have supported our Budget very strongly. It has been well received by a number of expert independent commentators and important community organisations.

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for example, said:

What we have here is a budget that keeps the economy moving, it keeps infrastructure moving, it keeps people working and brings more people into work.

The Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania said: Easily the best tourism budget in Tasmanian history, investing in our precious spots, delivering on election promises and stimulating investment in regional destinations.

The Master Builders Association of Tasmania said:

... state Budget to support growth in the building and construction industry ... This will boost jobs and will ensure that the building industry keeps growing.

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association said:

Agriculture has been a winner in today's State Budget. Commitments to irrigation infrastructure are crucial to the ongoing success of the sector and today's commitment of \$70 million is a significant step ...

The Budget's initiatives to build our skilled workforce and support those businesses that need more skilled people working within them was also recognised. The Master Plumbers Association said:

... the state Government's announcement to extend the successful Payroll Tax rebate to support employers to take on new apprentices and trainees in key growth industries ... is another win for our members running small to medium businesses in Tasmania.

The Housing Industry Association said:

... welcomed additional funding for TasTAFE to train more construction apprentices.

In conclusion there are also some important contributions from other key leaders in our community sector. For example, Shelter Tasmania, in reflecting on the stress in our public housing noted:

To solve the problem we urgently need greater **investment** in social and affordable rental housing and this fast-track **investment** in **capital** is **very welcome**.

There are a number within the broader community that understand what we are doing and are supportive of it. This is the next stage in our long-term plan for the state. At its heart it has not only a mission to ensure that our economy remains strong, that more Tasmanians are employed and more Tasmanians are getting the good education they need but, importantly, it also has the vision for every Tasmanian, no matter where they live or whatever their circumstances, to be able to enjoy the benefits of a strong economy, to participate in it and to achieve their potential.

Budget 2019-20 - Leadership for Young Tasmanians

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.27 a.m.]

Your Budget paints the bleakest of futures for young Tasmanians. It is a budget devoid of what most young Tasmanians needed to hear from their leader. They have huge anxieties about the future. They want a skills plan for the new industries. They want the seriousness and urgency of the climate emergency acknowledged, money for bushfire protection, action to draw down carbon, and a decisive shift into public and electrified transport. This Budget demonstrates no vision except a dark and spiritless one. How do you explain yourself to young Tasmanians who are looking to you for leadership about their future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I regret that she has such a negative view of our state and its prospects and, indeed, refusal to acknowledge the positive things we are doing to give young Tasmanians a brighter future.

There has been no better investment in our state's education system than the reforms that were undertaken by this Government that we are delivering and are helping Tasmanian kids in regional communities to stay engaged in their education longer, achieve the qualifications they need, and to support our most vulnerable younger Tasmanians into a healthy learning environment, which we are doing and which again is supported by this Budget. These are the most significant of reforms which have been opposed by Opposition parties but which are now delivering positive results.

When we talk about intergenerational change for our state, we will look back at this time and future Tasmanians will say thank heavens, finally a government had the vision, foresight, courage and capacity to invest in giving our kids the brightest future they have with an education system that our state deserves, and that is exactly what is happening.

Similarly, regarding TasTAFE, I will hear nothing from opposition parties that dismantled TasTAFE. In fact they abolished it just a few years ago. We are rebuilding TasTAFE and investing more in this Budget, despite what the member who asked the question said.

With respect to climate change, I have outlined in this place, and this parliament has debated it, that during this term of government we have been able to reduce the state to zero net emissions

to be totally renewable self-sufficient within a matter of years. That is because of a climate action plan that we are delivering with real action, not just talk.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The Premier is most definitely misleading the House. The reduction in Tasmania's emissions has nothing to do with his Government and everything to do with the previous government and the Tasmanian Forest Agreement.

Madam SPEAKER - I do not believe that is a point of order. Premier, please continue.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The fact is that during the last term of government Tasmania was able to achieve that. We will need to continue the work to ensure that we continue such positive progress. It puts the lie to the claim by Greens members opposite that we are doing nothing when we have a substantive climate action plan, which is funded as we planned for it to be in this Budget as well.

I believe these are not only the important matters to Tasmanians, particularly young people, but also their prospects of a job. There is no better opportunity for a Tasmanian to achieve their potential than to have the opportunity for a job in our state. It was not that long ago, during a Labor-Greens government, when we had more young people needing to leave the state than to stay and pursue opportunities in their home state. Now we are seeing a net migration return to the positive for younger people. It has been a long time since we have had that, and seen our population grow.

People from other parts of the country are now looking to Tasmania as an investment destination, the place to visit as a tourist, and also as a place to do business as we lower business costs and create a competitive environment for our businesses to prosper. That is why Tasmanian businesses now have the highest levels of confidence in the country. It does not happen by accident. Nor was it an accident when under the Labor-Greens government they had the lowest levels of confidence in that government. In fact, business thought that most of their policies worked against them.

We have turned things around. There is much more to do. This Budget is all about delivering on our commitments and getting on with the job of ensuring that our economy remains strong so that we can invest more, not only into essential services as this Budget does, but also ensure that young Tasmanians have an even brighter future.

Budget 2019-20 - New Infrastructure Projects

Mr O'BYRNE question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.32 a.m.]

Last year you described Tasmania as being in 'a golden age'. Last Thursday you placed Tasmania on a path towards \$1.1 billion in net debt. You have told Tasmanians you will place them in this massive debt to build infrastructure. In fact, it is a result of your incompetent budget management. The truth is that you have not announced a significant new infrastructure project in your Budget. You have simply listed a series of projects that carry over from previous years. Can you name one new project announced in last week's Budget that justifies Tasmania going from 'a golden age' to, like state Liberal governments before you, an age of massive debt?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question. The stage 2 of the Royal Hobart Hospital is funded in the Budget. That's one.

Members interjecting.

Ms O'Byrne - Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. I have my own point of order, if you do not mind. This is turning into a circus. I am struggling to hear what the Treasurer is trying to say. There is a lot of interjection from both sides of the House today. I remind everybody that we are here for a dignified debate. I ask the Treasurer to continue.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to relevance. Perhaps we would have a more orderly process if the Treasurer actually answered the question, which is for him to name one new project announced in last week's Budget.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you for that clarification. It is not a point of order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, the economic development minister and former infrastructure minister, Mr O'Byrne, is obviously struggling with this Budget. I can understand that. It is completely foreign to him what we have brought down. Under him, 10 000 jobs were lost; under us, 10 000 new jobs are going to be created.

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It was a pretty clear question: could the Treasurer name one infrastructure project he announced in the Budget?

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, you know that is not a point of order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, I have answered that question. Stage 2 of the Royal was funded in the Budget.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, let me make a couple of points. The member has been trying to run a line for a couple of days. He got a line up the other day that the state was only putting an additional \$50 million into infrastructure in this Budget. That was the line that you put in, wasn't it? You have not corrected it yet. Let me explain something to the former -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, let me hear what the Treasurer has to say.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, general government infrastructure investments will be \$2.8 billion over four years; \$205 million more than last year's Budget of which more than \$200 million of that is state government investment.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Treasurer, I am really sorry you have to shout. There are some very noisy people here. Please calm down.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, as I have said, the Budget is obviously completely foreign to that side of the House. We are creating jobs and we are investing in infrastructure. In terms of the state government investment in this Budget, which is around \$500 million more state government funding as part of our \$3.6 billion investment - \$500 million, not \$50 million as the economic genius on the front bench was suggesting the other day.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon, no name calling, thank you.

Mr GUTWEIN - Not \$50 million, nearly \$500 million. It goes to the economic credibility of that side of the House. He was only out by a factor of 10. I can understand his embarrassment.

This Budget delivers \$1.6 billion worth of funding into roads and bridges, nearly a 50 per cent increase on what was in last year's Budget, more than \$350 million into hospitals around the state; \$170 million into irrigation schemes.

Both sides of the House should be proud of stage 2 of the Royal Hobart Hospital. I have made the point already; we are getting on with it on this side of the House. We understand that by investing in infrastructure we will create jobs and we will generate revenues. I look forward to seeing their alternative budget. I look forward to seeing what they will cut or not support in our Budget; how they will fund those things that they want to support. It is incumbent on the other side of the House to bring down an alternative. We did on this side of the House. We explained where we would find our savings; we explained what we would invest in. On that side of the House, their opportunity will be later today.

Madam SPEAKER - Before I take any calls, I find that four people, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Franklin and the member for Clark are all on a first warning. I will be much tougher today.

Budget 2019-20 - Net Debt and Interest Payments

Mr BACON question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.39 a.m.]

Tasmanians need to understand the level of debt you will shackle them with as a result of your train-wreck Budget. They need to understand the consequences. Once you have placed Tasmania's future on the credit card with \$1.1 billion in net debt, can you tell taxpayers how much they will be paying in interest on these massive borrowings, which you deliberately and dishonestly withheld from them before the last election?

A member - Super liability.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question - and that very helpful interjection as I was getting to my feet to ensure that I did not forget that they spent the Superannuation Provision

Account. That is what they did on that side of the House. On this side of the House we make no apologies on investing in infrastructure. How quickly did they ditch stage 2 of the Royal?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Leader of the Opposition and Mr Bacon, you are now both on your second warning.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. I am sorry I am an interference but over here in the Greens we are sick of hearing the Treasurer reach back five and six years rather than answering the questions he has been asked in here this morning. It is a repeat offensive.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not an official point of order but it is clarification.

Ms O'Connor - It is maddening and insulting. You have been the Treasurer for five years.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - And our economy is growing at 3.3 per cent. This Budget underpins 10 000 new jobs, unlike when you were in government the economy was in recession and 10 000 jobs were lost. I thank the member for her interjection.

In terms of net debt, the numbers are in the Budget. Between 2019-20 and 2022-23 the interest bill will go up by \$20 million in the fourth year to support \$3.6 billion worth of infrastructure spending. That side of the House has an aversion to building things. On this side of the House we make -

Mr O'Byrne - Do you drive to George Town through Dilston?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr O'Byrne, warning number two.

Mr GUTWEIN - On this side of the House we have no problem with building things and we are proud of the fact that by investing \$3.6 billion into infrastructure over the next four years we will build roads, bridges, schools and affordable housing.

Later today that side of the House has the opportunity to explain what they would do differently. We look forward to that because Tasmanians should understand what the other side of the House stands for because whingeing is not a policy and complaining is not a platform.

Budget 2019-20 - Net Debt Position

Mr BACON question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.43 a.m.]

You failed to be honest with Tasmanians before the election about your clear intention all along to take the state into massive net debt. Quite the opposite, in fact - you said you would not put Tasmania's future on the credit card, but that is exactly what you have done by recklessly

mismanaging Tasmania's finances in what you describe as a 'golden age'. Can you now explain to Tasmanians the pathway out of your \$1.1 billion of debt and when will the debt be repaid?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question. Once again, I point out that unless he has been living in a bubble or an alternative universe he would understand that we have lost \$500 million-worth of revenue. We have a growing economy and more people coming to the state, three times the growth in our population than it was just a handful of years ago, and twice as strong as it has been over the long-term trend. We make no apologies, as I have said -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I am going to seek leave at the end of question time to table the Revised Estimates Report 2018-19 which the Treasurer is being very dishonest about that clearly showed his economic hypocrisy way before the GST writedown.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, I think that is an abuse of a point of order but never mind.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, it goes to their understanding of financial matters. That has been on the website for a handful of months and has been tabled in this House already.

In terms of our debt, we make no apologies for the state being in net debt to underpin a \$3.6 billion infrastructure spend. Over the course of the forward Estimates we throw increasingly larger cash surpluses in an operating sense and we will make decisions based on the economic circumstances of the time in terms of the level of net debt that we carry. We will determine whether we pay it off or continue with it based on the economic circumstances of the time and what is in the best interests of Tasmania and Tasmanians.

Right now it is in Tasmania's best interests to have a \$3.6 billion infrastructure program. It is in Tasmania's best interests that this Government continues to invest strongly in its economy. It is in this state's best interest that the Budget underpins the creation of 10 000 new jobs and the opportunity that that will bring for Tasmanians.

I look forward with interest to seeing what that side of the House might do in similar circumstances when they bring down their alternative budget later today.

Labor's Alternative Budget for 2019-20

Mrs RYLAH question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.46 a.m.]

Can you update the House on whether Tasmanians can expect to see an alternative budget today, and if not, what can Tasmanians -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker; I seek your guidance. Is it an abuse of question time where a Dorothy Dixier has no substance to it whatsoever?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. I think the tradition in this House has made our points of order a little unusual.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, you have already ruled, but on that point of order I would like to draw your attention to the continued abuse of this House by members opposite who are pretending to raise points of order to score a political point.

Ms O'Connor - I am genuinely wanting to know.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, it is obviously highly disorderly and I ask that members be discouraged from continuing to disrupt proceedings of the House like this.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you very much. It has something to do with politics in this place so I am ruling that one out of order and ask Mrs Rylah to repeat the question.

Mrs RYLAH - Can the Treasurer update the House on whether Tasmanians can expect to see an alternative budget today and if not, what can Tasmanians expect Labor's budget reply to say?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question and her interest in this very important matter. Last week I delivered the Government's sixth Budget which will maintain momentum and invest for growth. It is a budget which continues our long-term plan to grow the economy, create jobs, invest in essential services and put down the pressure on cost of living. It delivers record spending into health of \$8.1 billion and into education of \$7.1 billion. Over \$544 million more will be spent on health than was forecast in last year's budget over four years.

This is unashamedly an infrastructure budget, investing \$3.6 billion into intergenerational and job-creating infrastructure such as roads, dams, water, hospitals and schools. These investments will underpin our economy, ensure it continues to grow and will generate the revenue we need to continue to invest record amounts into health, education and looking after the most disadvantaged. The Budget also underpins the creation of 10 000 new jobs.

Today the House will have the opportunity to hear Labor's alternative vision. Budgets are about choices. It is incumbent on the Opposition, the Opposition Leader and the failed former finance minister to outline what they stand for and, importantly, how they would pay for it.

This year the Government has faced a massive half-billion-dollar writedown in GST and stamp duties. As Tasmanians would expect, the budget demonstrates that we have sensibly worked through this issue. We have made choices. Rather than changing down a gear, as I said earlier today, we changed up a gear and we are investing \$3.6 billion in infrastructure -

Mr Bacon - Up a gear with no new projects.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon, that is warning number three.

Mr GUTWEIN - with total new spending of close to \$700 million in this budget.

We have chosen to invest record amounts of infrastructure to build more affordable housing, new roads, bridges, schools and hospitals -

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne, that is warning number three.

Mr GUTWEIN - as well as 100-year assets such as dams and irrigation schemes. We are going to use our strong balance sheet and we make no apologies for that. We are going to invest in the infrastructure that Tasmanians need. This budget builds a strong economy and it underpins 10 000 new jobs and we make no apology whatsoever for that.

What would Labor do? It is incumbent on those opposite to deliver an alternative budget. We did. It is only right and fair that Tasmanians know what their political party stands for.

The Greens, I have said this before - as kooky as they are - will deliver an alternative budget. We will not agree with what is in it, but at least they will try.

It is incumbent on the other side to release an alternative budget. I refer to Ms Giddings when she was premier and treasurer. When premier, Lara Giddings said:

... the Liberal Opposition must release an alternative budget if they are to have any financial credibility.

I do not agree with Ms Giddings on much, but I agree with her on that. We brought down our alternative budgets and Tasmanians could understand what we stood for and importantly, how we would pay for it. Ms Giddings went on to say, and again I agree:

This is a significant test for the Liberals and they simply cannot claim to have economic or financial credibility if they refuse to release an alternative Budget.

A number of you sat with Ms Giddings then and I presume many of you must have agreed with her. What is going to happen today? That is the question. What are they going to announce today, and importantly, how are they going to pay for it? A 3 per cent pay rise would inject costs of over \$280 million into the budget. Will they support our modest efficiency dividend? Next year, in the budget year, only 75 cents in \$100. If they cannot explain how they would fund those positions and if they oppose those efficiency dividends, that would inject \$700 million worth of additional costs into the budget. Today they have their opportunity. It is incumbent upon Labor to explain what they would do when faced with similar choices.

On this side of the House, we have made our choice. We have determined our way forward. That way forward is to invest record amounts into infrastructure. It is to ensure that we can invest and continue record funding into health and education and importantly, it is a budget on this side of the House that underpins 10 000 new jobs.

Budget 2019 -20 - Appointment of CEO for Brand Tasmania

Mr SHELTON question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.53 a.m.]

Can you advise the House on the steps the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is taking to better promote and protect the Tasmanian brand and to ensure our state's reputation is strengthened locally, nationally and internationally?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As all members appreciate, our brand is one of our great assets, not only to government but to so many Tasmanians who are proud about

the state in which they live. Many businesses depend on the integrity and the quality of our brand and our state's reputation so we are taking strong action to better promote and protect it.

Earlier this year the Government established Brand Tasmania which is Australia's first place branding authority and one of only a few in the world. Brand Tasmania's mission is to ensure that we continue to stand out from the crowd and compete in the global market place. Brand Tasmania has a very important role to play to bring all sectors together with a common understanding and common purpose of our brand, and how to better promote it and to protect it. A strong brand will inevitably bring economic, social and cultural strength to our state.

A board has been appointed with highly-respected entrepreneur and brand enthusiast, Nick Haddow, as chair. The board comprises an exceptional group of people similarly committed to the objectives and vision of Brand Tasmania.

In this year's budget we are investing \$4 million to establish Brand Tasmania and to support its important work. Today I can announce that following an extensive international search Mr Todd Babiak has been appointed to the role of CEO for Brand Tasmania. Mr Babiak is an internationally-renowned and award-winning place brand expert who has worked all over the world from Australia, including here in Tasmania to north and central America to Europe and Africa, developing successful place branding and economic development strategies. It is a strong demonstration of the value and the interest in our state and its brand that this role has attracted the attention of the world.

Mr Babiak was the co-founder and CEO of an award-winning place branding and strategy company. In 2016 he was awarded the best expression of place brand identity at an international award event based on the work he has done in Edmonton, Canada. He has worked in newspapers, television and advertising, and he is a best-selling and award-winning novelist and fellow of both the Royal Society of Arts in London and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.

He has previously worked in Tasmania with the Hobart City Council and the Hobart City Vision in 2017 and also with Tourism Tasmania. In 2018 he led the work on the Tasmanian Story project for the Department of Premier and Cabinet which was essential in progressing the work to establish the authority.

The recruitment process for the inaugural role of CEO Brand Tasmania was highly competitive and I thank all candidates. I also thank the interim CEO, Mark Bowles, who has done an excellent job in the early work in setting up Brand Tasmania. On behalf of all of those who have a passion for and an investment in our brand, I extend our best wishes to the inaugural CEO of Brand Tasmania, Mr Todd Babiak. The very best of wishes in this most important job, which he starts today.

Budget 2019-20 - Frontline Services Funding

Mr BACON question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.57 a.m.]

In addition to burdening Tasmania with \$1.1 million in net debt you have now imposed \$450 million worth of new cuts on public sector jobs and services. These new cuts are in addition to the \$740 million you slashed in jobs and essential services during your first half decade in

government. Where will these cuts be made? Can you stand here today and guarantee that this new \$450 million in cuts will not result in you taking an axe to frontline jobs and services?

ANSWER

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

This budget is about maintaining momentum and investing for growth. Again I make the point, because it appears that they have been living in an alternate universe: we have lost more than half a billion dollars worth of revenue so, as a government, we have had to make choices.

One of those choices, as I have explained ad nauseam this morning and one which we make no apologies for, is to invest in infrastructure so that we can continue to grow our economy and importantly generate the revenues that we need to invest record amounts into health and education and looking after Tasmanians in need.

In the budget there is a modest efficiency dividend of three-quarters of 1 per cent - 75 cents in \$100 is what this will impact. It is modest, it is manageable and we have made the point that we will protect the front line, but we will maintain essential services. We will work with agencies and look at those discretionary areas in the first instance such as consultants, advertising, promotion, travel and transport. We will look at targeted vacancy control as well as natural attrition.

We have put that on the table. The other side is aware of that. I said that last week. In the context of what is occurring around the country, this is a very modest efficiency dividend: New South Wales, 2 per cent to 3 per cent last year. The Victorians yesterday announced another efficiency dividend. The Commonwealth has a modest efficiency dividend. The Northern Territory and South Australia have introduced efficiency dividends. All of them are significantly higher than the 0.75 of 1 per cent that we are going to work with our agencies to deliver.

Madam Speaker, we will protect essential services. We understand that the front line needs to be protected but we will work with our agencies to find sensible savings. I will come back to the point I started on. Half a billion dollars of revenues were lost, GST and stamp duty, so what we will do, sensibly and responsibly, is ensure that we protect Tasmania against the headwinds that are buffeting the national economy, continue to invest in our own economy and deliver the essential services and the infrastructure that will continue to service Tasmanians well for the next 100 years.

Affordable Housing - Release of Surplus Government Land

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for PLANNING, Mr JAENSCH

[11.01 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Hodgman Liberal Government's plan to fast track surplus government land for more affordable housing?

ANSWER

Mr O'Byrne - This is amazing. You have an infrastructure budget and for your first question you can't even get a DD to the Infrastructure minister. Unbelievable.

Mr JAENSCH - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Mr O'Byrne - An infrastructure budget and not one dorothy for the Infrastructure minister.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr O'Byrne, you are flagrantly ignoring my warnings. The next one you are out the door and you will miss a very good answer.

Mr JAENSCH - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in affordable housing. Increasingly, the supply of affordable and social housing is not a one-size-fits-all approach, as those opposite would have you think. We need to pull all the levers available to us to provide more housing for Tasmanians in need.

I am focused on delivering for every part of the housing supply chain, including releasing more land for homes to be built to meet demand. This was a clear message we received from stakeholders at the housing summit last year where the Government committed to introducing a mechanism to fast track the release of surplus of government-owned land.

Last year this parliament passed the Housing Land Supply Act 2018 which establishes an effective and appropriate process for rezoning surplus Crown land and land owned by Housing Tasmania for altering certain planning provisions applicable to such land and for the transfer of any rezoned Crown land to the Director of Housing. The first set of orders under our new legislation passed last year and included sites in Devonport, West Moonah and Rokeby, and has the potential to yield well over 50 subdivided lots with the potential for multiple dwellings on these lots. The rezoning for Rokeby and Moonah is complete and Devonport is in its final stages now.

Today I am pleased to present another housing land supply order, this time for land in the Launceston suburb of Newnham. The Newnham site encompasses 2.4 hectares which will be used for a mix of social and affordable housing options, potentially yielding up to 75 dwelling units, depending on the type of development proposed, and ensuring it meets the requirements of the Launceston Interim Planning Scheme 2015. We will continue to identify more land in high-demand areas around Tasmania to increase the supply of affordable housing.

In accordance with the act, the proposed Newnham order underwent consultation with a number of interested parties including neighbours, the council, and state agencies. The feedback received was generally supportive of the proposal we put forward. The standard rezoning of land can normally take in excess of nine months and our new process, under the Housing Land Supply Act, will cut significant time from this assessment process, resulting in more land being available for affordable housing much sooner, all without compromising planning considerations and community outcomes.

The final makeup of the number and type of housing on the land parcel will be contingent on local needs for social and affordable housing, and more orders will be rolled over during the rest of this year. These orders deliver on our commitment to address housing availability and affordability by fast-tracking the supply of land and more homes. It is just one aspect of the Hodgman Liberal Government's multipronged approach to addressing the shortage of housing in Tasmania.

Time expired.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Access to Parliamentary Counsel

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, quite recently I wrote to the Premier pointing out that there was no access for members of the House of Assembly to a parliamentary counsel or lawyer to guide and assist members in drafting bills for consideration and amendments they wish to raise. It is often forgotten that members can propose a bill for a law or an amendment to a law in their own right. It is my duty to maintain and facilitate this right of members as an issue of equity.

Following the report I received from the Parliamentary Research Service I confirmed to the Premier, the Honourable Will Hodgman MHA, this need for members to be better supported in this regard. In the Budget being presented to parliament last week funds for a private members' staffing service have been made available by the Premier and the Treasurer. I thank them both for this consideration. A sum of \$150 000 per year has been added to the parliamentary budget for the appointment of a new parliamentary counsel who will now work for all members of the parliament.

I will meet shortly with my colleague, the Honourable Craig Farrell MLC, President of the Legislative Council, in regard to this matter to ensure that members of the Legislative Council have the same access. This matter will shortly be discussed by the joint House Committee and a program of access arranged. I expect that this service, after the determination of the joint House Committee, will be constituted within the next six to eight weeks.

I commend the Premier for his agreement to assist all members of the parliament and look forward to working with him on further improvements to the facilities for members of the parliament and the Tasmanians who visit us. Thank you.

POINT OF ORDER

Standing Order 144 - Offensive Words against a Member

[11.06 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order under standing order 144. I regard this as a matter of grave importance to bring to your attention and to members of this House. I seek action from the member concerned or a clarification that the words were not used.

In sitting down from asking question number nine, Mr Bacon was heard using a term which I choose to not repeat in raising the matter, but a very highly abusive and offensive name was directed towards the Treasurer. This is becoming an abusive pattern of behaviour from the member for Clark, Mr Bacon. Under standing order 144 I ask you to direct Mr Bacon to either clarify that he did or did not use an offensive word, or to immediately withdraw and apologise.

Further, Madam Speaker, because there are many occasions where unbecoming or offensive words are used usually we would accept a withdrawal and move on. But given the gravity of what has been heard to be said, I ask you also to examine the *Hansard* and/or the television recording to determine the matter for yourself and report back to the House.

Mr BACON - On the point of order, Madam Speaker, during the course of question time today I did call the Treasurer 'a clown'. I am not sure if that is what the member is referring to. I have absolutely no idea what the Leader of Government Business is referring to. If he wants to tell me privately what I am alleged to have said I am happy to withdraw it if that is the case. However, I do not think I said anything that was out of order at all.

Madam SPEAKER - Mr Bacon, I did pull you up on calling the Treasurer a 'clown', but the other word that you used was in the heat of the debate so I ignored it, but it is 'troglodyte'.

Mr BACON - Which I do not think is unparliamentary.

Madam SPEAKER - It is not exactly complimentary either.

Mr BACON - If it is 'troglodyte' that has caused offence then I withdraw it. I have never seen such a carry-on in my time in this place that you would be so offended by the word 'troglodyte'. Was that the word?

Mr Ferguson - You speak for yourself.

Mr BACON - So I am supposed to respond to an allegation you will not even make? How would I possibly do that?

Madam SPEAKER - Let us make this an example for the whole parliament that we stop calling each other names and that we be a little more dignified. Are you happy to accept that, Treasurer?

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, on the point of order, I believe the tape should be checked. I did not hear what was said but apparently people listening to the parliamentary webcast would have. If what was said did come from Mr Bacon -

Ms O'Byrne - Troglodyte?

Mr GUTWEIN - It was not 'troglodyte' - then he should withdraw it. But I have not heard what was on the parliamentary broadcast and I think we need to test that.

Madam SPEAKER - It is a bit difficult if no-one will tell Mr Bacon what he has to apologise for.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point I am making is, let us check the tape. Mr Bacon has said that if we can inform him privately he can take the appropriate action if that is the case.

Madam SPEAKER - All right, but let us take this as a warning to the House in future that we be a bit more considerate of each other. Silly names are not necessary in sophisticated debate.

Ms O'CONNOR - Briefly on the point of order, Madam Speaker, standing order 144 is very clear:

If the offended Member objects at the time when such words are used, the Speaker may direct that the words be withdrawn ...

What we have is a situation where I do not think the Treasurer heard what is alleged to have been said and we have the Leader of Government Business in the House running interference for the Treasurer well after the fact.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the point of order, Madam Speaker. My understanding of standing order 144 is that if a member has some offence at general things that were said, they could be brought up in the adjournment debate.

Madam SPEAKER - We all understand the point that we need to be a little more sophisticated in our debating technique.

MESSAGE FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Joint House Committee - Appointment

Message received from the Legislative Council -

The Legislative Council has made the following appointments to the Joint Committee of both Houses to control Parliament House and grounds and other matters, Mr Farrell and Mrs Hiscutt.

C Farrell
President, Legislative Council
23 May 2019

SHORT STAY ACCOMMODATION BILL 2018 (No. 66)

WORKERS REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION AMENDMENT (PRESUMPTION AS TO CAUSE OF DISEASE) BILL 2019 (No. 7)

CONSOLIDATED FUND APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION FOR 2018-19) BILL 2019 (No. 9)

Bills agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendments.

MESSAGE FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Estimates Committees

Message received from the Legislative Council -

Requests that the House of Assembly give leave to all ministers to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Council Estimates Committee in relation to the Budget Estimates and related documents.

C Farrell
President, Legislative Council
23 May 2019

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

That the resolution of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Net Debt

[11.14 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: net debt.

We saw clearly in question time today that whilst the Government is building a narrative around an infrastructure budget, effectively the Government cannot point to any new infrastructure project that had not already been announced by this Government. This is a government that is plunging Tasmania into in excess of \$1 billion of net debt on the basis of an infrastructure spend; a spend which had already and should have already been factored in to the budget papers in previous budgets.

Last year the Treasurer claimed that this state is in 'a golden age' - a golden age that this Government alone had directed them in. Now, 12 months later, we are seeing the state Government led by this Treasurer in close to a billion dollars in excess of \$1 billion dollars of net debt.

The infrastructure projects that have already been factored into the Budget should have been considered in terms of cash flow. In particular under roads, you have \$1.6 billion in road funding, but nearly \$900.5 million of that is funded by the federal government. So, an excess of \$900 million of that is federal government funding for the Labor's 10-year action plan on the Midland Highway and the recent announcement by the federal government for funding of the Bridgewater bridge.

When you take out federal government funding as well as a whole range of projects that had already been announced by a previous Labor government - the 10-year Midland Highway strategy, the community road strategy and the community roads package - effectively in the five years of this Liberal Government, there is not one road infrastructure project that has been announced or commenced in the last five years that was not already announced under previous Labor governments. So, this is work that had been previously announced and previously put in to budget considerations.

The 'golden age Budget' did not really last an age, did it? It was more like a long weekend on the fizz. The Treasurer who claimed a golden age is now thrusting the state into over \$1 billion of net debt. The previous Labor government avoided this despite the headwinds, the write downs in GST, the Australian dollar and the exchange rate peaking at \$1.08 and \$1.10. As an export-oriented economy we know that is a key factor in the Tasmanian economy. The previous government, a government so criticised and so pilloried by those on the opposite side of the House, did not take Tasmania into net debt.

Only 12 months ago this Treasurer committed not to take Tasmania into net debt. Yet here we are writ large in the budget over \$1 billion of net debt forecast. Then he compares other states and the response to other states going into various levels of net debt and dealing with issues around efficiency dividends. Even though the Victorian state government is going into net debt the credit agency ratings have come out and said that they support the strategy. 'We think it is a good thing what they are doing. We can see a sound strategy, we can see that there is a pathway forward.' This is very different from what they are saying about the Tasmanian state Budget. They are very concerned. They have an immediate question mark over the budget and fiscal strategies of this state Government.

You cannot selectively quote what is happening in other states with other budgets in terms of fiscal strategy and budget strategy over the forward Estimates. There was a very different response from the credit agency. This Government would say, 'Trust us on infrastructure. We are the infrastructure Government'. The fact that the Infrastructure minister was not asked a Dorothy Dixer in a sea of woeful Dorothy Dixers from the other side says it all. On the infrastructure budget the Infrastructure minister could not even get up to defend the infrastructure spend. Look at their record on infrastructure. They claim it is an infrastructure budget, but look at their record.

There was a gaggle of Liberal politicians in 2014 at the Hobart airport roundabout saying, 'Here is a traffic snarl. We have the strategy to fix it. We will announce a massive upgrade of the Hobart airport roundabout to deal with traffic congestion at that point.'

Last year we had the Infrastructure minister in Estimates say that by the end of 2018 the airport roundabout upgrade would start. The Premier, the next day saying, 'actually it will not be by the end of 2018, it will be at the end of 2019', yet your budget papers outline that it will not start until 2020. They have not even awarded the contract. How can you say 'we are an infrastructure government' when you announced a project of significance to the community in 2014 and it is now halfway through 2019 and you have not let the tender out? It is almost like every 12 months it is the annual birthday of the airport roundabout announcement where all the Liberal politicians' gaggle around and say 'this is the infrastructure for the future'. You have not even awarded the contract and the tender.

Most Tasmanians would know that in a small economy the size of Tasmania, the infrastructure budget and the infrastructure spend is crucial.

The Treasurer is very keen to get to his feet to compare and contrast to my term. We took great joy in investing in significant infrastructure projects: the Brighton Bypass, the Brighton Hub, the East Tamar Highway Bypass, the Kingston Bypass. In 2013-14 we announced a 10-year Midland Highway strategy that would deal not only with freight but consumer traffic, north and south.

At the pre-election forum on infrastructure, where we talked through all of our projects for the following 10 years, the shadow minister, Mr Hidding, said, 'We will do what they are doing'.

Time expired.

[11.22 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for bringing this matter of net debt on for the MPI debate today. Any state budget, and we have said this before, is a statement of values. It tells us everything we need to know about what the government of the day values and what it is prepared to prioritise.

What we know is not only this budget, but every budget prior to this going back to 2014-15, has placed a higher priority on roads and bridges than it has on providing homes for Tasmanians, the best quality public health and education systems in the country and properly funded public services. We have had to listen to the offensive and galling claims of this Treasurer over a number of years now that 'the budget is back on track and back in the black. That we are entering the golden age'. The golden age lasted about five minutes and this state budget is the 'emperor's got no clothes' budget.

This state budget lays bare the lack of vision and lack of strategic forward planning of this government over the past five years. Under five years of Liberal government not only have we gone progressively backwards economically, but socially Tasmania is in a far worse situation than it was in 2014. When you have a look at some of the metrics that TasCOSS put out last Thursday - and unfortunately, I did not see any members of the Government there excepting for the Housing minister, Mr Jaensch, who struggled to cobble together a coherent narrative for the TasCOSS stakeholders - but this is the table they put out.

The number of Tasmanians on energy concessions has gone from 88 430 four years ago to 92 863 this year.

The Department of Emergency Medicine, people who are seen within four hours at the RHH Emergency Department has gone from 60.3 per cent to 54 per cent. The elective surgery waiting list has gone from 7438 four years ago to 9043 now.

TasTAFE VET enrolments - and one of the great tragedies of this term of the parliament as well as the last term, has been the degrading of TasTAFE. Even when you look in the budget papers, they are short-term, grant injections to TasTAFE which over the longer period, continues to go into nearly terminal decline under this Government. TasTAFE vet enrolments: 63 400 five years ago, 54 000 this year.

The number of unemployed, 8900 when we left office, 17 500 at this year's state Budget time. That is not the 13 000 jobs that this lot crow about every opportunity they get and yet under-employment is worsening in Tasmania.

The number of people on the housing register - 2054 when we left office - after building 2200 new affordable energy efficient homes, and now we have 3233 people on the housing waiting list as at March, and they are waiting longer. It has gone from 19 weeks to a year.

The number of children in out-of-home care has also increased.

We have a Treasurer who continually says, 'We make no apologies'. Well he should. He should apologise to those Tasmanians who are living on the margins; those Tasmanians who are looking at advertisements to rent a bed in a hallway for \$75 a week. This Treasurer and the Premier should apologise to them.

Tasmania has not been in net debt since the 2007-08 financial year. We managed to keep the state out of net debt in a recession and not degrade public services. This year, Tasmania is projected to go into \$284 million worth of net debt, escalating rapidly to \$1.1 billion in 2022-23.

Infrastructure investment in 2018-19 was \$719 million; this year it is \$723 million, decreasing across the forward Estimates in real terms. This year's infrastructure investment is smaller than last

year's investment. The last budget projected infrastructure expenditure of \$731 million. This year's infrastructure expenditure is \$8.3 million lower than last year's budget allocated to this financial year. That is a fall in infrastructure spending.

This Government has spun the truth by claiming that they have chosen to invest in infrastructure in order not to go into net debt. The reality is that they have cut their infrastructure investment program and going into net debt was not a deliberate choice.

It is also not solely because of falling revenue, as the Treasurer would have us believe. Projected revenue for 2018-19 in the 2018-19 Budget was \$6.21 billion; the actual outcome was significantly higher at \$6.38 billion. Likewise, the previous budget projected revenue of \$6.24 billion for this financial year, whereas this Budget is projecting \$6.5 billion worth of revenue for this financial year and borrowings are increasing from \$671 million in 2018-19 to \$1 billion in 2019-20. Borrowings will escalate to \$1.8 billion in 2023.

At its worst, during the global financial crisis, under the Labor-Greens government, borrowings were \$1.1 billion in 2013-14.

To top it all off, within this Budget are savage cuts to the public service. This is a budget without heart and which puts the state in a precarious financial position in the forward Estimates.

Time expired.

[11.28 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank members for the opportunity to speak on this today. I will make the point: we made choices in this Budget, choices to invest in infrastructure or to pull back on infrastructure and that is quite apparent in the budget papers. As a Government, we could have reduced the level of infrastructure spending, we could have geared down, but we did not. We changed up a gear and we make no apologies at all about that.

The member who just spoke looks back over her shoulder at what was happening when they were in government. They did not have a growing population then; they did not have people flooding into the state at three times the rate that they were five years ago. Their economy was in decline; their economy was in recession, and their population was in decline.

We have a growing economy; 3.3 per cent in the last financial year, forecast to be just under 3 per cent at 2.75 per cent this financial year, forecast to be just under 3 per cent next year at 2.75 per cent again. Our economy provides the revenues that we need to fund record levels into health and education and to look after Tasmanians in need. As I have said, we make no apologies for making the decision to increase the investment because that will underpin jobs, economic growth and the economic prosperity of this place.

In terms of the infrastructure spend we are delivering, there is \$2.8 billion in the general government sector, \$205 million more than last year's budget, and virtually all of this -

Mr O'Byrne - Does that include TT-Line?

Mr GUTWEIN - Again, you do not understand how the budget operates. The TT-Line is funded from equity off our balance sheet. The general government sector is \$2.8 billion and that is

an increase of more than \$200 million, the vast majority of which is state government funding. Equity transfers to support infrastructure investment in TT-Line, TasWater and TasIrrigation total \$800 million over the next four years, which is \$473 million more than what was forecast in last year's budget.

Out of the whole-of-government infrastructure spending at \$3.6 billion there is nearly \$700 million of new funding in this Budget. Of the \$3.6 billion in infrastructure across the board, the state Government is contributing around 71 per cent. In the 2019-20 Budget the state Government is contributing more than \$2.5 billion of that investment and the Commonwealth is contributing approximately \$1 billion. The state Government's total investment has increased by \$547 million and the Commonwealth's commitment has increased by \$131 million compared to last year's budget. This means that of the additional \$678 million in infrastructure in this Budget the state is contributing nearly 81 per cent of it.

In terms of net debt, I want to make the point that the Government has made a clear choice. We could have drawn back on infrastructure spending and decided not to invest at the levels we are investing at. I have made the point that the vast majority of the increase is state government funding. It is not as Mr O'Byrne was attempting to con people over the weekend that the only increases were from the feds. That is manifestly untrue.

We as the state Government have made a decision to invest record amounts into infrastructure because we believe that there are national headwinds in front of us. You only have to look at the budgets that have been brought down around the country. The Northern Territory is in desperate straits. In Victoria, as a result principally of their housing collapse, they wrote billions of dollars worth of stamp duty off in their budget and have introduced new taxes and an efficiency dividend and that market will not fix itself quickly. The New South Wales budget brought down last year includes efficiency dividends and writedowns in stamp duty and I expect they will be writing down their stamp duty again.

This Budget is designed to ensure that we underpin the strong economic growth we are seeing at the moment and continue to generate and create new jobs for Tasmanians. In terms of employment, almost 13 000 jobs have been created since we were first elected -

Ms O'Connor - No, there are only 1000 more people employed than there were in 2014.

Mr GUTWEIN - I thought the member might be interested in this. There are now 6200 more women employed than in March 2014. There are now 1400 more young people who are employed compared to March 2014. In terms of the long-term unemployed there are 900 fewer Tasmanians on the long term unemployment list.

Our economy has been strong. The outcomes of the work and the investment that we have been engaged in over the last five years has ensured that there are nearly 13 000 more Tasmanians in employment than there were when we came to government.

The Budget we have framed makes a conscious choice to continue with our record levels of infrastructure investment and actually steps it up a gear, because we believe our economy will drive our revenues and that will enable us to continue to invest record amounts.

[11.35 a.m.]

Mr BACON (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, this matter of public importance is about the state Budget that was brought down last week and the \$1.1 billion of net debt that the Treasurer has

plunged the state into in what he self-proclaimed was a 'golden age' for the Tasmanian economy. It is a rare feat that he has managed to plunge the state into \$1.1 billion worth of debt. It takes a special kind of talent. All he can point to is infrastructure. He calls this an infrastructure budget but there is not one new project in terms of infrastructure announced in this Budget, not one single project.

Mr Gutwein - That is not true.

Mr BACON - Name one.

Mr Gutwein - I did this morning.

Mr BACON - Which one?

Mr Gutwein - Stage 2 of the Royal.

Mr BACON - So no-one had ever head of that before last Thursday?

Mr Gutwein - What, do you think that we're going to magically come up with something overnight? What new infrastructure program that no-one has heard of in this state are you going to announce in a couple of hours?

Mr BACON - The point is that this is your great infrastructure budget. This has plunged the state into \$1.1 billion worth of debt and there is not one new project announced in this Budget.

This is a Treasurer who has had five years of deceit of the Tasmanian people and it has finally caught up with him. He used to think net debt was a bad thing when he was in opposition. On Tuesday 7 February 2012 he put out a press release about former premier Giddings with the headline 'Giddings must rule out going into net debt'. It was good enough at that time.

Before the election there was no word about plunging the state into a billion dollars worth of debt. You only have to go to the Building the Future document, with picture after picture - like all these documents do, they pretty much all have the same picture on the front with the Premier and Treasurer front and centre - but you only have to crack it open to get down to point 5 where the Liberal Party promised before the last state election that they would remain net debt-free. Now we have a billion-dollar broken promise by this Treasurer and what does he say today? They made choices. They made a billion-dollar choice to break that promise to the Tasmanian people not to go into net debt, and they say it is all down to infrastructure.

You can argue about the detail around how much additional infrastructure spending is in this Budget as long as you like, but the facts of the matter are that there was not one single new project announced last Thursday by this Treasurer in his budget speech. How can you have an infrastructure budget without one new project? This puts it clearly and simply for the Tasmanian people that the Treasurer has squandered his own golden age. He has spent five years bringing down budget after budget that have been dishonest with the Tasmanian people. We have seen huge cash deficits and this is now all coming home to roost.

We know that we not only have \$1.1 billion in debt there in black and white in the Budget but we also have \$450 million worth of cuts. The Treasurer will not even say which department they are going to come from, which services are going to be cut and which jobs are going to go. This

Treasurer had a \$500 million writedown, in his own words, and all he did was pluck out \$450 million in cuts but provide no detail, so the ministers do not even know which one of them is going to be carrying how much of a burden as we go forward. It was a core promise by Mr Gutwein not to go into net debt. He has broken that promise by over a billion dollars and he has nothing to show for it, not one new infrastructure project, no new services for the Tasmanian people, and this is through the 'golden age'.

How did we possibly get to the point where we are \$1.1 billion in debt? We do not have a pathway out of this debt and it gets bigger and bigger every year. What flows from that is bigger and bigger borrowing costs every year. The Treasurer will not address his mind to exactly what path they will go down to get this state Budget back in the black.

Today in an answer in question time the Treasurer said they may pay off the debt or they may go into further debt. If you cannot manage the Budget through good economic times how are you going to do it if there are head winds in the national economy as the Treasurer spoke about? You only have to read the Budget to see that there are difficult economic times around the world. You have trade disputes between the biggest economies in the world. Our largest market in China is going to be hit by any further trade disputes. Those things are on the horizon yet this Treasurer has managed to take us into \$1.1 billion worth of debt in what have been relatively good economic times.

What if there is an economic downturn? There is no buffer at all when it comes to this Budget. You only have to read the statement from Moody's to see that it is not just infrastructure spending that is driving us into net debt. It is the fiscal deficits that have been extended further out into the forward Estimates. I think it is around \$380 million just this year in fiscal deficits that is driving us into debt. They have said that the delay in returning to fiscal surplus until 2023 is credit negative. There will be a further update in August from Moody's.

This Budget is built on driving the state into debt; \$450 million worth of cuts to our hospitals, our schools and other public services that have not been explained. There is also the raid on our Government Business Enterprises. We have seen the Treasurer raid GBEs for five years and it has continued.

Time expired.

[11.42 a.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the MPI this morning. In doing so I congratulate the Treasurer for the hard work that goes into every budget. When it comes to budgets, and it has already been mentioned this morning, choices have to be made. In this Budget the choice has been made to maintain the momentum and invest in the growth of Tasmania. We know that our state gross product has been growing. We know the economy in Tasmania is growing. Therefore, what this Budget does is assist the Tasmanian economy to continue its growth.

The reason the Government is going into net debt is to fund the infrastructure that Tasmania needs and deserves. All other jurisdictions use net debt to fund infrastructure. That is what this Government is doing. From my background in agriculture, when you need to invest in intergenerational investments and infrastructure then you can use debt to do it. It is the appropriate way to go about it. This is a modest debt that this Budget entails.

The Budget includes an unprecedented \$3.6 billion investment into intergenerational infrastructure, including \$2.8 billion in agency-funded infrastructure and nearly \$800 million through government businesses and TasWater. Despite there being significant write downs in the Budget revenue of nearly half a billion dollars, as the Treasurer has already mentioned, we are still investing in the infrastructure that Tasmania needs to maintain the momentum in our economy and create jobs. The reality is that jobs are so important to keep our young people here. We have a net migration now where people are coming back to the state because there are jobs in Tasmania for our young people.

The Budget increases our investment in intergenerational infrastructure in Health, Education and Housing, all the areas those on that side have been saying we should invest in. It also invests in road, rail and bridges, in water and sewerage infrastructure, and our parks and tourism assets to ensure that our way of life and the future of our economy is enhanced right around Tasmania. It will help to support around 10 000 jobs, as the Treasurer has already mentioned. Our economy is strong and is growing at the fastest rate in a decade. On a per capita basis we have the fastest growing economy in the nation.

Since we were first elected, almost 13 000 more Tasmanians are employed. The unemployment rate is now down by 0.9 per cent since we first came to government. Tasmanian businesses are some of the most confident in the nation. Business conditions are some of the strongest in the nation. As rated by small and medium businesses, government policies are the most popular in the nation. State final demand grew 4.5 per cent in the December 2018 quarter in trend terms, compared to December 2017, the second strongest state in the country. It is just 0.1 per cent behind Victoria.

Private investment grew by 18.5 per cent in the December 2018 quarter compared to the December 2017 quarter. Gross rate product was recorded at 3.3 per cent in the 2017-18 financial year. This was Tasmania's fastest growth in a decade and the fastest per capita growth in the nation.

Tasmania exported \$3.76 billion in value over the year to March 2019, up by 6.6 per cent compared to the previous year. In March 2019, the trend value of retail trade was at a near record level of \$544 million and grew 2.8 per cent compared to March 2018.

As a result of our strong economy, our population is growing again. Tasmania has recently been growing at twice the long-term average and our economy is growing above the long-term trend. These things will not continue if we fail to provide the infrastructure needed to accommodate this growth. Tasmania wants better schools, better hospitals and safer roads. Tasmanians would not be thanking us if we did not deliver these things just to avoid a modest debt.

Beyond all the spin and mischief the Opposition would like to put out, this infrastructure program is a good thing that will be delivered for Tasmania. We are funding major infrastructure programs as well as a number of smaller ones, which are very important local projects.

A great example of the infrastructure program benefitting regional communities is our investment in the West Coast Wilderness Railway. It is a popular trip and a major drawcard to the West Coast. The Government will invest \$16 million to upgrade the popular iconic West Coast Wilderness Railway to support regional tourism.

A further example is our tourism roads: \$58 million over four years; and \$7.5 million to upgrade the Great Eastern Drive. What a fantastic promotion and drive we have on the East Coast of Tasmania, which is part of Lyons. No one would disagree we need to invest into tourism roads.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

Second Reading

Resumed from 23 May 2019 (page 38)

[11.49 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, a year ago we were told by this minority Liberal Government that the state was on the cusp of a golden age. Tasmanians were promised that they would all share in the benefits of economic prosperity and good budget management.

Tasmanians were promised that services would be improved and infrastructure delivered, all while keeping the Budget in surplus and out of net debt. At that time, the Treasurer's words rang hollow for people living in tents at the Hobart showgrounds. His brash statements were cruel to hear for patients stuck in hospital emergency departments. His comments showed scant regard for the thousands of Tasmanians looking for work.

The cry of the 'golden age' with spoils to share was empty rhetoric for thousands of teachers and nurses, paramedics, firefighters and park rangers, who were told they did not deserve a pay rise that kept up with the cost of living.

The Treasurer's words rang hollow then and they ring even more hollow now.

Just a year after the Treasurer promised the dawning of the golden age, he has plunged our state into debt and budget cuts due to his financial incompetence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are seeing a tragedy unfolding. This minority government has been blessed with the best economic conditions in more than a decade, but because of their poor financial management, Tasmanians have nothing to show for it. The 'golden age' has been squandered, the good times have been wasted and Tasmanians look around and all they can see is missed opportunities - missed opportunities to fix the health crisis, missed opportunities to invest in public housing, missed opportunities for job seekers with the state's underemployment rate the worst in the nation, and unemployment rate the worst in the nation.

Tasmania has seen missed opportunities in Burnie where the Government has ignored the master plan for the Burnie Port expansion that would unlock export potential across the north-west. Tasmania has seen missed opportunities on the West Coast where, despite years of promises, mines remain closed and mineral exploration has dropped off the cliff. Tasmania has seen missed opportunities in Launceston where raw sewage is still flowing into the Tamar River after five years of Liberal government. Tasmania has seen missed opportunities in Hobart where people are locked

out of the property market and commuters are trapped in traffic as a result of poor infrastructure planning.

We are nearing the halfway mark of this Government's second term. The Liberals have been in power for more than a decade and even though terms of trade are good and interest rates are low, the Liberals' financial incompetence will see the state budget head into net debt for the first time in 15 years.

This is the minority Liberal Government's billion-dollar broken promise. Future generations of Tasmanians will be forced to pay for Peter Gutwein's budget mismanagement.

TasCOSS has pointed out that across a range of indicators, many Tasmanians are doing worse now under a Liberal government than they were before Will Hodgman became premier in 2014.

More Tasmanians are putting off seeing a doctor due to cost. There are more people waiting for elective surgery and people waiting much longer to be seen in the emergency department, with just 54 per cent seen within four hours.

There are fewer TAFE enrolments and the number of underemployed Tasmanians has increased to 26 800. There are now over 3200 people waiting for housing assistance and the length of time it takes for an applicant to be housed is, on average, 56 weeks - over nine months longer than they would have waited in 2014 when this Premier first became officer of this government.

There are more children in out-of-home care, with more than 1300 children on care and protection orders. The 18 disability service providers who support 90 000 people living with disability in our state who are not eligible for the NDIS have been ignored in this Budget.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this minority Liberal government is falling well short of expectations. The Liberals are even failing to meet their own targets set before the last state election. They promised Tasmania would have the healthiest population in the nation by 2025. The latest ABS national health survey, published in March, shows Tasmania has the highest rate of cancer in the country, the highest rate of heart, stroke and vascular disease, the highest rate of back problems, the highest rate of osteoporosis, the equal highest rate of asthma, over 70 per cent of Tasmanian adults are overweight or obese and, again, that is the highest rate in the country.

Smoking rates have barely moved since the Liberals came to government. The commitment to make Tasmania the healthiest state in the nation by 2025 will never be met by this Government while it fails to invest in preventative health. It is just another broken promise.

The Liberals promised 90 per cent of all elective surgery patients would receive their surgery within clinically recommended time frames by 2022. Yet they have funded 3048 fewer surgeries next financial year than were delivered this financial year, and the actual number of patients seen within the clinically recommended time frames is just 64 per cent.

The Liberals promised to build 900 affordable homes by the middle of this year. To date they have only delivered 281 and they have no hope at all of reaching their own target.

The Liberals set a population target of 650 000 people by 2050. Treasury's own modelling suggests that target will never be achieved. In fact, deaths in Tasmania are now out-pacing births, meaning we are solely reliant on migration to avoid entering population decline.

The Government promised to bring the unemployment rate down to the national average. Today, Tasmania's unemployment rate is 6.7 per cent compared to 5.1 per cent nationally. The gap between the national average and Tasmania is the widest it has been since the Liberal Government came to office.

Youth unemployment is 14.3 per cent which is well above the national average and 3800 full-time jobs have been lost since the election.

Over the past year, approximately 4500 fewer women were in work. We also know that women, on average, retire with 50 per cent less superannuation than men. Women are more likely to end up in poverty as they age.

This Government is tired, it is lazy and worst of all, it does not have heart.

The budget that was handed down last Thursday is a train wreck. The revised estimates report presented an ugly set of numbers but nothing could have prepared us for the work of pure budget vandalism delivered by this Treasurer. He cannot blame Canberra for his incompetence - \$1.1 billion worth of net debt, \$450 million worth of cuts to education, health and other services, unfunded wage agreements across the public sector, raids on government businesses, delayed infrastructure projects and systemic underfunding of essential services.

The Treasurer has claimed that the state is going into debt to fund infrastructure - that is a lie.

Last year, the Government promised to deliver a \$2.5 billion infrastructure program without going into net debt. This year, the infrastructure budget has no new initiatives yet debt levels will balloon to \$1.1 billion. No matter how you spin it, that does not add up.

The Treasurer is using infrastructure spending as a smokescreen for his own incompetence. The real story is the delay in the delivery of a host of promised infrastructure projects. Promised mental health beds have been delayed; the Burnie Court upgrade has been pushed back; a number of school construction projects have been delayed, including Devonport High, Legana Primary, Penguin school, Sorell school, Cosgrove High, Southern Support School and Taroona High. Thirty-four million dollars has been taken out of the budget for the new northern prison. The Hobart Airport roundabout, which the Premier promised would be under construction by the end of last year, has been delayed yet again.

This Government has a woeful record of getting infrastructure spending out the door. In 2017-18, the Government promised to spend \$610 million on infrastructure but only spent \$436 million - a shortfall of \$174 million. How can they claim this is an infrastructure budget when the key promises that they made have been delayed?

The inescapable truth is that Peter Gutwein has blown the budget and is putting recurrent services on the credit card which is something he promised he would never do. The Treasurer has claimed the interest repayments of this debt are manageable - how utterly out of touch. Over four years it will cost \$100 million to service the Treasurer's debt timebomb. These costs are going to explode because Peter Gutwein has admitted there is no pathway out of debt. That is money that will not be spent on health, it will not be spent on housing and it will not be spent on education. Tasmanians will be appalled to learn that the Liberals are now happy to spend \$100 million on interest, not on hospitals.

The foundations for this almighty mess were laid long ago. Labor warned during the 2018 election campaign that the Liberal Party's \$2.7 billion worth in election pork-barrelling was unaffordable.

Every year this Treasurer has spent more money than he budgeted but has been saved by increases in GST. When the 2018-19 Budget was handed down last year, my colleague, the shadow treasurer, warned that reckless election spending had been prioritised over investments in essential public services. His press statement said:

History will judge Premier Hodgman and Treasurer, Peter Gutwein's, 2018 State Budget as a house of cards driving Tasmania perilously close to net debt whilst simultaneously failing to deliver for essential services.

Twelve months later, that house of cards has come crushing down. The surplus is a hoax, propped up by more than half a billion dollars' worth of raids on Government businesses in a single year.

The Treasurer claims that the state is not spending more than it earns - that is a lie. The budget papers show next year alone the cash deficit is \$340.6 million. The underlying result which removes the distorting effect of federal government payments is in deficit by \$137.1 million in the coming financial year and will remain in deficit across the forward Estimates. Even those appalling numbers are reliant on \$450 million worth of indiscriminate cuts embedded in the Budget. That is not loose change, as the Treasurer arrogantly describes it; that is jobs. That is the systemic erosion of the services that Tasmanians rely on every day. The best thing Saul Eslake could say about this Government's first term is that they had done a good job of minding the store. That is no longer true. Peter Gutwein has raided the cash register, stripped the shelves and sent the store broke.

Being in government is a privilege that allows you to make people's lives better. It should be the aim of every government to strive to make the state a better place and to leave a positive lasting legacy, but this minority Liberal Government has done none of that. This minority Liberal Government legacy is the same as that left by every Liberal government before it - essential services in crisis and net debt that will cripple future generations.

We have been here before. It took Labor eight years to pay back the more than \$1.5 billion worth of debt that was left by the Rundle Liberal government. We built the state's cash reserves to over \$1 billion which helped us to withstand the shock of the global financial crisis. Even after losing \$1.5 billion in revenue, we managed to keep the state out of net debt. The state has not been in net debt for 15 years. The Liberal Government inherited \$220 million worth of cash and investments from Labor in 2014 and have managed to turn that into \$1.1 billion of net debt.

The Treasurer's financial incompetence can no longer be glossed over with revenue windfalls from Canberra. He has been exposed and yet he says he is proud of this Budget. He is proud of the health system, so starved of funding and resources that patients are treated in corridors, in armchairs and given bells to call for attention. He is proud that his Budget does nothing to get young Tasmanians the skills they need to earn a living. He is proud that the housing waiting list has 1000 more people on it than when the Liberals took office and more Tasmanians than ever will be sleeping rough this winter. He is proud of bankrupting this state. Tasmanians deserve better than this.

Labor takes its responsibility as the alternative government seriously. All of our policies will be fully costed and fully funded well in advance of the next election, but the Treasurer cannot deflect on others, including the Opposition, to clean up his mess in the meantime. There are immediate problems in this Budget that are entirely of the Government's making and they must be addressed by this Government. Sustainably funding health cannot wait three years. Paying public servants wages that keep up with the cost of living cannot wait three years. Investing in more housing supply cannot wait three years. Supporting more people into work cannot wait three years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a false economy not to pay your workforce appropriately. The budget papers actually name up slow wages growth as a major risk to the economy. We know that public servants are already leaving the state because their wages have not kept up with the cost of living. Stress claims and sick leave are on the increase. Public sector workers are demoralised and feeling disrespected. The Government has spent almost a year locked in a bitter wages dispute with its workforce and there is no end in sight. Even the revised wages agreement with the teachers above 2 per cent is not fully funded in this Budget.

The Government is telling its workforce that if they want a pay rise of more than 2 per cent they will have to find savings over and above the \$450 million already embedded in this Budget. It is shameful. Right now there are over 200 vacancies in the health workforce. There are vacancies in child safety. There are vacancies in corrections and the Tasmanian Fire Service needs 40 new recruits. Not only are we losing people, we cannot recruit to fill the current vacancies, let alone increase numbers to meet growing demand. The sledgehammer approach taken by this Government is not working. Labor would sit down with its workforce and negotiate in good faith.

While the Liberal minority Government has been focused on itself, Labor has spent the last year since the election speaking to Tasmanians. Our industry advisory councils have proved to be an invaluable engagement tool across key industry sectors. Over the past 12 months we have had constructive discussions with employers, industry groups and unions about how we can create jobs and economic opportunity. Throughout all those discussions there has been one constant theme; skills and training. There are simply not enough skilled workers in Tasmania for the jobs that are available. Tasmania has the highest unemployment rate in the country. Because of this Government's failure to invest in training, Tasmanians are now missing out and projects are being held back.

The building and construction sector need thousands of trained workers. The disability sector requires more than 5500 workers for successful rollout of the NDIS. The hospitality and tourism sectors are in desperate need of more chefs and kitchen staff. The horticulture sector relies heavily on backpackers and the health sector is the fastest growing in the state. Despite this knowledge, the government has done nothing to give Tasmanians the best chance of getting this work.

It is disgraceful and a fact that under this Liberal Government 2000 apprentices have been lost. Our state's TAFE system should be the training engine room of the economy, driving qualifications and employment. We want to rebuild TAFE so it has a reputation for the highest quality training outcomes. TAFE training has the capacity to be delivered in our regions as well as our cities and should be working seamlessly with industry to identify skills gaps and tailor training to meet that need.

When Tasmanians hear stories about tradies flying in from the mainland or overseas to work at the Royal Hobart Hospital, they ask why they couldn't get that job. They are asking why restaurant owners are forced to employ chefs from overseas when thousands of Tasmanians are

looking for work. The 2017 Infrastructure Tasmania report into the possible acceleration of TasWater projects declared that the only way to achieve construction of those projects sooner was by bringing in workers from outside Tasmania.

Under this Government there are more opportunities for workers flying in from Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane than for young Tasmanians. That is not the future I want for our state. I want Tasmanians to get the skills that they need here so they can get a job and remain here in Tasmania. Today I can announce that Labor will make TAFE free for students who choose to undertake training in areas of critical skills shortages such as aged care, disability care, building and construction and tourism and hospitality. The pilot program will run for one year and allow two intake courses and consultation with industry that meet critical skills gaps.

Under Labor's policy, up to 5000 students will gain qualifications in key areas that will grow our economy. This initiative will help up to 5000 Tasmanians into work. In addition, Labor will work with the agricultural sector to introduce the ag-career kickstarter that will provide a subsidised training pathway for workers to gain basic skills that will set them up for a career in agriculture.

The lack of a strategic approach to skills and training is the single biggest concern Labor hears from industry right across Tasmania. Our industry advisory councils have been valuable contributors to the development of this policy and Labor will continue to work closely with them and listen to their feedback so we can keep delivering on our plan to create jobs and grow Tasmania's economy.

As a state, we also need to be doing our bit to train the next generation of apprentices and trainees. In 2002 the Bacon Labor government mandated that at least 20 per cent of labour on government building construction contracts had to be undertaken by apprentices and trainees. The policy was, and still is, nation-leading. Under this Liberal Government they do not think it is important enough to give locals a chance of an apprenticeship and they have not continued the initiative. A Labor government would ensure that the policy is reinstated with serious penalties for lack of compliance. This policy would help employ more apprentices and trainees across every region. We should maximise the return on government projects for all Tasmanians.

Today I can also announce that this policy would be applied to the civil construction industry for the first time. Local Tasmanians deserve a share of the \$1.6 billion roads and bridge funding in this budget. For the first time we would also seek to mandate the policy across all state projects, including those carried out by government businesses. Local Tasmanians looking for work should get the first chance at an apprenticeship or traineeship. Under Labor, they will.

Another key theme that has emerged from our engagement with business is the problem of trade waste. Trade waste compliance is choking businesses and forcing some to close their doors. Labor calls on the Government to adopt the policy we took to the election to introduce a \$5 million grant program to help small businesses cover the cost of trade waste compliance. Small businesses across the state employ more than 100 000 people. The Treasurer cannot continue to ignore this problem when the Chair of TasWater has said -

Many of these mum and dad operators are in difficult positions as they can neither afford to comply nor can they sell a non-compliant business.

Not all that long ago, the Treasurer agreed that something desperately needed to be done to address the problem but since becoming a part owner of TasWater he has watched as small

businesses go down the drain. Labor wants small businesses to thrive in this state. That is why we will work with them to ensure that they can keep operating and keep employing people in our regions and in our towns.

Everyone knows that there is a health crisis in Tasmania. Once again, this Budget systemically underfunds Health. The funding allocated in the coming year is less than half of one per cent more than was actually spent this year. In real terms that is a cut. People are dying in hospital waiting rooms and still this Government has not got the message that it needs to fix the funding black hole in health. The Budget does not even start to fund the additional beds at the new Royal Hobart Hospital until the middle of next year.

Today the Auditor-General has published its report into the performance of Tasmania's four major hospitals in the delivery of emergency department services. Alarmingly, it has found that the rate of ED adverse events increased significantly from 2015 to 2018 across all four major hospitals by around 60 per cent. The health crisis is getting worse under the minority Liberal Government and people are dying because of it.

Last year this parliament called on the Premier to convene health round tables around the state to draw together health experts, unions and politicians from both Houses and all parties to find solutions to the health crisis. Those calls have been ignored by the Liberal Government. My letters to the Premier offering solutions and asking to meet have been ignored. Regrettably, since then things have only become worse.

We cannot wait for this Government to sleepwalk into another year with no plan. If the Government will not take its role seriously, we will do their work for them. Labor will convene health round tables. We will be inviting the Government to attend, along with all the other key stakeholders that this Parliament agreed to be at the table. The Labor Party is serious about finding solutions to the health crisis in this state and we will sit down with anyone who is willing to work with us to make sure that all ideas are considered.

Every day we see stories of overcrowding in the emergency departments at our major hospitals and ambulances ramped, waiting to offload patients. There are many factors placing pressure on our health system but there can be no doubt that more people are now seeking help for mental ill health. We need to have services available to support people in hospital but also in the community. Fundamentally, we need to be helping people before they become acutely unwell.

Earlier this year Labor took the initiative to release a mental health discussion paper. We received submissions from a broad range of stakeholders. The compelling evidence is that mental health support has to start in the early years. The Mental Health Council of Tasmania said in their submission -

It is important that all Tasmanians have access to evidence-based, age-appropriate mental health education in each year of schooling from primary through to secondary school. Children who are mentally healthy learn better, benefit from life experiences and have stronger relationships with family members, school staff and peers.

The Youth Network of Tasmania wrote -

Alarmingly, Tasmania has the second highest youth suicide rate per capita in Australia and suicide is now the leading cause of death in young Tasmanians aged 12 to 25.

Participants in the 2018 Tasmanian Youth Forum identified the need for more mental health information and events to be included in the school curriculum to provide them with the tools to identify the signs and symptoms of mental ill health among themselves and their peers. Labor is listening.

Today I can announce that a future Labor government will appoint mental health workers in every single state primary and high school. This is a landmark policy that will ensure Tasmanian students have access to specialist mental health support. Mental health workers in schools will help to destigmatise mental health and foster more supportive peer support networks. These efforts will lead to a reduction in bullying, improve understandings of emotions and behaviour regulation, and enhance the learning opportunities for children.

We know from talking with teachers and parents that we can do more to help our children and young people develop social and emotional resilience that would help them at school and at home. We want our children to grow up healthy and strong, mentally and physically. An investment in them at this early age will help to prevent the development of more acute mental health issues and ease pressure on our health system.

A critical failure of this Government is its failure to invest in affordable housing. As a result, we are now deep in the grips of a housing crisis. For yet another year we are heading into winter with no emergency response from the Government to assist people sleeping in tents, cars, shipping containers and under bridges. The response from this Government has been callous to the point where the minister for housing last week recommended a woman, facing homelessness, with her four children, call an 1800 number.

The construction of more affordable housing properties should be a priority, but the minority Liberal Government has been slow to adopt Labor's ideas for urban renewal in the northern suburbs along the rail corridor, and more residential infill close to services. Had they picked these good ideas up earlier, more people would have been housed this winter.

This is a government that cares more about headlines than it does about people. When it became obvious to everyone that the Liberal Government was not going to meet the targets in the affordable housing strategy to build 900 new homes, the Government did not invest more money, they did not pull out all stops to ensure that they met their targets; they changed their targets. It was shameful. Then they said that they were on track to meet their new targets.

Labor is committed to tackling the housing crisis. That is why we have successfully moved to establish a parliamentary inquiry into housing and homelessness. Together, with the inquiry into homesharing that is soon to report in the upper House, these committees will provide recommendations to government for action that will help more people into affordable housing in the medium to long term.

We also repeat the calls we made last year that the Government act swiftly before the onset of this winter and house Tasmanians without shelter. We call again on the Government to seek expressions of interest from local government and private dwelling owners to urgently secure tenure of disused buildings and accommodation and repurpose them for Tasmania's homeless.

A glaring gap in this Budget is the fact that it ignores our young people. There is no vision to improve the lives of future generations. The Budget does not mention climate change, let alone fund mitigation measures, or renewable energy investments. There is nothing in this Budget that improves the lives of young people right now; nothing to help them with the cost of further education and training, and little to support them to help them get a job. The Liberals have put our future on a credit card and expect young Tasmanians to pay for it. The policies I announce today are aimed squarely at ensuring young people have opportunities to get a fair go and fully participate in society and our economy.

A key part of Labor's economic vision is to put the Tasmanian brand at the heart of everything we do. As a state, we can set ourselves apart by offering quality products and experiences, whether that is advanced manufacturing, food and fibre, high value minerals, services or tourism. We should share more stories of our rugged bushland, our fresh air, our abundant water, our creative industries, our Aboriginal culture, our enterprising farmers, and the things that define us as a place. As a state, our shared pride in and understanding of what makes us Tasmanians can be the thing that unites us.

The Labor Party wants our economy to grow and for more Tasmanians to obtain jobs. That is why we will align investments in skills and training to underpin the strength of the Tasmanian brand and help more locals get employment in the growth sectors of our economy.

Two years ago, when I became the Leader of the Labor Party, I shared a saying from my time growing up on the family farm in Nugent. My parents taught me to always feed the animals before you feed yourself. That means putting the needs of others before your own. I keep coming back to that philosophy which is at the heart of why I ran for Parliament. As politicians, we must never forget that we are the servants of the people who elect us. My driving purpose is to make life better for people today and to leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

My vision is for Tasmania to become a beacon to the rest of the world for fairness. The train wreck of a budget that was handed down by the minority Liberal Government last week does not bring us closer to being a fairer, more inclusive state. The minority Liberal Government's budget incompetence drives the state into \$1.1 billion in debt. It continues to chronically underfund essential services; it ignores the growing number of people who are unemployed, and it fails to invest in our people's future. Tasmanians deserve better than the tired and dysfunctional minority Liberal Government.

Labor stands ready to provide the leadership that this state needs for a strong economy, more jobs in Tasmania, more opportunities for our young people and support for those doing it tough.

[12.20 p.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak to this year's budget. It is the next important stage in the delivery of our long-term plan for the state that we have taken to previous elections that has been endorsed by Tasmanians at those elections and on which we are expected to deliver. That is precisely what we are doing.

This budget will deliver not only on our election commitments but also our plan to keep our economy strong, our budget in good shape to invest more into essential services, schools, hospitals and to protecting our most vulnerable. Also, it is ensuring that our state has the infrastructure it needs as it continues to grow and support that momentum in our economy and to take action to keep cost of living pressures down, cost of business pressures down and also to protect Tasmania's unique and very special way of life that we all enjoy.

Equally, it is at the heart of this budget and my Government's vision to ensure that all Tasmanians can benefit from, and participate in, a strong economy and one that has prosperity in the years ahead.

We will certainly always ensure that we manage our state's finances well, which we do.

We do recognise, as well, and I always say this - that there is a lot more that we need to do, there are too many Tasmanians needing better from us and this budget does increase our efforts and responds to increased pressures and demand for services. There is additional support for those in need and new ways to support those in our community, whether it be to be safe in the place that they call home or where it is not safe for them to be in their home, to have support available through our Family Violence Action Plan or through our Affordable Housing Action Plan, along with a number of important initiatives that this Government has introduced and which we are delivering.

We have increased our effort. This budget shows what you can do by managing the state's economy well and managing its finances well. You can invest in the sorts of things the Leader of the Opposition spoke about but showed in government that the Labor Party was unable to deliver.

Tasmania has come a long way in recent years. Our economic growth leads the nation in many areas - almost 13 000 more Tasmanians now have a job than when we came into government in 2014. That is a significant improvement on the quality of life of those Tasmanians and we want to see more employed in the place they call home. Our reputation as a visitor destination continues to exceed expectations and to deliver on the strong growth in our visitor economy. We are a producer of world-class products and again, the reputation for our state's products has never been stronger but there is more to do.

This year's budget is about maintaining the momentum of growth in our economy and it is about investing for growth in our economy with a balanced budget of surplus across the forward Estimates. The budget does deliver a record investment into infrastructure, an unprecedented \$3.6 billion into building hospitals, the schools, the roads, the dams, the presence that our growing state needs. These are investments that not only deal with the demand of our growing economy but will also, in themselves, create more jobs. The budget forecasts 10 000 jobs will be created from this budget alone.

We are delivering record funding for health. It is a top priority for my Government - \$8.1 billion in funding over the budget and forward Estimates. This is an increase of \$540 million on the level of health funding in the 2018-19 Budget. With demand for hospital and health services continuing to grow and growing rapidly, we are continuing to increase our investments in health to ensure that Tasmanians can receive care more quickly.

There is a record \$7.1 billion to be invested into another of our top priorities and that is educating our children. This will enable us to continue the strong progress that we are making in lifting education results by better engaging our kids in their education so they can achieve their full potential.

These things are only possible with a stronger budget and a stronger economy. A strong economy is supported by a confident business sector and in our state, they continue to have high levels of confidence which means more investment, more retail trade, more export growth, welcoming more visitors here than ever before.

Our commitment as demonstrated by this budget and its predecessors is to ensure that our economy remains strong. It is fundamental to what we do to our state's future but also our capacity to deliver the services that Tasmanians need.

Our long-term vision, across our state, is for thriving communities in all our regions and with all Tasmanians benefitting from a strong economy.

It is a Tasmania that remains at the top of economic performance measures and we have shown that we can. There is no reason why we cannot continue to do so. It is a Tasmania where every child grows up healthy with a good education and the opportunity of a good job in a prosperous and growing state with the infrastructure our growing state needs.

This Budget backs our vision for Tasmania to be the nation's renewable energy powerhouse to keep power prices down for households and businesses. Despite what the Leader of the Opposition says, this budget also delivers on our vision and our commitment for Tasmania to continue to be a leader in climate change; to deliver action, less talk, and positive outcomes for our state in this important area, which is of concern to all Tasmanians.

Also the brand that is so special, as I have spoken in the House about already today, continues to receive additional and strengthened support and protection. There is a capacity for us to promote our brand and our products and our services to ensure that we shine the brightest on the world stage.

We have come a long way in recent years. I believe that Tasmania is now a much better place to live, work, raise a family and to visit as a tourist than it has ever been before. No-one on this side of the House thinks this is a good as it gets. We recognise there is a lot more to be done and this Budget is about delivering that and it is about ensuring that we continue to grow our state. We do not put the brakes on our progress and our development but we take new opportunities to ensure we remain prosperous and can deliver more for Tasmanians who depend on essential services.

The state's finances are a critical element of my Government's commitment to ensuring that we manage this place well. It is so critical to ensure that we can put more into essential services and target our efforts to improve the quality of life for Tasmanians, both in the immediate term but also strategically to prepare for future decades. Under this Budget we will achieve these outcomes. We will deliver a balanced budget, modest operating balance surpluses in each and every year across the forward Estimates. As the Budget confirms we will continue the delivery of our election commitments, address demand pressures in vital service delivery areas, continue the long-term sustainability of the budget position through the implementation of savings measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector, which is certainly something any good government should do. We will continue to drive economic growth and job creation including through our investments in major social and economic infrastructure.

Importantly, the Government will continue to achieve all of its fiscal strategic actions and we will build on the achievement of net operating balanced surpluses over the past three years with surpluses forecast in every year of this Budget.

This is despite a significant reduction in revenues, notably our GST receipts and also in conveyance duties. As the Budget confirms, when compared to the 2018-19 budget estimates, revenue from GST and conveyance duty has fallen by \$535.1 million. Of this, total GST receipts have fallen by \$280.3 million and conveyance duties have also fallen, through no fault of this

Government. It is also important to note that the economy remains strong now and is forecast to continue to be strong under this Budget.

The Government will act once again in a considered and responsible manner to deal with the challenges we face and ensure that our Budget remains in strong shape, so it includes the implementation of savings measures which are necessary to ensure the sustainability of our budget position and the future provision of services.

The level of savings required in the 2019-20 year is approximately 0.75 per cent of total expenditure with a further 0.75 per cent in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Achieving these savings, together with expenditure constraints will be essential to keep our Budget in a strong condition to deliver our plan. As the Treasurer has pointed out earlier today, most other Australian jurisdictions' governments have efficiency dividends in place, some permanently. It is entirely appropriate for a government to manage its finances well to ensure that government is as efficient, effective and as productive as it can be and to ensure we do not spend more than the state can afford.

We will work with individual agencies early in the new budget year to identify the most appropriate approach to the implementation of these savings measures and we have a strong commitment to protect the front line and minimise the impact on service delivery remaining. The focus will be on expenditure and things such as consultants and travel advertising, as well as vacancy control and other natural employee attrition and reviewing returns from all government businesses.

I point out that when we came into government in 2014 we did these things and were able to achieve savings far in excess of what we are proposing under this Budget. It shows that not only can it be done and it certainly supports our strong budget position, but we can deliver it and continue to deliver good services for Tasmanians without impacting on frontline service delivery.

A review of the State Service will also be undertaken to identify structural, legislative and cultural improvements that will transform current structure services and practices to deliver a more efficient and effective public service, and appropriately so. We want Tasmanians to be confident that their public service is efficient, productive and focused on them, and that will continue under this approach. We will provide an update on savings measures as agreed with individual agencies in the first quarter of the 2019-20 financial year.

I want to touch on the strength of our economy which, as the Budget confirms, is growing at 3.3 per cent, its highest rate in a decade. On a per capita basis, our economy is growing at nearly double the Australian average. Business confidence is high, there is more investment, more retail trade, more export growth and we are welcoming more visitors here than before. State final demand has increased and has grown at one of the fastest rates of any state. It is underpinned by strong growth in both investment and household consumption which is growing at one of the highest rates in the country as well. Private new confirmed investment to December of last year was 18.5 per cent higher in real terms than the year before. This was the highest annual growth rate in the country and significantly outpaced the national average.

During this term of government, gross state product has grown at the fastest rate in a decade and on a per capital basis at double the national average. Building construction approvals, financing and completion have remained strong, whereas nationally they have gone backwards. Exports remain strong and our population has grown at its highest rate in nearly a decade, with growth in

net interstate migration. Business confidence, not only amongst the business sector itself but also support for the Government's policies, remains high and continues to rank the highest in the nation.

There is always more to do, but this is a reminder that there is no reason Tasmania cannot continue to be a top-performing economy and it is important to ensure we are equipped to invest more into services and infrastructure. It lifts the prospects of more Tasmanians getting a job here so wherever they live, whatever their circumstances, they can participate in and share in the value of our state's prosperity, as they should, and it also unlocks the potential of our regions by ensuring all Tasmanians, wherever they live, are contributing to their economy, their community and their quality of life.

It is true that this Government has opened the state for business. We have encouraged investment. We have been outward looking in ensuring that more people have an interest in what our state has to offer and how we can support Tasmanian business to access those markets overseas that have a great appetite for all we offer.

We have done a number of things to keep business costs down as well whether it be to cap power prices, reduce business costs or lower payroll tax to the extent that we have now one of the most competitive payroll tax regimes in the country. We have backed our competitive strengths, most notably I would suggest in tourism and our visitor economy, promoting our state and marketing all that we offer better than ever before. The Tourism Industry Council CEO has declared this year's Budget to be the best tourism budget ever and I would like to ensure it can continue with the support of our colleagues because it is a lot more than our tourism industry, I hasten to add, it is our visitor economy. So many sectors are the beneficiary of this strong growth and positivity about all our state offers.

We are strongly backing agriculture and the investment this Government is making in the next stages of irrigation projects is momentous. There are also our seafood and aquaculture industries and our national parks and reserves. I will talk a little more about them in a moment.

We have done a lot to pump-prime our building and construction sector. We recognised a long way back without needing the benefit of advisory councils that one of our greatest strengths is our building and construction sector. It is a great generator of economic activity right across the state with a strong flow-on impact of economic benefits and is also a great employer. Whereas under former governments many of our tradies left Tasmania to pursue greater opportunities elsewhere, we are now welcoming many more of them back than ever before, and it is true to say that under this Government we have a very significant challenge of needing more of them. We are putting out the welcome mat to all those who left the state under a Labor-Greens government and anyone else who would work in our trade and construction industry to cover Tasmania because there has never been a better place to work in that sector than our great island.

I want to briefly mention a little more about our infrastructure program, which is important. I have referred to the irrigation investments which include a \$170 million pipeline for prosperity for our farmers. We are also committed to a sustainable industry growth plan for our world-class salmon industry. This Government backs our salmon industry like no other. We do not have a bet each way on this and we certainly would not want it to be the victim of politics or an unsupportive government.

It is an industry that is growing and that brings with it some challenges but enormous opportunities as well. We have developed a sustainable growth plan that was extensively consulted.

It is about sustainability and that includes for our environment as well as this world-class industry. We want to continue to work very closely with them because it is a great producer of one of the things that sits so beautifully within our brand but is also a major employer of Tasmanians right across the state.

It is fantastic to also see the prospects lifting in our mining sector. This Budget facilitates new exploration incentives and we are very optimistic about the future of this important sector which produces over half of our export value and has a much brighter future now than it did under the former Labor-Greens government.

I will allow the Minister for Energy to speak a little more about the extraordinary opportunity this Government is seizing to become Australia's renewable energy battery with massive projects before us, investments by my Government and also the Morrison Coalition Government to advance what is one of the greatest opportunities for our state in a generation and which in itself will not only deliver great outcomes for energy consumers here keeping prices down and securing Tasmania's energy but also ensuring we can export this valuable product to the nation and support more jobs, more investment renewables. Again, it is a very significant practical demonstration and reaction we are taking, not only in renewable energy. It ensures our emissions are kept down and that we continue to be very well positioned, not just as the battery of the nation but as the renewal energy power house with enormous expertise, capacity to build the infrastructure to support it and also the skills and expertise amongst Tasmania's great energy companies, which we are also now exporting increasingly to other countries around the world.

I want to touch a little on our strategic growth agenda. It is an approach that is new. There is a lot of optimism in our state. We want to harness that. We want to continue and enhance the positivity that so many Tasmanians - not so many on the benches opposite - are feeling. We want to ensure that it is something that all Tasmanians can participate in. We have an obligation and a duty to them to do so. We want to lift the prospects of all Tasmanians wherever they live; whether it be their education or accessing the skills they need, or whether it be in their health and wellbeing. We have a lot more to do in that regard including their ability to access via better transport networks the opportunity of improving their education, their skills and getting to work in the place they call home.

This is a new approach for a Tasmanian government and many around the world. It will take time for all levels of government and for the non-government sector, for business, for the community services sector to implement a range of initiatives that are better coordinated to achieve these objectives. My Government has commenced this work. I hope it will continue to be supported by those who understand that our state's best prospects and that of all its people depend upon strategic growth. This Budget contains specific initiatives that commence that work and we will continue as a government with this mission and vision. It is the essential core for us wanting to continue to grow our economy because a strong economy supports a better quality of life for Tasmanians.

A number of viable services are being enhanced under this Budget that ministers will speak more about when they are able. There is \$240 million in additional funding for the Tasmanian Health Service and Ambulance Tasmania to address increasing health demand in addition to the increased funding already being provided through our election commitments; and \$27.6 million to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Disability Services. A lot more needs to be done to ensure those services are well-implemented and delivered to the Tasmanians who need

them. This Government has the financial capacity to back our commitments and our obligations under this important national initiative, which we are doing.

We have \$20.1 million for additional police officers so that Tasmanians can be safer in their communities; \$16.8 million for our prison services. It is as a matter of fact that with a growing economy and a growing population we need more contemporary facilities and services to accommodate those who are a threat to the safety of our communities. We make no apology, not only for ensuring that we do all we can to keep our communities safe, but to ensure that those who are incarcerated are in more contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities across the state.

We have \$16.9 million for out-of-home care, which is a significant investment for some of our most vulnerable people, which is an increasing area of concern to us all. It is reflected in this year's Budget, and \$14.3 million to support our courts and legal services. I acknowledge and credit the Attorney-General for her strong advocacy in this regard, whether it be through additional funding for legal aid or legal assistance services to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I want to briefly refer to the extraordinary investment in our infrastructure. I have been offended, to say the least, by the notion that this is a budget that cares more about roads than about people. That is entirely and utterly untrue.

As we have pointed out in this place, there is certainly a lot that is going into our roads, our rail and into other important infrastructures that will support a more productive and efficient economy for all those who drive on those roads. The much safer road networks, and the congestion-busting initiatives in this Budget will reduce the time that people spend sitting in their cars when they would rather be at home or with their loved ones, or doing something else. These investments in infrastructure are critical. But there are also important investments in social and community infrastructure which ministers will refer to in their contributions.

It is intergenerational as well, as this is where this Government is most certainly big and brave. We are investing in intergenerational assets and infrastructure like never before. It is deliberate and it is targeted to achieving those outcomes I have referred to as well as supporting more jobs growth for our state. The choice would be to slam on the brakes or to say, 'This is as good as it gets, this is as far as we go. Our state cannot afford the infrastructure that our economy, our communities need and expect governments to deliver'. We have made a choice about ensuring that growth continues. It is matched by infrastructure investments, and Tasmanians can look forward to a better infrastructure to support them.

The significant write downs in our receipts and in our revenues, to which I have referred, through no fault of the Government is \$535 million. It is critical that we manage that as well as we are doing, with the Budget being in surplus. That does not happen by chance either. We must also maintain the momentum, that element of our Budget. Our plan is critical. We have chosen to invest in job-creating infrastructure, intergenerational infrastructure to underpin our economy, and 10 000 more jobs for Tasmanians out of this Budget is a significant commitment.

For those opposite who are critical of that investment, are they seriously saying we would not want the state to do its bit to support, alongside extraordinary levels of private investment, more jobs in our state? We have chosen not to put on the brakes but to go up a gear or two. We will fund the investment with a manageable level of net debt in future years. It will be the lowest level of net debt in the country, compared to other states, and the lowest on a per capita basis in the country.

We have delivered as well. This goes to the planning of our infrastructure demand. We have a more strategic approach to planning the state's first ever 10-year infrastructure pipeline, with \$13.9 billion in infrastructure investments from government and non-government sectors. It should be well noted, given the recent federal election and the strong commitments of the Morrison Coalition Government, we have received strong support from them for nation-leading, state-building, projects.

I have mentioned the battery of the nation projects but we also have the extension of the freight equalisation scheme for our exporters, contributions from the Commonwealth to our irrigation schemes and as well, significant funding for Tasmania's road network, most notably the Midlands Highway, as we speak and there is a lot more planned; the freight rail revitalisation program.

People of Australia, but also in Tasmania, increasingly supported a coalition government in its return to Canberra. We are matching a lot of what they are doing. Their investments and commitments are very much in sync and aligned with ours.

We have secured two city deals for the state. There are six or seven now across the nation so Tasmania is certainly punching above our weight. It amounts to a forward investment schedule approaching \$2 billion to transform our cities at either end of the state. That will have massive regional benefits.

In the south, we have: a \$576 million Bridgewater bridge and a true Hobart international airport to support our tourism and export sectors and cement the state as Australia's gateway to the Antarctic. It is a massive investment in southern Tasmania, which disabuses any myth that the Commonwealth government has not had a focus on the south.

In the north, with the massive investments that are pumping into the hearts of Launceston and Burnie, an education theme that in partnership with the University of Tasmania, will build very strongly the educational presence of their campuses in these cities. Also, important projects that will revitalise, restore and renew confidence to even greater levels in those important cities and in our broader regions.

I assure all those who are committed to working constructively that we will continue to look at ways to break down the barriers to ensure every Tasmanian has the best opportunity to benefit from the strong economy. We need to unlock the potential of our regions through the infrastructure program I have outlined but also through other important initiatives we have, including with TasCOSS and the TCCI to get more young Tasmanians to training or to work.

We need to more carefully align all of this work alongside current and future workforce predictions, ensuring we have the right skills and training programs in place so that local people have the best chance of having a local job. This needs to happen with a whole-of-government lens across decisions and policy making so it meets our strategic growth objectives. There are a number of commitments within the budget to assist with this.

It goes very much to improving youth employment outcomes and supporting the long-term unemployed into work. There are significant investments into TasTAFE and into other ways to ensure we have the skilled workers needed to meet the demand, not only now but in future decades.

The work TasCOSS and the TCCI are doing is very new but it is a great collaboration between business and the community sector to fully understand what is stopping young people from getting into work or to progress in their schools or their education.

Ms O'Connor - Lack of public transport might be part of it.

Mr HODGMAN - This is exactly about finding good practical outcomes and I hope that is able to continue.

I will touch briefly on some significant commitments in my portfolios. The State Budget reaffirms a majority Liberal Government's commitment to our world-renowned national parks that do in themselves attract about 1.3 million visitors each year. They are a key driver of our booming visitor economy. They are an essential part of who we are and what makes our state such a special, precious place.

We are investing \$31 million over four years to future-proof our tourism infrastructure and enhance experiences for locals and visitors. Our commitment to deliver will boost national parks rangers and frontline staff, improve the infrastructure and maintenance in our parks. This budget will continue to advance our investment of \$86.8 million, including a \$30 million commitment from the Australian Government to transform Cradle Mountain into the MONA of the north and north-west. It is a world-class experience and it will be an even more special place to visit in the years ahead given the extraordinary level of investment occurring under this government and the Morrison government.

Our iconic walks have captured the world's attention. They are a major drawcard, bringing increasing numbers of visitors but many locals enjoy these walks as well. The *Sunday Tasmanian* recorded my dear wife, Nikki, and me on one of them. There are so many people who want to be able to access our world-class wilderness in such a fine way and we are committed to the next version of the \$20 million iconic walking experience in another region. We are progressing plans and I expect to be able to make more announcements about the next steps on that soon.

There are important initiatives on Aboriginal joint management of reserves and a number of important areas in parks, most notably to ensure that we deliver our \$2 million funding commitment for bushfire management, planning mitigation and our response to the fires in the TWWHA.

Our 2019-20 Budget continues our strong commitment to preserving our spectacular natural environment and the minister will speak a little more about this shortly. It is a very important focus and priority for my government.

We are delivering the state's first trade strategy. We have also delivered the state's first defence and advanced manufacturing strategy. We have a new business events attraction fund available offering \$1.2 million in funds to bring major national and international events to our state, particularly into our regions. Business events are amongst the highest-yielding segments of our visitor economy. Participants tend to stay longer, spend more while they are here and they often come back again so this is a way to ensure that our tourism sector of visitor economy continues to stay ahead of the pack, particularly in our regions. We have a major \$20 million regional tourism attraction loan scheme to provide low interest loans of up to \$1 million for businesses to undertake projects to grow their local visitor economy.

There are a number of other important initiatives in the tourism sector, but also in heritage. A \$10 million renewal loan scheme similarly to make loans available to refurbish heritage properties for tourism and business opportunities, essential heritage conservation, to adapt a property to support a new business initiative in the visitor economy. In addition, there is \$3.6 million for the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, one of our most visited places, to provide a better experience for our visitors. This will ensure that the gardens can continue to generate additional revenue and ensure their financial stability.

The 2019-20 Budget also invests \$4.4 million into our trade strategy, and \$2.75 million into our defence strategy. We will be delivering more through our action plans on these strategies in the years ahead with additional resources and support because our exporters with the highest rate of growth in that sector of any state in the country are a key driver of our economy. Again, we are supporting jobs and businesses right across the state.

I have spoken today about Brand Tasmania: the first place brand statutory authority of its type in Australia so we are leading the charge on that front. We have more resources and capacity for it to promote and protect our brand. There is \$1.4 million in the budget for Brand Tasmania to continue to ensure we stay ahead of the pack, that we stand out from the crowd and that we can compete in a global marketplace to attract more investment, trade, tourists and jobs.

In conclusion, this Government is proud of how far the state has come. This Government is proud of what we have done to turn the fortunes of many Tasmanians around with the support of other governments, with the backing of a strong and vibrant business community that has invested like never before, with the confidence to support more jobs and more prospects for Tasmanians. We have a very active and passionate non-government community sector that well represents the needs of its constituents, our Tasmanians, who need better health care sooner, access to an affordable home, support for our most vulnerable, whether it be a Tasmanian with a disability or a carer. Our Budget and our Government contains a lot to ensure that we are supporting those who need our support as best we can because our budget is back in good shape, and it will be a surplus budget. We are able to invest in infrastructure that will provide a better quality of life for Tasmanians and increase our ability to reduce demand pressures. We are delivering a Budget that will and that should, in my view, be more positively received. It is something that we noted from our Budget presentations over the course of Friday that many Tasmanians businesses and the broader community are more confident about Tasmania's prospects. It is something we should always endeavour to sustain.

The negativity and the criticism from opposition parties does nothing to help those Tasmanians they claim to care about. It certainly runs the risk of diminishing confidence in our community which is something that we should harness and embrace and back with the actions that are contained within this Budget and the positive policies that we bring forward.

It is all about maintaining the momentum, ensuring that this time where our state is very much the envy of the nation and the place to be, can continue to be that place. This has not happened by accident. It has happened because a majority Government has had a plan to deliver, that has delivered results and that plan continues in the 2019-20 Budget. I congratulate the Treasurer, my ministers, our entire team for the support that they have put into this Budget which is a very brave and bold budget but one that will deliver more to the Tasmanians we serve. I commend the Budget.

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

MATTER OF INDULGENCE

Standing Order 144 - Offensive Words against a Member

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, on indulgence. This morning during question time an allegation was made about a word or an insult that was allegedly given to the Treasurer from the member for Clark, Mr Bacon.

Mr Bacon was not aware of what the allegation of the word was that was supposedly uttered from his mouth. He denied it. We found out during the MPI there was a discussion with the Leader of Government Business and Mr Bacon about the nature of the allegation. Mr Bacon absolutely and categorically denies that he uttered those words. They are deeply offensive to him and to all people in this House.

We understood that was where the matter lay. We thought it was resolved in that conversation. We understand now that that mistruth and that allegation, despite being strenuously denied and with no evidence being provided that the comment was made, has continued to be peddled around this place and to the media.

We are very concerned about that and understand that the Leader of Government Business is telling people that that still occurred, that the word was uttered and the insult was given.

It has been utterly denied and we find it highly offensive that despite the conversation, despite the matter being - we thought - resolved to satisfaction, the allegation was made. It was denied and there is no evidence that a comment was made, but the Leader of Government Business is continuing to inform people that it happened.

We are seeking a complete withdrawal of that allegation from the Leader of Government Business and an apology for making such an accusation which we say and we absolutely believe is utterly untrue.

We are seeking an apology on indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - It has not happened within the House. I am not aware of what has been going on.

Mr O'BYRNE - On indulgence, the matter is now in the public domain and continuing to be peddled by the Leader of Government Business. That is outrageous. He made the accusation. We thought it was resolved between Mr Ferguson and Mr Bacon, the member for Clark.

We understand it is continuing to be peddled so therefore we say on *Hansard*, on the record, that the accusation needs to be withdrawn and an apology needs to be given.

We notify the House that we will be referring this matter to the Privileges Committee.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2019 (No. 21)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[2.33 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that is an unedifying way to conduct our parliament. No-one should stand in this House without being prepared to stand by the lies that they say outside of this Chamber. It is disgraceful that the minister would use the forms of this House to make that kind of comment and then not being able to have the guts to back it up in this place. Quite frankly, he misuses this House all the time. He should be ashamed of himself. He has been called out and he should publicly apologise.

As we continue with the Appropriation Bills -

Ms Archer - Bryan Green did it to me and he did nothing like this.

Mr Bacon - What did you say? Did you hear me say it? Get up and say it?

Ms Archer - No.

Mr Bacon - No, because I did not say it and you all know I did not say it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'BYRNE - To be absolutely fair, the gutlessness of members opposite when they background journos, rather than having the courage to stand in this House is a condemnation on their own pathetic characters.

Speaking of pathetic characters, the bill before us today, the Appropriation Bill, quite frankly I cannot work out if Government members are channelling Pollyanna and her rose-coloured glasses or Alice in Wonderland believing six impossible things before breakfast.

The Treasurer like his other colleagues today, has peddled so many mistruths, the primary one being that he would have us believe, and has clearly convinced his colleagues, that the budget was all going swimmingly until the GST writedown and the loss of state revenue: that in fact we have a revenue problem not a spending problem.

However, the Government has its own document which we would have tabled, but the Government made very clear, has already been presented to Parliament, just clearly not read by anybody on the other side of the House. The Revised Estimates Report, prepared by Treasury to provide an update on the 2018-19 Budget expenditure and forecast as at December last year which under the Financial Management and Audit Act 1990, must be released before 15 February. The Revised Estimates Report was released on 30 January 2019 during the bushfires, which may explain why none of his colleagues seem to have had the chance to read it but it does not excuse them wilfully ignoring it now, although we are seeing just now how seriously they take the truth.

Madam Speaker, do you know what this Revised Estimates Report is? This document is a desperate cry for help from Treasury. This is a plea from Treasury who are being forced to

implement the Government's election commitments last year, that it knew were unsustainable, that everybody on this side of the House knew were unsustainable and that the community clearly now know were unsustainable. It highlights that this Treasurer and this Government were more obsessed with winning at any cost than ensuring a financially stable position for our state and who is paying the price now? Tasmanians who have to live through the 2019-20 Budget of this Treasurer. This Budget is all about covering up his own incompetence and ineptitude.

During the 2018 state election the Liberals made \$2.7 billion worth of election promises and we warned then that they were not affordable. We did not match them then because they were unaffordable. Blind Freddy knew then that they were unaffordable and this document, the Revised Estimates Report, proves that.

The 2018-19 Budget was released on 14 June and in it the Treasurer said:

I believe that Tasmania is on the cusp of a golden age. We can now leverage the strong financial position that as a Government we have worked so hard to achieve.

What this document tells us is that at the end of January - and what this Treasurer would have been well aware of late in 2018 - this budget was already in trouble. The Budget released last week has not suddenly become a problem. This Budget was in trouble beforehand and the Treasurer knew it. Treasury used this document to signal that to as many people as possible that they needed something to be done to curb this behaviour. They made it really clear that Treasurer Gutwein had already stuffed the Budget.

The Budget last year forecast a net operating surplus of \$161.9 million in 2018-19. The fiscal balance was only forecast to return to a wafer-thin surplus of \$5.3 million in 2021. Net debt was already forecast to deteriorate across the forward Estimates to be just negative \$14.8 million in 2021. At the time of the budget last year in the wake of the absolutely irresponsible spending by this Treasurer and this Government we warned that it would take Tasmania perilously close to net debt.

Even before the latest write down, Moody's credit rating agency ranked Tasmania's finances as the worst in the nation. That is the legacy of this Treasurer for the last five years. That is the legacy of half a decade: the worst in the nation. That was after this Treasurer had ensured that Tasmania's rating was downgraded to AA2 in 2016. That is the legacy of this Treasurer.

Reports from RDME and KPMG leaked in September last year revealed the health system is structurally underfunded by \$100 million a year. At least \$100 million a year. The Government rejected the reports and is still too gutless to release them publicly. The Revised Estimates Report reveals a dramatic deterioration of the budget position so this line, this Alice in Wonderland line, where you can just believe impossible things, that all of a sudden, things turned to custard. They turned to custard under this Government and the Treasurer knew it was coming because this Treasurer was the architect of it.

The projected surplus for 2018-19 was reduced to just \$7.3 million, a deterioration of \$154.6 million in just seven months. The fiscal balance deteriorated by \$188.8 million to a deficit of \$473.4 million. This is before the Treasurer's sudden surprise phone call where the GST amounts; the \$5.3 million fiscal surplus projected for 2020-22 disappeared, replaced with

\$175.7 million deficit and to use the Treasurer's favourite term there were already \$1 billion in fiscal deficits forecast over the forward Estimates.

The Revised Economic Report 2018, snuck out during the bushfires and clearly not read by members on the other side of the House, shows that the budget was forecast to descend into net debt of \$343 million in 2021-22, before the issues that the Treasurer would have us believe we are responsible for.

Forecast GST receipts were already planned to be down by \$72 million over the Forward Estimates. According to the policy and prime minister statements in the 2018-19 Budget, it amounted to nearly \$1.4 million in recurrent and capital expenditure. That Budget contained more than \$20 million worth of grants to special interest and community groups. Most of the recipients will not have to make any kind of acquittal at all.

The Revised Estimates Report contained nearly \$368 million in additional expenditure decisions since the June Budget. The Liberal Party pork-barrelled its way into government. Who is paying the price? Tasmanians now.

In his contribution before the break, the Premier said, not long before he sat down that this has not happened by accident. That is true - it has not happened by accident. It had been a deliberate decision to spend more than we had to win an election. Now Tasmanians will pay the price.

The 2018-19 budget was based on a lie. Health has since been massively under-funded and was always going to require substantial additional funds. The election promises were unaffordable and were in clear breach of the Government's own fiscal policy. The Liberal Government has failed to embark on any and real economic reform that would improve the structural sustainability of the Budget or the economy. We are now seeing the results of a reckless and short-sighted approach to governing - to win at any costs.

The Revised Estimates Report lays bare the Liberals' failure to manage the Budget or take advantage of Tasmania's good economic fortune. Last year the Treasurer said that Tasmania was in 'a golden age' but he has squandered any opportunity of good fortune in his desperate desire to win an election. We are still in the grip of a health and a hospital crisis. The housing crisis continues with Tasmanians unable to put a roof over their families' heads.

The Government promised not to send Tasmania into net debt but that is exactly what they have done. Labor, during our time, during some of the most difficult international economic times - not the good times this Government has experienced times - did not take us into net debt, even in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. The last time Tasmania entered net debt was the last time the Liberals were in government. That was the last time we had net debt. It took Jim Bacon's Labor government to bail you out.

It is not a golden age, it is a farce. Pollyanna, who is not here at the moment, in his rose-coloured glasses, claims surprise and external factors when his own treasury economic forecast laid bare his mismanagement and the very dire position of the budget well before the GST write down.

The Liberals promised over and over again that they were not going into net debt. That was clearly a lie.

Despite claiming Tasmania is in a golden age, Premier Hodgman and Treasurer Gutwein will plunge the budget into more than a \$1 billion in debt on Tasmania's credit card. Because of this reckless spending, Tasmanians are going to be slugged over \$100 million in interest, which would have been better spent on essential services. They are racking up so much debt that will only get worse in future years. Tasmanian services will pay for that reckless mismanagement.

On top of that, we have the Treasurer announcing \$450 million worth of cuts to public sector jobs. That is around 1500 nurses, teachers, park rangers or firefighters on the Government's hit list. For those who say that efficiency dividends are not about job cuts, stop being untruthful. We know that the bulk of cost in the public sector are in fact people who are unemployed.

Do not, for one minute, think that by claiming to only cut the back line, you can have no impact on services in most agencies. I would in fact contend in all agencies. In relation to service outcomes and delivery, there is no difference from the mythical front- and backline division. In order to deliver the services that this Government think are frontline you need the backline people doing the work. Already nurses are doing too much administrative work. Already teachers are doing too much paperwork. When they do that, it affects their ability to deliver the service that we want from them.

When you respond, when you blithely ignore the truth of this budget document and pretend that everything was okay up until the GST revenue in your weird little *Alice in Wonderland* trip that you are on, I challenge every minister to get up and explain in your own agencies what is frontline and what is backline. I will be very interested if you can record what is frontline and what is back line. I do not think that is something that it is possible to do. The Government knows that. They just use it as a line to get out of trouble. If they cannot do it then the whole premise of savings not impacting on services is a lie. It can be nothing else.

The Treasurer is also raiding government businesses such as TT-Line and the Motor Accident Insurance Board to prop up his very flimsy numbers. It took Labor eight years to pay back the more than \$1.5 billion dollars worth of debt that was left by the Rundle Liberal government.

We built the state's cash reserves to over a billion which helped us to withstand the shocks later of a global financial crisis. After losing 1.5 billion in revenue we managed still to keep the state out of net debt. We have been net debt free for 15 years.

A Liberal government inherited \$200 million worth of cash and investment from Labor in 2014 and they have managed to turn it into a \$1.1 billion net debt.

Members interjecting.

Ms O'BYRNE - That is what you have done. I notice you were all deathly silent when we talked about the truth of the revised economic report. You were deathly silent when we talked about the report that showed you are already in trouble. But now, 'Gosh, net debt. Tony Rundle, he is a great bloke. Everything is great. Labor did not fix it'. Except they did and you know they did. You know that it took a Labor government to get you out of the mess that you had put our budget and our state in.

The Treasurer has claimed that the interest repayments on this debt are manageable. Really? Over four years it is going to cost \$100 million to service the Treasurer's debt. This is only set to get worse. The Treasurer has no pathway out of net debt. The only line he uses is, 'We have all the

power to pay down the debt early or increase the debt, and we will do that'. That is not an answer to transitioning Tasmania out of net debt. That is an incompetent response from an incompetent Treasurer.

The \$100 million to be spent on servicing the Treasurer's debt is money that will not be spent on Health, Housing or Education. Tasmanians will be appalled to know that the Liberals are now happy to spend \$100 million on interest payments, not hospitals nor housing.

Even those appalling numbers are reliant on \$450 million worth of indiscriminate cuts embedded in the Budget. I cannot believe a government that brings in a budget and says, 'We are going to find \$450 million worth of cuts but we do not need to tell you where they are. That will all be fine. It will be sorted out by agencies'. How weak. You knew you were in trouble late last year and you did nothing. This Budget is a farce and you know it.

This is not 'loose change' as the Premier would have it; \$450 million is not 'loose change'. It is jobs. It is people's lives. It is their ability to pay their mortgage and feed their children. How dare you say it is loose change?

The Hodgman Government infrastructure Budget is a myth. When a government talks about re-profiling infrastructure commitments that is code for delaying upgrades at schools, failing to build new housing stock and delaying improvements for bridges and roads. The Government's own budget forecasts that infrastructure spending will go down every year over the next four years. The Treasurer has claimed that the state is going into debt to fund infrastructure. That is simply not true. That would be the case if you suddenly created a whole lot of new infrastructure investment; something brand new that you were doing. 'Here is this new infrastructure investment we are doing and that is why we are justifying net debt.'

There is no new infrastructure in this Budget. The Treasurer could not find one example during question time today. The infrastructure budget has increased by just \$200 million and yet debt levels will balloon to \$1.1 billion. That is the reality. If you think any differently then quite frankly you must have re-engaged Brett Whiteley's calculator. That is the only way you could have got to that kind of figure.

The Government talks about 'the promise of Tasmania' - I believe was the platitude - the Tasmanian way of life. Do you want to talk frankly about how life really is in Tasmania? Not in your cloistered little world but for real people. TasCOSS have pointed out that across a range of indicators many Tasmanians are doing worse now under a Liberal government than they were before Will Hodgman became Premier in 2014. Well done, you. More Tasmanians are putting off seeing a doctor because they simply cannot afford it. I talked to my mum about what it was like before Medicare came in and how terrified people were that your kids would get sick. They could not afford to take them. People are feeling that now.

More people are waiting for elective surgery. More people are waiting much longer to be seen in the ED - 54 per cent seen in four hours. There are fewer TAFE enrolments. TAFE courses are increasing in cost and often delayed or cancelled. There is a significant threat to enrolled nursing accreditation and the number of Tasmanians who are underemployed is 26 800. Well done, you.

Madam Speaker, there are now - and the number makes it sound clinical but you need to remember that we are talking about people - 3200 people waiting for housing assistance. You can languish on that list for 52 weeks, a whole year. That is nine months longer than before you came

to government. Well done, you. There are more children in out-of-home care, with more than 1300 children on care and protection orders. Well done, you.

The Government promised to bring the unemployment rate down to the national average; it is now 6.7 per cent compared to 5.1 per cent nationally. The gap between the national average and Tasmania is the widest it has been since the Liberals came to government. Youth unemployment is 14.3 per cent, well above the national average. Well done, you.

Mrs Rylah - Better than when you were there.

Ms O'BYRNE - I am sorry, Mrs Rylah - well done, you; you are very proud of that. A total of 3800 full-time jobs have been lost since the last election. Mr Tucker is shaking his head. Do you not believe that 3800 full-time jobs have been lost since the election? There are ABS statistics you can look at. Will you please, as a government, inform yourself of what is happening?

Madam Speaker, on the subject of public sector workers, it is a false economy not to pay your workforce appropriately. The budget papers name up slow wages growth as a major risk to the economy. Public sector workers, the people who you employ as a government - the people who take care of our hospitals, who teach our children, who protect our parks, who work in our prisons - are demoralised. They are feeling disrespected, and this Government has no pathway through the wages dispute, as it has no pathway out of debt.

This Government simply cannot envision a future for Tasmania. It is interesting that they can always envision how to get re-elected. Re-election is pretty much the only thing that motivates this Government. Even the revised wages agreement for teachers is not fully funded in this Budget. To have stalled for so long and to now tell your workforce that if they want a pay rise of more 2 per cent they are going to have to find savings above the \$450 million shortfall already embedded in this Budget - quite frankly, what a dog act.

Right now there are 200 vacancies in the health workforce, there are vacancies in child safety, there are vacancies in corrections and the Tasmania Fire Service needs 40 new recruits. There have been contracts people have signed with the Government which clearly makes them an employee and they have never had an hour of work. We know the dodgy work that has been done around establishing figures. We know what you have done.

Labor's industry advisory councils, which the Premier spoke of so dismissively because he knows so much better than industry, have proven to be an invaluable engagement across industry. We have been part of a constructive discussion with employers, industry groups and unions about how to create jobs and economic opportunity. As Rebecca White said in her contribution, throughout all of those discussions the one consistent theme is the lack of engagement, investment and access to skills and training.

The building and construction sector need thousands of trained workers and the disability sector more than 5500 for the rollout of the NDIS. The hospitality and tourism sector is in desperate need of more chefs and kitchen staff and the health sector is the fastest growing in the state, yet despite report after report, we have seen almost no action from this Government. In fact, under this Government 2000 apprenticeships have been lost. For goodness sake, we are flying tradies in from the mainland or overseas because, heaven knows, the Government could not have predicted we might have needed plasterers to work on the Royal Hobart Hospital. Why could we have such a

lack of planning there? They are asking why restaurant owners are forced to employ chefs from overseas when thousands of Tasmanians are looking for work.

Labor's plan for free TAFE for students who choose to undertake training in areas of skill shortages will work towards that. In aged care, disability care, building, construction, tourism and hospitality, they are calling out for trained staff, and we will work with industry to meet those credible skills gaps. A total of 5000 students will gain qualifications in key areas that will grow our economy and get them into work.

People would be aware that back in 2002 the Bacon Government mandated that at least 20 per cent of labour on government building construction had to be undertaken by apprentices and trainees. That was and still is a nation-leading policy. This Government has not ensured it has operated. It should be reinstated and reinforced, and I applaud the announcement today that under Labor that would be applied to the civil construction industry and I urge the Government to take that up.

Local Tasmanians deserve a share of the \$1.6 billion in roads and bridge funding in this Budget. That is the sort of action a government committed to skills and training might take.

In the lead-up to the last election we had lots of conversations about trade waste. I certainly had them in my local electorate with some of my local businesses. I believe the Treasurer spoke to exactly the same people I did. Compliance is costly and becoming very difficult. We call on the Government to adopt our last election policy to introduce a grant program to help small business cover the costs of trade waste compliance. The Treasurer is on record saying something desperately needed to be done and since becoming a part-owner, he has failed to act.

We are in a housing crisis. More than 3200 people are on the public housing waiting list and the average wait time is longer than a year. The Government has simply no chance of meeting the deadline it set to build 941 new houses by June this year; it is not possible. The Treasurer's acknowledgement that the Government is failing to deliver affordable housing for Tasmanians by bringing forward \$10 million of funding is a drop in the ocean. We are heading into a cold winter with no emergency response from government. There are people in tents, cars, shipping containers and in caves at the Gorge in Launceston. Well done, you. What does this Government think people in a crisis should do? Call the 1800 number, that will solve everything - as if they don't call the 1800 number every single day they can.

The construction of more affordable housing properties has to be a priority, but this Government keeps failing to meet its targets. In fact when it first became obvious to everyone that they were not going to meet the target in the affordable housing strategy, they did not invest more money or ramp up the work. They simply changed the target and then said they were on track to meet their new target, which we know they will not be able to do. I hope we get some good outcomes from the parliamentary inquiry into housing and homelessness and the home-sharing report the other place is undertaking.

The Government continues to underfund the health system with investment forecast to drop further next year in real terms. Speaking to people who work in the system, they are terrified that the system is so close to being unfixable. That is your legacy. Well done, you.

The health and hospital crisis continues to get worse. Staff know that people are dying needlessly in EDs and on waiting lists. Ambulance response times are the worst in the country and

people cannot get access to specialists when they need it. People are dying in hospital waiting rooms, yet still this Government has not got the message that it needs to fix the funding black hole in health. The avoidable preventable death toll in hospital outpaces the road toll in Tasmania. As the Auditor-General has said, we have had a 60 per cent increase in adverse outcomes in public hospitals across this state. Well done, you.

If the Government will not take its role seriously, we will do their work for them. We will convene the health round tables that this Parliament committed to and said would happen. We will convene them because we need to have these conversations.

The five-year suicide rates in Tasmania are the second highest in Australia. We are 25 per cent above the national average. That means that 15 more people die from suicide each year in Tasmania than if we were at the national rate. The Tasmanian suicide rate for each of the last three years has been higher than in any other point this century. Our EDs, our acute facilities and the community response are not meeting demand. We have to do more.

Labor took the initiative to have that mental health discussion paper our Leader spoke about and we received a lot of submissions. The compelling evidence is that mental health support has to start in those earlier years.

As a parent and someone who spends a lot of time with young people, I cannot be more proud that I can be part of a future Labor government that will appoint those mental health workers in every single state primary and high school, not only because those students need that support but so do the staff in those schools who are trying to navigate their way through complex mental health issues that impact on their ability to take care of every child in their classroom.

We also need to ensure that students have access to specialist mental health support. This is one area where I am pretty sure the Deputy Premier will support me because he would rather have spent the chaplain money that came from the federal government that is locked in to having chaplains on quality mental health care and really good targeted mental health care in our schools. I am sure that is something the Deputy Premier would support. We can do more to help our children and young people develop social and emotional resilience that will help them at school and at home.

Madam Speaker, the Budget handed down last Thursday is, frankly, a train wreck. Nothing could have prepared us for the fiction that this Government has put around it, pretending that this was not already a problem for our economy and our Budget. We have \$1.1 billion worth of net debt and \$450 million worth of cuts to health, education and other services this Government is too gutless to name up. There are unfunded wage agreements across the public sector, raids on government businesses, delayed infrastructure projects and systematic underfunding of the essential services that Tasmanians rely on.

A budget is fundamentally about a government's priorities and this Budget shows, as did the one before, that the priority of this Government has only ever been re-election. This Budget does nothing to fix the crisis in our hospitals and our health system. It does nothing to address Tasmania's disastrous unemployment and youth unemployment rate. It does nothing to reduce the public housing waiting list as winter is approaching.

This Government's priorities are wrong. Worse than that, when the Government stands here and says that this infrastructure budget that is taking us into debt is the right thing and he could not have anticipated it, it is quite clear from this report, the Government's own report, a not so secret

cry for help from the Treasury being forced to implement politically motivated policies of this Government that they needed something to be done. We knew this was coming. The Government knew it was coming. This farce, it is a fib, this deceit that you practice on the Tasmanian people to say that this all happened all of a sudden and you could have done nothing. What rot. You are the government - you were supposed to do something.

[3.01 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Infrastructure) - Madam Speaker, I consider myself very fortunate to be a Tasmanian and to live in such a great state. We have come a long way since 2014. Tasmania is a far more diverse and dynamic place and Tasmanians are proud of their state and why wouldn't they be? On so many levels Tasmania has become the envy of the nation. On a per capita basis our economy is growing the fastest in the nation and nearly double the Australian average. It is the strength of our economy that means we can afford to invest for the future.

As the Treasurer has indicated, this year's Budget is the next step in our long-term plan to grow the economy, create jobs, invest in essential services, such as education and health, and to protect our way of life. It is about maintaining the momentum and investing for growth. Now is the time for us to accelerate our infrastructure spending to set Tasmania up for the decades ahead.

The 2019-20 Budget delivers an unprecedented \$1.6 billion in partnership with the Australian Government commitments to build the transport infrastructure our growing state needs. We know that better roads save lives and reduce the impact of serious crashes as well as increasing productivity and liveability as commuters travel more efficiently and businesses can get their products to market. In the 2019-20 Budget we are investing in a number of road, rail and bridge projects to help address congestion in our cities and suburbs and deliver safer freight corridors and better travel times.

Despite the negativity of those opposite, our commitments in transport infrastructure have been warmly welcomed by the Civil Contractors Federation, Australian Logistics Council, the RACT, Traffic Management Association of Australia, the Tasmanian Transport Association, Tasmanian Bus Association and Roads Australia whose President, David Stuart-Watt, has said:

It is not just about having safe, reliable transport infrastructure it is also about creating and maintaining jobs for Tasmanians.

Our transport commitments include \$304.3 million for rail infrastructure; \$294 million on the new Bridgewater Bridge; \$231 million on roads of strategic importance like the Bass Highway and the Sorell-Hobart corridor; \$112 million to keep upgrading the Midland Highway; \$83 million towards an urban congestion fund; \$75 million towards our Launceston and Tamar Valley traffic vision; \$58 million specifically to support tourist roads and \$292 million for infrastructure maintenance.

With funding locked in to this Budget, early work has started on a number of approval processes for a new Bridgewater bridge including significant geotechnical analysis and environmental studies. The complex scoping, planning and approvals process will be completed within three years with a two-year construction phase. We expect that Tasmanians will be driving on the new Bridgewater bridge in 2024.

Our rail investment includes safety and efficiency upgrades of priority sections of the state's freight rail network to increase capacity and support our productive industries with all key rail

freight corridors benefitting from this investment. We know that an efficient and reliable freight rail network helps road safety and will combat congestion.

We are also investing in heritage rail with an additional \$16 million to support and enhance the iconic West Coast Wilderness Rail which we know is so important to the west coast economy, a point that was reinforced - and I know Mrs Rylah and my colleague, Mr Jaensch, would agree with me - when we visit Queenstown and the west coast more broadly. It attracts many thousands of visitors to Tasmania and the \$16 million of capital investment will support the sustainability of such an iconic tourism opportunity for our visitors and locals alike.

A new flyover at the Hobart airport interchange will help ease the bottleneck in and out of Hobart to the south-east - and despite what the Opposition has said and has been claiming - it has not been pushed back. The project went to tender in early April this year. We expect to award a contract in the second half of this year so works will start this year. It will take two years to build. The project's cashflow profile in the budget reflects this project timetable.

Also designed to improve traffic flow is the planned replacement of the roundabout at Midway Point and the Arthur Highway overtaking lanes east of Sorell. These are important projects that form part of our South East Traffic Solution program. Significant road investments on the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah and the Sorell to Hobart corridor will provide more efficient regional freight routes and will reduce congestion for commuters. These will be supported throughout \$231 million Roads of Strategic Importance budget allocation.

Since 2015, our \$500-million Midland Highway 10-year action plan has delivered 14 upgrade projects along the highway and five more are currently under construction. We expect three of those to be completed by the end of June and two are ongoing, including the biggest single road project in the north in decades and that is the \$92.3 million Perth Link Roads project which will be completed in 2021. I had the pleasure to visit this Saturday and I commend all the people on that project. The particular section that I visited, the person in charge of that project was a local Perth person. It is great to see so many jobs that have been generated, not only from that project; local people are really involved in their local projects and they should be very proud of it. This is the biggest upgrade program the highway has ever seen. By August this year we expect that 91 kilometres or 62 per cent of the action plan works will either be completed or under construction. The 2019-20 state Budget continues to support the action plan with a \$112 million allocation.

With growth in our northern regions now gathering pace our Launceston and Tamar Valley Traffic Vision will support a number of developments that are planned and underway. In this Budget there is an allocation of \$75 million towards the important commitment and includes upgrades to the West Tamar Highway; increased capacity on the Charles Street Bridge as well as planning for a second Tamar river crossing; building a new roundabout at the Mowbray Connector and safer junctions on the East Tamar Highway at Goderich Street and at Gleadow Street.

We understand that as Hobart has grown so has the number of commuters. That is why significant funding is being allocated to our Greater Hobart Traffic Solution and an Urban Congestion Fund for projects to alleviate congestion. This includes activating the northern suburbs transport corridor which measures on the Macquarie and Davey streets and planning works on the Southern Outlet fifth lane project, a new dedicated traffic incident response team and intelligent transport solutions to better manage congestion.

In particular, we have allocated \$20.8 million as part of the Hobart City Deal to support better transport options in the Kingborough region. We know that part of the congestion challenge is to increase the use of public transport and that it must be an attractive and efficient option for commuters. This has been reinforced in the recent work completed by the RACT.

This measure will support a redeveloped bus transit centre in central Kingston and more park-and-ride facilities, including possibly at the Kingston Park development and other facilities in strategic locations across the Kingborough region. Improved frequency or increased express bus services to make public transport a more reliable option and intelligent transport solutions either on road or at bus stops, which could potentially provide better real-time information for commuters.

Tasmania is also seeing more visitors than ever before, and we welcome them with open arms. To ensure they enjoy and have a safe visit to our state, we are investing \$58 million to improve roads frequented by tourists and locals alike through our Roads to Support Tasmania's Visitor Economy program, the first-ever road funding program dedicated to these types of regional roads. These works include sealing popular gravel roads and building more passing lanes and stopping bays on important routes like the Great Eastern Drive and Tasman Highway in the north-east, Hastings Cave Road, Fortescue Bay Road and Bruny Island's main road.

The Budget also provides a total of \$292 million to renew or rebuild road services, replace faded line markings or damaged signage, and maintain the vegetation and roadsides across the state road network in Tasmania. This maintenance, as I am sure everybody would appreciate, is important for local road safety and driver comfort in Tasmania. We continue to invest in supporting important road safety education programs in our schools and information campaigns targeting vulnerable road users across Tasmania.

We have already produced Tasmania's first 10-year infrastructure project pipeline to provide certainty for contractors and their workforce. The next important piece of work is our 30-year infrastructure strategy. It will look not just across transport but also other important infrastructure such as energy, water, health, housing, education, corrections and technology. It is a complex piece of work that we are taking the time to get right. I look forward to releasing this visionary strategy for consultation later this year so we can take Tasmanians with us on this important journey.

With an unprecedented investment in job-creating infrastructure comes an increased need for skilled workers. The Government invests over \$100 million each year in skills and workforce development. This includes funding for training and workforce development activities to build capacity in leading sectors and regions, and for innovative projects that assist Tasmanians facing disadvantage to learn new skills and enter the workforce, as our public training provider TasTAFE will continue to build the skills for our changing workforce, the Budget provides an extra \$2.9 million specifically to ensure TasTAFE can continue to support our growing economy and address skills needs in some of our key industries.

The skilled workforce to meet industry demand funding will enable TasTAFE to train more apprentices and students in growth industries including construction, electrotechnology, plumbing, welding and nursing. This commitment will help meet the future skills needs of Tasmania's booming construction sector, with more than 230 new student places available in qualifications and programs including prevocational welding, certificate 2 in electrotechnology and certificate 2 in automotive vocational preparation, which I know you are very familiar with, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Additional funding will enable TasTAFE to employ an extra 5.5 FTE teachers across building and construction and allied trades, a dedicated team of three welding teachers and a dedicated apprenticeship coordinator and industry liaison officer.

In health we will create an additional 75 student places in TasTAFE's Diploma of Nursing qualification which is a 45 per cent increase on current levels. We will also see an extra seven teachers employed, together with a new teacher support, plus a new dedicated work placement coordinator to ensure students can be offered suitable on-the-job opportunities.

This Budget continues our 2018/2022 capital investment for TasTAFE of around \$15.5 million, as promised. The Government will build centres of excellence in agriculture and trades and expand Drysdale facilities at Devonport to the tune of \$1.5 million and northern Hobart of \$2 million.

It is also worth noting that the deed funding for TasTAFE, when you exclude the additional funding for our centres of excellence, will increase by over 10 per cent across four years, from \$76.5 million this financial year to \$84.5 million in 2022-23. TasTAFE is cash-positive and will generate a small cash surplus in each year of the forward Estimates. This is a fantastic achievement considering TasTAFE started with a debt of \$2.5 million when it was reformed in 2012 when the skills institute and polytechnic were combined. TasTAFE has repaid this debt and is well positioned for the future.

I was pleased to see that Master Builders Tasmania welcomed the Government's vocational education investments in the Budget, with executive officer Matthew Pollock publicly acknowledging they will make more students job-ready. The Beacon Foundation is very supportive of our initiative to increase the number of schools-based apprenticeships, with state manager Mick Probert saying:

... we believe they are a tremendous resource that can help more young Tasmanians finish year 12, bridge the youth unemployment gap in our community and assist those industries experiencing skills shortages to attract young workers.

We know that there has been a national decline in apprentice and trainee commencements stretching back to 2012, but the decline is much less in Tasmania thanks to our blooming economy. Skills Tasmania drives engagement with 14 strategic community and industry partners to identify current and future workforce needs and inform priorities and focus for skills investment across Tasmania. For the period 2018-21, the priority industries for training and workforce development systems are tourism and hospitality; building and construction, which includes civil construction; advanced manufacturing, including maritime and defence manufacturing; information and communications technology; aged services; disability services; agriculture; aquaculture; and transport and logistics.

Tasmania currently demonstrates particular strengths in trade apprenticeships due to targeted investment and stronger economic activity and continues to have the highest apprenticeship completion rates in the country at around 58 per cent. I believe it is around 53 per cent nationally, so we are well ahead when it comes to completion rates, of which we should all be very proud and the people involved should be very proud as well.

Building on these key strengths continues to be a high priority. Our contestable programs subsidise the cost of training for existing workers and job seekers, primarily in priority industries, across a range of training, to build a productive and competitive workforce.

The best investment we can make in Tasmania's future is in education because it is a passport to a better life. That is why in this Budget we are investing a record \$7.1 billion in Education and Training, which represents an increase of some \$349 million from last year's budget. In addition to the \$1.5 billion over the forward Estimates to boost school-based apprenticeships, the Budget delivers \$8 million over three years to continue our very successful plan to extend all high schools to year 12 by 2022, which has seen a 10 per cent increase in TCE attainment since we came to government. Our approach is seeing high schools, training centres and colleges working together to keep students engaged in school longer and improve outcomes.

The Hellyer Collective and the tegana Collective are great examples of this. The Hellyer Collective was launched just last week and I commend all those involved with the collective, led by Hellyer College, the principal Judy Fahey and all the principals within that region working together with the common goal of ensuring our students maximise their attainment and their outcomes and are able to live healthy and productive lives after completing year 12.

Education is the single most powerful driver for improving economic and social outcomes in Tasmania, including health, life expectancy, happiness and productivity. There is a strong body of evidence that demonstrates a child's experiences and environment in their first years will shape their life, which is why this Budget delivers a significant increase in funding for the early years with around \$85 million in extra funding.

Our free preschool program, Working Together for 3 year olds, is nation-leading, with Tasmania becoming the first state in the country to implement an approach that not only funds places for vulnerable or disadvantaged children in early learning centres but also provides that holistic and wraparound support. Pilots are currently occurring at 11 early learning sites where eligible children are receiving 10 hours of free preschool each week.

I was very pleased to visit one recently which I spoke about in this House last week. The East Devonport Child and Family Centre is partnering with the Devonport Childcare Centre to participate in the pilot and is providing wraparound support for participating children and their families. This wraparound support empowers families to receive all the benefits from this great program. I heard how it is really appreciated by families. This support is personalised and varied and includes a range of actions such as transport for children to and from care, food drop-offs, referrals to other services and assistance with filling out paperwork. I passionately believe that all three-year-olds deserve the opportunity to experience early learning no matter what their circumstances. I am very excited that in 2020 this initiative will be rolled out statewide.

The Government is also progressing our commitment to six new child and family learning centres with \$15.5 million in this Budget. The centres will be located in Sorell, Kingborough, Glenorchy, East Tamar, West Ulverstone and Waratah-Wynyard communities and will provide a one-stop shop for services for families with young children. I am very focused, as is this Government, on improving equity and access for all learners.

Introducing a new disability needs-based funding model in Tasmania from next year is what I am most proud of. There is an additional \$34 million in the Budget over the Forward Estimates to support this new approach that will see the number of students who receive funding nearly double.

This new model is nation-leading again. It will see us move away from a one-size-fits-all approach in providing funding based on the type of disability and instead focus on the individual and the support they need to achieve a better educational outcome.

It is culmination of five years of work and a key recommendation from the Disability Ministerial Taskforce. I thank all of those involved who have helped get us where we are today. This is a huge shift in practice and culture for our schools and families. It is all about ensuring we have a truly inclusive education system that delivers all students a quality education based on equity.

A needs-based funding model has been welcomed by the Tas Disability Education Reform Lobby, with founder Kristen Desmond calling it a critical reform that has been years in the making. Once again, I congratulate Kristen for her advocacy in terms of what we have achieved to date and her work over many years. The extra \$34 million in the Budget builds on the total investment being made to support students with special needs, which for 2019 is just over \$93 million, an increase of \$24 million since we came to Government in 2014.

We also recognise that trauma can have a significant impact on a child's ability to learn. This Budget contains an extra \$7.25 million for government schools to support children and young people impacted by trauma and with emotional and behavioural challenges. This support will build capacity within schools, including trauma-informed practice, training and professional learning for school staff further strengthening student engagement and approaches. I note the Tasmanian Principals Association's positive comments with the President, Dr Sally Milbourne, saying the funding will enable the sector to take a more long-term and strategic approach to help students.

While mental health in schools appears to be a topic of discussion today, it has been one of our highest priorities since we came to government. We have significantly increased professional support staff in schools with an extra 65 FTEs. This includes psychologists, social workers and nurses. Last year we launched a child and wellbeing strategy and we have funded the establishment of a child and wellbeing unit. This Budget continues our strong focus on the wellbeing of students with a further investment in our School Health Nurse Program, with additional funding of \$2.7 million over four years in this Budget to provide eight school nurses and one in each college. As Minister for Education and Training, I will never criticise investment into such important areas as mental health, whether that be in the schools or in the broader community. This is the final phase of our program to provide school health nurses across all government schools.

Also funded in this Budget is our Principal Wellbeing Action Plan to ensure principals have the support they need to flourish and lead learning and improvement in their schools.

Literacy and numeracy are the foundation for achievement in all areas of learning. This year a new literacy strategy has been implemented in schools. This will be supported by the inclusion of literacy coaches in all government schools from next year, including colleges and special schools.

We are very proud to have set an aspirational target of 100 per cent literacy. We should aim high and should aim for nothing less than 100 per cent literacy within our community. Our Government is also progressing the development of a numeracy strategy in the second half of this year.

To support our schools of the future, the Government is investing in education infrastructure at a record level with \$184 million over the forward Estimates in our capital investment program. This includes funding for new schools, school rebuilds, major refurbishments and new child and

family learning centres. Two new schools will be built in the growth areas of Brighton and Legana. Significant rebuilds will be undertaken at Penguin District School, Sorell School, which will be extended to year 12, Cosgrove High and Devonport High. I note Devonport High will be completed by the end of 2022. Our commitment of \$10.5 million is absolutely unchanged. Significant works will also occur at East Launceston Primary School, Hobart College, Lansdown Primary, Riverside High and Spreyton Primary, to name a few.

The Budget also continues our commitment to our school farms, which provide an invaluable learning experience and pathways for students interested in agricultural studies. To guide our education infrastructure investment, we are focusing on broad grassroots consultation to ensure all voices are heard and to futureproof this large-scale investment by supporting changing community needs and expectations. We are taking the time to get these important investments right.

As education minister, I strongly value the work of our dedicated teachers and support staff. The Budget contains \$145 million in recurrent funding to allow us to employ an additional 358 new staff, including 250 new teachers. It also delivers on three priority elements in the education workforce action plan. Funding of \$3 million over the forward Estimates will be provided for: a review of the Teacher Intern Placement Program and provision of additional placements; teacher success profile assessments that provide for the establishment of quality assessment protocols that will be applied at critical teaching touch points; and a trial to introduce highly accomplished and lead teacher certification for Tasmanian teachers.

I expect this major increase in teaching staff and focus on quality teaching will make a significant difference in our ability to ensure every student has access to the best quality education. This Government's targeted investments in education from birth to year 12 and beyond will ensure that Tasmania has a job-ready generation of young people with the skills to participate in a modern economy.

An area of future jobs growth, particularly in my home electorate of Braddon, is the advanced manufacturing sector. Since the Government first launched our defence strategy we have seen Tasmanian companies such as Penguin Composites score multi-million dollar contracts and develop an international reputation for high quality, niche products. In the 2019-20 Budget this includes \$2.75 million over four years to support the growth in Tasmania's defence industry and enable us to pursue a bigger slice of the global defence market. This is an enormous opportunity for all our highly skilled advanced manufacturing businesses and manufacturing businesses right across Tasmania.

The 2019-20 Budget maintains the momentum and invests for growth. It builds on the work we have already done so all Tasmanians can look forward to a brighter future, not just for them but for generations to come.

Statement by Speaker

Standing Order 144 - Offensive Words against a Member

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, an important part of my role as Speaker is to preside over and adjudicate over matters of dispute relating to behaviour in this Chamber.

Earlier today the Leader of the House requested that the *Hansard* record be checked in relation to a comment made by the member for Clark, Mr Bacon, during question time. I have now viewed the footage of Mr Bacon's interjection and the footage does show a remark which is inappropriate and unparliamentary. I ask that Mr Bacon withdraw the remark and apologise at the first available opportunity.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, in response to that, if I may. We have also checked the footage and it is very clear that the word that is being alleged to have been said is not said. We contend a different word has been used which has been deliberately confused and contorted.

Mr Bacon's position on this is very clear. He did not use that word. The recording, on indulgence, is very clear that another word is used. I understand that you may have had a conversation with the Government on this matter, but we seek a discussion with you prior to this matter being resolved for all members of the House.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you very much, Mr O'Byrne, but I can assure you I listened to it about three or four times.

Mr O'Byrne - He said 'guru'. I was sitting next to him. I heard it.

Madam SPEAKER - I am sorry. I am happy to have an independent person have a look at it, but I assure you I listened to it three or four times and I am quite of the opinion of what the word was. It is not you, Mr O'Byrne, but I believe it would be very wise if Mr Bacon would consider his position because we would not like this to get any bigger than it is.

Mr O'BYRNE - I understand and I am not being disrespectful but the principles of natural justice must apply and Mr Bacon does need to be able to respond.

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, the principles of natural justice have been that I as an independent chair have listened to the recording, as I said, three or four times. I do not like my ruling being questioned. However, I have offered you a private meeting with the Leader of the House, if that is okay with the Leader of the House, and we can listen to it again. But I dispute your - I am sure you are doing it in good faith, but it is not what I believe has happened.

I think it would be very wise for Mr Bacon to apologise because it would have been the third time he was insulting to the Treasurer. There is one I pulled him up on, one that I let go through to the keeper, and the other one I had not heard until that recording.

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, all I wish to add to the record at this point is that there should be no further debate in the Chair.

Madam SPEAKER - I agree.

Mr O'Byrne - We would take up the offer of a discussion with yourself to further that matter.

Madam SPEAKER - Okay, then we will make it for a meeting at 4 p.m. if that suits you, Mr Ferguson?

Mr FERGUSON - I would rather not negotiate on the floor of the House, Madam Speaker. I simply do not wish to add to the debate at this time.

Madam SPEAKER - That leaves me in an awkward position. I have made an offer where I would allow Mr Bacon and Mr O'Byrne to sort that out so I would be very appreciative if you would reconsider your stance so that we can finish this matter today and bring it to a conclusion.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence on that previous matter. It is an awkward matter for the House to deal with when two people feel very strongly and I appreciate your response.

I rise on the debate on the state Budget and it is very clear the momentum and the walk of this Government has gone and has returned back to the bad old days of Liberal governments every time they get elected in majority to this place, even in minority to this place when they were in minority with the Greens between 1996 and 1998. That is a walk to debt and deficit. That is a well-worn path of the Tasmanian state Liberal Party that they cannot be trusted with the books.

Mrs Rylah - We are in surplus all the way through the budget.

Mr O'BYRNE - You are already in and forecasting for a billion dollars of net debt. When you actually rack up such a debt your capacity to maintain your surplus is very difficult, and you know that. We have seen that whenever the Liberals have been in government for any period of time. You look at the Gray government in the 1980s and the early 1990s, and you look at the 1990s the Groom/Rundle government that they left Tasmania's books in an awful state, a terrible state. It has taken five long hard years for this Liberal Government to return to that situation, to drag us back to massive debts starting to accrue and the billion dollars in net debt is a massive challenge. The thing is only 12 months ago we were in the 'golden age', not so much an age, more of a long weekend and to rack up a billion dollars -

Members interjecting.

Mr O'BYRNE - You do not take it from me. Here is a press release from Mr Gutwein as shadow treasurer in 2012. He is calling on the then Labor premier: 'must immediately rule out taking the state into net debt in order to solve the government's financial woes'. Please, we did not take the budget into net debt. You are the ones who are taking us into net debt but there he was in opposition in 2012 calling on the premier and calling on the then state government to rule out taking the state into net debt. The budget forecast that only a wafer-thin \$53 million margin would keep us out of net debt this financial year. We are in this position because, apparently, Labor are poor financial managers. Even getting close to net debt, not even getting into net debt, in Mr Gutwein's view, is an indication of poor financial managers.

We are now very clearly seeing this Treasurer and the 'house of cards' budget that he has pulled together 12 months after being in a 'golden age' and now pushing the state into \$1 billion of net debt. It is he who is the poor financial manager. Even on his own measure when Labor in government in the teeth of the global financial crisis and the ripples that impacted on the Tasmanian economy, we worked extraordinarily hard to maintain the condition of the state budget and to ensure that the books were well-looked after. It has taken five years of poor Liberal Government mismanagement to drag us back into net debt and not just by a little bit - by \$1 billion of net debt

across the forward Estimates. That is by Mr Gutwein's own words an example of his poor financial management and his mismanagement of the state's finances.

Whilst he is very good to get up and claim excellent economic conditions and the confidence in business - and we do not shy away from the fact the economic conditions within which Tasmanian businesses work have changed remarkably, particularly being Tasmania, it is an export-orientated economy and the terms of trade again of the Australian dollar pegged to the United States is below or around 70 cents parity. At a time when we were in government it was \$1.08 to \$1.10 - extraordinarily hard, and metals prices tanking so our major exporters not only had difficult terms of trade but very difficult terms in the markets within which they played.

Even in the toughest of times we were able to maintain a fiscal strategy that ensured that we did not bankrupt the state. In terms of this Government, in the good economic times - the conditions in which you are working in - you are still mismanaging the books and creating so much difficulty for the public sector and the state that it will not be long before the house of cards falls apart.

It is very interesting in terms of the narrative of the Treasurer over the last 12 months. In the last 12 months we were subjected to a speech from the Treasurer where he referred to Tasmania moving into a 'golden age' and that was because of their work, that it was purely the work of the state Liberal Government that we were moving into a golden age. Now that we are pushing the state into \$1 billion of net debt, that we have the highest unemployment in the country by a fair show, high youth unemployment where Tasmanians are struggling to get a roof over their heads, where they are struggling to get access to quality health services, where these challenges are facing, it is no longer the responsibility of the Hodgman Liberal Government, it is outside circumstances and it is the shock to the budget with the downgrade in the GST.

This Treasurer has been very fortunate in terms of his first few budgets, not necessarily the first budget, but the last four budgets, where he has been able to benefit from an increase in GST receipts. Instead of managing the books appropriately, instead of getting the priorities right and building the foundation stones for a strong economy, he has gone on a spending spree and then all of a sudden from the golden age, we have gone to massive debt - \$1 billion of net debt.

That has happened in a 12-month period and the Treasurer gets up here and talks as if it is a surprise, it is beyond our control.

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot take credit for the Australian exchange rate and the dollar, you cannot take credit for the global economic conditions improving, and you cannot take credit for an increase in business confidence without taking a responsibility of government, the responsibility of building foundations of a Tasmanian budget that can deliver for the Tasmanian community.

We are accused on this side of talking the state down, being negative. You guys were Olympic standard when we were in government. At the toughest of economic times, when so many businesses, small, medium and large were working so hard to keep the doors open because of the way the markets were, every day you were talking the state down, being negative. The hypocritical circumstances. We were out there articulating the challenges facing the Tasmanian community. We do not shy away from those challenges, but you guys were Olympic standard in talking the state down when in opposition.

Some of the stunts that you pulled when you were in opposition were grotesque. You were dancing on people's misery and on circumstances which had significant impact on people's lives. You took advantage of them. One of your attack dogs dressed up in a volunteer firefighter's uniform when he was not a volunteer firefighter to try to make a point around regional communities. It was grotesque and offensive. How dare you get up in this House and accuse us of talking the state down?

We are raising issues on behalf of the Tasmanian community. We acknowledge that the economic conditions have changed, through little or no impact of the work that you have done. The economic conditions have changed but we will not walk away from the responsibility we have in as an opposition to raise these issues. We will not use parochialism as a way to divide the Tasmanian community.

In the recent federal election, your performance in using an investment in MONA, which would underpin hundreds of millions of dollars in investment and economic activity for the state and Tasmania's desire and hope to get a Tasmanian team in the AFL, split the Tasmanian community. We as a party would not press that parochialism button to divide the Tasmanian community north and south. Such a dishonest campaign. Talk about talking down the state. What is worse than that? Dividing the state, pitting Tasmanian against Tasmanian, using misinformation and dishonesty to drive a wedge through the Tasmanian community. It is grotesque and offensive.

To say that the Labor Party, in wanting to support an investment in an AFL team for infrastructure that would be a statewide team, was only a plaything of the south, shame on you, the Tasmanian Liberals. To have the Premier standing next to Prime Minister Morrison in those northern seats, giving a wink and a smile to that kind of dishonest strategy, you should hang your head in shame. Potentially you have put the dream of an AFL team, which tens of thousands of Tasmanians still hold, back 10 years. Melbourne would be saying, 'We saw a glimpse of unity, a glimpse of the state coming together'. In the desperation for a short-term benefit, you divided the state again and took advantage of it. That was absolutely disgraceful.

They are very quick to stand next to people from MONA, people who are doing good things, but they throw them under a bus when it suits them politically. It is absolutely disgraceful.

This Budget is to work on the narrative that, 'We are going into net debt because we planned it. It is a clear and coherent strategy for us to go into net debt', yet it was only a matter of months ago that you were promising the Tasmanian community that we would not go into net debt. In some feeble attempt to cover your mismanagement, you say that you are going into net debt because it is a strategy. If that is a strategy, what would happen if you started to think about what you say? How bad would it get then?

The disconnection you have with reality in terms of what people hear you say and what you actually do and how you justify your actions is offensive. There has not been one new infrastructure announcement made in the budget speech. It was essentially a rolling out of commitments that had already been made. You have moved quickly from 12 months ago, a golden age, to be on track for \$1 billion net debt. Essentially, you are gambling and hoping against hope for an uplift in the GST revenue over the next couple of budgets to get you out of this hole. That is the strategy.

The Treasurer has been asked a number of times: what is the pathway out of net debt? There has been no answer apart from, 'We will just get on with the job. We will spend the money on infrastructure and the Budget and the money will roll in' - like it is wafer thin.

The commitment was made to the Tasmanian people that you will not go into net debt; yet now you are into net debt. Apparently, that is a strategy. But you do not have a strategy to get out of net debt. In the then shadow treasurer, Peter Gutwein's own words and by his own measure, going into net debt when Labor did not during the toughest of economic times would mean that the then government, if we went into net debt, we would be poor financial managers and another example of Tasmanians being expected to pay for the poor financial management of the Government. Your own words are hanging you there. In improved economic times, you have taken us to a place where, even in government and through the toughest of multiple GST writedowns and I remember the budget committee meetings when we were viewing a report from the federal Treasury that we were going to receive another writedown from GST, and the decisions that we had to make to maintain a steady budget to avoid going into net debt.

Even with just a single writedown, all of a sudden you plunged Tasmania into a billion dollars of net debt. Pathetically, you are asking the departments to come up with \$450 million of savings, but you cannot identify how you are going to make those savings. We have seen what you do when you want savings; you did it in your first term, in your first budget, in 2014-15. You cut the hell out of the public service, you cut jobs, frontline and backline. That is what you did in your first budget. We know when you say you need to identify \$450 million in savings in your Budget, that is jobs gone. That is frontline and backline services. You are yet to define what frontline services are, but you may say that firefighters are frontline, police officers are frontline, but what about the radio rooms? What about people responding to triple 0 numbers? Are they frontline or backline? You are yet to define that.

We know what the \$450 million will mean: jobs of Tasmanians, people thrown on the unemployment scrapheap. Apparently public sector jobs are easier to get rid of because people do not identify with them, but they are people with families to provide for, who work and live within their communities. This will have a significant impact on those people's jobs, make no bones about that. To so flippantly say, 'It has changed', it is outrageous.

You say that the reason you are thrusting Tasmania into net debt is because it is an infrastructure budget, with a massive increase in infrastructure. But, when you look at it, the general government sector infrastructure investment this year is \$752.4 million. By the time you get to the end of the forward Estimates 2022-23, it drops down to \$695 million, whilst the overall total goes from \$847 million to over a billion, so it is a \$200 million increase.

Here is an interesting fact. In terms of infrastructure investment, in the last year, 2022-23, we have \$157.5 million investment in the TT-Line. If you take out the TT-Line investment, the uplift in state investment in infrastructure is only \$50 million. Let us have a look at the dividend policy. On the revenue side, you are going after all of the Tasmanian businesses. Let us be clear, TT-Line has never paid a dividend. The Bacon government purchased those two vessels; the debt was a loan. The debt was on the books of the TT-Line. With their normal business activities, they paid off that debt in 2011. We made it very clear that we would not seek a dividend from that company because they had to build reserves to not only maintain the operation of the vessels, but they had to work on vessel replacement programs. So, we said that we were not going to touch the TT-Line's revenue.

In the previous term of your government, you dragged \$80 million from the TT-Line but said, 'We are not going to use it'. You pulled \$80 million out of the business, you put it on your books, said you are not going to use it but propped up your books in trying to create a surplus for the Government year in, year out. In this Budget you have changed it. It is no longer a special dividend.

It is a regular dividend in line with other GBEs, and you are going to pull out another \$80 million from the TT-Line. It is a change of policy in that you are now looking at TT-Line as a cash cow. Once the vessel replacement occurs you need to be clear with the Tasmanian people whether you are going to continue to pull dividends out of the TT-Line and reduce its capacity to drop prices, to keep prices low for caravanners, tourists and freight companies trying to get crucial time-sensitive freight out of the state.

You need to be clear. From golden age surpluses and net debt-free as far as the eye can see, you get one downgrade from GST receipts of half a billion dollars and all of a sudden your whole house-of-cards strategy has fallen down and you are pushing us into a billion dollars of net debt and claiming publicly that it is all about an infrastructure spend when you have made no new announcements for infrastructure. Particularly in terms of \$1.6 billion in roads, over \$900 million of that is commonwealth government funds and the biggest lick is the Bridgewater bridge.

Your Budget does not stack up, your strategy does not stack up, and your narrative does not stack up. You not only have not announced any new major projects in the Budget but you are reprofiling a whole range of infrastructure spends and pushing them back, kicking those challenges down the road and hoping upon hope that there will be a GST uplift and you will get yourself out of the pickle you found yourself in. I will give you the tip - it did not work for Robin Gray. He nearly bankrupted the state and it took a Labor government -

Ms O'Connor - It took a Labor-Greens government.

Mr O'BYRNE - and a Labor-Greens government at the time, led by Michael Field as Premier, to take that challenge on. Then after the Groom and Rundle governments it took a Labor government in majority under Jim Bacon to clean up your mess - and guess what? One time, two times, three times - it is a hat-trick. Third time lucky. We were not lucky with this mob in terms of economic management of the state. Gray drove us into debt and bankrupted the state. Groom and Rundle did the same thing. Now it is Hodgman and Gutwein driving us into significant net debt and completely hamstringing the state's ability to provide the crucial services that are supposed to be provided. You get ministers up here, one by one, talking about the things they are doing in their portfolios. Apart from just doing your job, most Tasmanians just want you to be competent at delivering the services and doing what you can with the cards you are dealt to deliver the services.

It is very clear that in the echo chamber of the Liberal Party the state is going swimmingly well and everything is fantastic, but it is not. With the current economic conditions we have, how can you be happy with the highest unemployment rate in the country by a fair way? Given the economic circumstances we are currently in, the wind is in our sails economically. There was a transition that Labor commenced under the Bacon government in terms of diversifying the Tasmanian economy that was followed through under subsequent premiers and the work that we did in irrigation, for example. You pat yourselves on the back on irrigation investment and so you should be investing in irrigation, but you are like the brickie who turns up once the work is done, lays the last brick on the wall and then claims credit for the wall.

It was Labor that did the heavy lifting on irrigation and ensured that not only did we get funding to make sure the first and second tranches of irrigation were rolled out across the state, but proved up the economic model for subsequent tranches. To claim credit for that as your work, that structural change to the agricultural industry and to the Tasmanian economy, is really thin. You have short memories. Do not claim credit for stuff you do not do.

It is not just about the economy because the economy is there to serve the community. I am sorry if it is boring, Mr Tucker - if you want to fall asleep there, mate, just roll back and roll your eyes.

Mr Ferguson - That is not what we do.

Mr O'BYRNE - I saw him do it - don't start.

Here are some stats. The number of Tasmanians on energy concessions from 2013-14 to 2018-19 has increased from 88 430 to 92 863. In terms of being seen within four hours at the Royal Hobart ED, in 2013-14 60.3 per cent were seen and that has now dropped down to 54 per cent. The elective surgery waiting list has gone from 7438 in 2013-14 up to 9043. The proportion of people deferring access to GPs due to cost was 6.9 per cent in 2013-14 and that increased to 8.7 per cent in 2018-19. TAFE and VET enrolments were 63 400 in 2013-14 and that has dropped down to 54 100 in 2018-19.

The number of people on the Housing Register in 2013-14 was 2054 and that has now increased to 3233. As to the average waiting time for priority applicants, the most sharp and extreme end in terms of the wait for public housing for Tasmanians, in 2013-14 there was a 19-week wait. Even five months is far too long, but that has blown out to from 19 weeks to 56 weeks between 2013-14 and 2018-19. These are numbers no government should be proud of because that is the human face and the human cost of inaction in these policy areas.

You have had the best of economic times that Tasmania has seen for over a decade. You have had the economic winds at your back, yet you have driven the health system into crisis, you have been asleep at the wheel in terms of housing, you have had no strategy, vision or forethought to think about what may occur in the state's future to ensure that if something goes wrong we able to look after people. You have an economy that, whilst it is going well, is going to be let down by this Government because of your infrastructure spend.

There is nothing new in this Budget, nothing that has not already previously been announced and should have previously been accounted for in last year's budget and particularly in the roads.

I commend the Government for following through on Labor's 10-year Midland Highway safety strategy. That is a Labor strategy. We announced that in 2013-14 and the fact that you are doing that work should be commended. But what is next? There is a whole range of projects that need to occur from an infrastructure perspective to ensure that you deal with traffic congestion. Traffic congestion was a building issue in our term but it became peak about three or four years ago and all that has happened since is reviews and a traffic congestion budget with no details on it. You have talked a big game about the Hobart ferries but we have seen Metro get a Queensland consultant in to make a recommendation that you need to put more money into buses and therefore undermine the ferry case.

There is no coherent strategy around infrastructure dealing with congestion in the north and south, and as to your believability on getting jobs out the door in terms of civil construction I can tell you that whilst the civil construction industry will not play politics on this they are straight down the line and a number of companies are very concerned about the ability to get jobs out into the market so they can maintain employment and jobs because you have failed to deliver on a coherent infrastructure strategy for the state.

The minister was on his feet saying that he was going to launch it and announce it later in the year. Last year you said it would be announced and released by the end of 2018. When you failed to reach that deadline you said it would be out by the end of March, and you failed to reach that deadline. We thought the Budget was where we would see the 30-year strategy that may be a fig leaf of protection against inaction and failure to deliver but we saw the minister in his contribution that it would be delivered later in the year. So, we have no confidence that even when we see it that it will do the job that is required for Tasmanian businesses and Tasmanian industry.

There has been a minimal increase to road maintenance in terms of potholes around the state and how we ensure that people drive around safely. This is no major infrastructure budget. It is basically a rehash of announcements that have already been made and, in some cases, a failure to deliver the originally committed time lines.

It was wonderful to hear the announcements in terms of Labor leader, Rebecca White's, response and the extension of the minimum requirement for Tasmanian trainees and apprentices. Extending that from the building and construction industry into the civil construction industry will support thousands of young Tasmanians getting the training and apprenticeships they deserve and need to get a start in an industry which is vibrant. So, having that extension, because we know that is a current requirement in building and construction for government jobs, which we understand is not being applied by this current government, it is an easy get.

If you want to get the numbers of trainees and apprenticeships up, the money that you spend as a government and the leverage you have to ensure that Tasmanians are trained is a crucial leverage point that you failed to pull. Labor in government would extend that to the civil and construction industry. They have been calling for this and it is Labor that is responding to ensure we can support young Tasmanians and an industry that is in desperate need of a government that has some sort of vision and foresight on what the labour and market forces will require in years to come. It is crucially important that you not only deal with the short-term issues facing an industry or a community, but that you pitch ahead and you look at the issues that are coming and prepare for those moments.

It is clear in virtually every portfolio, there is a lack of thought, there is a lack of preparation and, therefore, we see a budget narrative unravelling before our eyes from golden age, net debt free, surplus as far as the eye can see, to now, 'Oh no, it is actually a strategy. We are going into \$1 billion of net debt.' It does not fly. It does not work. This is a budget that has failed Tasmanians.

[4.03 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, drenched in the negativity of the former speaker, I absolutely commend this Budget.

Mr O'Byrne - Former speaker?

Mr FERGUSON - The member who has just now spoken, the member who has resumed his seat.

I commend this Budget to the House. It brings me a lot of pride and satisfaction to be part of a government that is actually focusing on Tasmanians and what Tasmanians need and what they expect of us, including in times where there are additional challenges that are put in front of government, not the least of which is the very apparent writedown of revenue that the Government -

together with other state governments around the country - is experiencing. You need to be able to respond competently.

This Budget brings great benefits to Tasmanians and I will, of course, be focusing on my portfolios. In those portfolios, significant strides have been made forward in health; in police, fire and emergency management; and in science and technology. Given the challenges that we inherited and that have been competently dealt with by the Government, together with the more recent writedowns of revenue, I pay tribute to our Treasurer who, again, has delivered an outstanding piece of work in his sixth budget. It is not something that could be done overnight either. A huge amount of work has gone into this, particularly by him and his office, and the Treasury, together with the input across government. It again shows the strength of this Hodgman Liberal Government. Our economic management has enabled us to create jobs, to invest in essential services, and protect the Tasmanian way of life.

Frankly, they were dire economic circumstances when this Government came to office in 2014. We inherited significant structural budget problems that were going to dog this state if they had not been dealt with. Those issues have been addressed and the Treasurer and this Government have turned it around.

You will not be surprised that I am particularly proud of the Hodgman Liberal Government's record investment in health. Year after year we have provided unprecedented levels of funding to improve our health system to enable us, across the state, to support Tasmanians with the health care that they need and are entitled to. We want to support them in their time of need and support them with safe services, which was another significant challenge we inherited and the need for reform. Importantly, we want them to receive timely access to those services.

I heard it said earlier in the House - it may have been last week - that somehow the increase in the Health budget year by year as we have seen, the lazy comment being interjected was, 'That is only indexation'. You would think from members on the other side of the House that record health funding each year we have been in office is some sort of accident, something that would have automatically happened anyway.

Yet, we have members opposite criticising the Government for the structure of our budget which does include some manageable net debt, even though across the forward Estimates we are able to demonstrate we are spending less than we receive in revenue so that we have a buffer for future shocks, like the fires we had last summer.

We have consistently provided record funding in health. I squarely put it on the record: we have consistently boosted services, opened beds, and recruited extra staff. No doubt people can identify areas where there is a service shortfall or that there is a weakness that needs to be addressed. Fair enough, but that does not create a situation where members opposite could claim anything other than what I have stated. Over the last five years, the Government has delivered more than 1000 full-time equivalent staff in our health system and we have opened more than 130 new beds in our hospitals.

I heard a question rhetorically asked at different times, 'What about all the staff who are leaving?' That is the usual negativity from members opposite. To be clear, staff are recruited, staff retire, and staff change roles. That is understood. These are net figures, these are figures that take account of any departures in the health system. It shows that staff have been staying and staff have been recruited to our organisation when you take a total look at it.

Increase in demand, which we all now understand, has created fresh challenges and we want to face these challenges head-on. To meet rising demand, we are now investing nearly 32 per cent of the entire state expenditure in the Health portfolio. This is now the second highest of any state in Australia and compares to around 25 per cent just one decade ago. A huge shift in what I would call state effort in regard to the health system.

It is a good thing. It allows us to have been able to address some of those service weaknesses I referred to but importantly, it has allowed us to meet the increase in demand. We want to do better. We do not think it is good enough; have never said that it is. We always want to improve and that is what we will be doing as we approach the next four years.

The three big ticket items of this budget are health, education and infrastructure. First of all, health is the biggest spend. It is now a record \$8.1 billion over the budget period and forward Estimates for health as well as the other two big ticket items I would name up as education - one of my great passions in my public life - but also in infrastructure, which is about enabling the future productivity of our economy. It is certainly going to employ a lot of extra Tasmanians, estimates of 10 000 as we build the infrastructure that Tasmanians need.

It is going to help make Tasmania a more liveable state and allow people to have a better quality of life and we should all be for that. I will come back to health a little later but Tasmanians can be assured we are acting and will never take our eye off the ball, to take pressure off our hospitals and ensuing we have modern and safe health services for our staff and our patients.

Our police service does an exceptional job and it is a huge credit to the serving women and men of Tasmania Police that local communities do recognise and value their hard work and commitment. They have wanted to see a government that gets behind the police.

Tasmania Police repeatedly reports the nation's highest public satisfaction levels in their performance. I say, 'Tasmania Police, take a bow, each and every one of the 1254 of you'. They should be extremely proud of this achievement, as I am as minister. They secure the confidence of the community by their actions, their attitudes and their compassion, particularly for victims of crime. This is again reflected by our Government in this Budget. We are continuing to deliver on our commitment to boost frontline police numbers to help keep Tasmanian communities safe.

We are turning around those devastating cuts that were imposed by the Labor-Greens government. To be clear, those cuts had a huge impact. The service lost 108 dedicated people from our service and it was forced to restructure its entire organisation. When the Hodgman Liberal Government was elected in 2014, the Tasmanian Police Academy roared back into life upon our commitment to recruit. Already we have recruited 113 additional frontline police officers that have been by and large recruited through the academy. There have been some mature entries from interstate as well, but we have employed an extra 113 over and above that 108 that were cut.

The academy has never been busier, with 10 courses planned over the term of this parliament. It is pretty phenomenal, and already graduations, in my time as minister last year and also in April this year, have seen a further 21 officers on the beat throughout the state. That is brilliant. We now have 1254 police officers who are serving with distinction and, for some of those younger ones, gaining experience. That is terrific. We are maintaining that momentum with this year's Budget because it includes ongoing funding for more police recruitment and the security they deserve. The first course for this year is already underway and the second is due to start in August.

The Government has committed to providing a core full-time special operations group over the term of this Government. Not content to leave it until the end of our term, we are getting underway now. This Budget takes the first step towards establishing that core full-time SOG by investing \$1 million into a fit-for-purpose facility and allocating \$400 000 for specialist equipment. The commitment will support Tasmania Police's rapid response to incidents including terrorism or other emergencies as well as other enhanced capability we want to build. We will also ensure a timely and appropriate response for high-risk incidents and this is an important part of this Government's plan to keep Tasmanians safe. By the way, that is our first responsibility here and that is what this Government is committed to doing.

There is no doubt at all that we are strong supporters of community safety, and this Budget reflects that. Important infrastructure developments that will also be progressed this year include the \$10 million for police stations at New Norfolk and Longford and the new \$12 million emergency services hub for Sorell.

The 2019-20 state Budget also backs in Tasmania Fire Service. I want to pause for a moment and again heap praise on all of our emergency service personnel including our fireies, but also our personnel across all agencies who took the badges of philosophy when they joined the task of putting out those fires over summer. They were, frankly, ravenous fires and it was an incredible intervention of humankind to get in there and attempt to put those fires out safely. Those fires were on the scale of 1967 but unlike 1967, which swept through in a small number of days and, of course, devastated communities and caused dozens of lives of Tasmanians to be lost, this season saw the same land mass of Tasmania burned, and significant risk to the community, with no lives lost. I thank God for that and I thank our fireies for that.

There were a lot of people backing in our emergency services personnel and a lot of people praying, including me, that everybody could do everything they could to preserve life, save property and protect critical infrastructure, and I include in that our wilderness environmental values. It was marvellous to see our emergency services working closely together and ensuring that twice a day the protocol was engaged to ensure that we met the needs of our community with a combined teamwork approach. Brilliant stuff.

Our investment in this Budget will provide more than \$13 million for new medium tankers, heavy pumpers and aerial appliances - stakeholders have been telling us we need to do this - plus more than \$3 million for the replacement and refurbishment of fire stations. A total of \$9 million each year is allocated to our nation-leading strategic fuel reduction program which has seen 533 burns across the state tenure-blind over the past four years. This means that more than 63 000 hectares now presents a lesser bushfire risk.

In relation to the most recent bushfires over summer, the final cost is still being determined but \$64 million has been allocated to meet that estimation this financial year and due to that strong financial management and the strategic decision by government to retain buffers to meet emergencies, we are able to allocate \$10 million in the 2019-20 budget to cover future costs that may be identified with this fire event. Of course we expect the federal government to come to the party. We know they will and, following an application, we anticipate about half of the cost of the fires to be recovered through the federal government's disaster recovery funding arrangements. We thank the Prime Minister and his colleagues for their unwavering commitment to meeting their obligations.

Following any major fire there are always lessons to be learned. The response was phenomenal and I can only heap praise on those frontline emergency service personnel and their bosses for the ways in which they engaged that fire, the ways in which they protected life and property and critical infrastructure and our wilderness. That does not mean that there cannot be lessons to be learned, and I say that without picking holes in any of them. The best way for that to occur is through a robust and independent review, which is now underway, with input from experts and local communities.

We have commissioned AFEAC, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, the peak body responsible for representing emergency services, to undertake an independent review. This review is being led by Mal Cronstedt AFSM, who has more than 40 years experience in fire and emergency services. I expect the final review to be delivered to government in the coming months. I believe there will be significant learnings from it, one of which will be not to criticise firefighters in the middle of a fire campaign. It saps morale, damages confidence and makes people question in some small number of cases the robust public messages that are being put forward via emergency services. Having said that, as any responsible government would want to do, we expect to see other ways that we can improve the response in future and I look forward to that. The public can look forward to seeing that as well.

Our career emergency services personnel were supported to an outstanding degree by our volunteers and they are recognised again in the Budget with \$2 million continued over four years. We started that last year. That is being provided to volunteer TFS brigades and we would not leave out SES units to apply for non-essential equipment, training, recruitment and community engagement activities. Let us remember to thank the volunteers who make a special sacrifice to support Tasmanians in their time of need and danger.

In regard to the Budget, local government authorities will also be receiving emergency management planning and education support, with \$1.5 million over four years to allow the SES to employ regional emergency management planning and develop offices. I could not believe it but already I have had the feedback from people in the service as to just how much they appreciate that investment.

The science and technology sector will benefit from the state Budget which commits \$370 000 over four years to raise the sector's profile and its brand and to enhance engagement to enhance the knowledge of career paths and to improve capability in the industry. This will also address critical science and technology infrastructure investment priorities. Funds will be invested over four years to continue the Government's free public wi-fi services in key hotspots around the state. We have been targeting key tourism locations.

There are further funds that support science and tech, including improving mobile coverage for the Great Eastern Drive, which is in market at the moment; digital inclusion initiatives for which we have been partnering with TasCOSS, which has been fantastic; and the digital-ready program which is a great success of this and past governments that we have invested upon and improved.

Coming back to Health, demand on our health services is unprecedented. So too though, is the response of the Hodgman Liberal Government. The only fair thing to do is to have our eyes wide open to the challenges facing Health and our ears open to the expert clinical advice on the best approaches for us to meet those challenges. I restate the growing demand which has been so challenging.

Importantly, our Budget has been open to larger and larger provision of funds year on year. We do not shy away from tackling the tough issues, including the significant challenge that our staff are facing in emergency departments, unlike our predecessors who botched the budget. Then they closed hospital wards and beds when they ran out of money, including in EDs. At worst, they were sacking a nurse a day over a nine-month period. Unforgiveable. Again, unlike our predecessors, we are funding new beds, new nurses, doctors and allied health staff.

Here is an important fact which may be lost on some people if you only chose to listen to the negativity of the Labor Party. We need to know what the facts are. Here is the record. The record investment of \$8.1 billion in Health is \$544 million more over the Budget and forward Estimates than forecast in last year's Budget. That is a massive increase.

I do not have the figure in front of me, but when this Government came to office, annual spending on health was in the realm of short of \$1.5 billion a year. In the coming financial year, it is now only short of \$2 billion a year. That is a massive increase, a 33 per cent increase from where we started. It is a one-third increase. It is not only the size of your health budget, it is how you make sure that Tasmanians get best possible access. Some people do not like to hear about record investments. They imply that it is not a useful term, but it is useful. We have more resources, we can provide more and better care, where the leadership is lined up and we are listening to the experts.

As I mentioned earlier, I can advise the House that it is nearly 32 per cent of the entire Budget. It has risen from 25 per cent. If you look at the figures over four years, it is nearly \$2.3 billion more over the four-year budget period compared to the last budget of the Labor-Greens government. It proves beyond any doubt that we are acting on the health challenges. We are open-hearted and open-minded as to how we can meet that demand. I am very thankful to be part of a government that responds in this way. What was the history when you saw a revenue shock before? You saw previous governments trying to close schools. They cut staff, closed wards and reduced beds in the emergency departments.

This is a government that has been able to find the right structure for our Budget to continue our investments, to honour our election commitments and, importantly, to even leave a special buffer which is available to us, so we can take advice on the best way to meet current demand. I include in that, the work we will do next month through the Access Solutions meeting.

We are opening more beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital with \$132 million, delivering 100 new beds over the next four years. That is a very transparent statement about what Tasmanians can expect in what time frame. It is completely consistent with our pre-election commitments, which stands in contrast to Labor who were not able to name a single extra bed at the Royal Hobart Hospital that they would open and in what time frame.

For the first time in the state's history, we will have a dedicated adolescent unit with specialised mental health care for young Tasmanians. This will not only be in the south, it will also be in the north. This is a vital service that Tasmanians have been asking for a long time. I wish that we had it years ago but here we are; we are building the facilities, we needed the building fabric to build the adolescent units and that is what is happening.

We will recruit more than 460 new full-time equivalent nurses, doctors and health professionals to staff these additional beds. We will invest \$90 million to start Stage 2 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment.

This was a new initiative in this Budget. Yes, we committed when the master plan was released, which was marvellous. It was one of those rare times in my job where you make a government decision and everybody who is worth listening to says, 'This is the way forward'. I thought it was marvellous. I hope not to be wrong about this. I think it was supported by members opposite. It was on the best clinical advice by really smart people who were well-informed and were prepared to consult. I think it has been brilliant. In this Budget we show how we will provide every dollar that we were advised we should budget so that Stage 2 can be confidently got on with.

It means a bigger emergency department. It means more ICU beds in an appropriate location. It also means ward upgrades, which are overdue. Also, we will be spending \$180 million to reduce pressure across the THS and \$40 million to support emergency care and bed access. I have to emphasise this includes support for any immediate measures emanating from our Access Solutions meeting, which I could have called a round table, as well as commissioning extra hospital capacity arising from the redevelopment.

I see opportunity here. The Government has a plan. We have fixed the redevelopment; it has been built. It is a beautiful big building, but it is what you do with it that matters. We will staff it and open those beds but there is the potential for us to do even better than our promised time frame.

In my beloved north, there is \$50 million for eight new beds on Ward 4K. Ward 4K is the kids ward at the Launceston General Hospital. That will be staffed with a new adolescent unit, which we are very proud of. We know it will really help families. Eight new beds will be staffed with 26 new FTE staff, including 18 nurses. These beds will significantly improve the care our health system is able to provide for young Tasmanians, in contemporary facilities that speak of the importance that we place on young people, some of whom are going through very difficult and challenging circumstances at home, at school and in the community. We will invest in them from a preventative and early intervention approach, but when they are really sick, we do not want them jammed in a children's ward. We want them in an appropriate facility. I know that members listening to this will agree. It is overdue, but it has only been possible for us to open these facilities because we physically have been building them. I look forward to the day where the first family enjoys the benefits of that more appropriate clinical care.

The Launceston General Hospital's \$87 million redevelopment is continuing. There is \$61 million allocated over the next four years to progress crucial new facilities and to deliver new capacity. I have already mentioned some of it but this funding will also provide the vital space that is needed for a range of services, not just the women and children's precinct and 4K. Importantly, we will do for the LGH what we have done for the Royal. We will develop a master plan that will be completed over the next 12 months, which will help us chart the course of the next stages of redevelopment and ensure that our funding and the way it is used is really well-planned and well-supported and the result of really good information and really smart people talking to committed clinicians as part of the consultation. I look forward to that. I really think it is exciting.

The Budget also includes for 10 drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds at Launceston's Missiondale, 12 in Ulverstone as part of the Salvation Army Bridge Program, and five at Serenity House at Sulphur Creek. Also, in the north-west - we would never leave the north-west behind; Mrs Rylah would never let me get away with it - more than \$20 million will be spent over four years to staff the eight new beds at the North West Regional Hospital and \$2 million to complete construction of its new ante-natal clinic.

Madam Speaker, you have to bolt onto that, the significant commitments made out of the federal election, which I will speak about another time, but we welcome that investment. It will really help us to get the very best possible result on a site that is physically constrained. That is great news for Braddon. Nearly \$32 million will complete upgrades at the Mersey Community Hospital, which is now in state hands, where it belongs. It will then receive a further \$4 million for new services.

Time is getting away on me so I will just mention the stage 2 of the King Island Hospital redevelopment. There is the highly successful, rapid response service that we will be rolling out to the north-west. These measures, which include more staff that are funded in the Budget, highlight our belief that Tasmanians deserve access to the best possible health care. That is why we are opening more acute and subacute beds on the coast, in the north, and in the south. We are investing in vital infrastructure and we are actually building infrastructure that had been promised for decades and, vitally, we are increasing services.

Significant demand pressures have also challenged our ambulance service and to ease this, an extra \$20 million has been allocated to improve the response times. The overall ambulance service budget almost doubles over this budget to \$438 million over four years. That is a big increase and in this year's Budget we are continuing to roll out that \$125 million plan for Ambulance Tasmania which includes more in the way of our dedicated aero medical service. That is now a dedicated service, not just on call: it is actually ready to go right now. It can be up in 10 minutes, right now. Not a case of calling people in from the hospital and taking paramedics off the road, we are ready to go now.

I will probably run out of time for doing this, but when we launched that service a couple of months ago, one of the clinical leads said to me, because I had wondered to myself, will it save lives? I think it will. I am told it would save maybe nine lives a year; it has only been going a few months and the clinical lead said to me, 'Michael, we think it has already saved three lives'. When we get that redevelopment finished on Campbell Street, together with its helipad, it will take even more time off that transfer. I look forward to that.

Madam Speaker, there is \$10 million to implement secondary triage, \$3 million for extra staff in the statewide operation centre, and \$21 million for 42 paramedics across our regions, which I know is welcomed by everybody in this House.

The benefits to Tasmanians that are delivered in this Budget extends to all corners of our great state. In my beautiful electorate of Bass, there are many exciting projects that are being funded which communities have been yearning for, lobbying for, and hoping for. Their hopes will be realised. There is the LGH redevelopment, there are major projects including the Launceston and Tamar Valley Traffic Vision; there is the relocation of the university, there is the new northern prison, there is nearly \$45 million for state road upgrades, a new primary school for Legana, and the completion of facilities at Riverside High School. The East Tamar will get a new child and family learning centre, East Launceston Primary will finally enjoy its completed upgrade, and \$2 million will be spent on the northern Tas Tennis Centre. The regional areas of Bass have not been forgotten. Major projects include more than \$11 million to be spent on the West Tamar Highway Traffic Solution; \$6 million to retain the V8 super cars, and more than \$1 million on the Scottsdale Northbourne Extension.

Tasmanians can be assured that the Government is investing in the essential services and infrastructure that our growing state needs. I commend this Budget to the House.

[4.34 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, Liberal Governments have been big spenders. The Gray government almost bankrupted the state. In the Groom-Rundle years there was no money left. It was only after winning government in 1998, that the Bacon government had to fix things up by paying back \$1.3 billion of debt so that Tasmania was net debt-free in 2005.

Now we are seeing this again. This Liberal Government's spending is out of control. Treasurer Gutwein has never delivered an underlying net surplus. He has projected surpluses but he has always had to go back for more cash from the Consolidated Fund before the following budget, pushing the state into an underlying net deficit.

This is certainly evident in the state's declining cash position. This is how I started my budget reply speech last year. What we see this year is the chickens are coming home to roost. Why is that the case? Because this Government is all spin and no substance.

What we have now is that the Government cannot hide their finances any longer, and what we are instead staring down is \$1.1 billion in net debt over the forward Estimates. Yet we do not hear that from the Government. All we hear is continued spin. Continued spin, like 'maintaining the momentum, changing gears, cutting the cloth, taking the state to the next level'. Again, all spin and no substance.

I also argue that the Government is being truthful when they say they are 'maintaining the momentum', that they are 'changing gears' and they are 'taking the state to the next level'. That is because these can all be in the wrong direction. You can maintain momentum. You definitely maintain momentum as you are rolling down a hill. You can change gears but if you are going off the edge of a cliff it will not help you. You can 'cut your cloth' until there is no cloth left. This is the sort of talk that the Government is full of, 'taking the state to the next level' yet they were not saying that they were actually taking the state to the next level down, and now indeed what we are seeing is the state headed towards \$1.1 billion in net debt.

The Government is not meeting its own targets, like those in their nice glossy brochure that was handed out not very long ago. Target number one was to reduce the unemployment rate to the best state in the country by 2022. How is that going at the moment? We are the worst in the country. Reducing the youth unemployment rate to the lowest in the country as well. How is that going? That was number two. Number five, the Government claimed 'We will remain net debt free'. That is definitely not the case.

What we are seeing now is from 1 July, for the following year, this Government will be borrowing something like \$780 000 a day, and that will increase in the following year to around \$800 000 a day. That is what net debt actually looks like. That is the Government heading in the wrong direction. The Government also said, 'We will ensure that net cash and investments will remain positive and exceed borrowings'. That is definitely not the case. And point six: over the next four years we will continue to spend less than what we earn. How can that be true? How can this Government still claim to be living within its means when we are building up as a state \$1.1 billion in net debt, or something like \$2000 per man, woman and child?

We hear the Government talking about the strength of the Tasmanian economy and suggesting that it was the Government's plan and the result of the Government's action. Since coming into power in 2014 the reality has been a massive drop in the Australian dollar, a massive increase in commodity prices, record low interest rates, and a global recovery. Undoubtedly, unbudgeted rivers

of GST from the federal coffers, which covered - and it was indeed this unbudgeted GST that provided cover for the Government's budgeting confidence over the last three or four years or so.

In other words, the Government was budgeting for losses but it was only additional unbudgeted for GST that covered the gaps. Extraordinary luck is what this was. Now what we are seeing is the Government has hit the first hurdle with a drop in GST, and we have heard about that today. What happens after the Government hits the first bump in the road? We start hearing things like, 'The budget is not the economy'. Wow, that is a revelation. We also hear the Treasurer trying to distance himself from the state's economic performance and the massive budget disaster that this state now faces. But how can it be that the state is doing well economically when the budget we have has real deficits and \$1.1 billion budgeted over the forward Estimates. There is no pathway out of that \$1.1 billion debt.

We have heard today that the debt might increase. How much debt will we be facing by the time we get around to the next election? I contend that the Government has gone beyond spin, and I contend that what they are doing now is gaslighting Tasmanians. For those who do not know what 'gaslighting' is, I will define it for you. Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation that seeks to sow the seeds of doubt in a targeted individual, or in members of a targeted group - in this case, the Tasmanian public - making them question their own memory and perception, using persistent denial, misdirection, contradiction and lying in attempts to destabilise the public and delegitimise the public's belief.

I will provide some examples of what this gaslighting looks like. Tasmania has the highest rates in the country of heart, stroke and vascular disease. We have record ramping and only today, the Auditor-General's report found that:

Ambulance ramping across Tasmania's four hospitals has increased significantly between 2012-13 and 2017-18 by around 149 per cent, far exceeding the 20 per cent growth in ambulance presentation to EDs over the same period.

The RHH was significantly bed-blocked for almost 93 per cent of the time between June 2018 and January 2019, with patient safety severely and routinely compromised almost once every four days on average. The LGH similarly spent more than 70 per cent of the time during this period at the highest possible level of escalation and in a state of almost constant 'gridlock'.

Patients are increasingly waiting longer in EDs for treatment with the THS's performance against timeliness KPIs deteriorating markedly over the last five years due to worsening performance at the RHH and the LGH.

The rate of emergency department adverse events significantly grew between 2015 and 2018 by around 60 per cent, with most events occurring in the RHH and the LGH.

Yet despite those damning findings from our own Auditor-General, we have continuing rhetoric from the Government. Despite this continuing structural underfunding of health, proven by numerous reports, we have a budget that is actually funding 3048 fewer elective surgeries. What do we hear the minister saying? 'Record funding', and if it is not that, it is Labor's fault, obviously. This is spin. I wish I had a bit more time to do the calculations, but the minister spoke of when

coming into government the Health budget was \$1.5 billion and now we are seeing record funding across the forward Estimates.

It would be an outrage if there was not record funding across the forward Estimates because that is what forward Estimates do. They have to take into account inflation, so there will always be inflation and that cumulative effect over four years will always be record spending. The minister talked about how the funding has gone from 1.5 per cent to 1.98 per cent. He must not be aware of what is called cumulative inflation. If you have inflation, the next year you have inflation on the original, plus inflation on the inflation, and so on. It is like compound interest.

On the back-of-an-envelope calculation I have worked it out that at 8 per cent you go from \$1.5 billion to \$1.98 billion in five years. That is cumulative inflation. If Health inflation is running at 8 per cent, you go from \$1.5 billion to \$1.575 billion, \$1.701 billion, \$1.837 billion and \$1.98 billion over that five-year period. That is what cumulative inflation does.

I am not exactly sure what the Health inflation figure is running at but we know that in Tasmania there are increased presentations and we have to take that into account with increased funding. So going from 1.5 to 1.98 over that period is not an outrageous increase. It is only what Health inflation should deliver. One of the key questions is how much does Health need, given the findings of our Auditor-General, the talk of ramping and deteriorating outcomes for patients? We see ramping at outrageous levels and so on. The minister claiming day after day that record funding has been delivered and that everything is on the improve is exactly what I have been saying; it is gaslighting.

I now turn to infrastructure. We heard today the Treasurer asked to name one new project that had not been announced previous to the Budget and he could not name one. All he did was continually relaunch the things he announced previously. He could not think of one more project. The Budget is chock-a-block full of federal funding, and that is a good thing. However, what we have seen in this so-called record infrastructure budget and the reason for going into \$1.1 billion of debt is no new projects. We see projects delayed, reprofiled and, in some instances, completely missing. That includes broken election promises.

Once again, in this Budget, like last year's budget, we see the infrastructure funding kicked down the road profiled into the later years. We have had delays in things like the Burnie court complex and the Penguin school and once again the Bridgewater bridge - 2024, anybody? I have spoken a number of times in the House that it was supposed to be rolled out in 2018-19 and now we are out to 2024. No doubt there will be a press conference sometime down the track once again relaunching it and we will have some silver shovels where we will see Government members turning a sod. But the vast majority of this funding is in the out-years. The Bridgewater bridge has been discussed to be delivered in 2024, beyond the next election. We have heard about this time and time again. It is just this Government continually kicking the can down the road at the same time crowing about record funding.

Let us not mention the four-lane Midland Highway. That is proof positive that this Government cannot be trusted on infrastructure funding. We have seen recently that a couple of new areas of the highway upgrades have been opened but what we see is not four lanes but three lanes with a wire rope and significant distances of two lanes. Once you get out of Epping Forest we do not see four lanes; we see two lanes with a wire rope in between for at least 1.5 kilometres. I have not measured it but it is well over a kilometre. We see this now as these new areas are being opened up. We are not getting a four-lane Midland Highway although we saw the Premier on a massive

billboard promising to deliver a four-lane Midland Highway. We are seeing a two-lane Midland Highway or three lanes at best. We are also seeing areas that were four lanes being reduced to three lanes.

This is proof positive that this Government cannot be trusted when it comes to delivering infrastructure projects. They say they are investing in growth and will accelerate the infrastructure spending but the record is horrendous. They cannot name one new project from this Budget, they are not delivering and everything is kicked down the road.

When we look at housing, what do you do when you have a homelessness crisis with people sleeping on the streets, people who cannot find rental accommodation, even people with middle-class incomes? If they lose a property sold to Airbnb we see they cannot get into housing. What do you do? You promise 900 homes. When the Government realises there is no way they can possibly deliver it, what do they do? They change the target and start calling it lots and homes, not lots of homes. If you renovate a kitchen, let us call it a new house. Last week in question time we had discussions about a young mother with four kids about to become homeless. What did the minister say? Call the 1800 number. Shame.

Now we have \$1.1 billion in debt. We are going to be seeing mounting interest and the Government is definitely spending more than they are earning. On top of that they are hitting up government business enterprises, which my colleague, the member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, highlighted. They are hitting up government business enterprises for more and more cash and yet we have \$1.1 billion of net debt. The reason it has only peaked at \$1.1 billion is because \$450 million has to be found in undefined savings.

We hear talk of cutting the cloth and making tough decisions but the Treasurer has not outlined any of those decisions. He has punted that one off to the departments and insisted that they find \$450 million in undefined savings with no clarity on how that is going to be achieved. We hear some rhetoric that frontline services are not going to be impacted. What is frontline and what is backline? Do we have a definition on that? What happens to backline cuts? Do they impact the frontline? This is simply pretending that job cuts do not hurt anyone or any service. We know that is far from the truth. What this is is cuts, cuts, cuts.

Then we have public service pay that is not budgeted for. There is no increase above 2 per cent budgeted in this Budget. Apparently public servants do not deserve a pay rise that keeps pace with the cost of living. What we have from this Government is an austerity wages policy, and no wonder retail sales are down. Imagine being a public servant, not knowing if you are going to get a wage increase that keeps pace with the cost of living and a negotiation that has dragged on now for 12 months. Yet we come into this place and we hear the Treasurer again trying to gaslight the Tasmanian community by saying that the average income of a public servant was something like \$110 000. This was an outrageous comment that has not been retracted. We know that is not the truth.

Furthermore, in coming years the difference between mainland and Tasmanian wages will increase and there will have to be a catch-up at some stage or recruitment of any employee in demand around the country will be difficult. This will lead to a massive brain drain. Why would you want to stay in Tasmania if you are earning significantly less than your counterparts on the mainland? That pull to the mainland will become inevitable.

I move on to TasWater. I welcome our leader, Rebecca White's, comments today backing in our \$5 million election policy to provide \$5 million in grants to small businesses and community groups. What we know is that this is massively impacting small business and sporting clubs. We have seen instances where we have businesses with buyers but they cannot sell a noncompliant business. I have already spoken in this place about how Ulverstone, renowned for its café culture, is down three cafés now purely because of this issue. The effect on mum and dad businesses is so serious that the chair of TasWater recently wrote to Labor and the Government asking for help to find an urgent solution. It is important, and this is from Dr Stephen Gumley:

It is important to note that the expense of complying with environmental regulations also jeopardises the viability of many smaller commercial operations like local bakeries, cafés and hairdressers which, though small, collectively employ just as many people in Tasmania, especially in our regions.

No doubt he wrote this because he has been asking for assistance from the Treasurer for years and getting no response and now the Government is actually a shareholder, we see no responsibility taken in this budget. We are committed to our election promise of \$5 million, which is also the figure that TasWater has highlighted would help fix the problem. The Treasurer obviously knows about this because way back in August 2017, he said:

TasWater's single-minded trade waste policy is having a devastating impact on hundreds of businesses around the State. In fact, I've been told it has actually contributed to businesses shutting down. It's absolutely ridiculous and it needs to be stopped now before it destroys more Tasmanian businesses.

Well, it is destroying more Tasmanian businesses and this Treasurer has done nothing about it. He is now a shareholder in TasWater. He has the opportunity in his budget to fix the problem and yet he has not.

I move on to agricultural training. Training of existing and new employees in the agricultural industry has always been a priority, or should always be a priority, especially in the current workplace and health and safety environment. It has now become mandatory prior to any new employee undertaking work on a number of agricultural enterprises. That is why I am definitely backing in our leader's announcement today of the ag skills kickstarter program. This is training that could be undertaken by any individual wanting to gain employment in the agricultural sector. More importantly, it would form a training pathway for current or new employees to upskill, to achieve the standard required for farm work.

What we are actually talking about here is almost like a White Card process where skills that a worker should have before undertaking any agricultural job would be things like first aid, manual handling, ChemCert certification, tractor certification, tractor operation, forklift operation, ATV four-wheel drive operation, chainsaw operation and, workshop safety and awareness, which would have to be a new course. This would be a package put together that would allow individuals who have undertaken it to walk on to any agricultural property and present the skills. Straight away they could start driving a tractor, they could start spraying crops or grass, they could undertake manual handling, operate a forklift, operate an ATV, cut down trees, do repairs, and so on.

This would also provide a career pathway because what we have at the moment is a lot of backpackers being employed, especially in the horticulture industry. If this training was provided we could have people starting with basic jobs and rapidly becoming managers. We are seeing this

all the time especially in the fruit and berry sectors. One thing that has come through loud and clear from our industry advisory councils is the lack of skills and the lack of employees with the appropriate skills. This ag skills kickstarter would be part of the solution to providing the skills that people need to increase employment. By providing farms, farmers and agricultural operations with skilled employees, if they have this kickstarter program under their belt they could walk on and take up any job on any farm, which would be very good.

In the Budget we welcome the Government adopting our ATV policy, or our quad bike policy. Only a few weeks ago, we had the unfortunate death of a child on a quad bike which highlighted that the Government has not taken any action since a 2016 coroner's report. No action. When there is a problem and something that we highlight, the first place that the Government looks for answers is Labor's policy. We saw this right before the last election and we are seeing it again. It is no wonder that the Government is always calling for Labor to produce policies because they do not really have any original ideas of their own and the first thing that they look for is Labor's ideas.

If that is the case I would like to reiterate another Labor idea and that is around the centre of excellence. The question I have - and in the Budget it is there - is this \$5 million funding for the Freer Farm? I just question how is giving TasTAFE \$5 million actually creating a centre of excellence? How do you define a centre of excellence? What concerns me most about this commitment is the huge opportunity missed to establish a real centre of excellence in agriculture.

We saw during the election campaign that the Government adopted our language of a centre of excellence, but in doing so it only talks about spending this money at the TasTAFE Freer Farm in Burnie. The centre of excellence we launched during the election campaign was a true whole of sector approach at a similar level to the Menzies Institute for Medical Research or the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies in Hobart. The north-west is ideally placed for a real centre of excellence in agriculture with the concentration of fertile soils, abundant water resources and value-adding capability with packaging and processing facilities like Harvest Moon, Simplot, Field Fresh and Botanical Resources, to name a few.

The north-west also has a large number of agricultural professionals working in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and service industries like Serve-Ag, Agronico, Peracto, to name a few. The north-west also has a university campus in Burnie which hosts TIA and a vegetable research facility at Forth, the dairy research facility at Elliott and the TasTAFE farm in Burnie. The only thing holding back something truly world class is that all the research, education, and innovation potential is split across multiple sites.

The centre of excellence we launched during the election campaign was a true whole-of-sector approach at a similar level to those other institutes at the university and I would argue that this is a far more visionary approach than simply handing \$5 million to the Freer Farm. This money could be better used combining all those facilities to one central site and this approach would have a number of benefits. Firstly, agricultural research would be streamlined, reducing equipment duplication across sites and allowing research into entry to industry level issues like irrigation to be more easily managed. Bringing vocational education and TAFE to the university together would allow the seamless integration of certificate level courses with university associate degrees in agriculture and so on.

The Government has not clarified at all what they mean by a centre of excellence. We would argue that our true centre of excellence would be where a student could study Certificate II, III or IV or indeed our kickstarter program and then move into a diploma and associate degree, et cetera,

without having to go anywhere else. This combined facility would also be ideally placed to run short courses for farmers as well host masters and PhD students. Furthermore, university agriculture graduates could get all the practical qualifications that they should graduate with as outlined in our kickstarter program including tractor driving, ChemCert, ATV and chainsaw, et cetera. It would work well with our kickstarter.

I would take it even further by working with people like Fermentas to host a fermentation facility to experiment with potential export products. I argue that the Government should be working with the CSIRO to host their proposed semi-commercial microwave-assisted thermal stabilisation, or MATS, technology, at the same site and also providing semi-commercial processing equipment so small start-up businesses could hire the equipment with new vegetable or dairy products without having to build a whole factory. That is a true centre of excellence which be a paddock-to-plate research and testing facility for new innovative products and processes. For example, you could breed and grow your own experimental cabbage variety, ferment it, package it and host investors to try it, all at one facility. That is what a true centre of excellence is and it is all within reach if our current Liberal Government decides to make it a priority.

Moving on to mining and drilling incentives, we have seen a number of glossy brochures and I have highlighted some of the points of the brochures in the past. It is getting quite difficult to keep up with the brochures because they keep getting published and the printers must be doing really well. Building your Future glossy target number 16 said that mining drilling incentives would provide a 50 per cent increase in new mining ventures over five years. In the last budget there was a drilling incentive program. The Building your Future second year agenda glossy said that this initiative would result in a 60 per cent increase in greenfield drilling over four years, but what is the actual result? Over the last 12 months there has been a 21.9 per cent decline in the value of mineral exploration. You need increases in exploration to drive operations, because we know that mining companies have to be able to prove mineral resources before they can go to market. What this will end up with is royalty downgrades and indeed we are seeing that in the Budget. Over the forward Estimates the royalties are declining, not increasing.

In Police, Fire and Emergency Management I welcome the \$1.25 million for upgrades to police housing. The people I know in the force have spoken to me about the poor quality of houses, especially on the west coast, and that impacts on them, especially when they have small children and a cold, mouldy house; that is not somewhere you would like to be in any circumstance, let alone as a police officer in that area. The new police stations have been delayed. The first-year agenda glossy spoke of completing the rollout of body-worn cameras to frontline police officers in their first year. However, that is not happening. These body-worn police cameras are a fantastic thing, but there is no more money until the \$654 000 is allocated in 2020-21.

All the while we are seeing guns out of control in Launceston. What we need is more officers on the beat in Launceston and a strategy to target the concerns there. Once again, we are seeing no fatigue management plan. Firefighters need new equipment and there is new equipment in the Budget. Our firefighters need new equipment, and it is budgeted for, but we need the Government to actually spend the money. Last year there was a budget for new equipment and it was not purchased, so we need the Government to actually spend the money.

Firefighters also need a new insurer. We did not see that in this Budget. Allianz is not an appropriate insurer and I have spoken about that a number of times. The way the insurer has treated people like Rob Broost is disgraceful.

In conclusion, what do we see from the Government? We see glossy brochures, talking spin, calling their glossy brochures strategic plans, action plans, action agendas, visionary targets, and aspirational targets. This does not make up for a lack of action. It is part of their long-term gaslighting of the Tasmanian public. The Treasurer boasting that the Government is a good financial manager is undermined by \$1.1 billion of net debt and people will increasingly be asking questions.

Time expired.

[5.04 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I could correct the record but there would be so much to correct. I will focus on my portfolios hopefully without interjection, given that members have resisted the temptation of interjecting throughout Dr Broad's contribution, which had a lot of misrepresentations. I am sure it will all be clarified next week at Estimates.

I rise to make my budget reply specifically in relation to my portfolios of Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Corrections, Environment, Arts and Racing, and as a member for Clark, because there are a number of matters that I hope I have time to run through in relation to local initiatives. I am particularly proud of some of these local initiatives that will benefit my electorate that I have both lobbied for and helped develop and ensure are funded.

It is an honour to be a minister in the Hodgman Liberal Government and play my part in the development of the 2019-20 state Budget. This is a budget that will continue to grow our economy and create jobs so we can continue to invest in essential services and protect our way of life. It maintains the momentum in Tasmania and invests for growth right across our state. That is what is needed and that is what this Budget delivers.

Our Government is committed to ensuring our court system is both efficient and effective. There is no silver bullet solution to addressing the courts increasing workload but the \$35 million in new funding provided through this Budget will contribute significantly. I am proud that I have been able to secure this \$35 million package for our justice system but emphasise that just as important is the procedural and technological reform we are planning and implementing across the courts and corrective services system.

In particular, the Government has been undertaking consultations on the Magistrates Court (criminal and general division) bill for several years. It is a significant body of work developed in consultation with major stakeholders via a steering committee. Importantly, this draft bill will update and modernise the processes and procedures for the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court, known as the Court of Petty Sessions, currently provided by the Justices Act 1959. As we can see, that act is well overdue for updating. It also introduces changes to jurisdictional thresholds, monetary limits in both criminal and civil jurisdictions, impacting both the Magistrates and Supreme courts.

There is funding of \$496 000 per annum provided to permanently replace a recently retired part-time magistrate and that is with a full-time magistrate, the recently appointed Magistrate Leanne Topfer, who I appreciate has been welcomed by all sides in this House. It is an appointment I was particularly proud to make. This funding will also ensure that the court will have the support staff necessary to make the best use of the magistracy's time. In addition, the Budget provides almost \$3 million for an additional magistrate to be recruited that has been specifically requested

for some time by the Chief Magistrate and I anticipate that the recruitment process for this position will commence shortly.

This funding package ensures appropriate administrative support and court security is provided to maximise the efficiency of this new magistrate. I am very proud of this new initiative. It will equip the Magistrates Court to address longstanding demand pressures and reduce the court criminal back-log by hearing and finalising more cases.

Turning to Supreme Court judges, additional funding of \$1.4 million has been provided over two years to continue the appointment of a number of acting judges within the Supreme Court. They have proved very useful, not only in relation to dealing with backlog pressures but in times where we might have a conflict of interest. We have a selection of judges in that regard. In addition, funding of \$1.1 million has been provided from 2021-22 to appoint a seventh judge in the Supreme Court. As members would be aware, there have been calls for a seventh judge for some time. Indeed, it goes back to the 1990s, as I was reminded by the Law Society the other day.

It is also important to recognise that additional judicial resources will have a flow-on effect to other areas. That goes without saying. In recognition of this, additional funding for the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is being provided for.

Justice Connect is also a key part of the Government's strategy in the justice system. It will modernise, enhance efficiencies and improve policy outcomes for a better information sharing, access to timely and trusted information and integration across government with relative critical ICT systems, so basically sharing information between agencies, and statistics and data collection.

An allocation of \$4.5 million in the 2019-20 year has been made within the Digital Transformation Priority Expenditure Program within Finance-General to finalise detailed requirements and proceed to the award of a tender by early 2020 with design and development to commence in mid-2020.

The Justice Connect program is expected to be rolled out in stages, both in criminal and civil divisions over the forward Estimates with a total funding allocation of \$25.9 million for the program. It is a significant investment. It will create enormous efficiencies within our court system and, as I said, across agencies, but particularly in relation to our court and corrective services.

Turning to Legal Assistance Services, this Government is a strong supporter of the legal assistance sector, as evidenced by the record state funding we have delivered in previous budgets. In this Budget, the Government continues to offset the reduction in Commonwealth funding under the current National Partnership Agreement - NPA - providing funding of \$1.26 million for 2019-20. This brings to \$3.7 million the total amount of funding the Hodgman Liberal Government has provided since 2017, fully covering the shortfall in Commonwealth funding under the current NPA. The Government recognises and values the important role that legal assistance organisations play in our community. The funding allocated will allow the community legal centres and the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania to continue delivering important legal advice and assistance to the most vulnerable members of our community whilst there has been some certainty around the NPA.

Additional funding, in the order of \$245 000 per annum, has been provided in 2019-20, and over the forward Estimates, to support the Ombudsman's office and, specifically, the right to information work. I understand the funding will be used to recruit a new principal officer and new

investigation review officer. I imagine that resource has been very well received. It has been requested for some time and, again, I am proud to be able to deliver on that. The additional positions are expected to help in continuing to deal with the new Right to Information Act, review matters in a timely fashion, finalising the backlog of such matters, working with agencies to provide specialised RTI experience through voluntary placements within the office - something I know the Ombudsman would like to do and which has my full support - and coordinating RTI training, particularly in smaller public authorities.

Turning to my Corrections portfolio, the 2019-20 state Budget's record infrastructure spend includes major investments in new prison infrastructure as part of the Hodgman Liberal Government plan to keep Tasmanians safe. As I previously stated, there has been a national trend of an increased number of prisoners. Tasmania has not been immune from this trend so it has been critical to ensure that the Tasmania Prison Service is provided with additional resources. The Budget includes \$16.8 million in new funding for Corrections for a range of initiatives and to ensure the TPS can cater for demand and continue to recruit new correctional officers, in addition to the 107 already employed by our Government since 2016.

I was privileged to attend the recent graduation for the newest wave of correctional officer recruits. They come from a range of diverse backgrounds and demographics in terms of age and experience. It was wonderful to see. I have been advised by the Director of the Tasmanian Prison Service that these graduates have settled in well to their new roles at the Risdon Prison Complex in particular and, indeed, across the state.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has embarked on a massive prison infrastructure agenda in addition to the staffing funding injection. Included in the Budget is funding for the first stage of the \$270 million new northern prison. As members would or should be aware, the expression of interest process to determine a site for the new prison has now been completed with public consultation on a new site due to begin this year. An announcement on the final location is anticipated once the due diligence process is complete. It is essential that that due diligence occurs.

This year's Budget funds the first four years of work on this important project. This new northern prison is in addition to the new \$70 million southern remand centre at the Risdon Prison site. Early works have already begun on the site adjacent to existing facilities at the Risdon Prison complex but it is a stand-alone centre. It will be designed to house 140 remandees and is expected to be completed over three years. It is expected that more than 130 jobs will be created during the construction of this project, with 50 jobs ongoing in correctional services.

I mentioned the jobs in the building construction industry but as a result of our infrastructure spend it is having an impact on increasing the available jobs in this industry. From my portfolio of Corrections, 50 ongoing jobs is welcome and needed by the service. Importantly, these projects will not only meet future capacity needs within the Tasmanian Prison Service but it will maintain the momentum and create new jobs in our building and construction sector.

One thing that I want to address, which was raised in Dr Broad's contribution, is the Burnie Court complex and the delays that occurred there. There is nothing untoward in any delays there.

Dr Broad - I didn't say it was untoward.

Ms ARCHER - I am just stating the facts for you, Dr Broad.

Dr Broad - I highlighted that it's been delayed.

Ms ARCHER - No need to react. I am just getting some facts on the record.

This Government is committed to ensuring that Tasmanians have access to an effective and efficient justice system. As part of this commitment, as the House knows we said we would invest up to \$15 million to substantially upgrade the Burnie Supreme and Magistrates Court. This significant capital investment recognises the importance of ensuring regional Tasmania has adequate public infrastructure and access to justice. Our 2019-20 Budget reflects an achievable timeline due to the planning required for the outcome we need and to keep the court in operation. We do not want to have to close that court because it would mean that many on the north-west coast would not have access to justice.

In March this year, GHD was awarded the contract for this project. Their early work has indicated the need to spend additional time planning on how we achieve the upgrade whilst still making sure we deliver the separate court services through the period of construction. From that perspective, that is the only reason for any timeline that has been reflected in the Budget that maybe misinterpreted by others in this House.

Turning to my Environment Portfolio, our Government is committed to safeguarding our natural environment and preserving what makes our state so special. Our Budget is all about maintaining momentum and investing for growth across the Environment portfolio which, of course, incorporates the important challenge of climate change. I made a significant contribution in relation to climate change last week but I will make some further comments shortly.

We are providing Tasmania's only environmental and analytical testing laboratory, Analytical Services Tasmania, with additional funding of \$1 million in the 2019-20 Budget. This new funding will allow the laboratory to continue to support the important agriculture, aquaculture and mining industries, the public, local and state governments and our precious environment, most importantly. AST specialises in chemical and algal laboratory services and provides essential services to the Director of the Environmental Protection Authority and the Director of Public Health. This includes internationally recognised testing and monitoring of water quality, soils and biological material such as fish and shellfish. This multimillion-dollar funding boost builds on our Government's plan to support tourism and exports in the state while protecting our natural environment.

The Government will also continue to provide additional funding to the Save the Tasmanian Devil and orange-bellied parrot programs to help with their conservation efforts. I look forward to officially opening the brand new orange-bellied parrot captive breeding facility at Five Mile Beach in coming weeks and have released some public information about the success of that program to date, which I am very happy to fill the House in on next week during budget Estimates. I do not have time if I want to get through all my portfolios now but it is exciting to see the numbers of orange-bellied parrots coming out of that facility.

I should also mention another Hodgman Liberal Government initiative, which is the rolling out of a new litter application to help with reporting of litter hot-spots. This, together with implementing a commitment to use offenders under community corrections orders to help clean up rubbish on public land, will contribute to Tasmania reducing its litter and also help in our corrections space - the beauty of being minister for both. In March, Keep Australia Beautiful released the 2017-18 National Litter Index Survey which showed an impressive decrease of littering in Tasmania. The survey found a decrease of 6.4 per cent in litter items and 6.2 per cent in volumes

of litter compared to the previous year across most litter categories. There is always more to do in keeping Tasmania free of litter and I will have more to say on this in the near future, including when I release our draft waste action plan, as promised, very soon.

We acknowledge also - as I had done in this House as recently as last week - that climate change is a serious and urgent challenge that requires immediate and practical action from local, national and international governments. We are focused on delivering our nation-leading Climate Action 21, Tasmania's climate action plan 2017-21, through a series of initiatives and actions including supporting the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, funding to undertake a business resource efficiency program that assists small and medium-sized businesses to reduce their emissions and operating costs, funding for the PowerSmart home and business programs which provide financial support to conduct energy audits for small and medium-sized businesses, and helping lower-income households reduce their energy costs through support and education, energy efficiency audits and low-cost upgrades.

In addition, Tasmania's ongoing investment in renewable energy and the carbon sink in our forest means the state is very well prepared for the transition to a low-carbon economy and we are the only jurisdiction in Australia to have already reached zero net emissions based on 2016 data. Our Government is also investing up to \$30 million to take the first phase of Battery of the Nation to investment stage by 2022 and with support from the federal government an additional \$56 million has been committed to the development of the second interconnector between Tasmania and the mainland.

With major initiatives such as these Tasmania is well placed to help lead Australia through its challenging transition to cleaner sources of energy. In relation to the Greens' criticism of our Climate Action 21 and the fact that it is a plan for a period of time, it is not uncommon for us to attach funding to a plan and when a plan expires we will then fund any new plans that come after that in the usual budget bidding process, so you continue to misrepresent that we would just ignore the issue of climate change post 2021 - that is, quite frankly, ludicrous.

Under my Racing portfolio our Government is continuing to restore the racing industry's sustainability and the many jobs it supports, particularly in regional Tasmania. It is estimated the racing industry injects around \$103 million a year into the Tasmanian economy, while over 5000 Tasmanians are either employed or participate in the industry as trainers, breeders, jockeys, owners, strappers and in many other roles. I am looking forward to continuing the strong gains that have been made over the past five years since we came to office.

This Budget delivers for Tasmania's racing industry with a total of \$31.4 million to be invested into the industry to ensure that our Government's plan for sustainable growth can continue to be delivered. The funding in the 2019-20 Budget means that investment in this important industry has grown by more than \$2 million since we came to government. Together with the strong financial position of TasRacing, it will allow for growth in prize money, enhanced integrity services, an increased focus on animal welfare and major improvements to racing infrastructure. This includes the \$12.5 million redevelopment of the Elwick thoroughbred track which is well underway and expected to deliver a world-class service in time for the 2020 Hobart Cup, which is not that far away.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to ensuring that the momentum in the industry continues and this year's Budget also includes ongoing funding of \$350 000 to support thoroughbred and harness breeding programs, as per our commitment. This will continue to assist in boosting

incentives to increase breeding of racehorses in Tasmania, fostering jobs in the breeding industry and increasing Tasmania's racing presence on the national stage. There has been no better advertisement for our thoroughbred racing and breeding sector than the Adam Trinder-trained and Tasmanian-bred filly, Mystical Journey. She is a product of Carrick's Armidale Stud and in recent months has won the prestigious Australian Guineas, while also taking out the inaugural \$5 million All Star Mile at Flemington. What an exciting race that was. She is now favourite to follow in Winx's footsteps and win the Cox Plate in October, so we all look forward to that race.

The Government also remains fully committed to improving animal welfare outcomes. We are providing an additional \$30 000 commitment to Brightside Animal Sanctuary to assist in rehoming greyhounds. I take this opportunity to commend Brightside on its tremendous work in this area to date. That funding is on top of last year's \$100 000 commitment to expand the Greyhound Adoption Program, a key welfare initiative of the greyhound racing industry that facilitates the rehoming of retired greyhounds and promotes greyhound ownership in the community. TasRacing is now in the process of identifying a suitable greyhound rehoming facility, as the proposed option to build a facility at Pontville would require a further unacceptable time delay to complete and become operational. I look forward to this progressing well, particularly with our new CEO of TasRacing on board, as they work towards rehoming as many greyhounds as possible across Tasmania.

Turning to my Arts portfolio, this year's Budget is about maintaining the momentum and investing for growth. This is critical for our cultural and creative industries, which have experienced a surge in activity in recent years. Our Government is a strong supporter of Tasmania's cultural and creative industries and this is reflected in the 2019-20 state Budget. This year's Budget secures our continued support for the arts, with a total expenditure across the portfolio of \$27.9 million. This often gets missed when people do not look at the different sectors, so I will go through them. This includes more than \$15 million for the arts, almost \$10 million for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, which is a significant contribution, and more than \$2 million for the screen sector.

Building on the sector's significant momentum of recent years, as well as investing for further growth, the state Budget includes \$1 million for the highly interactive children's exhibition at TMAG, giving young people the opportunity to learn and explore in an exhibition built especially for them. That is coming up very soon which is very exciting. There is \$200 000 for arts organisations based in northern Tasmania to deliver high-quality arts activities that strengthens that region's arts sector as well as engage and inspire as part of the northern arts program and \$200 000 for the Government's commitment to support the new Tasmanian Theatre Fund as well as \$160 000 as part of our initiative to support the representation of Tasmanian galleries and artists at two of Australia's premier international arts fairs, the Sydney Contemporary and the Melbourne Art Fair. We are also maintaining our support to Tasmanian artists and organisations through our successful and extensive arts and cultural heritage programs.

Our thriving screen industry grows from strength to strength with the support of our \$2 million Screen Innovation Fund. I take this opportunity to mention *The Gloaming*, a Stan production by the renowned Vicki Madden, who was also responsible for writing *The Kettering Incident*. It is her latest and the biggest production to start filming here in Tasmania. *The Gloaming*, strongly supported by the Government's screen fund, is expected to spend \$7.5 million on Tasmanian goods and services, deliver many jobs and promote Tasmania internationally as a destination.

Critically, key organisations such as the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Ten Days on the Island and the Theatre Royal will also receive ongoing strong support from the Hodgman Liberal Government through this Budget. Very soon, I look forward to the reopening of the redeveloped

Theatre Royal. The Government has invested \$2.8 million in this project, which is part of UTAS's \$96 million Hedberg development. We will be reopening the Theatre Royal prior to the opening of the rest of that development.

In the few minutes I have remaining I want to run through the list in my electorate of Clark. The Budget delivers record funding - as you have heard from previous ministers and indeed the Treasurer and the Premier - for health, education and infrastructure, which means unprecedented spending on hospitals, schools, roads, housing and job-creating infrastructure projects across my electorate of Clark. This includes 250 more beds for the Royal Hobart Hospital, the \$96 million Royal Hobart Hospital stage 2 redevelopment, including expansion of the emergency department, the ICU expansion and ward upgrades; and \$5.9 million for the Glenorchy ambulance station, which I was very pleased to announce through the election campaign.

Investment in roads specific to the electorate or feeding into the electorate is the planned upgrade of the Domain Highway and Brooker Highway interchange to improve safety and reduce congestion; \$84.7 million for the urban congestion fund including tackling traffic congestion in Hobart and focus on the northern suburbs transit corridor; \$71.98 million for the Greater Hobart traffic vision, including improving traffic flow on the Southern Outlet and Macquarie and Davey streets; major funding for a much-awaited new Bridgewater bridge; investigation of the costs and benefits of a western bypass for Hobart via a tunnel or roads; planning for a new Hobart bus transit centre; and \$12.5 million for the revitalisation of Cosgrove High School. We are very proud to deliver that; it is much needed. There is \$4.73 million for the upgrade of Lansdowne Crescent Primary School, another school bursting at the seams; and \$4.45 million for an upgrade of Taroona High School, similarly bursting at the seams. Both those schools are very popular.

There is \$4 million for the Southern Support School; \$2.1 million for refurbishing the theatre at Hobart College, which we have probably all visited, and is in need of an upgrade; \$2.6 million for a new visitor centre at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens; \$3.5 million for a new child and family learning centre at Glenorchy; \$3.2 million for the Moonah youth facility; \$200 000 for sports facility upgrades at Moonah and Clarence; and \$500 000 to support the Taste of Tasmania.

Time expired.

Statement by Speaker

Standing Order 144 - Offensive Words against a Member

[5.34 p.m.]

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, I have another statement to make to the House today.

In the hyperbole of some rather heated and, quite frankly, disrespectful political debate this morning, an accusation was inferred against the member for Clark, Mr Scott Bacon. On hearing an unclarified version of *Hansard*, I was of the opinion that Mr Bacon had made an unfortunate slur against the Treasurer. It became clear to me from the rather passionate defence by Mr O'Byrne on Mr Bacon's behalf that my ruling should be reconsidered.

I have since convened a meeting between representatives of the Government and Mr O'Byrne and Mr Bacon, where we reviewed an enhanced and clarified version of the recording of *Hansard*. It is clear to me now that Mr Bacon is innocent of the claim against him.

Unfortunately, the media has published the event as a racist slur, which clearly impacts on Mr Bacon's good name. For this I wish to apologise. I also hope that the media publish and report this correction for Mr Bacon's sake.

I now consider the matter to be closed, although I will give the call to the Leader of the House for a response on behalf of the Government.

[5.35 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, without hesitation or reservation, I accept your ruling, as I did your earlier ruling. It is very clear that you have taken the correct steps to examine the record, as I requested you to do.

I do not wish to make a fuss about this in any way but simply note that it is remarkable to a number of people how the same recording listened to in different ways has led people to different conclusions through the day. I also, on that basis, simply ask that people would reflect that you could understand why some people were concerned at what might have been said this morning.

In relation to Mr O'Byrne's comments at 2.30 today, I wish to state for the record that I did not use the word in my earlier point of order, nor have I raised that word with any members of the media.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for reviewing the matter again and throughout the day. On that basis I unreservedly withdraw my point of order and state for the record that I believe Mr Bacon deserves to be cleared of the use of the word that has been used in the media. He should be believed. I regret and say that I feel for Mr Bacon in the sense that he has been connected to the use of that word in the media through the afternoon.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you very much. That brings the matter to a close.

[5.37 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I believe this Budget shows the true colours of this Government. They say it is an infrastructure budget but it does not announce any new spending on infrastructure. They say it is a health budget but it does not do anything to seriously address the root causes in the crisis in the health system that we see right now. It is apparently a budget that addresses housing while not providing a crisis response to the emergency that our current housing system is under the pressure of suffering right now and one that it requires.

I recently had the good fortune to spend a day with Salvation Army workers who work with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and also people who are returning to the community from prison. What I heard and saw that day would shock anybody. The saddest part is that it is not shocking any more. It has simply become something that is expected. I learnt that there are 30 people living permanently on the Queen's Domain in Hobart in tents. We visited bus shelters in chilly Fern Tree that people are calling permanent homes, even throughout the winter. We visited crisis accommodation providers who are turning away 300 people or more each month and they are heartbroken to be doing so. We visited facilities like Flint House that used to be an

emergency accommodation provider, somewhere people could find a bed for a night or for the short term, particularly on returning from prison or out on parole. It is now full on a permanent basis.

The initiatives in this Budget, while committing to more long-term builds of houses, do not do anything to address these people living in crisis right now. Last year at this time the Treasurer told us that we were in a golden age. At that same very time, we had people who were living in tents at the showgrounds and protesting by sleeping in tents right here on Parliament Lawns - no golden age for them. Since that time last year when we were told we were in a golden age, the situation has only become worse for the homeless people living in Tasmania, but also worse for the Government as they have clearly plunged us into \$1.1 billion in net debt.

What are those in our community who are homeless or at risk of homelessness meant to think when they see their needs are simply not a priority for this Government and the Government itself is going into debt to fund things that will not help them one bit - not tonight, not tomorrow night, not anytime in the next five years?

The Government has committed to building hundreds of houses each year but they are already failing to meet their own target. How are we meant to believe, as a community and as a parliament, when they say that they will bring money forward to build new social and affordable houses by 2020-21? Even if by some miracle they do meet these targets that have been set by the Government, what does that mean for the people who many of us have met with who are sleeping rough today, tomorrow and for the foreseeable future?

We all know that one of the greatest necessities to finding a home you can afford to rent, let alone buy, is having a secure job that pays you a decent wage and keeps up with the cost of living. Right now, Tasmania's unemployment rate is 6.7 per cent, vastly higher than the national average. When it comes to youth unemployment we far outstrip the national average at 14.3 per cent. That is quite staggering. Almost 4000 jobs have been lost since the last election and fewer women are in work. The number of people with insecure and unstable work, or who are under-employed are seeking more hours, continues to steadily rise. The number of people who are having to string together multiple part-time or casual jobs just to pay the bills is staggering.

I fear we are on the road to seeing full-time working poor in Australia. We would never once have imagined that we would potentially go down a path similar to that in the United States, where people are working full-time or working more than full-time hours, but still earning below the minimum wage, still struggling to pay their bills, still struggling to heat their houses and feed their families. It is shameful and it is not something we should ever aspire to as a state or a nation. Even those who do find themselves in employment, especially those in public sector employment in Tasmania, are being stretched further and further to unsustainable levels.

The Government has been locked in wage negotiations with public sector unions for over a year, with no result. The public sector people I speak to are leaving the service because the conditions are bad and worsening. Nurses and other health professionals are bringing forward their retirement, returning to casual pools or retraining together, to pull together, to get out of the industry and into a new one.

Correctional officers are off on unprecedented levels of sick leave and workers compensation, many with low or no prospects of returning to their substantive duties, due solely to the overcrowding in the prison population and the dangers that brings to their jobs. We are failing to recruit, let alone retain, public servants at frontline and backline jobs across the whole public sector.

Public servants I speak to are feeling unlistened to and disrespected. They are already recovering from the \$700-odd million work efficiency dividends, in other words, cuts, they had to find back in 2014-15 and 2015-16. They are recovering slowly with restructures, revamps and shells of the units that they used to work in. Now they have been hit with an extra \$450 million in efficiency dividends, in other words, cuts, that they may define within their budget. I ask, how much blood can we really expect to get out of this stone? How much more blood can we expect this financial year with an extra \$450 million in cuts announced in this Budget?

The Treasurer tells us that they are going to target more discretionary areas of agency budget first which is fair enough. Consultancies and travel will be targeted first, but agencies will not be able to go to zero in those outputs. They will still spend something on those things, so where will the rest be coming from? It can only be jobs.

We are told frontline workers have been quarantined from having to contribute to those \$450 million savings targets, but who are frontline workers? No-one will tell us. We can assume that a nurse is a frontline worker, but is a ward clerk, who supports the work of that nurse, a frontline worker? Is an administrative worker in a hospital who takes bookings for patients and schedules surgery a frontline worker? Is the payroll officer, who pays all those people's wages, a frontline worker? Without each one of these roles, the whole system falls down.

What about in law and order? We can all agree a police officer is a frontline worker, but what about an administrative worker, working in the station, who keeps it open and running? Are they a frontline worker? Are investigators who support the work of frontline police, frontline workers? Are community corrections officers, who monitor people serving community corrections orders, frontline workers? Are correctional officers, working in the prison, frontline workers? Is a roster manager in the prison, dealing daily with unfilled shifts and claims for sick leave and workers compensation leave, frontline workers?

Are clerks in the Magistrates or the Supreme courts who manage hearing dates and scheduled hearings and the movement of defendants in court, frontline workers? Without each and every one of these roles being filled, the whole system falls apart.

We can all agree a teacher is clearly a frontline worker, but what about education facility attendants who keep schools running? What about policy people in the Department of Education who work on curriculum and timetabling and school administration? Are they frontline workers? Without each one of these roles, the system falls apart.

Saying the cuts will not affect frontline workers is a furphy. No frontline worker, however you define them, can do their job effectively without each and every other one of those roles that support the work they do. This is not a budget for workers. It is not a budget for those working in the system now. It is certainly not a budget for those who are under-employed or unemployed or aspiring to work in any industry.

One of the greatest impediments to finding a secure, reliable, well-paid job is skills and training. Through Labor's Industry Advisory Councils, we have been hearing directly from those affected that there are massive skill shortages in Tasmania in a whole range of sectors across the workforce. That is why I am proud of Labor's announcement today that we will make TAFE free for students doing courses in those areas of critical skills shortages - aged care, disability care, building and construction, tourism and hospitality. These are the areas that are crying out for staff and the areas that people are desperately wanting to work in, and Labor is listening. Any responsible government

should be planning for future workforce challenges. This one is not doing that but Labor is. We will continue to consult with industry and open up places for 5000 students to get free TAFE qualifications in the key areas that will grow our economy and see more people in jobs.

One of the other main barriers to finding a job and finding an affordable home to live in is when we face poor health in ourselves or our family, or when one of us in our families and communities is living with disability. This Budget does not do the things we know would work to stem the flow of acute health need; and that is to invest in preventative health programs that will improve health early, stop people getting as sick as they otherwise would and stop people getting so sick that they need acute treatment in hospital.

People are crying out for these kinds of preventative health programs. They are the only ones that will start to improve our social and health indicators, which continue to decline while our spending on acute health treatment inevitably continues to rise. Nobody would ever suggest that limiting spending on acute health services is the answer. People who need hospital treatment should get it urgently and get it where they live. Until we start improving people's health and social indicators early through early intervention spending in Health, Education, Social Justice and the Criminal Justice System, this continuing spiralling of spending will only increase year on year.

In the meantime, even though acute health services are not being delivered on time or within national target time frames, the Government promised that 90 per cent of all elective surgery patients would receive their surgery within clinically recommended time frames by 2022. In this year's budget allocation for next year, they have funded 3000 fewer surgeries than were performed this year. The number of patients seen in clinically recommended time frames is just 64 per cent.

None of this is the fault of the medical professionals who are working in the hospital system. The people I hear from are working their guts out in a system that is stretched beyond reasonableness.

I spoke recently in this place about a midwife I talked to who is working in tight shifts with sometimes just four to five minutes to work with a breast-feeding mum to help her and her new baby learn to feed in those precious early hours and days. Her time is wasted scouring wards for equipment like a thermometer to take temperatures because there are simply not enough to go around. It is demoralising and it leads to massive worker burnout with nurses regularly working double or triple shifts. They are getting sick and tired of that pressure and the impact that it has on their clinical work. They are also actually getting physically sick and having to take sick leave at a further cost to the system simply because of how stretched their workplace is for staff and equipment.

I recently met with a woman who was admitted to the Royal Hobart Hospital with acute appendicitis. She felt like one of the lucky ones because instead of waiting for hours or days in the Emergency Room she was admitted pretty quickly and into a bed. There she sat for over a week for surgery, a week with acute appendicitis before she was finally operated on. She was pretty scared and said she was drugged with strong painkillers just to keep her comfortable. That is hardly the system we expect in a developed country like ours.

We are not hitting the mark with delivering the systems and programs that would improve people's health early with early intervention and preventative health spending, but we are not even hitting the mark when it comes to delivering the acute health services people need in their darkest hours.

I know many people in Tasmania living with a disability who are living dignified and productive lives. Many have had good experiences transitioning to the NDIS but many, sadly, have not. There are still major problems with the NDIS. Federal Labor recognised this and took a full policy to the election to fix the problems that we are seeing in the early days of the NDIS. There are gaps and cracks that people will fall through in the future in the NDIS rollout but there are cracks and gaps that people are falling through right now.

Everyone recognises the NDIS was a major change to the way we deliver and fund disability services in Tasmania, one that in theory and, hopefully, in time will allow people with disability far more autonomy and control over the services they receive and from whom they receive them. But there are still so many unanswered questions. Many of the gaps and problems likely to arise out of the NDIS were identified long ago. Many were identified early in the trial phase and some even before the trial phase began.

Surveys were conducted of the Tasmanian disability sector very soon after the announcement of the NDIS, which found that there were significant parts of the Tasmanian disability sector that were not equipped to deal with the transition to a market-based system, but these questions were routinely ignored by those at the top. It is simply arrogant to ignore that those problems have been there and known about all along. Instead of facing those problems with honesty and integrity and committing to work with the sector to fix them, we are simply told, day in and day out, that things are fine and there is nothing to see here.

There has been an overwhelming attitude that the market will provide, but so much of what is delivered in the community services and disability sectors is not designed or equipped to operate well in a market-based system. As far as NDIS transition goes, I have heard multiple instances of the system failing people, of people being approved for NDIS plans that do not quite cover their needs, or people whose funds are halted when their plan is under a routine review with no idea of how to continue to meet their needs financially while the review is undertaken.

One family I heard about currently hire a wheelchair from TasEquip. Their daughter has some ability to walk unassisted but a wheelchair is required for many of her mobility needs. The system is working well for them. It has been explained to them that they will not have to return any of the equipment that they currently hire from TasEquip before they are assessed for and provided equipment through the NDIS. While this was of some comfort to them at first, they are at the moment nowhere near being assessed for an NDIS plan because they are languishing on the wait list to be assessed by the seating clinic which is underfunded and under-resourced. They have to be assessed by the seating clinic before they can apply for an NDIS assessment.

Even when she does get her appointment for her daughter with the seating clinic and they proceed to NDIS assessment, her greatest fear is that she will not be assessed as eligible for a wheelchair. What then? We know TasEquip will not be around anymore to help them in the way they do now and at a cost of several thousands of dollars the family cannot afford to buy a wheelchair. She also explained that part of what has worked very well for her with TasEquip is that as her daughter grows she is able to rent a new wheelchair that has been used by another child but is suitable for the age and size that her child is at the time. Buying a wheelchair, I am told, costs several thousands of dollars, and once a child outgrows that wheelchair the family is up for that cost once over.

Her greatest fear at the moment is waiting for an appointment at the seating clinic to have her daughter assessed to know whether she will be able to then go on for assessment with the NDIS,

and even once that occurs she is fearful that she may not be assessed as eligible for a wheelchair and then they really will be in a dire situation.

I have also heard stories about people's NDIS plans being scheduled for routine review to assess whether they need to diminish when they have permanent needs, such as people who are amputees or people with Down syndrome. It is quite galling to know that a medical model is being applied to assessing long-term and permanent disability needs for people whose needs may increase but are unlikely to decrease over their lifetime. Not only is it a little farcical, it is also really demoralising and quite disrespectful to those individuals to have to continually prove their needs for disability support. They are unlikely to diminish because they have permanent disabilities, when what they really want to be doing is just getting on with their lives.

However, even more worrying is the fact that the minister responsible for the NDIS in Tasmania does not understand that even if someone is assessed as being eligible for NDIS and receives services, there are in fact over 90 000 Tasmanians who will not be eligible for NDIS funding, and yet still right now receive, and need to continue to receive, services from currently block-funded Tasmanian community sector organisations.

The minister explained recently in question time that ILC grants are available for these organisations to apply for, as if this will mean that they will simply be able to keep the doors open and continue with their work, but this is a drastic misrepresentation of the intention and operation of the ILC grants. These grants are project based, are time limited and do not provide core organisational funding; in other words, the overhead funding to keep your organisation running, paying staff, paying your rent, paying for light and power and your insurance costs. They are also nationally competitive, and there is no guarantee of success once an organisation has applied.

It is extremely worrying to know that the minister will tell us in question time that these organisations will be fine and all they need to do is apply for ILC grants. The fact is NDIS eligibility criteria are necessarily tight and will fund people aged seven to 65 with funding and support for permanent and significant disabilities. Even in reading out those eligibility criteria, we can see that there will be major gaps in areas like episodic illnesses, people over 65, and advocacy support for individuals, let alone systemic advocacy that many organisations provide that has a direct positive impact on client experience and also episodic disability like some psychosocial illnesses, some cancers or less severe disabilities. The state still has an inherent responsibility to cater and listen to the needs of these people and the needs of the sector and at the moment we have a government that ignores those needs.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to the portfolios I am responsible for, I welcome the funding for a new permanent judge and a new permanent magistrate and extra funding for the DPP to address backlogs in both systems. There is also some extra one-off funding for Legal Aid and top-up funding since the Commonwealth national partnership agreement funding dropped away some years ago. That backlog has been recognised by the Government last year and this year and it is encouraging that there is going to be a new judge and a new magistrate who will inevitably have some impact on dealing with that backlog, but the Budget fails to address the systemic issues that lead to that backlog, and it is something we will cover further in Estimates next week.

Many of the backlogs are experienced in the Magistrates Court, for example, and often in the Supreme Court as well, and I give an example of Magistrate Court trials that have been set down for hearing that have to be cancelled. They could have been in the diaries of defendants, lawyers and judges for some months, but they are cancelled with short notice because the defence has not

had the ability to take instructions from their clients. The reason for that is they may have had a phone appointment booked with their client who is on remand or otherwise housed at Risdon Prison. That phone appointment was cancelled because the prison was in lockdown at that time. At the moment, during lockdown periods, prisoners are unable to access phone appointments with their legal representatives. The prison was in lockdown because there were not enough staff to shifts that day at the prison. As we can see, from that one little example, there are systemic issues at play in all portfolios of government, which simply throwing money at things does not help to resolve. There are systemic issues across health, education, law and order, the criminal justice system, and across disability.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Cancer Council of Tasmania - Unite in Yellow Gala Dinner

[6.00 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to speak with regard to the Cancer Council of Tasmania's Unite in Yellow Gala Dinner held last Saturday evening in Devonport at the new Paranapple Convention Centre, the function centre above the library. It was a terrific event and a great place to have such a function. There were many people from across the north-west and further afield at that dinner. It was great that it was well represented, too, by our Braddon colleagues with Mr Jaensch, Dr Broad and Ms Dow there, as well as a number of other local government representatives across the region.

This event was the first of its kind in four years. I recall going to a few of these events a little while ago and it is great that they have come back to the north-west coast. I commend the event coordinator for the north-west, Phil McCulloch, who said the night went wonderfully well and was a huge success. It exceeded all expectations. I commend Phil, the Cancer Council team and the members of the board who were there as well, and Penny Egan, the Executive Officer for the Cancer Council of Tasmania.

As many would be aware, the Cancer Council of Tasmania is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation that works to minimise the incidence and impact of cancer for all Tasmanians. This selfless organisation provides high quality support services not only for people diagnosed with cancer, but also their families, carers and friends. Every Cancer Council dollar raised stays in Tasmania, ensuring it supports those in our communities who will benefit the most.

There were many highlights in terms of the entertainment of the evening but the guest speaker, Michael Crossland, was a fantastic speaker. He talked about his cancer story, his survival story ever since he was a very small child. He shared what was a very heartfelt and inspiring story about how he overcame childhood cancer to achieve incredible outcomes in both his personal and professional life. The sheer tenacity that Michael has demonstrated in terms of having dreams of where he would like to be in the future and actually achieving many of his life goals with a significantly difficult situation in his ongoing health problems is quite extraordinary. Michael talked to anyone who wanted to have a chat with him. He signed his book, which is an inspiring story. If anyone gets the opportunity to listen to Michael at an event at some point in time I recommend that. It was uplifting. The range of emotions that one felt listening to Michael's story and what he has achieved out of clear adversity is quite extraordinary.

I also pay tribute to all the organisers of the event. It was great to catch up with some students from Don College. They hosted the event, served the meals, and provided some entertainment as well. They were wonderfully professional, presented extremely well, and were a credit to Don College. I hope - and I expect - that everyone would certainly understand how proud the Don College community would be of the students who did such a great job with the Cancer Council event, from John Thompson, the principal, right across the board.

My wholehearted thanks and congratulations to the Cancer Council of Tasmania, for the fabulous event that was held on Saturday and for bringing that event back to the north-west coast to allow people to contribute to such a worthy cause. Thanks also to the many sponsors, north-west based sponsors, who contributed to the evening. I will not mention them by name tonight but to the incredibly generous businesses and individuals right across the north-west coast, well done, and thank you to the Cancer Council for all the work they do right across Tasmania. I know the work that they do is very, very much appreciated by all the people who are touched by their efforts. Thank you very much.

University of Sydney Business School - Global Executive Masters MBA

[6.06 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about an event that I recently attended when I had the opportunity to speak to participants from the University of Sydney Business School and their Global Executive Masters MBA participants.

The Global Executive MBA program is arguably this country's most prestigious MBA program, providing a wide range of unique experiences from around the world in different countries and global businesses. Leadership and the ability to be self-aware and learn and lead through disruption and ambiguity are the goals of the program. Students go through real consulting projects for a who's who of Australian and overseas businesses.

This program is specifically designed for senior executives with at least 10 years' experience so it is probably undervaluing them a little to call them students. I probably should call them participants. These include people in senior leadership positions from companies like Google, the Commonwealth Bank, NBN and a who's who of Australian businesses.

My brother completed this program last year and over Christmas we talked about the program and the countries and companies that he visited. We talked about how it would be great if Australia's highest-level executives could come to Tasmania and work with a Tasmanian company as part of a module of study. Some of the companies that my brother visited during his course were extraordinary, and the alumni he worked with was incredible.

On the back of this I worked with the lecturers to identify an opportunity in Tasmania and then I worked with Tassal to organise a module for participants in Tasmania. We identified Tassal for a number of reasons. One was because this is a large Tasmanian company. It is vertically integrated going from smolt all the way through to packaged product. Now they have a wholesale business in Sydney, and have expanded into prawns. They are a company that now has an Australian reach, not just in Tasmania. It is a company that is innovative but also faces a number of challenges. This is why I thought that Tassal would be a fantastic company and make a fantastic module for these participants to investigate.

I was also provided the opportunity to discuss with participants the challenges and opportunities facing the aquaculture industry in general, including community concerns, the industry's expansion plans and regulatory challenges.

It was a fantastic event, a fantastic dinner at the Glass House off the Brooke Street Pier. Participants in this program loved Tasmania and many had taken some additional time off to holiday in Tasmania, either before or after completing the module with Tassal. For many it was their first time in Tasmania. I believe that having this level of business leaders, both current and future, in this state investigating a Tasmanian company was a great opportunity for the state and I was very proud to be able to make it happen.

Thanks must go to not only my brother, Stephen, for helping to organise but also to Professor Stephen McGuire and Professor Clinton Free from the Sydney Business School, and also to Lucy Commis, the program coordinator. A great time was had by all. It was a fantastic opportunity.

Geoff Valentine - Tribute

[6.10 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, tonight I want to talk about a family friend who has had a significant impact on my life. My level of deep respect for this man and what he has brought to the abalone industry in Tasmania needs to be recorded as he has reached his major milestone and has finally hung up his lead belt.

Indeed, on 24 May 2019, last Friday afternoon, having lived 72 years, 3 months and 10 days, Geoff Valentine, born on Valentine's Day 14 February 1947, the holder of 55 consecutive abalone dive entitlements from 1965 to 2019 inclusive, took his lead belt off at Betsy Island in Storm Bay and hung up his aqua-pro flippers for the last time.

Geoff, who paid £10 for his abalone licences in the old currency in 1965, is the last of the original pounds, shillings and pence divers. Geoff's story would fill volumes, including disasters at sea where his vessel sank beneath him, necessitating survival swims of many kilometres to the nearest shores, the first off the west coast of Cape Sorell and the others in the southern beaches of D'Entrecasteaux Channel. For nearly 25 years Geoff dived solo, without even a deckhand. The heavy lifting, the freezing water, the sheer risk and the lack of safety conditions he dived in are remarkable and not something I suggest others to try.

His most vivid and enduring recollections are every diver's dread: two encounters with *Carcharodon carcharias*, the Latin zoological name for the great white shark, which left him shaken but not stirred. To look into the pitiless eyes of one of the planet's most fearsome predators at a distance of less than a metre without the protection of a fortified shark cage is something never to be forgotten. In Geoff's words, 'nature has no sentiment'.

This is reflective of the great respect and understanding Geoff has for the ocean. He is truly at home under the water. He has spoken of the peace, the unobtrusive and the tranquillity. He has always felt very at home under the water.

Geoff's story is also that of Margaret Ward whom he first met and fell in love with, even before he began his diving career as an 18-year-old. Margaret and Geoff married on 1 February 1969.

They recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in the company of their seven children, Helen, Andre, Maria, Geoff Jnr, Michael, Jessica and Johnny, their respective partners, and their 13 grandchildren. Two of Geoff's sons, Geoffrey Jnr and Johnny, have also been professional abalone divers. Their combined time at sea encompasses over 100 years.

Throughout the abalone industry, Geoff Valentine is referred to as one of Tasmania's living legends. He is shy of public attention. He is a very private person. I feel privileged that he and his family have entrusted me with these words to read into *Hansard*. His contribution to the abalone industry is significant.

When I asked for Geoff's final comments, on reluctantly hanging up his lead belt and retiring as one of the greatest abalone divers the world will probably ever see, he simply replied the following three words 'what a ride'.

Port Arthur Lavender Farm

[6.14 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the Port Arthur Lavender Farm. The Port Arthur Lavender Farm is a thriving, family-owned farm enterprise in the picturesque south-east of Tasmania. The farm is owned by Clare and Brendan Dean who are achieving goals in the Tasmanian agricultural sector. The Port Arthur Lavender Farm is a successful example of how farm diversification can provide a different farm-based income source outside of traditional farming, building economic resilience for farming families and providing much needed employment to people in rural communities.

In 2012 Clare and Brendan adapted their business from a commercial lavender farm crop at their Pawleena farm and diversified into tourism in Port Arthur when they bought the Lemmo's restaurant building at Oakwood, which had stood empty for five years. The couple spent two years fitting out the building themselves. In October 2014, Clare and two staff members opened the doors of their Port Arthur Lavender Farm for visitors.

From humble beginnings back in 2012, the farm has been growing each year and is considered one of Tasmania's first-class visitor attractions, which attracts over 70 000 to 80 000 visitors a year. The farm retails over 50 products, which are made on site from the lavender that is distilled there each summer. Clare, whose passion is product formulation is continually inspired to create new things for their growing retail store. The onsite kitchen uses local Tasmanian produce to serve lunch and dinner in the restaurant and manufactures mouth-watering innovative lavender inspired delights in the forms of ice cream, chocolate and fudges.

Due to the success of the enterprise the Deans have increased their lavender crop at their Pawleena farm by 16 000 plants and continue each year to replace plants that have outlived their 10-year lifespan. The Deans have also been able diversify their Pawleena farm, which will this year be restocked with cattle for the first time in 10 years. The farm also yields poppies and fat lambs. Working on the good foundation they have established at the Port Arthur Lavender Farm, the Deans would like to add and improve the gardens at the farm to make them more of a showpiece by increasing the rose planting. Their aim is to have purple paddle boats on the dams for the next summer.

Through the Port Arthur Lavender Farm, the Deans are providing important employment opportunities for people living on the Tasman Peninsula, starting with two employees back in 2012. Within their first fortnight of opening Clare had to employ more staff because of the sheer volume of visitors to the farm. Within the first year of operations the staff numbers increased from 19 in the first season. Today the farm employs 26 staff during the peak season, whilst these numbers drop down to 12 over the slow season. Every year, visitor numbers are growing and the peak season gets longer.

On 20 and 23 March 2019, Clare and Brendan Dean hosted the 24th anniversary conference of the Australian Lavender Growers Association. Sixty-five delegates from all over Australia and New Zealand attended the three-day conference. During the conference the Australian Lavender Growers Association hosted an awards night to recognise the standard of excellence within their industry. First time entry to the awards, the Port Arthur Lavender Farm was awarded first place in the Dawn Baudinette Tourism Award for Excellence in Tourism in both the Agri-tourism and Retail sectors.

Through lateral thinking about how to utilise their land, Clare and Brendan have transformed their business from traditional commercial lavender cropping into a thriving agri-tourism and retail business that is providing much needed jobs in the Tasman Peninsula.

Burnie Surf Club - Annual Dinner

Tasmanian Fire Service - Saint Florian's Day Commemoration

Where? Where? Wedgie!

[6.18 p.m.]

Mrs RYLAH (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on three subjects. On Saturday night I had a terrific night at the Burnie Surf Club. Their amazing waterfront clubhouse has just gone through a transformation with a whole lot of renovations. It was their annual dinner and more than 150 people attended. It was a wall-to-wall sit-down fabulous meal. It was full of their sponsors, their members, and members of the public. It was a full house and an excellent night. I have to congratulate the Burnie Surf Club.

The surf club has undergone substantial renovations following the resolution of their dodgy lease issue with the Burnie City Council. It has been a great outcome. I congratulate not only the club but the Burnie City Council. There have been contributions from the state Government, the federal government for the grants and so on that enabled this change, with lifts and all sorts of things. It is a fancy show and a really great outcome - an amazing space.

To give you some idea of how vibrant it is, the Burnie Surf Club patrolled 3277 hours last year. It is an amazing number. I congratulate Russell Harland on winning the President's Award for his significant role in securing the grants for the club, Alison Hilder for her diligent and credibly capable work as treasurer, for Grant and Sam at Fish Frenzy for their great food on the night, Alex McKenzie for his fabulous night as master of ceremonies - if you have not seen Alex McKenzie in full flight it is worth going to somewhere where he is doing that job, it was great.

Bronze medallion winner was Madeleine West. The Senior Patrol Award went to Oliver West. The Junior Patrol Award went to Dylan Askew with 67.3 hours for this young chap in patrolling. The Encouragement Award went to Finlay Sayer with 40.5 hours of patrolling. The Ski Award to

Steve Blizzard, who gave pokes and fun at the young people and obviously a very capable surf lifesaver. Award paddler was Lachlan Cahill. The Swim Award went to Isaac Malley. The Beach Award to Connor van der Ploeg and the Boat Award to Luke Sayer - would you believe he does something outside *The Advocate*, his other world.

There were many other awards but I particularly want to comment and congratulate two winners. The Peter Bird Award went to Connor van der Ploeg. The Peter Bird Award is to foster the development of a young member and as they read out what he had done and how he has grown as a young person, it was a great thing to listen to. The Club Person of the Year - sincere congratulations to Stuart Paine, who as president was completely blindsided by this award and quite humbled to receive it. Well done to the Burnie Surf Club.

Also, recently my office attended the Tasmanian Fire Service Burnie ceremony to commemorate Saint Florian, the patron saint of firefighters, chimney sweeps and soap makers, and in honour of International Firefighters Day on 4 May. St Florian was the first known commander of one firefighting squad in the Roman Empire. He lost his life as did some of his colleagues for protecting the same humane ideals which firefighters the world over share today. In a tradition that goes back more than 150 years, many European countries celebrate St Florian's Day and their day of fire service simultaneously.

In Australia, International Firefighters Day was instituted after a proposal was emailed out across the world on 4 January 1999 after the deaths of five firefighters in tragic circumstances in a wildfire in Linton in Victoria.

The Burnie service included the reading of the names of Tasmanian fire service personnel and volunteer fire officers who have lost their lives while on duty. The formal ceremony included an official welcome by the District Officer of Arthur, Tyron Clark. The address was given by Ian Bounds, the Acting Regional Chief of the north-west; and a prayer read by David Meldrum, the District Officer, Operations. The bagpiper was Robert Cruikshank. I am told the service was respectful and moving and the Burnie Fire Office plans for this event to become an annual commemoration. I commend Tasmanian Fire Service Burnie for this event.

Finally, Where? Where? Wedgie! is a long-term project initiated by Nature Track and is their first long-term project. Where? Where? Wedgie! is focused on Tasmania's diurnal birds of prey, primarily on the endangered wedge-tailed eagle but they also include white cockatoos and corellas. Each autumn, interested persons can spend a day in the great outdoors - and the weekend was pretty terrible - eyes skyward, observing and recording the birds that are seen.

For the Where? Where? Wedgie! survey, Nature Trackers were coordinating a snapshot survey over a single weekend which was last weekend, with the idea that as many as possible make a similar effort to see an eagle or not see an eagle, as the case may be.

Whenever a species is named as being threatened, the question is asked - how many are there? The reason for this is a species population gives an indication of how close to extinction it is. Population size is a key factor when determining a species threatened status. In the case of the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, we do not actually know how many there are. The estimate is less than 1000.

Tasmania's wedge-tailed eagle hugely iconic and it would be a significant loss to Tasmania if they disappeared completely, as has been the case with the Tasmanian tiger.

I congratulate Cradle Coast NRM who have promoted and led the Where? Where? Wedgie! weekend, last weekend.

Trout Fishing in Tasmania - Government Support

World Fly-Fishing Championships 2019

[6.25 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on Tasmania's world-class wild brown trout fishery and the Hodgman Liberal Government's support for our inland anglers. As the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I am very proud to be the minister responsible for our trout fishing in Tasmania. We have a world-class trout fishery that attracts more than 26 000 licensed anglers each year, including 5000 interstate and overseas anglers. Tasmania's waters have one of the purest strains of the wild brown trout around the world that was first introduced in 1864, 155 years ago.

As many here would know, I am a keen angler and I love my fishing, but unfortunately not enough time angling in Tasmania's great lakes and rivers, but often it is in my dreams. I do enjoy getting out and about when I can, and it is a special privilege to be the minister responsible for Tasmania's inland fisheries.

I am proud of the Government's and the Budget's support for growing our world-class inland fisheries. I am proud of the fact that we have a range of initiatives that will support participation and growth in Tasmania's trout fisheries, and those initiatives include making it easier to go trout fishing. The Government has provided a \$300 000 commitment to freeze inland trout fishing licences, at the 2017-18 prices, for four years.

We have provided funding support for Anglers Alliance Tasmania and congratulations and thanks to Gary France and the organisation for what you do in promoting and supporting our trout fishery. That \$215 000 over four years goes to Anglers Alliance Tasmania, the peak body representing our trout anglers.

The Government supports marketing angling tourism. Just last year, \$30 000 was provided to the Trout Guides and Lodges Tasmania and, of course, to Anglers Alliance Tasmania, to market and promote angling tourism. The Tasmanian Trout Expo at Brumbys Creek at Cressy each year, is a fantastic weekend where you can catch that elusive \$10 000 trout; a fantastic effort by all the volunteers, and many thanks to them. I love attending each year.

The Anglers Alliance Access Program: the Government is providing \$200 000 for this year, through to 2021-22, to expand the IFS Anglers Access Program across priority lakes and rivers in the north-west, the north-east and Derwent catchments, in partnership with AAT and local angling clubs. The feedback I get from anglers that it is really appreciated, a wonderful initiative.

We are upgrading amenities at the high visitation trout waters and the Government is providing \$300 000 over two years for the IFS, in collaboration with AAT, local councils and others to build and upgrade existing and new community amenities to support those high visitation fishing locations, which will be the focus of the World Fly Fishing Championships 2019, later this year.

A month or so ago, I was at Four Springs with a mate, and the base was being laid for a new toilet facility for anglers. That is going to be really appreciated and all those facilities are expected to be open by the beginning of the season, the first Saturday in August, this year. It is terrific; it is all on track.

The trout weekend was held on 18 and 19 May at Liawenee, Great Lake. A fantastic weekend, I really enjoyed the event. Congratulations to the IFS and everyone involved in organising it. John Diggle and all of his team seemed to be up there and it was a fantastic effort. More than 3000 people attended over those two days and enjoyed the outstanding weather; a beautiful blue sky, yes, it was cold but blue-sky days, and the demonstration, the exhibits, the helicopter rides, were absolutely fantastic for all involved.

Many thanks to so many sponsors and supporters. AAT's Terry Byard was there, MAST's Lia Morris, Malcolm Crosse from the World Fly Fishing Championships organising committee, and so many others. The mums, dads and kids were enjoying fishing and checking out the annual spawning migration up the Liawenee Canal, and I had the opportunity to strip a number of trout.

At the time I put on the record then and I put on the record now my thanks to the SES and those emergency services who fought the fires in January and February 2019. It was devastating. The Great Pine Tier bushfire burnt vegetation in the catchments and at Lake Echo as well as Nineteen Lagoons, Penstock Lagoon, Little Pine Lagoon, all important fishing destinations, but the fires did have a major impact on the economy of the Central Highlands. With all the access roads closed for a number of months during that peak fishing season it was hard but I put on record my thanks for those who fought so hard to protect those areas from the fires and say thank you to the Central Highlands Council and Mayor Lou Triffett especially for her leadership. Thanks also to the Great Lake community centre and the wonderful band of volunteers that did so much.

At the trout fishing weekend we had the Tasmanian trout fishing photo competition and I had the privilege of announcing the first prize to Shaun Cooper for a photo of a beautifully marked brown trout from Lake Fergus and there were a number of prize winners that were acknowledged.

In short, many thanks to IFS for all the work and effort they did to put on that fantastic weekend. I ended up that night at the Westbury Fishing Club annual dinner and it was a really good night. A great time was had by all and it was a real privilege to hand out the awards but in an unprecedented event for me; it was on election night. I spent an hour or two with the Westbury Fishing Club patrons and it was a lot of fun.

We have the world fly-fishing championships coming up and I am so proud that Tasmania has been chosen as the venue for those championships. It has been a long time coming. The last time the world championships were held in Tasmania was 1988. Thirty countries are coming to compete, bringing an estimated 800 anglers and support crews to Tassie. The Government has provided \$100 000 support for the event and there is support and sponsors galore. It is fantastic. We are really excited and looking forward to it.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of IFS with the carp management program as well. That good work is continuing. The carp management team at the IFS has had support especially from our Government but also the federal government and many thanks to the Morrison Coalition Government over the past years. They have worked hard to eradicate European carp from lakes Sorell and Crescent and we are nearly there. The work in Lake Crescent was completed in 2007 and the lake reopened to anglers and I am pleased by the latest results which indicate there is

estimated to be less than 20 carp in Lake Sorell. The eradication effort is ongoing but there is definitely an end now in sight.

Ken Orr, a third-generation Tasmanian fly fisher, was the 2019 inductee to the Angling Hall of Fame at the trout weekend at Liawenee. Membership of the Angling Hall of Fame is the pinnacle of achievement for an individual's contribution towards the betterment of freshwater angling in Tasmania and it represents the highest level of peer recognition for this achievement. I was on the board of the Angling Hall of Fame with Ken Orr for a number of years prior to my time in the Senate. It is just fantastic. The late Noel Jetson and Ken established the Tasmanian Professional Trout Fishing Guides Association in 1981. It is now called Trout Guides and Lodges Tasmania, a wonderful organisation. His contribution over so many decades has been well recognised.

He was also successful and led the charge in banning unprocessed salmon imports into Australia and has represented Australia in many fly-fishing competitions. He runs a successful guiding business, is a member of Trout Guides and Lodges Tasmania and an active promoter of Tasmanian freshwater angling locally, interstate and overseas. I congratulate Ken on the record here in the Parliament, as I did at the weekend. It is a great achievement. Congratulations and well done. We have so much to be proud of with respect to trout fishing and our trout fishing world-class opportunities in Tasmania and I am very proud to be the minister to support and advocate for the trout fishery.

The House adjourned at 6.34 p.m.