



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Thursday 16 June 2022**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Thursday 16 June 2022**

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

### **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I welcome year 9 students from McKillop Catholic College, who are with us today.

I also welcome the Mayor of the Gold Coast City Council, Councillor Tom Tate.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Member for Braddon - Mr Rockliff**

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, I inform the House that the Premier will be absent from Question Time today as he is joining with other premiers for the Premiers Conference and also attending a meeting of the National Cabinet in Canberra.

I will be taking questions today in his absence.

### **QUESTIONS**

**Power Price Cap Legislation - Requesting Support from Government**

**Ms WHITE question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.03 a.m.]

Yesterday the Premier told Tasmanians that you were going vote against Labor's power price cap legislation. In doing so, he told Tasmanians he is going to let them suffer the massive rises that will follow from your massive broken promise - in the middle of a cost of living crisis. The former premier, Mr Gutwein, when he was treasurer, brought in a nearly identical bill in 2018. Why will you not support this one?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Government has taken a very strong and responsible position on putting downward pressure on power and energy prices in Tasmania since we were elected to office in 2014. Through the Budget - which has been warmly received around the state by Tasmanians and by business organisations - the Government is now providing \$305 million for support for people on low and fixed incomes to support them with regular bills, including electricity bills.

I welcome the question from the Leader of the Opposition, because we stand ready to provide further support in the context of some very real national challenges that are occurring right across the eastern seaboard. Look at the record if you would care to, Ms White. You were part of a Government that broke its promise. You said that you would limit power prices to 5 per cent. That was the promise by Ms Lin Thorpe on behalf of the former Labor government. In fact, you increased power prices by 65 per cent in that time. That is Labor's record.

The Liberal record is working with our energy businesses and Tasmanians to continue to do everything we can to have reliable supply -

**Ms White** - Why will you not support the bill?

**Mr FERGUSON** - and downward pressure on prices - I will come to your bill in a moment - to the point where last year, householders received a 7.11 per cent reduction in the standing offer prices for retail electricity in Tasmania. I do not remember the Labor Party welcoming that at the time. They are aware of and conscious of very significant challenges happening in the energy industry across Australia, in particular the eastern seaboard. They have produced a con, a total con, with a very hastily, and I would say error-ridden bill, cast upon the table yesterday by Mr Winter, the shadow energy minister. Much as you might like to try to polish this Mr Winter, it is a con on Tasmanians. You are offering something you cannot deliver -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Treasurer. I need to remind the House that it has been listed as an order of the day so talk about power prices generally. The bill is listed as an order of the day and therefore that debate is not to be taking place today.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was asked about the Government's position on that bill, so I will do my best in following your guidance.

The Labor Party is doing is what they tried to do on petrol prices. Who can forget that just weeks ago Mr Winter tried to move a motion through this House calling on the Government to legislate the price of fuel in Tasmania. Even the Greens had to scold Mr Winter on why that would not work. Here is the point -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You can attempt to legislate that petrol should be a dollar a litre, but if you make that law - who will sell it? Who will be able to buy it? It would lead to long fuel lines and vehicles with empty tanks.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - We have gone straight back to petrol, which is a very helpful reminder that you can promise something but you cannot deliver it. It is a con on Tasmanians. If the Labor Party's policy was put into law, it would ruin energy businesses in Tasmania and

it would send seven energy retailers to the wall. It would probably bankrupt them and they would not be able to deliver power. There would be blackouts in Tasmania.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - This is Mr Winter's mess. The Government is very attuned to the cost of living pressures on Tasmanians; we always have been. As we anticipate the independent regulator's decision on future standing offers for retail prices on electricity, we stand ready to do more.

**Members** Hear! Hear!

### **Health - Overtime Budget**

**Ms WHITE question to the TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.08 a.m.]

Information released after Budget Estimates shows you spent \$33 million on overtime in our hospitals in just the first 11 months of the financial year. In opposition, your party called overtime, which was then just a fraction of what it is now, 'a vicious and expensive cycle', which led to staff burnout, more staffing gaps and more overtime. Is it any wonder our health system is in crisis, our nurses and health workers burnt out, and our Budget drowning in debt, when \$33 million in overtime is the sort of incompetent management we get on your watch?

What is the plan to address it? Keep burning through more nurses? What are you doing to do, Treasurer?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. There is nothing more important to the Government than the safety and wellbeing of Tasmanians. One of the key elements of being able to provide a safe and healthy state is to have a strong and supportive health system.

The Government has been very deliberate to invest in health throughout our eight years in office. We do that because we understand the fundamental importance of reliable emergency services, reliable emergency departments and access to beds in our hospitals, including the infrastructure essential for those beds to be opened after those ruinous years of Labor when they closed hospital wards and shut down beds and sacked nurses. That is the history. After the 2011 Budget the Labor government sacked a nurse a day for nine months. You want to talk about burnout: you burn nurses, you burn beds and you put the padlock on the door of wards like ward 4D at the Launceston General Hospital. That is the history.

We have come into office with a strong posture on investing anew in new services. I welcome your question, Ms White, because nobody in this House wants to see our nurses or any of our health professionals under undue stress. We are investing in our workforce and providing the resources through the Budget before the House in extra staffing, support and

resources, taking health to \$11.2 billion over the Budget and forward Estimates - investment that has never before been seen in Tasmania in the health system.

It surprises me that Ms White would ask a question on a legitimate area of public policy but she has no foundation. The Leader of the Opposition has failed the basic test of an opposition to put up any policy alternatives and put them in their alternative budget.

We will accept the criticism, or the suggestion, from Ms White to continue to support our staff. We will do that. The Premier, who is also the Health minister, has a demonstrated commitment in this area. We have seen an increase of 655 paid FTE across the department - a demonstration that not only are we wanting to invest in health, but we have runs on the board and attracting extra staff so you can reduce the reliance on overtime and double shifts.

### **Aboriginal Land Council - Return of Lands in World Heritage Area**

#### **Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.12 a.m.]

In his last state of the state address, then-premier Gutwein committed the Government to receive and consider proposals for further land return. The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania immediately lodged a formal claim for the return of Crown land inside the boundary of the World Heritage Area as the kooparoona niara Aboriginal National Park. Almost a year-and-a-half and three letters later, the land council has not received a response nor any acknowledgement from your Government.

In their *Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty* report, professors Warner and McCormack recommended the return of land inside the boundary of the World Heritage Area as the kooparoona niara Aboriginal protected area. Instead, what we have is a proclamation on the table to change the tenure of those lands, mostly to low-grade reserves, seven years after the World Heritage Committee recommended they be given national park status. Your Government is ignoring UNESCO as well as the land council's claim and the truth-telling report.

Will you today show your Government is serious about the return of lands and commit yourself and the Premier to sitting down with Aboriginal Land Council to ensure those lands are returned to their rightful owners?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor, for her question. In a similar conversation we had across the Estimates table, I committed the Government to responding formally to the Aboriginal Land Council on this and a range of other matters they have written to us on. I reject the characterisation that there has been absolutely no response. The former premier met on at least one occasion, possibly two, one with me present, to talk with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania regarding their claims.

In terms of the Future Potential Production Forest Lands (FPPFL) in question and the process of returning them, we are obliged to reclassify them and assign them an appropriate reserve status under instructions, under obligations from UNESCO and the World Heritage



Council. Under normal circumstances our most urgent priority and obligation is to respond to the World Heritage Council. We have had a longstanding commitment to do that and we have run a consultation process on that. My colleague, Mrs Petrusma, is the minister responsible for carriage of that process and has been doing what we said we would do.

I am advised that our obligation to assign an appropriate reserve status to these parcels of land makes no difference at all to our ability to subsequently consider land return, management agreements or formation of different types of reserve classifications for that land. They are separate obligations which we are prepared to meet.

We have overdue time frames for the World Heritage Council obligation and we are acting on that. We have a request for consideration by the Aboriginal Land Council and we are also working through the detail of that. I am sure we will have more discussion on that.

My advice at this stage is that the particular classification of land they are referring to does not currently exist in our legislation. We would need to create it.

We are prepared to continue to work with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and other Aboriginal organisations on their priorities for land return while, in the meantime, we acquit our responsibilities to the World Heritage Council and we complete our review and amendment of the Aboriginal Land Act as well.

### **Ambulance Ramping**

#### **Ms DOW question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.16 a.m.]

Ambulance response times have blown out by 30 per cent on your Government's watch. Patients are dying waiting for help to arrive and the paramedic workforce is suffering and has terribly low morale. Last week the Premier was forced to reveal an astounding 14 400 patients spent 20 300 hours ramped in ambulances in just the first nine months of this financial year. The staffing costs associated with the unprecedented level of ambulance ramping are estimated at \$3 million a year.

In opposition, Mr Rockliff described ambulance ramping as 'out of control'. In 2014, you acknowledged the importance of reducing ramping for patients, hospital staff and our paramedics. Treasurer, ramping has increased by more than 550 per cent on your watch. If it was out of control and harming patients, staff and paramedics then, what is it now?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the deputy leader and shadow minister for health for her question on this important matter. The best thing you can do when you are faced with challenges on demand is to invest in health and ensure you have robust systems in place, bed capacity being opened, and effective into-hospital transfers so that ramping can be driven down.

The most important thing in relation to the question that the member has asked me is that we continue to invest in services so that we can reach people at their homes or workplaces in their time of need. We have a demonstrated delivery on that.

I am very pleased, and I know the member will welcome the Government's investment in additional paramedic support around Tasmania. She will welcome that the Tasmanian Liberal Government has employed an additional 343 full-time equivalents at Ambulance Tasmania since we came to office in March 2014.

Ramping is an issue in every jurisdiction in Australia. The most important thing to address ramping is bed capacity, hospital transfers - internal and between hospitals - but, vitally, ensuring that our ambulances reach people at their home, at their workplace where they have suffered a medical emergency or they need our paramedic support, that we get there in the least possible time. The best way you can address that are the investments I have already described. This will continue to be a challenge.

It is very easy for an opposition to say that they would like to see something happen but why have they not been prepared to put in an alternative costed policy? Put it on the table for Tasmanians to see that not only do they have the good idea but they are prepared to back themselves and demonstrate what that policy would look like and, importantly, how they would pay for it.

Despite the challenges, the Government is very focused on supporting and investing heavily in Ambulance Tasmania to ensure that Tasmanians can get the response they need when they need it.

### **Budget 2022-23 - Feedback**

#### **Mr WOOD question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.20 a.m.]

Can you provide an overview of the 2022-23 state Budget and how it was received? Are you aware of any alternatives?

**Mr O'Byrne** interjecting.

#### **ANSWER**

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and the support from Mr O'Byrne, who aspires to be the shadow treasurer again one day. Well may his day come because, as the national secretary of the Labor Party said yesterday, there are huge issues in Tasmanian Labor deserving of a thorough examination. Thank you, Mr O'Byrne.

I thank Mr Wood for his question on this important matter. First, I want to say what a great privilege it has been for me to be able to present a budget to this parliament to look after Tasmania's future. It is a budget that, as a government and a new leadership team -

**Ms White** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Ms White.

**Mr FERGUSON** - we have taken the deliberate decision to ensure that it is a comprehensive budget, a responsible budget and a budget that makes Tasmanians' priorities

our priorities. It showed in detail that we can lead with our hearts and our minds. It is a budget that is about strengthening Tasmania's future. We live in an incredible state and I believe it is one with an incredible future. Delivering on our vision for all Tasmanians is something that has been a priority for our new Premier and his new Treasurer. We are determined to make Tasmania a place where everybody is encouraged to be the best they can be.

**Ms White** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Leader of the Opposition. I warn you for constantly interjecting. Order, member for Lyons.

**Mr FERGUSON** - This Budget is harnessing our advantages as a state. It is creating more opportunities for Tasmania in a global environment filled with risk and disruption and we are determined to maintain a robust economy. Our strong financial position and the strength of our economy, which we have worked hard for, has enabled us to deal with the challenge of a pandemic and also continue to support our community.

The Budget invests in our future. I have already talked about the investment we are making into Health: \$11.2 billion into health services that Tasmanians need and can rely on; \$8.5 billion into that critical area, one close to my heart, Education, Skills and Training; \$538 million into Housing, part of our renewed and record \$1.5 billion commitment to 10 000 new homes, social and affordable homes for our people, for Tasmanians, over the next 10 years, including our interim targets with which we are on track.

The Budget also provides a landmark Infrastructure investment of \$5.6 billion. We have never seen an Infrastructure budget as large as this in the state. For those who would like that to include social infrastructure, I totally agree and endorse that it includes social and economic infrastructure. Business confidence is up, resulting in more jobs and investment and Treasury forecasts that above average economic growth will continue into the years ahead.

The Budget builds on the gains that we have made as a state in recent years, with strong investment in those areas that Tasmanians care about. As we have said, despite the impact of the global pandemic which has walloped every jurisdiction, we can show that we are delivering on our promise to get the Budget back on track and into operational surpluses over the forward Estimates.

The Budget was very well received by the Tasmanian community and business leaders. As I have moved around the state to every region, the feedback has been something that made us very grateful. In the days following the Budget the Premier gave a range of quotes from a range of stakeholders which endorsed the Budget. They recognised that we are acting on the cost of living, which we have talked about this morning, keeping Tasmanians safe and investing more into health and mental health, education and housing, and of course child safety, more than ever before. I welcome questions on those subjects. It has been a very positive endorsement of our plan. The question could be asked, where else would you rather live but this incredible state of Tasmania?

Mr Speaker, I was asked about any alternatives. I am able to speak of one alternative. That alternative belongs only to Ms O'Connor, the unofficial leader of the opposition, who did come forward with an alternative budget. At least they had a go.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Treasurer, could you wind up, please?

**Mr FERGUSON** - It would cut the throat of the economy but they were prepared to put their policies to an alternative budget. I cannot speak of an alternative budget from the Labor Party, which as we have heard overnight, is entrenched with issues and deserves a thorough examination for the mess they are in.

### **Dental Health - Waiting Lists**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.24 a.m.]

In the absence of the minister, Treasurer, there were 15 061 people on the waiting list for dental care as of April 2022. We know that regular dental visits can tell a lot about whether or not you may be at risk of chronic disease, including heart disease and digestion problems.

I note in the Budget that there is funding for 5350 dental appointments using graduate dental professionals. As far as I can see this is just for the next two years, with nothing for years three and four in the forward Estimates. This will still leave far too many Tasmanians languishing on the waiting list. Do you recognise that timely dental health intervention can prevent chronic health problems from becoming established in later life, thus relieving the burden on our health infrastructure and services? Do you understand that your Government's underinvestment in dental care will ultimately cost our health system more?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I welcome the question from Ms Johnston. It is a question that reflects the priorities of Tasmanians. It allows me to say that I endorse the spirit of where Ms Johnston is coming from and, in his absence, the Health minister and Premier, Mr Rockliff.

We are determined to address areas of waiting time and waiting lists, including elective surgery and in the area you have reflected, in dental care. We are continuing to address this with a range of initiatives including, as I think you alluded to, a \$5 million investment to provide an additional 20 000 appointments. This is a good thing for the Tasmanian Health Service and it is an important initiative to support Tasmanians because, as you have reflected in your question, that is a priority for the community, for Tasmanians.

I am also advised that between April 2021 and April 2022 an additional 9196 appointments have been successfully delivered. We have recently conducted a number of successful recruitment campaigns in implementing a graduate dentist and therapist program. I am also advised that it is due to that recruitment that there have been more than 1000 appointments made for general care for people on the waiting list during February and March alone. We recognise that there will be more to do in this area. That is why the Budget before the House at the moment contains a further \$1.5 million for oral health, providing for a further 5300 appointments.

To your question directly, Ms Johnston, the Government accepts that good oral health is good for your overall health and will continue to drive down those waitlists and wait times as we support Tasmanian families with the priorities that this Budget identifies.

**Royal Hobart Hospital -  
Alleged Unauthorised Release of Confidential Medical Records**

**Mr O'BYRNE question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.27 a.m.]

My question is to the Treasurer in the absence of the Minister for Health.

A constituent has raised with me deeply concerning revelations that confidential medical records of a patient who sadly passed away unexpectedly were released without authorisation by the Royal Hobart Hospital to a doctor at Gore St Medical. You may know Gore St Medical is a practice that emailed all patients urging them to attend an anti-vaccination rally last year. Dr Reinhard Hemm, who requested and received the medical records, had no personal or professional connection to the deceased and did not seek or obtain any authorisation from the individual's family to do so.

This was a clear breach of confidential medical information from one of Tasmania's public hospitals. Not only was this deeply distressing to the family involved, but it would send a chill down the spine of every Tasmanian. Although the hospital's administration has apologised and admitted wrongdoing, there seems to be no action taken against the doctor for their actions. The family contacted the Health minister's office for assistance in February this year and have yet to receive a response. I wrote to the Health minister regarding this matter last month and have not received a response either.

The family is deeply distressed. What are you doing to address the concerns and why has your Government not responded to the family's plea for assistance?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I acknowledge and thank the member for his question. That is very concerning scenario presented by the member for Franklin. I welcome the question. I am not the Health minister, so naturally I will, following question time, be in contact with the Premier's office, the Health minister's office, in relation to the specifics.

I note that you were careful not to mention the name of the patient concerned and thank you for raising it. I also note in your question that you have indicated you have contacted the Health minister's office, the Premier's office, and that you believe a response is still owing. I will take that on notice. I can also indicate that there is some level of information that I am prepared to provide to the House now, but I cannot say with certainty that it is the same case.

The Department of Health was advised of the release of medical records of a deceased patient to a general practitioner, without next of kin consent. I am advised that the circumstances surrounding inappropriate release of a medical record has been investigated, resulting in additional staff training and an update to the relevant protocols, to better detail the release of a deceased person's medical records in future. Again, I cannot confirm it is the same case as the one you presented. However, I am also advised that an apology letter has been sent to the next of kin, as well as direct contact made by telephone. I see, Mr O'Byrne, you are shaking your head, which indicates it maybe a different case.

Nonetheless, the Government is committed to ensuring the highest standards of patient confidentiality across all aspects of the Department of Health. If I have more to say about that, on behalf of the Premier and Minister for Health, I am prepared to do that, Mr O'Byrne. However, I would also advise you and the deceased's family, if they wish to take the matter further, they do have options available to them. Those options include through the Health Complaints Commissioner, which is hosted in the office of the Ombudsman, and of course, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Authority (AHPRA), if there is a view that the family may take that inappropriate or unethical actions have been taken by a GP.

### **Sanger Report - Native Forest Logging and Carbon Emissions**

#### **Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.31 a.m.]

Research released yesterday clarifies beyond doubt that protecting Tasmania's native forest is our number one climate action. That research was mocked by your Minister for Resources and backbench. Dr Jen Sanger's report shows native forest logging is Tasmania's highest carbon emitting sector. Logging and burning native forest releases more than 4.65 million tonnes of carbon every year. That is more than 2.5 times our entire transport sector. Time is running out for climate action and our children's safe future. Will you commit to reading this report? Will you ignore the climate dinosaurs in the party room? Will you and the Premier meet with Dr Sanger to learn more?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question. I am aware of recent reporting on research by Dr Jennifer Sanger, in collaboration with The Wilderness Society and the Tasmanian Climate Collective that claims our native forest logging sector is the state's highest emitting industry. I have not yet been able to go through a copy of the research report. I am advised that it has not been peer reviewed at this stage.

**Dr Woodruff** - That is right.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The researcher's claim does not reflect official emissions data -

**Dr Woodruff** - That is the point that is made.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - the State and Territory Greenhouse Gas Inventory data 2020, which shows that the land use, land use change and forestry sector, actually sequesters carbon, not emits.

**Dr Woodruff** - That is why you need to read the report.

**Mr Barnett** - Listen, listen.

**Dr Woodruff** - I am listening. This is about not net emissions -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Franklin, order.

**Dr Woodruff** - but the emissions that are coming from logging and burning -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For the seventh consecutive year, as I mentioned here yesterday, Tasmania has maintained net negative emissions in 2020. We were the only state to achieve net zero or lower emissions due to our sustainably managed forestry estate, our long-term renewable energy investments and ongoing emissions reduction in our waste sector and other sectors. The result includes the emission sources from post harvesting operations, such as regeneration burns, and emissions sinks from post-harvesting growth of different forest classes. Sustainable forestry management is part of the solution to climate change, not the opposite.

**Dr Woodruff** - Will you meet Dr Sanger and talk about all this with her?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is reinforced by the Intergovernmental on Climate Change (IPCC). The Tasmanian Government is committed to working across all sectors of our economy to continue to reduce emissions.

**Dr Woodruff** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, on relevance. Will the minister meet with Dr Sanger to discuss these issues with her face to face?

**Mr Barnett** - No.

**Ms O'Connor** - You are not the Speaker.

**Mr Barnett** - That is not a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER** - On the point of order, all I can do is instruct the minister to be relevant. I have been listening to the minister and he has been relevant to your question.

While I am talking, when you ask a question, that does not give individual members the right to constantly interject while a minister is answering. You have the MPI after this. If you wish to stay in the Chamber between now and then, I ask that the minister be heard in silence.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Tasmanian Government is committed to working across all sectors of our economy to continue to reduce emissions. We will develop emissions reduction and resilience plans for each key sector, and this will include a plan for the land use change and forestry sector.

We are committed to the long-term sustainable management of our forests for the benefit of all Tasmanians, and to meeting our 2030 net zero emissions target.

## **Wellers Inn, Burnie - Monies Spent on Upgrade**

**Ms DOW question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON.**

[10.35 a.m.]

Your Government has spent more than \$700 000 on a building you never opened as a COVID-19 case management centre at Wellers Inn in Burnie. Can you confirm Wellers Inn is owned by a Liberal Party member and is chairperson of the Liberal Braddon electorate committee? This obscene waste of taxpayer money to upgrade the hotel of a member of the Liberal Party stinks. Will you now ask the hotel owner to pay back the improvements made to this hotel - including \$63 000 for wi-fi infrastructure and \$20 000 for miscellaneous repairs - to recoup some of this wasted \$700 000?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party for her question: the Deputy Leader of a Labor Party which has completely lost its way, according to its national secretary.

**Ms Dow** - It is a reasonable question.

**Ms White** - It is a gift to one of your mates with no probity.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order. Mr Speaker, can I clarify your previous ruling to the Greens when we were interjecting during a minister's reply, and you said any interjections will lead to us being ejected from the Chamber?

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order. There are no such things as points of clarification. Please sit down. The Treasurer has the call.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It is an important question and a worthwhile response ought to be heard by members. I note that the Deputy Leader called for a Community COVID-19 Management Centre in Burnie, on the north-west coast: called for it; indeed, demanded that the then premier Mr Gutwein develop a community case management facility in her electorate because it was not fair that Burnie did not have one. That is what she said. After consideration, the Government did exactly that. I cannot tell the House who owns it. I will seek that advice. If it is a Liberal Party member -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. Deputy Opposition Leader, I warned the Greens about this. When you ask a question, that does not give you the right to constantly interject on the minister or the Treasurer when they are answering it. Please, when you ask a question, show some respect and listen in silence.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. To continue, I am advised that the Department of Health conducted the procurement in response to the Government agreeing with the Labor Party's request, or demand, that a community case management facility be opened on the north-west coast.



I will take advice on the ownership and the name of the hotel. Clearly, if it is a Liberal Party member who owns that hotel, that would be a question for the Health department. Did they do the wrong thing, Ms Dow? Is that what you are alleging? You chuck it out there with respect, they say. Well, there is not a lot of respect from the Labor Party when it comes to muck-raking and personal innuendo and slurs.

Perhaps the Labor Party wants the Government to have a policy of not ever allowing departments to do business if we find out that they are aligned to a political organisation. That is a fascinating insight into the soul of the Labor Party.

Community case management facilities are established to accommodate symptomatic COVID-19-positive patients who require a higher level of clinical supervision and support -

**Ms White** - Will they repay the money?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I will come to that - than can be provided through COVID@home and government-managed accommodation facilities but do not require hospitalisation. I am advised that the three community case management facilities that we have in place now are the Fountainside in Hobart with a 50-room capacity, the Coach House in Launceston with a 25-bed capacity and the Sunrise Motel in Devonport, which has a minimum of 12 beds. The community case management facilities have supported 469 positive cases from when the borders reopened on 15 December 2021 until 13 May 2022.

I am seeking other advice to assist the question in relation to the Burnie facility. I do not have that information in front of me but I am aware of questions that the Premier took on notice and responded in his budget Estimates committee. I am also aware that there were problems with the Burnie facility. I am aware of that, members are aware of that, and that has been transparently provided to the committee and therefore to the public.

In relation to capturing value, which I think was the last part of Ms Dow's question, and making sure that the taxpayer can get maximum value from that, I am aware that the Government is investigating options to capture as much value from that contract as possible, noting that it was not suitable as a result of some storm damage and some water ingress that compromised the usefulness of that facility, notwithstanding the fact that the Government entered into, through the Department of Health, in good faith, a contract to take over that facility for the benefit of the health of the people of Tasmania.

As to the political allegiances and the name of that hotel, I will seek that advice and provide it to you. I will say this: clearly you believe that you know the owner of that hotel is a member of the Liberal Party. I wonder what you will now do with that. Are you going to attack the owner or are you going to attack the Department of Health for entering into that procurement through proper procurement processes?

**Ms White** - How about you be transparent?

**Mr FERGUSON** - I think it has been transparent at Estimates.

## **Mining and Minerals Processing Sector - Government Support**

### **Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr BARNETT**

[10.42 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the important contributions being made by Tasmania's mining and minerals processing sector and the Government's support for this key sector?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question and his strong support for the mining and mineral processing sector. There is no greater friend of that sector in Tasmania than the majority Liberal Government. We are backing it. It is 5200 jobs across rural and regional parts of Tasmania. It is backing in Tasmania and the west coast in particular because it is host to some of the richest geology in the world. We are proud of that. We have copper, tin, zinc and gold; key metals that have been in our minds and are promoting the economic development of the west coast, north-west coast and the state. We need that because we are moving as a world into a renewable energy future and we need to be well positioned to provide those key and critical minerals necessary to power that transition.

There is good news on the export front. In the 12 months to April 2022 the industry provided a whopping \$3 billion of our \$4.67 billion in exports. That is big. That is a record. Mining and mineral processing is delivering for Tasmania. That is more than 64 per cent of that total. These figures show that Tasmania has what the world wants. We are delivering and there is more to come.

As to the contribution of the mining and mineral processing sector to our economy in terms of royalties and licence payments and fees, I can advise the House that the Tasmanian mining industry has delivered a record \$83 million in mineral royalties and over \$2 million in rentals and other fees this financial year and we are not even to 30 June. That is good news. It exceeds last years \$60.7 million figure and the year before that of \$31.6 million. The mining and mineral processing sector is on a roll and we are proud of it.

Nationwide, mineral exploration has certainly been impacted by the pandemic, but in terms of Tasmania, we backed it in during that time with an exploration support package, the export drilling grant initiative and the geoscience initiative that we worked on with the federal government. We are doing everything we can and I can report a record \$20.9 million in the year to December 2021, a 94 per cent increase in exploration on the preceding year.

Confidence is up and businesses are investing more. On my visit to the west coast last Thursday night and Friday the feedback was encouraging from the mining and mineral processing leaders' sector. I was underground at CMT and New Century Resources were indicating and have now announced publicly a 130 per cent increase in the ore reserves at Mt Lyell. That is encouraging news for the west coast. It is encouraging not just for Queenstown but for all of Tassie. Likewise, I was at the ABX drilling rig in the Meander Valley and they are looking for rare earth minerals. That support package we have for our explorers to get out there and do their bit is working.

In conclusion, we are on a roll. We are backing them to the hilt. There is no greater friend than us. It is time for the Labor Party to declare its position and its views. They have

no policies, no plans, and no alternative budget. The federal Labor candidate, Chris Lynch, when he was asked during the election about his support for Rosebery mine and the 500 workers and their families and the BBF and their campaign to close it down, he said it was a tricky question. In terms of federal Labor, we heard what was said in the National Press Club yesterday: there needs to be an investigation into Tasmanian Labor and where they are at and what they are doing. It is time to come on board.

### **Homelessness - Government Action**

#### **Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.47 a.m.]

Tonight, Shelley and her 15-year-old niece, who she is raising, will spend the night couch-surfing, just as they have for the past two years while waiting on your highest-priority Housing waitlist. When they exhaust the goodwill of friends and family in couch-surfing, they pitch their tent wherever they can find a place. Shelley is a victim/survivor of child sexual abuse and fought for decades for her abuser to be brought to justice. He finally went to the jail last year. A relationship breakdown two years ago left Shelley homeless. She has letters of support from her doctor, her trauma counsellor, the DPP and her niece's school principal, all outlining the desperate need for a roof over their heads. Shelley calls housing providers twice a week but she is let down each time because there are just no houses available.

Minister, being just one distressing life event away from homelessness seems to be the new normal for renters in Tasmania because of the failure of your Government to build enough houses for those who need them. How will you help Shelley?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. With respect to Shelley's circumstances, I empathise and thank you for sharing that. I encourage you to make direct contact not just with my office but with Housing Connect. We want to do all we can to support Shelley in those circumstances.

I will not go into particular details in terms of that response other than to say that we want to help and provide the support that Tasmanians need, not just in the long term. We know about the long-term plans for 10 000 homes by 2032; that is a very ambitious record investment in housing. We made it clear in the Budget the Treasurer has brought down that there is \$538 million over the forward Estimates for more homes and \$204 million this financial year to build those 1500 homes by 30 June next year. We are on track for that but make it very clear that there is a lot more to do.

Regarding homelessness, I want to make it clear that we have the funding of \$36 million for the here and now to support vulnerable and homeless Tasmanians. I acknowledge that there is a lot more to do. I acknowledge the goodwill in the Estimates hearings last week on a tripartisan basis. My call to all of us in this place is to do what we can to support not just the Government but each other to make a difference.

The member for Clark, Kristie Johnston, myself and others will be meeting today in a round table to try to make a difference in North Hobart and Glenorchy on how we can provide those services, how we can make it better and improve. I am open to suggestions on what we can do to make it better. That is why the Premier and I are convening a round table, with Lara Alexander, my parliamentary secretary, in early July, meeting with the key stakeholders of my new reference group. That is why I have released the housing authority draft legislation for public comment and feedback.

We want to make this a success. We want to make a difference in the lives of Tasmanians who are vulnerable or homeless. We want more Tasmanians to have a roof over their head. As the Premier and I have said, they deserve it. We will do everything we can and I am more than happy to follow up with respect to the particular constituent you referred to. I thank you for the question.

### **Housing - Impact of Rental Increases**

#### **Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr BARNETT**

[10.51 a.m.]

Shane and Wendy rent a home in Hobart's northern suburbs on the private market. Wendy has MS and Shane, her husband, is her primary carer. They have been model tenants but their landlord has advised that when their current lease expires, their rent will be increased to between \$800 to \$900 per fortnight. Currently they pay \$720 per fortnight. Things are tight enough right now. When their rent increases to that level they will have just enough to pay their rent and some of their bills. They will be going without petrol. They fear they will be going without doctors' appointments and medications, and possibly without food.

The cheapest unit currently available in all of the northern suburbs, from Moonah to Granton, is \$800 a fortnight. Moving is not an option. They have been on the list for public housing for more than a year. What will the Government do to help renters like Shane and Wendy? Will they be left to go without basics like food and medications?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her desire to support Shane and Wendy. I acknowledge the very difficult circumstances they are in. MS is a particularly debilitating condition and it is hard to comprehend the challenges they face as a family. I want to do all that I can. This Government wants to do all it can to support people such as these and to help make a difference. That is why we are investing record funds to make a difference in not just the here and now but into the future.

In terms of rent, we provided \$9.5 million for our rental incentive scheme. This is being used wisely and well. That is why we have increased the funding support. We know that there is pressure in terms of housing costs not just in Tasmania but around Australia. The cost of housing has gone up, up, up. It has settled a little bit now with interest rates going up. We know it has been tough and remains very difficult in terms of rental affordability.

I have perused the Anglicare *Rental Affordability Report* released a few weeks ago, which you would be familiar with. It paints a picture of challenges. That is one of the reasons that we have gone the extra mile in this Budget to invest more, in fact, record funding not just for 10 000 new homes through the next 10 years but \$204 million in this year alone. This is only the capital investment. In terms of the investment across the board to provide those services, \$650 million over the forward Estimates, which backs into \$538 million for capital.

Regarding the here and now, the rental affordability incentive scheme is more than \$9 million. We have responded to the issue of NRAS, the federal government scheme, coming off-line. I have spoken directly to the federal housing minister Julie Collins, who is also the federal member for Franklin. I have instructed my department to do whatever we can to support those Tasmanians in need but this is a federal government program. We are doing what we can at our level.

I hope that we can work together, federal, state, local, across the parliament in a tripartisan way to make a difference for Tasmanians in need. I always have my door open to help make a difference and will continue to do so.

### **Water Resources - Sustainable Management**

**Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms PALMER**

[10.55 a.m.]

We are all very aware of the Government's commitment to delivering irrigation schemes across our state, supporting farmers and regional communities, such as my electorate of Braddon. We understand the benefits this co-investment brings. We also know that maintaining the health of our rivers and waterways is paramount to ensure the long-term sustainability of our precious water resources. Can you update the House on what the Rockliff Liberal Government is doing to sustainably manage our water resources?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Our fresh water resources are arguably our most precious asset as it underpins our economy, our way of life and our environment. That is why the Rockliff Liberal Government is committed to a balanced and informed approach to sustainable management of our water resources, both now and into the future.

Today I am proud to announce we will be investing an additional approximately \$360 000 per annum to improve the sustainable management and monitoring of our fresh water resources through a new revenue retention model, which will see the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania reinvest up to 80 per cent of the fees it receives from water managers under the Water Management Act. This means the water users are making a direct financial contribution towards the sustainable management of our state's waterways.

Based on the 2021-22 revenue, it is expected that the department will now retain approximately \$939 000 per annum from water fees. The additional funding will be used to implement priority actions identified in the Rural Water Use Strategy. This includes additional resources to commence the review of Tasmania's water allocation policy framework, including

the Surface Water Allocation Decision Framework and part 6 of the Water Management Act 1999, relating to field management fees. It will also include investing in upgrading Tasmania's water monitoring infrastructure, such as stream-gauging stations and continuous water quality monitoring equipment - activities that will assist in supporting the Water Managers and Data Custodian Water Working Groups to develop the collaborative statewide water quality monitoring program.

The department will continue to identify key projects on an annual basis that support the implementation of the Rural Water Use Strategy. Investing in science-based projects underpins Tasmania's water management system and, importantly, can be used to secure additional funding through the federal National Water Grid Authority. This investment is in addition to the joint Tasmanian and Australian government investment of more than \$1.8 million announced last month to deliver three fresh water science projects as part of the Rural Water Use Strategy.

Some of our other recent achievements in this space include investing \$5 million over the last two years in the River Health Action Plan to improve water quality by keeping livestock out of waterways; better managing effluent within the Tamar Estuary and Esk River catchments; investing \$1.5 million to deliver initiatives from the Rural Water Use Strategy and establish the River Health Advisory Project, enabling the creation of three new specialist water science positions within NRE Tasmania; and securing \$26.5 million in funding from the Australian Government for water infrastructure projects that will deliver improved environmental outcomes for our waterways and make highly reliable recycled water available for irrigation, reducing the need to access water from our waterways.

I am proud to be part of a Government that acknowledges the challenges for sustainable water management and is getting on with the job of addressing it.

### **Proposed Stadium Development in Hobart**

#### **Ms WHITE question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON**

[11.00 a.m.]

Your Government is not getting the basics right. In fact, you are getting them terribly wrong. You have a cost of living crisis; wages are proposed to be cut; a health system in crisis; the ambulance system collapsing, a housing crisis; a broken Budget; and debt is exploding. Given all of these massive problems, why on earth is your and your Premier's priority building former premier, Mr Gutwein's \$750 million floating stadium in Hobart?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, it was not worth waiting for dessert - I will say that. If that is the very best that the modern Labor Party in Tasmania is able to muster up on its last question on the last day of the Budget sessions -

**Mr Winter** - Do you support it?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Franklin, order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - if that is as good as it gets, I am sorry but Ms O'Connor deserves the title of official opposition leader in Tasmania.

Ms White, that question barely deserves to be uttered in this House. The Government has a thorough and proven commitment in health, housing, and in supporting people with the cost of living. While some parts of the world are facing a war, and the impacts are being felt by our community, we are acting and supporting Tasmanians to live their best lives here in our state - \$305 million for people on low and fixed incomes -

**Ms White** - What's your position on a stadium?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - to support them with their power bills, their local government rates and their TasWater bills. This Government's balance sheet is stepping up and supporting them. As I said in my first answer to the question asked this morning, we stand ready to do more, because we know there are significant challenges in the energy sector right around Australia.

What has Labor to offer? A cheap and cruel con; a bill that will not help anybody and would send seven retailers to the wall -

**Mr Winter** - Back the stadium.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Franklin.

**Mr FERGUSON** - and lead to blackouts in Tasmania.

**Ms White** - Do you support the stadium?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - What surprises me, Mr Speaker, is that the Leader of the Opposition again wants to pivot to her criticism on a stadium feasibility study. The Labor Party has been thoroughly called out on this matter. She and her shadow treasurer have been out there saying that the Government is spending \$750 million on a stadium -

**Mr Jaensch** - Not true.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Thanks, Mr Jaensch - it is not true. We could not have been clearer. The Budget provides for a feasibility study. Ms White seems to want to politicise that.

I will conclude. We have had, over the last four weeks, a thorough examination of the Government's Budget. We have had 63 hours at Budget Estimates Committees, where members on that side get to ask, more or less, anything they want on matters of detail, on matters of policy. They have had 63 hours, together with the time in this House.

The challenge for the Opposition, having had the opportunity to thoroughly examine our Budget, is to tell Tasmanians what they stand for. It is very difficult to see if the modern Labor Party in Tasmania stands for anything at all. On the one hand, the Leader of Opposition is calling for more spending; on the other hand the shadow treasurer is calling for less borrowing.

You cannot have it both ways. The national secretary of the ALP has called Ms White out on her war with Mr Ben McGregor and her intervention for Mr Winter. The party is still in national administration.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, it is completely irrelevant. Standing order 45: relevance. I draw your attention to the fact that the acting Premier is way off topic and he has not mentioned once whether he supports the stadium. That is the question for him.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Again, I remind the Deputy Premier of the relevance of the contribution. I heard him mention the stadium a number of times.

**Ms White** - Not his support for it, though.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I will allow the Deputy Premier to continue.

**Mr FERGUSON** - The national secretary - the top boss of this miserable party - called out Rebecca White, the Leader of the Opposition, in relation to her management of her party and the mess that it is in, and has said that this party will be getting a thorough examination for the issues that confront it and the mess that it is in.

I have been clear on the stadium. The Budget makes the priorities of Tasmanians our priorities. We are supporting people with the very real challenges that they face, and continuing to support a strong and robust economy so that we can have continued employment growth in our state, and a positive message that tells young Tasmanians they have a bright future in this state. Do not listen to the Labor Party with their mischief and with their attempts to talk our incredible state down.

### **Small Business Sector - Business Growth Strategy**

**Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, Ms OGILVIE**

[11.05 a.m.]

Tasmanian small businesses have demonstrated resilience and flexibility over the last two years. Can you update the House on the Government's commitment to supporting our small business sector; specifically, the important work that is being undertaken in relation to the development of the new Business Growth Strategy?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and note he has some small business background himself. Our Government is committed to supporting the 39 000 plus small businesses we have right across our fantastic state. Tasmania's small businesses have demonstrated resilience, flexibility and perseverance over the last two years. Our Government is committed to supporting our state's small business sector and the tens of thousands of Tasmanians it employs. Having provided more than 31 000 grants to small businesses, helping them survive one of the greatest disruptions imaginable, we are now concentrating on the immense future opportunities for business in Tasmania.



In May 2021 we made an election commitment to release a refreshed, small business growth strategy. Given the ongoing uncertainty relating to the operating environment for businesses in the second half of 2021, plans to develop a new business growth strategy were delayed. Instead, an interim strategy was developed in consultation with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the very important Tasmanian Small Business Council. This was released in December 2021.

Given Tasmania's borders have been open for some time and most restrictions have now eased, work has commenced on the development of our Business Growth Strategy for 2022-26. Our new strategy will help in charting our path forward, helping us to build on the strong foundations in our business sector and allowing us to grasp opportunities that arise in the future. We will be doing this together with business.

Our strategy will outline how the private sector and the Government can build on the strong business investment and consumer spending in recent years, and seize emerging opportunities in our economy, including increasing tourism and exports. We are increasing investment in public infrastructure; identifying positive elements of our business sector's work over past years; recognising innovations and improvements; and ensuring that Government policies are aligned with business and industry goals and targets. Collaborative efforts in these areas will continue our close working relationship, which is already successful and delivers so many positive outcomes.

A thorough consultation process has already begun, which will enable Tasmanian small businesses to have their say on how we can work together under our Business Growth Strategy. As part of this consultation process, we are engaging with key stakeholder groups and the broader business community, to ensure the next version of the strategy identifies the priorities that build the foundation for a thriving business sector. A series of face-to-face and online round table sessions are taking place right across the state in coming weeks, and a public submission process will also provide the opportunity to contribute to the development of the new Business Growth Strategy.

It is essential that we capture these ideas from all Tasmanian businesses and vital that we hear the voice of small businesses, not only from our metro areas but from regional areas. Everybody's input is welcome and feedback will enhance the design of our strategy. There is no doubt that the global business landscape will continue to evolve and change but by working together we can ensure Tasmania's small business community will be in the strongest possible position to respond to whatever challenges might come our way.

I will be attending some of these round table sessions and I look forward to hearing from everybody as part of the consultation process. I am looking forward to delivering the new business growth strategy later this year.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWERS**

### **Wellers Inn, Burnie - Monies Spent on Upgrade**

[11.10 a.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I promised the House I would come back in relation to the community COVID-19 centre for Burnie. The information that is useful

for the House is that it was the Wellers Inn site, owned by the Morgan family. My advisers indicate that it is surprising that the Labor Party would bring this matter up, given it was thoroughly considered at Estimates, where Ms Morgan-Wicks said:

There are not many suitable accommodation facilities that met our criteria in the north-west, as you would be well aware of the numbers that were involved. We approached all. We do not have time to run a formal procurement process. We were operating under COVID-19 emergency procurement guidelines which allowed us to go directly to market to try and source. We did not take into account, or even know, people's political membership in terms of ownership of accommodation facilities.

### **Ambulance Ramping**

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, further, to the Ambulance Tasmania question, I can indicate that as of January 2022 the Tasmanian Liberal Government has employed an additional 243 FTEs at Ambulance Tasmania since March 2014.

**Time expired.**

## **PETITION**

### **COVID-19 - Lifting Requirements for Vaccines and Masks**

**Mr Tucker** presented a petition from approximately 3011 residents of Tasmania, requesting that the House call on the Government to:

- (1) lift all mandates for employees to be vaccinated and ensure employers state-wide follow suit.
- (2) end requirements for masking in schools, medical clinics and transport services.
- (3) return to Tasmanians the right to choose medical interventions on a personal basis.

**Petition received.**

## **TABLED PAPERS**

### **Public Works Committee**

**Ms Butler** presented the report of the Public Works Committee on the Mental Health Service at the St Johns Park Facility, together with the evidence received and the transcript of evidence.

**Report received and printed.**

### **Estimates Committee A - Additional Information**

**Mr Tucker** presented additional information provided to Estimates Committee A by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water.

### **Estimates Committee B - Additional Information**

**Mr Ellis** presented additional information provided to Estimates Committee B by the Minister for Education, Children and Youth, Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth, Minister for Environment and Climate Change and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; and Minister for Small Business, Minister for Science and Technology, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Minister for Racing and Minister for Heritage.

### **SITTING DATES**

[11.15 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday 9 August next at 10 a.m.

I indicate to the House that it is the Government's intention that we will adjourn at 6 o'clock tonight. We would like to get through both the message from the Legislative Council and the family violence bill, but we will monitor that as the afternoon goes on. I will keep in contact with the manager of opposition business and the Independents and let them know whether we are progressing to 6 o'clock or whether we need to sit later. We are very hopeful that we will not need to.

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the House for keeping us informed of these matters. The motion from the Government is that we do not sit for almost two months. I understand those dates were set some time ago but I also understand that over the past few weeks we have seen some extraordinary changes across Australia and here in Tasmania when it comes to Tasmania's electricity market. The Government's proposal is that we do not sit now for almost two months. We have a bill that we tabled yesterday that will be ready to be debated if parliament was to sit tomorrow, so I would like to move an amendment to the motion.

Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment -

Leave out 'Tuesday 9 August' and insert instead 'Friday 17 June'.

The reason I move this amendment is because we are expecting a determination by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator as early as tomorrow if not early next week, as we understand things. Presumably the Government will know fairly close to exactly when that determination will be made. The proposal that the House not sit tomorrow means that the parliament will not be able to deal with that determination for almost two months. During that time, Aurora Energy will be issuing its bills to Tasmanian households and businesses, and small customers across Tasmania, and we know that it is very likely that that determination will cause very large bill shock for Tasmanian families.

The argument for sitting tomorrow is so that we can deal with this. In fact, if the House were to agree not to adjourn and allow the parliament to sit tomorrow, we could deal with this in an almost identical way that the parliament dealt with this in 2018. It is a bill that is remarkably similar to one that was promoted and tabled in this House, supported I believe unanimously in this House only four years ago to resolve a problem that is remarkably similar to the one that we are facing now. I will read from the second reading speech of former premier, Mr Gutwein, then treasurer. He said then:

Electricity prices have been increasing nationally due to a number of factors, including the retirement of low-cost coal-fired power stations and increasing prevalence of clean renewable sources.

Mr Speaker, the volatility in the market at that time does not compare to the volatility of the market at this point in time.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Franklin, I need to remind you that we are not discussing the bill.

**Mr WINTER** - We are speaking about the amendment to the adjournment motion, Mr Speaker; you are quite right.

The reason that we need to not adjourn this evening is to ensure that the parliament can deal with a very serious cost of living matter. That is why the parliament must sit tomorrow. The only proposal that has been publicly announced or put to the Tasmanian people on how to resolve this issue - how to protect Tasmanian families and Tasmanian businesses from the massive bill shocks that are potentially going to come when the regulator makes its determination - is the bill that Labor tabled yesterday. That is the only option at this point in time.

The other place sits next week, and it is perfectly reasonable for the House to sit tomorrow to consider this matter. The Government may have amendments to the bill. The Treasurer says that there are issues with the bill. Let us hear what they are and let us debate them. We should sit tomorrow and deal with this matter on behalf of Tasmanian businesses, households, and small customers who deserve to have a parliament that is in touch with their concerns and with the issues that matter to them. The cost of living is that biggest issue, and that is why the parliament has to sit tomorrow.

This is the issue on the list of so many Tasmanians. This is the issue that we are tasked with dealing with, as a House. I believe that we have an obligation. We have a job to do that can be done tomorrow instead of not sitting for nearly two months whilst the cost of living crisis gets worse - with a tip tax, water and sewerage bills going up, electricity prices going up, rates going up. We can sit tomorrow and deal with the electricity matter, quickly and efficiently. Maybe there will be amendments but we can do it.

That is what Tasmanians expect us to do. We are not asking the Government to do anything they have not done before. We are asking them to do something they did only four years ago. We are asking them to support a bill that they successfully proposed to protect Tasmanian consumers. Why would we not sit tomorrow to deal with this matter? We are ready to go. We believe this is the best way to deal with the problem for Tasmanians and Tasmanian

businesses. That is why I urge the Government to support the motion to amend the sitting times.

[11.23 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, this is an interesting manoeuvre on the part of Labor. They did not get around to tabling the bill until this week and now, on the last sitting day, is asking parliament to sit again tomorrow. Of course, Dr Woodruff and I welcome any opportunity to be in here representing our constituents and Greens values.

We will support Labor's motion for the House to sit tomorrow but we regard it for what it is - it is a stunt. If it was not a stunt, there would have been consultation with other parties and members in here, the drafting of the bill would have been flagged with us and it would not have been laid on the table the day before. It was only laid on the table yesterday. Labor could have negotiated the space for us to debate it today if they had tabled it on Tuesday. They may have been able to do that but instead what we are getting is, I think, cynical. We are happy to sit but we see this as a stunt.

We have not been offered a briefing on the bill by Mr Winter or Labor. We are not certain that this legislation is the solution to the looming electricity price hikes. There are some question marks over retrospective validity, future price determinations and the point at which the system ultimately has to catch up with itself if you are holding off price increases. This has not been well argued by Mr Winter or Labor. However, if it is a genuine effort to assist Tasmanians with their power prices, then we should have the debate. It is on that basis that we will support this move to extend the sitting. Really, you left your run very late. It is the first piece of legislation we have seen out of you people for - I do not know how long. We are willing to debate it. We are always willing to sit more. We will support this motion on that basis, but it is a little bit shifty.

[11.25 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I will speak from here. It is important that, as parliamentarians, we represent our community and respond to emerging issues. The proposal and the legislation on a matter of importance, such as cost of living, is something that deserves a hearing and should be debated. When Tasmanians open their next bill and see a price shock, and they know that we had an opportunity to debate a bill that may take some of that pressure and pain off their weekly expenses, they would be very disappointed that there was a bill that could lead to a cost saving for them, a reduction in price of energy for them - and we squibbed it. The people of Tasmania would be disappointed - not just in the Government, but in the entire parliament.

Every opportunity we have as a parliament to come together to make a difference - not just in energy pricing; it is housing, it is health - and to debate serious issues that will positively impact on people's lives, we should not squib it. If the Government does vote against this, which I expect they will, it means they are squibbing it. It means yet another opportunity they have wasted and ignored, in taking constructive action that could support people dealing with a massive cost of living crush.

I will be supporting this amendment to the motion. I am more than willing to turn up tomorrow, as I know many other members would and members of the community would expect us to.

[11.27 a.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment. I note the concerns about the lack of notice, but I appreciate the timing around this particular issue.

I have been very vocal in my comments about the lack of availability of sitting dates in terms of progressing the legislative agenda on behalf of Tasmanians. I believe that we should be sitting more frequently. One of my concerns over the last four weeks in what we have been doing in this place, is the lack of efficiency and efficacy in progressing those real cost of living issues and changing things for the better for Tasmanians - in particular, the lack of efficiency and efficacy in the debates in this place over the last three weeks.

I will be supporting the motion to sit tomorrow to deal with cost of living pressures, which is a very important issue to Tasmanians. I hope the Government supports it in a collaborative manner although I suspect that Mr O'Byrne is correct: the Government will not. I hope that they do, because this is a real thing that we can do for Tasmanians, to reduce cost of living pressures.

[11.28 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, Ms O'Connor pretty much hit the nail on the head in the first sentence when she called it a manoeuvre and then called it for what it is - which is a stunt. When I was elected to the position of Leader of the House, I said that I would run a no-surprises agenda and that I would work in - Ms Johnston just used the word, 'collaborative'; please, do not even bother trying to use that word in relation to this. The bill was tabled yesterday. You did not even have the decency to provide the amendment to anybody beforehand, and you have not spoken to us. As Ms O'Connor said, you could have tabled it on Tuesday and told us you want to debate this before the end of the week but you did not do that.

All it is, is a stunt. Honestly, exhibit A for Mr Erickson to look at is the seven minutes that you just spent on your feet trying to justify this ridiculous stunt. We will not be supporting it. I have done everything in my power to work in a collaborative manner with Mr Winter, with Ms O'Connor, with Mr O'Byrne and with Ms Johnston.

**Ms O'Connor** - You are a marked improvement on your predecessor; yes, you are.

**Mr STREET** - You are never capable of paying a compliment without slapping somebody else while you are doing it, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'Connor** - Just a little backhander on the way through.

**Mr STREET** - I do not actually care about your compliment. The Government will not be supporting this stunt. I know that Tasmanian people who are watching this are smart enough to know what Labor is doing. They have no alternative budget, they have no policies, no positions they are prepared to put on the record, but they come in here on the last day before we adjourn and try to pull this stunt. It is ridiculous. Tasmanian people know you have nothing, and federal Labor knows you have nothing. You are an absolute basket case and the sooner the federal party intervenes so that we have a decent opposition in this place, the better off we will all be.

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, this is a very serious issue. This is an emerging crisis across the country that includes Tasmania, as part of the National Electricity Market. The market regulator only intervened in the market yesterday. We have drafted a bill based on something that the Liberal Government introduced in 2018. It is sound from that perspective in how it would affect the bills Tasmanians receive.

The response from the Leader of the House was personal in the attacks he made. It did not go to the substance of the issue at all, which is what we are here to talk about. That is how we can, as a parliament, put downward pressure on rising cost-of-living issues affecting Tasmanians.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I will remind the Leader that we are not talking about the subject. We are talking about the amendment. We are not talking about the bill -

**Mr Street** - What did I say that was personal?

**Ms WHITE** - You attacked this fellow right here. Have a look at the *Hansard*.

**Mr Street** - I worked in a collaborative manner the whole way through.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms WHITE** - Mr Speaker, because the Leader of the House has not got his own way, he is going to thwart the attempts of this parliament to be able to look at a very serious issue, which is power prices for Tasmanians.

We should be bigger than this petty little argument that is going back and forth now about how people would like to be informed. You have not been perfect and, at the end of the day, the people of Tasmania deserve to know that the parliamentarians they elect to represent them in this place are willing to do the work.

We are saying let us come back tomorrow. The upper House sits next week. We can deal with legislation tomorrow that can improve Tasmanians' lives by capping their power price bills so that if they are opening those bills, they know we have done everything within our power to keep them as low as possible.

This is a debate about whether we work tomorrow. I support the motion that we work tomorrow to deal with this issue. It should not be about whether somebody was informed within a certain time frame about whether we work tomorrow. We are here to work. I am happy to show up. Tasmanians vote for us to be here to do that job, particularly when it comes to an emerging issue around energy reliability and crisis, and making sure that Tasmanians are not going to face further cost-of-living pressures when they open their energy bills. That is the crux of the matter we are debating here. That is the substance of the issue confronting Tasmanians. It is cost-of-living pressures that are keeping them up at night, not whether or not you had a nice little conversation in before we had a debate in this parliament.

I am flabbergasted at some of the rhetoric that is thrown around in this place, particularly on an issue like this. Let us just be bigger than that on this one occasion on behalf of Tasmanians who do deserve better.

**Opposition members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr SPEAKER** - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 10**

Ms Butler (Teller)  
Ms Dow  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms White  
Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 10**

Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood (Teller)

**PAIRS**

Dr Broad  
Ms Finlay

Mrs Alexander  
Mr Rockliff

**Mr SPEAKER** - The result of the division being Ayes 10 and Noes 10, therefore, in accordance with standing order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes. The Noes have it.

**Amendment negatived.**

[11.38 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I want to make it clear that I did not make a ranty-rave-y political speech. I could have. I did few yesterday but I ran out of rants for at least a few hours. I will make a couple of comments. First, this is an emerging energy crisis. The criticism that I tabled a bill too late -

**Ms O'Connor** - You could have tabled it on Tuesday and we could have debated today.

**Mr WINTER** - The truth is, Ms O'Connor, it was not ready.

**Ms O'Connor** - Well, get your act together.

**Mr WINTER** - There is an emerging energy crisis going on across Australia and -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Mr Winter, I need to remind you that you cannot reflect on the vote. We are dealing with the motion as it is.

**Mr WINTER** - Of course we are, Mr Speaker, and it is about the sitting times for the House. We deal with these matters as quickly as we possibly can in the circumstances that are arising. That is the simple truth of what happened.



Mr Speaker, I would have loved during this current sitting schedule, which is what we are talking about, to try to debate the bill later today. I sought advice about whether we could do that today and the answer was no, we could not.

**Ms O'Connor** - Who did you seek advice from?

**Mr WINTER** - The Clerk of the House, Ms O'Connor, and the answer was we could not. The only option I had after taking advice this morning was the option we have taken today. I am sorry if it has offended you that you did not get enough love on the matter or enough consultation. The truth of the matter is that we have acted as quickly as possible on this because it was about Tasmanian families and trying to ease the cost of living.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Land Returns**

[11.41 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens - Motion) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: Land Returns

We stand on the land of an ancient people who nurtured and shaped this landscape, lutruwita/Tasmania, for 50 000 years or more. This country was never ceded and was taken from its people at the point of a gun. The journey towards justice and reconciliation is too long and despite some positive steps towards reconciliation, Aboriginal people in Tasmania continue to get lip service from successive governments. It is 17 years since the last lands were returned to Tasmanian Aboriginal people. It is a travesty, it is unjust, it is inexcusable and it is a road block to genuine reconciliation.

It is seven years since the United Nations World Heritage Committee, after the federal and state Liberals failed in their attempt to shrink the 2013 extensions to the World Heritage boundary, called on the Australian and Tasmanian governments to upgrade the tenure of unallocated Crown lands inside the World Heritage extension to national park - seven years.

Fast-forward to the state of the state Address last year from the former premier, Mr Gutwein, who said:

Last week I committed to receive and consider proposals for further land return, and I want to be clear, this Government is committed to taking significant steps on our path to reconciliation and also, importantly, taking significant steps to ensure we improve the lives and circumstances of our First People.

In response to that clear invitation to Aboriginal communities to lodge formal land claims, the chair of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, Michael Mansell, wrote to the former premier on 30 March last year and said:

As you would be aware and is explicit in this submission, the future potential production forest land subject to this proposal is legally unallocated Crown land that forms part of Tasmania's reserve state. The presentation to parliament of a proposal to change the legal tenure of unallocated Crown land in the TWWHA presents a unique opportunity to allocate it to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community by returning it to our ownership through ALCT. In doing so, you can honour your State of the State commitment to take significant steps with regards to reconciliation and improving Aboriginal lives.

The letter goes on:

The return of Aboriginal land as a national park tenure breaks new ground for Tasmania and presents an opportunity to deliver land justice for Tasmanian Aborigines that remains in line with Tasmania's commitments to UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee. The request of UNESCO to grant this land's status as national park was unconditionally accepted by your Government in 2016 and since. Returning it to Aboriginal ownership as a new Tasmanian tenure presents the chance to go further and create a lasting legacy that gives substance to your acknowledgement of our elders and community. Indeed, such action would honour our elders' past, offer due respect to elders still with us and give hope to the emerging elders you referenced in your address.

To this day, there has been no formal response to that claim. There was a follow-up letter from Rebecca Digney in September last year and again, no response. In November last year, in the *Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty* report, professors McCormack and Warner recommended the return in recommendation 12, the creation of the kooparoona niara Aboriginal Protected Area. The report says:

We believe the proposal for the kooparoona niara Aboriginal Protected Area would have considerable support from the wider community ... and could serve as a model and would serve as a test of local management and access.

What we have instead is a mealy-mouthed proclamation under the Nature Conservation Act 2002 to upgrade the tenure of that allocated Crown land mostly to low-grade regional reserves and conservation areas and a complete dismissal of a formal claim made by the Aboriginal Land Council for a kooparoona niara/Great Western Tiers national park.

We do not buy that this is urgent. It is seven years since UNESCO asked the state to upgrade the tenure of these lands. We regard it as disgraceful for the Government not to have responded to the Aboriginal Land Council's claim and we are moving that this House does not approve the proclamation. We are calling on the Government, in consultation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and stakeholders, to develop reserve-class tenures for Aboriginal-owned and managed protected areas, as recommended in the *Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty* report and respond to the formal land return claim made by the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania in respect of the proposed kooparoona niara national park by returning these lands to Aboriginal ownership and establishing the kooparoona niara national park under the new reserve tenure.

Mr Speaker, we are providing parliament with an opportunity to do the right thing here. It is very unusual, of course, for the Greens to move against an upgrade to reserve status for any unallocated Crown lands, but we regard this as a higher-order responsibility and obligation on the Tasmanian parliament to get serious about reconciliation and land returns. The injustice and the lip service must end and that mealy-mouthed proclamation that was laid on the table a week and a half ago is simply not good enough.

This is business we can deal with in this parliament. We do not accept the Government's excuses around the proclamation. This is work that can be done now. We want parliament to address this. We want government to face-to-face with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania representing the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and commit to returning those lands to Aboriginal ownership. This is their country, their cultural landscape. We must return it to them. It is our obligation. It is the very, very least we can do.

I call on the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to take this as seriously as it needs to be taken. We do not approve the upgrading of the tenures of those areas of land inside the World Heritage Area before there is a conversation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Either this Government and this parliament is serious about reconciliation and land returns or it is not, and we are encouraging members to do the right thing.

**Time expired.**

[11.48 a.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this matter on today and I note the significant departure from the policy position of the Greens in this particular circumstance. It is a significant thing and one we all need to have some time to think about.

Some 139 years ago the heads of Aboriginal families living on Cape Barren Island signed a letter - they were John Smith, John Maynard, Thomas Mansell, Eric Henry Beeden and Phillip Thomas. The letter they wrote to the newspaper was to do with the complaints about a 6000 hectare parcel of land which had been returned to them. They responded in this letter to the newspaper by saying:

Whatever land they have reserved for our use is a token of their honesty, inasmuch as it has been given in lieu of that grand island, Tasmania, which they have taken from our ancestors.

That was 139 years ago, Mr Speaker. Twenty-seven years ago in 1995, the Aboriginal Land Act passed this parliament and we saw an immediate return of lands at that time - putalina, preminghana, Hummocky, Steep Island, kuti kina, ballawinne, wargata mina, Badger Island, Babel Island, Great Big Dog Island, piyura kitina, truwana, wybalenna and part of Bruny Island at pungkatina was the last one.

Since then, we have seen leases, land grants - very insignificant ownership matters. Ms O'Connor stole a bit of my thunder; I was going to talk about the timeline as well - seven years since that tenure upgrade was recommended on that allocated crown land; six years since this Government gave a commitment to reset the agenda with our First Peoples; five years since the commencement of the review of the model of land to hand back; four years since the discussion paper; three years since the feedback report on the discussion paper; 13 months since the Aboriginal Land Council wrote about land returns, at the invitation of the then

premier; and 11 months since the McCormack/Warner report was produced, *The Pathway to Truth Telling and Treaty*. What we have seen over that entire time are words. Lots of words - but very little action.

You are judged more by your actions than your intentions. That is how we will be measured now and how we will be measured into the future. Tasmania is known for the brutality of our colonial history. It is a dark and difficult stain upon us all. In this century, Tasmania has an opportunity to finally address those wrongs, and to do so in a demonstrative, actual way rather than just the language that we use. There is unanimous support in this House for treaty and the truth telling that is needed to go before that.

We need to build and sustain those relationships and create trust, with a people who have very little to trust us for. I note recent comments of Rebecca Digney that the community has had to fight for every single thing they have got. They have had to fight really hard for it. They do not trust us on this; why should they trust us? The fact that they have welcomed our commitment to treaty and truth telling is phenomenal - that they have the grace and courage to do that, given how we treated them over generations.

It is important that if we want to build and sustain trusting relationships then we have to be responsive and the Government needs to be responsive. There is a statutory body. The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania is a statutory body of Tasmania and it is being ignored. How does that build trust? How does that place us in an environment whereby we can move down this pathway to treaty which must have truth telling? Part of the truth telling today is we are not doing the right thing here again.

In the Estimates hearings last week, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs had an opportunity to declare his commitment to the establishment of an Aboriginal controlled national park. Rather than make that commitment to the statutory body - the Aboriginal Land Council - he obfuscated: he talked about definitions and the difference between national parks and Aboriginal protected areas. All of these are fine conversations to have but nothing is changing. All we are doing is talking - and we just keep talking.

Right now, the classification of the land is far less important than the minister showing the Tasmanian people, and the Aboriginal people of Tasmania in particular, how committed you are to returning land to rightful and continuing owners. It is an easy way out for the Government to point to the consultation paper and the model for returning land. It is an easy way out to say it was only released last week. As I said, we have been talking about this model for five years now. It does not cut it to keep saying that we need to continue consulting because, clearly, you are not ever going to end your consultation period.

The General Manager of the Aboriginal Land Council wrote to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs last year with proposals relating to land. It is well and good for the minister to point to the meetings that have taken place, as they did today but why was the land council not afforded a reply in writing - unless the minister wanted to avoid the scrutiny of the public record?

If the Government is serious about working with our First Peoples then it is past time to model the behaviour that demonstrates that we are serious about working and building trust in relationships with our Aboriginal community. This kind of decision puts the pathway to treaty on a really shaky foundation at a time when every member of this House wants to embrace it.

It has been undermined by a Government that I consider genuinely wants to move to treaty but does not understand how to get there. That might be the problem.

The consultation paper on the model for returning land proposes some significant reforms. If the Government and the minister are unable to work collaboratively with the statutory body responsible for Aboriginal land it remains to be seen how they might be successful. These are serious matters for our House to be addressing. These are matters I am glad I raised today. We will deal with the motion that has been foreshadowed by Ms O'Connor when we return. However, because that is almost a couple of months away, I ask the minister to please start dealing in good faith, start dealing with trust, start trying to give our community a reason to believe that we might treat them different from the way we have since the time of our arrival.

[11.55 a.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) - Mr Speaker, I thank Ms O'Connor, Leader of the Greens, for bringing on this matter of public importance. The issue of land return is a matter of public importance, and our Government recognises that connection to country and land and sea is a fundamental pillar of Aboriginal identity that we respect and want to uphold. Our Government is committed to returning more land and enabling more Tasmanian Aboriginal people to be involved in the process of returning land and the benefits that can bring for them, their families and their communities.

Referring to the subject of the Greens tabled motion and Ms O'Connor's contribution, it is somewhat ironic that the Greens would claim credit for inclusion of these parcels of land that have been referred to in the extension of the TWWHA in the first place, so they become part of our World Heritage Area. For the last seven years, the Greens have demanded that the Government officially declare these areas to be national parks, which is ironic in the context of the current proposal from the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania for formation of an Aboriginal National Park in parts of these areas. Both the World Heritage classification and what would have been national park classification may have made that more difficult to do.

**Ms O'Connor** - You have had seven years.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That is my point; for the last seven years you have been asking for a different outcome. For the last decade you have been campaigning on a different form of tenure. Now you have switched, and that is your prerogative but the Government is left with working through the detail of what is involved. There are ministers other than myself involved in that process, but I assure you we are working through the matters raised by the Aboriginal Land Council. The parallel processes that are underway include our obligations to the World Heritage Council which we must also acquit. We have not dismissed, and we have not refused to meet. We have met, and are meeting again as soon as next week, to work through the next level of detail on these matters.

There is work underway regarding the proposal put forward by the Aboriginal Land Council. There is also work underway regarding our obligations to UNESCO. The Greens have been offered a briefing on that process, which they have not yet taken up. I encourage them to do so because it will allow greater exploration of some of these matters. We will continue to work with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania regarding the specific nature of their interest, the proposed activities, level of management, ownership or involvement, that

they are seeking so that there can be a consideration of the appropriate class of reserve and management status considered. We have closed no doors to that.

We are committed to returning more land. It is not true to say that there has not been more land enter into the ownership and management of Aboriginal people in the time we have been in Government. Interestingly, many of those actions and those additions have worked around our Aboriginal Land Act, not through it. There have been Aboriginal organisations coming to us to seek land return and joint land management arrangements that do not involve working through the Aboriginal Land Act. We are talking with them now. There are aspects of that act that are deeply problematic. I suspect that both of the former ministers who have spoken today know what I am talking about. They know those issues.

However, it has come to me to bring a set of proposals forward to amend the legislation so that it can serve more Aboriginal people in the way it was intended. We are committed to that process.

As you know, we have a live consultation process underway right now. We are listening respectfully to all Aboriginal people to hear their interests and their priorities for amendments to that Act to make sure it works for them. As we are bound to, as a Government, under our obligations to work in the interests of all Tasmanians, all Aboriginal people, to hear more voices, and particularly and specifically under a statement of intent that our Government signs specifically with the Tasmanian regional Aboriginal communities alliance, which I understand that the Labor Party and the Greens have also signed -

**Ms O'Connor** - We have also signed it, that is right.

**Mr JAENSCH** - which obligates our parties, our parliament, to ensure that where policy is developed on Aboriginal issues, all stakeholders are given full opportunities for participation in consultation, and to engage with Aboriginal groups to enhance policy advice, including advice on legislative reforms that support Aboriginal policy. It is a commitment to be inclusive, to listen to all Aboriginal organisations and voices, and to work with those who will work with us to ensure that what we deliver is in the best interests and has the confidence of all Aboriginal people.

You will note that some of the proposals for change that are in the Aboriginal Land Act proposals for change consultation paper do go directly to some elements of inclusion, eligibility, participation and the removal of an objection clause which has been identified to us as a source of adversarial set up between Aboriginal people in Tasmania. We want to remove that as part of these changes.

[12.02 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I acknowledge that I stand on the land of the palawa pakana people who have been responsible for caring for this land for tens of thousands of years. I am sure that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs makes the same acknowledgement at every occasion that he speaks in public in his role as the minister.

Why we are here today is that acknowledgement means that that acknowledgement is just a form of words. Where we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after we have just had the report from the truth telling and treaty process from professors Warner and McCormack is that we thoroughly understand that Aboriginal people in Tasmania, lutrawita, require so much more

than words. They are sick of words. They are sick of platitudes. They are sick of promises that were made and broken, like the promise of Matthew Groom when he was minister in 2015 to adopt the recommendation of the UNESCO mission to create a national park and to formally attach those areas in the TWWHA, the unallocated land.

They are sick of doors that are pretended to be open, but actually are slammed shut in their faces. The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania was shown the deepest disrespect by this Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, this Government, under previous premier Gutwein and current Premier Rockliff, when they did not even have their letters responded to.

As soon as premier Gutwein last year made the commitment in the state-of-the-state speech, where he said, 'Last week I committed to receive and consider proposals for further land return, and I want to be clear, this Government is committed to taking significant steps on our path to reconciliation.', the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania immediately wrote to premier Gutwein to let him know exactly what they had in mind, to put the Government on notice that significant steps towards reconciliation require changing the legal tenure of unallocated Crown land in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and allocating it to the Aboriginal community by returning it to their ownership throughout and creating a national path. They made the point that the inclusion in the TWWHA presents no barrier to freehold return to Aboriginal ownership and management. Their letter was not answered. That point was reaffirmed by professors Warner and McCormack in their substantial body of consultation and research work they presented in November last year to the Government.

Professors Warner and McCormack were also very clear that in Tasmania there have been no significant land returns since 2005. Their statement completely contradicts what the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs just said then, despite repeated commitments by the Government to return land. They were very clear that the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has listed cultural values that include Aboriginal cultural values. They are the only cultural values recognised in the World Heritage listing of the TWWHA.

In response to the 2015 UNESCO reactive monitoring mission report, the Government recognised that the management of the TWWHA focuses too much on the natural values at the expense of attending to cultural values. These values have been further threatened by the limited participation of Aboriginal people in its management and by the lack of recognition and opportunity for cultural practice. Those were the words of professors Warner and McCormack in the *Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty* report from the Government's commitment in 2016, a commitment they have failed to uphold.

We have had a succession of premiers - Hodgman, Gutwein, Rockliff - who are all saying the words. Every time they say those words and do not taken action towards what real justice looks like, they are deeply disrespecting Aboriginal people. They are hollow, cynical words, and it is shameful to have ministers of the Crown repeating what is essentially a lie because they have no intention to do anything significant. If they did, they would have taken up this opportunity. This is a very significant opportunity presented by ALCT last year and they were not responded to. They wrote again six months later - also not responded to.

How can the minister pretend that there is any intention of taking this serious claim on board? If he did, he would not waste parliament's time by bringing it back later. We do not have time to wait for action on injustice. The Tasmanian community, the truth-telling and treaty process that is in train, we want to have justice and reconciliation for Aboriginal people.

That requires the return of land. We do not want to take any more time when when we have a recommendation from the *Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty* Pathway report that is abundantly clear, recommendation 12:

The first Aboriginal protected area, the kooparoona niara Aboriginal Protected Area in the Western Tiers, including the FPPFL on the boundary of the TWWHA, should be declared. Conditions relating to joint management with the local Aboriginal community and the management plans for the park should be made. The first Aboriginal protected area could serve as a model and would serve as a test for local management and access.

This is past time, which is why we will be moving to make sure it happens.

### **Time expired.**

**Mr WOOD** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I will kick off my piece today by reiterating how strongly this Government recognises and acknowledges that the Aboriginal people have a profound and ongoing connection to Tasmanian lands and waters. Connections to country and the responsibility to care for it is central to Aboriginal culture and identity.

Returning more land to Tasmanian Aboriginal people is a priority for the Tasmanian government and forms a crucial part of our Reset the Relationship policy agenda. The review into the model for returning land, which aims to identify the barriers to returning land and explore options to improve the land return process, is an integral step in this process.

As highlighted by the feedback received from the 2018 public consultation process, it is clear that the current process to return land does not work for all Tasmanian Aboriginal people. The major issues identified included that more land should be returned; assessing land to be returned should include agreed criteria; improving Aboriginal representation in the voting process for Aboriginal Land Council Tasmania; and improving governance and accountability in the management of returned land. Additionally, under the act, Crown land can only be returned with the agreement of the parliament by a mechanism that transfers the title to the ACLT which holds the title in perpetuity for the Aboriginal people.

The arbitrary nature of parliamentary approval for land return can make the process somewhat unpredictable, which was proven when the most recent attempts to hand back land to Aboriginal people stalled and failed to pass parliament. The uncertainty of the land return process was also noted by the Legislative Council Select Committee on Aboriginal Lands, whose final report recommendations in 2013 included that a process should be created to allow any further claims or proposals to be removed from the political arena and to be fairly assessed by an independent body. The parliamentary committee also highlighted other complexities such as ownership, management and public access.

Other legislative issues which were also identified in previous consultation processes included that the act itself does not provide any guidance or criteria against which any potential parcel of land can be assessed for its suitability for return, nor does it contain any mechanisms such as a set of criteria against which land could be identified and prioritised for Aboriginal communities to trigger government assessment of the suitability of a parcel of land for return.



The *Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty* report also includes commentary and several recommendations directly relevant to the act, including how the ALCT election process can be improved and promotes the need to progress land return and joint land management arrangements as a matter of priority. It is clear that a new approach is necessary if land returns are to play a constructive path on our reconciliation journey with all Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Last week the Government released a consultation paper, a revised model for returning land to Tasmania's Aboriginal people. It is a consultation paper on proposals for change which outlines the Government's proposed approach to amending the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 to support the return of more land to Aboriginal people. This consultation paper has been informed by the consultation undertaken to date and outlines the Government's proposed approaches and directions on key amendments to the act, which are: to extend the scope and intent of the act to meet community expectations; enable broader and more inclusive representation on the ALCT electoral roll; simplify the process for land return by creating a new instrument of transfer for significant parcels of Crown land; expand provisions for local or regional Aboriginal community organisations to play a role in land management; create a transparent process and clear criteria for proposing and assessing land for return; clarify the role of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania; and require reporting of administrative land management activity.

One of the key roles of the ALCT, to hold the title of the land and oversee its management on behalf of all Tasmanian Aboriginal people, is not intended to change. The Government intends to maintain the framework of the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 and the intent that it should provide the legal framework for land to be transferred to the independent statutory authority, ALCT, comprising members elected by Aboriginal people and held and managed by ALCT as statutorily defined Aboriginal land in perpetual trust for and for the benefit of Aboriginal people.

Our proposals seek to improve the transparency, ease and inclusivity of processes that support ALCT and provide a clearer process for transferring land. Written submissions are encouraged by Sunday 24 July; however, engagement throughout this process will be ongoing and the Government will be reaching out to meet the Aboriginal people during this time. Feedback from this consultation process will inform the development of the draft exposure bill which will be released for comment.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2022 (No. 23)**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2022 (No. 24)**

**Reports of Estimates Committee**

**In Committee**

**Continued from 15 June 2022 (page 104).**

## **DIVISIONS 2, 3, 4, 9, 14**

Estimates of the Minister for Education, Children and Youth, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training, and Workforce Growth.

[12.17 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to address the Estimates responses provided by the minister in Committee B. Earlier this week, following interjection in response to a comment I made about a speech from a former member, the minister said that I was nasty to him in Estimates. You actually might want to check *Hansard*. It says that Mr Wood said it but you and I both know that it was you, minister, who said it.

I want to point out that I was not nasty in Estimates. I was firm and I was disappointed. The minister spent a lot of time saying how much he cares. When people question the outcome of his comments and language about caring in relation to the outcomes, he gets quite offensive and offended about that. I was firm in my attempts to get answers. I was disappointed, but having had some of these answers and some of the feedback, now I am just downright angry at what this minister does.

This minister portrays himself as one of the caring people. We have had it in this parliament before when he had a former portfolio and the defence that is always run about this minister is, 'Oh, but he really cares', and I am sure he does. I do not doubt that he cares. What I doubt is his ability to be able to deliver things and put anything on the ground.

The debate we had, whilst not reflecting on it, is actually part of the portfolio responsibilities that this minister has that we can reflect upon. The very time lines and issues that were raised in that last contribution indicate the inability of this Government and in many ways the inability of this minister, to actually get things done.

I feel for the minister who sits beside him, Mr Barnett, who is now being presented with wave upon wave of heartbreaking stories of homelessness and I know that impacts on the minister, I genuinely do, but this is the product of years of people not getting anything done. That is not acceptable and is something that this Government needs to take responsibility for.

There were some other issues that were raised that this minister needs to take responsibility for. I am genuinely concerned that the decision around the abolition of the Department of Communities Tasmania, prior to the outcome of the commission of inquiry, is extremely dangerous. I do not know what the backup plan is, if the commission comes back and advises against that.

This is not to say that things should not be done in the meantime. Things absolutely should be done in the meantime - keeping children safe is an important responsibility that we all have - and I am not insensitive to the minister's challenge in that area. A number of people in this place have had this portfolio in the past - and it is hard. However, a decision to spend your time, your energy and your staff's time and energy reshaping a department into some stand-alone body is a distraction from the work at hand. The work at hand is to make sure that children are safe. The work at hand is very much going to be informed by the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

I worry that we spend all of that time and energy moving staff around, changing their frameworks, changing their employment contracts, creating a new structure; and then we have to put it all back - or put it into some other form that is recommended by the commission. Every bit of energy that we spend on that, is energy that we will not be spending on children. As we know from evidence that has just been given this week, Claire Lovell, and I quote from the *Mercury* article:

Claire Lovell, Executive Director of the state Government's Children and Families portfolio which oversees fostering adoptions, said there were dozens of vacancies within these agencies. She said that that meant that not all children in out of home care had an assigned child safety officer. She said, 'I know that we struggle to keep up with reasonable community expectations around the services that we deliver and the safety and quality of those services. The organisation was stretched by under-staffing, high workloads and a large number of areas requiring attention. We can't do everything at once. The more things we try to do simultaneously, it seems the more our efforts are diluted. I am genuinely frightened that the effort that is going to be put into creating a new structure will further dilute our capacity to respond to the needs of those children'.

This is a damning piece of evidence and only one of the myriad distressing and heartbreaking stories being told to the commission of inquiry.

We asked a few questions about some of the resourcing matters. The Government had committed to additional staff within the child safety system. We were able to determine that the funding - the provision - is sufficient for 10 FTEs over the four years, but the minister -or the department - has not quite yet determined how that will look. They would be across the advice and referral line and child safety service. Every single additional resource is important; but I genuinely wonder whether that is going to be enough of a resource to do what the minister wishes to do, and what we - and the community - wish the minister to do.

The other area of concerns is about staffing, and the perpetual issues of under-staffing and vacancy issues. We regularly hear numbers of between 40 and 60 vacant positions within the department. That is quite scary.

In response to a question on notice, the minister provided the average vacancy levels for the financial year to date. This is from 1 July last year to where we are now. The data went through to 14 May and the average vacancy for child safety services in the south was 10.64 full-time equivalent; 8.52 for the north; and 5.75 for the north-west. That is a significant average out of the 249 FTE allocation for this area. The minister's answer suggests that we have a number of people who are not actually there.

As at 9 June, we also had a total of 17 employees who are on long term leave. That is another question that I asked, because one is issues about vacancies we cannot fill and another issue is the positions that we have filled, that have a name attached to them, but do not have anybody working in them at the moment.

There are eight staff or 7.9 FTE on workers' compensation; three staff or 1.6 FTE on parental leave - the response is maternity leave but I am assuming that there might be a mixture of parental leave in there and six staff on leave without pay. What concerns me about those is

that: of the 7.9 FTE on workers compensation, only one of those positions is back-filled; of the 1.6 FTE, or three staff, on maternity leave, only .5 FTE has been back-filled; of the, 5.9 FTE, or six staff, on leave without pay, only two are back-filled. I do not understand that.

The minister may be able to correct me, but I remember a commitment given previously that, particularly because this area was so dominated by young women workers, that there was an understanding that parental or maternity leave would have a greater impact on this agency than others, and those positions would be back-filled. I am not sure if that was the position of the minister at that time, or whether that is a commitment that extends beyond that period but could the minister let us know why those are not back-filled?

I do not understand why positions vacant due to workers compensation are not back-filled. That is not a cost to the agency. The workers compensation costs are not borne directly by this agency; they are picked up by Government's compensation funding.

I also do not understand why four of the six positions vacant due to leave without pay, have not been back-filled. I am now seeing a picture whereby some 20 per cent of the workforce, on any given day, are not in the workforce. That does not count people who may be on sick leave, or who may be having annual leave that is not replaced. That concerns me, minister. I wondered when I looked at that data whether the issue of not back-filling was because you are struggling to fill the vacancies. I do not doubt that the minister is attempting to fill those vacancies. I am not suggesting that is a deliberate saving but is it so hard to fill those vacancies that we do not even try to find the people for the back-filling? Is that what is happening? What that leads us to is a desperate need for a workforce strategy - an emergency workforce strategy because this is an emergency.

The information that we are getting through the commission of inquiry shows that this is an emergency for our state. We need a workforce strategy that looks at whatever you have to do, whatever you have to pay, whatever framework you have to put in place, to make sure those jobs are filled. The cost of not filling them is too dangerous, as Ms Lovell said in her evidence. The more our efforts are diluted they simply cannot respond to the needs of the children. Ms Lovell said it was not possible for Child Safety to keep every child safe in Tasmania.

I know the minister wants to; we all want to. If one of our issues is that we have not found a way to support our workforce enough to make sure that those things can be done then the minister has to act on that with more than a level of urgency. If the only strategy that the minister has, is 'it is okay, we are going to re-shape the Department of Communities and take resources away to do that', then I am really frightened about the impact on staff.

Speaking of staff, we also raised the issue of the buildings at St Johns Park and the issues of the mould infestation, post the rain and flooding incident. The minister identified that there had been audits done on the safety of the building, both for asbestos and for mould. They have not been provided to the staff. We asked if the minister would do so; he said it was not his thing, he did not own those documents, they belonged to the Health department, nothing to do with him. He did take on board that he would find them and see if he could get health to release them. They were provided to the staff late last week and I am appreciative of that. Immediately pins were laid on because the report did show that some of the public areas that staff are walking through and working in were dangerous.

I understand there is a pathway to resolution for that now and that is a good thing. It would have been a lot better had the staff, the workers' health and safety staff who asked, had immediately been given that information so that this could have been dealt with earlier and so that it did not take time in the House. I am not sure why Mr Wood is shaking his head at me -

**Mr Wood** - I have a sore neck.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I cannot see that I have said anything outrageous there, other than the most important thing would have been to give workers that information first. They have been able to resolve the issues and I do appreciate the minister taking action to make that happen. However, they have been really stressed and frightened for a long time before that issue was dealt with.

We need to have an ongoing plan for that site because the weather incidents are not going away. The reality is that building is most likely going to have impacts again, simply because of the age of the building and the ongoing weathering circumstances we are now experiencing.

The minister might be able to tell me one other thing. Minister, you would recall an investigation when, as a culmination of a number of deaths of children in care, a commitment was undertaken to make sure that work was done. I am of the memory that one of those recommendations was that each time demand outstripped capacity for Child Safety, that a notification would be made and that would be lifted up to at least the minister's office. I do not know if that still happens or if I have misremembered. I thought that was one of the recommendations. Perhaps the minister could have a look at that. That would be the sort of thing that would provide a flag to say we really need to look at our resourcing issues.

Moving into Education, this might be where the minister thought I was being nasty to him but I was pretty disappointed and concerned. We spent a lot of time on the safeguarding our children con. This Government, in their Budget speech, talked about the significant investment into safeguarding our children, which people generally welcomed. That was a good thing. Then it turns out that these are not additional resources, not a new thing being funded by this Government. This is, in fact, from the Commonwealth resourcing that was going to flow anyway. This was not that the Government had suddenly found this new significant investment. This Government has made the decision on how to purpose Commonwealth funds that schools would have received anyway. That is the bit that concerns me the most about it.

If the Government had said in the Budget speech, 'One of our priorities is to ensure that the Commonwealth resourcing we have negotiated with the Australian Government addresses this', that would have been fine. We would have said, 'Okay, that is an interesting decision and probably the Government should put more money into it itself, but they are open about that.' The message that was sent to the Tasmanian people was that this Government, in addition to the funding in education that was already expected to flow, was going to commit additional resources. And you did not. That is a con.

I am very disappointed in that because it is now unclear how those impacts will be felt, given that each of those schools in our public system would have been expecting to get their share of that resource anyway. That would have been money they were expecting to see come through to their schools to assist in learning and development, and the structures around schools to make those things better. I want the minister to continue to explain how that was not perhaps a misrepresentation of what was going on.

I would also like a little more detail. The minister has said that there will be an allocation of between 0.2 and one FTE per school across government schools to provide not only a child safeguarding officer in those schools but a network. I would like to know exactly what schools are going to get. Schools would like to know exactly what they are going to get.

I would also like to know how the minister had been intending to spend the Commonwealth dollars before he made his decision. What were they going on before you decided that this was how you would spend their money?

I am also not sure whether this is in breach of the National Partnership Agreement. I am not utterly convinced it is in the spirit of the National Partnership Agreement. That is something that needs to be understood and recognised.

The other question, too, is that some of that national partnership funding flows to the private sector as well. I can see the minister shaking his head. Do I have that wrong?

**Mr Jaensch** - You keep saying what you want to say. I do not think that I am going to change your view.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I do not want to mislead. My question then, minister, that you may be able to respond to, is whether any of the Commonwealth-negotiated money flows to the private schools, and what that means in terms of any of their commitments and staffing arrangements around safeguarding? I am not saying that the minister is doing anything wrong. I am genuinely trying to understand that.

We raised issues around the resourcing for the grounds-keeping in schools and the changes that have been made to that. The minister did provide a list of the changes in resourcing. This is to do with country schools that have significant land and a number of them have school farms, school farm teachers' buildings and buildings onsite. There is a concern by people who are doing those jobs that in many cases they do not have enough time or resources to do the job properly. They are worried about that. These are the workers on the ground.

**Mr Jaensch** - You have an answer on that.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I just said you provided a list and the list deals with where there have been increases and decreases for each school.

**Mr Jaensch** - You have the explanation of how it was determined.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I was around in the early days when we first did the allocation framework for resourcing for schools many years ago - not in government, but in one of my old jobs - so I do have an understanding of how these things are done. I also know that there are concerns from people doing the job that in many cases they are not able to do the work they have to do. That is the significant thing.

I will end on the issue of period products in schools. The reason I was asking the questions about how much is spent and how people access those products is to do with what process a student has to go through to get them. My argument was, first of all, there is some great work happening in Victoria if you want to have a look at it now which is about

normalising periods and period understanding. They are teaching boys about it to try and normalise behaviour. That is one issue.

My second issue was if a child has to go to a teacher who they may or may not have a relationship with, or a school nurse who they may or may not have a relationship with, they have to go and ask for something, they may not choose to do that. This is why I am a big fan of putting vending machines in schools, which we have seen in other jurisdictions, because it takes that away. It was extremely helpful when it was explained to me that girls can sometimes be embarrassed about periods. Being a woman and having brought up daughters, obviously I did not know that, so thank you so much for sharing that with me. I was unaware that might be an issue for young women except for the fact that it was the actual point of asking the question. If on one hand, the department is saying it can be embarrassing to go and ask, then saying 'but we are going to make you go and ask', that did not seem to make any sense to me. I do not decry the fact that \$80 000 is now given to schools to fund this. I do not know how each school deals with it. I do not know how it deals with the issue that the department raises. The reason that we give it to the school is because girls are embarrassed and then we make them go and ask the staff person.

I would love to see the Government commit to putting in vending machines, as other jurisdictions have done but I thank them so much for explaining to me, as a woman and a mother of two daughters, just how challenging periods might be for girls.

### **Time expired.**

**Mr WOOD** - Chair, it is my pleasure to speak on one of the portfolios I was privy to listening to in budget Estimates Committee B and that is Mr Jaensch's extensive portfolio. I was very interested during the process to hear the minister's comments that all funds raised through the landfill levy will be reinvested in waste and resource recovery - an important element that makes Tasmania's levy unique to those operating in other states, where funds raised through the levy are directed into the consolidated fund.

The assistance being provided to local councils and businesses to help prepare for the levy is an initiative mentioned during the hearing. Our Government is supporting these facilities to have appropriate facilities to collect data on the amount and types of waste being disposed of. This will be important as businesses and councils transition to these new arrangements. It was clear from listening to the minister talk that our Government is significantly investing in waste management and resource recovery in recent times to grow our circular economy.

The minister mentioned the Recycling Modernisation Fund where our Government, in partnership with industry and the Australian Government, is providing \$5.5 million to invest in innovative plastic reprocessing, which will result in over \$20 million worth of investment in Tasmania. I understand that this will create over 50 ongoing full-time jobs and means many thousands of tonnes of plastic will be being reprocessed in our state that would formerly have gone to landfill or been exported. He also mentioned \$6 million worth of investment in composting organic waste, providing \$3 million for Dulverton in the north of the state and \$3 million for Barwick in the south of the state, in both cases a contribution to establishing state-of-the-art in-vessel composting facilities.

We remain on track to commence a container refund scheme in the first half of next year. This is something many members of our community in my electorate of Bass have been eager to see for quite some time. It was great to hear that this scheme is progressing, that it is expected to reduce the littering of drink containers by almost 50 per cent, which will be a great outcome for our environment.

I was pleased to hear about the 2022-23 Budget's investments into skills and training. As a government we want to make sure that Tasmanians have more opportunities to access the training they need to get a good job. I am passionate about the opportunities for young people in my electorate of Bass and the minister's updates on the way training has rebounded since COVID-19, particularly in key areas like aged care, disability care and building and construction, were appreciated. With the Commonwealth Government, the minister explained how we are extending the JobTrainer Fund by \$18 million, a huge investment that thousands of Tasmanians will benefit from.

The minister also outlined how the Government is investing \$15.5 million to secure the future of TasTAFE and build on our structural reforms, which is welcomed. This new funding includes \$7 million to support students and the additional TasTAFE teachers as well as providing additional resources and administrative support for staff, and there is \$5 million in additional funding to complete the new Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence at TasTAFE's Clarence campus.

The Budget continues funding for important upgrades at the TasTAFE Alanvale campus in my electorate. Once completed, the students at those facilities will benefit greatly from learning in a modern, fit-for-purpose training environment. We continue to fund the important work of Jobs Tasmania, including the regional jobs network which will soon cover off every region of the state. These hubs are supporting many local communities, including the Northern Employment and Business Hub led by Nicole Gross and her team, who are doing outstanding work.

In the Education portfolio, I was interested to hear how the Government and the Department of Education continue to prioritise student learning while investing in safety, wellbeing, access and participation of Tasmanian students. We know that education is the single most powerful driver for improving economic and social outcomes in Tasmania including health, life expectancy, happiness and productivity.

The Government is strengthening Tasmania's future with a record investment in Education, Skills and Training of \$8.5 billion over the 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates. I was pleased by the Government's clear commitment to addressing the recommendations by professors Stephen Smallbone and Timothy McCormack in their report on the independent inquiry into the Tasmanian Department of Education's response to child sexual abuse. This was highlighted by the significant additional resourcing that will be provided to schools through the Budget's \$36.4 million investment in safeguarding children. This includes \$26.1 million over four years to employ a safeguarding officer in every government school.

We heard of the continuation of the Government's education infrastructure investment, a \$250 million investment over the Budget and forward Estimates that will provide our learners with contemporary learning facilities that maximise student engagement and learning. Learning was the key theme in my questions to the Education minister on supporting our principals and providing our schools with the tools they need to improve learning outcomes.



However, I noted that the questions from other members of the committee were largely unrelated to learning, or to our schools and school leaders and the Education department and also for this Government.

During Estimates, the minister announced very important policy settings applicable to young people in contact with our redesigned youth justice system. The Tasmanian Liberal Government will raise the minimum age of detention from 10 to 14 years as part of our comprehensive reform of the youth justice system. There will always be a need for secure detention as a last resort for a very small minority of young people who commit the most serious offences. This change will help ensure that the detention of young people in Tasmania is truly the last resort.

Raising the minimum age of detention will require legislative amendment to the Youth Justice Act 1997. This will occur together with a suite of amendments identified as part of whole system reform under our youth justice reform transition plan. This is anticipated to occur near the end of 2024. Raising the minimum age of detention will be a key part in our plans to build a nation-leading best-practice approach to young people in conflict with the law. I commend the minister for the leadership he has shown on this important matter.

I thoroughly enjoyed hearing the minister discuss his commitment to the action on climate change and the steps he is taking by working with industry and our community to reduce emissions. I also know there is economic opportunity for Tasmania and investment in jobs from responsible action on climate change. We have a nation-leading emissions profile. The minister mentioned this again this morning. Tasmania has achieved net-zero emissions for the last seven years in a row and is the only state or territory to be net-negative by 2020. This is a fantastic achievement.

I also understand there has been considerable take up to the Government's stamp duty waiver and that Tasmania is now in doubt with a comprehensive statewide electric vehicle charging network. I am confident that the minister will continue to work across government and with our industries and community in a collaborative way, unlike the Greens, who would continue to tell Tasmanians what to do and how to do it. I know which approach I and the majority of Tasmanians prefer. The minister is clearly committed to taking action on climate change in the best interest of all Tasmanians.

**Time expired.**

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Chair, I thank Mr Wood for his contribution and his participation in the Estimates process and the questions he asked. I note that there are no other members of the committee from Labor or the Greens who were there at Estimates in the Chamber at the moment to make a contribution.

Notwithstanding that, I acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners and continuing custodians of the land on which we meet today, and acknowledge elders past, present and emerging.

I also acknowledge and thank all the people who supported the Estimates process this year again, the chairs, the secretaries to the committees, the Hansard staff and the other attendants who were able to conduct and support our committee process right throughout the week. Thank you.

I thank the departmental secretaries and their teams and my own office staff and advisers for the extensive preparation that goes into Estimates week, as well as their assistance on the day and preparing answers to questions taken on notice, which I understand have now all been completed and submitted.

All of this process and hard work ensures that Tasmanians, through their parliament, have a very important opportunity for scrutiny of government budgets and the policies they support. I take my responsibility in this process very seriously and again thank all who have assisted me in this role again this year.

The Government is focused on supporting our education leaders, teachers and school communities as they strive to improve education outcomes for Tasmania's learners. Our school leaders are focused on improving learning outcomes by implementing the Department of Education's approach to school improvement. In this approach, each school identifies evidence based priorities and related actions, and they are then supported by the Department to respond to these priorities. In this context, I was pleased to provide detail on the Government's investment of \$2.85 million over two years and \$1 million ongoing each year for the Principal Capability and Performance initiative.

Principals have a critical role in leading school improvement, and this initiative will support the ongoing continuous improvement of our principals who we know have the biggest impact on learner outcomes after parents and teachers themselves. I again acknowledge the dedication and skill of our teaching and school leadership teams who are constantly working together to inspire and engage more learners to learn more every day.

A further commitment to improving learning outcomes is our investment of \$12.2 million dollars over four years for the Student Systems Renewal initiative. This initiative recognises the importance of bringing together all the essential information on students to provide tools that will improve student learning, wellbeing and engagement. This is a strategic investment to ensure the right people have access to the information they need to do their jobs, to support learning.

Budget Estimates was also a great opportunity to consider just how important it is to support the fundamental needs of our learners so that they can succeed in their learning journey. The 2022-23 Budget continues this Government's significant investment in education infrastructure across the state, with allocation for capital works totalling \$250 million over the forward Estimates, including \$69.7 million in 2022-23 alone.

Fit-for-purpose education facilities support student engagement and participation which is fundamental to their learning outcomes. Every child has a right to have an education, to be heard and to be kept safe from harm. We know there is more to be done to keep our children safe.

The 2022-23 state Budget includes a total package of \$36.4 million over four years, with \$12 million ongoing, to ensure our schools are safe places for children and young people. Appointing a Safeguarding Officer in each school will provide a central point of contact for matters relating to child safety in each school, and a safeguarding network across the whole state Government school system.

Learning is the core business of our early childhood settings and our schools and I thank each of the dedicated professional and highly valued staff who support learning in schools and other settings every day.

I was also pleased to announce during Estimates that, as part of our comprehensive reform of the youth justice system in Tasmania, the Tasmanian Liberal Government will raise the minimum age of detention from ten to fourteen years of age. This will be one key element in our plan to build a nation leading, best practice approach to young people who are in conflict with the law. We know that for younger children, detention does not support rehabilitation or reduce the likelihood of reoffending. In fact, early exposure to a detention environment can further traumatised young people, expose them to problem behaviours of older detainees and increase criminal networks.

Sadly, there will always be a need for secure detention as a last resort for a very small minority of young people who commit the most serious offences and to ensure community safety. This change will help ensure that the detention of young people in Tasmania is truly a last resort.

Importantly, under our comprehensive reforms we will enhance responses across the entire youth justice service system, including more options for diversion and community sentencing. Only as we implement these new initiatives will we be in a position to remove sentenced and unsentenced detention for the younger, more vulnerable cohort. Under our Youth Justice Reform Transition Plan, this is anticipated to occur near the end of 2024.

In child safety, I have had the opportunity to release the Strong Families, Safe Kids Next Steps action plan progress report. The report provides an update on progress over the last year on our long running child safety reforms including some key achievements.

In August last year, the Government launched its It Takes a Tasmanian Village, Tasmania's first ever whole-of-Government child and youth wellbeing strategy for 0-25-year olds. The strategy has funding of over \$100 million for initiatives that support the wellbeing of children and young people, with a particular focus on the first 1000 days of life.

We established the Strong Families, Safe Kids advice and referral line as the single point of contact for unaccompanied, under-16 -year olds who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. The Under- 16 Youth Homelessness Policy Framework was also released, to improve the service system responses for young people under- 16 who are alone and at risk of homelessness.

Following a review of supports for informal kinship carers, Mission Australia has commenced an informal Kinship Care Liaison and Support Service in the north-west. This is providing a key contact point for informal Kinship carers to help them navigate the service system and access the supports they need.

We have also recruited an additional Child Advocate for children in care in the north and north-west, to support the excellent work of our current child advocate, Sonya Pringle-Jones. I thank everyone who has contributed to the implementation of Strong Families, Safe Kids. We look forward to continuing our work to deliver better outcomes and improved safety and wellbeing for Tasmanian children and young people and their families.

Turning to the environment portfolio and our circular economy agenda. I was pleased to announce last week in Estimates the successful applications for Landfill Levy Readiness grants across the state. Funds provided through these grants will support landfill and resource recovery operators, like local councils, to have appropriate facilities to collect data on the amount and types of wastes being disposed. We are supporting local government and businesses to make these important changes to the way waste is managed in Tasmania, including through investment in weighbridges, computer upgrades, traffic control and staff training.

Applicants were able to apply for up to \$100 000 each for necessary equipment or changes to their systems, with funding made available through the Government's Circular Economy Fund. I was pleased to announce the recipients of these grants, including Hobart City Council, Central Coast Council, Meander Valley Council, Burnie Council, Mornington Park Waste Transfer Station, West Coast Council, Derwent Valley Council and Glenorchy City Council. I thank these operators and these councils for their co-investment to ensure that landfills and transfer stations are prepared and ready for the introduction of the landfill levy on 1 July.

I was also pleased to detail the significant investment that our Government is making to support the separation of the Environment Protection Authority from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This commitment includes an increase of \$2 million per year ongoing, for additional resources to increase the rigour and integrity of environmental assessments and increase the number of environmental regulatory and compliance staff for the broader regulatory requirements and environmental management of the finfish industry. The Budget also includes \$500 000 per year, to support separate office accommodation for staff after the separation from Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. This support will allow the EPA to operate from separate premises in both Hobart and Launceston. The Government has also prepared amendments to the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 to complete the separation of the EPA from the department. A public comment period closed on 3 June and submissions are currently being reviewed.

Chair, the 2022-23 State Budget is about strengthening Tasmania's future. That is why our Government is providing additional funding for a stronger, more transparent and independent EPA.

In my climate change portfolio, Mr Chair, last week and again today I was pleased to inform the House of the most recent state and territory greenhouse gas inventories for 2020. The data shows that, for the seventh consecutive year now, Tasmania's emissions profile continues to be the envy of the nation and the world, and we have maintained net negative greenhouse gas emissions. However, we know that we need to continue to reduce emissions across all sectors of our economy. That is why the 2022-23 Budget includes significant funding to further reduce emissions, including almost \$10 million over four years to deliver our next Climate Change Action Plan; \$10 million over four years to replace the Government's ageing fleet of fossil-fuel boilers; and we have increased our investment to \$4.6 million over six years to transition the Government fleet to 100 per cent electric vehicles by 2030.

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

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2022 (No. 23)**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2022 (No. 24)**

### **Reports of Estimates Committee**

#### **In Committee**

#### **Resumed from above.**

**Mr JAENSCH** - At the Estimates table I was also pleased to provide an update on how the Government is supporting the uptake of electric vehicles in Tasmania. We are incentivising electric vehicle uptake with a two-year stamp duty waiver on electric vehicles, which will continue in 2022-23. As at early April, 515 waivers have been provided, supporting Tasmanians to make the switch to an electric vehicle by reducing the upfront purchase cost. There are two-year registration waivers on electric vehicles for hire car companies and bus companies and we also have a comprehensive statewide charging network that allows Tasmanians and visitors to travel around our state with confidence, powered by Tasmanian renewable energy. Our ChargeSmart 2 grants program is providing \$773 000 for an additional 43 electric vehicle fast and destination chargers in regional Tasmania and at key tourism destinations.

We are providing over \$16 million to Metro Tasmania to trial zero-emissions buses, electric and hydrogen, in the north and the south of the state. I also provided an update on our target to transition the government fleet to 100 per cent electric vehicles by 2030, and as part of a wider strategy to reduce fleet emissions, recent reduction to emissions limits for vehicles on the Government's fleet list. As at 1 January 2022, passenger vehicle emissions limits have been reduced by 21 per cent from 240 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre to 190 grams.

Growing a low-emissions circular economy, reducing waste and improving resource recovery are priorities for our Government. That is why I was pleased last week also to announce that registrations are open for the second Business Resource Efficiency Program. We recognise businesses want to be part of the solution on waste and climate change, but they need a helping hand. That is why we are providing \$200 000 to fund a second round of the Business Resource Efficiency Program, as promised at the last election. The program builds on the success of the first program which ran from 2018 to 2020 and supported 11 small and medium-sized businesses in a range of sectors across the north and north-west of the state. Our Government is strengthening the future of all Tasmanians by supporting our businesses to reduce emissions and waste and growing a productive circular economy.

In Aboriginal Affairs last week I was pleased to release the consultation paper 'A revised model for returning land to Tasmania's Aboriginal people', which outlines the Government's proposed approach to amending the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 to support the return of more land to Aboriginal people. The paper has been informed by consultation undertaken to date and outlines the Government's proposed approaches and directions on key amendments to the act, which are: to extend the scope and intent of the act to meet community expectation; to enable broader and more inclusive representation on the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania's electoral roll; to simplify the process for land return by creating a new instrument of transfer for significant parcels of Crown land; to expand provisions for local or regional Aboriginal community organisations to play a role in land management; to create transparent processes and clear criteria for proposing and assessing land for return; and to clarify the role

of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and require reporting of administrative and land management activity.

Importantly, the key roles of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania to hold the title of land and overseeing its management on behalf of all Tasmanian Aboriginal people are not intended to change. Submissions are encouraged by 17 July, but engagement throughout the process will be ongoing. We will be reaching out to, and meeting with, Aboriginal people during this time. Feedback from the consultation will inform the development of a draft exposure bill which I will release for comment ahead of the planned introduction in the parliament in early 2023.

I also updated the committee on how the Government is progressing our commitment to develop new legislation to provide greater protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage. Earlier in the year I released a consultation paper on the development of new legislation. Submissions have closed on the consultation paper but we are continuing to consult widely to ensure that we produce a robust, comprehensive and contemporary piece of legislation. The responses received and the engagement with Aboriginal people has been encouraging, as have the responses received from non-Aboriginal stakeholders, and I thank everyone who has engaged in the process to date.

The work is also complemented by our allocation of an additional \$200 000 over two years in the Budget toward the development of a new purpose-built statutory Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Register. The investment in the Aboriginal Heritage Register will replace our current ageing system with a new fit-for-purpose register which will be integral to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania's desktop review process to determine if there is known heritage in a particular location and prompt further management or design actions at the very start of a development project, not at the end. The importance of understanding, respecting and protecting this ancient and living culture cannot be overstated.

Our Skills, Training and Workforce Growth Estimates hearings heard how the Government's investments are delivering for Tasmania. There is well over \$600 million for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth across the Budget and forward Estimates and we are committed to ensuring more Tasmanians can access the training they need to get a job. Tasmania can be proud of the huge increase in apprentice and trainee commencements coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the most recent figures available showing that commencements in trades in Tasmania increased by an astonishing 94.2 per cent over the 12 months to September 2021. There were 11 075 apprentices and trainees in training in Tasmania as at 30 September 2021, the latest statistics we have, and 7800 new apprentice and trainee commencements in the same period.

The Estimates hearing also heard how the Government is investing in community organisations who are doing amazing work with local jobseekers and we are continuing to invest in TAFE. This year's Budget brings the total additional new funding for TasTAFE committed since 2021 state election to \$114 million. The CEO and COO of TasTAFE were able to provide an update on the TasTAFE transition process, conditions for staff and an overview of the next steps over coming months. More broadly, I outlined the Government's ongoing work to engage closely with industry in both workforce development planning and in the lead-up to the introduction of industry compacts which will drive outcomes for local industry and help ensure government, TasTAFE and industry are working closer together on common goals.

I thank everyone involved in the preparation for and delivery of the Estimates process, assistance from my office, my departments and staff in preparing me, and I want to thank the other committee members. I found the exchanges we had across a wide range of topics generally constructive and I thank them for their questions and I thank my team again and my departments for the hard work they have put in over the last week in preparing answers to those questions and matters that we took on notice, all in aid of a thorough scrutiny of our portfolios through the Estimates process.

**Ms DOW** - Chair, I rise this afternoon to report on the Estimates hearing with Mr Jaensch that I attended and took part in, particularly around Education, Children and Youth. We only had three hours for this sector and it really was not enough time. This is a very large area that encompasses a lot of critically important parts of the Tasmanian community but it is also about the life expectancy and life outcomes for many Tasmanians. It would have been good and I put on record the fact that we should have been given more time by this Government to scrutinise these particular areas.

**Mr Jaensch** - You negotiated it.

**Ms DOW** - We certainly made some points about that at the time, minister. The other point I make is that we did not really get the opportunity in the lower House Estimates to examine TasTAFE. In previous years, that has provided a good opportunity to get a good understanding of changes that have taken place and considering there have been significant changes to TasTAFE -

**Mr Jaensch** - They were there.

**Ms DOW** - They were there, but we did not get to it because we only had three hours.

**Mr Jaensch** - We did.

**Ms DOW** - We got to it in the upper House but we did not get to discuss it in great depth in the lower House, and that is a shame. There have been significant changes to TasTAFE over the last 12 months and it is important to scrutinise and hold this Government to account.

I will to start by talking about the power of education, and I will set the scene by reading a piece into *Hansard*:

About 120 000 Tasmanians live in poverty constantly balancing basic needs, accommodation, food and education just to get through each day. More and more Tasmanians are facing the uncertainty of poverty each day. Access to housing has become less secure in recent years. The prices of essential services like electricity, water and internet have risen and more people are choosing between heating and eating.

We have talked a lot about that in this place this week.

Poverty has an immense effect on the many lives of people in Tasmania including thousands of children and young people. Education can open doors and equip children, young people and adult learners with lifelong skills for a healthy life and economic opportunity. However, barriers to accessing

education or a lack of education can lead to poverty through social and economic exclusion and poorer health.

That is such an important point to make, because it underpins a lot of the questioning that we undertook as part of our work in Estimates, as well as a lot of the points that we want to put on the record about this Government not getting the basics right across Tasmania right now, when it comes to health, education and housing. They are the fundamental building blocks of a community, a society, and an economy and of a person's life.

If you want to have the best opportunity in life you need the very best educational opportunity. Right now, Tasmanians are not getting that. It is important to read into *Hansard* a few of the statistics around education at the moment, because this is the legacy of this Government. Our education results are the worst of any state across every age group in reading; the second worst in every age group in writing; the worst in every age group in spelling, the worst in every age group in grammar and punctuation; and the worst in years 5, 7 and 9 in numeracy.

The most damning fact of all about those statistics is that they are going backwards under this Government. At Estimates, we asked about the funding in this Budget for education. We talked about the initiative regarding child safety officers and the fact that there was no new money in the budget for the safeguarding children and young people initiative. Given what I have talked about in my contribution to date, there is a need for additional funding because, minister, you are well aware of the challenges facing education and the pressures that our providers, teachers and teacher aides are under each and every day, as well as the complex social, mental and wellbeing issues they are dealing with in the school setting.

School is becoming much more a place of support that perhaps it has not been in years gone by. There is that increased need to be providing those wraparound services in a school setting for children and for their families. We asked a lot of questions about why there was not increased funding in the Budget for these positions, and we still believe there should be. I understand the explanation that is provided, that it is through the bilateral agreement; but, of course, as across most of the public services that this Government is providing, there is increased demand. There will be a need for increased funding across each of those areas as well. We believe there should have been additional funding for these positions. We understand the importance of them and want to see them given every chance to succeed and to provide better support to our children and families across our school settings across Tasmania.

I also put on the record my thanks to all our teachers and teacher aides and our school communities across the state for the wonderful work that they do. I do not believe the statistics that I read into the *Hansard* today are reflective of their good intentions or the wonderful work that they do with our children and our families. It is a structural problem that we have in Tasmania that we need to address, and it certainly sits outside the school setting and out across the community. Even though I believe this Government is accountable for those outcomes, I consider that all of us in this place have a responsibility to try to improve those outcomes for Tasmanians. That is what we are elected to do. Our role in opposition is to highlight these issues, advocate for change and to call out this Government when it is not doing a good job - and we believe it is not doing a good job.

I am also concerned about students having to wait too long for support in our schools. During Estimates, we found out that the average wait times for school support staff are at an



alarming 140 days to see a school psychologist, 28 days for an intervention, and 108 days to see a speech pathologist. That is very damning, and needs to be fixed.

There are currently 47.6 full-time equivalent speech and language pathologist positions funded across the education department, but 15.23 of these positions - or 32 per cent - are vacant at the moment. I want to understand from the minister what is being done to address that. I know there are initiatives at the University of Tasmania right now, looking at transition to practice course for speech pathology to ensure that we are locally training our own.

Why has it taken this long? This is not a new issue, and there has been no planning done by this Government around workforce development, particularly across allied health. For years people have had to leave Tasmania to study an allied health degree and they are less likely to return to Tasmania to practice. That is a significant problem for a state that has an ageing population. It is going to have an increase in demand year-on-year for allied health services and we just do not have the staff here to provide those services.

I want to understand from the Government what they are doing to address that, and how they intend to make sure that these children who are in desperate need of these specialist services, do get the care and the intervention they need in a good time frame. It should not be at the further detriment of those children, particularly when it comes to speech pathology which is fundamental to a child's development, and can also be useful in identifying issues with hearing and the like. These are all significant barriers to their learning and their early developmental years, particularly in primary school as they learn to read and write.

These are structural and fundamental things that need to be corrected to make sure children have the services and support they need, so we can have better outcomes in reading and writing and arithmetic across our school settings and across our communities.

We have also spoken for a long time now about the importance of good mental health and wellbeing support for children across our school communities. We know that all lifelong mental health problems begin before the age of 14 and that suicide continues to be a leading cause of death for young Australians. We have called on the Government to implement our policy about mental health workers in all Tasmanian schools. They have not done that to date. I put on the record again, Chair, that we want to see that initiative implemented by this Government because it could bring much better outcomes and support services for children, and their families, in our schools across Tasmania.

My last point goes back to where I started. In Tasmania, we have an illiteracy rate of 50 per cent and that is completely unacceptable. Literacy is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our people, and to our people's ability to gain meaningful employment, to get a roof over their head, to access health services, and also to have good health literacy and good health outcomes across their lifespan.

Education is the pillar for building that, and this Government is failing.

**Time expired.**

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Chair, there was a lot to talk to minister Jaensch about. I will go through the ones that it is possible to go through.

We started our questioning of the minister around evidence that was given to the commission of inquiry by Sonya Enkelmann, an expert in this area. Ms Enkelmann told the commission of inquiry that she had been commissioned by Communities Tasmania to do a body of work on an outcomes framework for children and young people in out-of-home care and work on reforming the model of family-based care.

The evidence that Ms Enkelmann gave to the inquiry was that those bodies of work seem to have been lost in the department. The concern was that there was no continuity in this reform work and there was not a clear direction, particularly on outcomes for young people in out-of-home care, to the department or to service providers. The minister suggested through his answers that those bodies of work are not lost; they are still guiding the agency. However, what has become really clear, particularly through the commission of inquiry, is that the pace of reform in out-of-home care and Child Safety is dangerously glacial.

We have recommendations from the royal commission from four or five years ago saying that all states needed to introduce child-safe organisations frameworks and legislation, and a reportable conduct scheme. What the committee heard was that although this recommendation from the royal commission is some four years old, that work will not be finalised for another three years. It is simply not good enough.

I heard what the minister and his advisers had to say about having to bring organisations across the state up to standard in understanding what this framework would mean and what their legal obligations would be, but it is just not good enough for it to take seven years after the royal commission has identified the need for legislation reform for that reform to be in place. We will certainly be keeping a close eye on the minister's progress in this area.

We also asked questions about the advice and referral line, which at the table I likened to something of a data black hole. I heard what the minister had to say about the benefit of a line that can respond to a child's needs and see if there is something that can be done by service providers or the state to support that family and keep that child safe and at home. I understand that, but the problem we have with the system, in our view, is that it fundamentally changes the notification process. If a person has a concern about a young person and rings up the advice and referral line, there is a listening and triage process. Then a decision may be made to refer the matter to Child Safety and that is when the clock starts ticking on a referral. We regard that as a somewhat risky situation if there is a child sitting in that system, the advice and referral line, for two or more weeks before a decision is made on referring to Child Safety. Again, we will be watching the minister closely on this.

**Mr Jaensch** - The triage is done up the front end.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I said I heard you at the table and I acknowledge some of what you said.

The other real frustration for us was the question I asked initially of the Premier about the number of State Service staff who had been stood down as a result of historical or contemporary allegations of child sexual abuse. Before he was stomped on, by probably somewhere in DPAC, the Premier said that there had been a total, I think, of 31 state servants stood down and he was prepared to detail which agencies they had been stood down from.

I asked the minister for Education and child safety who has responsibility for the wellbeing of young people in Ashley how many of the Department of Education, the Child Safety Service, Youth Justice and Ashley Youth Detention Centre had been stood down as a result of historical allegations, ED5 investigations, and that is when the wall came down.

We do not buy the argument that naming how many people, for example, have been stood down from the Department of Education potentially compromises their right to natural justice and a fair hearing. That is a rubbish argument. Parents of children in public schools in Tasmania have a right to know if there have been people working in the Department of Education, which there have been and that is the evidence to the inquiry, who have been stood down because they presented a real and present danger to children.

The Premier's reflex was to be honest about which departments these state servants had been stood down from. This minister's reflex was not to be open about that, and then later in the answers to the questions on notice we saw the Premier revert to the default position, which is not being open with Tasmanians about where people who threaten the health and wellbeing of children, predators potentially, are being stood down in government agencies. It is simply not good enough and it makes a mockery of this new Premier's commitment to openness and transparency -

**Dr Woodruff** - Not to mention Mr Ellis's comments yesterday about tracking down paedophiles and doing everything we can to lock them up.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is quite a helpful interjection. I did catch that part of Mr Ellis's posturing, and it was in relation to mandatory minimum sentencing legislation which the Government has put on the table for the fourth or fifth time, and the stated commitment to stop paedophiles in their tracks, yet there is no transparency with Tasmanians about how significant that problem has been and what is being done to address it.

I also want to understand what this Government's plan is for children and young people during a pandemic, to really understand what advice the Department of Education and the Education minister were working on from Public Health. I want to understand how it could be that it is official government policy to allow more than 50 000 children and young people under the age of 19 to be infected with a novel coronavirus which has known long-term consequences, which causes brain damage, enlargement of the heart, gets into our neurons, our veins, and every organ in the body.

This Government's policy has basically been one of herd immunity, which is completely discredited. Even at our own Menzies Centre, the evidence is coming in that there is no such thing as herd immunity with COVID-19, and particularly with Omicron, yet we have a government that allowed at the beginning of this school year children under 12 to go into under-ventilated classrooms unmasked, and the highest number of infections have been amongst primary school-aged students. The cavalier attitude to the health and wellbeing of our children is very distressing to many Tasmanian parents. There is a sense of abandonment, and now the Government's position is to remove all masks from schools.

This novel coronavirus is killing, on average, 50 Australians a day and has taken the lives of more than 80 Tasmanians. This is a scandal and a Public Health failure of epic proportions. Over time the general public will come to understand that they have been scammed by their political leaders and their not independent Public Health officials into allowing themselves to

be infected with a very dangerous and rapidly mutating virus. I am very worried about children and young people. I am deeply worried about this official government policy which says it is okay for them to be infected over and over again.

Our kids deserve protection. We have anecdotal stories of whole classrooms full of bright young maths whizzes, all of whom got infected with COVID-19, who failed their maths test as a collective. That happened in Sydney. I saw it on social media. It was a report from a parent. We are playing with fire here but, worse than that, we are playing with the health and the long-term health and long-term possibilities of our children. It is bordering on criminal. The extent of the negligence is really breathtaking.

**Time expired.**

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Chair, there are many things to report back on, but I want to give an overview of my reflections on the minister's responses and his actions as the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, arguably the most important issues facing Tasmanians today.

For the rest of our lives we will be responding to the rapidly heating planet and the effect it is having on natural disasters increasing and our capacity to produce food, our capacity to have homes that are safe, our capacity to have the infrastructure that links our communities together and is able to survive the pressures that we are seeing unfolding in eastern Australia right now, not to mention all around the world.

I started off asking the minister about when he would release a climate action plan for Tasmania. Currently, under this Government, there is no plan of action for how we respond to natural disasters. There is no plan for how we respond to multiple crop failures as a result of climatic conditions we cannot control, except for the emissions that we put into the air, and that is something I will get to.

I talked about what the New Zealand Government is doing. They are doing some incredibly wide-reaching stuff. Standard stuff, really. We only get excited about it because there is a dearth of it in Tasmania. New Zealand has an action plan to protect communities and the financial system from shocks and future disasters from natural events that will occur more frequently.

The response of the minister was that there will be an action plan after the climate change legislation, which has not, so far, been produced. It is delayed by a year on the Government's own time frame. This time last year the Government promised Tasmanians, the climate change stakeholder community and the parliament that we would have that legislation last year. Here we are -

**Mr Jaensch** - It was tabled last year.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You are in control of government business and we are not. You have not brought it on. It is fine for you to have it sitting there as a not very important order of business. It is obviously much more important to push through anti-protest legislation, while we heard from Ms Archer that there is zero evidence the Government can produce that there has been a single example of a protester harming a person in a workplace in Tasmania. There is nothing. Nothing to underpin it. Nothing with WorkSafe.

The Government's priorities are distressing for young people. They are very anxiety-provoking. The glacial and dangerous pace of action from this minister on preparing us for the inevitable increasing natural disasters is appalling and shameful. He should be named the minister for dithering. He is certainly not the minister for climate change action. What we have just seen from Ms O'Connor with him in Children and Youth is the same thing repeated portfolio by portfolio. Where is the state of the environment report? Where is the climate change action plan? Where is the legislation to govern us on the most important issue we have in front of us as a community this century?

In addition to the glacial pace of action, the other narrative that was very clear from the minister's responses in question times is a series of false statements the minister made designed to pretend to people who are listening that there is some concern to take action on the issues that matter the most to them. Those issues, for anyone who is concerned about climate change, would be reducing the emissions that we put into the environment. The minister said:

Our Government is leading the way in terms of our EV fleet, in terms of the emissions that we control. Reducing emissions has to be an absolute key focus of what we do. We are taking that commitment to track those emissions down to their source, to work with the owners of those emissions and reduce them so that we can remain net zero or below, up to and beyond 2030.

They were the minister's words. I will put it to him: why then, will you not meet with Dr Jen Sanger, who has just produced a report on the amount of emissions that government-managed Forestry Tasmania is putting every single year into the atmosphere - emissions that this Government controls? This Government can do something about those emissions. Those emissions are the largest source of emissions of any single sector in Tasmania and they can be gone with the stroke of a pen - 75 million tonnes of carbon can remain protected in our forests until 2050.

Our carbon-dense forests are being logged and burnt every single day, every single year with this minister's complicity. The emissions from that logging and burning creates more carbon dioxide-equivalent gases going into heating our atmosphere than 1.1 million cars on the road, two-and-a-half times more than our whole transport sector. The minister has the gall to talk about the only thing that this Government is doing to reduce emissions, which is to increase the number of electric vehicles in the government car fleet. Even that is a lie. There is no effort to do this, none at all.

I asked this minister questions, I asked the minister for Transport questions about how this is being done, and in Treasury. It is not happening, it is words that go nowhere, designed to create a false sense of action, designed to trick young people into thinking that their Government is taking this seriously, is taking action.

I asked you, minister, 'Talking about reducing emissions, which you have agreed is a key and important measure'. He interrupted me and said, 'It has to be the main game'. If only people could believe what you said, minister.

**Mr Jaensch** - Mmm.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No 'mmm, mmm': if only people could believe what he said. Why not get up and talk about the main game?

**Mr Jaensch** - I do but you do not want me to interject, otherwise I would be all over you.

**CHAIR** - Please do not incite the minister.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You do not have the guts to stand up and answer that question directly to people. When you said to me in a committee, on behalf of all the people I represent, that controlling, reducing our emissions has to be the main game, yet, you say absolutely nothing about the largest source of emissions in Tasmania.

**Mr Jaensch** - I have read in a dozen initiatives and you can just choose not to hear them.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The largest source of emissions in Tasmania is written very clearly in this report, *Tasmania's Forest Carbon: From Emissions Disaster to a Climate Solution*. We can have a solution, we can retain and enhance the stores of carbon in our forests. Instead of having the highest emitting industry in Tasmania being the native forest clearfelling and burning sector, we can end that and make something really substantial.

The reason the Government is going soft on a commitment to a net-zero-today target and to bettering that by 2030, is because they are planning to keep logging the 400 000 hectares of still-available native forest between now and 2030. They are planning to make sure that every single bit of the carbon stored in those forests will be emitted into the atmosphere. That is the Liberals' plan. That is what the Liberals are doing in government. They are keeping to the door open to logging the native forest until it is gone, until it is emitted, until every single stick of wood is either lying on the forest floor or has been burnt.

We will not stop talking about it and the community will not stop talking about it. People will not stop protesting because the minister is obviously not listening to science, he is not listening to children, and he is not listening to the community of people who are concerned. He is not listening to anybody, I guess, except the people who are paying the piper. It is about signalling in the dirtiest and most dangerous way to the wrong people in the community. We utterly reject everything that this minister is trying to do in this portfolio because it is pathetic and hateful.

**Time expired.**

**Ms WHITE** - Chair, I will talk about a couple of matters that deserve further examination from the budget Estimates time with Mr Jaensch. I will start on the climate change bill. I note the comments about the delay made by the member who just resumed her seat. You probably should have been called the minister for dithering because there is certainly no action. It is a process that has been drawn out not just for a year but a number of years now.

The review of that act was supposed to occur a couple of years ago from memory, and it has certainly taken a very long time. There was a bill tabled in October last year but the Government has certainly not demonstrated any urgency about bringing that forward for debate and we will not be dealing with that before we go into the winter recess. That is an indication of how little this Government cares about taking action on climate change. There are some important elements of that bill we would like to debate and some important amendments we would like to move to strengthen that bill. It will still be a number of months before we get a chance to start to talk about that and that is another example of the wrong priorities of this Government.

I will talk about the safeguarding officers and the absolute disgrace of this Government in making an announcement and the Premier giving a ministerial statement to speak about the Government's commitments and outline new initiatives to keep children safe, which are vitally important and largely drawn from the independent review held into the Department of Education looking at their response into child sexual abuse allegations. It was very serious work that was undertaken and an important report was provided to government. When the Premier came into this House and gave that ministerial statement, he outlined a number of new initiatives that were based on those recommendations and certainly had our support. However, when we saw the Budget we realised that there was no new money for those initiatives. The line item in the Budget has a clear asterisk next to it which, in the footnotes, says quite clearly that this will be funded from existing resources of the department, in particular the safeguarding officers who will be in our schools, which was one of the recommendations from that inquiry into the Department of Education's response to child sexual abuse.

The concern we have is not only has the Government given lip service to something that is incredibly serious, but they are also setting these initiatives up to fail because without additional resourcing, without providing the money that is needed to make sure they can succeed, they are at risk of failing, just like some of the good initiatives that commenced in Child Safety have been exposed as failing our children because they have not been properly resourced. We saw that with the evidence provided to the commission of inquiry this week and last week about the lack of resourcing and the vacancies and the terrible impacts it has on caseloads and children.

**Mr Jaensch** - They are either vacancies or they are lack of resources. They cannot be the same thing, Ms White.

**Ms WHITE** - I genuinely cannot hear what you are saying, minister. I encourage you not to interject.

**Mr Jaensch** - They would not be vacant if they did not exist.

**Ms WHITE** - You can make your own comments in a minute. There has been some very compelling evidence provided to the commission of inquiry and there have been answers provided to the questions that were put on notice about vacancy rates across your departments, minister. It is not something you can defend. It is there in black and white. It concerns us that you have made announcements about new initiatives without new money. It is not only us who have raised concern about this. It is also the Australian Education Union Tasmania. I quote David Genford, the Tasmanian branch president, who says:

It is a despicable sham. Renaming money already spent on education and children shows the Rockliff Government takes positive PR more seriously than child safety.

That is the reality. The Government made a number of announcements and then claimed, because of a bilateral agreement they signed in 2017, that there will be the money there to fund it. That money had already been earmarked for programs that are offered through our schools and currently support the learning of our children. They had never envisioned in 2017 that the Government would be announcing safeguarding children officers in 2022. I do not know what the Premier and the minister for Education take the Tasmanian community and our teachers for, but it is pretty damning when we already have a budget that does not appropriately

recognise the pressures in the system, particularly in Child Safety, and now there are new initiatives announced with no new money.

The final thing I will talk about is some of the conversations we had in the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, in particular the conversations we had around Closing the Gap, capacity-building funding that has been announced in the Budget. The intent behind this, I think, is quite valuable but the concern we have is again the Government setting these organisations up to fail. The funding is short-term funding. It will help to build the capacity of organisations, some whom do not even deliver services now, to start to deliver some services in their communities. Through a conversation in the committee it was explained to us that they would then start to bid against other not-for-profit organisations or service providers who were operating in the same space in the future and that would be how they would acquire ongoing funding.

That defeats the whole point of Closing the Gap. You fund these organisations so they can close the gap, not so they can compete against other organisations who are delivering similar or like services to similar people. If you are serious about Closing the Gap you have to fund these organisations ongoing so they cannot just build their capacity now, but continue in a sustainable way to deliver services to their community to improve health outcomes education outcomes and employment outcomes, not just set them up for a couple of years' time so they then have to compete in the market for funding from government and other sources. That is not what Closing the Gap is about, and we are not doing particularly well on those measures where we assess how we are going against Closing the Gap benchmarking. I do not think setting these organisations up to have to fight for money in the future to do that service work we would like them to be able to do is the right approach.

I credit the Government for acknowledging that we need to build the capacity of these organisations but you cannot just leave them in a situation where you essentially set them up to fail. I raised concerns about that in the committee and I place that on the record again now. There did not seem to be very much detail around how those capacity-building funding grants will be rolled out and I hope that in the design of that program they look to other initiatives that have been rolled out in the past by governments of all levels.

One I will draw the minister's attention to was run by the primary health network when they rolled out initiatives around 10 or so years ago, probably less but around then, to fund organisations in our community for five years at that time to build local capacity, to improve connection and health. It was a real social determinants of health approach, but when the money ran out those services stopped operating. That is the concern that I have here: the intent is good but the design needs to be better than programs we have seen in the past, because they fail. If we are serious about Closing the Gap we have to learn from those mistakes and put in place better structures so that we can improve the lives of Tasmanian Aboriginal people so they become healthier, stay engaged in education, access housing and employment, have a better life and more equitable outcomes compared to the general population.

**Estimates of the Minister for Education, Children and Youth, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth agreed to.**



## **DIVISIONS 9, 11 and 12**

Minister for Racing, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries.

[3.19 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** - Chair, I have the honour of rising today to discuss Small Business. I will also run through digital cybersecurity and I will also have a look at some of the areas through different portfolios that Ms Ogilvie looks after.

I will say what a fantastic job our shadow minister, Jane Finlay, has been doing in the small business area. As you know, she is unwell this week. She is passionate about the small business portfolio and has operated a number of small businesses in the electorate of Bass. She understands how difficult it is to manage a small business, as do many people on the Labor team. Tasmanian Labor is passionate about the topic, given that over the past two years we have watched the debilitating impacts of COVID-19, and how financially and emotionally crippling the effects of COVID-19 have been on the small business sector. It has been very tough.

More than 40 900 businesses operate in Tasmania, and 97 per cent of these are classified as small businesses - as the minister would know - either as sole operators or employing fewer than 19 workers. I will reiterate how hard Ms Finlay has worked across this portfolio. She has also worked in conjunction with Rebecca White, our Leader; Shane Broad, Dean Winter, Anita Dow, Ella Haddad, Michelle O'Byrne and with me. She has gone right across our whole team. Just about every business in Tasmania would fall under that small business category.

The three largest industry sectors in Tasmania by number of businesses are construction, agriculture, forestry and fishing, followed by rental, hiring and real estate services. As many of you would be aware, Ms Finlay also has the shadow portfolio of primary industries and water. I have the shadow portfolio of building and construction. We have a lot to do with small businesses especially in those areas. The great thing about small business is that it is all encompassing. Whether you are a fisher, a dairy farmer, a builder, a hairdresser or a horse trainer, small businesses touch most parts of our community.

It was great to hear that Ms Ogilvie is very happy to advocate on behalf of anybody who has a business issue; thank you for that. One issue which the Labor Party is quite passionate about at present is the Tasmanian rock lobster industry and the proposed policy and rule changes that will come into effect from 1 November this year. There is a large small business issue at hand that has potential to decimate the livelihoods of those living in our regional communities. Like many, the past two years have been difficult for the rock lobster industry with severe economic challenges throughout the pandemic, as Ms Ogilvie put it; and also with the restrictions of trade to China. To emerge from that battle and be whacked with another whammy is blatantly insulting.

I am talking about the proposal to expand the 60-pot rule in the north-west and north-east of the state's waters, as the minister would be aware. There are concerns that this expansion will only further support some larger operators, while smaller operators - many of whom have had this tradition passed down through the generations - will be shut out of the industry. This places financial and emotional pressure on the fisher who is squeezed out of the industry and the flow-on effects will be catastrophic.

To use King Island as an example, these fishers have families living, working and being educated on the island. In some cases, there is a partner who works at the local IGA; they might have a second job at the airport or the dairy, or the local bakery. They might be the nurse at the local medical centre. They might deliver the local beauty services or work on a farm. Many of them work in the childcare centre or they also work at the school. Most people who live on King Island do not have just one job.

You lose the small businesses from the fishery, and you collapse the fishery on King Island and many vital services that will go with it. Small businesses and people will be gone from those vibrant communities. That is the spin-off effect when you do not think through policies, especially policies like this one where no empirical evidence or data or research has been undertaken, to boost reasoning for making such a policy decision. That is why it seems to us to be a decision based on lobbying and political persuasion, which is certainly not in the best interest of communities, especially communities like King Island, and also communities like St Helens.

Break O'Day Mayor, Mick Tucker, has reiterated the same points that we just spoke about with King Island. He says that Break O'Day Council strongly opposes the proposed rule changes of expanding the 60 pot area and requests an in-depth economic analysis of the proposal be delivered before implementation. The proposal is a reactive, ill-advised response to the current market and does not consider long-term implications. This includes detrimental impacts on the viability of smaller operators, as well as impacts on local businesses such as slip ways, boilermakers and all those who depend on those operators. He went on to say in that letter that 'the impact of such an occurrence will be detrimental to the Break O'Day region's economy', which I know, Chair, you and I both feel very strongly about.

That is two small regional communities, at pretty much opposite ends of the state, that are reliant on small business. Two small regional communities that could become ghost towns, stripped of vital and essential services, if the implications of this rule to small business owners is not well considered. It needs to be well considered.

It beggars belief that the consequences need to be spelt out to the Government. We should not have to do this. You should have already done this. This should have already been resolved and some common sense should have prevailed, especially by now. It is incompetent.

Ms Ogilvie, you have stated that your door is always open and that you are always happy to have conversations, and we welcome that. It is a very sensible approach. We also understand that you have agreed to raise the issue with Ms Palmer and we look forward to hearing how that proceeds because it is a very serious issue.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Yes, I am happy to do that.

**Ms BUTLER** - Speaking of sending Ms Ogilvie in to clean up the Government's mess, Ms Finlay also raised during the Estimates hearings an issue with a group of tradespeople who are small business operators. They are awaiting payment for work that they have done constructing four community housing properties in the electorate of Bass. These tradespeople were engaged by a Victorian based contractor, Landmark Construction, and are yet to be paid for their services. It is understood that the properties will soon, or already have, received a final sign off, meaning that Landmark Construction will be finally paid in full. However, the Tasmanian tradespeople are yet to be paid. They are small business operators who were

confident in taking this contract, because they thought they would not have to worry about a building collapse or not being paid because it is a Government contract but that is not what has happened.

In the process of chasing up the payment and before this matter was raised, the tradespeople were threatened. They raised the issue with Tasmania Police and also the housing department, and they have been fighting for payment for some time. I understand this issue was raised with the Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing, Mr Barnett, and also with the minister for Police, Mrs Petrusma, back in April this year.

These are tradespeople. They need to be paid. It screams of incompetency, but what happens a lot when we advocate on behalf of people in our community, you will find that the community members, business owners or people representing an organisation get sent on a bureaucratic roundabout.

One of the most important jobs that we can do as local members is to step into the middle of that roundabout and say stop. Someone has to fix this problem now because people get sent from one department back to the other one and then back to the other department. Many people just give up, and I am not sure whether that is a strategy because you see it time and time again that people literally just give up. It looks like that could be a problem here, no-one taking responsibility for it, so we would love to see that resolved because it is our job to take responsibility and advocate for people. That is why they elect us as members of parliament and it is one of the biggest functions we have in that role.

Through Estimates we heard that, in 99 per cent of cases, the state Government pays invoices on paper within the 14-day policy. I know that Ms Finlay called on Ms Ogilvie to consider that the same 14-day clause is reflected when any Tasmanian is engaged as a subcontractor on behalf of a government project, as in the case with Landmark Construction. We have read that Australia's construction industry is clinging to a thread, with an estimated one in two businesses trading insolvent at the moment, which is very concerning. We should not be making life harder for these people. We should be supporting them and advocating on their behalf.

We have heard that many industries are not coping in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with inflation skyrocketing - they are saying it could be up to 7 per cent by the end of this year - and cost-of-living pressures driving consumers away from spontaneous retail spending. We have seen in media reports that the buy now, pay later sector is bleeding money because many using these payment methods are now unable to pay back their debt. We have a lot of problems coming our way. Indeed, insolvencies are high on the radar, with the state recording 34 bankruptcies in the March quarter 2022, an increase of 13.3 per cent from the same quarter the previous year. We know a storm is coming. I read a presentation from a Deloitte event recently, and the sheer billions of dollars that are owed to the ATO is a national problem. However, we have a high concentration of small businesses in Tasmania and we need to be mindful about what sorts of pressures are being placed on our small businesses in Tasmania and what we can do to support them and advocate for them.

In the Estimates hearing, minister Ogilvie said that the Government is keeping a close eye on the question of insolvency and reiterated that it was important for any business that is having trouble in the small business sector to come forward early and ask for help to see what we can do. That is great and we really appreciate that. We know there is some advocacy for

small businesses. This is going to be a huge problem for us, especially as local members, but as a government we need to make sure we are doing whatever we can to support those small businesses. If we can save them from having to go into liquidation, we need to do whatever we can.

I would like to briefly talk about 1 March when Tasmania lost contact with the world, pretty much, for six hours. It was not a one-off; there have been circumstances when that has happened before. It was a pretty unusual event to have the lines severed in the same afternoon, but it showed how vulnerable our digital infrastructure really is and the impacts of what that can mean to us as a state. It really did cut us off from the world. There was a small amount that was still running through the Basslink cable but it was not sufficient. The system that is in place and the attempts over many years for other cables to be constructed have been largely ignored. Each time it is ignored it becomes more expensive. When your economy is so reliant on the infrastructure and you are at the whim of somebody putting a spade through a wire in Victoria, we have to be able to safeguard that digital connection a lot better than we are.

According to consumer action group, Digital Tasmania, the 1 March outage impacted the following services: Optus and Vodafone mobile - no service or SMS only for four to five hours; home and business landlines - even phoning 000 or next door was not available on many landline phones. That is contrary to information that was provided in that Estimates committee because it looks like there is evidence that 000 was unavailable in Tasmania for a period of time over that six-hour duration and that is not good enough. We need to have protocol guidelines that switch over straight away. Other services affected were internet through most providers, thus affecting many other services; eftpos systems and ATMs with many banks; airport check-ins; car rental bookings - we know some planes could not take off in that six hours; and television stations - off-air or broadcasting mainland programming.

My son told me that Netflix was still running because it went through the Basslink cable. Many Tasmanian government phone services including the government switchboard and also the coronavirus call centre were non-contactable for that six hours. It is not good enough in the year 2022 to be cut off pretty much from the rest of the world - except for Netflix - for six hours. We must do so much better.

There were numerous remote sensors and internet devices reported as unavailable such as back-to-base security alarms, rain gauges and river flood level sensors - these are the kinds of things when you start thinking about the consequences - automated weather stations, sewer pump stations, automated electricity switchovers and sensors.

Customers with internet providers came back after a few hours but they were slow because the capacity on Basslink appears not to be sufficient. Tasmanian Labor and consumer groups such as Digital Tas have previously highlighted the risk to Tasmania having limited connectivity to the world, both in terms of reliability and for competitive access. We know the minister's background in telecommunications and she has previously spoken about the reliability of that infrastructure and understands how important that is.

We will keep pursuing that and supporting advancements in that area because it is important for our state. We cannot afford to be cut off from the rest of the world for six hours, or any time, really. We need to make sure there are appropriate protocol guidelines in place. From advice I received, to restore those 000 lines, it took somebody actually punching in numbers in Victoria and apparently there is talk about it being done through unsecured keys

because there was basically no protocol in place for an automatic switchover. We can do so much better. It is unprofessional and sounds a bit 1970s to me.

**Time expired.**

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Chair, this was obviously Ms Ogilvie's first Estimates as minister so I will cut her a bit of slack for reading every answer out of her brief -

**Ms Ogilvie** - I thought you wanted the information -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay, I will take that interjection. I know I sound like an old fart, but when I was a minister it was a matter of great pride to me -

**Mr Winter** - I think the correct term is 'back in my day'.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Back in my day, Mr Winter, when I was a minister, it was a source of great pride to me to be across my portfolios and be able to sit at the Estimates table and answer questions eye to eye with opposition, or in some cases, Greens members who were giving me grief across the table. I am always a bit disappointed when I see ministers at the Estimates table rely heavily on material that is prepared for them in writing by the department. I put that on the record and I hope next year Ms Ogilvie is more across her portfolios.

We started this Estimates session with Racing and the outstanding petition signed by 13 378 Tasmanians calling for an end to public funding of greyhound racing, remembering that the greyhound racing industry receives about \$10 million each year in public funding. I acknowledge the work of the Greyhound Rehabilitation Enthusiasts Association of Tasmania, Let Greyhounds Run Free, the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds, the RSPCA and the Dogs' Home of Tasmania, the Kingborough Dog Walking Association and the Huon Valley Dog Walking Association. Those incredible people who just love these dogs, with zero resourcing, managed to sign up the biggest e-petition in the history of the Tasmanian parliament.

I asked the minister for her response to that petition. She acknowledged that it is great that people are participating in democracy and was very supportive of that, but then we got the usual propaganda we get from every minister in this role - this is not personally about Ms Ogilvie; it is just the official position. She said, 'What I can say is that the Government and the racing industry regard the welfare of animals as critical'. Well, we can all say that. It is very easy to say that, but it is what you do about those words if that is your belief set. We have a government here that is on the brink of pulling the integrity arm of the racing industry, the Office of Racing Integrity, which has been beset by troubles, taking away its independence and separation effectively from Tasracing and absorbing it into Tasracing. We are going to have the stewards and the integrity element of the racing industry, which were separated from Tasracing for a good reason, now back in the tent with Tasracing, which we regard as a highly regrettable outcome.

Each week on the track dogs are injured, some catastrophically, and are either put down on the track or taken away - as was the case with Tah Bernard, a dog in Launceston late last year - and they die a short time later as a result of their injuries or are put down. The fate of Tah Bernard came up at the Estimates table. I asked the minister what her thoughts were on

the investigation into the fate of Tah Bernard and trainer Mr Anthony Bullock. Again, there was another read-out answer from the department that said:

In relation to the investigation of the matter of Tah Bernard and Mr Bullock, as I said, we regard animal welfare as critically important. The number of greyhounds euthanised at racecourses because of injuries received is trending downwards over time. You would be aware of that, Ms O'Connor, from days when you were in government.

Irrelevant, because I never had anything to do with the racing industry.

**Ms Ogilvie** - You were in government.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Twice Ms Ogilvie tried to say 'you would know about this because you were in government'. I had zero to do with the racing industry. It was an attempt to have a crack at me, which I did not even realise until I was re-reading the *Hansard* earlier today.

We had a situation where the Director of Racing released a report into what happened to Tah Bernard, who was taken to the Mowbray vet, could not be seen in time, then allegedly dragged out squealing from the vet, tossed into the back of a trailer and taken away and was put down the next day. There were zero consequences for the trainer and zero guidance from the Office of Racing Integrity about how you might prevent a situation like that from happening again. We have an industry that is cruel at its heart and profits from the suffering of animals.

I know there are a couple of recommendations that came out of that investigation, but one of them, as the minister said, was that veterinary surgeons requested that all greyhound trial events be procured in such a way that allows for its attendance in case of injury within 15 minutes. Why was that not happening already? The second recommendation was that another review be undertaken of all policies and guidelines in respect of the euthanasia of greyhounds to ensure that the information available to participants in the community is clear, consistent and transparent. Blah, blah, blah. Nothing for these dogs except a life invariably cut short.

We did hear that, because of some reforms that have taken place in the greyhound racing industry, and part of this is because of the work of the select committee that we established, the minister reported that euthanasia rates are down. I will say that 'euthanasia' is the wrong word. Euthanasia is from two Greek words and it means a sweet death, a gentle death. In contemporary parlance we might call it a mercy killing. These dogs are being killed because they are injured, they are past their use-by date, and they are expensive to feed.

We have seen the number of dogs killed, euthanased, decline in 2016-17, with 309, and in 2021 there were 40, so that is some progress. Part of the solution has been to better resource the Greyhound Adoption Program and Brightside and to some extent the RSPCA to make sure these beautiful dogs are found homes. Now of course we have a glut of beautiful greyhounds looking for homes. As long as this industry is subsidised to breed dogs for profit we are going to have an animal welfare issue with how we look out for these beautiful dogs. They are such gentle, sweet-natured dogs.

I also asked about the fate of Fly Calypso, a young greyhound that crashed into the catching pen gate, I understand, at the Devonport track. Mr Helmich said there was a post-race

vet examination and it was found that the dog had a spinal injury so they euthanased the dog. The understanding is that the dog collided with the catching pen gate and for some reason which is unknown, it failed to stop, probably because he hit the gate, but again, dogs are expendable in this industry.

I encourage the minister, who I am certain, like all thoughtful people, actually loves animals, to sit down with the wonderful people who put together that petition and listen to their side of the greyhound racing industry. It is all very well to go along to the races and wear a hat with a fascinator -

**Mr Winter** - Have they sat down with the racing industry?

**CHAIR** - Order, Mr Winter.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, they have. A number of those organisations have had conversations through ORI and Tasracing and sat down with Mr Helmich. There is quite a constructive conversation there and a relative openness about data. I encourage this minister to spend some time with the greyhounds and listen to the stories of people who love and care for them because this industry is most certainly not sustainable and it is losing its social licence.

I also asked the minister what the Minister for Science and Technology did in relation to the latest science. I am still baffled why we have a Minister for Science and Technology who apparently has not sat down with all our outstanding climate scientists since she became minister and was not up to date with the most contemporary science on logging and bushfire risk.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I did sit down with them prior to that, though. You're just being a little bit selective there.

**CHAIR** - Order. I am sure Ms O'Connor will listen to you in silence if you listen to her in silence.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If you are going to be the minister for Science you might want to take notice of some of the science.

**Time expired.**

**Mr WINTER** - Chair, I rise to make a contribution on the output, predominantly on Racing but a little bit on Science and Technology as well. I was lucky enough to get to take charge with the absence of Ms Butler on a portfolio I am very passionate about. I enjoyed it very much.

I will start with the good. The part of Estimates I enjoyed the most and I thought was the most useful and constructive was the Science and Technology output. The minister allowed me to interact almost directly with Dr Justin Thurley, who is an outstanding public servant. He took me through a lot of the risks they are assessing, particularly around cybersecurity and telecommunications. There was a free and frank exchange where we got to the bottom of the issue. It is only a short time to scrutinise the portfolio. I was able to do that and get a good understanding of what he and his team are doing. I thank the minister, and the Chair, for allowing that exchange to happen.

I have to say that was in stark contrast to Racing, where it was difficult. It was not at Mr Barnett levels of obfuscation but it was pretty close -

**Ms Ogilvie** - I do not know if that is a compliment or a backhander.

**Mr WINTER** - I am not sure whether the trajectory you want to go, minister, is towards Mr Barnett's level or the other way. I hope it is the other way and you answer questions a little better than he did and, perhaps in this portfolio output, a little more direct with the answers to the questions.

The issue around racing predominantly for racing enthusiasts, for professionals and everyone in between - which is actually quite a lot of people in the racing industry, particularly in greyhound racing is about integrity. There are not many people, I think there is only one trainer who is full-time training. Most of them are hobby trainers, part-timers -

**Ms O'Connor** - He does not even have a kennel licence, that one.

**Mr WINTER** - That is the cohort of people we are asking questions on behalf of, or about, in Ms O'Connor's case. The question for them, not just greyhound but also harness and thoroughbred, has been around integrity for a long time.

I kicked off my questioning on this output with now Walkley Young Journalist of the Year, Emily Baker's excellent reporting on racing integrity from last year. I asked the minister about that report. I hope Ms Ogilvie has read the report now.

**Ms Ogilvie** - You gave it to me, thank you.

**Mr WINTER** - That is good. That report was a summation of a lot of concern that had been around the industry for a while. The question of those issues, the allegations, have been well put. The minister said I used parliamentary privilege. I actually just read from an ABC report that was on the internet -

**Ms Ogilvie** - I do not think I said parliamentary privilege, did I?

**Mr WINTER** - I think you did. The point I made to the minister at the time was, 'Well, actually this is on the internet'.

The issue is that the minister, and the minister before her, continued to say that the review of the Racing Regulation Act would deal with these integrity allegations. What we found out during Estimates was that the allegations reported by the ABC had also been put to racing ministers in the past, been dealt with through Estimates scrutiny and the Tasracing GBE hearings last year, but have not yet been dealt with.

Regarding the former director of Racing Integrity, Tony Latham, we heard that investigation is still ongoing. That is an extraordinary period of time. The report alleged that the then-acting general manager, who was also the director of Racing Integrity, Tony Latham, asked for a \$200 fine imposed on trainer/driver Rhys Nicholson during a controversial Tasmania Cup final to be withdrawn. It also reported that Office of Racing Integrity staff had blown the whistle on dysfunction and low morale. I am aware of what the allegations are. I



have not and I will not say what they are here. I am sure the minister is aware. They are very serious allegations and they still have not been resolved.

**Ms Ogilvie** - They are under investigation.

**Mr WINTER** - They have not been resolved and the investigation has not been completed. We also heard later in the week that Mr Latham is now back serving with Tasmania Police. That is a situation with integrity. It does not do the industry any favours. In order for racing to be successful, you must have a very high level of integrity. Questions of integrity need to be dealt with quickly and very seriously. The time frame on this investigation has been very long. I urge the minister and the department to try to resolve that as quickly as possible.

Similarly, the chairman of stewards for harness racing, Mr Shinn, has been stood down from his position for around four months now. Mr Jacobi answered the question and said that the chairman of stewards - sorry, he is not stood down. I should have said he has not been acting in the role as chairman of stewards; he has not been at work for four months. We think for a period of time he was stood down but he is no longer stood down. He is not currently under investigation -

**Ms Ogilvie** - You have to be very careful.

**Mr WINTER** - Mr Jacobi said it was not appropriate for him to comment on the specific employment matters. The issue is again that because the department, ORI, and the minister are not saying anything about this -

**Ms Ogilvie** - It would not be fair to comment; the investigation is not complete.

**Mr WINTER** - The issue is-

**Ms Ogilvie** - Do be really careful.

**Mr WINTER** - Very careful. I am aware of what some of the the allegations are.

**Ms Ogilvie** - You may well be, I do not know.

**Mr WINTER** - Of course, I will not be saying what they are. The issue with not saying anything is that the rumour mill continues. I know that this has been distressing to Mr Shinn but this is a very important position for integrity in harness racing. In fact, I do not know that there is a more important one. For that position to now be without a full-time chairman of stewards for four months, for there to be no communication about anything to do with it, is a situation that just encourages the rumour mill.

There has been an incorrect article about this which I believe has now been taken down. That is good. Again, that is bred by the fact that there is no information and I am not sure that this approach is one that is fair to anyone.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Due process is so important, of allowing fairness and due process. You have to be very careful.

**Mr WINTER** - I do not think this process has worked well for Mr Shinn or for anyone.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I take that on board.

**Mr WINTER** - The issue of the north-west tracks is one that is devastating for north-west harness and greyhound trainers. They were promised a new track. Even if that track was still going ahead and had not been abandoned by Tasracing because of the environmental issues, Tasracing had not made appropriate preparations for a period of time where the Devonport Showgrounds track would not be operating for training or for racing, and building and constructing a new track. It is going to take, let me put on the record - I hope I am wrong - but finding a site for a new track, designing a new track, getting a new track approved, building a new track, is going to take years and years. These trainers are going to be without a homebase for a long period of time. The fact is that Tasracing was not prepared with an interim solution that would allow those trainers to continue to operate.

As I said most of these, in fact all of these trainers are part timers or hobbyists, and are now having to take their animals - who they love and adore, whilst they are being compensated financially, what Tasracing cannot compensate them for is their time and that is something the minister needs to take a very close look at.

**Mr WOOD** - I am pleased to make a contribution to budget Estimate sessions for the minister, Ms Ogilvie. Ms Ogilvie holds the important portfolios of Small Business, Science and Technology, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Racing and Heritage.

As a new member of parliament I found it very interesting to hear about how this Budget will support those important sectors. For starters, I was interested to hear the minister talking about the online Heritage Register. I learnt during Estimates that online access to information held in the register is now available and will no doubt increase appreciation for Tasmania's iconic heritage places which play a role in Tasmania's lifestyle and brand. The minister indicated that there are more than 5000 individual places entered in the Tasmanian Heritage Register. This must be a very welcome initiative for those who, like me, take an active interest in Tasmanian heritage.

During the Small Business section of Estimates the committee heard that this year's Budget includes \$50 000 for a future-facing customer service project that will make it easier for small businesses to do what they do best. This project aims to reduce the burden of unnecessary government regulation which can cost small businesses time, money, opportunities and jobs.

Other important initiatives that continue to be supported include our Small Business Advice and Financial Guidance Program which assists businesses in recovery, transition and growth as we transition to a new post-pandemic operating environment. We are also helping businesses to prepare for the future. We are also continuing our support of the creation of new businesses and the success of early-stage businesses through our \$2 million Small Business Incubator and Accelerator Pilot Program. Ongoing support through the Business Tasmania Service, who were represented at the committee table, and the Enterprise Centre's Tasmania program remains available to help businesses navigating the current operational environment.

The minister was asked about government support to business throughout the pandemic and we heard that Tasmanian businesses have received more than \$165 million in pandemic support. Having worked for 20 years in a small family business, I know first-hand and acknowledge the hard work and long hours that so many of our small businesses put in to keep

their doors open, their shelves stocked and our communities supplied with food, groceries and other essentials they need.

This year the Government is also developing a new business growth strategy for the period 2022-26 and will be partnering with the Tasmanian Small Business Council and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce in the development, which the minister made reference to earlier today. We will also be talking to businesses across the state through a series of round tables that will ensure we hear the voice of small businesses from both our metro and regional areas. I look forward to hearing more about this new Business Growth Strategy later this year.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Yes, you will be involved.

**Mr WOOD** - Thank you. I am very proud to be part of a government that is, without a doubt, the strongest of supporters of the small business sector. During the committee hearings I also had the opportunity to hear a lot about the racing industry. Specifically, the minister detailed how the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget includes \$964 000 over four years of additional funding for three cadet stewards. Furthermore, among the minister's many important announcements, on behalf of the Government she announced the release of the independent review into Tasmania's Racing Regulation Act 2004. The minister indicated that she supports, in principle, the recommendations within the report and also outlined how she will be working closely with participants within the industry to progress this work.

It was no surprise that the committee spent some time discussing animal welfare and initiatives and the minister was very clear that animal welfare is a high priority for the Government. The Office of Racing Integrity ensures property inspections throughout the state are undertaken to ensure racing animals are properly cared for and licensed participants are complying with animal welfare legislation and the racing rules.

Pleasingly, more greyhounds are being rehomed than ever before. In fact, over the past five financial years the numbers of greyhounds rehomed as a percentage of the overall number of greyhounds retiring from the industry has been consistently increasing.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government will do everything it can to support the racing industry with further investment so those in the industry can thrive and succeed in Tasmania.

It was no surprise to me to learn that Tasmanian manufacturers are some of the best in the world. The Tasmanian Government is committed to supporting and growing the success and recognition of our advanced manufacturers. During Estimates the committee heard that the Tasmanian Government has supported a total of 20 Tasmanian companies through our Accelerating Growth Grants program. This has resulted in the creation of 98 full-time positions. We have just seen the conclusion of the most recent round of Accelerating Growth Grants program and 12 local companies will share in almost \$865 000 in funding as part of the Advanced Manufacturing Accelerating Growth Grants program.

For the latest round of grants, the successful projects will assist with the creation of more than 40 new manufacturing jobs in Tasmania. The aim of the program is to encourage our advanced manufacturers to innovate, expand and create new jobs and opportunities for Tasmanians. It is also helping to make Tasmanian manufacturers competitive, more resilient and better able to compete in global markets. It is anticipated that this funding will encourage

some \$2.2 million in investment by successful applicants, an immediate return of almost \$2.50 for every dollar put in.

The Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries team works hard to support success for our excellent Tasmanian companies. In 2021-22 the team engaged with over 600 organisations and across the same period, grants to the value of \$1.8 million were approved to businesses to grow and improve their commercial manufacturing outcomes. In addition, during 2021-22 more than 50 defence supply contracts were awarded to Tasmanian companies with a value of more than \$74.5 million. The industry continues to grow from strength to strength.

In closing, I congratulate the minister for her passion and dedication to these portfolios and her hard work in advancing the Government's ambitions for a strong and resilient Tasmanian economy.

**Ms DOW** - I am pleased to make my contribution on this output this afternoon, particularly around Advanced Manufacturing but also Heritage, which I had the pleasure of learning a lot more about during our Estimates committee and during the preparation I did for that on behalf of my colleague, Michelle O'Byrne.

I want to start with Heritage and congratulate the minister on being the seventh minister in four years for the Heritage portfolio. It is quite an achievement.

The thing that struck me in this Estimates hearing was the fact that the minister seemed to consider it was acceptable that it took eight years to notify property owners about changes to the Heritage register.

**Ms Ogilvie** - We went through that in a lot of detail.

**Ms DOW** - It is crazy. Eight years is a long time. It is as long as you have been in Government. I know the wheels turn slowly - we see that every day in this place in the broken commitment to a community or your failure to deliver on projects. Eight years is a long time to write a letter to people, a letter that we learned was sometimes about minor typing errors, for example. It should not have taken that long, minister, but it did.

Given the significance of Tasmania's heritage and culture and the beautiful buildings that we have and should take pride in across our state, it makes us a laughing stock when it takes eight years to report those changes to property owners across the state. Hopefully, the minister will provide more information about that in her contribution.

We also talked about the Economic Benefit of Heritage report which was undertaken by a previous member of staff. That report has never seen the light of day -

**Ms Ogilvie** - There is some interim work going on which we did share with you.

**Ms DOW** - and it was interesting to ask some questions about that. We learned about the further work that was being done, but it was not clear how much this work cost the Government or what was achieved. I am sure the person did the work in good faith and did a lot of hard work to complete that report, but it has not seen the light of day. Perhaps you will tell us more about that in your contribution as well.

That brings me to Advanced Manufacturing, which is close to my heart because it is one of the major industries across my electorate. I am proud of the industry and I want to see this portfolio area continue to have a strong presence in the Rockliff/Ferguson Government, despite the now Premier not holding this portfolio any more.

It certainly had a large profile and a large task dedicated to it earlier in this Government's time, when there were changes in advanced manufacturing, particularly at Caterpillar in Burnie when the manufacturing line moved off-shore to Thailand. There was a concerted and very good effort by this Government to work with those local supply chain businesses that would be impacted by that change to further develop their capabilities, their market opportunities and their trade relations across the world, as well as opportunities to still be involved in what was happening at Rayong in Thailand. The advanced manufacturers I speak to have said that to date, that work is still going quite well and they still have the opportunity to be part of the supply chain into that factory.

They also want to look for new opportunities and we have heard a bit about the work that is being done around capabilities. However, it is concerning to have two contracts that this Government is responsible for, where there have been implications for local businesses. The first one relates to RDM Constructions in Hobart and the tendering for the police vessel. This local company missed out on this contract, although it has the capability and wanted to work with the Government and be involved in these tenders to give employment to local people. The contract went to Western Australia, and it is still not clear why. I will be interested for the minister to provide further information on that in her contribution.

It leads to questions about the Government's buy local policy and whether they are supporting the enhanced capability of advanced manufacturers across Tasmania. Are they getting a good understanding of what these businesses can provide to government tenders and government work and the positive contribution that they can make as well as the positive economic outcomes which flow from that in local jobs - particularly regional economies? It is disappointing, and we discussed that a lot during the Estimates hearing.

I also note the BusTech contract, which has been a successful contractual arrangement between Metro and local advanced manufacturers, a number of whom are based in my electorate. It has been a successful initiative, and they have the capability to deliver the remaining buses that are part of this contractual arrangement. The minister was unable to give a lot of information and kept deflecting the issue to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport as part of his portfolio. I would see this as a cross-portfolio responsibility. There are benefits to be gained from two ministers working together to create jobs across regional communities and to enhance our advanced manufacturing capability. It could also provide a better product and a better service for Tasmanians, through enhanced public transport across the state.

I consider these two are interrelated, despite your claims, minister. This is a really important project. It is still not clear what implications will be for those advanced manufacturers, their employees, or for local jobs with the changes to this contract. It is still not very clear what went wrong, or why these changes have occurred. I hope that the minister can provide some more information about that, in her contribution.

As always, it was good to hear from Rear Admiral Steve Gilmore and the great work that he is doing. I find the conversations that we have with him, particularly about his international focus and the relationships that he is developing, to be of interest. It is also good to get an

understanding of the value for money that the state is getting from that role. Tasmanians would greatly benefit from understanding a more about his role.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I could not agree with you more.

**Ms DOW** - I ask the minister to look at elevating that role so Tasmanians understand what they are getting for the significant amount of money that is being paid for Stephen's role. It was good to hear about his activities, and about planned trade missions. I was pleased to hear that advanced manufacturers will be invited along to a number of those trade missions to look for future market opportunities and to develop supply chain partnerships in those countries. That can only be a positive thing, and I look forward to the results.

However, I ask that the minister makes the time to reach out to a number of those companies that will be impacted upon by the changes to the bus contract, to understand the impact that will have, and to provide them with more information. I do not have a lot of information about this at the moment.

The final thing I will talk about is the Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan, which has a number of initiatives outlined in it. It does not have a timeframe and it would be helpful for the Government to provide an update on each of those interventions and what has been achieved to date. It is good to see a number of those grants programs continuing. There continues to be a diverse number of Tasmanian businesses that are afforded the opportunity to apply for those, and, if successful, be able to grow their business, do some research and development, look at new product development and new market opportunities.

As always, it would be good to see more investment in that, particularly as we look at changes to supply chains around the world, the impact of COVID-19 on those supply chains, and the opportunity that presents for manufacturing in Tasmania. We should be supporting small businesses to look at new product development, undertake research and development and look at what opportunities are available to them.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Chair, I will take a few moments to speak on the Heritage area of the portfolio. I was not able to be in that because of a scheduling clash. I thank my colleague, Ms Dow, for raising those issues. I am still no wiser about a couple of them so I will flag those issues again.

My main concern was around the delay in notification to owners about the changes to the heritage listing eight years ago. That was canvassed extensively through the debate, but I am not clear that we received answers for it. I will go through Ms Dow's questions.

Ms Dow said, 'Given almost 2000 letters of intent have been sent to owners in recent weeks, eight years after changes were made, how is this fair on owners?' 'Chair, my question was to the minister. Does the minister think that eight years as a period of time is fair on owners? You have not answered that'. Then, via interjection, Ms Dow said 'in a shorter time frame than eight years'. Again, Ms Dow asked 'The minister has failed to answer the question. The question really is, is eight years too long to notify owners? Yes or no? It is a simple question I'd like to understand if you think that was fair or right?' 'I will ask the question of the minister for the last time: do you think that eight years is too long for people to have to wait to be notified about those changes?'

Ms O'Connor had some conversation, and then we go back. 'Minister', says Ms Dow, 'do you realise your Government was a national embarrassment without such basic notification work required under the Heritage Act in taking eight years'. 'Do you realise how humiliating this has been? These are regarded as some of the most important cultural heritage places in the country. You are a laughing stock'. Again, Ms Dow says, 'do you realise that the Government is the national embarrassment?'

**Ms Ogilvie** - More and more hyperbole.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - 'Do you agree that it is embarrassing?' 'You did not answer my first question when I asked you about whether you thought it was acceptable that it took eight years'. And finally - 'Minister, can you guarantee the committee today that owners weren't jumping through heritage planning approvals to apply for parts of the properties that were not listed? What was never answered was, whether or not.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Hang on, you did not get to the end of that bit?

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I was just reading Ms Dow's questions as the *Hansard* stands. I can go back to read all of it if you want.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Alright, okay. No, I will read the *Hansard*.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - The point was, if I can continue, Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - The point was that there were questions about whether or not an eight-year delay was acceptable. Clearly, it was not because we would not be raising it, and people would not be raising it with us, if an eight-year delay was an acceptable time frame and if they had been given a reasonable excuse and an understanding about why that took place. Owners are still raising with us that they do not know why it took so long and they felt concerned.

**Ms Ogilvie** interjecting.

**CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am sorry, Chair, I really cannot hear.

**CHAIR** - Order, Ms Ogilvie. Can Ms O'Byrne be heard in silence? I am sure that she will allow you to be heard in silence. Thank you.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - In the final question, the minister was asked whether or not people had to jump through hoops. That is part of the issue. People did not know what their status was for eight years. For eight years nobody told them. Those 2000 letters only went out recently. I am advised that they would have had a different interaction with their local government when they wanted work to be done if this matter had been clarified and resolved earlier.

The eight years is a significant issue. It is an issue for those people. I know that Ms Ogilvie is not the minister who made this decision. The error did not occur under her watch but it clearly was an error. I believe it is appropriate that the Government apologises to those

people and says that it is not acceptable that it took eight years. That would go a long way to rebuilding a relationship with those owners who have been concerned. I appreciate that it was not the minister in front of the House today who was responsible for this going wrong in the first place but we are now at a point where the other letters have gone out and maybe it is okay to say, 'We are sorry, it should not have happened that way. It took too long to fix'. You could even say, 'I am really glad I fixed it'. You can take credit for that.

It is important to do that for those owners. The argument was provided that it made absolutely no difference. It would not be being raised with us if it made absolutely no difference. That is the reality.

The former director was moved out and was working on a report on the economic benefits of heritage. We understood it would be a public document. The report was commenced, and it is an important piece of work. What concerned me in the answer from the department was that part of the issues with that report was the lack of information about the sector generally, and the need to do some foundational work to inform the strategic direction.

I do not understand how that could be the case. If it was done by the person who has been the director of Heritage, I do not believe they could have had a lack of information about the sector generally. I would have assumed they are particularly well informed about the sector generally. I am interested in what exactly was wrong in that report and also in the pivot that has been made to this new report that we believe may be released later on.

The minister said it was her intention to release this pivotal piece of work. I do not know if this is the same piece of work, or whether we paid somebody to do a report that now sits in a drawer because we did not like the outcome, and this is a new piece of work. Maybe the person did not do any work at all; maybe there no report was done; or whether the department genuinely believe that the person who ran the Heritage department for years had a lack of knowledge and information about the sector generally. That makes no sense to me, whatsoever.

My third point goes to the National Trust, and we have raised this issue before. I am genuinely worried about the viability of the National Trust. The minister was asked whether the National Trust is solvent. I am concerned that the National Trust is provided enough money at the last moment, each time, to remain solvent, but there are significant issues with its viability and organisational structure. The answer was given that this was not something that the department would necessarily know about. However, there is a reason that someone from Heritage sits on the National Trust Board - it was to ensure that government always had oversight and an understanding, because this is a significant collection of properties and assets for the state. It is really important and the ability for them to be more than solvent, viable, is really important. The question is whether simply giving them a little bit of money that bails them out every time they get close to crisis point is what we should be doing, or whether we have to have a much more open and frank conversation about where the National Trust is. They are important and we want it to work. As everyone would know, the organisation has had challenges in the past, but it is important that we have a clear understanding of where the National Trust is up to.

I understand they requested significant funds because they are in a bit of trouble, both in terms of their asset management and their ongoing day-to-day operations. The minister said that she was comfortable things were okay. We need a much greater understanding whether



they are okay because it is not alright for such a significant collection to fall over. There is a reason Heritage Tasmania and the department has always been involved, particularly because of some issues in many years gone by.

The only other thing I noted was not raised in Estimates, so you can ignore this if you wish to, but the Heritage eNews monthly emails which used to go out all the time seem to have stopped. I wonder if that was because somebody might not be around at the moment, or if that was a decision. The eNews were really good practical notes for owners. Heritage Tasmania has always had a really positive engagement and interaction with owners. Owners have been front and centre of the focus to make sure people who love their properties are well informed and well resourced to take care of them. I do not know whether that has been a deliberate decision or it may just be operationally something that has occurred. The minister may or may not know.

I note that the minister mentioned that she actually lives in a Heritage-listed property.

**Ms Ogilvie** - No, I checked it and it was not Heritage-listed.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Okay, because you were going to be the first minister since Peter Hodgman who actually lived in a Heritage-listed property and I was going to say it was a good thing.

The only other point I will make as I wind up is that I think heritage is incredibly important to Tasmania. The language the minister has used so far indicates that as well but quite frankly, seven Heritage ministers in just under four years is not good for the sector. We would like to see some stability both in Heritage and within our Government.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Chair, I will do my best to try to address some of the issues that were raised on the fly. I am very happy and excited to be the Heritage minister. My first degree was in classics and history and cultural heritage and I have worked in the sector. I am pleased to be here and let us hope I stay here for a while and we can get some things going.

It is my pleasure to rise and reflect on the 2022-23 Budget and the Estimates process. I start by thanking my departmental representatives who ably supported me. They were fantastic, both the departmental staff who joined me at the table but also those who did so much work preparing briefs and collating information and everybody in my office as well. It was quite a remarkable job and I thank them very much.

Having been a member of this Chamber for some time now, I have been through many budgets and budget Estimates hearings. However, this is the first time I have been through the process as a minister. I was there for a very different yet very interesting and rewarding process this time around. I have a number of very important portfolio responsibilities, being Small Business, Science and Technology, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Racing and Heritage. I was very pleased to answer as many questions as possible and provide the committees with as much information as I was able.

It is clear that this Government is committed to science and technology and the role it plays in the lives of Tasmanians, the contribution it makes to our economy and the benefits we all derive from it. This Budget continues to deliver the important initiatives that improve the lives of everyday Tasmanians. I was very happy to share information about those initiatives

during Estimates. I was a bit sad that Ms Butler missed out but Mr Winter did a good job across the tech sector in particular.

It delivers investment into initiatives that foster exciting new projects that have international significance and continue to put Tasmania on the world stage. It is no surprise to anyone in this place how heavily we all rely on technology. We use it to complete the simplest tasks like reading the newspaper, to stay connected with our loved ones, and to undertake our jobs. We saw the importance of science and technology in sharp relief at the height of the global pandemic through the incredible contribution of our scientists in responding to the pandemic by developing vaccines and technologies to detect and respond to the virus. We saw the incredible capacity of our technology sector which just came alive when we needed them to. I am pleased that during the committee hearings we had the opportunity to discuss the incredible contribution that the science sector makes.

The Tasmanian Government sponsors and conducts science research across several agencies and the output from this research involved scientific advice on matters of high importance to our state, including environmental management, biosecurity, conservation, water management, human health, disaster mitigation, renewable energy and climate change. The Tasmanian Government also invests in critical science research infrastructure that provides scientists with access to world-class facilities and nationally-linked research systems.

As you would be aware, excitingly, another area the Tasmanian Government is investing in is the space sector. With the Australian space sector expected to grow to around \$12 billion per year and support around 20 000 new jobs by 2030, it is no wonder there is a renewed interest and excitement in the opportunity Tasmania's growing space economy represents. It is important to remember that our state has long held a reputation in the sciences, as well as engineering and maths but broadly in the sciences and particularly in astronomy and astrophysics. For example, Tasmania has contributed over a number of years to the observation of the climate using the astronomical infrastructure available to us. We can measure climate change from space from right here down in Sandy Bay at UTAS.

I was a little bit sad, unfortunately, that the Greens member for Clark left just when I was about to detail the great work we are doing, so perhaps she will pick it up from this speech. I am sure even the most sceptical of members can agree that it is well worth investing in the burgeoning space economy when it delivers benefit to everyday Tasmanians, our skilled entrepreneurs and businesses and the contribution it makes to understanding and addressing broader environmental challenges, including climate change, an issue that is of such importance to everybody in our community.

The Tasmanian Government has so far committed over \$900 000 to initiatives aimed at strengthening Tasmania's space research infrastructure and accelerating the growth of a commercial space industry. Since signing a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Space Agency in 2019 - it was a great day, I remember it - the Tasmanian Government has taken measured steps to strengthen Tasmania's unique space research infrastructure capabilities, particularly and importantly in the fields of space domain awareness, space medicine and life sciences.

We have partnered with the Australian Government under the Regional Connectivity Program to deliver digital infrastructure projects that enable specific scientific capabilities. For example, the state has contributed \$150 000 to support fibre-optic upgrades to the UTAS Green

Hill Observatory that will enable next-generation astronomical research and space domain awareness capabilities. It is really good high-end science that we are doing right here in Tasmania and others nationally only wish they could do.

With the support of the Tasmanian Government as well as our engagement with both the Australian Space Agency and NASA, Tasmanian company Fortifyedge has just secured \$750 000 in funding from the Australian Space Agency to develop and test its technology on the International Space Station. Who would have ever thought we would be able to do that? Fortifyedge is developing astronaut biometric technology that will be able to do everything from ensuring the security of space facilities, including the International Space Station, through to tracking the real-time health and wellbeing of astronauts.

This initial seed funding has shown that for a small investment we can get a big return for our state and our economy. That is why we believe our \$500 000 Tasmanian Space Technology Seed Fund will really kickstart the growth of our local space industry. The fund will support Tasmanian businesses to extend, adapt or develop new products or services for the space sector. It aims to grow the space sector, drive innovations, strengthen industry collaboration, increase investment and create new skilled jobs for Tasmanians, and also get kids excited about space and wanting to study science. We are very pleased about it.

It is also clear that our Government is committed to our very important small business sector with the role it plays in supporting our 39 000-plus small businesses right across the state. Our small businesses demonstrated such resilience, adaptability, perseverance. Our Government is committed to supporting the small business sector and the tens of thousands of people it employs. Having provided more than 31 000 individual grants to small businesses totalling over \$165 million during the pandemic, helping them survive one of the greatest disruptions imaginable, we are now concentrating on the huge future opportunities for business in Tasmania.

I am pleased that during the committee hearings we had the opportunity to talk about the development of our new business growth strategy which will, in partnership with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Tasmanian Small Business Council and the business community, inform the development of new programs and initiatives to help our small business sector thrive.

In coming weeks, we will be consulting with small businesses through a series of round tables across the state, including digital engagement, to ensure that our new business growth strategy will meet the needs of our business community. This important process will inform the development of new programs, activities and initiatives that assist businesses as we chart our path forward and build on the strong foundations in our business sector.

It is also our intention to improve small business customer service experience with government to make it simpler to engage with government.. This goes to some of what Ms Butler was talking about. We believe that small businesses deserve to receive a high level of service from government. That is why we have allocated \$50 000 in this year's Budget for the small business customer service initiative, and it is a good start. The purpose of this project is to deliver customer-centric outcomes for small businesses. Business Tasmania will work with a small business advocate to develop an initiative that will assist in progressing this work.

Tasmania's historic heritage remains a prominent element of Brand Tasmania. Its value as a key driver of our visitor economy is generating many social and economic benefits across the state as places are being restored and their stories highlighted. I was pleased to talk about these matters during the Heritage session of budget Estimates and would like to thank Mr Wood for his support. He has a deep and genuine interest in heritage and it is something that he and I will be working on going forward.

Having the opportunity to represent the Premier at the opening of the new visitor centre at the Cascades Female Factory recently, highlights the importance of protecting these places so that they can continue to be used and valued. For many decades, the Cascades Female Factory had all but been abandoned. I remember it when it was in bad shape. Today it is a World Heritage-listed place and its new visitor centre allows visitors to re-engage with the history and the many moving stories of the females incarcerated at the site.

This Government's \$3 million contribution to the visitor centre is the perfect example of how investing money into our most significant heritage-listed places creates jobs and contributes to growing the economic future of the state.

The staff at the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority have now started working with the National Trust in Tasmania to develop a convict heritage hub at the Penitentiary Chapel in Hobart. The \$1.25 million election commitment towards this project is another example of this Government's support for heritage tourism initiatives that will drive increased revenue to support the future protection of these sites. I will say, because I think I did say this in Estimates, that I have relatives who came through those convict channels and were part of this broader story.

I am pleased that during the committee hearings we had the opportunity to talk about the National Trust, something Ms O'Byrne has raised. Like many in the tourism sector, the National Trust is beginning a phase of rebuilding following COVID-19-related closures over the past two years. To assist the Trust, an additional \$300 000 has been provided to the board to achieve its vision of creating new experiences that will reinvigorate visitor attendances across its properties.

While this investment in the future of the Trust is important, it is also important to consider how money is allocated across the breadth of the historic Heritage portfolio. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania has engaged a consultant to analyse and provide a common understanding of the broader operating environment of historic heritage in Tasmania. The findings of this review will help inform how best to prioritise and address the long-term challenges and opportunities that arise across the heritage sector.

The work to protect our state's historic heritage sites is not possible without the assistance of the Tasmanian Heritage Council. I had the opportunity at Estimates to outline this. It has been another busy year for the council as it continues to maintain the Tasmanian Heritage Register and review development applications for places entered into the heritage register.

As at 31 March, the heritage council had already exceeded two of the 2020-21 performance measures with more than 5000 places entered on the heritage register and 15 per cent of those places being actively managed.

Ms O'Byrne, I am sorry if anybody has been upset by the timeliness of being informed of administrative changes. Certainly, if you have situations or people who need assistance with that, please bring them forward and I will be happy to act.

One of the most common questions the heritage council receives is whether a place is heritage-listed and why the place is significant. Earlier this month I joined the chair of the Tasmanian Heritage Council to launch the online version of the Tasmanian Heritage Register through LISTmap. Now any person, anywhere and at any time can access the information they need, including the location, boundary and historic details of each register entry, along with a statement of significance. Aligning the heritage register with LISTmap is also creating efficiencies for the heritage council by generating automatic notifications of title information changes, which will allow the heritage council to keep location and boundary details up to date. This has been a long-term strategic goal of the heritage council and I congratulate the council members, and the staff at Heritage Tasmania and Land Tasmania for their amazing work in delivering online access to the heritage register.

I also acknowledge the owners of our heritage-listed places. Many of these places are owned by the state and local governments but many more are owned or leased by members of our community. Thank you for maintaining our places and, in some instances, adapting unused places for new and exciting uses.

During the committee hearings, I also had the opportunity to talk about the racing industry. The 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget includes \$964 000 over four years of additional funding for three cadet stewards. Tasmania's racing industry is a vital part of Tasmania's social and economic vibrance. The program will be structured into two-year contracts for three cadets in two separate programs.

Probity and integrity are critically important in the racing industry. They underpin confidence in all three codes in our state, thoroughbred, harness and greyhounds. That is why our Government has led the way by commissioning independent racing expert Dale Monteith to review the Racing Regulation Act 2004 and the broader racing integrity model in Tasmania. During Estimates I had the opportunity to announce the receipt and public release of the independent review into Tasmania's Racing Regulation Act 2004. Once again, I take the opportunity to publicly thank Mr Monteith for his important work. The Government notes and supports, in principle, the recommendations of the report. I will be working closely with participants within the industry as we move forward. Given the importance of integrity and probity in racing, the review of the act is timely, ensuring that the industry continues to meet the expectations of the community in terms of integrity functions and, just as importantly, animal welfare.

Animal welfare is a high priority for the Government and the Office of Racing Integrity, which ensures property inspections are undertaken throughout the state to ensure racing animals are properly cared for and licensed participants are complying with animal welfare legislation and the racing rules.

The Office of Racing Integrity contributes to a healthy, growing and competitive racing and breeding industry by ensuring that it is safe, fair and credible. The Tasmanian greyhound industry is committed to rehoming every greyhound that is suitable for pet life and, pleasingly, more greyhounds are being rehomed than ever before. Over the past five financial years, the

number of greyhounds rehomed as a percentage of the overall number of greyhounds retiring from the industry has been consistently increasing.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government will do everything it can to support the Tasmanian racing industry with further investment so that those in the industry can thrive and succeed in Tasmania.

Mr Chair, most importantly, I cannot forget to mention Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries. I note we had a couple of questions from Ms Dow around BusTech and the police vessel. I recall from the Estimates hearing that my department had already started to reach out. I will chase that up for them.

Ms Butler also, before we move onto this section, you asked on behalf of Ms Finlay about rock lobster, landmark and cable resilience. I had already committed to look at the rock lobster and landmark issues. My department will have a look at those and we will reach out to Ms Palmer on the rock lobster issue. In relation to cable resilience, we can have a conversation about that because I realise, of course, we have a new federal government and it is a national program.

We are continuing to grow Tasmania's advanced manufacturing and defence industries sector and capability through the 2022-23 Budget. During budget Estimates, I was joined at the table by our very own defence advocate, retired Rear Admiral Steve Gilmore, who continues to do an exceptional job to support and guide the implementation of the Tasmanian Defence Industries Strategy. We have committed \$900 000 to support that work. His role incorporates strategic defence and maritime advice, and was pivotal during the visit to the state by a senior US Coastguard delegation looking to understand Hobart's Antarctic gateway status. He has continued to lead engagements through Canberra, the Sea-Air-Space Exposition in Washington USA and the Indo-Pacific Exposition in Sydney during May. I was very fortunate to be at that. Most importantly, he has assisted many Tasmanian businesses to navigate defence contracting, and what a great job we have done landing contracts.

Other important work continues. We have more grants going into advanced manufacturing, accelerating growth. The recently completed round will deliver more than \$2.2 million in investment into the Tasmanian economy and create some 40 new jobs in advanced manufacturing. It is positive growth for our fifth largest industry and we want to see it continue.

**Time expired.**

**Estimates of the Minister for Racing, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries agreed to.**

**Bills reported to the House without amendment.**

**Bills read the third time.**

## MOTION

### Joint Sessional Gender and Equality Committee

[4.50 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

- (a) The Resolution of the Legislative Council be agreed to with the following amendment -

In paragraph (1), subparagraph (a), by leaving out 'by report back to the referring House'.

- (b) Tuesday 16 August next at 1.15 o'clock p.m. be the time, and Committee Room 1 be the place, for holding the first meeting of the said Committee.

- (c) The members to serve on the part of the House be -

the Leader of the House;  
Mrs Alexander;  
Ms O'Byrne; and  
Dr Woodruff.

**Ms O'Byrne** - I was just looking for an explanation for (a).

**Mr STREET** - Mr Speaker, the explanation of (a) is that the Clerk has asked us to amend this. In the upper House it was 'by report back to the referring House'. The Clerk pointed out to me that the proper convention is that because it is a joint standing committee of both Houses, that any report be back to both Houses. If it was referred to the committee by the Legislative Council, the report would still automatically come to the House of Assembly as well when they report back. The way it was set up, the report would have only gone back to the referring House. By removing that, the report goes to both Houses.

Regarding Tuesday 16 August, we are back on 9 August but the Legislative Council is not back until the week after. In order for all the committee members to be in Hobart, we have set the first Tuesday that both Houses are back as the first meeting.

Thank you very much to Ms O'Connor and Mr Winter, and to the two Independents for the collaboration on working out the membership of this committee.

The Clerk also wanted me to make the point when I spoke, just for clarity's sake, that it refers to 10 sitting days to report back. That is 10 sitting days of the House that refers the bill to the committee. It is not 10 sitting days of each.

Other than that, I thank Jo Palmer, the Minister for Women, for her work in the Legislative Council, and also the work of other Legislative Councillors who have been behind this initiative. Again, I am able to finish this parliamentary session on a better note and say thank you very much for the collaboration on making this work. It is much appreciated.

[4.52 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE (Bass)** - Mr Speaker, I am delighted that I apparently have 40 minutes to speak on this, but more delighted that I have had conversations with Mr Street. Given that we are in agreement, I shall not be taking 40 minutes. However, I assure you, if necessary, I could easily find 40 minutes to fill on why gender impact assessments matter, and the quality impact assessment.

**Ms O'Connor** - You could talk all day on that.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Under water. I wanted to make a couple of comments about it. Ms Palmer and I discussed this motion in the Estimates committee. She asked whether we would be supporting it. It was always going to be a matter of if the Government would choose to bring it on. I appreciate the fact that it has been done and realise the work that has been done to do so. I appreciate that. It is really important. This will make us think differently and critically about the way in which policy and legislation meets the needs of a broader sector of our community.

Gender does affect our needs and experiences differently so the impact of legislation is felt differently. The European Institute for Gender Equality has a little summary that explains it well. Traditionally, government policy and legislation has been viewed as gender-neutral and value-free instruments on the assumption that the formulation and administration of public policy benefits all members of the public equally. However, structural gender inequalities are still embedded in our society. Even if law treats women and men as equals, women still do not have equal access to control over material resources and assets, which is why this is an important piece of work.

Although it may not be intentional, policies often impact men and women differently and may even strengthen social, cultural or economic gender inequality. If they are not taken into account at design stage, the policy in question will actually be gender-blind. To avoid this, it is necessary for people at the centre of the intervention to meet the different needs and interests, to identify gender inequalities in terms of access to and availability of resources. We do need to have an intersectional approach to consider gender and equality, which can be compounded by disadvantages and discrimination through the way we formulate our legislation on the basis of gender, identity, age, ability or ethnicity. I look forward to this piece of work.

For those people who think that it might not be an impact, and you cannot do a gender impact assessment on everything, the Victorian body which has been set up under their Equality Act - which requires them to do gender impact assessments on policies as well as legislation at state and local government level, even did a gender impact assessment on a mountain bike track that was proposed to be funded. Most people would think that there might not be anything that would have an inequality, or a gender access difference with that, but they found that they have had a real problem with the track. They were assuming what women and men like to do and building their tracks and their facilities around those tracks based on gender. There is nothing that does not have an impact that could be assessed by this committee.

I still want to see Treasury doing a lot more work in Gender Budget Statements, but this is a significant piece of work, it is a step forward. I look forward to the work that this committee does to inform Government in the future, not only about legislation but also about how we construct our budgets and deal with the structural inequities in our community. I am very pleased to be part of it.



[4.56 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, we are also very pleased to support this initiative that has been put forward by the new Minister for Women, Ms Palmer. It will be a body that is gender inclusive, which is very important, and it will be established for this session of the parliament. We hope that this ultimately becomes a standing committee of both Houses of the Tasmanian parliament. Dr Woodruff is very much looking forward to being a constructive contributor towards the work of this committee.

It raises the question of what has happened to the committee system though, that we are debating the establishment of a really important joint sessional committee. It was not that long ago that we had standing committees, for example, for community development, for the environment where references could be sent and committee members could examine particular issues, call for submissions and present recommendations. Dr Woodruff and I would very much like to see that committee system re-established. Once the House is restored to 35 seats it will be much more doable, because you will have more members with a capacity to represent their constituencies through the committee process. That will lead to much better representation, where community members can put forward referrals and where we can be examining matters of significant public interest.

On that note I will say, we need -without too much further delay - to have a joint standing committee on climate action. It is, arguably, the most important work that we have to do as a community - to make sure that we are ready for the future which is barrelling towards us very fast. Dr Woodruff and I will continue to take that up with the Premier and have some conversations with our other colleagues in the House about how we might work together on climate action. What are the things that we can agree on? What are the steps that we can agree to take together? What is the message that we send to young people about the possibilities of collaboration to deliver some meaningful action on climate; and that includes emissions reduction and helping communities to adapt; and making sure we are as climate-ready and resilient as we are capable of being.

Establishing a gender committee will help parliament have a much more inclusive lens applied to legislation and policy. In some ways we need this committee to be mindful of the multiple layers of inequality in our society and to note that inclusion has many elements; I think Ms O'Byrne referred to this. This is no disrespect to our male colleagues but if you have that gender lens applied to legislation, policy, and practices in this place you are likely to have a more inclusive parliament. We need to be ever mindful of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, of young people, of people living with a disability, and of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer. Establishing a committee that specifically focuses on gender issues and gender equality, will lead to a more open frame about inclusion more broadly in our community, and that would be fantastic.

It is frustrating, particularly to people like Ms O'Byrne, Ms Archer, Dr Woodruff and I and plenty of other female MPs, that we seem to be having the same conversation over and over. In the Labor-Greens government we had the Tasmanian Women's Strategy, which was to apply a gender lens to all legislation and policy. That is now 10 years ago, and we are still in a situation where we are having debates in both Houses of the parliament about how we apply a gender lens to all areas of law, policy and parliamentary practice. Let us hope this same conversation is not being had 10 years from now.

The great thing about this House and this parliament is that it is one place in the world, at least, where the women have the numbers. We support the motion.

[5.01 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I will not take up too much time because I would like to get to my bill. Given members have had some commentary, it is important from the Government's side that I speak. It is also important that I speak on some comments that our Minister for Women, Ms Palmer, made in the other place, in relation to this motion and in support of this motion.

Throughout my parliamentary career and my legal career, I have always strived to do what I can within my power to support women and their participation in various fields, occupations, professions, trades which we hopefully will see more of, and also through the legislation that we take through this place. Members will be aware that I take quite a bit of legislation through this place and I hope this has some impact on the legislative reform we take through this place and as part of our Government.

Our Government is committed to ensuring that all women and girls in Tasmania feel safe and that they have the opportunity to fully participate in our economic, social, political and community life. The world is changing rapidly, that goes without saying - particularly over the past two years. We must ensure that the way we operate as a Government, and as a community, reflects and supports contemporary standards and expectations.

Our Government has done work to achieve gender equality and is guided by the Tasmanian Women's Strategy. Over the past 12 months, we have been consulting widely in the development of the Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27. We have heard clearly that the community wants to see our Government leading by example to achieve systemic cultural change. I agree with that and I agree with the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor. It seems we talk a lot about this issue in this place and a lot of us would like to see more change.

**Ms O'Connor** - Now that we have the numbers, Attorney-General.

**Ms ARCHER** - You mean women? Yes. It is rare that we all agree in this place but it is a nice and welcome change.

It is an exciting but a critical challenge. We have already worked towards many initiatives that will embed gender impact assessments into the work of the Tasmanian Government. The draft strategy proposes some key initiatives that reflect contemporary practice. We are looking to introduce a gender impact assessment process to be integrated into the work of the Tasmanian Government. This will include resources, tools and training to build the capacity of all agencies to assess the gender impact in the development of policies and programs. We plan to make these resources publicly available so that other organisations can use them as well.

We are also looking to develop an evaluation framework that will help to measure the gender impact of our work. In the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget we committed \$800 000 over four years to implement the Tasmanian Women Strategy and progress these important pieces of work.

We delivered a Gender Budget Statement as part of the Tasmanian Government's Budget this year, and that was the first time. This is an important first step, and we will build on this for next year, as in the processes I just outlined. I strongly believe, and I know that other members welcome this, that a joint sessional committee on gender and equality will complement the work we are doing within the Government, and indeed, the whole parliament.

It aligns with our aim to provide Government-led cultural change. A parliamentary committee shifts the responsibility for change from women, and only women, to the institution of parliament as a whole. I consider this is probably one of the most important factors. It shows that we are serious about a commitment to sustainable cultural change and gender equality. The reality is, there are structural barriers to genuine equality, and there is a gendered aspect in everything that we do.

Our Government believes we can improve the way we work to address these barriers and work towards gender equality in Tasmania.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to support this motion today. I really do hope that it provides for the change that a lot of us want to see in this place. It is very easy to say that you commit to gender equality, very easy to say that. I will not give any examples. As an individual, I truly hope and believe that this can import the change that we need. It is a very important step forward, and probably one that people were not expecting the Government to support, because it is a big shift.

I must say that, for me, 10 days can seem like a long time when a lot of my legislation is urgent. I place on the record, that I am hoping that this is not used as a mechanism - and I am sure it is very well-intentioned - to delay something, that should not be delayed. I do not think that anybody has that intention now. Perhaps I am speaking to the future members.

Please do not politicise this committee, because it is really well intentioned, and I believe that the purpose for which is set up will send a very strong message to Government and future governments and to government agencies to look at these issues before they get to this place - so that we will not have to use this committee very often. That is certainly my message, and hope, that that is never the case.

With those final words, Mr Speaker, I certainly commend the motion to the House.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **FAMILY VIOLENCE REFORMS BILL 2022 (No. 10)**

### **Second Reading**

[5.08 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Mr Speaker, this is an important legislative reform. I move -

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill continues our Government's clear commitment to implement legislative reform to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence. The bill delivers on an important election commitment to create a new declaration for repeat family violence offenders, and the commitment to be able to mandate participation in behavior change programs as part of the family violence order.

This is in addition to delivering on our commitments under the Safe Homes, Families, Communities Action Plan for Family and Sexual Violence 2019-22. I will now provide detail on key amendments introduced in this important reform.

The bill will insert a new part 4A in the Family Violence Act 2004 to provide a serial family violence perpetrator declaration framework. It will deliver the second phase of a key Government election commitment, which began with the creation of a new persistent family violence indictable offence at section 170A of the Criminal Code Act 1924. It will also see Tasmania become the second Australian jurisdiction to implement such a framework following Western Australia, which commenced in 2020.

The serial family violence perpetrator declaration is intended to identify perpetrators who continue to disregard the law and commit family violence offences against a current or past spouse or partner. It will enhance accountability by ensuring stricter interventions and oversight from the justice system. The framework will be applicable to a perpetrator aged 18 years or older who has committed at least two indictable family violence offences occurring on separate days, three indictable or summary family violence offences occurring on separate days, or been convicted for persistent family violence under section 170A of the Criminal Code.

The third threshold is included separately because, although the crime of persistent family violence is an indictable offence, a conviction requires a finding that a perpetrator committed at least three separate occasions of family violence which, if convicted individually, would otherwise satisfy the first two thresholds.

The offending thresholds respond to contemporary data and expert analysis. Research by the Australian Institute of Criminology indicates that a significant proportion of family violence offenders reoffend and the likelihood and the rate of reoffending increases significantly with each repeat offence.

Our Government acknowledges that Tasmania is not immune. Last year, 28 per cent of family violence perpetrators committed at least one more offence within a year of their first offence. Looking over a 10-year period, the position increases markedly to 58 per cent of perpetrators having committed at least two offences. Of even greater concern is that just 2.5 per cent of perpetrators accounted for around 15 per cent of all incidents in the last 10 years.

This means a small percentage of serial family violence perpetrators are responsible for a great number of reported family violence incidents. Over time, patterns of serial summary offending can also lead to an escalation in the severity of offending. This pattern is strongly linked to an increased likelihood that a perpetrator will commit strangulation, choking or suffocation offences. As the Sentencing Advisory Council has observed on their recent report on the matter, strangulation, choking or suffocation is a significant risk factor for future homicide. This is why I have recently introduced a bill to criminalise strangulation as a standalone offence to recognise the significance of this conduct as part of the supportive suite of family and sexual violence related reforms.

In addition to escalations and family violence offending, many serial offenders go on to commit non-family violence offences. They become generalist offenders. This is particularly so amongst individuals who become serial offenders before they turn 30.

I acknowledge the gravity of the long lasting and significant impacts caused by serial offending on victims/survivors. It is clear that an intervention response focusing on serial offenders is required to reduce reoffending to benefit victims and to significantly reduce the likelihood of violence in our community. By enabling the serial family violence perpetrator framework to apply to perpetrators who have committed multiple summary offences or multiple indictable offences, the courts and justice system will have increased capacity to respond to serial offending. This will assist with accountability and deterrence for serial offenders.

Mr Speaker, the framework will also provide appropriate safeguards. First, under section 29A the courts can only consider making a declaration at a time when a person has been convicted of a family violence offence. That can only occur if the perpetrator satisfies the offending thresholds I mentioned earlier. These thresholds must also occur within the past 10 years, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

If a perpetrator meets these requirements, the framework provides that a court is to then be of the opinion that a declaration is warranted having regard to (a) the nature and circumstances of the family violence offences relied upon in the declaration application; (b) the risk that the offender may commit further family violence offences; (c) the offender's antecedents and character; and (d) any other matter that the court or judge considers relevant.

In consideration of these factors and as part of its risk assessment, the bill provides that a court may order that a report be prepared by Corrective Services or another person. Where a court is of the opinion that a declaration is warranted, it will have discretion to determine the duration of the declaration for a period of up to five years. The declaration will be recorded on the perpetrator's criminal record.

The framework further provides at section 29D a mechanism for review of the declaration for it to be discharged early in exceptional circumstances, or for the declaration's duration to be extended.

A declaration has consequences for a perpetrator over and above any sentence imposed for the conviction that caused the application to address the serial nature of their family violence offending. Part 9 of the bill will amend the Firearms Act to prevent a person from holding a firearms licence for the duration of their declaration. Firearms ownership is a privilege. It is established that perpetrators with access to firearms are likely to commit more severe family violence than those who do not. The Government considers that serial perpetrators have forfeited their right to possess a firearm for the duration of the court's declaration. If the perpetrator is sentenced to a period of imprisonment for their family violence offending, the amendment to section 72 of the Corrections Act provides that it will be a factor considered by the Parole Board in a parole-eligibility assessment.

The bill amends section 13 of the Family Violence Act. If the perpetrator commits another family violence offence whilst the declaration is active, that is to be regarded by the court as an aggravating factor at sentencing for that family violence offender. A similar technical amendment will be made to existing section 13A of the Family Violence Act to reflect

this language, directing that the court is to consider the aggravating factor rather than the current discretion that the court may consider it. Together with the amendments to section 13 of the Family Violence Act, the bill amends the Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offenders Act to provide that being a declared serial family violence perpetrator is a matter to be considered by the Supreme Court in determining whether to make a high-risk offender order.

In addition to these immediate outcomes, the new part 4A in the Family Violence Act provides that a court will be directed to assess the making of a family violence order. This may include, as a condition, that the perpetrator is to be electronically monitored and/or that the declared perpetrator attend and participate in a rehabilitation program.

As I mentioned earlier, Tasmania will be the second jurisdiction in Australia after Western Australia to implement a serial family violence perpetrated declaration framework. Accordingly, and in response to consultation feedback, the bill includes a statutory review provision which is to commence five years after the framework's commencement. A five-year period was assessed as being of sufficient length to provide a reasonable number of persons whose declaration has run its entire duration, thereby enabling a longitudinal evaluation.

As is usual for statutory review provisions, the review report will be required to be tabled in both Houses of parliament within 10 sitting days of it being received by the Minister for Justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this leads me to the second key reform in this bill. Under action 25 of the Safe Homes Families Communities Action Plan, the Government committed to introducing amendments allowing for a mandated behaviour change program for participation as part of a family violence order. The amendment to section 16 of the Family Violence Act will deliver on this commitment. Importantly, it will empower the court to engage a perpetrator in a rehabilitation program earlier, enabling a targeted intervention that addresses the perpetrator's behaviour. It will overcome an existing barrier where a court cannot order rehabilitation program participation until a conviction is recorded.

For the court to engage a person in a rehabilitation program as a family violence order condition, the bill provides that the court must first order that a program assessment be undertaken to determine eligibility. Following the result of the assessment, the court must be satisfied that the person is both eligible to participate and that the program is available to participate in at a suitable place and time.

To safeguard against a person not complying with an order, or potential increased risk of offending, the bill provides that a court may require that the person report to Corrective Services. With respect to programs available through Community Corrections, I note that there is a dedicated high-risk program, the Family Violence Offender Intervention Program, as well as a community-based low medium-risk program, EQUIPS which stands for Explore Question Understand Investigate Practice Succeed, as well as the dedicated Men Employing New Strategies Program. Importantly, under Safe Home Families Communities Action Plan our Government has committed to funding these important programs.

I now turn to the miscellaneous amendments included in this bill. In further amendments to the Family Violence Act under part 2, section 4 of that act is amended to expand the definition of 'harassing,' to include, 'making unwelcome contact, directly or indirectly with the person.' It is common for a police family violence order or court issued family violence order

to contain an order that prevents one from harassing another. This amendment is intended to ensure that the definition accurately reflects conduct generally understood to be harassment, to better capture it as a form of family violence.

Following this amendment, the bill amends the definition of family violence in section 7 of the act by extending it to include reference to the crimes of 'aggravated assault,' in section 183 of the Criminal Code; 'rape,' in section 185 of the Criminal Code; 'committing an unlawful act intended to cause bodily harm,' in section 170 of the Criminal Code; and 'wounding and causing grievous bodily harm,' in section 172 of the Criminal Code.

This amendment is intended to provide greater clarity to the existing definition, to avoid a judge considering they are limited in the conduct that they can consider as constituting family violence when imposing a sentence. Importantly, it will improve legal clarity when sentencing for convictions, under the crime of 'persistent family violence,' at section 170A of the Criminal Code.

An associated consequential amendment is also made by the bill to update the alternative convictions provision in section 337A of the Criminal Code and reflect these changes. Moreover, for avoidance of doubt and to reflect that conduct listed under the definition of 'family violence,' is intended to be non-exhaustive, the bill will also insert a new catch-all of 'any other conduct that causes personal injury'.

Section 14 of the Family Violence Act is amended to expand the types of conditions that can be made on a police family violence order. At present, section 14(3) of the act provides a list of conduct that police can order a person to refrain from doing. However, the list does not incorporate all conduct captured under the definition of 'family violence.' This amendment provides that a person who has a police family violence order issued against them can be ordered to refrain from committing any of the acts under the definition of 'family violence.' It will future-proof the police family violence framework by automatically capturing any future changes to the definition of 'family violence.'

Parts 3, 7, 8, and 11 of the bill will make important technical amendments to reflect, in particular, the introduction of the crime of persistent family violence, under section 178A of the Criminal Code.

Part 5 of the bill will amend the Criminal Code. Importantly, the bill omits section 54 from the Criminal Code. This is an antiquated provision concerning liability of husband and wife for offences committed by either with respect to the other's property. It is well-known that perpetrators of family violence often injure, or destroy their spouse's property. This conduct is family violence. It is explicitly recognised at section 7C of the Family Violence Act. Section 54 of the Criminal Code is outdated and does not accord with the current expectation of what amounts to 'unlawful conduct.'

Lastly, part 10 of the bill will amend section 61 of the Justices Act. This amendment will revise existing subsection 2(a)(vi) to improve clarity in its operation. This amendment will clarify section 61(2)(a)(vi) to refer generally to the commission of an offence that involves or relates to family violence.

Broad public and targeted consultation processes were undertaken on a draft version of this bill and I sincerely thank those who provided feedback and input to help inform the

development of this important family violence reform. Our Government is committed to ensuring that our laws protect victims/survivors of family violence and ensure perpetrators appropriately face the consequences of their actions. The provisions in this bill will improve our justice system response and provide more opportunities for the court to intervene and engage rehabilitation for perpetrators.

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

[5.25 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to make a contribution on behalf of the Labor Opposition on the Family Violence Reforms Bill 2022 and indicate that we will be supporting the bill.

I have spoken about family violence already once this week with regard to responding to some of the Estimates committee hearings last week where we were dealing with some issues surrounding family violence. I have raised issues in this parliament before around the history of our family violence legislation in Tasmania. It was introduced by then attorney-general, Judy Jackson, in 2004. It was quite groundbreaking and nation-leading at the time.

This week I have particularly spoken about the coercive control provisions of that legislation, meaning that non-physical forms of family violence have been offences under our legislation now since 2004. Those are section 8, which provides that someone can be charged for economic abuse of an intimate partner, and section 9, which is the section dealing with emotional abuse and intimidation.

Other states and territories are currently starting to move towards criminalising coercive control. I have received some representations from the community asking Tasmania to do the same and asking where the legislation is. It is quite good to be able to explain that those provisions have been on our statute books for a long time and that coercive control is criminalised in Tasmania.

That said, those two provisions are not very regularly used. I spoke about that yesterday and at the Estimates table regarding some research that was done through my office through the University of Tasmania Internship program and the Parliamentary Library. Albeit that those offences have existed in the Family Violence Act since 2004, there have been relatively few charges under those offences. Certainly, very few that have been stand-alone although there have been some, and there have been convictions for coercive control forms of family violence that have not been charged alongside physical forms of family violence. There have been some charges but not as many.

Part of the reason for that is that the community's understanding of family violence is continuously changing and evolving and modernising. People are starting to understand very acutely that family violence does not only come in physical forms, and that the non-physical forms of family violence, the ones that are criminalised in our legislation and others as well, which together would be described as coercive control, social isolation and manipulation, economic abuse and manipulation, isolation from friends and family - those types of family violence are insidious crimes that are committed and can and do have incredibly long lasting and harmful, emotional impacts on victims/survivors and on their families.



In some instances, they can have fatal consequences. I have spoken before of the horrific murder of Hannah Clarke and her three children in Queensland a few years ago. When people see such dramatic and devastating murders like that, that are family violence motivated, often the media coverage is one of shock and the community response is one of shock - and it should be. It is shocking. Often that shock manifests in surprise that they did not see that kind of violence coming. Often you hear those comments in some of the media reporting that people could not have imagined the offender could behave in that way. In fact, once those cases start to be investigated, more times than not there have been non-physical forms of family violence present in those relationships, sometimes for years or decades. Often those physical forms of family violence are preceded by non-physical forms of family violence.

The reason that I go into that history is to recognise that as our community understanding of family violence continues to change and evolve, the law needs to keep pace and needs to modernise in accordance with community understanding. That is what the Attorney-General has done with much of her legislation since I have been in this place, in modernising and updating our family violence laws. We have supported every one of those pieces of legislation.

Creating the new offence of persistent family violence, then this bill to create the framework that will sit around the treatment of people who are convicted of that offence is a really important step forward in how Tasmania deals with family violence offenders.

I will get to some of the contributions from community organisations later in my contribution. Often it came up in those contributions, and from members of the community speaking to us, that it is a frustration for victims/survivors - and, I dare say, for the courts - that historically each instance of family violence needed to be dealt with as a separate incident and a separate charge. The courts were not empowered to look at a pattern of offending. What we know from the experiences of victims/survivors is that family violence offenders are rarely one-off offenders. There is usually a pattern of offending within a relationship but also over multiple relationships as well. That is what the creation of that offence will address. It is what the framework in today's bill will address as well, in terms of empowering the courts to be able to look at multiple instances of family violence that the offender appearing before them has perpetrated against their partner. That can mean against several partners.

That is a positive step forward in dealing with family violence and starting to take an approach that will hopefully lead to a reduction in offending. The parts of this bill that deal with rehabilitation programs are really important parts of that framework in terms of trying to turn those statistics, the alarmingly high rates of family violence, around.

I will read some of those rates into the *Hansard* now. These are national figures, not Tasmanian figures. They will not come as a surprise to members of this House because I know that people in this place are impassioned about this issue, as we all should be. They will come as a shock because they are shocking figures when you think about the numbers.

First of all, on average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner. That is a shocking statistic. If it were a different cause of death causing an average one death a week, we would probably have a different national and international approach to those deaths. In the past we have not dealt well, as communities, with family violence. Those statistics are still devastatingly high, that one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner.

One in four women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner since they were 15. One in four women in Australia have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner since the age of 15. Almost 10 women a day are hospitalised for assault injuries perpetrated by a spouse or a domestic partner. That is not good enough for any society. We should all be doing everything we can to try to reduce those horribly high statistics that 10 women a day are hospitalised for assault injuries inflicted by a spouse or partner and that for one woman a week, on average, those injuries eventually lead to her murder.

Mr Deputy Speaker, two women have lost their lives this week through violent deaths. They were Cheryl Johnson and Sajida Tasneem. I wanted to read their names into the *Hansard* today because it seemed relevant to do that. Cheryl Johnson and Sajida Tasneem are not here to benefit from changes like those put forward in this bill and that is a very sad thing. I hope that women in the future will benefit from strengthening family violence laws.

Changing the law is one thing. Culture change is much harder. We are here to make laws in this parliament and that is one of the roles we can play. As community advocates and leaders, we can also help to try to change those conversations in our communities and in the state, normalising conversations about family violence and making it clear that people are empowered to bring forward their allegations and their stories.

We spoke over the Estimates period, and the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence was in the Chamber as well, about the need for mandated and consistent training for police and other people working in the family violence sector. I know that work is now commencing in her department, which is really encouraging because, until we start to change the culture and expectations around how we deal with family violence, the laws will not have the effect we want them to. We want these laws to work. They have to work. They have to work for women like Cheryl Johnson and Sajida Tasneem. They have to work for the countless other Australian women who have lost their lives to intimate partners at alarming rates.

There was a community consultation submission from an individual - I will not use her name although the submission is available on the minister's website - who spoke about her experience of domestic violence. One of the things she said that really struck me was that for herself and other women she has spoken with, court charges and laws are a world away from how they live. She said:

I have never called the police. That was a risk I could not take. The payback from him would be huge. I tried to keep it a secret.

I know women who have done that. I reckon we all do, particularly with non-physical forms of family violence. It is really hard to talk to people about coercive control. It is not taken seriously even in general conversations. I do not mean that as a criticism because I know that there is amazing work happening to try to increase people's understanding of -

**Ms Archer** - They also do not know that it is an offence in this state.

**Ms HADDAD** - That is right. - coercive control but there are so many women in the situation described by that woman. I do not know whether the violence she experienced was physical and/or emotional abuse because her submission was quite short. That is the case for so many women - the fear of raising it, the fear of the retribution that you will experience from that partner or former partner means that you just do not talk about it. That is what we need to

change. That is the culture change that we need, to be able to normalise conversations about family violence because only when we do that will we hopefully start to see some of those horribly alarming rates reduce.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I became a bit emotional. I apologise for that.

**Ms Archer** - It's an emotional topic.

**Ms HADDAD** - It is something that I feel pretty strongly about. My intention was to speak more about what this bill will achieve and to put on to the record some of the comments that have been made by community sector organisations. I know that other members who will speak today will be doing that as well.

As the minister outlined in her second reading speech, the bill establishes a serial family violence perpetrator declaration framework, and a series of consequential amendments to other acts to implement that framework -things such as the changes to the Firearms Act to prevent ownership of a firearm when somebody is declared a serial family violence perpetrator.

The declaration is designed to identify perpetrators who repeatedly commit family violence offences against a single partner or multiple successive partners. The introduction of the declaration recognises that serial family violence perpetrators present a high risk of repeat and escalating offending. It aims to provide for a heightened justice response, proportionate to the severity of a perpetrator's family violence offending and assessed risk of future family violence offending, through the imposition of restrictions facilitating rehabilitation or providing enhanced supervision.

Under the framework, once it is in place when this legislation commences, both the Supreme Court and the Magistrate's Court will be able to make that declaration as long as the perpetrator is 18 years or over, and has been convicted of at least three indictable family offences or a combination of summary offences and indictable offences, and has been convicted of that offence in 170A of the Criminal Code, which is the crime of persistent family violence. There are factors outlined in the bill about the things that the court needs to consider in making the declaration.

The duration will be at the discretion of the court, up to a maximum of five years and includes the ability to review the declaration, including extending it on application. Once the declaration has been made, it will be recorded on the person's criminal record and will remove their ability to possess a firearm.

I will ask a question of the minister at that point: will that be a permanent removal of their ability to own a firearm, or for the period of the declaration?

**Ms Archer** - I will have to check that.

**Ms HADDAD** - Thank you. It also talks about aggravating factors that are to be considered at sentencing for subsequent family violence offences. After somebody has had that declaration made, if they are convicted of a later family violence offence, the fact that they have previously had this declaration will be considered an aggravating factor in those subsequent cases.

The second part of the bill, as the Attorney-General outlined in her contribution, is about the ability for the court to order rehabilitation programs. I have spoken in this place a lot of times about my interest in, and passion for, alternative sentencing options for courts. One that is working very well in this state is the court mandated drug diversion program. I know that in the community consultation, some people have raised concerns about the programs being compulsory or being mandated by the court and I know there are factors that the courts do not have to take into consideration before they can require that of a perpetrator.

I acknowledge those concerns but I am not sure what the alternative would be with regard to trying to start to shift that dial. The program needs to commence so that people can start undertaking that training. There is a review clause in the bill, a review period, that will give the Government information about how well that is working and if changes need to be made. I am sure that can be considered at that time. In the first instance, those behavioural change programs will hopefully lead to that culture change. No matter how hard we legislate in this place, until culture begins to change, we are not going to see a reduction in family violence.

The second part of the bill establishes the ability for courts to require offenders to take part in rehabilitation programs. I might go now to some of the community consultation submissions starting with Engender Equality and Yemaya who made a joint submission.

They reinforced some of what I know many of us heard from other community organisations as well and people working in the family violence sector. That is that repeat family violence offenders in the past have only ever been treated incident by incident in the criminal justice system, meaning that the overarching patterns of perpetration and the totality of the harm as well as the capacity to continue perpetrating remains unaddressed to the extent that this scheme recognises that patterned rather than incident based nature of family and interpersonal abuse has the potential to relieve victims/survivors and their children of the burden of managing their own risk and safety, it is a useful measure.

That is part of the point of creating that new persistent family violence offence in the Criminal Code, is that it will allow the courts to move away from having to consider each incident in a family violence separately, but they are making the point that that is what they hear.

They also make the point that I have talked about earlier that criminal justice responses to family violence are only ever as effective as their implementation and without accompanying training, change management processes and evaluation they risk inconsistent application or unintended consequences for victims/survivors. They are identifying really the need for training in the sector, but also that I think those rehabilitation programs, they are making the point that they need to be well funded and abundantly available for courts to sentence people into because I know, for example, with the CMD program it has some amazing successes but the numbers are capped. They need to be capped I suppose at some point, but I think this submission from Engender -

**Ms Archer** - They are at 120, but we know we are not capping any more.

**Ms HADDAD** - not capping anymore? Oh, that is interesting, thank you for that.

They are making the point of course that the courts need to be able to sentence offenders into these rehabilitation programs, but that they need to be funded and available and I think

that is something, obviously, the Government is well aware of, but it is something that was highlighted by Engender and Yemaya in their submission and in other submissions as well.

They also raised the fact that in some parts of the state there are currently no programs available. I suppose that is a flag for the Government to make sure that there is statewide access to programs, recognising of course that family violence offenders do not just live in the major metropolitan parts of Tasmania, but live throughout the state, including in rural and regional areas as well.

Community Legal Centres Tasmania in their submission spoke about some of the alarming statistics around homicides related to family violence and how high they are around the country and they also recognise that legislative change is needed. One of the things they raised is the problem of the lack of transitional housing for survivors waiting to escape abusive relationships, and highlight the fact that family and domestic violence is the most common reason provided by people seeking support from specialist homelessness services in Australia. I know that that is still current from when this submission would have been made a little while ago.

Equally, one of the alarmingly high reasons that people return to family violence relationships, sometimes after they have been able to escape, is housing. People return to a violent relationship because they have been unable to be housed either in emergency accommodation or other secure, safe and stable accommodation and that is a terrible result for that person and for that family. I know that the shelters in Tasmania, the emergency shelters, are turning people away at increasing rates each year. In the last financial year, it was a little over 19 000 times in that year that people needed to be turned away, because there was no room. Those shelters were at full capacity. I am at pains to point out that that is not necessarily 19 000 people. People are counted multiple times in those statistics because it could be one person calling multiple times, or calling multiple shelters. Notwithstanding that fact, that is an enormous number - 19 000 times that people have been turned away from emergency shelter in Tasmania in just one year.

The year previous to that it was 18 000. The year previous to that it was 14 000. It is growing year-on-year as our housing crisis continues to worsen and affects every level of the housing system, including emergency shelter. The turn away rates for the Women's Shelter in Hobart are heartbreaking; I think it is seven out of ten adult women and eight out of ten children - but forgive me, it could be the other way round. I do not have those statistics in front of me right now, but seven out of 10 and eight out of 10 women and children are turned away from the Women's Shelter. That is heartbreaking for those women and it is heartbreaking for the people working in the sector as well because they do not want to have to be turning people away.

Part of the reason that the shelters are full and are unable to accept new people coming through their doors is that lack of transitional housing. Community Legal Centres Tasmania has identified in their submission that sometimes the first port of call in leaving a family violence relationship is an emergency shelter, but there is a real need to be able to move quickly through that emergency housing response and onto transitional housing, or better still on to secure and safe housing and there is a massive lack of that transitional housing as well, which bottlenecks the whole system. As I said, in many cases it means that women do not leave or they return to a family violence relationship.

The same submission from Community Legal Centres Tasmania goes on to say that -

Survivors of family and domestic violence who remain homeless after requesting assistance has risen from one third, to almost half; and the number of survivors who are housed in either a social housing, or private rental property has dropped by 37 per cent.

The problem is getting worse. One of the things that this submission raises and it was also raised by Women's Legal Service Tasmania, is the threshold for consideration in the scheme - the two indictable offences, or a mixture of three summary and indictable - is the worry of potentially creating a hierarchy of offending. We have learnt a lot about family violence, as I said earlier, and people are starting to recognise that those non-physical forms of family violence are no less damaging. They might be harder to see, physically, but they are no less damaging in terms of the effect that they have on victim/survivors.

They raised that; they said that anecdotally they are aware that 'assault is often tried as an indictable offence but that other forms of abuse, including economic and emotional abuse, are often tried summarily.' They do not believe that in making the declaration there should be any distinction between indictable and summary offences and recommend that the number of indictable or summary offenses is consistent. I did raise that in the briefing and I recall that it was explained to me in terms of the policy thinking, behind having that two levels of consideration for the courts to determine whether, or not, someone can have that declaration made.

They also raised the issue, that I said earlier has been raised in other submissions as well, about the fact that participation in those rehabilitation programs really needs to focus on the perpetrator's capacity and suitability and their desire to really change - a recognition that they have a concern about the mandated component of that. My personal view is that you have to start somewhere and there are factors that the court will need to consider in determining if someone is suitable for the framework. Until people start to be exposed to those programs, we will not start to see that culture change. Notwithstanding that, they and others have raised concerns about mandating the rehabilitation program, needing to make sure that the people who are doing them really want to change their behaviour.

That leads to the other question I wanted to ask the Attorney-General in today's debate. There is the EQUIPS domestic abuse program inside TPS already. I know that the sex offender program is mandated. Is there is any policy intent to increase the availability of those programs for people who end up with a custodial sentence and the declaration?

Lastly, I will raise some of the points made in the community consultation submission from Women's Legal Service Tasmania. They spoke about the fact that these reforms will further build on the Government's improvements to the law as it relates to family violence. I spoke about that as well, that when our laws were implemented in 2004 they were world-leading, but laws need to change and need to modernise and need to improve. The Attorney-General has done that through a number of pieces of legislation.

The Women's Legal Service Tasmania supports the efforts in this bill to create declarations recognising serial family violence. They support the extension and clarification of the definition of harassing and acknowledge that this clarifies that unwelcome contact, either direct or through third parties, will now clearly be covered within the definition of harassment.

They said that in their experience of representing women who are victims/survivors of family violence, the use of third parties to communicate messages is a commonly used tool of harassment designed to further intimidate and control the victim/survivor. It has the effect of wearing them down.

They raised some of those same issues about men's behavioural change programs being an opportunity for victims/survivors to safely leave while the perpetrator remains under observation and support the Government investing in longitudinal studies to measure the effect and outcomes of those programs.

They also support extending the definition of family violence beyond intimate partners. I spoke about that a little bit in the briefing I received, particularly about the possibility of children being viewed by the law as victims/survivors in their own right.

They would like to see the courts being required to consider the presence of a child, pregnancy and/or the fact that the perpetrator is a serial family violence perpetrator for sentencing purposes. This should not, in their view, be a discretionary matter but should be a mandatory factor that the judge must take into account in determining an appropriate sentence. Others also raised the desire to have the courts required to see the presence of a child or pregnancy as an aggravating factor for family violence sentencing.

I believe I have managed to put on the record all the questions I had of my own and from some of the community consultation submissions. I know my colleague, Michelle O'Byrne, the member for Bass, will be speaking on the bill. I will finish my comments by putting on record, through the Attorney-General, my thanks to her department and office for the briefing I received a little while ago. Bruce, Mark and Kristy attended the briefing, and also Natalie from the minister's office, who I believe has had baby twins, which is very lovely. Congratulations.

**Ms Archer** - She is on maternity leave.

**Ms HADDAD** - She is on maternity leave at the moment. She was very heavily pregnant. It was probably one of her last briefings before she have headed off on maternity leave. Congratulations to Natalie.

**Time expired.**

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Polish-Tasmanian Relations**

[6.00 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I rise on the adjournment tonight to talk about the important relationship between Australia and Poland. It is a speech I have been wanting to make for quite some time.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries. With and on behalf of the Tasmanian Government, I wish to acknowledge this important milestone. While formal relations began in 1972, Australia and Poland have a long history. It is particularly important to mark this occasion in Tasmania because the post-Second World War migration of Poles and eventually other Europeans to Australia started here in Tasmania. Polish soldiers of the third Carpathian Rifle Division fought alongside Australian diggers at Tobruk, forging friendships and camaraderie that led directly to the resettlement of Polish soldiers to Tasmania in 1947 and 1948. These soldiers took up work with the Hydro-Electric Commission, building Tasmania's electricity infrastructure in the harsh conditions of the Tasmanian Central Highlands, a very common story with our European migrants.

Initially, they were billeted at the Brighton Army Camp before moving into the community. Many settled in and around Brighton where the bridge across the Jordan River was referred to as Polonia Bridge. This first intake of Polish ex-service personnel was important to Australia's immigration program as it was a trial to see if people from war-torn Europe would enjoy the Australian way of life.

The trial was such a success it paved the way for a further 400 000-500 000 immigrants arriving from Europe in the 1950s. Over subsequent years, Polish ex-service personnel and their families arrived in Tasmania. They also found work in organisations such as the PMG, the Zinc Works, as it was then known, Cadbury, Siltex and IXL.

However, these Polish post-war settlers of 1947 were not the first Poles to set foot in Australia. The first Poles to arrive in Australia were 10 Polish sailors who sailed to Western Australia on a Dutch ship in 1696 and, together with Captain Willem de Vlamingh, explored the Australian coast.

The first known Pole to settle in Australia was Józef Potowski who, together with his wife, Catherine, and son, John, arrived in Hobart in 1803. Mr Potowski became one of the earliest and most successful wheat farmers in Tasmania. Their daughter, also named Catherine, was born in Tasmania. Józef Potowski passed away in 1824 and was buried across the road from here in what is now St Davids Park, where a small plaque commemorates his life.

Many notable Polish explorers visited Tasmania during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1832, Dr John Lhotsky, traveller, naturalist and writer, spent two years in Tasmania. The first Polish political exile, freedom fighter George Gordonovitsch arrived in Hobart in 1834. Between 1840 and 1842 Sir Pawel Strzelecki explored and mapped much of Tasmania. Strzelecki is remembered through the mountain named after him on Flinders Island, in Strzelecki National Park, and the Strzelecki Ranges, and town of Strzelecki in Victoria. It was Strzelecki who named Mt Kosciuszko after another Polish national hero, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who fought against Poland's oppressors and also in the American Revolutionary War on the side of the Americans.

Hobart's Otago Bay takes its name from the iron barque *Otago*, the only command of the Polish author Joseph Korzienowski, who we know as Joseph Conrad, which was beached there in 1931.

The Somerset War Monument was designed and built by one of the first 1947 ex-service personnel settlers.



Members would also be aware of the Polish corner in New Town where there is the monument to Tobruk as well as a Polish Club and Polish House.

There are many other landmarks across Australia with Polish roots.

The Polish community in Tasmania operates numerous organisations including the church, schools, dance groups, sporting clubs and special interest groups. These organisations cultivate Polish traditions and culture, and preserve and celebrate Polish history, achievements and heritage. Polish culture is deeply embedded in the fabric of our Tasmanian community.

While 50 years of diplomatic relations pale in comparison with the long history of Polish settlement in Australia, this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an opportunity to reflect upon the important moments in our shared history and appreciate how Australia and Tasmania's history has benefited from the arrival of those from Poland.

Mr Speaker, in my time remaining, I want to celebrate Tasmania's young achievers. I attended the Tasmanian Young Achiever Awards, as I do every year, or at least attempt to, which took place on 3 June in Hobart at Wrest Point. The awards recognised the wealth of talent, dedication and inspiration shown by young people from all across Tasmania. Established in 1989, which is some 33 years ago, the awards are aimed at acknowledging, encouraging and promoting the positive achievements of all young people in Tasmania, specifically those under the age of 30 years.

The awards help to showcase the many talents of young Tasmanians and encourages them to pursue their goals. The awards celebrated the achievements of young Tasmanian finalists across a diverse range of fields, with activities focused on important issues like affordable housing, sustainability, education, and celebrating Tasmanian diversity.

Young people are making important contributions to Tasmanian communities in showing leadership in the areas of sport, small business as well as creative and innovative programs to help others in our local communities to facilitate change and to provide volunteering assistance across a range of fields.

It was my great privilege to present the Premier's award to young palawa man, Caleb Nichols-Mansell of Burnie. I have not a lot of time. I am going to mention quickly in my electorate, Leanne O'Keefe of Moonah, who won Colony 47 Transition to Work Award; also Amy Smith of Moonah, who won the sports award, an amazing sportswoman at 17; she has played Big Bash League and also national cricket league.

Mr Speaker, the impressive list of finalists and winners, and semi-finalists, I got to meet as well was truly inspirational. I add my congratulations to all of the winners on the night and indeed the finalists as well on behalf of the Government.

### **Health - Surgery Waiting Times**

[6.07 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I am not going to take very much time of the House. I have been asked by a constituent to read in a letter to the House. In fact, she asked that it be a question today in question time for the Minister for Health. I contacted her because it arrived

after that. Of course, that is not possible now as we are not back until August. She has asked that I read this letter in. It says -

I'm writing to you as I would like you to bring this up in parliament question time, directed to the Minister for Health. I am a 74-year-old pensioner, now retired, who worked part-time for 46 years and payed my taxes.

My gripe is I have been on the elective surgery waiting list for 12 months at the Launceston General Hospital for a colonoscopy. I had a phone consult with a surgeon in February 2022 who then sent me a letter, or a pamphlet, etc. saying that I was semi-urgent and my wait time would be 90 days.

I rang up after that time was served, was told on three separate calls the wait time was one year, or two years, or three years.

As I was experiencing pain, I contacted a private gastroenterology service on Friday, 3 June, was booked in to have it done Friday, 10 June. I had it done at my own expense as I do not have private health insurance, because I cannot afford it. So it has left a big hole in my savings. I live alone as my husband is in aged care in the dementia wing, so I could not get him to help as most of his pension goes to the home for his care.

My question to you, current government, is how could you even entertain building a new stadium for football, costing millions of dollars when the average person has to wait and pay for their own surgery for medical problems? It's ludicrous. That money would be better spent in hospitals or on homeless people. It's like we are living in a third world state.

Thanking you,

Mrs Kathleen King

I spoke to Mrs King to see if I could assist her in any way. She just wanted the letter to be read and she wants the Premier, as the minister, to reply to her. I will send the letter through the system as well.

She just got her second bill, she paid \$800 for the hospital, she paid her doctor \$800 originally, she just got her second bill for the extra \$400 for the doctor. She is still waiting for her pathology bill and her anaesthetist bill. This is an incredibly expensive exercise for someone who cannot afford it. She has also told me that she has got an issue with, hopefully, benign cysts and now she is on a waitlist for a urology appointment.

It is not acceptable that this is the circumstance for this constituent. I have no words to add that put any more pressure on the Government than the words that Mrs King has said. It is not okay and our priorities need to be different.

## Roger Scholes - Tribute

[6.10 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to honour the life of a most beautiful and wildly creative soul Tasmanian soul, one of our greats, film maker and artist, Roger Scholes. My heart felt so heavy when I read news of his premature death at the age of 71 a little more than a week ago.

Roger Scholes was an extraordinary and rare man. He had this incredible intelligence and this bottomless well of empathy and humanity and sometimes I know it completely overwhelmed him. The world did. People did. Their circumstances. The state of the natural world.

Roger Scholes was a film maker of international renown. He produced that incredible film *The Tale of Ruby Rose* which captured the haunting and harsh beauty of the Tasmanian highlands. He was also an historian, a recorder of histories, and he made the 1982 documentary *The Franklin River Blockade* and captured so well that important history of our island.

Many people feel so sad. I will just quote from Breath of Fresh Air Film Festival Director, Owen Tilbury, who worked with Mr Scholes over the years. He said, 'He was a man fully dedicated to his craft'. Mr Tilbury said, 'Mr Scholes is one of Tasmania's most iconic early auteurs who shaped the film making scene of his time'. He said he would remember Mr Scholes as a 'film maker with a strong social conscience and empathy for outsiders and a willingness to suffer for his art'. 'He was more than happy to suffer physical privation, financial challenges and electoral battles with various people for his art', Mr Tilbury said.

He will be very very much missed because this is the passing of a true icon and a giant of the Tasmanian film industry. One of Roger's defining characteristics was his deep identification with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and he burned, not quietly but gently, but he burned with a sense of injustice about what happened to Tasmanian Aboriginal people over the last more than 200 years. He was always trying to do something to make it a bit better. He did that incredible installation at William Crowther's statue in Franklin Square, which was an acknowledgement that Crowther was obviously a complicated man, but an acknowledgement of the terrible travesty of Crowther's treatment of Aboriginal man, William Lanney.

He also was working with Aboriginal Tasmanian people to understand better cultural burning practices. I sat down with Roger last year about this project where he was going out on country and looking at those core burning practices. This great film maker and wonderful artist did not have a lot of money and he needed a bit of help to buy a film camera. Last July, Roger, and his beautiful and clever wife, Katherine, who is a renowned author in her own right, came to dinner with Dr Woodruff and I here in the dining room. It was a wonderful conversation and his curious mind and his big heart took us all over the place. His wife, Katherine is a delight with the fiercest intelligence. I send my deepest condolences to his wife, Katherine, and his sons, Johnny and Linden.

I am sure you know, Katherine, Johnny and Linden, that your husband, your dad, your friend, was one of the great, great Tasmanians. He was so well loved and his was a life of giving and sharing, of teaching, of loving and curiosity and kindness. Mr Speaker, there is a song going around in my head and it is Don McLean's beautiful song, Vincent, and this reminds me of Roger:

I could have told you, Vincent, this world was never meant for one as beautiful as you.

Mr Speaker, vale the wonderful, wonderful Roger Scholes.

**Dr Woodruff** - Hear, hear.

## **Flinders Island**

[6.15 p.m.]

**Mr WOOD** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, recently I had the privilege to visit one of the most beautiful, small islands that this nation has to offer - Flinders Island. Flinders Island, as you all know, is in my electorate of Bass. It is the most populated island that makes up the most magnificent Furneaux group.

I take this opportunity to speak to the House about the close-knit community that is an integral part of their life there and the unique challenges that the islanders face. We left Launceston early on a clear, bright morning and boarded the regional flight with Sharp Airlines from the Launceston Airport. I was very pleased to see that the plane we were flying on, whilst very small, did indeed have two engines. I am told the Flinders Island locals affectionately refer to these planes as 'flying cigars'. When you have to virtually double-over to get into them, you can understand why. Nonetheless, I am sure anyone who has been on one of these flights knows that the trip over can be, at the best of times slightly bumpy. This time we were not disappointed. The pilot, however, did a magnificent job. I have to say if you have not done it, take the flight. The views on approach to the island are truly breathtaking.

I was struck by the island's incredible natural beauty. It is a region of rich pastoral land and abundant wildlife. Much of the island, remarkably, is still just as, I suspect, Matthew Flinders would have found it when he first explored this area some 200 years ago in all its untamed glory.

Whilst there, I was able to speak to locals, small business owners, council and the indigenous members. It seemed to me that there are several key factors that drew them altogether as a community. First, they all live and breathe the same set of struggles that are unique to the island. They all experience the same limitations that an isolated region has.

It is interesting to note that the island is 62 kilometres from north to south and 37 kilometres from east to west with a total land area of some 1300 square kilometres. It is remarkable. Mount Strzelecki in the south-west of the island is its highest peak at 782 metres and to state that it rises majestically out of the crystal-clear waters, well, in this instance it is an absolute understatement. It is just breathtaking. It is simply stunning and you need to see it to believe it.

About a third of the island is mountainous and rugged with ridges of granite that run the length of the island. The coastal areas are dominated by beautiful pure white sandy beaches and sand dunes.

Second, the islanders love their island and they are fiercely proud of it. They gather each other up, as a community, in reflection of that. They are their very own support group. The

camaraderie and human decency that I saw in the towns on Flinders Island is nothing less than heart-warming. I had the privilege to meet the many volunteers there who sit on a multitude of committees so that the community continues to run smoothly: volunteers like Julie Simmons who devotes her time tirelessly to the sports and RSL club over there plus runs the island's local small newspaper. People like Anne Campbell from the Country Women's Association who blessed us with some of her delicious orange kiss biscuits and spoke of the important work that she and many others do to bolster their society.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly encourage anyone listening to make the time to travel to Flinders Island, to experience firsthand, not only the awe-inspiring landscape, but the compelling community spirit that flourishes there.

We could learn a lot from the people of Flinders Island. My personal commitment is to be a strong advocate for them in the unique challenges that they face in that beautiful part of this world.

**Ms O'Connor** - Hear, hear. That was a lovely contribution.

### **Cybersecurity Projects**

[6.20 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, tonight on the adjournment I am going to talk about cybersecurity projects. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend Estimates this year due to having COVID-19. This is an area of questioning which I really wanted to speak to the minister about, and make sure that we start talking about it more often in the House.

This Budget was scant on cybersecurity projects, including no detail as to how the Government is funding the protection of our critical infrastructure assets in relation to cybersecurity. Questions were raised regarding the funding of risk management programs in relation to the security of critical infrastructure.

There is a federal act, which is called the Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018. Under that act there are certain obligations which each state government is obliged to follow. From my understanding, we are really behind the eight ball in Tasmania. Our two critical pieces of infrastructure are the RHH and the LGH, both critical assets. If there is a cybersecurity attack on those assets, the consequences to the people of Tasmania would be dire. If you can imagine: every single person in Tasmania's medical records at risk. If you can imagine a doctor looking up someone's medical records, which states that they are an A negative person and they are an O person and proceeding with an operation. These are critical assets.

Cybersecurity is a real threat. We really have not invested enough, from what I can see. There is really nothing in the Budget about the supporting infrastructure to make sure that we have effective cybersecurity in Tasmania. One of the first obligations is developing a cybersecurity incident response plan. That is to prepare for a cybersecurity incident. As far as we can tell, there is not a whole-of-government cybersecurity incident response plan.

The second obligation is undertaking cybersecurity exercises to build cyber preparedness. As far as we can tell, that also has not been done. That is another obligation under this federal act. These are critical assets.

The third one is undertaking vulnerability assessments to identify vulnerabilities for remediation. As far as we can tell, that also has not been done on a whole-of-government response. We do not know if it has been done on those two critical assets. We will continue in the second half of this year to pursue this. It is really important we get this right.

The fourth obligation is to writing system information to develop and maintain a near real time threat picture. I do not think any of this work has been undertaken. I believe the bare minimum has been invested in our cybersecurity capacity in Tasmania. We know that as far as the Budget read there is nothing in the future Estimates to fund the protection of our critical infrastructure assets in relation to cybersecurity. There is no funding allocated to fund a risk management program either.

We will continue, as I said, to push the minister and DPAC and the Premier, who actually has overall responsibility for that cybersecurity protection. When there is an incident, and it is not an 'if' there is an incident, it is a 'when' there is an incident. This is the reality that we face now. We need to know that we can continue to provide and deliver services if there is a cyber-attack on Tasmania's critical assets.

### **Port Sorell - Subdivision Proposal**

[6.25 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I want to make some comments about a subdivision I understand is in process within the Latrobe Council, which is to develop a site on 353 Port Sorell main road, and to create visitor accommodation which houses up to 600 people adjacent to that road.

To put it mildly, there has been quite substantial community concern about putting a essentially a whole new township on this particular site. The rationale for the development is to provide accommodation for seasonal workers who are coming from overseas to pick fruit. However, until now Camp Banksia at Port Sorell has met that need, and it is an established facility with access to reticulated water and sewerage. It is also in Port Sorell where workers can mix with local people and reduce the isolation of workers and build community engagement.

As the member for Franklin, I can speak with a great deal of concern about isolating our seasonal workers in basically a bunker in isolated parts of regional communities without access to services, having no easy access to shops and community life. It puts them in a very dangerous situation. It promotes the possibility of some form of slave labour. There have been incidences around Australia, and in Tasmania there have definitely been incidences of terrible abuse of workers. It is very concerning when people are not located near community services, and when there is an alternative like the accommodation at Camp Banksia.

Why is there a need to subdivide rural land when these workers are only going to be here for a short period of the year? As well as not having existing water and sewerage services, or community services and support, there are also no pathways for cycling or walking safely along

Mill Road, which is right next to the airport. It is a rural industrial area. There are not any shops or recreation facilities for the 600 people to look after themselves, and at the moment there are no buses to access, there is no service. It is 10 kilometres each way to walk to Woolworths.

**Ms O'Connor** - That is terrible.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - That is 20 kilometre round trip, that is 5 hours of walking at a fast speed just to get to Woolworths. It is really disgusting that this is on the table. It is terrible for community cohesion. They only need it for supposedly three months of the year, but they are not using the existing facilities at Camp Banksia so locals are smelling a rat. Obviously it is very convenient for the landowner to propose a subdivision for 600 sites, which may or not be used in perpetuity for this purpose, then lo and behold, afterwards it is available for that landowner to make merry money.

It is a terrible precedent to subdivide rural resource land and change it to visitor accommodation which is what is being proposed here. The seasonal worker scheme could change at any time and it is essentially a temporary purpose. It is also on a wetland. The water table is only 40 centimetres below the surface, and the soil will be waterlogged for a considerable part of the year and will flood. Recently it was always wet in winter. It had a lagoon, it is breeding habitat for swans and green and gold frogs. In February this year there was extreme rainfall that the locals in that area knew about because it exceeded the one in 100 year record in places. The council has admitted that its capacity with its stormwater system cannot keep up. This is no stormwater system there. It is clear that with climate change these events will become frequent. The idea of having 600 people in a flood zone without an ability to get out is really quite deeply concerning.

It really goes to show how terrible our planning scheme is, that the council alone could make a decision about something like this. We have to have what the Planning Commission recommended when the Liberals pushed through the planning scheme in 2016. Peter Gutwein, at the time the planning minister, ignored the advice of the Planning Commission, ignored the direct recommendation to have overlays that would prevent these sorts of things happening when you have a properly designed planning scheme with planning policies that overlay the whole state.

There is no proper biodiversity code. In 2016, the Liberals in government made sure that did not happen. They did not adopt that recommendation for the independent planning body.

We do not have a climate change planning policy. We do not have a settlement to have transport and infrastructure planning policies. We do not have a biodiversity planning policy.

How on earth can we be planning for the future events that are happening without those things in place?

A cynical observer might wonder if that is the Government's intention - do not have any comprehensive, thoughtful, careful integrated planning that takes account of all these things that make sure that people do not get stuck in Australia, in Tasmania, a very long way from their homes, unable to access a chemist, unable to get to a doctor, unable to buy food or converse with other people, stuck outside a town in a facility and beholden to the whims of the landowner.

We are very concerned. The community is not going to stop. We need to hear from TasPorts and TasWater, a whole range of other bodies - obviously the ETA. We will keep following it.

**Time expired.**

### **Rural Health Services Shortage**

[6.32 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to raise the concerns of a constituent who has contacted me about rural general practice services across Tasmania. In particular, what has happened at Ouse in the Central Highlands and the fact that now a community with over 1000 people has no reliable general practice service. We have heard in this place before, even this week, of the issues and the importance of attracting and retaining general practitioners to rural and regional areas.

It is fair to say that yesterday there was an announcement from the Government which talked about an innovative model around primary health care reform. It was very light on detail. It did not really outline the Government's intention. The last topic was about writing to the new federal minister, Mark Butler, requesting assistance from the Federal Government. I think if you wanted to make some assumptions about it, it was about better resourcing rural and regional hospitals across Tasmania which we had a policy around at the last state election.

I want to highlight again the devastating impact that a lack of access to general practice in these rural and regional communities is having for people. It is a significant issue. This Government has had almost 10 years to deal with this issue. It is not a new issue. From time to time you will hear separate communities across the state that are impacted at any given time by not having access to a GP.

The Government said that they are looking at this model. We know that there are a number of solutions that have been put forward, particularly by the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania who recently made a submission to the rural health inquiry. I have a copy here. It is a very comprehensive submission. It outlines a number of solutions to try to address this issue across Tasmania, which we must do for the health and wellbeing of our rural and regional Tasmanians, making sure that we have good primary health care services in those communities which will reduce the burden and the pressure on the acute care sector in the long term.

I recommend that the minister have a look at this submission. It really does provide good information and good suggestions around how this can be improved. I also will read into *Hansard* a couple of the recommendations from that report because I think that is important. It fits very well with the fact that our constituents continue to raise their concerns about not having access to a GP and the detrimental impact that has to them and their local community. Here are some solutions that are being put forward by a group of rural doctors who think that they may be able to assist the government locally around some of these models of care. They say:

We need to have accessible primary care for all rurally located Tasmanians and that access to primary health care is the key to improving health outcomes for rural populations. We need more funding for pre-hospital care



to reduce the delay to ambulances called to rural patients; investment in the Tasmanian Rural Generalist Pathway; to improve remuneration for doctors and investment in the infrastructure required to enable the right care, in the right place, by the right doctors, with the right skills.

We hear a lot from the Health minister about the importance of providing the right care, in the right place close to where people live, but we are not able to do that at the moment in Tasmania. It is a significant gap in service delivery, particularly where you do not have general practitioners in rural and regional areas. We need investment in rural generalist allied health professionals. We need the rural generalist model to be applied at all district hospitals. We need district hospitals to be adequately resourced and staffed to ensure maximum utilisation and we need access to safe, high-quality women's health services in rural and regional areas.

We need to increase the number of rural junior doctors being trained through the Rural Junior Doctor Training Innovation Fund and we need a review of the UTAS medical student intake policies. We need the ongoing provision of telehealth services to continue to support rural patients and to overcome barriers to access to services. We need improvements in communication between primary care, hospital care, specialist care, mental health care, drug and alcohol services and prison health care with a single portal for all communication.

In summary, our constituents continue to raise their concerns. Rural and regional communities are continuing to miss out on vital general practice services, but also yesterday's announcement made by the government needs some greater clarity. We need to understand what model the government is proposing, if it will look at nurse practitioners as part of that, and whether it is focusing on a rural generalist model. The government committed to funding and rolling that out, supporting the Mersey Community Hospital on the north-west coast as a way of starting to build our rural generalist workforce across the state and addressing some of these gaps in service provisions.

I call on the minister and the Premier to provide an update to the House, or to publicly outline what that model entails and how it is different from what is being provided right now across Tasmania.

**The House adjourned at 6.37 p.m.**