



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 4 June 2020

REVISED EDITION

Thursday 4 June 2020

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[11.12 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before I deliver answers to these questions on the Notice Paper, I thank the two honourable members for putting those questions - about 30 questions from each of them - on the Notice Paper. Much appreciated.

Mr Dean - There has always been a reluctance to do that because getting answers to those on notice can take up to six months, eight months - I had one there for 12 months.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes. In defence of that, I have put in place some different arrangements to hopefully get the answers quicker. I have a couple of answers today that were only put on there by the member for Nelson yesterday.

The following answers were given to questions upon notice:

33. COVID-19 - GAMBLING

Ms WEBB asked a question of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council -

Given that face-to-face gambling venues are closed during the COVID-19 shutdown, and many habitual gamblers and those who have a problem with gambling will be experiencing an enforced pause to their face-to-face gambling activity -

- (1) What increased and/or additional risks have been identified by the Government during the COVID-19 crisis in relation to:
 - (a) levels of gambling activity;
 - (b) levels of gambling harm;
 - (c) impact on those who are in an at-risk gambling category; and
 - (d) impact on the families of those in at-risk gambling categories?
- (2) What initiatives have been developed under the Government's gambling support program to specifically address the changed circumstances and potential increased risks during the COVID-19 crisis?
- (3) Has additional funding been provided specifically to gambling support services for proactive outreach during the COVID-19 crisis?
- (4) Has additional funding been invested during the COVID-19 crisis in the Government's public health education campaigns relating to gambling?

- (5) Has there been an increase during the COVID-19 crisis in the frequency of media and online advertisements promoting the public health messaging on gambling and promoting gambling support services?
- (6) How are the Government's gambling-related web-based sites - e.g. the Know Your Odds website and Facebook page and the Communities Tasmania gambling webpage - being used to provide the Tasmanian public with information, advice or messages specifically relating to the COVID-19 crisis and gambling harm and gambling services?

Mrs HISCUTT replied -

This question may have been put on the Notice Paper on 7 May. This particular question - No. 33 - had to be answered by two ministers. The question relates to face-to-face gambling venues, gambling support and funding, and online advertising.

The Department of Communities Tasmania responded to questions (2) to (6) through its minister. Treasury responded to question (1) only.

- (2) The Gambling Support Program - GSP - is working closely with Gamblers Help specialist support providers to monitor changes in demand, volume and client needs as well as collecting anecdotal information about clients' experiences throughout COVID-19.

Gamblers Help Services support providers are providing alternative accessible support during this COVID-19 crisis. Advice regarding gambling and COVID-19 is available through Gambling Help Online and the Tasmanian Government coronavirus site.

In addition, GSP is developing COVID-19 messaging for distribution through the GSP Know Your Odds website and the Know Your Odds Facebook page.

Finally, the GSP is monitoring emerging academic and economic studies focused on the effects of COVID-19 on gambling, including potential shifts to online gambling.

- (3) No. Support providers have reported a decrease in the number of people accessing gambling specialist support services and are redirecting existing capacity, including undertaking proactive support to existing and recent clients and their families as appropriate.
- (4) No, although the development of a planned online gambling campaign has been brought forward.
- (5) No.
- (6) Messaging regarding COVID-19 and gambling is being provided through Gambling Help Online and the Tasmanian Government coronavirus site. Additional messaging reflecting this advice is in development and will be delivered through the GSP Know Your Odds website and the Know Your Odds Facebook page.

Ms Webb - To clarify that, additional messaging hasn't occurred yet?

Mrs HISCUTT - I can only report what is here. The first part of question No. 33 was presented by the Minister for Finance. The member's question was wrapped around the additional risks during the COVID-19 crisis -

- (1) The Government does not have possession of any research into additional levels of risk during the relatively brief period of time that has elapsed during which gambling venues have been closed to patrons.

34. COVID-19 - ONLINE GAMBLING

Ms WEBB asked a question of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council -

Noting that there is concern expressed about an increase in online gambling during the time face-to-face gambling venues are closed, with many gambling-related activities such as racing having also ceased, and with people spending more time in isolation at home -

- (1) How does the Government measure the level of use and quantum of losses to online gambling in this state?
- (2)
 - (a) Is there an accurate and credible measurement of the levels of use and quantum of losses to online gambling prior to the COVID-19 crisis in Tasmania?
 - (b) If so, what are the pre-COVID-19 Tasmanian figures on use and losses to online gambling?
- (3) How is the Government monitoring or measuring the levels of use and quantum of losses to online gambling during the COVID-19 crisis in Tasmania?
- (4) Is the Government aware of an increase in the use of and losses to online gambling during the COVID-19 crisis?
- (5)
 - (a) Is the Government monitoring or measuring changes in the amount of advertising for online gambling in Tasmania during the COVID-19 crisis?
 - (b) If so -
 - (i) has there been an increase in advertising; and
 - (ii) what is the data on that increase?

Mrs HISCUTT replied -

The member's question is wrapped around the increasing concerns expressed about the increase in online gambling. It talks about measuring the level of use and quantum of losses of online gambling. There were five questions with a few (a)s and (b)s in the middle of it.

- (1) to (3)

It is difficult to obtain data on the level of online gambling by persons based in Tasmania. This is due to the different forms of online gambling, the cross-border nature of the service,

that some people are gambling on illegal overseas sites, and the limited availability of industry data.

While some data from online gambling taxed in Tasmania is available, information on the volume of spend by Tasmanians on other products offered online, such as keno and lotteries, is difficult to obtain. The introduction of the point of consumption - POC - tax in Tasmania from 1 January 2020 provides an indication of Tasmanian betting levels. The tax applies to all wagering and betting types or products offered to customers in Tasmania. This includes bets placed online or through the physical TAB terminals located in Tasmania.

There are limitations in using this data to assess trends in online gambling pre- and during COVID-19. These include the lack of historical trend data and that the tax collected is not separately reported for online and terrestrial gambling. However, based on those sources, the POC tax revenue year-to-date to 30 April 2020 is tracking to budget, with no noticeable spikes relating to increased activity.

Research is currently underway by the University of Sydney to determine how COVID-19 has affected gambling participation in Australia.

- (4) It has been reported by credit bureaus and some major banks that consumer spending on gambling has increased during the period of the COVID-19 restrictions. Changes to consumer spending habits are to be expected due to the restrictions imposed. Spending on online gambling has fluctuated over this period; however, it is too early to draw any meaningful conclusions from the limited data available.
- (5) When a complaint is received about gambling advertising (including online advertising) of the sole Tasmanian licensed provider, an investigation is undertaken by the Liquor and Gaming Branch of the Department of Treasury and Finance. As at 26 May 2020, no complaints have been received since the shutdown of gambling venues from 23 March 2020.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Resumed from 19 March 2020 (page 57).

[11.20]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I do not know whether we keep statistics in this place on the length of time or hiatus between when we start to deal with a motion and then when we finally take it back up again. I do not know what period of time it is, but I tell you what it has been a heck of a long time.

Mrs Hiscutt – It's usually an election that wipes it off the Notice Paper.

Mr VALENTINE - That is right. Well, we live in interesting times. There is no question about that.

It is a pleasure to get up today to talk about the Premier's State of the State address. I have to say that if the Premier was to write his State of the State address today, I think it would look quite significantly different to the one we were presented with back in early March.

Ms Rattray - Are you referring to the strong financial position the state was in back in March?

Mr VALENTINE - I might well be referring to that.

First, I want to acknowledge the Honourable Jane Howlett as a new minister residing in this House.

Ms Forrest - Not so new now.

Mr VALENTINE - She is still new - it is her first year. That is how long it has been since I had this speech written. I do want to acknowledge the fact that she has attained that position and I wish her well in it. No doubt she will have her moments and we will have our moments in being able to ask her questions, which I am sure she is looking forward to.

Ms Howlett - I am.

Mr Finch - And the three of us made it back from Shipstern Bluff.

Mr VALENTINE - That is exactly right.

I also want to recognise the Honourable Jo Siejka and her partner Daniel, and their new responsibility in little Ivy. Being a parent, of course, carries with it a great deal of responsibility and I wish them both well as they enter that phase of their lives. It will be terrific to be able to see little Ivy growing up and for us to be able to share photographs and the like. I wish them well even though the member for Pembroke is not able to be here today.

I also want to acknowledge Will Hodgman and his family. I think it is fair to say that Will will get his life back to a degree, and I want to take -

Ms Forrest - I bet he is glad he went when he did.

Mr VALENTINE - Well, that is right. I want to take a moment to dwell on that because I do not think we have dealt with that really in this House. I do not know even that they have dealt with it much in the lower House, the other place.

The Hodgmans were, in fact, Tasmania's first political dynasty. I know some would say political dynasties are not always great in terms of diversity, but the Hodgmans were Tasmania's first political dynasty, which I know is not always seen as a positive

That dynasty began with Thomas Hodgman, who was Will's great-great-uncle, if I am not mistaken; he was a member of the House of Assembly for 12 years in the early 1900s.

His nephew, Bill Hodgman QC - Will's grandfather - was a member of parliament for 21 years, nine as a member of the House of Assembly - MHA - and 12 as a member of the Legislative Council - MLC - where he was in fact president, Mr President.

Bill's sons Michael and Peter also served mostly in state parliament - Peter as an MLC for 12 years and an MHA for 15 years, where he was a state minister; and Michael as an MLC for eight years and an MHA for eight years - he also served in the House of Representatives for 12 years where he was Minister for the Capital Territory between 1980 and 1983. I might say a more passionate man and stickler for protocol you would not find. He was a vocal proponent for Tasmania and was nicknamed 'the mouth from the south' - I think most people will remember that nickname for a long time to come.

Will was born in 1969 and elected in 2002 and became Liberal leader in 2006, I believe. He holds the honour of being the longest serving leader in the history of the Tasmanian Liberal Party, eight years in opposition and six years as premier, the latter something his father often spoke of but sadly never saw him obtain, but he would have been immensely proud of Will. In the end, Will bowed out at a time of his choosing and was not beaten as such.

Regardless of any political opinion we might have, in terms of Will's achievements or otherwise, he is to be congratulated for his tenacity and determination over such an extended time, a period that was only possible, no doubt, because of the sacrifices made by his family.

In wishing Will all the best as he further contemplates his future, it is with the definite acknowledgement of those sacrifices made by his wife Nicky and their children so Will could follow his career.

It is not always easy when you are making decisions when you know it may impact on your family time, but we have all put our hands up for this type of life, both for the good and the bad times. It is not unlike a marriage really, where parliament so often plays the part of the other person or the other man or the other woman in a relationship and much wisdom is needed, and we all have that balance to strike.

I acknowledge the Premier, Peter Gutwein, and his move to the role of Tasmania's forty-sixth premier. Anyone would be both humbled yet quietly proud to take up such a role, I am sure, knowing your colleagues have that level of trust in you. I am sure that understanding the full burden of the role has not escaped our Premier because we all know, a short spell in the ring and a major uppercut - wham, comes the coronavirus, it is a virtual World War III, but the world is fighting the same foe. It has just been unbelievable.

The statement, 'May you live in interesting times' was, I think, always put down to Confucius, but it was not - it was actually a Chinese curse, but not by Confucius, as many think. Apparently, it is now known who the author was, but Confucius apparently did say, 'Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall'. It is a statement that has a lot of merit to it.

As a state, we have the tenacity to get through this, even though the balance sheet might look frightful when it is all finalised.

Martin Luther King Junior said, 'We are not makers of history, we are made by history'. I would say how we reshape life after this pandemic will define us as a society of our time, I believe.

The Premier, in his address, says -

... we have demonstrated commitment, focus and drive to deliver a better future for Tasmania. This will not change under my leadership.

It is good to know that the Government has commitment, focus and drive because we are going to need all of that. The big question is driving towards what? In his address, the Premier notes that the Government was elected in 2014 to deliver a strong economy and jobs; build Tasmania's infrastructure for the twenty-first century; keep Tasmanians safe; invest in health, education and Tasmanians in need; act on the cost of living; and protect the Tasmanian way of life.

I have to say, I do not think that anyone in that role would have thought that in the short space of five or six or eight weeks, that all of that would come into major importance and have to be focused on in such a short space of time.

There will be a number of different opinions on those objectives - first, as to how each of those objectives are defined, and, second, how best they may be achieved. From whichever angle we choose to approach them, achieving them depends on many things. A strong economy is one - it quite obviously needs to be a resilient economy. Even though the Government's proposed budget is likely to be in tatters, it needs to be structured to provide a safety net over time, in my opinion, to be used for those, shall we say, unforeseen circumstances that do happen, and I personally believe may happen more regularly, whether it is events such as the coronavirus - hopefully we will not experience this circumstance too often - or bushfires, floods and other natural disasters.

We have to take an intelligent look at how we manage going forward in terms of resourcing for those sorts of events. We cannot always expect that we are going to fall back on the Commonwealth, although the Commonwealth is there for some of that purpose. I think we can, as a nation, take a leaf out of the books of Norway and New Zealand. They have funds set aside for major events. Perhaps that is something that should be approached as a nation as far as we are concerned. We cannot operate on a wing and a prayer, hoping nothing will happen.

I believe we need to expect the unexpected, if that makes sense. I imagine the events of the last few months have taught us, through bitter experience, it is a precautionary approach. We need to make sure we take those precautions.

This pandemic has certainly shone a bright light for most people on those things that are really important to them. It has been a wake-up call as to how much more we, as a state, need to address certain issues. Some of those issues are food and product security, and the importance of good community cohesion in order to continue to operate at the local level.

Mrs Hiscutt - I like to hear you talk about the product security; I mentioned potato dumping in my contribution yesterday.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, we have significant issues and they need to be addressed.

Ms Rattray - This morning I received a gift of two pairs of magnifying glasses so that I can read the labels better in the supermarket, because if you leave your cheap glasses behind, or you lose them while you are going around, it is not so bad, but if you have not got them, you cannot read the labels and you do not know that a product is not Australian.

Mr VALENTINE - That is true. I have become a master at reading labels, I have to tell you, after getting type 2 diabetes. How much sugar has this got? How much sugar has that got? Where it is made is really important.

Mr PRESIDENT - Were the glasses made in Australia?

Ms Rattray - I have not had them on yet to be reading labels, but I will look when I go back to my office. Thank you for the question, Mr President. Homework at lunchtime.

Mr VALENTINE - You could ask the rhetorical question: are his made in Australia? There you go.

Ms Rattray - I am sure they are sourced in Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - I am not sure where mine are made, looking at that.

Nevertheless, I was talking about community cohesion. We need good cohesion as a community to continue to operate at the local level, but also at the state and national level.

We have realised through this time how much we have needed to rely on each other to get by really. We have seen how important a good health system is to us, and we have learned the value of being flexible in how we deliver education to our children. Has not that been an experience for just about every family in Tasmania? I think teachers will be appreciated a bit more from here on in as a result of that. I know teachers have told me how great some of the parents have been in delivering education to their children in what are really unusual times. Some have really blossomed in terms of taking on that role. Yes, with some assistance from schools and electronic packages, they have been able to do this. Others would have been absolutely stressed out of their mind trying to cope with that at home, especially with numbers of children. I am sure the member for Elwick would have some stories to relate if he had the opportunity to get up and speak again, but I do not think he does.

Mr Willie - I am a trained teacher and I struggled with my kids at home and trying to work. I think there was a real equity issue too, member for Hobart, in terms of parental capacity and resources, and the longer it went on, the more unfair it became.

Mr VALENTINE - Are you talking about the resources each individual school had, or are you talking about the resources they had at home because at home obviously some did not even have computers?

Mr Willie - There is a huge digital divide. There is a different attainment in parents' education. There was a whole range of factors -

Mr VALENTINE - It has pointed up a lot of things, has it not? I think - and this is what we were speaking about yesterday when it comes to the inquiries - it is really important to get that down. We cannot rely on corporate knowledge to carry that forward because these events thankfully do not happen that often. It is really important to get stuff on the public record, and that is the point I was trying to make yesterday - the sort of information the member for Elwick is talking about needs to be captured. It is a little bit of a beacon for somebody to pick up on at a later point if something like this happens well into the future.

Mr Willie - If you are interested, member for Hobart, the Peter Underwood Centre was commissioned by the federal government to do a piece of research into remote learning, and it is a really interesting and informative report. You can find it on their website - it is just around all of the issues with homeschooling.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, I know, I get their emails.

Mr Willie -It is worth a read. It covers on a lot of those issues.

Ms Rattray - The member for Elwick may make a submission to the committee inquiry and put some of that information on the public record.

Mr VALENTINE - He could well do.

I was talking about parents having to be teachers and we were talking about the digital divide and those sort of things - certainly, some unusual times. I think the children themselves will look back on this just the same as my parents talked about the times during the Depression and during the World War II. These stories will last for a long time in the minds of younger people who have had to go through this. You know - 'I remember when', 'What we had to do', 'I remember how mum was tougher than my teacher or dad was tougher than my teacher.'. Interesting.

We hope that children come through it relatively unscathed in terms of their education on the whole.

We have learned about the value of a good aged care system that can respond to emergencies such as we are in, and the importance of providing housing for the more vulnerable has been proven. These are just a few matters that have come to fore during this time and we need to see them addressed going forward.

From what I have seen, we have become a more caring community through these times and that has been a good thing. However, we have also seen the opportunity for greater degrees of family violence to occur, which is sad, along with discrimination and racism. Sometimes these things are a bit more hidden and it is not all good news on the community front unfortunately. I want to take the time to read from a *Talking Point* newsletter we were all sent by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, from Equal Opportunity Tasmania. I want to read it on the record, because we are in these interesting times, to make sure that it is properly recorded. The newsletter is headed, 'Coronavirus: The Silent Discriminator' -

The coronavirus harms lives, it is a cause of death and despair. Regrettably discrimination also wreaks silent havoc.

In a few short months this virus has turned the lives of millions of people upside down and many will never be quite the same.

The power that the coronavirus has wielded has been extraordinary. It has been the silent influencer as to who loses their job, who receives social welfare assistance, who is placed into mandatory lockdown, who can travel, what activities we can pursue and who we can visit. It has influenced who is provided with dental, medical and other allied health services and who is not. It has been the cause of people dying alone and being buried without ceremony and honour from family and friends.

Around the world violence against women is reported to have significantly increased. This is a truly dangerous side of gender-based discrimination.

In Tasmania, as we weather the coronavirus storm, discrimination and the erosion of human rights on the basis of race, age, gender and disability is extending further into daily life.

We are witness to a quiet surge of direct and indirect discrimination in the areas of employment, provision of services, education and accommodation.

Loneliness and isolation has crept into people lives, some more than others, insidiously corroding the physical and emotional wellbeing of even the most resilient.

The gap between the haves and the have-nots in our community is increasingly evident. The greater the level of under-privilege the greater the risk of discrimination.

The pandemic and the state of crisis will pass.

...

When we do emerge from a life of lockdowns, restrictions and economic hibernation, the fall-out will potentially give rise to another kind of misery - unbridled discrimination.

The elderly and those with disabilities are likely to experience the brunt of conscious and unconscious bias.

Gains, painstakingly made in gender equality may slip into reverse.

If the current trend is an indication of the new normal those who are Asian in appearance are likely to experience increased racism and incitement to hatred.

If we allow this pandemic to silently spread discrimination without fierce protest and action, we risk a wave of discrimination becoming the new normal. Marginalised and vulnerable members of our community risk becoming even more marginalised and vulnerable.

Now, more than ever we need to collectively decide what sort of community we want to be on the other side of the pandemic.

To ensure we can be the best that we can be, we need to practice kindness, respect and compassion towards each other. We need to do it now.

Over recent weeks we have seen wonderful glimpses of kindness, compassion and gratitude. Such glimpses show the better sides of human nature, they must be the ordinary not the extraordinary practices of who we are.

The brightest minds and millions of dollars have been spent combating the spread and effects of coronavirus.

If a fraction of that commitment went toward combating discrimination not only would the economic benefits be on the right side of the ledger, Tasmania would also have a community envied by others.

I read that newsletter in because these are important thoughts and worth placing on the record certainly given the fact that it came from our Anti-Discrimination Commissioner.

I ended up doing a bit of research and I came across the words of Franklin D Roosevelt, an American president who was not perfect, but he was more perfect than some. He pointed out a way that is worth considering. He apparently said -

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

As we plot our way out of this and as the Government seeks to do that through its budgeting, we need to have those words at the forefront of our minds rather than somewhere in the back.

In effect the economy has taken a back seat to the health and welfare of those around us and it has shone a light on some of the deficiencies we have seen in the way people are treated. You think of your own experience in the past few months - we have been made more aware of those around us. While in the country everyone knows their neighbour and their business - I know this because I grew up there - in the city, that was not always the case until now. We have been brought together more through this experience and no doubt in the country the community bonds have grown even stronger as well.

People helping people, getting food for elderly or neighbours in need; running errands for strangers who have been confined to their homes through quarantine or isolation. Any number of groups on social media have been offering services of one kind or another. The arts? Have they not stepped up? People coming together across the ether to try to keep us all sane and sensible, yet I have to say they are the forgotten quarter to a significant degree. However, we need to capitalise on this experience in the main.

Mr President, we need good strategic thinking with a focus on community, lifting the economy by trying to make sure all survive at a level that is humane and inclusive.

There will always be the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' as Sarah Bolt, our Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, pointed out, but we need to show a more social approach that is more people-focused. By all means concentrate on having a strong economy, as has been expressed by the Premier and the Government, but let it be for the right reasons and focus.

The experience we have all been through has been a great leveller because the virus is no respecter of persons: it did not just attack those who have lots of resources and it did not just attack those who do not have resources - it was across the board.

To many people, the paradigm has changed and we really need to press the reset button, not just in terms of the economy, but also in our approach to the social issues mentioned. It is called 'reciprocity', and that is sharing and caring, and I reckon it has really kept us functioning and has paid off to the benefit of our wider community. Other members might well have had the same experience themselves.

I have been trying to put my finger on what has changed over the past few weeks and I heard a phrase from someone on the ABC program, *You Can't Ask That*. I do not know if you have ever watched that program, but don't they get down to the nitty gritty? They really do. Someone on that program said, 'We have discovered what it means to live again in a community rather than an economy'. I think that is so true; we have. I think it is because we have needed to rely on each other to do the right thing for the benefit of us all, and that makes a real difference when it comes to building community as well.

I congratulate the Premier and the Government in general terms for helping to cement social inclusion more into place. We have seen them funding all sorts of initiatives to protect the vulnerable, like the extra money going to the 'Safe Night Space' pilot for those sleeping rough, with its 24/7 wraparound services, services like food, showers, lockers for rough sleepers' personal belongings to keep them secure, and laundry services et cetera, and the money the Government is putting into brokered accommodation that is safe, secure and affordable.

The extra money being put into mental health at this time, \$1 million there, and our funding for services for young homeless people, another \$500 000 there, so it is around an extra \$4.1 million all up.

Members would all agree with me that there is more to do in that social spaces if we are to avoid further problems down the track.

Ms Rattray - I noted that the annual sleep-out will not occur this year. You have always participated in that, honourable member.

Mr VALENTINE - I think there are two - the Salvos and St Vinnie's, and it is the St Vinnie's one that maybe will not occur at this point. I think the Salvos sleepout is later; I have not heard yet that it is not on; I know what the member for McIntyre is saying. Some people in Launceston are participating, are they not?

Ms Rattray - It used to be called, 'The CEO Sleepout', did it not?

Mr VALENTINE - One is called, 'Sleep out for the Salvos', and the other one is called, 'The CEO Sleepout'. I remember I made a bit of a donation towards the CEO one, someone in Launceston who was supposed to be participating in that, but it is still going to go to a good cause, even if they do not spend the night on the grass. It is not going to make any difference - people are not going to withdraw their money, and hopefully that money will still go forward and will help people who really need it.

Ms Rattray - It has certainly raised awareness of those particular initiatives.

Mr VALENTINE - It has. I have to tell you, when you do those things - I am a bushwalker - that spending a night on the grass in front of the Grand Chancellor is not really hardship in a lot of ways.

Mr Willie - Do not sleep on the grass, it is damp. You sleep on the concrete.

Mr VALENTINE - Not if you have the right gear. I have slept in snow caves, so a bit of dampness does not hurt. Well, you have been there?

Mr Willie - Yes, a few times.

Ms Rattray - I have slept in my office one night; that was enough for me.

Mr VALENTINE - We will not ask why that happened. Did you lose the key at home?

Ms Rattray - No, I was in my office in Hobart. It frightened the jingoes out of the cleaner the next morning.

Mr VALENTINE - Coming to empty the wastepaper basket and finding the member for McIntyre asleep on the couch.

Ms Rattray - I was not asleep. There was not much sleeping.

Mr VALENTINE - The point is, that money goes to a good cause. Heaven knows how homeless people have survived during this time. It must be so difficult for them, and coming up to winter it is even harder. We cannot always be in control of our circumstances. Business people I know, through some circumstance, have found themselves in exactly the same position at the end of the day - and you think, 'How could that have happened?', but it does happen and we have to always remember that the people out there cannot control their circumstances and end up being on the street.

The Government says it is being accountable, responsible and transparent. At his briefings, the Premier has been saying that, and it appears to be the case. It needs testing, which is our role here, and also of any standing or joint select committee inquiries regardless of how many there may be at the end of the day, as we were discussing yesterday. As long as they are productive and complementary, I agree. I do not think there should be huge overlaps between our inquiries, whatever shape they take. As long as we are getting good, cogent information down on the public record.

I encourage the Premier to carefully reassess our priorities as a state based on the experiences of the past few months - perhaps by also advocating for a national living wage as something to be explored when the National Cabinet comes together. I have to say it would pay dividends back through the general economy of the states overall, possibly making each state stronger as it gives people greater spending power for essential needs, reducing the issues some people have from living hand to mouth for significant periods, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the population overall, and reducing the overall demand on other social services. If you think how much we do spend on social services, the living wage idea is something that could be considered.

Basically, what goes around comes around as far as those sorts of dollars go. So, while the Government is spending it on the one hand, it is flowing back through businesses and other services that those people then go out and purchase. I think it really does need serious consideration.

The pandemic, as impacting as it has been on our way of life, has done our nation a favour in some ways by highlighting our capacity, or lack in certain circumstances, to deliver manufactured goods rather than relying solely on imports. Balance of trade is something that is important, but where we place those eggs of our nation is also important. How many we produce ourselves is important for our state economy - electricity generation is a case in point. Again, how we do that is important. In building a strong, resilient economy, it is important that we concentrate on making sure it is full of positive actions that add to our sustainability as well as to our state.

At this point, I point members to a documentary by a fellow called Michael Moore. It is called *Planet of the Humans*. I do not know whether members have watched that, but I can assure you it is a real eye-opener.

Mrs Hiscutt - Is that the one in which he was talking about electric cars, which you have?

Mr VALENTINE - He was talking about solar panels, and wind-powered generation, all of those sorts of things.

Mrs Hiscutt - He was talking to people who were plugging in to charge their car up, asking if they knew where the electricity came from, and telling them that it was from a coal-fired station down the road.

Mr VALENTINE - That's it. It's all of that. It is common sense when you stop to think about it all. It is a real eye-opener, so if you have not seen it, watch *Planet of the Humans* by Michael Moore. It is all about sustainability.

It questions solar and wind electricity generation, as I said before. It takes a good behind-the-scenes look at the economics at play in the renewable space. It is not all it is cracked up to be from a sustainability point of view in some parts of the globe.

I say 'in some parts of the globe', because I think we in Tasmania have the opportunity to really capitalise. The film itself, video, call it what you like, could be described as an inconvenient truth.

It is not what a lot of people want to hear, but I think it is important they do hear it, so that they understand the aspects it is getting to, so that whenever we are planning and doing things, we really take a good hard look at the sustainability side of things.

He is being honest, and he is being as honest as you can be, but I have to say that, as far as Tasmania, is concerned, with some really great opportunities, we could build a more positive image backed up by authentic, sustainable actions in the renewable space. We have to look at the sustainability; it is a competitive edge for us because we have hydroelectric power.

Each state government - I am sure it is appreciated that not all states are the same - has different pressures, hence the need to handle this crisis in the best way possible to find the right balance between hand-up and hand-out. That is, not just to those individuals who are doing it tough, but to businesses as well. They are a really essential part of society, providing jobs and economic stimulus. No doubt the measures talked about earlier will pay dividends in the long term. We just need to balance with expenditure on social issues as well.

Ms Rattray - Just as long as we get that Small Business Hardship Grant program sorted out.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, I will talk a little bit about that.

The Premier says in his address on Health that we have immediately increased investment and made sweeping changes to governance, recognising that demand for services remains high, and we must get better patient outcomes. No-one, I think, denies that Health is a wicked problem.

We just have to be smarter with the resources we have, and the circumstances we find ourselves in, with this coronavirus, are quite unbelievable. Who would have thought, even four months ago, that the world would be brought to its knees by a virus?

It took me back to an old television series made in the mid-1970s. It was called *The Survivors*, a BBC series. When you watch that, it has so many parallels with what we are going through at the moment. Except in the series, some people died within an hour of getting the virus so they did not have much opportunity to try to fix things.

These days, it is a different story but people are dying - 13 in fact have lost their lives here. It is just such an unusual time; it has been discombobulating - I think is the word that one could use - for the world.

Mr Finch - It is nearly as good as reciprocity.

Mr VALENTINE - Oh, sorry, yes. Discombobulating - I first came across that word in the Hobart City Council, when one of the aldermen got up and used the word and we all thought, 'What the heck does that mean?'. It is a good word.

Ms Rattray - I share it quite regularly now, but I credit that to the member for Rosevears.

Mr VALENTINE - I got it from somebody in the Hobart City Council, but, yes, I have heard the gentleman over there use it.

The health system is likely to get worse before it gets better. I do not envy any government having to tackle the issues that exist in that system, especially now, but this is where it needs a multi-partisan approach, as I and others have often stated in this Chamber - and as the member for Murchison comes back to her seat, she has said it a few times. We need to deal with this in a multi-partisan fashion. We cannot afford to fight over important matters like this. We just cannot afford that.

Ms Rattray - The pandemic has certainly shown that there is an opportunity for that joint approach.

Mr VALENTINE - It has; the member is absolutely right. It has shown that we can do it -

Ms Rattray - Together.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. That is not to say that things are not questioned, and it is not to say that the smaller components of the decisions made are not scrutinised and questioned. It is just the big picture items - it is just where we want to be in 20 years time. Let us agree on that. Is that so hard? Everyone wants a good health system. If we can agree on where we want to be then, let us aim at that. If there are going to be changes in government, maybe you just simply choose certain avenues that you might run down within an agreed overall plan.

Ms Rattray - The health system and infrastructure. There is probably more.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, there is a number.

Ms Forrest - Education and training.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, there is a number there.

Ms Rattray - You have been talking about that for as long as I can recall being in this place.

Mr VALENTINE - Not just me; there are others as well and, as I said, the member for Murchison as well.

Ms Forrest - Unfortunately, I think it had a motion that was not supported by this House at one stage; it belonged to our restructure plan

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, you may well have. I think I might have supported it.

Mr Finch - I did, too.

Ms Rattray - Everyone will be scurrying for *Hansard*.

Ms Forrest - I may be wrong; maybe it was put but wasn't backed up -

Mr VALENTINE - We will have to go back to the *Hansard* and have a look. We have the benefit of that, you see - it is the public record.

Ms Forrest - It might have been supported, but it wasn't by the majority. I thought that everyone would agree on such a sensible way forward, but not everyone did.

Mr VALENTINE - No, fair enough. It is a democracy.

The Premier announced certain initiatives that will go some way towards alleviating some of the concerns that we have, of course. I ask the Premier and the Health minister, Ms Courtney, who has been doing a great job every day with the Premier at the briefings, getting information out and the like. Both of them and the Director of Public Health, they really are to be congratulated for doing this day after day - twice a week now, for the most part.

Ms Forrest - They finish today. It is the last one today.

Mr VALENTINE - I did not get to today because I was touching up some parts of this speech.

Ms Rattray - If it is needed or as required.

Mr VALENTINE - I congratulate them for the way they have approached the whole public information space. They have really done an exemplary job there. Mind you, not everybody appreciates the circumstance we are in at the moment; they think it is all a big hoax. I had one posting that I will not read out but it was - 'You need to be slapped a bit. You need to understand that this is a hoax. Your language is not right'.

Mrs Hiscutt - Yes, I had a bit of that, too. Where are they living?

Mr VALENTINE - It is the science, it is not the policy stuff - it is the science behind the very fact that a virus exists and how it can travel. It beats me.

I was called all sorts of things, that I and my followers were of a certain type and, quite clearly, what goes on inside your head - all sorts of things were implied; it was just terrific.

Mrs Hiscutt - The hazards of public life.

Mr VALENTINE - Needless to say, we moved on - you do get those sorts of people; they are allowed to have their opinion - it is a free world and it is important that people are able to express things without people getting too upset.

The Premier has announced certain initiatives that will go some way towards alleviating some of the concerns in the community. I ask the Premier and Health minister, Sarah Courtney, to continue to examine the report by the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee A on Acute Health Services in Tasmania, which was developed from the many submissions made by people at the coalface. I am sure many more experiences could be added to what we documented during that inquiry but it was a significant inquiry. It did not get much airplay, but people came forward and told us the real stories and real circumstances that are out there.

Mr President, I encourage the Government to revisit that. It is delivering on some of the inquiry's recommendations - things like restructuring health services to facilitate local decision-making. As I have said on this Floor before, health must be managed so as not to allow it to decay into three fiefdoms again. I think that would be a really big backward step because we will end up simply chasing our tail again. It will be centralised and decentralised, and centralised, and on we keep going. I worked there for 20 years, as people know, and to have three or four changes in the structure of health again was discombobulating for everybody.

Mental health services are getting some attention, which is good to see, and certainly not before time. I think I may have heard about the mother and baby units getting some attention. I do not know whether the member for Murchison has any information on that, that they were setting up a mother and baby unit somewhere in the north? Maybe I should be -

Ms Forrest - There is a glaring lack of -

Mr VALENTINE - It was during our inquiry, the fact there was only one unit in the state and the big issue with that is that if you are in Burnie, Smithton or on the west coast, and you have mental health issues associated with the birth of your child, the last thing you want to do is be taken out of your network to go into a mother and baby unit somewhere in Hobart.

Ms Forrest - It is appalling.

Mr VALENTINE - It really is a significant circumstance and it needs to be addressed. I thought the Government may have made some announcement there, but maybe I was wrong. The Leader, in her summing up, might get some information.

Mrs Hiscutt - Onto it.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

The Premier says in his address -

There is more to do in housing and climate change as well as ensuring that more Tasmanians are able to grasp the opportunities our growing economy offers.

He talks about keeping the state's economy strong again, so that we can attract investment, create jobs and also generate the revenues we need to invest in health, education and housing, and looking after our most vulnerable.

Again, today, in the press, the Premier is telling us that a thousand new homes will be built by the state Government and that they are implementing a \$1.8 billion infrastructure package over two years, supporting an estimated \$3.1 billion in construction value.

I am also reminded in today's press by the Premier of some of the supports that have been put in place - the member for McIntyre was talking about this - the \$15 000 Small Business Hardship Grants. The Premier said that the Government has spent \$30 million supporting 18 200 small businesses with grants of varying sizes.

The Opposition pointed out that some have fallen through the cracks on that score, and no doubt that will happen. The benefit of some of these inquiries is that we find these things out and we can get them on the public record and they become something that can be used in the future to make sure we do things better.

There is also talk about the \$3 million skilled visa program not being delivered at this point, but that is in the wings and we hope they can sort things out there. I do smile a bit, though, when I think back on the global financial crisis and how Labor stimulated the economy; when the Liberals got into power, Labor was lambasted for having a woeful balance sheet and it was touted as mismanagement. Here we are at a Commonwealth level seeing exactly the same scenario playing out in reverse - if Labor gets back in, will it be lambasting the Liberals for having a woeful balance sheet?

Mr Willie - One of the lines they used was that there wasn't a revenue problem, there was a spending problem, but look at what is happening now.

Mr VALENTINE - To me - and as I say, I smile a bit - it points out that we need to reduce the politics in all of this and focus on the things that matter: argue about how the rescue money is being used rather than whether it is needed. Quite clearly it is needed, but argue about where it is being placed. To that end I encourage the Premier and his Cabinet - when building the economy, as he says, they want to continue to be community welders, and not use the oxy-cutter's blowtorch that divides the community and creates community angst with future policies that could be used as a wedge. I think a lot of goodwill has been built up. We need to capture that and we need to build a better, more inclusive economic base.

The Premier mentions climate change as well. Keeping the economy strong, creating jobs and generating revenues will also rely on ensuring we cover the risks associated with climate change. The Premier obviously recognises that in his State of the State address; however, to what extent remains to be seen. I look forward to learning more about his aspirations in this regard, looking possibly at a climate change inquiry, but when it was announced that the Premier created the portfolio, I thought 'No, it is not reasonable to be doing now.'. It is more reasonable to look at what the Premier does with that portfolio and perhaps look at an inquiry further down the track when there is something to inquire into. I think that is important.

It is about learning what the Premier's aspirations might be in regard to climate change. It is certainly important to look at when we are attracting investment, as the Premier is talking about wanting to do. Increasingly, I am sure those who want to invest significant resources in this state would want to know that the state is actively considering climate change, one of the most talked-about issues on the planet.

The production of hydrogen - using hydro-generated electricity appears on the surface to have some significant merit. If heavy industry and the use of heavy equipment are to become more sustainable, it is a big issue.

When you look at the use of fossil fuels, cars are one thing but mining and furnaces used for the smelting of metals and those sorts of things are really where a lot of greenhouse gas emissions happen. The idea that we can generate hydrogen in this state through the use of hydro-electric power has to be a competitive edge. I wish the Government well in going down that path. There are not many negatives in that. I suppose you might have some emissions when it comes to transporting the product to markets. But, even with that, shipping itself might see a switch to hydrogen power. Would not that be great? Not only for the planet - it would be great for this state. I look forward to what that brings and how sustainably we can make that happen in our little state.

The Premier talked about 21 100 jobs being created since 2014, with 256 100 Tasmanians now in work - the highest on record. I am sure these figures will be significantly revised as a result of the coronavirus situation. No doubt it is a case of 'watch this space' as to how much impact it has on the number of jobs we have in this state.

It turns my mind to the years 11 and 12 retention rates. That has been lifted, which is great. How are our apprentices going in real terms? Are they lifting fast enough to cope with the construction demand there is going to be? Do we need to pay even more attention to that area, which will ultimately lift job numbers? Having kids go through years 11 and 12 is fine. Some will struggle. We have heard that some schools have only four or five spaces filled in their years 11 and 12, and you would have to wonder about the economy in that. They are doing it in conjunction with colleges as well. A few questions should be asked, when we are a little further down the track, about how that has panned out. I am not convinced that most schools going to years 11 and 12 will necessarily pay back the dividends we expect of it. I certainly have questions there.

Odds-on we need to get back into manufacturing in a much bigger way, given the way the paradigm is changing with the coronavirus and the lack of availability of goods from overseas. Indeed threats are being made from some quarters, I have to say. We have all heard about the Victorian company that produces surgical masks and how it was inundated with orders given that the usual avenues for the supply of these things were apparently not available. We need to look at our manufacturing capacity.

It is something I have always been a bit concerned about - every time we import a product, yes, we might get it cheaper, but at the end of the day, what is it actually doing for our country? When we get into circumstances such as we are now in, what else will be unavailable? We need to be ahead of the curve to get the wins for the state as well. One hopes that the state has radars up to pick up those opportunities, especially in the manufacturing space.

The Premier talked about having an economy growing at its strongest rate in 15 years, faster than the powerhouse economies of Victoria and New South Wales. A statement needs to be made

about that. This growth is the result of nation-leading business confidence, increasing population and a strong budget position. There is no doubt our stronger economy has made, and is making, a difference to the lives of a great many Tasmanians, but we know there is more to do, and there is. But we are concentrating on the growth paradigm because that is the way the world is focused.

When we come out of this, will growth be the most sensible way forward? Perhaps in the short term, to get ourselves back in business, but every time we get growth, we disadvantage those who are the have-nots. It is trumpeted as some great thing when house prices rise, but for the poor, it is simply a bell that warns it will be even harder to get into housing or to put food on the table. One person's fortune is another's detriment - as housing prices rise and rents go along with them, given the borrowings that underpin the purchasing of those houses.

At the moment, the pandemic is forcing a bit of a correction in the rental space, and that has to be a good thing. Those with Airbnb-style accommodation are needing to take on long-term rentals to keep their assets viable, given that tourism has taken a dive.

I am no economist, but I suggest this paradigm shift, the impact of the coronavirus, is teaching us all a lesson about what is important. We need to consider how our society as a whole should be functioning and realise that the world can only grow so much.

To that end, I want to take you to another document we were all sent, as far as I am aware, by Dick Smith. I do not know whether members have read it, but it is titled *Climate Change is not the biggest threat to the world's environment*. I want to read from it -

Ms Forrest - Population is. Is that what he says?

Mr VALENTINE - The member for Murchison just burst my bubble. It was written by Kevin Casey, a professional freelance writer and global wilderness adventurer specialising in the solo exploration of remote rivers. He is based in Brisbane, Australia.

In his article, he talks about the fact that climate change is not the biggest threat. He says -

Climate change is not the biggest threat to the world's environment - we are. The world's rivers and seas aren't choked with floating piles of rubbish, toxic chemicals and plastic waste because of climate change -

I will repeat that -

The world's rivers and seas aren't choked with floating piles of rubbish, toxic chemicals and plastic waste because of climate change. They're that way because we have 7.7 billion people crammed onto a planet that's dying, under the pressure of our greedy, selfish abuse.

He doesn't pull any punches -

Two decades from now, the earth's oceans are on target to contain more plastic in them (by weight) than fish. Climate change didn't do that. Way too many people did that.

He goes on to say -

Climate change hasn't covered the world with concrete or replaced healthy ecosystems with canal estates and shopping malls - we and our ever-increasing numbers are the culprit. Climate change is only one of many symptoms of an out-of-control disease - human overpopulation.

The irreversible environmental damage stemming from having too many people on a finite planet is already painfully evident. Our bloated population is diminishing our children's futures in ways that have very little to do with the planet's temperature.

I keep hearing people say *'Humans have always found a way to solve difficult problems, so don't worry- it'll all work itself out'*. Alas, the problem the earth faces now is one it has never dealt with before - a plague of nearly 8 billion humans. It can't cope anymore.

I turn to another part of it -

No politician talks about our population epidemic -

Hang on, I'm doing it today -

All you hear from them is 'jobs, jobs, jobs', and 'more growth' -

I was talking about the growth paradigm -

You don't hear climate change activists talking about overpopulation, either. It's too dangerous a subject, too painful a reality. It permanently occupies the 'too hard' basket.

We stridently blame governments for lack of action on climate change - while secretly hoping that whatever they decide to do doesn't adversely affect our consumer lifestyle.

I think he makes some good points and he has a diagram in here. In 1890 we had 1.6 billion people. In 1930 - going forward 40 years - we had 2.3 billion people. In 1960 - the next 30 years-- we had 3 billion people. In 2014, which admittedly is 54 years on, we had 7 billion people. What are we going to have in 2100? His diagram has question marks following heaps - a lot of people.

Ms Forrest - Do you know the best way to stop that?

Mr VALENTINE - Stop having babies.

Ms Forrest - No, no, well, aside from that. Before that is to educate women in developing nations. If you educate women and girls, we will see a natural decline in population because they then make informed choices, and they can make decisions to get away from men who want to do what it does to make babies. It is very simple.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, you are right there. Obviously, there are pressures on them that sometimes they cannot escape. Whatever it is that we need to do, it needs to be done soon because we simply cannot allow the population on this earth to continue. We cannot continue to have a growth paradigm and that is why I am referring to growth. Yes, we will need growth coming out of this for the level of population that we have at the moment -

Mr Dean - Was it Paul Keating or Bob Hawke who said that we need three - one for you, one for you - somebody else - and -

Ms Forrest - That was Abbott?

Mr Dean - No, it was not Abbott. It was Paul Keating or Bob Hawke, one of those. One for the government, one for the people. I think that has gone now.

Mr VALENTINE - I think it has gone past that.

It is interesting when you look at the population growth, the annual percentage. The author has a chart here, with rankings. The country with the highest level is the Maldives - 3.8 per cent; Australia, 1.6 per cent; and all the way down to Lithuania, with -1.4 per cent. A population growth of 2 per cent doubles its population every 35 years. It is great for the economy in terms of stimulating things, but it is unsustainable and we really need to think about it. The earth's population, he says in the last page -

The Earth's population increases by 80 million ... yes, 80 million, EACH YEAR.

Every one of these people will expect and deserve four things - food, water, energy and space.

He is not knocking climate change. He is not saying that climate change is not a fact. Well, it is. Climate change is something we have to deal with and account for, but what he is saying is that we are our own enemy when it comes to the impact we are having as a species on the globe.

I know people do not want to hear that, and I know that that is not convenient to a lot of people, but somewhere, someone, some country, some little state has to say, 'Well, we are going to do it differently. We are going to approach this in a different manner.'

Ms Forrest - How about we invest in social capital? He said that too, did he?

Mr VALENTINE - While you were out, I did not talk about social capital as such, but I talked about balancing our budgets more around some of the social things we have found during coronavirus period.

Ms Forrest - Yes, build up the social capital; do not just worry about building bridges and roads - build the social capital.

Mr VALENTINE - That article was by Kevin Casey; as I said, it was sent around by Dick Smith. Obviously he would have paid for that to be distributed to a lot of politicians around Australia. Take the time, go and read that, and print it out.

Ms Rattray - What does Molly say? 'Do yourself a favour', Molly Meldrum says, 'Do yourself a favour.'

Mr VALENTINE - So the great paradigm is simply unsustainable when you consider the matters raised by Kevin Casey. The earth is not an ever-expanding globe, but we have an ever-expanding population; as a result, in real terms the resources available to support life on this planet are ever-diminishing and we really must take stock. The present crisis is a wicked problem that is bringing home the need for us to be able to think outside the square as a community. A global community, really. We need to be resilient, but to support that objective it is really time to find a more sustainable model.

I noted a couple of letters to the editor way back on 17 March. One was by Bob Elliston, and it is titled, 'Economic shrinkage' -

SINCE COVID-19 may end economic growth and cause a huge contraction in world economic activity (one that the biosphere desperately needs), our federal government should firstly initiate a universal basic income (one more generous than Newstart); secondly, tax all the rich and corporations; and thirdly, fix our currency to an invariable value (eg one hour of manual labour) to stop any inflation from the possible need to print more money; thereby ensuring the money supply, velocity of money and purchasing power are all maintained (under government control) and so no casuals, gig workers or other poor need starve or turn to crime. A society and economy based on living with the virus will organically emerge.

Interesting point of view. You might say that is very left wing, and it may well be. Just because it is left thinking does not mean it is not good thinking. Good on Bob Elliston for putting it out there. That is one suggestion, and I am sure there will be many other people who will have some solutions. The world needs to think of something, otherwise we will implode. I do not have the magic answer, but I know we need to be a world that cares not so much for the dollar, but for the people who inhabit this planet, and the planet itself so that it can support us in the future. That is what we need. Here we are looking at going to the moon again and man trying to reach Mars, and all that sort of stuff. Are we going to go and ruin another planet? Let us look after what we have here.

In my book, growth is ultimately not a real option in the long term. We do not want to face up to it, but it is simply unsustainable, given the finite resources and our ever-increasing population.

As I said before, Tassie has room to grow because it is not overcrowded. When you look at a place like Holland, you realise Holland is 64 times as dense as Tassie. Sixty-four times as dense, can you imagine that?

Ms Forrest - We do not want to be like that.

Mr VALENTINE - No, but can you imagine it? This is going back a little while now, so it might be more; there are 16 million people in Holland in a place half the size of Tasmania. Now, if we have 500 000 -

Ms Forrest - It is a bit flatter, though.

Mr VALENTINE - It has more useable space, if that is what you mean.

Ms Forrest - Useable, I know.

Mr Dean - When you go there it does not feel like it. I was there reasonably recently. It does not feel like it is so dense when you are there because it is spread out more obviously. Whereas we have a lot of -

Mr VALENTINE - The thing is that we cannot say we can change things later. The imperative for that is a long way away. We cannot say that because we simply do not want our head to hurt too much thinking about it all.

Ms Forrest - Mine is hurting now.

Mr VALENTINE - It will get to the point where we will not have a choice but to change. It is a bit like this coronavirus situation. We did not have a choice, we had to move on this otherwise it would have decimated us.

Ms Forrest - We did have a choice - we could have acted like the United States or the United Kingdom.

Mr VALENTINE - I realise that, but it was a wicked problem and we had to face it. Yes, we did have a choice, and thankfully we looked at it the right way.

Mr President, someone has to bite the bullet somewhere and start the process. We are a small island at the bottom of the world. Would it not be great, if, like renewable energy, we could get off the great powerline chain and lead the world from the bottom up?

I hear you say that the operational model with its up-change predetermines our modus operandi, but we need to explore how we can do it.

As I said, we are doing it with renewables - why not with a different economic system? 'Too hard', people will cry, 'Too airy-fairy.'. All I can say is that one small irrepressible virus is all that it is taking at the moment to be a world disruptor. I reckon we can do something different; we can have a different paradigm that delivers a better result.

In thinking about it, each elected member has basically been chosen to be in the mix when it comes to governing the state. There are various numbers of thousands of people for each seat - and I do not have that off the top of my head, but it is a lot of people - who are seeing their representatives who are not in government being sidelined to oppose it, so I think we need to use all the staff that we have in our parliament to come up with some answers.

Mr President, is not just something that the Government has to come up with when it comes to changing the paradigm. We need a paradigm shift. It will take leaders like the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Greens to sit down together to discuss things that are non-negotiable, as we said before, and where they have a common goal, to work out a path forward, and that is in health, education, climate change et cetera. As for those areas where we cannot agree, the politics will be played out.

I think I will move forward a bit, I do not want to take up too much time here.

One thing that the Premier focuses on is the aim to create a public service that puts Tasmanians at the centre of everything it does, from the provision of services to the development of policy to the expenditure of taxpayer funds.

I recall talking about this around 2013 - the public service needs to be end-to-end and holistic; it needs to look at local, state and federal matters. We live in a digital world and I am sure things have changed significantly enough to warrant a major redesign and, yes, there are savings to be made. It is one of those things that really needs to have a multi-partisan approach, in my book, again. It is a great opportunity, but it is also an opportunity to inject politics into the mix and I think public servants deserve better.

Natural attrition could be used to downsize as best over a long time perhaps, but it is a way forward. Do not do it to simply privatise services because - I do not know about you, but having been in local government I have seen how a national competition policy works - it will cost more in the long run for services if they are all privatised. Yes, some services that perhaps are not prolific have been delivered over broader time frames - private enterprise could do that without keeping a workforce sitting around trying to find something for them to do. You can go down that track but it really does need to be a holistic vote.

Take Hobart, for instance - the Hobart City Council has a service centre on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Davey Street; you walk in there, it is a big open space -

Mr Dean - In fact I saw it.

Mr VALENTINE - You go down there and you see this big open space and then you go up to Service Tasmania and you have exactly the same sort of space with a few people. I am sure if they got their heads together, the Government could work out with local government what services could be delivered from those centres and close one of them - money saved.

Ms Rattray - Service Tasmania initially used to be within the Dorset Council office space; now they have moved it up to the library.

Mr VALENTINE - Somebody probably said, 'We can save money doing this'; yes, the state could save money, but the people are put at a disadvantage or in some way you have to go to two places instead of one. If people sat down and worked through it, there would have to be money that could be saved simply in the service delivery alone. Not only that, but Service Tasmania does a certain amount of stuff, and other services could easily contract to do those. It would be like Australia Post; you can do a lot of things at Australia Post. So much is spent and people might say that reduces jobs; at the end of the day that might be a downside, but it depends on how you go about it.

The Premier goes on to talk about the state's growing population and growing demand for housing, and that must be improved. I guess improved for whom is the point in question; indeed there is more to do with housing. The coronavirus is providing a silver lining for a time because many Airbnbs are already becoming long-term rentals, although they are not affordable for many.

Ms Forrest - Just on that point, I am aware that people have been put onto JobSeeker but with the funding lift, they have been able to afford private rentals. If that is dropped back, what is going to happen to those people?

Mr VALENTINE - That is right, but the fact that people can't rent their Airbnb out has obviously created in some ways a bit of a glut. The trouble is it is at the upper end of the market. The people that are -

Ms Rattray - Short term.

Mr VALENTINE - And it is short term, because they want be able to switch back into the Airbnb-style offering as soon as the borders are open. It will be an interesting area to watch.

Mrs Hiscutt - It will be interesting because the workplace COVID-19 safety plan that you will have to do before an accommodation place can reopen may be a determining factor in whether some of these places will open again.

Mr VALENTINE - From the tourist perspective. The Premier said in his address -

That is why today, I am announcing we will, after consulting with Taswater, TasNetworks and industry representative bodies, introduce later this year legislative timeframes for the permit process for energy and water, and sewerage services.

That is something which has already been done. Simplifying often means removing so-called barriers that have been put in place for good reason, but we need to see the community benefit as a whole, not just those with the dollars who may simply be wishing to improve their own position. A sense of place is really important; it is what motivates many Tasmanians and our economy can be vibrant without selling off the farm, so to speak. Do we want to end up with less than satisfactory infrastructure because some time frame has been imposed on its approval when looking at the building approvals?

Tasmanians love their way of life. I think we have to be careful how we approach changing things like the planning scheme. I know there is going to be a big debate on the major projects legislation that is coming forward. Some see that really as a bogey - an opportunity for a government to simply stimulate the economy and basically help developers get their infrastructure going - but there is always that balance, and the opportunity for community to have a say.

I will wait to hear all the facts. I know some are saying, 'Well, this is the way it is going to be.' Quite often when you see an exposure draft of something, it changes by the time it gets here. I do not spend a lot of time reading exposure drafts to educate myself on what that bill is going to do, because you only have to revisit it again. You are wasting time by having to go through it a second time to find out what has actually changed.

People do not realise that in this Chamber we are almost the last to see the final bills, so it is important that when we see them, we have a good understanding of what they are trying to achieve, and look at whether they are reasonable legislation.

I will make one further comment about major projects. The Resource Management and Planning System has been in place for many years. While there may be room for some improvement, we need to be sure that we are not cutting the community out and, as I said before, removing that sense of place and community from the equation. On the surface, legislation such as the major projects bill and the Tasmanian Planning Commission review seem to contradict the Government's present care paradigm. As I said, quite a few are pointing out that the major projects

legislation is very deficient. It may see some of that way of life changed and somewhat diminished, some would say, depending on the way things are handled.

To my mind, we have to look at the sequence of events there. If we are going to bring in major projects legislation and deal with it now while we have a planning commission here - and at the end of the day I am sure it would have a certain overarching role to play in major projects - but then all of a sudden we go along and review the commission, that seems to be a bit of 'cart before the horse'. I think you would review the upper structure first and then bring in something like major projects legislation, but I might be wrong. I am not advocating for major projects legislation. I am just saying that the way it is being done seems to be a little back-to-front.

I will call it quits there. I think I have bored people to tears, and I note the Premier's State of the State address.

[12.48 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, COVID-19 is a worldwide epidemic, with ramifications widely spread across our society.

I want to begin my remarks today by offering my sincere condolences to all Tasmanians who have lost friends and loved ones because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of this pandemic have been wide-ranging, altering our society and affecting our way of life and severely affecting our economy, but the most devastating impact has been the lives that have been lost.

Every life is precious, and to everyone who has lost someone close to them, my thoughts and the thoughts of this parliament are with you.

I wish to also thank our dedicated frontline health and emergency service workers who have worked selflessly to help and protect the lives of others, day in and day out. Thank you.

I extend my thanks to our teachers, our cleaners, our administration staff, our volunteers - to everyone who is working tirelessly to get us through this challenging time.

I offer my support and gratitude to all members of parliament, in both Houses, who I know have been working tirelessly to get us through this very challenging time.

Some good news during the COVID-19 pandemic: my congratulations go to the member for Pembroke. To Jo and Daniel, congratulations on the birth of beautiful little Ivy. I have only had a chance to see some photographs, but I look forward to meeting Ivy and hearing her in this Chamber very soon.

Mr President, the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians has been the number one priority for the Tasmanian Government during this pandemic. When the severity of the pandemic became apparent, the state Government acted swiftly and implemented strict and unprecedented travel and social distancing measures to protect the lives of Tasmanians. Although these measures have been harsh, they have been successful in limiting the spread of the virus in our state and flattening the curve of the COVID-19 cases. These measures have saved lives, and I thank all Tasmanians, including all those in my electorate of Prosser, who have adhered to the restrictions and guidelines in order to protect themselves and others.

While some restrictions have been lifted, we must not be complacent. Undoubtedly the most severe side effect of these life-saving measures has been the impact on businesses, employment and the overall economy. Businesses across all sectors have been negatively affected, and many have been forced to shed staff and close their doors because of government-mandated restrictions or loss of income.

Our tourism and hospitality industries have been particularly hard hit, with almost all bars, restaurants and accommodation venues being forced to close down. The impact of this is particularly poignant in my electorate of Prosser, with the economies of so many little towns on Tasmania's east coast and the peninsula having been heavily dependent on our state's tourism industry.

In response to the health and economic consequences of COVID-19, the Tasmanian Government has implemented a support package totalling in excess of \$1 billion. It has provided economic support measures to businesses and individuals affected by the pandemic. It has also provided additional funding to charities and support services to assist individuals and families who are experiencing adversity during this very tough time.

Applications have been received for assistance from individual households and businesses right across the community. Earlier today, the Premier announced a reboot of the economy, with a record construction blitz over two years, underpinning around 15 000 jobs. The package will build on the Government's current infrastructure package of \$1.8 billion over the next two years, and in total will support an estimated construction value of \$3.1 billion across the next two years. It brings forward government expenditure that will stimulate investment in the private sector. It will strengthen and underpin the economy, and will create thousands of jobs.

The best way to get our budget back on track and to grow business confidence and create jobs is to grow the economy, and that is what we are doing. The program of works will build next-generation infrastructure, improve the opportunities for more Tasmanians to become home owners, and provide houses for more Tasmanians. It will get our economy back on track, fuel the supply chain across the state and create jobs.

The centrepiece of the package delivers 2300 new dwellings, including social and affordable housing across the state. There is no better place in the country right now to build a house, with our state's expanded first home owner's funding of \$20 000 for any owner-occupier to build a house, combined with the federal government's injection of \$25 000.

Mr Dean - What are the conditions in relation to any person building a home?

Ms HOWLETT - Conditions were announced this morning. If you are a single individual, earning a single income, it is capped at \$125 000. For a couple, it is \$200 000 combined income.

Ms Rattray - And the renovation or build has to be more than \$150 000.

Ms HOWLETT - Correct.

Mr Valentine - It is not just a do-it-yourself project.

Ms HOWLETT - No. It is all about creating jobs, meaning there is a massive \$45 000 available, regardless of whether it is your first or your tenth house.

It also secures and fast-tracks projects across community, infrastructure, roads, irrigation, and other essential infrastructure.

Mr Dean - Is that going to be spread evenly throughout the state? Is that the best they can do with the infrastructure money that is going to be spent, and is it distributed equally, or fairly evenly?

Ms HOWLETT - From what I have seen, it is fairly equally across the state.

Mrs Hiscutt - There is an application process, means-tested.

Ms HOWLETT - We have \$100 million to deliver an additional 1000 new social houses, in partnership with community housing providers, and \$24 million in additional and brought forward funding for 220 houses under the Affordable Housing Strategy.

We are improving the HomeShare program to revise eligibility thresholds, and we are helping to reduce the initial cost of buying a house and the monthly cost of owning it. It is estimated that uptake will result in 150 home purchases, including 75 new builds over two years.

There is \$20 million to support the delivery of 1000 homes by extending the successful \$20 000 First Home Owner Grant initiative to all owners, occupiers and building applicants for 2020. This means that if you contract to build a house this year, you will receive the \$20 00 grant whether it is your first home or not. Details, guidelines and eligible criteria will be available as of Tuesday, 9 June 2020.

The Government will allocate \$40 million for state road safety upgrades in 2020 and 2021 and 2021-22, and bring forward \$40 million through an accelerated procurement tender process. This will provide the local construction industry with the certainty of work over the coming months and into the next construction season.

The first tranche of projects under this package is now out to market, including safety upgrades on Highland Lakes Road, at the Pub with No Beer corner; improved turning facilities on the Bass Highway at Boat Harbour; and road widening and improved turning facilities on the Arthur Highway at Eaglehawk Neck.

A further nine projects will be put to market under this process, and will include bridge strengthening works, the upgrade of Binalong Bay and Bruny Island landline infrastructure, and road-widening work on Midland Highway between Powranna and Tunbridge.

Our record \$378 million road budget for the next financial year already includes other significant projects, such as the new Hobart Airport interchange, park and ride facilities in Kingston, the West Tamar Highway upgrades and the start of the \$100 million Bass Highway upgrade with the Boat Harbour turnoff.

These projects are all on track to start later this year. We are investing \$15 million to prioritise the \$28 million Don Irrigation Scheme infrastructure -

Ms Rattray - Hear, hear.

Ms HOWLETT - I thought I would get a 'hear, hear' out of that - to meet the increased demand for Tasmania's next five irrigation schemes.

The Don Irrigation Scheme is expected to commence construction early 2021, and deliver 130 direct and indirect jobs.

Ms Rattray - It's a tad outside my electorate, but I am happy for Tasmania.

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely. It is a game changer.

An additional \$10 million will be available to upgrade regional health centres and ambulance facilities, and \$7 million will be invested to undertake refurbishment to the Launceston Police Station. Do I get a hear, hear?

Mr Dean - That is good.

Ms HOWLETT - There will be \$3.5 million invested in a new emergency station operation centre; \$8.7 million will be provided to upgrade the final 29 police houses across the state -

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

QUESTIONS

COVID-19 - Macquarie Point Site

**Mr VALENTINE to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.32 p.m.]

With respect to the current Macquarie Point Development Corporation's expressions of interest process associated with the proposed sustainable energy infrastructure project and escarpment land release -

- (1) (a) Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted in any way on the time lines for these projects being brought to market and/or progressed; if so, to what extent?
- (b) Under the Government's Buy Local policy, was any action specifically undertaken to prepare local businesses so they were able to individually or conjointly engage in the expression of interest process for the works?
- (c) If action was taken, can the nature of that action please be explained together with the number and type of Tasmanian businesses involved prior to the expression of interest - EOI - process commencing?

With respect to the current master plan for the Macquarie Point site -

- (2) (a) Is the Government still firmly committed to the master plan and, therefore, the MONA vision for the Macquarie Point site as a whole?

- (b) If so, what recent interactions, if any, have taken place between the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and/or government with MONA or its subsidiaries with regard to any aspect of the master plan?
- (3) What is the Government's expected overall time frame for the delivery of the Macquarie Point master plan?
- (4) Can the Government guarantee the processes involved will prevent the master plan from being subverted, the site ultimately being fragmented and the vision for the site not being achieved?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Hobart for his seven questions. The answers are -

- (1) (a) The EOI process for the escarpment was delayed by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation due to the unknown market conditions relating to COVID-19. The corporation, via Knight Frank Tasmania, initiated and released a registration of interest process to test the market. The EOI for the district infrastructure scheme was released, as per the original time frame, on 30 May 2020.
- (b) Prior to the release of the district infrastructure scheme EOI, a future opportunities notice was placed on the Tasmanian Government tenders website for a period of 10 weeks. The Treasurer's Instructions determine the requirement for Buy Local policy, which the corporations work within.
- (c) The corporation, as part of its future opportunities notice and undertakings as part of the Buy Local policy, has generated solid interest from local firms.
- (2) (a) The master plan supports the Government's reset vision and the development for the site. The master plan is contained within clause 32 of the Sullivan Cove Planning Scheme 1997. To support the master plan, the rules for use and development along the proposed development footprints, view lines, public open space, corridors - including the transit corridor - turn the vision into reality and support the site's development being focused on art, culture, science and tourism.
- (b) MONA was informed and briefed of the master plan and made a representation during the public process on the master plan and the planning rules underpinning it.
- (3) To support the development of the site, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation is on schedule to physically remediate 80 per cent of the site by the end of the 2020 calendar year. Infrastructure to support the developments and subdivision of the land is well underway. The corporation's stage development and land release process is scheduled to be completed within the next five years. However, depending on other regulations, such

as planning and building processes which developers must go through in order to bring a building out of the ground, time frames will be extended.

- (4) The master plan and planning rules adopted under clause 32 of the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997, which has gone through the Hobart City Council public process, and approved by the Hobart City Council and the Tasmanian Planning Commission in October 2019, ensure use and development to be consistent and coherent as the corporation undertakes a multistage land release program.

Furthermore, both Houses of parliament approve the upgrading of the governing legislation to add extra functions and objectives of the corporation, such as ensuring that permanent development and interim activities, such as events, are maintained along with the preservation of corridors such as the transit corridor.

Federal and State Elections

Ms RATTRAY to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.37 p.m.]

As there has been an announcement of a federal by-election for around 115 000 electors scheduled for early July, and with the Legislative Council elections for Rosevears and Huon of around 25 000 electors each, with booth locations spread across the two electorates -

- (1) What actions is the Government consulting on with the Electoral Commission to facilitate these elections?
- (2) What time frame is being considered for these elections to take place?
- (3) When can announced and other potential candidates expect to know the date of elections and when the writs are likely to be issued?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for McIntyre for her three questions.

(1) to (3)

The answer is all in one. The elections for the divisions of Huon and Rosevears are an important part of Tasmania's democratic system and we take the responsibility to conduct these elections very seriously. The Tasmanian Government has recently passed legislation that enables the Legislative Council elections for 2020 to be held before 31 December 2020, subject to Public Health advice.

It is the Government's intention to hold these elections as soon as it is safe to do so within the time frames. The Government continues to consult with the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner regarding the conduct and timing of these elections in order for them to be held as quickly as possible and safely while meeting social distancing requirements. We

thank the commissioner for his advice and for his continued vigilance to ensure the elections will be conducted in a way that minimises the risk of infection.

Significant measures will be put in place to maintain public safety during the Legislative Council elections when they are safe to be held, and to ensure appropriate measures are applied and processes changed where needed to minimise any risk of coronavirus infection. The Government will continue to take the best and most up-to-date advice from the Public Health experts and the TEC as to the timing of these elections.

Legislative Council Elections 2020

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.39 p.m.]

Mr President, it might be appropriate for me to ask my questions in relation to the same matter. The answers the Leader has given on that would cover the latter two questions in my notice to you. My questions relate to the Legislative Council elections for 2020.

At an earlier time the Leader indicated to the House the Government held very real concerns regarding contestability. If the 2020 Legislative Council periodical elections were to be conducted by a full postal vote process, will the Leader please advise -

- (1) What are the Government's very real concerns?
- (2) If a full postal vote was legislated, could such elections be contested?
- (3) Does the Leader accept that although deferring the scheduled elections for Rosevears and Huon has reduced the health risks of attending a polling place, it has widened the democratic risks, as noted political scientist Richard Herr has written in *The Examiner*?

I think the Leader answered my questions (4) and (5) when answering the member for McIntyre's questions, so I will delete those.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his three questions.

(1) to (3)

The Tasmanian Government recently passed legislation that enables the Legislative Council elections for 2020 to be held before 31 December, subject to Public Health advice. It is the Government's intention to hold these elections as soon as possible, when it is safe to do so, within this time frame. The Government continues to consult with the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner regarding the conduct of timing of these elections, in order for them to be held as quickly as possible, and safely, and meet social distancing requirements. Once an election date is announced, we will encourage voters to apply for postal vote applications, should they wish. However, based on advice from the Tasmanian Electoral

Commission, we are not considering amending the Electoral Act 2004 to enable a universal postal vote.

I assure members that the Government's intention is to hold the election as soon as we are able, but it will be subject to Public Health advice, as the recently passed legislation requires.

Federal and State Elections

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.42 p.m.]

Mr President, I hate to do this, but the Leader's response did not answer any of my questions. It is a cover-up.

Ms Forrest - It is disrespectful.

Mr DEAN - It is disrespectful. The member for Murchison is right. The questions are clear to understand, and I would have thought this information would have been available, so I ask the Leader to resubmit those questions to the appropriate minister, and that the questions as asked be answered.

Ms Webb - It is not scrutiny if you do not get answers.

Mr DEAN - You are right. I need the answers, thank you.

ANSWER

Mr President, in response to the member for Windermere's request, I am happy to resubmit his questions again. However, I think the basic gist is that the elections will be held as soon as safely practicable and anything outside of that, and that is the answer. I am happy to submit the same questions if you like.

Mr Dean - All the answers.

Ms Forrest - It is a constant battle.

COVID-19 - Elective Surgery - Testing of Patients

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.43 p.m.]

With regard to the resumption of elective surgery in Tasmania, it is noted that many hospitals on the mainland are requiring all elective surgery patients to have a COVID-19 test and to self-isolate from the time of the test until admission for elective surgery.

Acknowledging that Tasmanian patients are being screened using a self-reporting screening tool -

- (1) (a) Has consideration been given to COVID-19 testing of all booked elective surgery patients within a short time before their planned admission?
- (b) If so -
 - (i) Are these patients then required to self-isolate prior to admission?
 - (ii) Has this been implemented across all sites?
 - (iii) If not, in light of this practice being adopted by many mainland hospitals, why is it not being considered?
 - (iv) Will this option be considered as a measure to enhance the protection of frontline staff and their families and other patients?
- (2) Does the minister believe this would provide an additional tool to enhance the screening tool to protect patients, staff and their families?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her six questions.

- (1) Testing of COVID-19 for patients prior to elective surgery was considered and consulted on as part of the most recent cohort group expansion. Clinicians were concerned that a requirement to test all booked elective surgery patients before a planned admission had the potential to unnecessarily delay surgery for these patients, and felt that appropriate measures were already in place to enable people to receive surgery in accordance with best practice infection-control protocols that minimise risk to patients, their family and staff.

Elective surgery patients who have risk factors for COVID exposure and clinical symptoms will either be tested or identified as suspected of having COVID-19 and treated with additional precautions, with the addition of N95 masks worn by staff for aerosol generating procedures - for example, for incubation, oral or airway surgery or gastroscopy - and surgery is undertaken in a dedicated COVID-19 theatre. For anyone in quarantine or isolation, the hospital surgical and perioperative service department will consider whether surgery can be delayed until the person's period of isolation or quarantine is complete.

- (2) Tasmania's approach to testing people with COVID-19 is similar to other states and territories and is based on information from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and advice from public health services. The committee is made up of chief health officers from all Australian states and territories and it is the main national expert committee for advice about COVID-19 in Australia.

We will continue to take the advice of the Tasmanian Chief Medical Officer and the Public Health Services, which are regularly reviewing and considering emerging evidence on best practice COVID-19 precautions and healthcare settings.

COVID-19 - Reopening Specialist Clinics

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.46 p.m.]

With regard to specialist outpatient medical services and clinics -

- (1) What is the time frame for reopening outpatient specialist clinics for -
 - (a) each speciality
 - (b) each outpatient clinic at each hospital - the Royal Hobart Hospital, Launceston General Hospital, North West Regional Hospital and Mersey Community Hospital?
- (2) Is telehealth being offered as an option for some specialty clinics?
 - (a) If so, for what specialties and in which hospital are outpatient clinics?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her 10 questions.

- (1) (a) The known time frames for reopening specialist clinics are -
 - Hospitals south - staged process commenced from early May to ensure ongoing patient and staff safety in accordance with Public Health directives. Ongoing social distancing will directly impact the volume of patients that can be seen face to face at any one time.
 - All clinic services continue for category 1, urgent and review patients and the utilisation of telephone and telehealth review continues for appropriate patients. Broadening service to allow for bookings of new category 2 and category 3 patients will be at the direction of the Royal Hobart Hospital executive.
 - Paediatric services have continued following a clinical redesign with a greater utilisation of telehealth facilities. Maternity services have continued in the south, having undergone clinical redesign to ensure social distancing can be met via phone and more limited face-to-face physical assessment -

Ms Forrest - Cannot stop babies from being born.

Mrs HISCUTT - To continue -

- A statewide public website and information sheets have been developed to ensure that women have access to information and support.
 - Category 1 gynaecology services have continued with a reduction in category 2 and 3 services being reviewed with a staged reintroduction. Surgical termination of pregnancy services has been maintained by the Women's Health Clinic South, for southern, northern and north-west women.
 - Hospitals in the north and north-west - specialist clinics at the Launceston General Hospital continued to function at a reduced capacity. The specialist clinic was required to physically move from its normal space and this reduced its capacity from 20 spaces to 11. Where possible, the consultants undertook telephone consultations and only critical face-to-face consults occurred.
 - A small number of medical clinics were required to completely stop and this was due in part to the cohort of consultants to be seen at high risk. The surgical outpatient ENT clinics stopped for a period as this was deemed to be of too high a risk to continue. This has now recommenced in a limited capacity.
 - The MCH clinics accommodated the COVID-19 respiratory clinic in one of the consulting suites and specialist clinic staff facilitated staffing and management of the expanded COVID-19 respiratory clinics.
 - Fracture clinics have continued and additional clinics are returning with availability of specialist staff. Telehealth and phone clinics have been offered where appropriate.
- (b) The known time frames for reopening each outpatient clinic at each hospital are below -
- The Royal Hobart Hospital outpatient clinic is currently seeing category 1, emergency and review patients. Staged recommencement of category 2 and category 3 patients will occur over six weeks due to patient volumes.
 - The urology outpatient clinic is currently seeing category 1, urgent and review patients, including BCG therapy patients.
 - The neurosurgery outpatient clinic statewide service will see a staged phase back to face-to-face reviews over four to six weeks to manage patient volumes.

- The vascular outpatient clinic statewide service will recommence bookings for category 2 and category 3 patients over two to four weeks.
- General surgery and colorectal outpatient clinics will see staged recommencement of category 2 and category 3 patients over six weeks due to patient volumes.
- The wound outpatient clinic will see staged recommencement of services from two to six weeks to allow for a review and bookings of category 2 patients.

As I go through this, honourable member, I will cover the outpatient clinics first and then the update -

- Respiratory clinic numbers are to increase from 1 June 2020 and will commence bookings for category 2 and 3 patients from 1 June 2020 onward.
- Neurology will recommence some face-to-face reviews from the end of May for category 2 and 3 patients and will review clinic numbers to ensure safe social distancing in waiting rooms.
- Endocrinology will see a staged increase over four to six weeks for recommencement of category 2 and 3 patient bookings.
- General medicine will see a staged increase over four to six weeks for recommencement of category 2 and 3 patient bookings.
- Infectious disease -

Ms Forrest - Is this from today or the date it was written? It simply says two to four weeks, so was it from a week ago?

Mrs HISCUTT - It was sent through last week.

Ms Forrest - We are probably a week into it. A lot of people are waiting for these clinics.

Mrs HISCUTT - I think I was up to infectious diseases, which will see a staged increase over four to six weeks for recommencement of category 2 and 3 patient bookings.

- The refugee and humanitarian arrivals clinic, the RAHAC, will see a staged increase over eight weeks to manage large family groups and interpreters.
- Gastroenterology - staged increase over five to eight weeks for recommencement for category 2 and 3 patient bookings.
- Renal - staged increase over eight to 10 weeks reverting from telephone model back to face-to-face consultation. Large clinic

patient numbers and multidisciplinary clinics will increase waiting times. Telehealth utilisation will continue where appropriate.

- Rheumatology - staged increase over four to six weeks reverting back to the face-to-face model. Ongoing telehealth utilisation will continue where appropriate.
- Inflammatory spinal/SAC - staged increase over four to six weeks reverting back to the face-to-face model. Ongoing telehealth utilisation will continue where appropriate.
- Ear, nose and throat - due to increased risk of aerosol-producing procedures, these will see a staged increase over one to two months to increased face-to-face reviews. PPE use is required for scopes and aerosol-producing procedures.
- OMFU - due to increased risk of aerosol-producing procedures, will see a staged increase over one or two months to increased face-to-face reviews. PPE use is required for scopes and aerosol-producing procedures.
- Ophthalmology - slow increase in face-to-face reviews over two months to manage large patient volumes and longer wait times for multiple specialist reviews at same appointment.
- Orthopaedics - continue category 1 reviews and emergency appointments with staged recommencement of category 2 and category 3 patients over eight weeks.
- Cancer services - outpatient clinic services unchanged. Some telehealth will continue for less urgent follow-ups.
- Aged care - staged increase over four to six weeks reverting back to face-to-face model. Ongoing telehealth utilisation will continue where appropriate.
- Rehabilitation - staged increase over four to six weeks reverting back to face-to-face model. Ongoing telehealth utilisation will continue where appropriate.

With regard to the Launceston General Hospital, all outpatient clinics have continued. The need for social distancing will affect the capacity of waiting areas. With regard to the clinics -

- ENT clinic - recommenced in a limited capacity due to increased risks.
- High-risk consultants - recommenced operation of the outpatient clinics in a staged fashion.

- Orthopaedics - have continued to provide services utilising telehealth and critical face-to-face consultation. Capacity to increase as surgery continues to increase.
- Women and children's services - outpatient clinics will continue to function, utilising telehealth and critical face-to-face consultation. There was a prioritisation of category 2 and 3 paediatric and gynaecological outpatients and, currently, women and children's services is finalising the reopening of all services.
- Specialist clinics - completion of the women and children's services capital works program will continue to restrict some clinics due to noise and space considerations.

With regard to the North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey Community Hospital, both the NWRH and the MCH are running modified clinics from 11 to 29 May 2020. Full services will begin commencement in June 2020.

(2) (a) Telehealth is offered as an option for the following specialist clinics -

- in the south, there is rheumatology, the inflammatory spinal/spinal assessment clinic, renal, vascular, neurology and respiratory clinics. Clinics are being added as appropriate and in consultation with Telehealth Tasmania.
- for hospitals in the north and north-west, telehealth has been offered in all clinics at the LGH, the NWRH and the MCH.

(2) (b) Telehealth is offered in the following hospital outpatient clinics -

- telehealth has been available in all clinics at all hospitals based on the clinical need of the patient. Face-to-face appointments are offered when clinically indicated by the treating doctor. The use of telehealth has been very positive in pre-screening new patients before the face-to-face visit. In some instances it has meant the patient does not need to attend and reduces the total number of visits, assisting with social distancing in busy clinics.

COVID-19 - North-West - Acute Inpatient Mental Health Care

**Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.58 p.m.]

I appreciate the previous answer. Many people have been delayed when trying to access outpatient care. Hopefully it will not be much longer.

Mrs Hiscutt - Are you happy with that answer?

Ms FORREST - There are still some waiting periods for some of those. With regard to acute inpatient mental health care in the north-west region, I note bed capacity at Spencer Clinic has been reduced to promote and support social distancing and COVID-19-safe care -

- (1) How many inpatient beds are currently available at Spencer Clinic?
- (2) How are patients being cared for in the community, who would otherwise have been admitted and provided appropriate care?
- (3) If all allocated beds are taken at Spencer Clinic and a patient in urgent need of admission presents, how is the patient managed?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her further three questions.

- (1) During the COVID-19 pandemic, 12 inpatient beds have been available at Spencer Clinic. This has ensured that the clinic is able to meet the infection control requirements of the North West Regional Hospital to provide separate zones for COVID and non-COVID patients.
- (2) There are currently no consumers waiting in the community who require admission to Spencer Clinic. There are beds available at Spencer Clinic for consumers who require admission.

All consumers are continuing to be seen by the crisis assessment and triage team and case management through the COVID-19 pandemic, and CATT has increased its capacity in the community to provide more intensive mental health care to those who require such a service.

The Adult Community Mental Health Service in the north-west has provided the North West Regional Hospital Emergency Department with a nurse to ensure all mental health presentations at the North West Regional Hospital are seen promptly and provided with appropriate mental health care.

- (3) If the inpatient beds available at Spencer Clinic are full, the service follows the same procedure as prior to the pandemic, which includes reviewing the current inpatients and identifying those who are able to be discharged. If Spencer Clinic is unable to allocate a bed, contact is made with inpatient units in other regions, seeking admission. If an out-of-region bed is available, the patient is transported to that facility.

Spencer Clinic then continues to review patients for discharge and once a bed becomes available, the north-west patient in the out-of-area unit is transferred back to Spencer Clinic.

Mr DEAN - Mr President, do we need to seek an extension to question time, or has that already occurred?

Mr PRESIDENT - We can seek that.

Mrs HISCUTT - When the time is up, Mr President, we will call time and I will seek an extension to the time.

Biosolid Treatment Sites

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MRS HISCUTT

[3.01 p.m.]

My questions relate to biosolids - which is a fairly smelly question - a processed by-product of the municipal wastewater sewage treatment and composting sites within Tasmania. Will the Leader please advise -

- (1) How many composting sites for this product exist in the state and where are they located?
- (2) How long has each of these sites been in operation?

I should have said at the beginning, that I ask my questions in this way because a lot of this information is not clear or really available in the annual reports and so on,

- (3) What quantity of the product is used at each site?
- (4) In financial years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, were any complaints and/or incidents reported relevant to any of these sites, and what were the categories of complaints? Specific complaint details for each site are requested.
- (5) If any complaints and/or incidents were reported, what action was taken in each case?
- (6) Where the product has been in use as a fertiliser for long periods, what benefits have been reported as derived from the product?
- (7) Is there a cost to TasWater for the product where used; if so, what is the cost in each case, or the cumulative cost? I have asked for the cumulative cost because it does not breach any in-confidence issues.

I ask these question because of the site proposed for St Leonards in my electorate and many questions are being asked about this.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his seven questions, which are very detailed.

- (1) There are two sites which currently receive TasWater biosolids for processing through composting. One is located near Plenty in the south and the other is near Railton. The third site at Interlaken is authorised to receive biosolids but does not routinely do so.

A number of farming properties also receive biosolids for direct land application. Due to the low application rates, many of these properties are not regulated by the Environment Protection Authority Tasmania. The EPA has issued three environmental approvals to allow land applications of biosolids above the 50 wet tonne per hectare limit in the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act, Schedule 2, to support TasWater's lagoon desludging project.

- (2) The EPA commenced regulating these sites as follows - Railton, 24 October 2003; Interlaken, 9 December 2005; and Plenty, on 27 November 2009.
- (3) The facilities at Plenty and Interlaken are limited to producing 9900 tonnes of composted material per year. The facility near Railton is permitted to produce 25 000 tonnes per year. For the financial year 2018-19, the volumes of biosolids delivered to these sites for treatment were: Plenty, 2928 dry solid tonnes; and Railton, 2680 dry solid tonnes.

The biosolids are combined with other materials to produce the composted product. Production of compost at these sites does not always include biosolids as a constituent.

- (4) The table below summarises complaints received in relation to the three composting facilities regulated by the EPA and the responses by EPA in each case. I will come to them shortly.
- (5) Complaints have been received in relation to these composting facilities. Predominantly these complaints relate to odour issues associated with a range of operational matters. A range of strategies has been used to resolve these complaints, depending on the circumstances.
- (6) The EPA does not undertake assessments of the agronomic benefit derived from the application of biosolids, biosolid products or compost to agricultural land. Biosolids and compost contain useful amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and organic carbon, and limited quantities of potassium and trace elements, making them ideal for soil conditions and use as a fertiliser. Biosolids may also contain lime if this is added during the stabilisation process. The availability of these nutrients and the amount of organic carbon present depend on the treatment processes during sewage treatments.
- (7) The EPA does not have information relating to TasWater's internal cost structures and is not able to comment on the costs incurred by TasWater. The question is better directed to TasWater.

With regard to complaints in relation to EPA-regulated composting facilities, I will give the date, the number of complaints, the nature of complaint, and then the resolution.

Location	Date	Number of complaints	Nature of complaint	Resolution
Brightside Farm, Plenty Valley - microbial activity	2015-16	2	Odour	There was a letter to the operator and site audits conducted.
	2016-17	1	Odour and exposed fish waste	A meeting with the owner.
	2017-18	6	Odour and dumping	Operator instructed to take mitigation action. Site visit

Location	Date	Number of complaints	Nature of complaint	Resolution
				completed and improved outcome confirmed.
	2018-19	5	Odour and pollution	The operator instructed to take mitigating action. Improved outcome confirmed
Dulverton Organic Recycling Facility (DORF) and Mushroom Exchange Composting (MEC) site at Dulverton	2015-16	5	Odour and leachate overflow from the DORF	The IRO responded and investigated the DORF and the MEC contacted. The MEC instructed to take mitigation action. Notification after rain event. The IRO is the incident report response officer.
	2016-17	0		
	2017-18	5	Odour	The EPA visited the site and the IRO investigated. Source of odour not confirmed on some occasions.
	2018-19	7	Odour	The IRO visited the site. The source of odour not confirmed on some occasions. Long-term strategy now in place.
The Pure Living Soil at Interlaken	2015-16	0		
	2016-17	1	Odour	The EPA reviewed the complaint. Operation of the facility was modified.
	2017-18	0		
	2018-19	0		

Mr Dean - I appreciate those answers.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Extension of Questions

[3.10 p.m.]

Motion by **Mrs Hiscutt** agreed to -

That so much of standing order 45 be suspended to enable question time to continue for another 30 minutes.

TASCORP Bonds

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

Reserve Bank Governor Lowe's announced on 19 March 2020 that the Reserve Bank is prepared to purchase Australian Government Securities - AGS - and securities issued by the state

and territories central borrowing authorities, semis, in the secondary market as part of a package of measures to address the fallout from the current pandemic -

- (1) What is the total face value of TASCORP bonds purchased by the RBA since 19 March 2020?
- (2) To what extent is the Government and/or TASCORP involved in the bond purchases, and does either the Government or TASCORP have any active role in the process?
- (3) What has the open market purchases of TASCORP bonds meant for interest rates on TASCORP bonds?
- (4) For bonds of similar maturities, how has the purchase price of TASCORP bonds compared with those issued by other states?
- (5) Does the fact that the RBA has indicated willingness to purchase TASCORP bonds on the secondary market helped determine the rates of future bond issues and, if so, at what rates?
- (6) Does the fact that RBA is willing to buy TASCORP bonds at certain prices mean that deliberations of Tasmania's creditworthiness by various rating agencies have any practical relevance and, if not, what is the ongoing relevance of the state's credit rating?
- (7) When are further issues of TASCORP bonds planned, and what will be the trigger point for the new bond issue?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her seven questions -

- (1) The RBA has purchased \$127 million of TASCORP bonds as part of its long-dated open market operations. The RBA last purchased semi-government bonds on 8 May 2020.
- (2) TASCORP has no active or direct role in the bond purchase program. All purchases of bonds are facilitated by the RBA through the secondary market.

Ms Forrest - You didn't answer the question as to whether the Government has a role, it was only TASCORP.

Mrs HISCUTT - TASCORP has no active role.

Ms Forrest - The question was: does the Government and/or TASCORP -

Mrs HISCUTT - All purchases of bonds are facilitated by the RBA.

- (3) Interest rates have stabilised since the initial market volatility experienced in late March. There are many factors that impact interest rates, so the specific impact of the RBA's open market operations cannot be determined. However, like all other government bond interest rates, TASCORP's rates have generally tracked lower since the implementation of the RBA's policy.

- (4) The RBA has purchased bonds from all states and territories in the secondary market as part of its long-dated open market operations at yields broadly consistent with indicative market prices at the time.
- (5) The involvement of the RBA has greatly improved stability within the debt capital markets for government and semi-government bonds. The RBA is targeting the three-year government bond rate at 0.25 per cent. Longer term interest rates are determined by a number of factors, which make it difficult to forecast rates for future bond issues.
- (6) The RBA's involvement in purchasing semi-government bonds assists market stability. The RBA has been explicit that its bond purchases are not directed towards achieving any particular yield or spread for semi-government issuers. The standalone creditworthiness of the state will continue to be a significant contributor to the price of TASCORP bonds, relative to other states and Australian Government bonds.
- (7) While still subject to uncertainty as the final impacts of COVID-19 on TASCORP's clients are unknown, the bond issuance program for 2020-21 is anticipated to be in the order of \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion. TASCORP issuance strategy remains to issue in periods when investor demand is strong.

Should the member for Murchison require more detailed information regarding the operations of TASCORP, the Premier, also the Treasurer, the Honourable Peter Gutwein MP, would be happy to arrange a briefing from the chair and CEO. If the member wishes to pursue that briefing, just let me know and my office will arrange.

COVID-19 - Licensed Trading Hours

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.15 p.m.]

My question relates to the early morning trading hours of licensed premises in Hobart and hospital admissions. Will the Leader please advise -

During the financial years 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2020 to date, how many injury admissions have been made to DEM at the Royal Hobart Hospital post-2 a.m. to 6 a.m. Saturday and Sunday mornings?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question. This question only arrived about half an hour ago, so I will read the answer and the member may understand it when I read it out. This is in the light of having an answer for every question.

The Government has sought advice on the data requested and will provide that as soon as it is possible to do so. They are looking it up.

In broad terms the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a reduction in outside activities during all hours of the day, including early morning. Anecdotally, it has been observed there was a reduction in emergency department presentations during May and April, but more recently this has increased. We will provide that information when the minister has had time to find it.

COVID-19 - Mental Health Responses

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.17 p.m.]

With the additional funding for mental health services from both state and federal governments being welcome in light of the additional impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of many Tasmanians -

- (1) What specific measures are being put in place to support mental health on the north-west coast?
- (2) What specific measures are being put in place to support mental health on the west coast?
- (3) What specific measures are being put in place to support mental health of young people and children specifically in the north-west region?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her three questions.

- (1) The mental health responses to COVID-19 primarily focus on telephone or online delivery that is available to all Tasmanians including people on the north-west coast. The Australian Government has expanded the range of resources provide on the Head to Health website. The website provides links to trusted Australian online and phone supports, resources and treatment options. The website also has youth-specific mental health support links which range from apps like Check-in, Recharge, Worry Time to online forums such as the ReachOut peer support forum or the Beyond Blue life and wellbeing forum.

Beyond Blue has also established a new online resource and 24x7 phone counselling service which is staffed by mental health professionals to help people of all ages experiencing stress or anxiety associated with COVID-19.

The Tasmanian Government has funded a new service called A Tasmanian Lifeline on 1800984434 which commenced on 1 May 2020. This new hotline is for any Tasmanian who may feel stressed, anxious about the future, finding social isolation a challenge or simply need a friend or understanding voice to talk things over with, looking for advice, information, comfort and reassurance.

The new hotline is staffed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week, and the service is provided in three ways -

- Call in - Tasmanians will receive psychological support from a trained support worker to discuss their worries and be connected to a referral service where appropriate.
- Call out - contacting socially isolated older Tasmanians identified through existing services, family and friends who may be concerned or by other health professionals.
- Reach out - through partnership with those industries significantly impacted such as tourism, hospitality and retail, identifying at-risk members and reaching out for psychological support, counselling or employee assistance programs.
- Rural Alive and Well has also been funded by the Tasmanian Government to provide non-clinical mental health outreach services in rural areas. This funding has provided RAW with the capacity to increase its services to the north-west and west coast areas and an additional worker is now based in the region.

(2) This is the same as (1), which I have covered.

(3) Similar to the response to (1) with regard to the broader population, the mental health response to COVID-19 for children and young people focuses on telephone or online delivery. Kids Helpline has received additional funding to ensure that the service can meet the needs of children and young people experiencing a range of issues that may or may not be related to COVID-19 but may be exacerbated by the pandemic. The service is provided through email, WebChat or over-the-phone counselling.

Headspace has also received funding to expand the digital work and study service. This service provides the following: assisting young people with creating a resume; career planning; job searching; interview preparation; contact and collaboration with the employers and social firms; working with employment consultants and assisting with navigating Centrelink; supporting young people and exploring suitable education options, getting into study and sourcing financial support for education. This service is available for people aged 15 to 25 years via phone, or online chat.

Under the Australian Government's National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, all governments will be working to facilitate increased access to mental health information, assessment and care in education settings such as early childhood, school, TAFE and university, where there may be an increased demand for mental health and wellbeing services that can be easily accessible while people are at these sites.

COVID-19 - Small Business Hardship Grant

**Ms RATTRAY to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.23 p.m.]

I did not have a chance to ask these questions yesterday and they have been somewhat overtaken, but I will still ask because it is an important issue.

- (1) Can the Government please confirm that the \$15 000 Small Business Hardship Grant fund has been oversubscribed and many desperate small businesses have missed out completely or received a reduced grant of \$4000?
- (2) How many Small Business Hardship Grant applications were received? How many were unsuccessful? How many received the reduced grant amount of \$4000?
- (3) Will the Government reconsider the amount of money available to the Small Business Hardship Grant fund to enable Tasmanian small businesses to meet their commitments and trade during and after the emergency period?
- (4) If the Government is not willing to increase the funds available - and I do not think that is the case - how many small businesses in Tasmania does the Government expect will no longer be able to remain open and trade?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for McIntyre for her questions. This one is hot off the press and we have not had time to print it out yet; we are making an effort to have all answers here.

(1) to (3)

As part of the Tasmanian Government's nearly \$1 billion social and economic support package, we have delivered over \$60 million, with over 1200 grants to Tasmanian small businesses across the state as part of the COVID-19 small business support grant program. More than \$30 million has been paid out via the small business emergency grants, which have provided nearly 13 300 small businesses with grants of \$2500.

Over 2000 grants of \$750 have gone to businesses under the Business Continuity Program. Under round 1 of the Small Business Hardship Grant program a total of 1330 businesses have received funding of \$15 000. Round 2 of hardship grants has seen 1540 small businesses receive \$4000 to support them in recovery.

In relation to the Small Business Hardship Grant program, 3995 applications were received for the Small Business Hardship Grants; 72 per cent of applicants were successful under the program, with a total of 2870 grants paid over both rounds, with over \$26 million provided across the state through the hardship grant program.

- (4) Over \$6 million in additional funding was provided for round 2 of the hardship grants, supporting a total of 1540 businesses with hardship grants of \$4000. This funding was distributed in a second round of smaller hardship grants of \$4000 to those businesses which

did not meet the threshold or qualify to receive a \$15 000 grant. Without the additional funding and change in grant allocations to a smaller amount, these businesses would not have received funding otherwise.

As the Premier said in parliament this morning, he has spoken with the Secretary of Treasury and the Secretary of State Growth last night and he is expecting advice in coming days, which he will consider. The Department of State Growth has committed to review any individual applications by businesses that believe they have been unfairly assessed or are seeking advice relating to the outcome of their assessment. This process is already underway.

The Government remains committed to assisting Tasmanian businesses as we enter into recovery and we have taken considerable and significant measures to do this. We will continue to work with Tasmanian businesses as we move from the emergency response phase and into recovery.

Economic and Fiscal Update Report - Decrease in Dividend Tax

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.27 p.m.]

There may not be answers to these question, but I want to put them on the record.

The Economic and Fiscal Update Report dated May 2020, page 19 in particular, estimates the decrease in dividend tax and rate equivalent income for government businesses at \$140.2 million for 2020-21, which I note is a 38 per cent decrease.

What is the breakup of this amount specifically listed by individual amounts for each business, as would be presented in a policy and parameter statement?

I would have thought this would not have taken such a long time to answer - it was sent through a few days ago - because it is only one question related to a report that was released by the Treasurer on 19 May.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for putting that on record.

We are making every effort, as members can tell. One member has been fairly satisfied with the answers; one member is dissatisfied; and one member received her answer a minute ago. We are making every effort - there is a process and a few steps that have to be taken. With one answer to the member's question, an answer had been prepared but someone did not think it was quite right, and we need to make sure it is right before we can deliver it. It is in the system.

Pedestrian Safety - PublicAreas

**Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[3.29 p.m.]

My question relates to pedestrian safety and an issue raised with me by a concerned constituent who had a problem with a pedestrian on a country road.

- (1) During the financial years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 to date, how many crashes, injuries and deaths have occurred involving pedestrians walking in public areas?
- (2) For the same periods, how many crashes, injuries and deaths have occurred involving cyclists riding in public areas?
- (3) What is the extent of educational programs and publicity given to pedestrian safety?
- (4) What public directions, if any, have been given to pedestrians wearing high-visibility vests when walking on country roads and other public places?
- (5) Has consideration been given to making the wearing of these vests compulsory in these circumstances, in a similar way that we require cyclists to wear helmets and have lights fitted to their cycles and illuminated of an evening?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his five questions. Hopefully he might find these answers more agreeable.

Mr Dean - It is whether my constituent accepts it as well.

Mrs HISCUTT - I will just give the answers.

- (1) In regard to pedestrian crashes for the financial year 2017-18, there were 182 crashes involving pedestrians; 183 in 2018-19; and as at 3 June, there have been 123 this financial year.

It should be noted that 76 per cent of the pedestrian-involved crashes occurred during the daytime.

- (2) With regard to cyclist crashes, for the financial year 2017-18, there were 101 crashes involving cyclists; 102 in 2018-19; and as at 3 June, there have been 75 this financial year.

It should be noted that 85 per cent of the bicycle-involved crashes occurred during the daytime.

- (3) Pedestrians are vulnerable road users, and keeping pedestrians safe is a road safety priority for the Tasmanian Government. The Government has committed \$75 million to improve road safety over five years, under the Towards Zero Action Plan 2020-24. This includes

funding for \$1 million per annum specifically to improve safety for vulnerable road users, including pedestrians. The \$1 million Vulnerable Road User Program assists councils across Tasmania to install safety infrastructure treatments, including mid-block pedestrian refuges, intersection improvements and footpaths.

The Government has a range of initiatives to educate and encourage all road users to use our roads safely. Information is provided in the *Tasmanian Road Rules* booklet explaining that pedestrians must use a footpath or nature strip where available. The booklet also advises that where no such facilities exist, pedestrians should walk as close to the edge of the road as possible, and walk on the side of the road to face oncoming traffic.

Love 40 - I think we have all seen the ads on television - is a public education campaign highlighting the needs of motorists to slow down and watch out for our most vulnerable pedestrians. The campaign also highlights the need to be extra-vigilant around students alighting from school buses, particularly on rural roads. Love 40 screens at the commencement of school terms.

Last year, pedestrian safety was promoted as part of the 2019 road talk series. Road talk is a long-running and very popular road safety public education campaign that screens during the Channel 7 nightly news, generally in June each year. The road talk series is also promoted more widely, including on YouTube.

- (4) The safety of pedestrians walking along the roadside on country roads is raised periodically; however, the Government does not intend making the wearing of high-visibility vests compulsory for pedestrians.

The minister has requested the Road Safety Advisory Council to consider the need for public education to promote the safety benefits for pedestrians of wearing high-visibility contrast/high-visibility clothing while walking at night, particularly if not walking on formed pathways.

- (5) Cyclists are required to wear helmets to reduce the risk of injury in the event of single- or multiple-vehicle crashes. Bicycles are classified as vehicles, and are primarily used on the roadway.

To ensure their safe operation within traffic, bicycles are required to be equipped with a working brake, a bell or a similar warning device, front and rear lights, and a rear-mounted reflector.

Hydro Tasmania - Balance Sheet Decline

Ms FORREST to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.35 p.m.]

I believe this question will probably have answers that will be sent back. We will put this one on the record as well, in case late entries arrived for correction.

This is a follow-up question to an answer received on 25 March 2020, wherein it was stated that the underlying cause of the decline in the value of Hydro Tasmania's balance sheet of \$195.83 million was a commercial-in-confidence matter not to be shared with the beneficial owners, the people of Tasmania.

I note the Government has been trying to gain support for various projects to build on our strengths in renewable energy generation. Adopting a secretive approach appears to undermine the search for a social and economic licence, especially given the balance sheet loss representing almost 10 per cent of Hydro Tasmania's value.

- (1) Was the Government aware of the terms of the contract to which this loss relates, before it was signed?
- (2) Did the Government have any input into the terms and conditions of this contract?
- (3) Did the Government insist on any specific conditions as they related to prices and/or the term of the contract, or is it left entirely to the discretion of Hydro Tasmania's board?
- (4) What was the term of the contract?
- (5) When was this contract signed?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her questions and note them.

Tasmanian Alkaloids

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.36 p.m.]

My questions are supplementary to those asked relating to hand sanitiser. I think I asked them on the last occasion the Council was sitting.

On behalf of the constituents, I ask -

- (1) Is the Government aware Tasmanian Alkaloids is now a foreign-owned entity - a United States' private entity?
- (2) Was a tender process conducted?
- (3) What was the value of the contracts entered into? I suppose this is information in confidence, but I might get an answer.
- (4) Were there any stipulations that Tasmanian Alkaloids would be prevented from also supplying the general public if it had the advantage of a government contract?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his four questions.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Department of Health coordinated the procurement of hand sanitiser supplies in line with processes specified in Treasurer's Instruction PF-7, Procurement Framework - COVID-19 Emergency Procurement Measures. Under this TI, an accountable authority - that is, the department - is permitted to approve modified procurement and contracting processes for urgent procurement of goods, services or works related to the implementation of government measures in connection with COVID-19. The department determined that there was not adequate time to conduct a full procurement process, due to pressures resulting from extreme levels of global demand. A full procurement process could have taken up to 12 weeks to hand sanitiser procurement, or even possibly resulted in Tasmania missing out on supplies altogether. The department was not willing to take the risk.
- (3) White Label Distillery, valued at \$191 798, and M2 Logistics, valued at \$951 600.
- (4) No. The Department of Health contract was with M2 Logistics, a Tasmanian partnership. Tasmanian Alkaloids was contracted by M2 Logistics to manufacture the hand sanitiser.

MESSAGE FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Resolution Disagreed

[3.39 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - The House of Assembly has disagreed to the following resolution communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 3 June 2020 -

Resolved:

That Noting the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of Tasmanians and given the emergency response by the Tasmanian Government including Coronavirus related expenditure, legislative and public policy developments, that a Joint Select Committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of either House, with leave to adjourn from place to place and with leave to report from time to time to inquire into and report upon –

- (1) (a) The State's immediate and ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery measures;
- (b) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health, economic and social lives of Tasmanians; and

- (c) any other matter incidental thereto; and
- (2) That the number of Members to serve on the said Committee on the part of the Legislative Council be four.”

Signed
S. HICKEY
Speaker
House of Assembly, 4 June 2020

ADJOURNMENT

[3.40 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the Council at its rising adjourns until 11 a.m. on Wednesday 24 June 2020.

Motion agreed to.

World Haemochromatosis Week

[3.41 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I rise to raise an important health matter and to raise awareness of a condition that has been a silent killer, one which can be easily managed or serious complications avoided if people are aware they have the condition.

This condition is haemochromatosis. Why now? This week is World Haemochromatosis Week and it is timely to inform members and the public that haemochromatosis is the most common genetic disorder in Australia. About one in 200 people of northern European origin have the genetic risk for haemochromatosis.

People with haemochromatosis absorb too much iron from their diet. The excess iron is stored in the body and over time, this iron leads to iron overload. This excess iron overloads body tissues and damages organs in the body, leading to premature death. There is no harm at all in finding out if you should be tested and the treatment is easy. A regular donation of blood, which then helps someone else who may need a blood transfusion, so two people get direct benefit.

We all know that not enough iron causes health problems, but few realise that for some, too much iron is also a problem. If undetected and untreated, the excess iron can cause organ damage and tissue damage, and result in premature death.

Haemochromatosis tends to go undiagnosed, partly because its symptoms are similar to a range of other illnesses. Both sexes are at risk of haemochromatosis; however, women tend to develop the condition later in life because of the blood loss associated with menstruation during the child-bearing years and childbirth, although some women will develop symptoms at an early age.

Men are at risk throughout their lives, but postmenopausal women are equally at risk of the complications associated with the disease. The good news is that if haemochromatosis is detected before damage occurs, it is easily treated and is no barrier to a happy and successful life.

To provide a little information on why this disease needs to be taken seriously, I note that many in this place are more likely to have suffered from low iron levels, especially during pregnancy - for some that is not the case - but some store excess iron rather than have a deficiency and this can be very harmful.

We normally get iron from our daily diet. The body is finely tuned to take in and absorb only as much iron as is needed. Red blood cells contain the protein haemoglobin which carries oxygen around the body. Iron is needed for the production of haemoglobin; however, the human body has no method of excreting excess iron. It controls iron levels by absorbing only the right amount of iron from our food. Any excess is then stored in our organs and joints.

The body typically stores around one gram or less of iron; however, a person with haemochromatosis absorbs a great deal more from their food than is necessary. Iron stores of five grams or more can build up inside the body, and organs such as the liver, heart and pancreas are affected and ultimately damaged. Without treatment, haemochromatosis can lead to death.

For people with haemochromatosis, the excess iron stored in these organs and joints gradually increases over many years. The liver can become enlarged and damaged leading to serious disease such as sclerosis or liver cancer. It can also cause other health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, endocrine and sexual dysfunction, and arthritis.

Many cases of haemochromatosis are now diagnosed when a person attends a general practitioner for a check-up.

I note a personal interest in this health condition as my husband Rob has haemochromatosis. His condition was picked up in a work-related insurance check in 1998. Had he not been diagnosed at this time, he might well not be still alive. His cousin, who was living in America at the time, was similarly diagnosed following an employer requiring a health insurance medical.

People should be tested for haemochromatosis if they experience general symptoms related to issues of increased levels of stored iron in the whole body. These symptoms include fatigue, weakness, lethargy, apathy, weight loss, abdominal pain and joint aches - in particular, aches within joints in the fingers. We probably all feel like we have it now. If you have these symptoms, are Caucasian, over the age of 30 - that is probably all of us - haemochromatosis should be suspected. People should be tested if they have any of the complications that can be caused by haemochromatosis, including liver disease, liver cancer, heart failure, diabetes, impotence, loss of libido, early menopause, pigmented skin, or arthritis, or if you have family members - brother, sister, child, parent or grandparent - who have haemochromatosis. You may not know they do, though.

Those with a cousin, aunt or uncle who has haemochromatosis should also be tested, although the risk is not as great as above.

If any of you fit those categories, a simple blood test will pick it up.

This week is World Haemochromatosis Week. and I encourage members to raise awareness in their communities to this serious disease. If you are at all concerned, get tested.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 3.46 p.m.